

Iran's missiles can hit anywhere in Israel

REUTERS, Tehran

A senior Iranian military official said yesterday Israel and the United States would not dare attack Iran since it could strike back anywhere in Israel with its latest missiles, news agencies reported.

Iranian officials have made a point of highlighting the Islamic state's military capabilities in recent weeks in response to some media reports that Israeli or US warplanes could try to destroy Iranian nuclear facilities in air strikes.

Iran last week said it carried out a successful test firing of an upgraded version of its Shahab-3 medium-range

Palestinians in Israel jails on hunger strike

BBC ONLINE

About 1,600 Palestinians in Israeli jails have begun a hunger strike to protest at conditions they say are humiliating and unnecessary.

But Israel's security minister said they would not bow to pressure and the prisoners could "starve to death".

The inmates' demands include an end to strip searches and more prison visits.

Israel argues that prisoners continue to plan attacks from within jail and their contact with the outside world must be restricted as far as possible.

The open-ended hunger strike is currently taking place in several jails, and organisers of the protest say most of the around 7,500 Palestinians held by Israel are expected to join it by the end of the week.

A statement from the Palestinian Prisoners Society announced the start of the hunger strike, accusing Israel of "robbing us of all our rights, treading on our dignity and treating us like animals".

The Palestinians are presenting the strike as non-political.

A spokesman for the Israeli prison service, Ian Domnitz, told AFP news agency that the protest would not be classified as a hunger strike for 48 hours but was already being deemed contrary to regulations.

In response, prison officials have confiscated televisions and radios, stopped the sales of cigarettes and sweets, and stopped all visits.

The Israeli authorities say the restrictions are needed to prevent prisoners from organising further attacks from their prison cells, and the protest will not lead to a change in prison conditions.

"As far as I'm concerned, they can strike for a day, a month, until death. We will ward off this strike and it will be as if it never happened," Internal Security Minister Tzahi Hanegbi told reporters.

The stand-off could escalate in scale and political significance.

Issa Qarage, a prisoners' rights activist in the West Bank, told Reuters news agency that the hunger strike would spread from the main prisons to detention camps in military bases.

Protests have also been taking place in support of the prisoners, including in Bethlehem and the Gaza town of Beit Hanoun.

Meanwhile, in the latest violence, a Palestinian stabbed an Israeli border policeman near Jerusalem, who then shot and killed him, Israeli police said.

Israel Radio reported that the attacker appeared to be mentally ill.

Lissner stresses flood loss figure reasonable

BSS, Dhaka

Resident Coordinator of United Nations Jorgen Lissner yesterday said the government assessment on the damage of the current deluge in Bangladesh is "reasonable" in view of the UN experience in facing disasters around the globe.

"The UN thinks the government estimate of \$6.6 billion damage is reasonable in view of other disasters that the UN faced or responded to in other parts of the world," UNDP spokeswoman Lisa Hiller quoted Lissner as saying while asked to comment on the damage assessment.

Lissner, however, said the "damage assessment is not an exact science" and no-one knows the exact extent of damage at this stage.

Asked to comment on the damage estimates by a private policy watchdog, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), the UN coordinator said he was yet to go through their documents.

The difference between the government and CPD estimates matters little in terms of the UN flash appeal seeking \$210 million from the international community, he said.

"We've appealed for \$210 million but that's a small amount compared to what will be required either way to get Bangladesh back to its feet," he added.

Biman forms probe body on Brussels office graft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman Bangladesh Airlines has formed a two-member committee to probe the graft of its Brussels office reported by The Daily Star on Sunday, a press release said yesterday.

On completion of the probe, necessary action will be taken against the involved staff, Biman authorities said in the press release.

The State Minister for Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin receiving a complaint on July 2 has directed the authorities to probe the matter, which is already underway, the release added.

Shafiqur Rahman, a Bangladeshi expatriate in Brazil, on Saturday in a press conference accused the staff of Biman's Brussels office of taking bribes and harassing people.

Humayun Azad

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Countering their suspicion Nicolai said, "German police recovered the body of Prof Azad breaking into his flat which was locked from inside," adding, "The doctors are sure that the professor had died from a heart attack."

