

Turkey may launch action against Kurd rebels at 'any time': Erdogan

AFP, London/Washington

Turkey could launch military action into northern Iraq at "any time", Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Tuesday but insisted it would solely target Kurdish separatists and not threaten Iraq.

He made the comments after talks in London with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, who voiced support for Turkey and condemned the "terrorist violence" of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

"We have no calculations on the territorial integrity or political unity of Iraq," Erdogan said, referring to Turkey's threat to launch military strikes against PKK bases in northern Iraq.

He noted that the Turkish parliament had given the green light last week for cross-border action. "Any such effort would target only the PKK," he said.

And he pressed Iraqi authorities to take their responsibility. "We have some expectation with respect to what is to be done about the terrorist organisation in the north."

"The Iraqi government must know that we can exercise this mandate we have received from the Turkish parliament at any time," he said.

Brown meanwhile voiced his condemnation of the PKK, which attacked a Turkish military patrol near the border at the weekend, leaving 12 soldiers dead.

"We condemn absolutely and unequivocally the terrorist violence of (the) PKK," he told reporters, while stressing that London and Ankara would continue to work for a "diplomatic solution" to the crisis.

"I can assure you we are doing everything in our power... to make sure that there is no safe haven for terrorist organisations in that part of Iraq threatening Turkey," he added.

"We appreciate the frustration and also the anger that exists in Turkey," he said.

Erdogan added: "The United Kingdom has suffered greatly from terrorism and suffers from terrorism... the UK is well positioned to well understand what Turkey is experiencing."

"We know how terrorism can hurt people and we hope that no other country of nations is suffering from it."

Fazlul Haque

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its Assistant Director Mohammad Ibrahim to investigate the wealth of Haque, who was the adviser for law, justice and parliamentary affairs, forest and environment and land in the Tajuddin Ahmed-led caretaker government.

Private security guards at the multi-storey building told The Daily Star that the former adviser hardly appeared in public in the past couple of months.

Allegations are there against him that he took Tk 80 lakh bribe for transferring a forest official and also received Tk 45 lakh from the Bashundhara Group for allocating 84 acres of khas land. He was also involved in "appointment and posting business," it has been alleged.

Although nine advisers including the then chief adviser President Iajuddin Ahmed resigned from their posts on January 11, Justice Fazlul Haque, the senior most among them, did not quit and claimed himself to be an adviser even after new advisers to the caretaker government took oath.

Rokon-Ud-Doula

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judiciary slated for November 1.

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday gave its consent to the government move to remove him from the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM). Earlier, the establishment ministry had sought the apex court's permission.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, Supreme Court Registrar Ikhtedar Ahmed said the ministry did not mention any reason for the withdrawal. Rokon-Ud-Doula will remain a magistrate until further notification.

As of 9:30pm, there was yet to be any notice regarding the status of the beleaguered official.

Addressing a seminar in the city Sunday, Rokon demanded that the separation be deferred till 2021 to remove "inequality" between executive magistrates and judicial magistrates and put in place adequate infrastructure and logistics support.

Saying that he might even be arrested for making such statements, he called on the executive officials to go on a work stoppage from November 1.

Bangladesh Administrative Service Association's President Abu Md Moniruzzaman Khan, who was the chief guest at the seminar, tried to stop him but in vain. He later said the association bears no link with the statement.

Sources said departmental action might be taken against Rokon for violating the code of conduct for administrative officials.

3 criminals

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their previous remand of seven days, divulged information about high-profile political leaders -- who they claimed to have been their 'godfathers'.

They also said that they had carried out criminal activities without any major difficulty under the protection of a number of ward commissioners and lawmakers.

They told the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) interrogators that most wanted dreaded criminal Kala Jahangir had strong ties with Hawa Bhaban.

A top CID official seeking anonymity said the task force would now try to detect their godfathers. "If any solid information about their link to the godfathers is found, the godfathers will be brought to justice."

Sources said the interrogators would also try to glean information from the criminals about how the top criminals, now hiding in India, and their operatives are carrying out their activities in Bangladesh.

Habibur Rahman Taj was the second-in-command of Kala Jahangir and the areas of Mirpur, Pallabi and Kafrul were under his control. Ibrahim and Lambu Selim used to control Mohakhali and Gulshan areas.

