

Turkey trashes Kurd rebels' truce offer

AP, Baghdad

Turkey's foreign minister rejected any cease-fire by Kurdish rebels Tuesday as he met with Iraqi leaders in Baghdad to press them to crack down on the guerrillas. Turkish forces massed on the border and tensions rose over a threatened military incursion.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari, himself a Kurd, said Iraq's central government and authorities in its Kurdish autonomous region in the north would work together to deny the rebels freedom of movement, funds and representative offices. He did not elaborate.

Iraqi officials have been saying that guerrillas with the rebel Kurdistan Workers' Party, which is known by its Kurdish acronym PKK, were based in inaccessible mountainous areas of northern Iraq.

Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan said there are several ways to fight terrorism and Ankara would use them when appropriate. The buildup of troops along Turkey's border with Iraq, meanwhile, continued with military helicopters airlifting commando units into the area overnight.

The mix of diplomatic and military activity followed Sunday's rebel ambush near the Iraqi border that left 12 Turkish soldiers dead, 16 wounded and eight missing.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan met with British leaders in London and warned that Turkey cannot wait forever for the Iraqi government to act against the rebels.

Britain has backed the United States in trying to keep Turkey from crossing into Iraq to attack the Kurdish rebels based there. The US and others fear a Turkish attack

could lead to widespread bloodshed in one of Iraq's few relatively peaceful areas.

"We also don't wish our historical and friendly ties with Iraq to be ruined because of a terrorist organization," Babacan said at a joint news conference after meeting with Zebari. "On the other hand, we are expecting support from international community and our neighbours in struggle against terrorism."

Babacan said rebel attacks this month alone left 42 people dead.

But he rejected any offer of a cease-fire by the PKK.

Ceasefires are "possible between states and regular forces," a stern-faced Babacan said. "The problem here is that we're dealing with a terrorist organisation."

The PKK has called on Turkey not to attack Iraq, claiming that a unilateral rebel ceasefire declared in June was still in place although it

did not halt fighting.

"The position of the PKK is that we have agreed to a cease-fire but when we are attacked by the Turkish troops we will hit back," rebel spokesman Abdul-Rahman al-Chadarchi told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

He also confirmed that the rebels were holding eight Turkish soldiers captive and promised to treat them with respect, although he said it was "premature" to discuss conditions for their release.

"When they were attacking us, they were our enemies but now they are helpless captives whom we will take care of," al-Chadarchi said. "When the Turkish government asks for them, we can talk about conditions."

Turkish officials said the search was continuing for soldiers from Sunday's attack and would not comment on the rebels' claims.



PHOTO: AFP

Turkish soldiers and village guards patrol on an armoured vehicle in the province of Sirkat, on the Turkish-Iraqi border, in southeastern Turkey yesterday. Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan was in Baghdad for crisis talks on the activities of Kurdish rebels yesterday as Washington urged Ankara to hold back from unilateral military action.

US strikes kill 11 Iraqis: Iraq

AP, Baghdad

US helicopters opened fire on a group of men observed planting roadside bombs north of Baghdad on Tuesday, killing 11 Iraqis, including at least six civilians, the military said.

The suspected militants ran into a nearby house after the initial engagement and the Apache helicopter continued to fire at them, said Maj Peggy Kageleiry, a military spokeswoman in the area.

Six civilians and five military aged men were killed and five people were wounded and evacuated to a hospital in nearby Tikrit, 80 miles north of Baghdad, she said, adding it was unclear how many of the men were in the group were planting the roadside bombs.

Kageleiry had said eight military aged men were among those killed but later revised the figure to five and said an investigation was underway.

She expressed regret for the deaths of the civilians but blamed the insurgents for putting their lives in danger by running into the house to escape attack by the US forces.

