

Turkey attacks PKK rebels in northern Iraq

AFP, Undated

Turkey made good on its threat to strike Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq yesterday, saying it inflicted "heavy losses" on the armed separatist movement PKK with cross-border airstrikes and artillery.

The army said it used artillery and airstrikes against a group of "50 to 60 terrorists ... inside Iraq's borders" southeast of the Turkish town of Cukurca in Hakkari province in the mountainous Turkey-Iraq border region.

"If necessary, other army units will intervene in the region," it added.

Contacted in the Iraqi Kurdish city of Arbil, Fuad Hussein, chief of staff for Massud Barzani, the president of Iraq's Kurdish region, did not categorically confirm the strikes but said "it could be artillery shelling."

He said a ground assault by Turkish forces was not expected given the "prevailing weather conditions."

"The winter and heavy snow is not favourable for a ground assault."

Jabbar Yawar, the head of peshmarga forces in northern Iraq, said without elaborating that Turkish aircraft had been "trespassing" northern Iraqi airspace for a week.

Tensions along the Turkish-Iraqi border increased after October 21, when PKK militants ambushed a military unit, killing 12 soldiers and capturing eight. The captives were released in November.

Soon after, the Turkish government secured parliamentary approval for cross-border military operations into northern Iraq. The United States and the Iraqi government are keen to avert a large scale incursion.

Turkey, where the army continues to wield strong influence in national politics, has the second largest army in NATO after the United States with around 515,000 troops.

In recent weeks it has deployed around 100,000 soldiers along its 380-kilometre (240-mile) border with Iraq in the mainly Kurdish south-east region of Anatolia.

Saturday's operation comes days after the cabinet of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan authorised the army to carry out a cross-border operation -- a month after the green

light from parliament.

The Turkish parliament's decision last month provoked a flurry of diplomatic activity between Turkey, Iraq and the United States.

Baghdad promised to rein in the Kurdish rebels in the north of the country, and in early November President George W. Bush said the United States would provide "real-time" information on PKK movements from its satellites.

Hajj flight

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fill up each hajj flight since the very beginning of the hajj flight operations this year.

Haab leaders on the other hand, lashed back at Biman last week for the disorder and flight delays.

Biman so far flew 19,199 hajj pilgrims to Saudi Arabia and it would be able to carry about 12,000 more pilgrims, said a Biman official.

The national flag carrier has so far cancelled 12 hajj flights as private hajj agencies could not send sufficient number of pilgrims for each flight. The cancelled flights could have carried a total of 4,889 pilgrims to Saudi Arabia.

Haab Secretary General Maulana Eyaqub Sharafat brushed aside Biman's allegation and said, "It's not true what the Biman authorities have claimed. We, in fact, are not getting enough seats for our intended hajjis."

Highly criticising Haab, officials of Biman Bangladesh Airlines told The Daily Star that even after 18 days into the hajj flights, the private hajj agencies have failed to provide sufficient number of pilgrims.

"About 60 seats in three hajj flights remained vacant even yesterday," said a Biman official last night.

Haab leaders said Biman was responsible for the present situation as they fixed the hajj flight schedule without discussing with the Haab.

TECHNICAL GLITCHES ON DC10-30
Technical glitches in the fuel pump of a DC10-30 of Biman Bangladesh Airlines on Friday early morning forced it to return to Zia International Airport after it took off for Jeddah, Biman sources said.

There were about 314 passengers on board including 31 hajj pilgrims. The aircraft was on the skyline of Bhupul, India when the fault was detected, but the fault was not serious in nature and was not a threat to its passengers, added a Biman official.

The aircraft flew for Jeddah again at 1:00pm the same day after getting the problem fixed.

War criminals

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so that people can easily recognise them.

National Committee on Realising Demands of Freedom Fighters and Celebration of Freedom Fighters Day marked the day with elaborate programmes that included wreath-laying at the graves of martyred freedom fighters at Mirpur and at Shikha Chirantan at Suhrawardy Uddan.

Besides, rallies, cultural programmes and discussion meetings were held in the city and at district and upazila levels to observe the day which came against the backdrop of recent controversial statements of Jamaat-e-Islami leaders and sympathisers in which they denied outright the very existence of any war criminals in the country.

