

50 soldiers killed in S Russia clashes

AFP, Moscow

An opposition website in southern Russia said more than 50 soldiers were killed by militias yesterday in clashes that officials told Russian news agencies had killed only two soldiers.

The Ingushetia.org website cited a local official from the interior ministry giving the casualty figure, which would represent one of the worst losses for Russian forces since the end of major combat operations in Chechnya.

The website also quoted hospital sources and its own correspondent.

Russian officials in Moscow and in the province of Ingushetia where the clashes took place could not be reached for comment on the report.

Ingushetia, a mainly Muslim

province neighbouring war-ravaged Chechnya, has been racked by a growing number of attacks against security forces that are frequently blamed on separatist rebels and Islamist fighters.

"A source from the Sunzhensky region interior ministry said around 50 soldiers were killed" in a single attack in which armoured personnel carriers and trucks were also destroyed, the Ingushetia.org website reported.

Five more soldiers were killed in two other attacks, the website said.

Interfax news agency quoted local prosecutor Pavel Belyakov saying two interior ministry soldiers were killed and nine others were injured in an attack on a military column that was carried out by rebel fighters.

Officials earlier said two soldiers were killed and five injured.

"The situation in Ingushetia is under control," Belyakov told Interfax, adding that Russian authorities had declared the area where the attack took place a "counter-terrorist operation zone."

"A search of the area is currently taking place, the bandits who carried out the attack on a defence ministry military column are being tracked," a spokesman for the armed forces in southern Russia, told Interfax.

Ingushetia.org said one attack occurred near the village of Galashki in which the 50 soldiers were killed, while another was on the road between the villages of Surkhakhi and Alkhasty where two more soldiers were killed.

There was also a third attack on a military column that had come as reinforcement to the road between

Surkhakhi and Alkhasty in which at least three soldiers were killed, Ingushetia.org reported.

The website is highly critical of local authorities in Ingushetia. Its owner, Magomed Yuloyev, a local opposition leader, was shot dead in a mysterious incident after being taken into police custody in August.

Following Saturday's attacks, activists from the website said they were cancelling a demonstration to demand an objective inquiry into Yuloyev's death that had been planned for Sunday in Ingushetia's main city, Nazran.

In what appeared to be a separate incident, a car exploded in the village of Kantsyhevo in Ingushetia, killing its driver in what reports quoted officials as saying could be the accidental detonation of a bomb intended for an attack.

Japan wins seat at UN Security Council

AFP, United Nations

Japan was elected Friday to a seat at the UN Security Council for 2009-2010, displacing a bid by Iran for a place at the head table of international diplomacy.

In a vote in the UN General Assembly, which includes all member nations of the world body, Japan took 158 votes against 32 for Iran, the assembly's president Miguel d'Escoto of Nicaragua said.

Asia has two non-permanent seats on the 15-nation Security Council, on top of the permanent seat held by China. Indonesia's term is ending; Vietnam's stint continues through the end of 2009.

Among nations in the European group at the United Nations, Austria and Turkey won non-permanent places on the Security Council, leaving Iceland defeated.

Mexico and Uganda took the seats available for Latin America and Africa respectively without contest.



Iraqis from the Sadr movement burn effigies of US President George W Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice during a mass protest in the streets of Baghdad yesterday against the US occupation of Iraq. Followers of radical Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr marched through the Iraqi capital shouting anti-US slogans to demand the withdrawal of American troops and to protest a planned US-Iraq security deal.



Fighters from the National Congress for People's Defence (CNDP) under the direction of renegade General Laurent Nkundwa, parade on Friday a piece of artillery they took from the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) after attacking on the base in Rumangabo just north of the Eastern Congolese town of Goma last week.

Zimbabwe seeks foreign aid as ministry spat stalls power-sharing deal

AFP, Harare

Zimbabwe's power-sharing talks hinge on control of the home affairs ministry, state media said Saturday, as President Robert Mugabe and his rival asked neighbouring nations to help break their impasse.

Opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai said late Friday that four days of intense negotiations had failed to resolve their feud over the most powerful cabinet posts.

Both sides asked the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to intervene in the talks, which have been mediated by former South African president Thabo Mbeki.

Mbeki said he would travel with the Zimbabwean leaders to Swaziland on Monday, where a three-member SADC security body will try to find a solution. Mbeki brokered the original pact

signed one month ago, which calls for 84-year-old Mugabe to remain as president while Tsvangirai takes the new post of prime minister.

Tsvangirai threatened to pull out of the deal after Mugabe last week unilaterally awarded the most important ministries to his party, leaving him firmly in charge of the military and police.

Patrick Chinamasa, the lead negotiator for Mugabe's ZANU-PF party, said in state media Saturday that the talks hinge on control of the home affairs ministry. This oversees the police force, which stands accused of widespread human rights abuses.