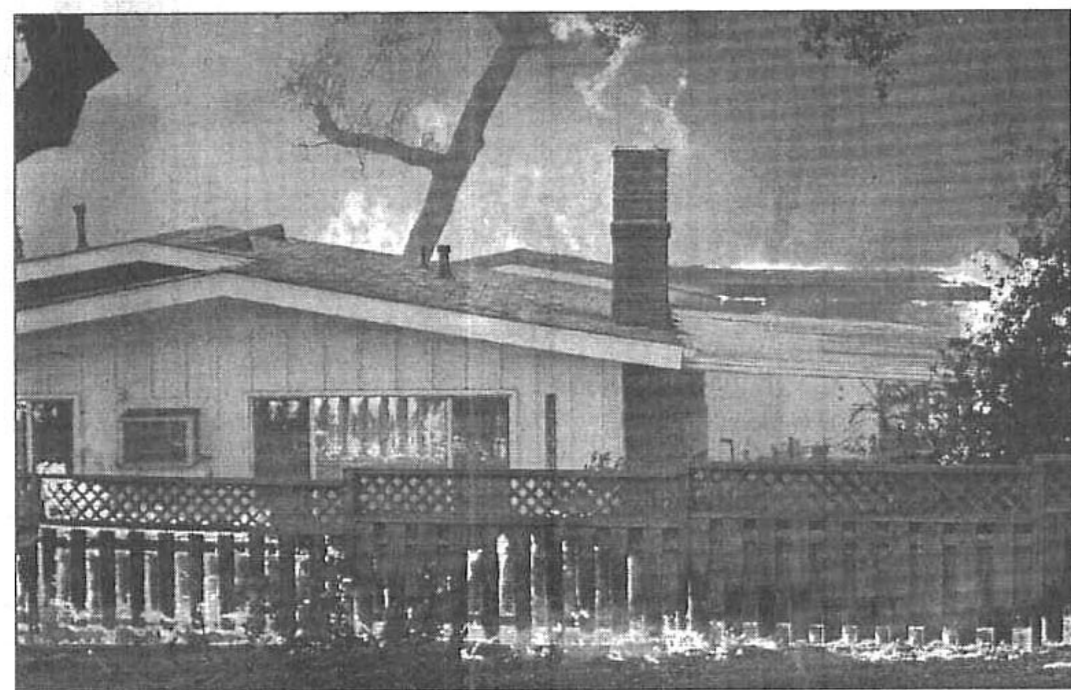


PHOTO: AFP

A home goes up in flames at the Valley Oaks mobile home park along Reche Road, west of Interstate 15, as the Rice Fire destroys at least 100 homes Monday near Fallbrook, California. Southern California is being pounded by Santa Ana Winds pushing numerous major wildfires into communities surrounded by native Chaparral habitat and burning hundreds of homes.

500,000 ordered to flee California wildfires

700 houses and businesses destroyed

AFP, Los Angeles

Half a million Californians have been ordered to evacuate their homes and flee the spreading wildfires blazing across southern California Tuesday, US media reported.

The Los Angeles Times reported that the wind-driven infernos have destroyed some 700 houses and businesses and led authorities to urge some 500,000 people to leave their homes, mostly in the San Diego area in south-eastern California.

The destruction prompted Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to deploy National Guard soldiers to help stretched firefighters.

President George W Bush declared an emergency in California and ordered federal aid be directed to the fire-stricken region.

At least 13 fires blazed throughout the region, where thousands of firefighters struggled to contain flames and evacuate residents.

Only one person has been killed and more than 20 people injured. Some 260,000 acres (1,000 square kilometres) have been destroyed in the fires, which are among the worst in the state's history.

Many parts of the state, including Los Angeles, have experienced record low rainfall and record-high temperatures this year, leaving vast swathes of countryside at the mercy of fires.

The flames are being propelled by a seasonal weather system known as "Santa Ana" winds. Authorities recorded powerful gusts of between 60 and 100 miles (97 and 160 kilometres) per hour on Monday. The desert wind is not forecast to diminish until Wednesday.

Local news reported that two big-rig trucks had been knocked over by powerful gusts in the southern California mountain passes near the town of Lake Arrowhead.

"It's a tragic time for California," said California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger after touring charred remains of buildings in the celebrity enclave of Malibu on Monday.

Abbas optimistic about US-backed ME conference

AFP, Jakarta

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas said yesterday during a visit to Indonesia that he was optimistic of a concrete outcome from a planned international conference on peace in the Middle East.

The conference on the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, called by US President George W Bush and expected to take place in Annapolis, Maryland, by year-end, has revived hopes of advancing a moribund Middle East peace process.

"We are going into this conference with optimism that we will reach a concrete outcome that is going to be positive for our people, which is long overdue," he said in a speech to Indonesian scholars and diplomats.

The president is in the midst of a

tour of key Muslim powers in Asia to drum up support ahead of the conference.

Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim nation and has been a staunch supporter of the Palestinian struggle for nationhood. It has no diplomatic relations with Israel.

Abbas said a document being drafted by his government in conjunction with the Israelis to form a basis for the conference would deal with six main issues: borders, Jerusalem, settlements, refugees, security and water.

"These are complicated issues," he conceded.

"We are determined to do our best to reach a consensus. But even if we don't, at least we are trying to determine the basics that need to be prepared to handle these issues," he said.

'Too early' to express disappointment over N-deal: US

PTI, Washington

Amid continuing uncertainty over fate of the Indo-US nuclear deal, the US has said it is "too early" to express disappointment and held out hopes that the two sides "can get it done".

White House spokesman Tony Fratto said the Bush administration remained committed to the civil nuclear agreement despite signs that the Manmohan Singh government may balk due to opposition at home from Left parties.

