

Georgia, Russia stoke fears of new conflict

AFP, Tbilisi

Georgia warned of the risk of a new war with Russia yesterday as Moscow raised the battle-readiness of its forces ahead of the first anniversary of their war over the rebel South Ossetia region.

Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili called on the United States and European Union to send a "clear message" to Moscow to help avert a new war, as both sides exchanged accusations of attacks and "provocations" in the region.

"There is a risk. The Russians are exerting constant pressure," Saakashvili told French radio station RTL when asked about the possibility of renewed conflict.

The latest (Russian military) manoeuvres are worrying. They refuse to respond to calls from European observers and unfortunately the media in Moscow are announcing a situation of imminent conflict," he said.

"Despite all that, I am confident that Europe and the United States will send a clear message" to Moscow, he said.

The Russian foreign ministry meanwhile said its forces had heightened their state of battle-readiness in South Ossetia.

"The situation is very worrying and the Georgian provocations ahead of the anniversary of last year's war are not halting," foreign ministry spokesman Andrei Nesterenko said in a statement.

"In connection with this, the battle-readiness of Russian troops and border guards stationed in South Ossetia has been heightened," he said.

Tensions have been rising in recent days between the two countries as they prepare to mark the one-year anniversary on August 7 of the outbreak of their five-day war over the breakaway Georgian region of South Ossetia.

"At the moment, the main thing is not to allow an escalation and development of the shooting into a more serious clash. We are doing and will do everything to avoid this," said Nesterenko.

Russia earlier Tuesday accused Georgia of preparing a series of "provocations" on

Anwar denies

always been clear as you will see it time and again. We did not, and we do not, interfere into the internal dynamics of Bangladesh."

Choudhury said his position was always transparent and that was to support a democratic, stable and prosperous Bangladesh. "That is exactly what we have been doing... We supported the voter list, supported a roadmap to a safe, free and fair election. So, I can't really see why the accusation should be there," he said.

Choudhury, who escaped a grenade attack in Sylhet in 2004, also said, "We are a good friend of this country and we have always been so. This is an independent country that makes its own decision."

Asked what led Bangladesh to a situation like 1/11, he said, "You as the media witnessed it. Leading up to the declaration of emergency was a lot of violence. People were dying in the streets. There were a lot of opinions about whether the election could be held and be free and fair. You had also problems with extremism."

Choudhury said the people of this country knew better than him about the situation. "What is important is that we looked forward and people worked together within Bangladesh. And now somebody has been elected... there is an opposition. In any democracy, you need a strong government and a strong opposition to work together."

He said he is willing to meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia during his visit.

"We had a good relationship with the current opposition party. When the party was in power we did a lot of work together to combat extremism. And we would do so again when they come back to power in future after election," he added.

He further said, "You are in opposition today but tomorrow you will be in power. That's democracy. No matter which party is being elected, we will continue with our strong relations."

Mother, 2 kids

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Officer in charge of Bhangura Police Station MA Mannan confirmed the incident.

Meanwhile, the local sources said Kulsum was often tortured in her house, and had bitter relations with her husband.

JS team

FROM PAGE 1
standing committee on water resources ministry.

The lawmaker said they will analyse the data they collected from India and check if India's Tipaimukh project, 210 kilometres off Bangladesh border, has any impact on Bangladesh.

"We will seek more information."

"The Indian minister said they were friend of Bangladesh in the past, are a good friend now and will be so in future too," he said.

Asked why the delegation went to India knowing that it is rainy season, Razzaq said,

"This was more because of political pressure. It is we who fixed the schedule for the visit, not India."

Awami League MPs Abdul Rahman and AKM Fazlul Haq and independent lawmaker Fazlul Azim, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology professor Monwar Hossain, Sajjad Hossain of Bangladesh-India Joint Rivers Commission, Water Resources Secretary Waheeduzzaman and Foreign Ministry Director General Emran Ahmed were also in the team.

BNP did not name any MP for the delegation, while Jamaat-e-Islami MP Hamidur Rahman Azad did not join the delegation at the last moment as he fell ill.

BNP had earlier termed the delegation's visit to India a "picnic". Party leader Hafiz Uddin, however, later lauded the delegation when it sought data from India.

BSF kills

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the bodies to Indian territory.

Officials of 39 Rifles Battalion sent a letter to their Indian counterpart protesting the killing and demanding the bodies back. However, BSF said they would hand the bodies over to BDR after maintaining proper formalities, sources said.