REUNION OF FREEDOM FIGHTERS
Freedom fighters at a reunion yesterday at National Press Club auditorium called on the government to bring the war criminals to justice.

Speaking at the get-together as chief guest, Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain said war criminals must be tried under the law of the land. He said nobody will oppose the trial as there is no debate or split opinion over the issue.

It is very unfortunate and disgraceful that the nation could not yet show proper respect to her brave sons and their family members who sacrificed their lives for the sake of the country, he said.

Dr Kamal emphasised building a prosperous and corruption-free Bangladesh in line with the spirit of the glorious liberation war.

Rhythm Cultural Society arranged the get-together to honour the war heroes and their family members.

WORKERS PARTY OF BANGLADESH

Workers Party also demanded trial of the war criminals, saying forgiveness cannot be extended to those who killed the country's brave sons during the liberation war.

"War criminals can be tried under the existing law of the country," said Rashed Khan Menon, Workers Party president, at a discussion meeting held at Shaheed Asad auditorium, adding the country's sovereignty will be endangered if the war criminals are not brought to justice.

"Liberation war is our highest

achievement; those who are working against the spirit of our liberation war must be defeated like they had been in 1971," said Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haq Inu at the meeting.

COMMITTEE ON REALISING DEMANDS OF FREEDOM FIGHTERS
The National Committee on Realising Demands of Freedom Fighters and Celebration of Freedom Fighters Day yesterday paid rich tribute to the liberation war heroes, placing wreaths at the freedom fighters' graves at Mirpur in Dhaka and at Shikha Chirantan at Suhrawardy Uddan.

The committee went to Shikha Chirantan with a procession from Engineers Institute.

Sector commander during the liberation war and former army chief Maj Gen (ret) KM Shafiqullah Bir Uttam, Awami League leaders Tofail Ahmed, Sajeda Chowdhury, sector commander Lt Col (ret) Abu Osman Chowdhury, Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon, ISD President Hasanul Haq Inu, among others, were present at the time.

Saifur-led BNP

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the court's order, EC had to postpone its proposed talks.

"We will follow the court's decision, whatever it is" Sohul said adding that the EC was comfortable with issue being settled by the court.

The EC has been in a dilemma in inviting BNP to the electoral talks, since both the factions - one led by M Saifur Rahman and the other by Khaleda Zia appointed Khondaker Delwar Hossain - have been desperately trying to convince the EC to recognise their own faction.

The EC on November 5 invited the Saifur-led BNP faction to electoral reform talks though a formal letter. The Delwar led BNP faction then challenged the EC's letter in the High Court.

Election Commissioner Schul also informed that EC at a meeting yesterday discussed the draft of rules on voter enlisting. "We will sit down again to finalise the rules," he added.

The meeting however did not discuss the draft ordinance on appointment of the election commissioner.

"The chief election commissioner himself drafted the ordinance to enact a law on appointment of the election commissioner," Sohul informed.

FBCCI

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Talking to reporters after the AGM, FBCCI Director Golam Dastagir Gazi said the election should be held immediately to bring back democracy into the FBCCI.

"We have no objection if an administrator is appointed," he said, adding that the administrator's responsibility will be to complete the election as soon as possible.

FBCCI President Mir Nasir Hossain said that after December 6, the commerce ministry would take a decision on the next step. "We are mentally prepared to leave," he said, adding, "We do not seek any further time."

The extended tenure of the present FBCCI executive committee ends on December 6.

Syed Moazzem Hossain, president of Bangladesh Indenting Association, commented that changes in the FBCCI after the present body's tenure expires on Dec 6, will be manifold like Jan 11's political changes in the country has been.

Anwar Hossain, president of Bangladesh Jewellery Manufacturers and Exporters Association, criticised the body saying that at different seminars and discussions key FBCCI officials still referred to Anwar-UI-Alam Chowdhury Parvez as president of the BGMEA whereas its own arbitration committee had dropped the BGMEA voters from the FBCCI voter list on accusations that the Parvez-led committee was illegal.

He said FBCCI's words were contradictory to its own decisions. About 350 general members, along with executive committee members, attended the AGM, presided over by FBCCI President Mir Nasir Hossain.

The apex trade body has been in trouble since BGMEA filed a case against the body for dropping five BGMEA members from the FBCCI voters' list.

