

International

In Baku, Erdogan hails Azerbaijan 'glorious' victory over Armenia

Bloody conflict leaves more than 5,000 dead

BAKU: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on a visit to Azerbaijan yesterday that Baku's struggle with Armenia was not over as he hailed his close ally's "glorious victory" in a bloody conflict with Yerevan. Erdogan arrived in Baku to attend nationwide celebrations marking Azerbaijan's military triumph over Armenia in six weeks of fighting over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Turkey backed Azerbaijan during a conflict that erupted in late September and left more than 5,000 people dead. Azerbaijan's win against Armenian separatists in Nagorno-Karabakh last month was an important geopolitical coup for Erdogan who has cemented Turkey's leading role as a powerbroker in the ex-Soviet Caucasus region the Kremlin considers its sphere of influence.

Azerbaijan's army paraded military hardware and weapons seized from Armenia, and Turkish drones were also on full display. Hailing the parade, Turkish television announced that Turkish drones "turned the tide" of the Karabakh war. "We are here today to... celebrate this glorious victory," Erdogan said during the parade in Baku, the culmination of festivities marking Azerbaijan's victory. "Azerbaijan's saving its lands from occupation does not mean that the struggle is over," he added. "The struggle carried out in the political and military areas will continue from now on many other fronts."

National anthems of Azerbaijan and Turkey were performed ahead of the military display that was reviewed by Erdogan and his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev. Erdogan's attendance "shows to the



BAKU: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev attend a military parade marking Azerbaijan's victory against Armenia in their conflict for control over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region.— AFP

whole world the unbreakable friendship of Azerbaijani and Turkish peoples," Aliyev said. More than 3,000 troops took part in the parade which has also been attended by 2,783 Turkish military—a symbolic equivalent of the number of Azerbaijani servicemen killed in clashes. A Turkish commando unit was also in attendance.

'Turkey's backing'

Ankara was accused of dispatching mercenaries from Syria to bolster Baku's army, but denied the charge. "Azerbaijan would not have been able to achieve military success in Karabakh without Turkey's open political backing," analyst Elhan Shahinoglu of Baku-based think-tank, Atlas said. The

clashes ended with a peace deal brokered by Moscow after Baku's army overwhelmed separatist forces and drew closer to Karabakh's main city Stepanakert. The deal sparked fury in Armenia, where Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has faced large demonstrations calling for his resignation. Under the agreement, Armenia ceded control over parts of the enclave it lost during the fighting and seven adjacent districts it had seized during a war in the 1990s.

The deal also leaves Karabakh's political status in limbo. The enclave will see its future guaranteed by nearly 2,000 Russian peacekeepers deployed for a renewable five-year mandate and the truce will be monitored in Azerbaijan by Turkey's military. Sepa-

ratists in Karabakh broke away from Baku in a war in the early 1990s that left some 30,000 people dead and displaced tens of thousands of Azerbaijanis. Their claim of autonomy has not been recognized internationally, not even by Armenia.

'One nation, two states'

Yesterday, Amnesty International said Azerbaijan and Armenia must urgently probe "war crimes" committed by both sides during the clashes. Amnesty said it had analyzed 22 videos depicting "extrajudicial executions, the mistreatment of prisoners of war and other captives, and desecration of the dead bodies of enemy soldiers". Armenia accused Turkey of direct involvement in the fighting, claims dismissed by Baku and Ankara. Their shared border has been closed since 1993 when the two countries cut diplomatic ties.

Armenia fights to recognize as genocide the World War I massacres of some 1.5 million Armenians in the Ottoman empire. Turkey has rejected the label. Erdogan in 2009 dismissed internationally mediated reconciliation efforts with Armenia and said ties could only be restored after Armenian forces withdrew from Karabakh. Referred to as "one nation, two states," Turkey's alliance with Turkic-speaking Azerbaijan was forged following the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991 and has deepened under Erdogan's tenure. Turkey has helped Azerbaijan train and arm its military. Azerbaijan for its part links NATO member Turkey with ex-Soviet nations in Central Asia and China.— AFP

Manmade materials now outweighs life on Earth

PARIS: For the first time in history manmade materials now likely outweigh all life on Earth, scientists said Wednesday in research detailing the "crossover point" at which humanity's footprint is heavier than that of the natural world. The weight of roads, buildings and other constructed or manufactured materials is doubling roughly every 20 years, and authors of the research said it currently weighed 1.1 teratons (1.1 trillion tons).