BDR officials said BSF returned the bodies at 8:00pm after a commander-level flag meeting at Telukpi boarder.

BDR handed the bodies over to their relatives.

A tense situation is prevailing in the area.

Digital database

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people in all 70 courts--64 district courts and six metropolitan courts--to record all the cases which are under trial or trial of which has been completed, sources in the CID said.

More than 120 forms used in court, including general register, property register, daily under trial register, appeal register, sessions court register, bail bond register and jail register will be fully digitised under the project.

This will reduce the workload of case investigators and court staffers, the CID officials said.

The CID also expects that it will bring an overall change in the court activities.

Asked about the database, CID Deputy Inspector General Saiful Alam said, "This criminal database will really help us a lot."

WB

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million a year on an average.

The WB wants to provide assistance for power, water resources, education and health sectors and safety net programmes, Muhith said. "I have requested them (WB) to increase budget support."

Asked about funds for the proposed Padma Bridge, the minister said the WB emphasises development of the southern region.

On the government's changed position on procurement regulation, and on banking and SOE (state-owned enterprises) sectors, he said, "They (WB) have supported the changes."

Muhith went on, "Our policy is to give scope to fresh hands. But we will not allow new entrepreneurs for jobs requiring Tk 100 crore. They think Bangladesh is a strong representation and leadership from Bangladesh. We think Bangladesh has a chance to lead the adaptation field and negotiate the deals for the country that have been affected," he said.

On climate change, Choudhury said the UK has been very supportive of Bangladesh. "We want to see a strong representation and leadership from Bangladesh. We think Bangladesh has a chance to lead the adaptation field and negotiate the deals for the country that have been affected," he added.

He further said, "You are in opposition today but tomorrow you will be in power. That's democracy. No matter which party is being elected, we will continue with our strong relations."

Zia murals

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Witnesses said one of the mosaics was removed from the stands on the northern side, near the Baitul Mukarram Mosque, while another one from the VIP Gate on the southern end. The third one was removed from the second floor of the stadium.

Many shop owners at the stadium market said it seemed that the mosaics were removed with drills during the night.

The mosaics of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman were untouched. A large contingent of additional police was deployed in the stadium area yesterday after the mosaics were removed.

Even though additional police were deployed there, Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police AKM Shahidul Hoque said he was unaware of the incident. "Nobody filed any complaint with us about the matter. If we receive any complaint, we will investigate the incident," he told The Daily Star.

Talking to The Daily Star, National Sports Council Deputy Director (admin) Ruhul Amin Hawlader said he had heard about the removal of the mosaics and had also watched a news report on television. He, however, could not say whether it was the sports council's decision.

The NSC secretary and other senior officials might know about it," he said.

Neither the state minister for sports nor the NSC secretary was available for making comments on the matter.

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday condemned the incident and termed it an example of the autocratic attitude of the Awami League government.

Delwar said, "They are damaging the mosaics only to erase the name of Zia and Khaleda Zia from our history."

While talking to reporters at BNP's central office in Naya Paltan, he said with instigation

of the government the mosaics were smashed.

"The government cannot avoid the responsibility," he said.

Dhaka National Stadium was renamed Bangabandhu National Stadium in 1997 when Awami League was in power. The mosaics of BNP founder Ziaur Rahman were installed there in 2003, after BNP assumed power in 2001.

In April, the Khaleda Zia Hall of Sylhet MAC Osmani Medical College was renamed Bibi Ayesha Hall.

In 2006, newly established medical college in the Suhrawardi Hospital compound at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar was named after Khaleda Zia. A couple of months ago it was renamed Suhrawardi Medical College.

Our correspondent in Dinajpur reports: Some unidentified miscreants vandalsed the foundation stone of the under-construction building of Dinajpur Medical College Hospital Monday evening.

The caretakers of the building, Masud and Rubel, who also witnessed the incident, told The Daily Star that eight to 10 people equipped with hammers vandalsed the foundation stone around 7:30pm.

When they tried to resist, the miscreants assaulted them, they claimed.

Shah Abdul Ahad, director of Dinajpur Medical College, declined to comment on the matter.

On October 28, 2000 Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the construction work of the Medical College Hospital by laying a foundation stone. Late minister Khurshid Jahan Haque, elder sister of Khaleda Zia, on August 27, 2004 replaced the foundation stone with another one with her name on it.

