

Tension rife as Israel joins Syria fray

More clashes on Iraq, Turkey borders; opposition strikes unity deal

AFP, Doha

Israeli troops fired warning shots into Syria yesterday in response to mortar fire, the army said, in the first Israeli fire directed at the Syrian military in the Golan Heights area since the 1973 war.

And amid country-wide violence, the Syrian opposition struck a hard-won deal on a new structure to take forward the 20-month uprising.

Participants in marathon talks in Qatar said discussions were continuing on details of a planned new government-in-waiting, but that the Syrian National Council had now heeded Arab and Western calls to join a new, wider coalition.

The Israeli warning shot across the UN-monitored ceasefire line between Syria and the occupied Golan Heights

came after a mortar round fired from the Syrian side hit an Israeli position and after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told his cabinet Israel was "ready for any development."

The opposition deal came after the Syrian National Council, which had formerly been seen as the main representative of the opposition, heeded Arab and Western pressure to agree to a new structure embracing groups that had been unwilling to join its ranks.

Former prime minister Riad Hijab, who fled to neighbouring Jordan in August in the highest-ranking defection from President Bashar al-Assad's government, hailed the agreement as "an advanced step towards toppling the regime."

There had been mounting diplomatic pressure on the oppo-



Turkish soldiers patrol the border town of Ceylanpinar at the Turkish-Syrian border yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

sition to overhaul its structures amid US-led accusations that the SNC had lost touch with civilian activists and rebels inside Syria and become little more than a talking shop for exiles.

International concern had been further raised by fears of a spillover of the conflict as fight-

ing raged on Syria's borders with Iraq and Turkey as well as on the armistice line with the Israeli-occupied Golan.

The Israeli army said that a mortar round fired from the Syrian side had hit one of its positions on the Golan, prompting the riposte from its troops.

Military sources told AFP that the army fired a single Tamuz anti-tank missile, a weapon known for being highly accurate, towards the Syrian outpost from which the mortar round was fired.

Since Israel and Syria signed a 1974 disengagement agreement, a 1,200-strong unarmed UN force has patrolled a buffer zone on the Golan.

Fighting also flared on the Turkish border as Syrian troops and rebels battled for the town of Ras al-Ain, where thousands of refugees have fled into Turkey in recent days.

On Saturday, 121 people were killed in violence, the Observatory said, among more than 37,000 who have lost their lives since the uprising against Assad's rule erupted in March last year.

Palestinian UN non-state bid this month

AFP, Ramallah

The Palestinians will submit a bid to the General Assembly for non-state membership of the United Nations later this month, president Mahmud Abbas said yesterday.

"We're going to the United Nations in November 2012, not 2013, or 2014," Abbas said at an event commemorating the eighth anniversary of the death of former president Yasser Arafat.

Palestinian envoys to the United Nations on Thursday unveiled the resolution they plan to submit to the General Assembly seeking observer status.

The resolution would call on the assembly to accord observer membership and urge the 15-nation UN Security Council to "consider favourably" an application Abbas made for full membership last year.

With direct peace talks on hold for more than two years, the Palestinians have sought to push for their long-promised state in other ways, in particular by upgrading their status at the UN.

They tried last year to obtain full membership at the United Nations through the Security Council, but the bid stalled over the opposition of the United States, a council permanent member and veto holder.

This year, the Palestinians said they would instead seek enhanced status at the General Assembly, where no one member can block a resolution, and they are expected to easily win sufficient support.

Israel warns of escalation over Gaza violence

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel is "prepared to escalate" its response to Palestinian rocket fire, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned yesterday, after one of the worst flare-ups along its border with Gaza in recent years.

"The army is acting and will act forcefully against the terror organisations in the Gaza Strip. They are receiving strong blows from the army," Netanyahu told ministers at the beginning of his cabinet meeting.

"The world must realise that Israel won't sit by idly in the face of attempts to attack us. We are prepared to escalate our actions," he said.

The flare-up began on Saturday evening when Gaza militants fired an anti-tank missile at an Israeli jeep along the Gaza border, injuring four soldiers, one of



them severely.

Israel retaliated with airstrikes, shelling and artillery fire that left six Palestinians dead and 32 injured by yesterday morning, and Palestinian militants fired at least 57 rockets into southern Israel.

The latest barrage of rockets, on yesterday morning, hit the Israeli border town of Sderot, injuring four civilians, Israeli police said.

