

PUTIN SAYS Iraq terrorist 'incubator' posing threat to world

AFP, New Delhi

Russian President Vladimir Putin, in an interview published yesterday, described Iraq as a terrorist "incubator" that poses a threat to the world.

"As had been the case with Afghanistan, Iraq turned into a major hotbed of terrorist threat, a firing ground and 'incubator' for militants," the Russian leader, who is on a three-day visit to India, told The Hindu newspaper.

"It is here (Iraq) and now that thousands of future terrorists are being recruited by terrorist networks. Those forces, most probably, can be employed in other regions of the world," he said.

Russia, which has faced a series of deadly attacks by separatists battling its rule in mainly Muslim Chechnya, opposed the US-led invasion of Iraq.

Putin said actions by the world community to tackle "the terrorist international" should "start from international law" and be concerted and united.

He said in written responses to

questions posed by the newspaper that differences between global players over Iraq had led to a "significant slowdown" in developing international "anti-terrorist interaction."

Putin said developments in Iraq had proved that the unilateral action taken by the United States and its allies was counter-productive.

"Terrorist activities there are not diminishing while peaceful Iraqis and citizens of other states become victims of violence."

Putin said foreign leaders often asked him how countries' security and sovereignty could be guaranteed if global affairs were to be dealt with "according to the Iraqi model."

He said Moscow had repeatedly called "our American partners' attention to this reality. And eventually, they realised the need to reach a political settlement in Iraq using the UN mechanisms."

Moscow, he said, had always held that the Iraqi situation could only be settled through a nationwide dialogue to reach national reconciliation.

India, Russia renew ties Moscow backs Delhi's UNSC berth

AFP, New Delhi

Russian President Vladimir Putin backed India's bid for a UN Security Council slot yesterday while New Delhi championed Moscow's early entry into the WTO as the former Cold War friends sought to breathe new life into trade and military ties.

At a joint press conference with India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on the first day of a three-day official visit, Putin said Russia backed India's quest for a permanent berth on the UN Security Council.

"Speaking about the enlargement from the point of view of geographical representation, India is number one on the list," he told the news conference at the end of nearly five hours of talks between the two sides.

Singh, for his part, said: "We will fully support Russia's early entry into the WTO (World Trade Organisation)."

Moscow and New Delhi maintained cozy relations during the Cold War. But in recent years under the previous Hindu nationalist

government, India's ties with the United States warmed considerably.

Singh's new left-backed government which took office in May, is signalling it had not forgotten its longstanding ally, analysts said, while at the same time keeping relations cordial with Washington.

The two sides said in a joint statement they were, "determined to foster in every possible way the relationships of partnership and closely interact on a bilateral and multilateral basis."

India which is battling an Islamic insurgency against its rule in Kashmir and Russia, which is seeking to crush a Muslim separatist revolt in Chechnya, also reaffirmed their "common resolve to fight terrorism."

The statement noted "the transformation in the global environment in the recent past and stresses the need for a new international architecture based on a multi-polar world."

In an interview with the Hindu newspaper, Putin said developments in Iraq proved unilateral action taken by the US and its allies

in invading the country was "counter-productive" and actions by the world community to tackle "the terrorist international" should "start from international law."

Iraq has "turned into a major hotbed of terrorist threat, a firing ground and 'incubator' for militants" that posed a threat to the world, he said.

The two sides also signed a slew of agreements ranging from energy to space.

Russia agreed to expand its role in the co-production of a cruise missile called BrahMos. The multi-target BrahMos which can be launched from submarine, ship, aircraft or land.

There was no immediate deal on Russia's push for India to sign an agreement on intellectual property rights that Putin is seeking to safeguard agreements to service India's huge Soviet-built arsenal. But Singh said both had agreed to the issue "should be resolved within the next four months beginning January."

Singh said the issue of spare parts for India's Russia-dependent war machine had been settled.



PHOTO: AFP

Visiting Russian President Vladimir Putin (L) and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh are pictured during an agreement signing ceremony yesterday in New Delhi. Putin held a series of meetings with leaders of India's new government amid hopes his visit will strengthen trade and military ties.

Bush picks Kerik for homeland security job

REUTERS, Washington

President Bush has picked as his homeland security secretary former New York City police commissioner Bernard Kerik, who helped the city respond to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and trained Iraqi police, administration officials said.

The officials said on Thursday that Bush chose Kerik to replace Tom Ridge, who announced his resignation on Tuesday, to lead US efforts to protect the country from Sept. 11-type attacks. An announcement could come as early as Friday.

As Bush continued a broad overhaul of his second-term Cabinet, there were indications that he was close to nominating a replacement for Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham, who has announced his resignation.

In addition, Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson appeared close to announcing his anticipated resignation.