He told the Herald newspaper that ZANU-PF had agreed to give Tsvangirai's Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) control of the finance ministry, a critical portfolio in a country grappling with the world's highest rate of inflation, at 231 million percent.

Jordanian king 'pessimistic' about ME peace deal

AFP, Madrid

Jordan's King Abdullah II said he doubted a Palestinian-Israeli peace deal will be clinched by January 20 when President George W. Bush steps down, in an interview Saturday in Spain's El Pais daily.

"For the first time I view myself as pessimistic. And I believe I am one of the most optimistic leaders in the Middle East," said the monarch, who starts a tour of Spain later Saturday.

"The success of the peace process will depend on whether there are successful advances between Israelis and Palestinians when the next US administration takes over," he said.

"If we manage nothing by the end of the year, given the uncertainty between Israel and Palestine, there will be no future for the peace process," the monarch said, underlining that this prospect "scared everybody."

Effigies of Bush, Rice burnt in Baghdad mass march

AFP, Baghdad

Angry Shias chanted anti-US slogans and burnt effigies of American leaders at a mass rally Saturday in Baghdad called by radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, who urged Iraqi lawmakers to reject a planned US-Iraq security deal.

Effigies of US President George W. Bush -- with fractured right arm -- and of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice were set ablaze along with several American flags as protesters chanted anti-US slogans.

Tens of thousands of protesters spat out their anger at the US during a protest march, which began at the cleric's Sadr City bastion in east Baghdad and ended at nearby Mustansiriyah Square, where the effigies were torched.

"No, No, to America! No, No to the devil!" shouted crowds of men, women and children as they walked the three kilometre (two

mile) route through the dusty streets of Sadr City to the square.

Carrying Iraqi flags and banners of the Sadr movement, the demonstrators demanded an end to the US occupation of Iraq.

"Get out occupier! We demand an end to the occupation!" they shouted.

Large numbers of Sadr supporters had gathered since Friday night at Sadr City's Mudhaffar Square where the protest march began, while many arrived at the venue from several Shia regions of Iraq early Saturday.

"We are marching to reject the occupation," said Karim Kadhim, a Shia from the holy city of Najaf.

"Would America like to be occupied by any other country? Would America like its sons to be attacked? Why are they occupying our country?" he asked.

"They have been lying for the past five years. They told us they are coming to free us and go. But they are still lying."

NEWS ANALYSIS

McCain jumps around in bid to stop Obama

AP, New York

The misadventures of Joe the Plumber were just the latest stumble for Republican John McCain as he veers from one idea to another in a thus-far elusive quest to slow Barack Obama's momentum.

Joe Wurzelbacher was supposed to be the Republican presidential candidate's ace in the hole -- an average, working-class Joe whose dreams of something better might be thwarted by Obama's plans. The Ohio plumber challenged Obama's tax policies and got the Democratic presidential nominee to say he wanted to "spread the wealth around."

McCain told Wurzelbacher's story at the final debate Wednesday in a bid to paint Obama as a tax-raiser out of touch with regular Americans.

But Wurzelbacher's story didn't quite hold up under inspection. He isn't licensed as a plumber in an

Ohio county that requires one. He owes \$1,200 in unpaid taxes. The dream purchase of the plumbing company where he works is a long way off no matter who wins the election. McCain acknowledged Thursday he hadn't ever spoken to the man he'd suddenly made a central figure in his quest for the presidency. McCain didn't speak with Wurzelbacher until Friday.

"Sorry, Joe," the Republican hopeful said Thursday on "The Late Show" with David Letterman for bringing Wurzelbacher a tornado of public attention he never sought.

The McCain campaign has always felt more improvisational than Obama's well-oiled machine, and the Arizona senator's years as a Navy pilot left him with a taste for daring feats. But recently, with polls showing McCain trailing Obama in several battleground states, his campaign operation has muddled McCain's message and

complicated his efforts to gain ground.

Policy proposals have been floated and postponed. Lines of attack have been launched, then abruptly changed. And Joe the Plumber, like Sarah Palin before him, was pushed onto the national stage without a complete examination.

"When you run a campaign without a strategy and everything becomes tactical and your tactics don't work, you respond by finding other tactics," Republican consultant Ed Rollins said. "Unfortunately, that's helped Barack paint the guy who is clearly better prepared to be commander in chief as erratic and not stable."

McCain has always said he prefers to be the underdog, and he rolled out a feisty speech this week vowing a spirited fight to Nov. 4. But he has at times also seemed exasperated with the state of affairs.

Obama, McCain camps trade barbs in voter fraud spat

AFP, Chicago

Barack Obama's presidential campaign accused rival John McCain of using a false crusade against voter fraud to suppress legitimate voters in a growing spat over ballots ahead of the November 4 poll.