The outbreak of violence was one of the most serious since Israel's devastating 22-day operation in the Gaza Strip over New Year 2009, and raised the spectre of a broad Israeli operation against the Palestinian territory.

The flare-up comes ahead of Israeli elections in January, but ministers said the build-up to the vote would not prevent an operation if it was necessary.

Africa agrees 3,300-strong force for Mali

AFP, Abuja

A West African summit yesterday agreed on an African force of 3,300 troops with a one-year mandate to wrest control of northern Mali from Islamist extremists, Ivory Coast's president said.

Alassane Ouattara told journalists that the troops would come primarily from 15-nation ECOWAS block in the Nigerian capital Abuja.

Countries outside the bloc may have a part as well, he added.

Ouattara said he hoped UN Security Council approval could come in late November or early December, which would allow the force to be put in place days afterward.

CIA chief's departure adds to Obama's to-do list

AFP, Washington

Fresh from re-election, President Barack Obama's lengthy to-do list grew after CIA chief David Petraeus resigned over an extramarital affair, leaving another high-profile administration post to fill.

The revelation brought a shocking end to the four-star general's stellar career, one so productive it had even sparked speculation he himself would one day run for the White House.

While Obama praised Petraeus as he acknowledged his departure, there was no denying it added to his headache over the makeup of his future administration, already expected to lose heavyweights such as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

As he heads into his second term,



David Petraeus and Paula Broadwell

Obama will likely have to replace not only Hillary, but also Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner.

Now, adding to the rumor mill is talk of who might follow in the footsteps of Petraeus, a 60-year-old former paratrooper credited with turning around the Iraq war.

His deputy Michael Morell will serve as acting CIA director and he

has a very good chance to replace him finally.

Another name being floated as a possible Petraeus replacement is John Brennan, the White House counter-terrorism adviser and a CIA veteran who has played an instrumental role in Obama's drone war against al-Qaeda militants.

The affair came to light as the FBI was investigating whether a computer used by Petraeus -- a married father of two -- had been compromised, the New York Times and other US media reported citing government officials.

Unnamed officials told the Times that Petraeus's lover was Paula Broadwell, a former Army major who spent long periods interviewing Petraeus for her book. She offered no public comment on the revelations.

NEWS IN brief

Greece faces tough budget test

AFP, Athens

Greece's government faces another crucial test yesterday when lawmakers vote on the 2013 budget just days after parliament narrowly adopted an austerity package aimed at securing a new slice of international aid for the debt-crippled country.

The austerity measures in Greece, the most economically-troubled nation in the eurozone, have triggered a number of general strikes and violent street protests in major cities.

Iran to probe into blogger's death

REUTERS, Dubai

Iran's parliament will investigate the death of a blogger in police custody, a lawmaker said yesterday following international condemnation of the incident.

Sattar Beheshti was arrested in his home on October 30, rights groups reported, after receiving death threats. The 35-year-old who ran an anti-government blog died in custody, possibly as a result of torture, Amnesty International said in a statement last week.

Ecuador's Correa to run for 3rd term

AFP, Quito

Ecuador President Rafael Correa officially announced Saturday that he would run for a third term in February elections -- a contest in which he is expected to be the runaway favorite.

The leftist Correa, who has led the Andean nation of 14 million people since 2007, is currently far ahead in opinion polls, winning 56 percent support among likely voters.

Mahatma's heir elected in US polls

PTI, Washington

A great-grandson of Mahatma Gandhi has been elected to a state assembly in the United States during the general elections held on November 6.

Shanti Gandhi, 72, contesting as a Republican Party candidate, defeated his Democratic rival by nine percentage point for the Kansas's 52nd assembly district.

He is son of late Saraswati Gandhi, wife of Mahatma Gandhi's grandson the late Kanti Lal.



Budget crisis highlights Nepal's post-war woes

AFP, Kathmandu

Months of political deadlock have plunged Nepal into a budget crisis that could leave 500,000 workers unpaid from this week in the latest sign of the country's woes since civil war ended in 2006.

Nepal has not had a parliament or fully functioning government since June and has been surviving on emergency funds, which run out on November 15 unless rival parties agree on a new budget.

With no deal likely, the Maoist caretaker administration faces being unable to pay teachers, nurses, police and soldiers.

"The budget plays a critical role in the remuneration for hundreds of thousands of civil servants," Kathmandu-based economics analyst Gokarna Awasthi told AFP.

November 20 marks the sixth anniversary of the peace deal that ended the decade-long Maoist insurgency which

claimed more than 16,000 lives.