Police said there are over 60 cases including murders pending against the three criminals.

Task force

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The foray into the Housing Bhaban came a day after another team of the task force visited and camped at Nagar Bhaban of Dhaka City Corporation.

Abdul Quayum, chairman of the National Housing Authority said, "The task force members will scrutinise service rules as well as how to improve the department's services for the city-dwellers. They will also monitor if there is any irregularity."

On Monday, the DCC came under the task force's supervision as part of the caretaker government's drive against institutionalised corruption in the second phase of the ongoing anti-graft campaign.

DU dormitories

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showing their identity cards and signing the register books.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Hall Provost Prof Mahtulul Islam said about 100 students returned to the dormitory till yesterday afternoon. He hoped that most students would get back in a day or two.

The number of female students returning to dormitories is less than male students.

Vice-Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz visited different dormitories to observe the situation yesterday. While talking to the journalists, he hoped that students would return to the dormitories soon. He said the academic activities of the university would resume on the scheduled date.

He said the students should not worry about harassment by the law enforcement agencies as the government gave assurance of a hassle-free environment.

BPC stares

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Last year the BPC incurred a loss of around 500 million dollars after the government deliberately kept local prices low in order to control soaring inflation.

Inflation hit a 12-year high of 10.12 percent in August this year, prompting the government to delay price hikes despite pressures from the multilateral aid agencies.

Bangladesh imported 3.8 million tonnes of mostly refined oil last year at a cost of over two billion dollars. The BPC said the fuel import cost this year might hit three billion dollars, or about 18 percent of the country's annual import bill.

Hatirjheel

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At the meeting, he also directed Rajuk officials not to approve any new structures in the area. From now on, things will be done keeping in view the vital project, he noted.

Officials of Rajuk and LGED said the storm retention pond near Sonargaon Hotel will be a 5,03,904-square metre one.

The LGED will build a 11 km road on both sides of the canals. It will also build a 320-metre connecting bridge between the two roads, a 250-metre overpass and a 14-km-long walkway.

Wasa will build a 6.8-km storm sewerage line, two km pipe drain, four km main sewerage line and two lift stations to drain out water.

Income tax

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compared to the figure of last fiscal year.

Until September 30, the NBR has collected Tk 3,104 crore in VAT and supplementary duty, while the amount was nearly Tk 2,700 crore in last fiscal year, said an official.

According to official figures, collection of customs duty rose by nearly 14.7 percent to Tk 4,030 crore against Tk 3,400 crore in the corresponding period last fiscal year.

Hospital lift falls

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and she had to undergo an emergency caesarean section to have the baby delivered more than a month early. The normal expected delivery date was on November 27.

Since there was no other elevator in working condition, the panic-stricken and first time mother-to-be, Afroza Begum, 20, had to climb back up the stairs on to the 8th floor where the doctors rushed her for the caesarean. Afroza had come to see Dr Shirin Akhter that day for a routine checkup and took the elevator to get to the level where she would undergo an ultrasound diagnosis.

Fortunately, the delivery of the baby was successful and the mother was recovering well. The premature baby, however, had to be admitted to the paediatric unit with severe breathing problems, said Anwara Begum, Afroza's mother-in-law.

Anwara added that following the accident, her son, the baby's father who is a driver by profession, had to spend around Tk 12,000 on medicines for both the baby and the mother.

Among others in the elevator, the seven-day-old infant, who was just released from the hospital that day, fell unconscious and Razia Akhter, a nurse at the labour ward of the hospital, sustained bone fracture in her foot.

Everybody else including the liftman suffered more than a few cuts and bruises and some even had their teeth broken. Liftman Anwar Hossain joined work yesterday after being released from the hospital.

Many hospital staff and visitors complained that elevator trouble or accidents are not new at BSMMU.

"Although the elevator was fixed in the afternoon, I dare not to use it. If you are in it, you will also tremble in fear," said Abu Sayeed, an eye-witness of the incident and an attendant of a patient.

"We come here to get better, not to get worse," he said adding that an elevator or two in the hospital always remain out of order, causing long lines in front of the working

Judicial power

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said a number of admin cadres.

"They are happy that the government is considering their demands," said a district admin official seeking anonymity.

The law adviser said since a new building cannot be constructed overnight, there would be some accommodation problems in the judicial magistracy. But the government will soon take steps to ensure the executive magistrates do not face any difficulties.

