

Israel rules out Hamas truce talks amid 'war'

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel and Hamas yesterday both ruled out any truce talks amid what Prime Minister Ehud Olmert described as a "real war" between the army and Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip.

"There is no other way to describe what's happening there other than real war between the army and the terror groups," Olmert said at the weekly Israeli cabinet meeting.

"This war will continue, all the while taking precautions to avoid a humanitarian crisis that could hurt civilians who are not involved at all in terror."

Olmert said Israel would not

hold truce talks with Hamas, a group that violently seized control of Gaza in June and does not recognise Israel's right to exist.

"The state of Israel has no interest in holding negotiations with groups that do not recognise the Quartet's basic conditions," Olmert said, referring to the international Quartet for Middle East peace.

The Quartet has demanded that Hamas renounce violence, recognise Israel and agree to past peace deals, steps which the Islamist movement has refused to take.

Hamas also said it would not hold any ceasefire talks unless Israel stopped its military operations, which have killed at least 20 militants over the past week in

Gaza as armed groups continued to fire rockets and mortars into Israel.

"It's too early to talk about the truce as long as the aggression continues against the Palestinian people... the Palestinian people have a right to continue resistance," said Hamas spokesman Ismail Radwan.

Since it seized power in Gaza, routing forces loyal to moderate Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas, Hamas has repeatedly said that it could consider a truce if Israel first stops its operations against militants in Gaza.

On Saturday Ahmed Yusef, a political adviser to the premier in the dismissed Hamas-led cabinet

of Ismail Haniya, again said as much in an interview with the Palestinian Maan news agency.

"We are ready to reach a truce with Israel... on the condition that the siege around Gaza is lifted and border crossings are open," he said, adding that Israel must also stop "assassinations" and arresting militants.

His statements came several days after Israel killed the head of the armed wing of the radical Islamic Jihad group, the most senior Palestinian militant killed in months. Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak said on Sunday that any talk of a truce from the Palestinian side was because of the effectiveness of Israeli strikes in the territory.

Five dead in US snow storm

AFP, Washington

A snow storm packing strong winds caused flight delays and closed highways across the central United States, leaving at least five dead in road accidents, US media reported on Sunday.

The National Weather Service warned travel conditions had deteriorated at the weekend in Midwestern states stretching from northern Missouri to Michigan due to snow and high wind.

"A combination of heavy snow, strong winds and bitter windchills will make any form of travel dangerous if not impossible in some areas," the service said early Sunday in a warning for parts of Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota.

The harsh weather posed a potential hazard for travellers ahead of the Christmas holiday Tuesday and for presidential candidates campaigning in the state of Iowa, which on January 3 holds the first contest for each party's nomination race.



Supporters of Thailand's democrat party celebrate election result on one of their party seat at the party's headquarter in Bangkok yesterday. Counting of the votes has started through out Thailand at the end of the voting while unofficial results are coming up from different constituencies.

3 Western leaders visit Kabul

AP, Kabul

Leaders of France, Australia and Italy travelled to Afghanistan over the weekend to meet with President Hamid Karzai and visit troops stationed in the conflict-ridden country.

Nicolas Sarkozy, the first French president to visit Afghanistan, signalled that French troops would not pull out of the country anytime soon. He told Karzai that France has a long-term political and military interest in Afghanistan, Karzai's office said in a statement.

"We did not want to give the signal of a withdrawal, which

would have been a detestable signal at a time when we see the ravages that terrorism can do to the world," Sarkozy said on France-Info radio.

France announced its decision a year ago to withdraw 200 elite Special Forces, raising questions about whether the pullout would precede a larger withdrawal.

French television quoted the president as suggesting that more combat instructors could be sent to Afghanistan, creating a "qualitative" but not a "quantitative" increase. There are currently some 1,300 French troops in Afghanistan.

Russian rocket delivers Christmas presents to space station

AFP, Moscow

A Russian Progress spacecraft, blasted off Sunday from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan delivering vital supplies, as well as presents and goodies for Christmas and New Year's, to the International Space Station.