A tentative calm returned after the Maoists swept to power in 2008 elections but Nepalese politics has been in flux ever since, with rival parties swapping control of the government several times.

In May, lawmakers failed after years of wrangling to meet a deadline to write the country's first post-war constitution. Parliament was then dissolved, leaving the nation with no government and no elections currently scheduled.

The Nepalese voted in an assembly in 2008 to draw up the constitution for a new social and political order in a nation that remains deeply impoverished and riven with inequalities.

The country has more than 100 different ethnic groups, and marginalised lower castes are pushing for more power and increased access to jobs and education after the abolition of Nepal's Hindu monarchy four years ago.

Submit report on Subhan

FROM PAGE 20

The tribunal however ordered to produce detained Jamaat's Nayebe-ameer Subhan on the day of submission of the investigation report.

On September 20, members of an intelligence agency detained Subhan along with two companions at Bangabandhu Bridge toll plaza in Tangail in connection with a criminal case.

Meanwhile, prosecutor Syed Haidar Ali yesterday placed arguments throughout the day on deposition of defence witness for war crimes accused Jamaat leader Delwar Hossain Sayedee.

The prosecution has so far taken nine sessions for

placing their arguments.

The proceeding of the case was adjourned until today.

The tribunal also adjourned another war crimes case against former Jamaat chief Ghulam Azam until today. Ghulam Azam's son former Brig Gen Abdullahi Amaan-al-Azmi is supposed to give deposition for his father today.

ICT-2 The International Crimes Tribunal-2 yesterday adjourned the case proceeding against Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah until November 15 following a time petition of the defence.

Yesterday was fixed for

recording the testimony of the first defence witness in the case, but the three-member tribunal led by Justice ATM Fazle Kabir fixed the new date, as the defence could not produce their witness.

"We need some time. We are facing some difficulties [in producing our witness]. Some [problems] are expected and some are unexpected," Abdur Razzaq, chief of the defence of detained Jamaat leaders, told the tribunal.

"We have fixed the date after consulting both the sides. Couldn't you produce anyone [of your witnesses]?" asked Justice Kabir.

"We are facing some

LOKPAL BILL Hazare warns Indian govt

IANS, New Delhi

Social activist Anna Hazare has accused Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of "betrayal" on the Jan Lokpal bill and warned yesterday of another protest if it was not passed before the 2014 general election.

Addressing supporters after inaugurating his new office here, Hazare said if Jan Lokpal bill is not passed before the elections, he will launch more agitations.

Hazare had on Saturday announced a new 15-member team and vowed to start a nation-wide campaign against corruption from Jan 30, the death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

CHINA CONGRESS MEET Transparency calls face tough road

AFP, Beijing

Pledges for more transparency by top Chinese Communist officials made following high-profile graft cases have been met with scepticism that corrupt leaders can come clean over their assets.

Wang Yang, the top Communist official in the southern province of Guangdong, and Yu Zhengsheng, the party boss of Shanghai, both said Friday that Chinese officials would begin releasing details of their assets in the future.

"I believe that Chinese officials will gradually make assets public in line with central regulations," Wang, seen by many observers to have reformist leanings, said during a Congress meeting in answering a foreign reporter's question.

Yu, meanwhile, said separately that Shanghai would "gradually move towards a system for making (officials') assets public," according to the state-run People's Daily.

But neither official provided any road map forward for improving transparency in a country that has no laws that clearly require government officials to make their assets or salaries public, a situation critics say is ripe for abuse.

The issue of official corruption has shot to the top of the national agenda as Communist Party delegates meet to anoint a new crop of top leaders for the coming decade.

China's ruling Communists have been scandalised for years by persistent reports of corrupt officials living lavish lifestyles and keeping multiple mistresses, and complaints that their iron grip on power prevents accountability.



Obtained PhD



Professor Dr. Md. Zahid Hossain Sharif, Head, Community Medicine, BGC Trust Medical College, Chittagong has obtained PhD degree in medical science. Under joint guidance of Professor Dr. M. Farid Ahasan, Professor of Zoology, University of Chittagong and ex-director DG Health Services. Dr. Pravat Chandra Barua, his PhD thesis was 'Development of surveillance system for AIDS and STIs for prevalence assessment and its policy implications in Bangladesh'. He is author of two medical books namely 'Essentials of Biostatistics' and 'Health Research Methodology'. He is credited with 24 publications in various national and international medical journals. He hailed from Hadurkil village of Dhalai union of Hathazari Upazila, Chittagong.