"If necessary, we will rent houses," he added.

Asked whether any amendment would be brought before November 1, the date for the separation to take effect, Mainul said: "Separation of the judiciary is a continuous process. After November 1, more changes might need to be made."

The law adviser noted that now is a favourable time for implementing the separation since the government can easily formulate necessary laws during the state of emergency.

Secretaries of the cabinet, law and parliament affairs, housing and public works, establishment and finance ministries attended the inter-ministerial meeting, said sources.

The association backed off its demand for deferment of the separation after the adviser assured them of taking care of their grievances.

SCBA on separation

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long-cherished aspiration is going to be materialised by separating the judiciary, such controversy is unfortunate," Barrister Amir said.

He noted that the judiciary is being separated to ensure justice and good governance for the people, as the people are the sole authority of the republic.

Barrister Amir said if the administrative cadre officers engaged in judicial functions felt that terms and conditions of their services were being affected through separation of the judiciary, they could move to the High Court for a redress, and he is ready to move their case.

He said barring the judicial functions, executive magistrates would be able to exercise their all other powers in areas like operating mobile courts, leading eviction drives, maintaining law and order during examinations, preventing public nuisance.

These are all executive powers, but they will be barred from dealing with any cognisable offence, which falls under jurisdiction of the judicial magistrates.

Replying to a question, he viewed that said since the Supreme Court has no separate secretariat at the moment, the law ministry has to process appointments, transfers and postings of judicial magistrates with the approval of the Supreme Court during this transitional period.

ones and wasting people's time.

One of the teaching staff at BSMMU said seeking anonymity, "This is not the first time a lift fell down. It happened before and a liftman was almost paralysed [after the accident]. But the authorities did not take any measure. The falling down of elevator is a sign of absolute mismanagement in this hospital."

Dr Mizanur Rahman Khan, assistant superintendent of BSMMU hospital, told The Daily Star that the university authorities have no control over the maintenance of equipment such as the elevators -- the Public Works Department (PWD) is responsible for the maintenance of elevators inside the hospital.

"It is very unfortunate that the PWD is still overseeing the maintenance and this matter should be addressed by the management," he added.

Prof Tahir, vice chancellor of BSMMU, said since the infrastructure at BSMMU has not been developed fully yet, the PWD is still handling the maintenance.

"We do not have an engineering department. Neither do we have the funds and posts for such operations. Besides, the lifts have been in operation for the last 30 to 40 years. As the administration is multidisciplinary, there are many problems here," he explained.

He has informed the health secretary of the matter and they would soon hold a meeting with the chief engineer of PWD, he added.

WB president

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exchange views with him on various socio-economic issues.

The WB president may also visit some NGO projects and government-run development projects being implemented with the bank's assistance.

Ahead of the WB chief's visit, the bank's local resident mission will organise a workshop at the NEC building of the Planning Commission on October 29. Senior government officials of the finance and planning ministry will take part in the workshop.

The workshop is likely to deal with issues related to achievements under the poverty reduction strategy scheme funded by the WB in Bangladesh.

They did little

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would ensure justice and people's rights.

BNP's expelled secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan also congratulated the interim administration for completing the incomplete tasks.

"BNP formed a committee to separate the judiciary after 2001 elections but could not finish the tasks," Bhuiyan told reporters at his Gulshan residence.

He said protests by some administration cadre officials were not right and added that they should abide by the Supreme Court's decision.

Delwar said they would take decision on sitting in dialogue with the Election Commission after getting invitation and seeing the agenda.

He reiterated that the BNP is united under the leadership of Khaleida Zia and dissident leaders must have to follow the party constitution if they want to return.

Replying to a question, Bhuiyan said reforms and unity have no alternative to making the BNP strong. "Unity in the party is a must to win the next election... But we did not receive any formal proposal," said the expelled BNP leader.

Mufti Hannan

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The IO prayed for a 14-day remand for Hannan saying he needs to be interrogated to gather more information about the attack and his cohorts.

With this 10-day remand, Hannan, operations commander of Hujji, has been on 135 days of remand so far in several cases including the August 17, 2005 countrywide bomb blasts, the 2001 Ramna Batamul blast and the 2004 grenade attack on British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury in Sylhet.