Kerik, 49, rushed to the site of the World Trade Center towers moments after the Sept. 11 attack and helped then-New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani during the Sept. 11 crisis, to coordinate rescue efforts, restore order and develop a plan for securing the city.



PHOTO: AFP

People pass a muddy floodwater caused by a landslide from nearby mountains in Gabaldon national road province of Nueva Ecija north of Manila yesterday as they return to their homes after the passage of Typhoon Nanmadol.

Disease risks rise after Philippine typhoon

REUTERS, AFP, Real

Flood waters receded in the northern Philippines yesterday in the wake of a typhoon, but thousands of people remained cut off from help, hungry and at risk of disease after a week of severe flooding.

At least 35 people died when Typhoon Nanmadol battered the main northern island of Luzon, adding to a toll of more than 1,100 dead or missing after floods and landslides this week, disaster officials said.

"We need one great heave to deliver the relief supplies, find the missing, rescue the isolated, feed the hungry and shelter the homeless," President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo said in a statement on national television.

Casualties from the typhoon appeared to be low because people were better prepared after three major storms in two weeks.

"Despite the heavy rains ... we have few casualties," said Colonel Elma Aldea, an official at the National Disaster Coordinating Council.

The NDCC said 25 people died in Aurora province, north of Manila, where the typhoon first hit land. Disaster officials said there had been a landslide, but had no further details.

They said 10 died in Manila and surrounding provinces, mostly from landslides and drownings, although flood waters had receded in most provinces as the typhoon rains eased.

At least 13 people were missing in northern Nueva Vizcaya province.

Some areas were still without power after high winds toppled 13 transmission towers in Bicol province east of Manila.

The health secretary warned of the growing risk of disease, urging people to bury their dead quickly.

5 cops killed in rebel raid on Kashmir camp

AFP, Srinagar

Kashmiri militants hurling grenades killed five policemen and injured seven when they stormed a security camp in Indian Kashmir yesterday, sparking a fierce gunbattle, police said.

The attack began just before dawn and fighting was still going on in early afternoon in Sopore town, north of Srinagar, summer capital of insurgency-racked Indian Kashmir.

The rebels barricaded themselves inside the camp's ammunition depot and were hurling grenades every time police tried to move in on them, police said.

Police said it was unclear how many militants were involved in the raid.

"One or two militants barged into the camp after hurling grenades under cover of darkness" and a heavy gunbattle ensued, a police spokesman said.

UKRAINE POLLS CRISIS Kuchma presents emergency plan

AFP, Kiev

Ukraine yesterday faced yet more polemics after President Leonid Kuchma proposed holding quick new presidential elections and handing interim power to a parliament where the opposition has a strong voice as a way out of the political crisis.

The outgoing president aired his emergency measures after first dashing to Moscow for urgent consultations with his counterpart and ally Vladimir Putin in which he won the Russian president's backing and praise for his handling of modern Ukraine's worst political standoff.

The proposals are unlikely to satisfy all opposition demands and underscore the careful line Kuchma has trodden since his country spiraled into political chaos following a flawed November 21 vote won by his

Kremlin-backed prime minister.

Kuchma is in effect parting company with Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich -- the man whom he had carefully groomed to succeed him after a 10-year reign highlighted by frictions with the West and fluctuating relations with Russia.

Lawmakers passed a motion of no confidence in Yanukovich on Wednesday and Kuchma said he would strip him of power and hand it to parliament should both sides follow his rescue plan.

"Ukraine needs a government that will act," Kuchma said.

The main obstacle now hinges on the timing and format of a new vote. Both sides admit the election was mired in fraud and are only waiting for the final verdict saying so from the Supreme Court -- now seen as just a formality and expected Friday.

Nato opens military academy in Iraq

Bush adamant on Iraq polls schedule

AFP, AP, Baghdad/Washington

Nato Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer announced the opening of the Western military alliance's Iraq training academy during a surprise snap visit to Baghdad yesterday.

De Hoop Scheffer, whose mission was previously kept under wraps for security reasons, announced the opening at a press conference.

And addressing a group of alliance officers already in the country to train Iraqi officers, de Hoop Scheffer stressed that Nato was in Iraq "on behalf of the Iraqi people."

"It is their priority, they want to be as soon as possible less dependent on others, less dependent on the coalition, less dependent on other military forces and take the fate of their own country into their own hands," he said.

His visit, which started Friday morning, was the first by a Nato

chief to the war-ravaged country.

De Hoop Scheffer, who was expected to leave the same day, stressed the importance of holding elections on January 30 as planned, "to see the political process in this country developing, to see people taking their fate into their own hands."

Asked about how many Iraqis had so far benefited from the training, in Iraq and abroad, Nato information officer Colonel Petter Lindqvist said "perhaps a hundred."