As mankind has ramped up its insatiable consumption of natural resources, the weight of living biomass - trees, plants and animals - has halved since the agricultural revolution to stand at just 1 teraton currently, the study found. Estimating changes in global biomass and manmade mass since 1990, the research showed that the mass of human-produced objects stood at just three percent of the weight of biomass at the start of the 20th century.

But since the post-World War II global production boom, manufacturing has surged to the extent that humans now produce the equivalent of the weight of every person on Earth every week on average. 2020 likely marked the moment when manmade mass tipped higher than biomass, according to the study published in Nature. "This study pro-

vides a sort of 'big picture' snapshot of the planet in 2020," said co-author Ron Milo of the Plant and Environmental Sciences Department at Israel's Weizmann Institute of Science.

"We hope that once we have these somewhat shocking figures before our eyes, we can as a species take responsibility." Drawing on a host of industrial and ecological data, the study estimated human production accounts for roughly 30 gigatons annually. At the current growth rate, manmade material is likely to weigh as much as three teratons by 2040. At the same time, overall biomass is decreasing, mainly because of deforestation and land use changes making way for intensive agriculture.

Buildings and roads account for most of the manmade mass, and a number of construction trends - including shifting from bricks to concrete in construction in the mid-1950s - contributed to the accelerated weight accumulation. Lead author Emily Elhacham told AFP that the study provided an indication of humanity's outsized impact on the natural world. "We can no longer deny our central role in the natural world," she said. "We are already a major player and with that comes a shared responsibility."— AFP

Israel unveils parts of Herod's palace buried by Judean king

HERODIUM: Israeli authorities are set to unveil previously off-limits structures within King Herod's palace-fortress Herodium, which the tyrannical Roman-era leader interred as his enormous burial plot. Herodium, a hugely popular tourism destination, is near Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank but falls in an area where Israel exercises full military and civilian control.

Archaeologists say Herod decided towards the end of his life to bury his palace, using ground from below the hill it was perched upon, until the outline of the structure was no longer visible. Israel's Nature and Parks Authority plans to open the revamped site on Sunday, allowing visitors to see for the first time Herodium's arched stairway, foyer and private theatre. The Judean desert complex was built by the Roman-appointed king known both for his brutality and the magnificent structures built during his reign over Judea from 37 to 4 BC.

The hilltop palace, its main entrance facing Jerusalem, was Herod's favorite. It was the only one he named after himself and where he chose to be buried, said Roi Porat, the Hebrew University archaeologist in charge of the excavations. A mere burial plot, however, would not have satisfied Herod,

who wanted his final place of rest to overshadow his palace. "That's why he covered the mountain, including the palace, to emphasize it," said Eran Krugel of the Israel Nature and Parks Authority.

'Unparalleled'

And while burying the palace during his lifetime provided Herod with the satisfaction of knowing his grave would stand out, it also helped preserve and protect the site for 2,000 years. "This is an unparalleled archaeological laboratory," Porat said, comparing it to Pompeii's preservation in lava. A broad staircase leads up the graveside to the palace's main foyer. There are three tiers of support arches above the foyer, from when Herod decided to bury his palace but still needed access while he was still alive. The foyer itself contains striped frescos in their original auburn, green and black, creating patterns mimicking marble panels, in line with the Judean royal style. At the bottom of the stairs on the other side of the grave is the theatre with around 300 seats, and the private booth and royal visiting room overlooking it. Herod hosted Marcus Agrippa, the second-in-command to Caesar Augustus, in that room in 15 BC, according to Porat.—AFP