The Obama campaign's top lawyer, Bob Bauer, accused Republicans on Friday of recklessly "plotting" to suppress legitimate votes and to "sow confusion and harass voters and complicate the process for millions of Americans."

An estimated nine million new voters have registered for the hotly contested presidential election, and the Obama campaign says Democratic registrations are outpacing Republican ones by four to one.

The McCain campaign contends that an untold number of those registration forms are false and warned that illegally cast ballots could alter the results of the election and undermine the public's faith in democracy.

Republicans have launched a

slew of lawsuits aimed at preventing false ballots from being cast, the most high-profile an attempt to challenge as many as 200,000 of the more than 600,000 new registrations submitted in the battleground state of Ohio.

That challenge was blocked by a Supreme Court ruling Friday.

Republicans point to investigations into whether liberal-leaning community organization ACORN had submitted false voter registrations as proof of "rampant" and widespread fraud which McCain said Wednesday could be "destroying the fabric of democracy."

But Bauer told reporters that the fact that senior officials from the Justice Department leaked news of an FBI investigation into ACORN a day after McCain lobbied that attack shows that "an unholy alliance of law enforcement and the ugliest form of partisan politics" may have returned.

He said the matter should be turned over to a special prosecutor currently investigating allegations



US Democratic presidential candidate Illinois Senator Barack Obama supporters cheer during a rally at Roanoke Civic Centre in Roanoke, Virginia on Friday.

Mexican drug wars intensify, killing 400 in two weeks

AFP, Mexico City

Almost 400 people have died in the past two weeks in an intensifying drug war in Mexico despite a government crackdown on cartels, trafficking and related violence.

The killings include six people lined up and shot against a wall with a written warning promising a similar fate to all "rats", and five others shot dead in a house where a ganglord's corpse was found in a freezer.

The death toll this year has crossed 3,800 despite a massive state crackdown launched two years ago, including the deployment of some 36,000 soldiers across the country.

The drug wars, ongoing for years in Mexico, has seen a spiral in violence since August.

Newspaper tolls, published daily, show 387 people were killed in the first two weeks of October, and more than 3,800 deaths recorded since the start of the year.

The killings are concentrated in the northern border regions, where cartels are fighting over key trafficking routes into the United States.

Nasa to launch probe to map solar system's edge

AP, Los Angeles

A small Nasa spacecraft embarks on a two-year mission today to give scientists their first view of the happenings at the edge of the solar system.

The Ixex probe, short for Interstellar Boundary Explorer, will study a chaotic region in space where the solar wind from the sun clashes with cold gases from interstellar space.

The solar wind, a stream of charged particles spewing from the sun at 1 million miles per hour, carves out a protective bubble around the solar system. This bubble known as the heliosphere shields against most dangerous cosmic radiation that would otherwise interfere with human spaceflight.

Scientists recently discovered that the solar wind pressure is at its weakest level in 50 years, although the exact reason remains a mystery. Ixex could help confirm whether the heliosphere is shrinking.