The Progress M-62 carried by a Soyuz rocket took off at 0712 GMT, a spokesman for ground control outside Moscow told AFP.

Saudis net 28 Qaeda men over attack plot

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi Arabia announced yesterday the arrest of 28 al-Qaeda linked suspects for planning attacks in the oil-rich kingdom, following an alleged plot to commit a "terrorist act" during the annual Muslim pilgrimage, or Hajj.

"Since December 14, 28 members of the deviant group (the term used by the Saudi authorities for al-Qaeda) have been arrested, including one foreign resident and the rest Saudi nationals," an interior ministry official said in a statement carried by the official SPA news agency.

The statement said the suspects were "linked to elements abroad and were planning criminal acts in the kingdom."

Saudi authorities, who have

been battling a wave of deadly violence waged by Islamist militants since 2003, use the term criminal acts to refer to al-Qaeda attacks.

On Friday, the interior ministry said that security forces had arrested an al-Qaeda-linked group planning a "terrorist act" during the hajj, which this year attracted about 2.5 million Muslims from across the globe.

The pan-Arab newspaper Al-Hayat reported on Saturday that seven non-Saudi Arabs had been arrested over the plot.

It said the arrests had not been announced earlier to avoid creating panic among the hundreds of thousands of pilgrims to Islam's holiest sites in and around Makkah in western Saudi Arabia.



Afghan President Hamid Karzai (L) welcomes his French counterpart Nicolas Sarkozy (C) upon his arrival in Kabul on Saturday to visit French troops. The international community cannot afford to lose the "war against terrorism" in Afghanistan, French President Nicolas Sarkozy said on a quick visit to the insurgency-hit country.

Turkey bombs Kurd rebel bases in Iraq

AP, Istanbul

Turkish warplanes bombed Kurdish rebel targets in northern Iraq on Saturday in the third confirmed cross-border offensive by Turkish forces in less than a week, the military said.

The US Embassy in Ankara said it was informed before the assault took place, but gave no further information. The United States and Iraq both have urged Turkey to avoid a major operation in the area, fearing it could destabilise what has been the calmest region in Iraq.

The bombing lasted nearly a half-hour on Saturday afternoon, and was followed by shelling from inside Turkish borders, the military said in a statement posted on its Web site. It did not say how deep into Iraqi territory the warplanes penetrated, or which areas were shelled.

Security forces in northern Iraq said the bombs fell about 75 miles northwest of Dahuk. There were no casualties reported, said Jabar Yawar, a spokesman for Kurdistan's Peshmerga security forces in northern Iraq.

Blair converts to Catholicism

AFP, London

Former British prime minister Tony Blair has become a Roman Catholic, church officials said Saturday, ending widespread speculation that he would switch to the faith of his wife and four children.

But as Catholic leaders welcomed Blair into the fold, immediate questions were raised about whether the 54-year-old had now renounced his liberal views on contentious areas like abortion, gay rights and stem-cell research.

A spokesman for the leader of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, said Blair had been "received into full communion with the Catholic Church" at a private mass on Friday night.

Tough Thai politician Thaksin's proxy

AFP, Bangkok

Fiery right-winger Samak Sundaravej openly campaigned as a proxy for deposed Thai premier Thaksin Shinawatra, and appears to have vindicated him at the ballot box more than a year after his ouster.

After the military toppled Thaksin's government in a bloodless coup, Samak rallied Thaksin's allies under the banner of the People Power Party, which exit polls showed had won the most seats in the 480-member parliament.

The military has made no secret of its dislike for Samak and the PPP, but the former Bangkok governor said he was confident that the generals would not try to stage another coup if he emerges as the winner.

Samak picked up Thaksin's mantle as a populist, vowing to bring back the still-popular former leader from his self-imposed exile and to revive the economy with the same brand of gung-ho capitalism and rural development.

A sharp-tongued right-winger and a staunch royalist, 72-year-old Samak is a bundle of contradictions -- he has hosted a light-hearted cooking show on television, but has also been linked to massacres of student protesters.

He has served in previous military governments, but railed against the current junta, which he accused of unjustly persecuting Thaksin.