Lindqvist said that progress so far had been remarkable.

"Our trainers report back to us that progress has really been remarkable, the devotion and dedication of the officers is great and these people are receiving threats to them and their families," he told AFP.

"The Iraqi officers are prepared to sacrifice so much."

Lindqvist stressed that Nato itself would not be involved in fighting insurgents, despite a rising tide of

violence ahead of the elections.

"We are not involved in training troops. It is a Nato decision that Nato will not engage on the tactical level and we are not entering into any combat whatsoever, except from self-defence point of view," he said.

Several hundred instructors due in the country will be protected by a Nato force, with the aim of training 1,000 Iraqi officers a year.

AP adds: President Bush rejected calls for a delay in next month's Iraqi elections, insisting Thursday that the vote was too important to put off even though violence and chaos still grip much of the country.

"It's time for the Iraqi citizens to go to the polls," Bush said.

Bush predicted Iraq's elections would leave the world "amazed that a society has been transformed so quickly," but he did not explain why he was so adamant that balloting go forward as scheduled Jan. 30.

A number of Iraqi political parties have urged delay.

Indian army kills 29 rebels in Manipur 67 others captured

AFP, Guwahati

The Indian army said yesterday it has killed 29 tribal guerrillas and captured 67 in a sustained operation in the revolt-hit northeastern state of Manipur.

The army, whose operation against Manipur's militants involving 7,500 troops began late October, insisted it had the rebels on the run and had seized an important rebel base, believed to be the headquarters of the outlawed People's Liberation Army (PLA), in a densely forested region bordering Myanmar.

"The militants have suffered heavy losses including the fall of the headquarters of the outlawed People's Liberation Army," army spokesman Major Santanu Dev Goswami said from Manipur's state capital Imphal.

"The rebels are on the run and some of them have relocated their traditional bases and moved across the border to Myanmar."

The army strike is aimed at the United National Liberation Front (UNLF), the People's Liberation Army and the Kuki Revolutionary

Army -- all fighting for independent homelands in Manipur, where rebel demands range from independence to more autonomy.

The rebels, meanwhile, said they had repulsed the attacks and inflicted heavy casualties on the army.

Goswami said only two soldiers had been killed in retaliatory strikes. "A large number of weapons have been recovered, including Kalashnikov rifles, pistols, radio sets, explosives and ammunition. More than 15 improvised explosive devices were detected and neutralised," he added.

"The rebels are now trapped in a no-man's land and it is for them to decide whether to surrender and accept offers for peace talks," Goswami said.

At least 1,500 rebels are estimated to be operating in Manipur from roughly 50 to 70 well-entrenched camps.

Manipur is one of seven states in India's remote northeast, a hotbed of ethnic and tribal groups fighting for autonomy or independence. Many of the rebel armies are believed to have bases in northern Myanmar.



Chairman of IPSSL Group of Bangladesh M Haider Uzzaman called on Sheikh Ahmed Bin Sayeed Al Maktoum, chairman of the Emirates Group and president of Department of Dubai Civil Aviation at his office in Dubai recently. They exchanged views on aviation, tourism and bilateral business expansion issues.

States call for making world landmine-free

AFP, Nairobi

Scores of countries party to an international landmine ban were set yesterday to pledge at a meeting here to step up efforts to rid the world of the deadly devices and to call on states who have not signed the treaty to do so soon.

On the last day of a summit reviewing the 1997 Ottawa Convention delegates were expected to adopt a declaration and a five-year action plan to expedite the abolition of devices that kill or maim around 40 people a day.

"We remain gravely troubled that anti-personnel mines continue to kill and maim, adding new victims to the hundreds of thousands of landmine survivors requiring life-long care," read the draft text of the Nairobi Declaration to be signed by the 144 countries that are party to the treaty.

"The presence of mines still blocks the return of displaced persons, hinders the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals that we have pledged to meet, and impedes states and people from building confidence between one another," the draft text said.

The treaty, which came into force in 1999, bans the production, use, trade and stockpiling of anti-personnel mines.

About 40 countries, including the United States, Russia and China are not party to the treaty although they comply with it to varying degrees.

"We call upon those states that have not joined our efforts, particularly those that possess vast stocks of anti-personnel mines or continue to use this insidious weapon, to adhere to the convention without delay," the draft said.

China made promising noises in this direction on Friday.

"We stand ready to further expand out cooperation with the States Parties to the Convention in order to contribute to early elimination of landmines," Liu Jieyi, China's head of arms control and disarmament told a plenary session of the summit.

The 2004 Landmine Monitor, prepared by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), says Georgia, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal and Russia have used mines since 2003, while the United States continues to use landmines in Korea.