Due to alleged political meddling, investigation into the deadly grenade attack that killed 24 and maimed over 300 made no headway during the four-party alliance government.

The present government brought the case under the monitoring cell of the home ministry and gave it priority to its investigation. The government appointed new investigators who have been focusing their attention on the Afghan war veterans since they might have a link with the attack.

Inspector General of Police Nur Mohammad recently said the charge sheet of the case is almost finalised and it would be submitted soon.

The four-party alliance government top tiers allegedly managed to manipulate the investigation to meet their own political ends.

The government's stance influenced the then investigators of the case enough to weave a story. They also attempted to feed the public the story the confessional statement made by a petty criminal Joj Miah.

Joj Miah's weak statement drew media criticisms, finally making it appear as blatantly merit-less, and he himself turned out to be a creation of the police department's fancy, when his sister divulged to the media soon after his arrest that CID had been paying Joj Miah's family Tk 2,500 a month for upkeep since the arrest.

Munshi Anwarul

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during his stint at the forest department, he accumulated wealth to the tune of Tk 2.9 crore in his name and in the names of his wife, sons and relatives from 1996 to 2007.

During scrutiny of the wealth statement he handed in to the ACC, he was also found to have concealed information on property worth about Tk 83 lakh, added the plaintiff.

Anwar, now behind bars, submitted his wealth statement to the commission through the jail authorities on June 14 following an ACC notice to that end.

EC talks

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local-body polls, like reorganising the party and selecting candidates.

The AL leader urged his party leaders and workers to help the authorities concerned in preparing the voter list.

Ashraf said the AL would formally propose Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed for holding political dialogue with the parties as there is no scope for such talks with the EC.

He hoped that the chief adviser would respond positively to their proposal, adding that other political parties have also lent their support to the idea.

As to Law Adviser Mainul Hossain's dismissal of such dialogue with the government, Ashraf said they would place their proposal to the chief adviser, not to him.

He said a 16-member committee, headed by AL presidium member Tofail Ahmed, would coordinate and place to the EC the reform proposals of the AL-led 14-party combine.

The committee will also go through the EC's draft reform proposals and pass on their views to the commission, he added.

The committee will sit tomorrow at the detained AL President Sheikh Hasina's political office at Dhanmondi at 11:00am with Tofail Ahmed in the chair.

Yangon

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crisis is Myanmar's "internal matter".

On October 20, US President George W Bush urged India and China to do more to put pressure on Myanmar's military rulers in an effort to end repression of democracy supporters.

"I ask other countries to review their own laws and policies, especially Burma's closest neighbours, China, India, and others in the region," Bush said.

Gambari, who is on a mission to coordinate efforts among key governments in Asia to help resolve the crisis, has already held discussions with officials of Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Gambari is scheduled to go to Myanmar next month for another round of talks with the junta and the opposition seeking a democratic set-up.

He met the junta leaders in Myanmar in September after troops opened fire on peaceful protests in Yangon.

BSF

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Bangladeshi cattle traders as they approached main pillar no. 345 on the border, killing Manjur on the spot.

BSF later dragged the body into Indian territory, they added.

BDR strongly protested the killing and urged the BSF to return the body.

Laden urges Iraqi insurgents to unite

AP, Baghdad

Osama bin Laden scolded his al-Qaeda followers in Iraq and other insurgents, saying they have "been lax" for failing to overcome fanatical tribal loyalties and unite in the fight against US troops.

The message of his new audio-tape Monday reflected the growing disarray among Iraq's Sunni Arab insurgents and bin Laden's client group in the country, both of which are facing heavy US military pressure and an uprising among Sunni tribesmen.

In the brief tape played on Al-Jazeera television, the terrorist leader urged militants to "beware of division... The Muslim world is waiting for you to gather under one banner."

He used the word "ta'assub" "fanaticism" to chastise insurgents for putting their allegiance to tribe or radical organisation above the larger fight to overcome American forces.

While the authenticity of the tape could not be verified immediately, the voice resembled that of bin Laden in previous messages. US officials in Washington said analysts were still studying the tape. Al-Jazeera did not say how it got the tape, which was bin Laden's third this year.

