

Tigers overrun Lankan military post: 38 killed

AFP, Colombo

Tamil Tiger rebels have overrun a military post inside Sri Lanka's most popular wildlife sanctuary, officials said yesterday amid a surge in fighting ahead of the economically crucial tourist season.

The defence ministry said the latest round of fighting over a 24-hour period -- both in the wildlife park in the southeast and in separate clashes in the island's north -- had left 38 rebel fighters and government soldiers dead.

Military officials said Tiger guerrillas killed seven soldiers in an attack inside Yala National Park, an area known for its leopards, elephants and migratory birds.

Six of the soldiers died in an overnight attack on an army outpost, and the seventh trooper was

killed and three more wounded in a mine attack as additional troops poured into the area, officials said.

"A pocket of isolated terrorists had attempted to overrun the army outpost," the defence ministry said in a statement. "Troops supported by reinforcements successfully managed to chase the terrorists away."

The clashes came a day before the authorities were due to open the Yala park after its annual six-week shutdown for the high tourist season, which runs till mid-January.

Western diplomats said they were worried about violence inside the sanctuary, particularly because many countries had just eased travel warnings for their nationals and suggested the island was a safe holiday destination.

"We are closely monitoring the situation," a Western diplomat

said, adding that there were no tourists inside the park, situated in the southeast and far away from defined frontlines.

The pro-rebel Tamilnet.com website said Tiger fighters overran what they described as an army "mini-camp" and later torched its facilities.

"The camp was set ablaze when the Tiger commandos completed their mission," Tamilnet said. It also gave a list of small arms seized from the camp.

The guerrillas have carried out several attacks against security forces and wildlife employees, and three of the five zones of the 1,000-square-kilometre (386-square-mile) Yala park have remained shut for years due to Tiger attacks.

Elsewhere, at least 30 rebels were killed and many more wounded in clashes on Monday in

the island's north, where a frontline divides government territory and a Tamil Tiger mini-state, the defence ministry said.

"Sri Lanka army soldiers launched several pre-emptive strikes immediately ahead of their forward defences in Wanni and in Jaffna, killing over 30 terrorists," the ministry said in a statement.

In the northern skirmishes, one government soldier was also killed and seven were wounded, it said.

No independent confirmation of the claim was immediately available, and there was no comment from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

The defence ministry also said Sri Lankan air force jets had destroyed a suspected Tiger logistic and military base in the rebel-held northern district of Mullaitivu on Monday.

'Human waste can help save planet'

AFP, New Delhi

A cheap system to recycle human waste into biogas and fertiliser may allow 2.6 billion people in the world access to toilets and reduce global warming, an Indian environmental expert said Tuesday.

Bhishwar Pathak, founder of the Sulabh International Social Service Organisation, said his group plans to push the system at the seventh annual World Toilet Summit, to be held in New Delhi at the end of October.

The organisation is dedicated to providing toilets to nearly 730 million people in India who lack them.

'Pak military, militants agree to truce'

AFP, Miranshah

The Pakistan military and militants have agreed a temporary ceasefire following some of the bloodiest clashes along the Afghan border for six years, a tribal elder said yesterday.

Elders have been leading talks to try to broker the truce in Miranshah, the main town in the lawless tribal zone of North Waziristan, after fierce fighting last week that officials say left around 250 people dead.

"A temporary ceasefire has been agreed and four army checkpoints in the area have been abolished,"

said Faizullah Khan, who heads the local tribal council, adding it was reached Monday night.

The military denied however a ceasefire had been agreed, saying talks with the Jirga, or tribal peace committee, were ongoing and a decision was expected later Tuesday.

"As far as security forces are concerned, negotiations for a ceasefire are continuing and a final decision is expected today," chief military spokesman Major General Waheed Arshad said.

"We have eased restrictions to facilitate movement of civilians in the area," Arshad said.

Fighting halted last Wednesday to allow tribesmen to bury some 50 people killed in a military airstrike that hit the village of Ippi.

There has been almost no clashes since amid ongoing talks and as Pakistan celebrates Eid-ul-Fitr, the Muslim festival at the end of the fasting month of Ramadan.

The military says 50 foreign militants including Arabs were among 200 rebels killed in the fighting which erupted ten days ago, indicating the involvement of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network.