The High Court has now suspended the FBCCI election till December 4.

Elections were earlier scheduled for August 4. On July 13, a Ministry of Commerce handout announced that loan defaulters, tax evaders and persons convicted of crimes, corruption and moral turpitude will not be eligible to contest the FBCCI election within five years of their conviction.

FBCCI then had to hold an EGM to insert these statutes into its own constitution before the next polls. To do this they sought an extension from the commerce ministry, which was granted on July 13.

Now FBCCI awaits the HC rule on its election process on Dec 4.

According to FBCCI constitution, an executive committee is elected for a two-year term and relieved after the tenure. However, if the biennial election is not held in due time because of "Acts of God" (meaning natural disasters or the like), the executive committee can, with permission from its board, apply to the commerce ministry for an extension of its tenure to hold elections.

The constitution also holds that elections should be completed within the extended timeframe and if the executive committee fails to do so, the committee will have to be relieved at the end of the extension period.

In the past the government has intervened in the FBCCI committee twice. In 1982, the then Sylhet Chamber of Commerce and Industry President MA Munir was appointed administrator, while in 1989, former FBCCI president Akhteruzzaman Chowdhury Babu was appointed administrator of FBCCI.

CA
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He said assistance from the relief fund is also being provided for other sectors.

"Your combined efforts will help the government provide relief for the affected people and activate their economic activities," he told the contributors.

The CA said the government has started rehabilitation work in various sectors, including agriculture, domestic animals and infrastructure.

He mentioned about Tk 130 crore soft loan for small traders, fishermen, livestock and poultry farmers, which will be distributed by micro-finance providing organisations through PKSE.

The CA said he had talked to the Bangladesh Bank governor and asked him to hold meetings with bankers to provide quick loans for the affected people for their faster rehabilitation. "And the work is getting accelerated following the bankers' meetings with the bankers."

He said loans and grants will be given to the affected farmers, fisherman and small traders for their rehabilitation.

Those donated to the relief fund yesterday include Agriculture Secretary Md Nurul Amin, Kafco CEO M Qaiser Jamal, Supreme Court Registrar Ikhtedar Ahmed, Principal of Khulna Medical College Jalal Ahmed, Managing Director of Citibank NA Mamun Rashid, President of the Association of Cargo Agents of Bangladesh Captain Saifur Rahman, Managing Director of Hamdard Hakim Md Yusuf Harun Bhuiyan and Vice-President of Bangladesh Scientific Equipment Traders' Association Md Nasiruddin.

CHT accord

FROM PAGE 1

When contacted, Shantu Larma said, "No comment now. I will tell you when time comes."

The leaders said vital clauses of the accord still remained unimplemented, breeding discontent and frustration among the CHT people, mostly indigenous.

On condition of anonymity, PCJSS leaders alleged that the previous alliance government had no intention to execute the accord. So, instead of taking any steps in this regard, it had violated the pact in various ways.

Noting that the main problem of the CHT concerns land, the leaders said the Land Commission has been formed to solve the complicated land disputes but it still remains dysfunctional. And land problem is getting more and more complicated, they added.

Such a situation is also affecting relationship between the indigenous and Bangla-speaking people in the CHT, the leaders said.

India allows

FROM PAGE 1

Mukherjee said India proposed to pay for the rehabilitation of people in 10 badly affected villages chosen by the Bangladesh government.

He added the government would have to execute the plan but India would pay whatever is required including repairing and building roads and cyclone shelters.

The external affairs ministers, a Bengali, arrived early yesterday morning in an Indian Air Force plane, carrying more than 36 tonnes of relief goods, including ready-to-eat meals, milk powder, medicines, water filters and blankets.

He visited two of the worst cyclone-hit areas, Sharonkhola and Patharghata, after he met Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed and the foreign adviser in Dhaka. Communications Adviser Maj Gen (ret) MA Matin accompanied Mukherjee.

MUKHERJEE
DISTRIBUTES RELIEF
As part of his daylong tour of Bangladesh, Pranab Mukherjee distributed relief goods among the cyclone-hit people at Rayenda in Sharonkhola upazila yesterday, UNB reports.