Bush calls for full UN oil-for-food probe

REUTERS, Washington

The Bush administration made clear on Thursday it would not take a position on whether UN Secretary General Kofi Annan should resign as it awaited the results of an investigation into the UN oil-for-food scandal.

President Bush called for a "full and open" accounting of Iraq's now-defunct oil-for-food programme following accusations Iraqi President Saddam Hussein illegally reaped billions of dollars from it because of Annan's lack of oversight.

While that probe is still pending Secretary of State Colin Powell said the administration will not take a position one way or another on whether Annan should step down.

"It would be inappropriate for the president to offer an opinion on this matter," Powell said in an interview with Radio Sawa, a US-funded, Arabic-language network targeting mainly youths in the Arab world.

Bhanga Pourashava				
District: Faridpur				
Invitation for Bids (IFB)				
Memo No. BPS/ENG/BID/2004-2005/244		Date: 02-12-2004		
IFB No: BMD/SP-BHAN/2004/02		Date: 02-12-2004		
IDA Credit No.: 3177-BD		Credit Name: Municipal Services Project, BMD		
<p>1. The People's Republic of Bangladesh has received a credit from the International Development Association (IDA) in various currencies towards the cost of Municipal Services Project, Phase-II Bangladesh Municipal Development Fund (BMD) and intends to apply part of the credit proceeds to cover eligible Municipalities for Infrastructure & Service Development.</p> <p>2. The Assistant Engineer, Bhanga Pourashava, District: Faridpur invites sealed bids for the Improvement of Road as mentioned below. Procurement is open to all bidders from eligible source countries as defined in the IDA's procurement guidelines. However, countries not eligible under the project also include: The Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Brunei Darussalam, Cyprus, Kuwait, Qatar, Singapore, United Arab Emirates.</p>				
Contract Package No.	Name of the work	Bid security (Taka)	Time for completion of work (days)	Price of bidding documents (Taka)
W-220/BMD-17-BH/04-02-R/03	<p>a. Improvement of road from Bhanga Bazar Bus Stand to Chillaadharar Govt Primary School (ch 675-1820m) including 2 vent PC (R8).</p> <p>b. Improvement of road from Bhanga Bazar Bus Stand to Boro Barighat, ch 1820-2985m (R9).</p> <p>c. Improvement of road from Bhanga Bazar Bus Stand to Kathurabari bridge, ch 283-675m (R7).</p> <p>d. Improvement of road from Bhanga Helipad to Roypara Bazar, ch 1437-2040m (R11).</p> <p>e. Improvement of road from Bhanga Helipad to Roypara Bazar, ch. 2040-3040m (R12).</p>	235,000.00	150	11000.00
<p>3. Bidding documents (and additional copies) may be purchased from the Office of the Upazila Nirbahi Officer, Bhanga, District: Faridpur OR Upazila Engineer, LGED, Bhanga, District: Faridpur OR Assistant Engineer, Bhanga Pourashava, District: Faridpur on submission of a written application upon the payment of a non-refundable fees mentioned in the above table for each set in the form of Pay Order/Bank Draft from any schedule bank in Bangladesh drawn in favor of Chairman, Bhanga Pourashava, Faridpur during normal office hours on all working days up to 06-01-2005. Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the same address during office hours upto 06-01-2005.</p> <p>4. The provisions in the instructions to bidders and in the conditions of contract are the provisions of the Standard Bidding Documents: Procurement of works (SBD), National Competitive Bidding (Trial Edition-January 1998, revised February 2003), issued by the World Bank Office, Dhaka.</p> <p>5. Bids shall be valid for a period of 91 days after bid opening and must be accompanied by bid security as mentioned in para 2 above in the form of Bank Draft/Pay Order/Bank Guarantee draw in favour of Chairman, Bhanga Pourashava, Faridpur. Bids must be delivered to the Office of the Upazila Nirbahi Officer, Bhanga, District: Faridpur, Upazila Engineer, LGED, Bhanga, District: Faridpur OR Assistant Engineer, Bhanga Pourashava, District: Faridpur on or before 08-01-2005 by 2.00PM.</p> <p>6. Bidders may deliver their bids by either in person or by courier service or by mail, which must reach the above office before the deadline for submission of bids. Bids received after the deadline will not be accepted.</p> <p>7. Bids will be opened in the presence of the bidder's representative who choose to attend at 3.00PM on 08-01-2005 at the office of the Assistant Engineer, Bhanga Pourashava, District: Faridpur.</p> <p>8. A pre-bid conference will be held on 29-12-2004 in the office of the undersigned at 11.00AM. The bidders are requested to attend the conference in time.</p>				
<p>Md Alam Miah Assistant Engineer (In Charge) Bhanga Pourashava District: Faridpur</p>				
C-2953				