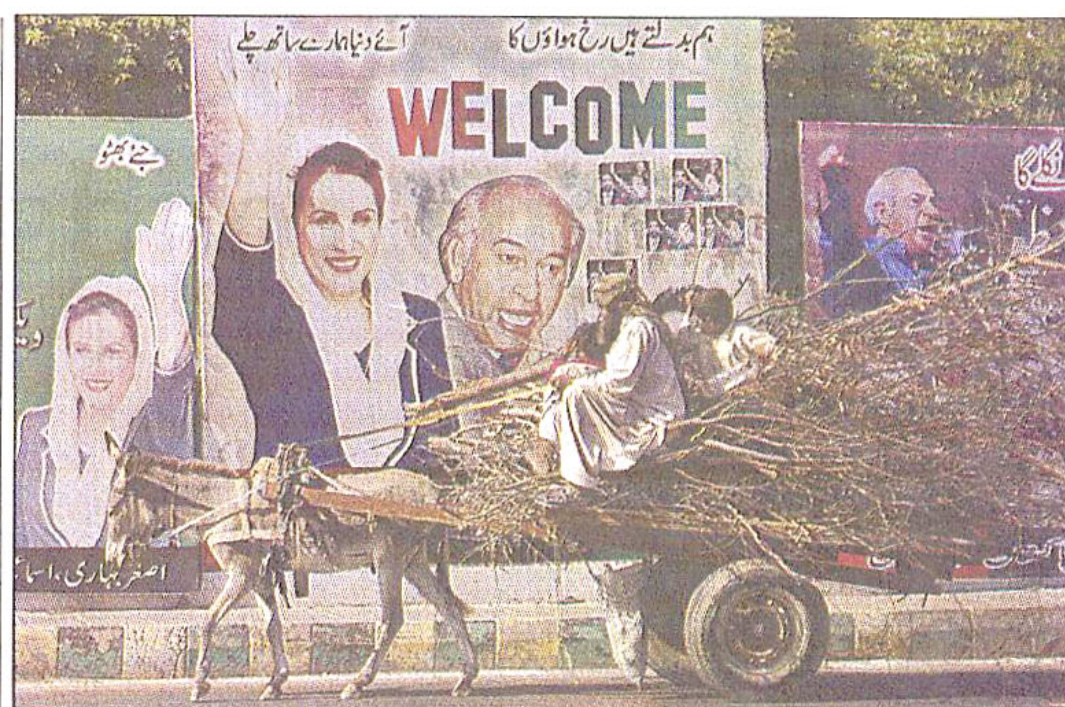


PHOTO: AFP

A Pakistani man rides his donkey cart in front of the welcoming billboards featuring Benazir Bhutto near her residence in Karachi yesterday ahead of her scheduled return to the country on October 18. A row erupted over preparations for Benazir's expected return after supporters plastered billboards and posters throughout Karachi.

Time for a Palestinian state, says Rice

AFP, Ramallah

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice pushed Israelis and Palestinians Monday to reach concrete understandings ahead of a US peace summit, saying the time had come for a Palestinian state.

Confirming that an international meeting would take place in Annapolis, Maryland, Rice said the creation of a Palestinian state was essential and that efforts to that end were US President George W. Bush's highest priority.

Rice was in Cairo on Tuesday to secure regional ally Egypt's support for a Middle East peace meeting, after saying the time had come for a Palestinian state.

Despite disagreement between Israelis and Palestinians over what exactly should be on the table at the US-sponsored conference, Rice said on Monday that a two-state solution to the decades-old conflict was essential.

"Frankly it is time for the establishment of a Palestinian state," Rice told a news conference after meeting Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas in the West Bank on her seventh visit to the region this year.

"The US sees the establishment of a Palestinian state, a two-state solution, as absolutely essential to the future of not just the Palestinians and Israelis, but also the Middle East and indeed to American interests."

"We have got quite a long time to go but we are not going to tire until we have given my last ounce of energy and my last moment in office."

"The president has decided to make this one of the highest priorities of his administration and of his time in office, means he is absolutely serious about moving this issue forward and moving it as rapidly as possible to conclusion."

Sharif to attempt return to Pakistan in Nov

AFP, Islamabad

Former Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif will try to return home again in November, two months after his last attempt ended in failure, his party said Monday.