A helicopter of Bangladesh Air Force carrying Mukherjee from the capital landed at Rayenda helipad at 3:40pm. He went to an army camp at Rayenda School where local army commander Lieutenant Colonel Sayeed Siddiqui briefed him about the losses caused by cyclone Sidr in the district.

The Indian minister visited the affected areas in Rayenda and distributed relief goods among the victims.

Mukherjee said, "I have come here to convey sympathy to the cyclone-affected people on behalf of my government."

He expressed hope that the affected people would be able to overcome the losses caused by cyclone Sidr. He also visited an army-run water plant at Rayenda.

Mukherjee left for Dhaka at 4:08pm, concluding his relief mission.

Communications Adviser MA Matin, Foreign Secretary Mohammad Towhid Hossain, Indian High Commissioner in Bangladesh Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty and Jessor GOC Maj Gen Rafiqul Islam were present during the Indian minister's visit.

Asked when the special VGF programme that was originally scheduled to begin yesterday in 12 coastal districts would start, Joint Secretary Shaiful Islam could not give any date.

He said, "We've started listing the names of victims and the job will take some more time to be completed."

Higher education

FROM PAGE 1

vying for admission this year against only 24,051 seats. Obviously, about 2.25 lakh students may have to try at the private universities or go abroad. Some may have to get engaged in professional work or remain unemployed, ending their academic career.

The 54 private universities in the country can accommodate only 11,000 students while most private universities allegedly do not impart quality education.

Many parents and students are not eager about the private universities as tuition fees and other charges there are much higher. There are also allegations that a few private universities sell certificates of honours and master degrees in different subjects.

Under the circumstances, the caretaker government is now considering enacting a new private university act to eliminate such irregularities and ensure sound environment for higher education.

After getting proof of allegations of selling certificates, the UGC has already declared 56 branches of foreign universities illegal and banned 100 outer campuses of different private universities and 40 medical colleges.

Meanwhile, many HSC-qualified students from rich families intend to study at foreign universities, especially in the US, the UK, Canada, Malaysia, India and different European countries.

Capitalising on this, a number of fake consultancy firms have sprung up and trapped many students.

Academics, however, said they do not think that all these measures of the caretaker government will benefit the nation if seats at the good educational institutions in the country are not increased.

Public universities like those in

want full execution of the accord. All pro-peace treaty forces have to unite for this."

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Voter registration

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Yesterday, the technical part of DCC voter listing started in Kafrul, Airport, Uttara, Cantonment, Khilkhet, Sabujbagh, Motijheel, Paltan, Jatrabari, Shyampur, Sutrapur, Kotwali, Pallabi, Mohammadpur, Adabar, Dhanmondi, New Market, Lalbagh, Khilgaon, Ramna, Shahbagh and Tejgaon industrial areas.

It will start in Hajiribagh, Mirpur, Badda and Shah Ali areas on December 9, 11, 26 and 29 while Gulshan and Tejgaon on January 2 and 16.

According to EC plan, the task of DCC voter listing will be completed by January 31, 2008 and the month of February will be needed for correcting the list.

As per the roadmap announced by the EC on July 15, the country-wide task of preparing voter list with photos will be finalised by October next year.

Saifur offers

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standing committee member loyal to Saifur, told The Daily Star, "They are old comrades in the party, so they can talk to each other... I hope Delwar Hossain will respond positively, which will be helpful for strengthening the party's unity."

BNP sources close to Delwar said Saifur was able to catch their leader on the phone after repeated attempts since the morning. "Delwar finally received Saifur's call in the afternoon," a source told The Daily Star.

Saifur called his rival in the party around 4:15pm and talked for one and a half hours, sources said, adding that he reiterated their stand to accept all the decisions of Khaleda regarding the party leadership when she gets released.

"Holding a post in the party is not an important matter at this moment. We agree on the question of unity and respect Khaleda Zia's decision in this regard," a BNP leader quoted Saifur as telling Delwar over telephone.

The BNP source said Delwar also said he has no reservations about unity in the party but took time to get Khaleda's opinion.

"I will try to get the chairperson's response. You should also try to contact her," Delwar told Saifur.

Both the factions held separate meetings and discussed the matter with their leaders last night.