Observations from Ixex should help researchers in "unlocking the

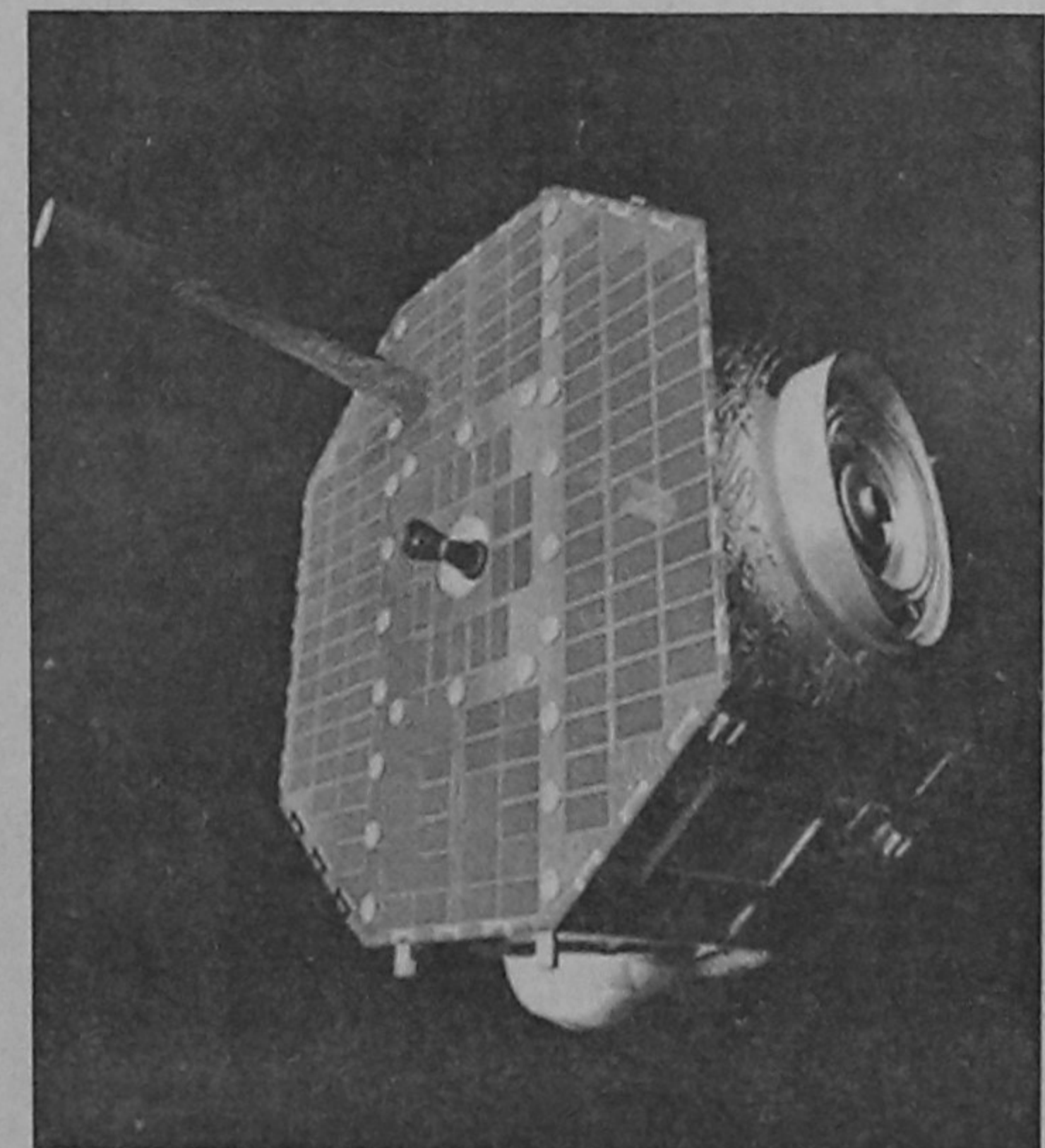
secrets of this important interaction between the sun and the galaxy," said David McComas of the Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio. He is chief scientist for the \$165 million mission.

Ixex, the size of a bus tire, will be launched aboard a Pegasus rocket that will be dropped from an aircraft over a Pacific atoll on Sunday.

The rocket will lift Ixex 130 miles above Earth and put it into orbit. The spacecraft will then fire its solid rocket motor to loft itself even higher, eventually to 200,000 miles above Earth.

Ixex will build on the discoveries of the long-running twin Voyager spacecraft launched in 1977 to explore the outer planets. The deep-space, manmade probes have since sailed past the outer planets and are headed out of the solar system.

Unlike the Voyager craft, Ixex will not barrel through space, but instead will do its job from high-Earth orbit. The probe carries two sensors that will collect information about the solar wind's mass and energy from all directions.



This artist rendering released by Nasa shows the Interstellar Boundary Explorer or IBEX spacecraft in space. The small Nasa spacecraft embarks on a two-year mission today to give scientists their first view of the happenings at the edge of the solar system.

Career Opportunity

Hashem Foods Ltd. is one of the largest manufacturer of quality food and drink products of this country. The company is currently manufacturing well know brands like **Shezan, Kolson & Sajeeb**. The company is looking for some dynamic, self motivated & experienced person for following position :-

01. Factory Manager : M.S. in Food Science/M.Sc/B.Sc Engineering form any recognized university. The incumbent must have minimum 10 (Ten) years practical job experience in any consumer GOODS or FOOD manufacturing concern. Age should not exceed 45 years. He will be responsible to manage internal factory management, production and factory related legal affairs.

02. Manager (Export) : The incumbent will be engaged to create and develop export market of food and other products and also will be responsible to supervise other export related works. The ideal candidate should be masters or MBA from any recognized university with good command in written and spoken English and Computer operating. The candidate must have minimum 5 (Five) years experience with proven record in the related field.

03. Store officer : Masters/ Graduation from any recognized university. The incumbent must have 5 (Five) years practical experience in store management. Must be able to operate software.

Attractive salary and other benefits will be offered for the deserving candidate. you are requested to send your application with your detailed C.V. along with two passport size color photographs to the Executive **Director, Hashem Foods Ltd, Shezen Point (5th Floor), 2 Indira Road, Farmgate, Dhaka-1215** on or before **6th November, 2008**

The name of the post applied for should be mentioned on the top of the envelope.