"We don't believe we can close the book on that yet. I think there's still some work to do. We want to work with India," he said.

Fratto said the US understands that the Indian government has to "deal with their local politics, just like we frequently have to deal with our local politics in dealing with

these kinds of issues".

"So we want to stay encouraged. We want to continue to dialogue with Indian authorities," he said.

The spokesman said he did not know what exactly transpired between US President George W Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh during their recent phone conversation on the nuclear issue.

"But I can assure you that the President (Bush) would have reiterated our commitment to that agreement and our interest in having it accomplished," he added.

Asked if Bush was disappointed with the possibility of the Indian side not going ahead with the deal, the White House official replied, "I think it's too early to express disappointment. I think we have some work to do and I think we can get it done".



PHOTO: AFP

A Pakistani policeman walks around the grave of the late prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the father of former Pak premier Benazir Bhutto in the village of Ghari Khuda Baksh yesterday. Heavy security preparations were underway at the family mausoleum of Benazir Bhutto as villagers awaited her visit.

Bush asks for \$46b more for wars

AP, Washington

President Bush asked Congress for \$46 billion more to bankroll wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and said he wants the money approved by Christmas. The fighting in Iraq, in its fifth year, already has cost more than \$455 billion.

Democrats who gained control of Congress with an antiwar message said Bush should not expect lawmakers to rubber-stamp the request.

"The colossal cost of this war grows every day in lives lost, dollars spent, and to our reputation around the world," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said. "The American

people long ago rejected the president's planned 10-year occupation of Iraq and want the administration to provide a concrete plan to bring our troops home."

"The choice is between a Democratic plan for responsible redeployment of our troops and the president's plan to spend another trillion dollars for a 10-year war in Iraq. We must end this war."

Announcing his latest request, Bush alluded to the nation's disenchantment with the war, which has claimed the lives of more than 3,830 members of the US military and more than 73,000 Iraqi civilians.

Myanmar agrees to visit of UN rights envoy

AFP, United Nations

The ruling generals in Myanmar have agreed to the first visit by the UN's top human rights official in four years, the United Nations said on Monday.

The announcement comes in the aftermath of a violent crackdown on pro-democracy protesters that left at least 13 people dead and intensified international criticism of the military junta.

The junta agreed to a visit by Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, the UN special rapporteur on human rights, and suggested that it take place before a regional summit in Singapore next month, UN spokeswoman Michele Montas said.

The UN's top envoy on Myanmar, Ibrahim Gambari, is also scheduled for a return visit to the country next month amid a flurry of diplomatic efforts to put pressure on the junta.

Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, has been in the international spotlight since pro-democracy protests spearheaded by the country's revered Buddhist monks were put down by the regime.

Nearly 3,000 people were rounded up and detained -- at least 13 people were killed. The military, which has run the country with an iron fist since 1962, has repeatedly quashed any shows of dissent.

Millions of dollars missing from Indian PM's relief fund

AFP, New Delhi

More than three million dollars donated to the Indian prime minister's relief fund for victims of disasters such as the Asian tsunami and Kashmir earthquake are missing, reports said yesterday.

The hole in the accounts came to light when the office of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh investigated a private petition filed under the 2005 Right to Information Act, the NDTV news channel reported.

Mujibur Rahman, an employee of the state-run Coal India Limited (CIL), filed the petition last year, NDTV said.

First impressions may last with voters: Study

AFP, Chicago

Political hopefuls should not underestimate the power of first impressions in snagging votes, a study published Monday suggested.

The finding comes from a small study by psychologists at Princeton University who were looking at the role of first impressions in the context of political races.

Competence is one of the most highly-rated qualities in political candidates, and previous research has shown that people unconsciously judge the competence of an unfamiliar face within a tenth of a second.

US pushes for Afghan reinforcements as support withers

AFP, Brussels

The United States will press its European allies Wednesday to provide more troops and equipment to combat the insurgency in Afghanistan, as mounting casualties undermine support for Nato's mission.

At closed door talks in the Netherlands, US Defence Secretary Robert Gates will buttonhole his European counterparts for reinforcements, as the US military is increasingly stretched by fighting

in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"The desire for a ministers-only session is so that they can be candid with each other about what's missing and who needs to step up," a senior US official said, ahead of two days of informal talks in the coastal town of Noordwijk.

Thirty-seven nations are contributing around 40,000 troops to the Nato-led International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) in Afghanistan, which is battling to extend the rule of the weak central government across the country.

Shake-up in Lankan military after attack

15 Tigers killed in battle

AFP, AP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's military made key changes in its command yesterday, a day after the Tamil Tigers infiltrated an air base and destroyed several aircraft, officials said.