Saifur, the senior-most leader of BNP, was appointed acting chairman at a controversial meeting of the party's National Standing Committee at their Gulshan residence. The meeting also appointed Maj (ret) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed acting secretary general of the party.

The pro-Khaleda faction outright rejected the decisions, saying that according to the party constitution, only the chairperson is authorised to call such a meeting.

Dr RA Gani, one of the senior members of the standing committee present in that meeting, later said it was not a formal meeting, so it had no legitimacy to change the party leadership.

Delwar also alleged that he was asked to join the meeting and was also threatened with death to leave his post. He could not attend the meeting due to illness.

Musharraf

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ally in its "war on terror", said that Washington should blame its own inconsistent policies for failing to achieve the desired results in this war.

"If there's a failure, it's not Pakistan's failure," the president replied when asked why his government failed to root out al-Qaeda and Taliban militants from the tribal region.

Pakistan, he said, had been struggling against radicalism and terrorism for 30 years.

"We are fighting terrorism everywhere. We have gone through 30 years of turmoil. We cooperate very well. So if there's a failure, it's not Pakistan's failure. Please don't accuse us."

The US, he said, turned a blind eye to terrorism until September 11, 2001. "We handled the situation alone for 12 years," he added.

Musharraf, however, refused to say what he would do with al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden if bin Laden was captured in Pakistan.

On whether he would enter into a power-sharing arrangement with Pakistan Peoples Party chairperson Benazir Bhutto, Musharraf said: "I'm not into any deal with anyone. We are in a stage where we have to have free, fair and transparent elections. We have to see, after the election, how things develop."

He insisted that measures like the imposition of emergency were taken in response to the "opposition's tactics".

"The opposition, have all along these five years tried to destabilise me and the government. You have to understand... we don't want agitation here... Agitation means breaking down everything, burning things. That cannot be allowed."

Musharraf was firm that he would not allow political protests even after withdrawing some of the restrictions imposed on November 3. "So, therefore, if anyone is trying to do that, we will stop it. That is the way it is in Pakistan."

BIDS conference

FROM PAGE 16

If development can be made to succeed in Bangladesh, there can be little doubt that it can be made to succeed anywhere else. It is in this sense that Bangladesh is the test case for development."

Faaland will assess how Bangladesh has performed in the test.

Prof AR Khan, professor emeritus of the University of California, Riverside, will possibly have a critical look at the industrialization, which he says lacks growth of broad-based diversification. He argues that an easy access to foreign exchange resources from exports to protected markets and from remittances of workers exacerbated by large foreign aid flows closely resemble the phenomenon of 'resource curse' popularly known as the 'Dutch disease'.

Rizwanul Islam and Zaidi Sattar will examine the macro scenario of growth, savings, investment and trade policy.

Prof Rehman Sobhan and Prof Arthur MacEwan of University of Massachusetts will speak on the implications of poverty and the consequences of ignoring the inequality and income distribution aspect.

McEwan will argue that empowerment of the people is not simply a product of income, it depends on a complex of social and political arrangements - the social capital, social mobilization, collective organization and decision making, and the strengthening of communities.

The conceptual issues will be followed by concrete data based presentation on the implications of inequality in access to education and employment by Dr Rushdan Islam Rahman, research director of BIDS. Challenges faced by agriculture and rural development will be examined by Dr Mahabub Hossain.

Prof Nurul Islam, emeritus fellow of IFPRI, will deliver his keynote speech on institutions for policy making for development.

EU-Iran nuke talks

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that specific period of time."

He was alluding to advances in enrichment technology Iran has set up and is running 3,000 enriching machines, or centrifuges, in the space of a year. That's 10 times the amount it had when the Security Council passed its first set of sanctions in December 2006. While Iran insists it has a right to peaceful use of enrichment to generate power, fears that the activity could be misused to create the fissile core of nuclear warheads have resulted in two sets of sanctions in the past 12 months.

US criticism of Iran goes beyond the nuclear issue, with Washington alluding that Tehran foments terrorism in the region, but Jalili was dismissive of the "various noise by the Americans," adding: "We don't pay much attention to them."

The council first imposed sanctions Dec. 23, ordering all countries to stop supplying Iran with materials and technology that could contribute to its nuclear and missile programmes, and freeze assets of 10 key Iranian companies and 12 individuals related to the programmes.