Sharif flew to Pakistan on September 10 vowing to topple President Pervez Musharraf, the man who ousted him in a 1999 coup, but he was bundled onto a plane to Saudi Arabia four hours later.

"Nawaz Sharif will arrive in Pakistan next month, preferably between November 15-30," Siddique-ul-Farooque, a spokesman for the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz party, told AFP.

He said the date and place of Sharif's arrival would be decided and announced later.

Punjab police gets vital clues in cinema bomb blast

PTI, Chandigarh

Punjab police on Tuesday claimed to have got some "vital clues" in the Ludhiana cinema hall bomb blast in which six people were killed and 25 others were injured.

"We have got vital clues in the case," Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) Chandershekhar told PTI while adding that revealing details would hamper investigations.

He said that a dedicated team, under the command of DIG (Ludhiana range) Ishwar Singh, had been constituted to further investigate all probable angles in the case.



PHOTO: AFP

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (L) and Russian President Vladimir Putin review an honour guard upon Putin's arrival in Tehran yesterday. Putin is on the first visit to Iran as a Kremlin chief since the 1979 Islamic revolution, defying reports that a squad of suicide bombers planned to kill him.

Turkey warns Iraq over Kurd rebels amid incursion threat

AFP, Ankara

Turkey yesterday told Iraq to crack down on Kurdish rebels based in northern Iraq or face the consequences, as Baghdad called for urgent talks over Ankara's threat of a military incursion.

With Iraqi Vice President Tareq al-Hashemi in Turkey for a visit and the Turkish parliament preparing to vote on a motion allowing for cross-border raids, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan made it clear that Ankara's patience with Baghdad had run out.

"The central government in Iraq and the regional government in northern Iraq must put a thick wall

between themselves and the terrorist organization," said Erdogan, referring to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

"Those who are unable to distance themselves from terrorism cannot avoid being adversely affected by the struggle against terrorism," Erdogan told members of his ruling AKP party.

Ankara complains that the PKK enjoys free movement in northern Iraq, is tolerated by local Kurdish leaders and obtains weapons and explosives there for attacks inside Turkey.

The PKK has waged a bloody campaign for Kurdish self-rule in southeast Turkey since 1984 in a conflict that has claimed more than 37,000 lives.



PHOTO: AFP

A girl approaches her partly submerged house in Monbon village yesterday following heavy rains in the area of Bulusan volcano in eastern Philippines province of Sorsogon. Heavy rain dislodged fine sand on the mountain's southeastern slope and carpeted the villages of Monbon and Cogon sending some 165 villagers to flee the mudslide.

Myanmar junta vows to 'march on' despite pressure

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's military junta yesterday shrugged off international action to punish the regime for its crackdown on dissent, vowing to "march on" even as Japan cut aid and European nations widened sanctions.

State media also insisted there were no political prisoners in the country and criticised a UN Security Council statement deploring the violence used to quell the biggest anti-government protests in nearly two decades.

The response came amid growing international pressure on the regime to halt its repression and launch talks with the pro-democracy opposition led by Aung San Suu Kyi.

Japan, one of Myanmar's main donors, said Tuesday it was cancelling grants of about 4.7 million dollars over the fatal shoot-

ing of a Japanese journalist when security forces put down last month's huge protests.

On Monday, European Union foreign ministers approved a new set of sanctions against the junta including an embargo on the export of wood, gems and metals, and threatened further penalties.

US President George W. Bush, whose country has imposed targeted sanctions against junta leaders, called for "enormous international pressure, to make it clear to the generals that they will be completely isolated and not accepted into the international community."

But Myanmar vowed to resist, saying in state media that "We will march on. There is no reason to change the course."

"We will remove all the hindrances and obstacles that may lie ahead," the official New Light of Myanmar daily said.

Stand Up and Speak Out Against Poverty and Corruption

Poverty is not natural, it is man-made. So, it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings. Poverty reduces all possibilities of improving life; however, we also know that poverty can be eradicated if all kinds of social discriminations are eliminated and people's access to resources ensured. So let us speak against all discriminations and corruptions and stand for establishing people's right to resources and justice.

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- Dignity of all human beings irrespective of men and women
- Immediate rehabilitation of victims of natural as well as man-made disasters
- Sustainable disaster management measures, not just aid
- Good governance, transparency and accountability at all levels of the state and nonpartisan and effective action against corruption
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South Asia & Middle East
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