President Mahinda Rajapakse appointed Major General Sanath Karunaratne Overall Operations Commander in the north-central region of the Anuradhapura area, where Tamil Tiger rebels devastated a key air force complex on Monday.

"He will be in charge of all security forces as well as police, including intelligence units in Anuradhapura," a government official said.

Karunaratne, 53, had previously

served as chief military spokesman. He has been credited with defending the army's Elephant Pass garrison in the far north of the island against a prolonged Tiger attack in 1990.

The government on Tuesday also transferred the responsibility of outer perimeter security of all airports in the country to the army after the air force failed to secure the Anuradhapura base, officials said.

Thirteen military personnel and 21 rebels were killed in the attack, the worst against the air force since an attack in July 2001 at another base that shares a runway with the island's only international airport.

The Tigers destroyed a fleet of

aircraft, including a multi-million dollar spy plane and supersonic trainer aircraft.

Meanwhile, army forces stationed along the frontier with rebel-held territory in northern Sri Lanka repelled two assaults by Tamil Tiger guerrillas, killing 15 of the attackers, the military said yesterday.

No soldiers were killed in the fighting Monday afternoon in the Vavuniya area, just south of the Tamil Tigers' de facto state, said military spokesman Brig. Udaya Nanayakkara. Rebel spokesmen could not be reached for comment and no independent confirmation of the battles was available.



Bangladesh Services Limited

(Owner of Dhaka Sheraton Hotel)

1, Minto Road, Dhaka-1000

Tender Notice

Sealed tenders in two-envelope system are hereby invited by Bangladesh Services Ltd. (BSL) for Supply, Installation, Testing, Commissioning and Balancing of HVAC, Lift, Fire Detection and Protection, P.A System, Telephone, M & E, Plumbing, Drainage including False Ceiling and Finishing works for Alternative Kitchen, Package-2 of DSH at 1, Minto Road, Dhaka-1000, from reputed, bonafide and eligible contractors.

- The intending firm must fulfil the following eligibility criteria for their participation in the tender:
 - Must have at least 10 (ten) years experience in Construction works covering Supply, Installation, Testing, Commissioning and Balancing of HVAC, Lift, Fire Detection and Protection, P.A System, Telephone, M & E, Plumbing, Drainage including False Ceiling and Finishing works in Bangladesh.
 - Must have proven experience in successful completion of Works in Bangladesh of similar nature which shall include Supply, Installation, Testing, Commissioning and Balancing of HVAC, Lift, Fire Detection and Protection, P.A System, Telephone, M & E, Plumbing, Drainage including False Ceiling and Finishing works and that the summation of cost of the above split components shall cost not less than Tk.50 (Fifty) Lac during the last 5 (Five) years (work order and completion certificate must be attached with the proposal).
 - The firm may form joint venture in such case the lead firm or its associates must fulfil the above criteria
 - Foreign firms operating in Bangladesh are eligible to apply but they must fulfil all legal conditions permitting their business in Bangladesh.
 - Must ensure availability of spare parts of the Equipment to be supplied and installed from the manufacturer for a period of 10 (ten) years from the date of expiry of maintenance period.
 - The firm or its associate possesses valid ABC Contractory and Supervisory license for electrical works.
 - Possess documentary proof of bank solvency certificate (bank statement for the last financial year).
 - Should have income tax clearance certificate for the financial year 2005-2006 & TIN No. and VAT registration certificate.
 - The Firm should have annual turnover not less than Tk. 2.00(two) crore during last 3 (three) years upto 2005-2006. In case of joint venture the lead firm or its associates should have annual turnover not less than Tk. 2.00(two) crore during last 3 (three) years upto 2005-2006.
- Any firm having unsatisfactory performance in any ongoing work in Bangladesh is not eligible to participate in the tender.
- Tender Documents will be available in the office of the undersigned during the office hours from 24/10/2007 to 06/11/2007 on payment of Tk.5,000.00 (Taka Five thousand only) (non-refundable) in cash.
- Earnest money amounting to Tk.6,00,000.00 (Taka six lac) only in the form of Bank Draft/Pay Order from any schedule bank of Bangladesh located in Dhaka issued in favour of BSL shall have to be furnished along with the Technical Proposal without which the Tender shall be rejected outright.
- The Technical Proposal and Financial Offer, submitted separately in sealed envelopes, will be received in the office of the undersigned upto 12.00 noon of 02/12/2007 and the Technical Proposal will be opened at 12.30 PM on the same day at the same place in presence of the tenderers if any. Financial Offers of only those firms will be opened, who would qualify in the evaluation of their Technical Proposal.
- Bangladesh Services Ltd. reserves the right to accept any tender or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Secretary
Bangladesh Services Limited