"They staged a coup without reason -- because of hatred and envy," he told AFP in an interview before the election.

Iraq vows to disband Sunni groups

AP, Baghdad

Iraq's Shia-led government declared Saturday that after restive areas are calmed, it will disband Sunni groups battling Islamic extremists because it does not want them to become a separatist military force.

In Iraqi Kurdistan, Turkish warplanes bombed Kurdish rebel targets, the military said, in the third confirmed cross-border offensive by Turkish forces in less than a week.

The statement from Defence Minister Abdul-Qadir al-Obaidi was the government's most explicit declaration yet of its intent to eventually dismantle the groups backed and funded by the United States as a vital tool for reducing violence.

The militias, more than 70,000 strong and often made up of former insurgents, are known as Awakening Councils, or Concerned Local Citizens.

"We completely, absolutely reject the Awakening becoming a

third military organisation," al-Obaidi said at a news conference.

He added that the groups would also not be allowed to have any infrastructure, such as a headquarters building, that would give them long-term legitimacy.

"We absolutely reject that," al-Obaidi said.

The government has pledged to absorb about a quarter of the men into the predominantly Shia-controlled security services and military, and provide vocational training so that the rest can find jobs. Integration would also allow Sunnis to regain lost influence in the key defence and interior ministries.

"We've kicked al-Qaeda out and we don't want chaos to take their place," said Sheikh Hatem Ali, a tribal leader who helped form one of the groups in the western province of Anbar.

He added that the government should not "brazenly exploit the sacrifices of these Iraqi" fighters and "should absorb these people, not reject them and send them

away."

The government has been vague about its plans and the interior ministry has agreed to hire about 7,000 men so far on temporary contracts, and plans to hire an additional 3,000. But the ministry has neither specified the length of the contracts nor the positions the men would fill.

The Sunni irregulars have contributed to a 60 percent drop in violence in the last half of the year, along with the infusion of thousands of US troops and a six-month cease-fire by firebrand Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr.

The leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq called on militants to kill members of the councils in a new audiotape posted Saturday on the Internet. Abu Omar al-Baghdadi said militants should kill members of the militias instead of slaughtering animals to mark Eid-ul-Azha -- a four-day religious holiday for Muslims marked by the sacrifice of cows, sheep, goats and bulls. The holiday ended Saturday.

Bangladesh Film Development Corporation
Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208

Tender No. FDC/PD-Import/2007-2008/5/42 Dt. 18/12/2007

International Re-Tender for Import of Kit Chemicals (Goods)

01	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Information, Government of Bangladesh.
02	Agency	Bangladesh Film Development Corporation, BFDC.
03	Procuring entity name	Managing Director, BFDC.
04	Procuring entity district	Dhaka, Bangladesh.
05	Invitation for	Kit Chemicals.
06	Invitation for Ref. No.	FDC/PD-Import/2007-2008/5/42.
07	Date	18/12/2007.
08	Procurement method	Open tendering method (OTM).
09	Budget and source of fund	Revenue.
10	Tender package No.	1 No.
11	Tender package name	Kit Chemicals.
12	Tender publication date	19/12/2007.
13	Tender last selling date & time	16/01/2008 up to 5.00pm.
14	Tender closing date & time	17/01/2008 up to 2.00pm.
15	Tender opening date & time	17/01/2008 at 2.30pm.
16	Name & address of office(s)	
	i) Selling of tender documents	i) Cash Counter of Accounts Section, BFDC, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208.
	ii) Receiving of tender document	ii) Deputy Director (Procurement), BFDC, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208.
	iii) Opening of tender document	iii) Director (T&E), Bangladesh Film Development Corporation.
17	Eligibility of tenderer	The tenderer/local agent should have: (a) Professional capability, technical qualification & personnel, reputation, experience, equipment, financial resources. (b) Agency certificate from the manufacturer to participate in the bid (original). (c) Registration from CCI&E and Bangladesh Bank. (d) Up-to-date trade licence issued by Municipal Corporation/ Authentic Authority of Bangladesh. (e) Up-to-date Income Tax GIR/TIN certificate & VAT registration (attested).
18	Brief description of goods	Kit Chemicals.
19	Price of tender document (Tk)	Tk. 1,500/- (one thousand five hundred) only.
	Lot No.	Identification of lot
20	1 No.	Kit Chemicals
		Location
		Tender security amount (Tk)
		Completion time in weeks/months
21	Name of official inviting tender	SM Kaiser Hossain Mallick.
22	Designation of official inviting tender	Deputy Director (Procurement).
23	Address of official inviting tender	Bangladesh Film Development Corporation, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208.
24	Contact details of official inviting tender	Tel: 8120204, Fax: 88029137280
25	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders.	