Khaleda Zia about three years ago inaugurated the building, even though it was under construction then.

The building is yet to become operational.

Ashraf

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and UNDP.

Citing examples of America, Ashraf said, "Only a few countries in the world, including some of our neighbouring countries, have a five-year-long tenure for parliament."

At the inaugural ceremony the LGRD minister expressed hope that under the project with a tenure up to December 2013 they would be able to build the local government bodies in a way that no military rule can use them for political purpose.

He said military rulers in 1958 and during 1975-1991 used the local government bodies, especially the upazila parishes, to perpetuate their illegitimate rule.

He said the government is closely observing the functioning of upazila parishes and will bring necessary changes after a year. "If needed, we will change the law to build a strong and independent local government," the minister said.

On his preference for the jury system, Ashraf later told reporters, "Judgment by a single judge cannot be safe in any country."

It would be a better and safe judicial system if there were at least three judges, a magistrate and two justices of peace to prepare the verdict in a trial, he said.

He also said it would be revolutionary for the judicial system if the village courts were run properly on the basis of the Village Courts Act 2006.

LGRD State Minister Jahangir Kabir Nanak said the project will build the capacity of the local government representatives and community members, especially women, for improving access to justice for disadvantaged and marginalised groups.

Abul Kalam Azad, joint secretary (administration) and national project director of the project, said the \$14,986 million scheme jointly funded by the government, the European Commission and UNDP would be implemented in 500 union parishes.

Monzur Hossain, LGRD secretary, Robert Juhkam, resident representative (a) of UNDP Bangladesh, and Dr Jean-Jacques Lauture of the European Commission delegation to Bangladesh also spoke at the inaugural ceremony.

India confirmed a death from swine flu yesterday," he said, adding that as April-June is the flu season, people should be careful and ensure personal hygiene during the time.

He said the government had directed to distribute health-screening card to the airlines so that no passenger infected with swine flu having the flu symptoms can enter the country undetected.

"But eight to 10 airlines are yet to introduce the health-screening card. Hence a technical meeting will be held at the office of the director general of health services soon," said Prof Rahman, adding though Bangladesh is doing well in containing swine flu and has taken various measures, in no way we can neglect the situation. Expectant mothers, people with co-morbid situation and obese are the high-risk group, he continued.

Meanwhile, two new cases of swine flu were detected here yesterday raising the toll of infected to 32 in the country, government sources confirmed.

At a discussion on "Pandemic Influenza: Media Coverage" at a city hotel Prof Mahmudur Rahman, director of Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) said of the infected 28 people have already been discharged by this time.

He is absolute to maintain personal hygiene, especially washing hands with soap, said Carel De Rooy, Unicef representative in Bangladesh. The experts at the discussion, organised by Unicef, also sought media cooperation to overcome people's panic and clarify confusions.

He said the government staff would get their increased salaries from July whenever the pay scale is implemented.

Finance ministry sources said the committee led by the cabinet secretary has finalised their report on the pay scale. But prices of essentials go up in the market as soon as the pay scale is announced.

Prices of many commodities are showing upward trend. The month of Ramadan begins at the end of August. If the pay scale is announced at this time, prices of essentials will rise throughout the country. So the pay scale is likely to be implemented around October, sources said.

He said the government's intention was to go into these army barracks and to kill as many people as possible... This would have been, if it had been able to be carried out, the most serious attack on Australian soil," he added.

The finance minister said more time is required to review the pay commission report, the secretaries committee report and defence pay scale report as there are many important issues for consideration.

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Sources at the establishment ministry said the promoted officers would be given appointment at different ministries soon.

Saudi may shut TV offices over 'sex' talk show: report

FROM PAGE 1
AFP, Riyadh

The Saudi offices of a Lebanon-based satellite station controlled by tycoon Prince Alwaleed bin Talal

could face closure over a racy talk show featuring a man boasting about his sex life, a newspaper reported yesterday.

The local operations of the Saudi billionaire's broadcaster LBC could be shut down

because of the "offensive nature" of the programme, Abdullah al-Othaim, a senior

district judge in Jeddah, told the pan-Arab Asharq Al-Awsat.

Contacted by AFP, LBC chief executive Pierre Daher

said the company had decided not to comment publicly on the controversy.

Jeddah investigators con-

tinued to examine evidence to

see what charges would be

filed against Saudi

Arabia or Lebanon.

The case has focused atten-

tion on LBC, which broadcas-