"My Mujahideen brothers in Iraq, you are a people worthy of praise and flattery. You've done well to carry out a glorious duty by fighting the enemy. But some of you have lagged behind in carrying out another glorious duty, which is to unite as one as God wants," bin Laden said.

He warned followers "against hypocritical enemies who are infiltrating your ranks to create sedition among Mujahideen groups."

Anthony Cordesman, a terror analyst for the Washington-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies, said bin Laden's underlying message appeared to be aimed at al-Qaeda in Iraq "that al-Qaeda needs to be less arrogant and moderate its conduct." Cordesman pointed to al-Qaeda in Iraq's attempts to impose Taliban-like Islamic laws in some areas it controlled as well as its killings of rival tribal figures, actions that alienated some Sunni Arabs and led them to join a movement opposing al-Qaeda.

To showcase the success of that tribal alliance, the US military planned what it called a "unification parade" in Ramadi, the Anbar provincial capital, on Tuesday.

Maj Lee Peters, a military spokesman for the area, said security would be increased to protect the celebration. It was to include at least 200 Sunni sheiks and hundreds of other dignitaries to commemorate Sheikh Abdul-Sattar Abu Risha, the founder of the anti-al-Qaeda group who was assassinated by a bomb Sept. 13.

Abdul-Sattar's brother, who has taken over the movement, said it was important to maintain pressure on insurgents, recalling that about 50 al-Qaeda militants marched through downtown Ramadi a year ago in a show of force.

"The people felt weak and afraid because of al-Qaeda. Now there is a feeling of strength," Sheikh Ahmed Abu Risha told The Associated Press at his heavily guarded compound as a band practiced for the parade in the backyard. "This year I want to have a good parade to show that we support the law."

The US military, meanwhile, kept up pressure on Shia Muslim militants as well.

Baghdad police said American helicopters strafed a building in the capital's Sadr City district, wounding a woman and her daughter, the second claim in as many days of civilian casualties from US attacks in the Shia enclave.

Iraqi officials disputed an American military claim that 49 militants were killed Sunday in a ground and air assault that targeted an Iranian-linked militia chief, insisting the number of casualties was 15 all civilians.

Aides to radical Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr condemned the raid but urged followers to abide by his orders to refrain from violence despite what it called "the crimes of the Americans."

"We call upon al-Sadr's people to show self-restraint. Their reaction should be peaceful and should not violate the order... to freeze their activities," said Falah al-Obeidi at the cleric's office in Sadr City.

Al-Sadr later issued his own statement urging his Mahdi Army militia not to harm or kill fellow Iraqis. He also appeared to call on members of Iraqi government forces to stop cooperating with the US military.

"You army and police of Iraq, don't kill an Iraqi in the name of secular laws or in the name of 'imposing the law,'" he said, using his phrase for the security crackdown in Baghdad and surrounding areas.

The US military has said repeatedly that it welcomed al-Sadr's order to his Mahdi Army fighters but pledged to continue its crack-

down against what it says are breakaway factions that are being armed and trained by Iran.

One of those suspected faction leaders, who was accused of leading a kidnapping ring, was the target of Sunday's raid. The military said he was not killed or captured.

Other Shia neighbourhoods in Baghdad were rattled by bombs Monday as at least 50 people were killed or found dead nationwide, according to police, hospital and morgue officials.

The figure included 25 bullet-riddled bodies, some decapitated, in a mass grave at Nadhum village in the mainly Sunni region around Lake Tharthar northwest of the capital. Police said the victims appeared to have been killed within the past three months. Overall, the number of deadly attacks has dropped recently, with US and Iraqi military officials citing the influx of soldiers ordered in by President Bush. The full contingent of 30,000 reinforcements has been operating since mid-June.

In the latest reported US strike, witnesses and police said attack helicopters opened fire before dawn Monday on a duplex in Sadr City that housed a family in one half and a store selling motor oil in the other. The US military said it was looking into the report.

Abdul Ridha Jassim said his wife, 42-year-old Nuriyah Jabbar, and 4-year-old daughter Hiba were seriously wounded.

"My poor wife and daughter. They didn't commit any sin or mistake to suffer such serious wounds," he said. "Who will take care and look after us. I feel a deep misery."

The military said the US ground and air assault in Sadr City on Sunday left "an estimated 49 criminals" dead, which would be one of the highest tolls for a single operation since Bush declared an end to active combat in 2003.