GD-4641

SM Kaiser Hossain Mallick
Deputy Director (Procurement)

US troops could soon begin partial Iraq pullout: Gates

AFP, Washington

US Defence Secretary Robert Gates Friday voiced hope that US troops will soon start returning home from Iraq, saying improved security there will enable five units to pull out by July as planned.

"The situation on the ground, I think, makes it likely that General (David) Petraeus will be able to decide to bring out the first five teams by July," Gates told an end of year press conference.

"The first of those is coming out this month. My hope has been that the circumstances on the ground will continue to improve," he added.

The challenge for next year, Gates said, would be "to sustain the gains we have achieved."

There are currently about

160,000 US troops in Iraq fighting a fierce insurgency launched in the wake of the March 2003 US-led invasion.

About 30,000 extra troops were sent in during the year in a bid to quell the violence as part of a controversial "surge" strategy laid out by President George W. Bush and the US commander in Iraq, General Petraeus.

According to a Pentagon report released on Tuesday, the surge has been working, with US forces achieving "significant security progress" in Iraq over the past three months with the number of attacks down 62 percent.

"Improved security is beginning to achieve momentum that, if maintained, may lead to sustained stability," it said.



Uzbek voters stand in a line before casting their vote at a polling station in Tashkent yesterday. Voting started Sunday in Uzbekistan's presidential election where hardline leader Islam Karimov faces only token opposition to his bid for a new seven year term at the head of the isolated Central Asian state.

Bangladesh Cricket Board
JOB VACANCY

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is a high profile national sports organization responsible for governing the game of cricket in Bangladesh seeks applications from qualified individual(s) for the following position.

Position : National Grounds & Facilities Manager

Department: Grounds & Facilities Management (Position-01)

The incumbent will perform a broad range of duties in the capacity of a National Grounds & Facilities Manager. The job requires coordination of various administrative & organizing support service / activities at the venue / complex.

The Key Responsibilities:

- To develop a Management Plan for efficient and viable management of all stadiums/ venues / complex under the control of BCB.
- Prepare budgets; ensure the adherence and maintenance of a proper professional standard of record keeping and fixed assets & store management with regard to all aspects of Grounds and Facilities Management Department.
- Ensure that Facilities and Grounds are in a state of readiness for domestic and international matches to be staged in Bangladesh.
- Ensure that all commercial agreements with sponsors and suppliers are adhered to.
- Administer HR at the venue / complex (As per BCB's standing operating procedure).
- Any other responsibilities as assigned by the Management.

Qualification: Post Graduate in any discipline having minimum 04 (Four) years of practical professional experience in Managerial position. Candidates having cricketing background will be given preference.

Special Skill Requirements

- Should have good communication skill in both Bangla and English language.
- Excellent presentation and report writing skills.
- Good Planning, Organizing and Coordinating skills.
- Proactive and can work independently.
- Must be computer literate (i.e Internet Communication, MS Word, MS Excel, Power Point Presentation etc.)
- Should be hard working and willing to work long hours on occasions.

Age limit: 30-40 years of age.

The interested candidates are requested to send their CV along with a cover letter mentioning expected salary and 02 recent photographs to the Chief Executive Officer, Bangladesh Cricket Board, Management Office, Navana Tower (5th floor), 45 Gulshan Avenue, Gulshan-1, Dhaka-1212 on or before 3rd January 2008. Only the short listed candidates will be called for interview. Please mention the post of the application applied for on the top of envelopes.