The charge d'affaires ruled out any possibility of an international probe into the death of the eminent writer and poet, as Kohinoor demands, and said, "We have full confidence in our police and doctors."

On suspicions of Azad being killed by Islamist fundamentalists, Nicolai said German doctors did not find any indication of a homicide, adding, "You can trust German doctors. They are well known professionals and you can trust their post-mortem report."

The envoy said the full post-mortem report would be given only to the deceased's family, if they make a formal request to the German prosecutor concerned. Azad's eldest daughter Mouli was learnt to have sought the post-mortem report from the German authorities concerned.

Citing a message from PEN International, Dhaka University Teachers' Association President Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique said the body might be sent back home on Thursday.

Azad was in Munich on a PEN fellowship to conduct research on German romantic poet Heinrich Heine.

Planning minister

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The Planning Commission will have to check the proposals out with the ministries for any queries in 10 days and the ministries are to send back the proposal with their replies in seven days, according to the latest decisions aimed to cut down on time in preparing and approving projects.

Development Project Proforma will replace Project Concept Paper and Project Paper and have two chapters instead of eight and 34 items against the previous 67. Besides, more changes have been proposed in the draft.

The government and the development partners have prepared the draft proposal to facilitate quick and easy implementation of the annual development projects.

Flood-hit villagers

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of fish at about Tk 25 lakh in Lalpur only.

Around a dozen cows raised for the Eid market, priced at about Tk 30,000 each, also died in the floods.

Raging floods washed away a two-km-long road in the locality built at a cost of Tk 40 lakh only a few months ago, he mentioned.

Shakkar, a social organisation, distributed relief among 200 people in Lalpur on Wednesday. Earlier, a judge and a local industrialist also distributed relief alongside government food assistance, locals said.

HC asks

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Bela says the petition came as the activities of Metro Makers breached the provisions in the Town Improvement Act 1953 and the Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act 1995.

The petition says Metro Makers was filling flood-flow lands that would have been disastrous to the city.

Dhaka residents will be more vulnerable to flash floods and waterlogging, as the proposed Modhumoti Model Town will block the natural flow of water, Bela says in a press release.

The court also asked six top government officials to explain in six weeks why they should not be directed to protect the sub flood-flow zone near Amin Bazar from illegal earth-filling by Metro Makers.

They are secretaries of housing and public works, land and environment and forest ministries, Rajuk chairman, director general of the Department of Environment and the deputy commissioner in Dhaka.

3 more Sylhet OCs

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houses and the grenade attack near an Awami League meeting venue within a space of 47 hours in this north-eastern city last week. Besides, eight sub-inspectors (SIs) and 25 constables are also on the list to be transferred to other ranges, police sources said.

With yesterday's transfers, Detective Branch (DB) of Police Inspector Nazrul Islam replaced Inspector Shahidul Islam as OC of Osmaninagar Police Station. Islam was sent to Chittagong Range.

The OC of Gowainghat Police Station, Raoshan, has been transferred to Chittagong Range and the OC of Biswanath Police Station, Shahedar Rahman, to Dhaka Range. However, no-one has yet been appointed as OCs at these two stations.

On Saturday Kotwali OC Shafiqur Rahman was sent back by his previous assignment as OC of South Surma Police Station, while Syed Mahbubur Rahman took over as Kotwali OC.

The decision of the shuffling was made last week following allegations against some officers, who had come to Sylhet from terror-stricken Khulna region before and after the deadly blast in Hajrat Shahjalal Shrine last April.

According to the allegations, some of the police personnel while working in Khulna division had links with the operatives of outlawed political groups.

It is also apprehended that these policemen might have a hand in the recent spate of bomb attacks in Sylhet.

The speculation found a firm footing after an activist of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party named Mahbubur Rahman alias Thandu had been caught in Compiganj upazila of the district on July 28 last. Thandu, who hails from Harinakundu upazila of Jhenidah, was wanted in a number of criminal cases, the Sylhet superintendent of police (SP) said.

A major shake-up in the police administration also followed the April-2 grenade blast at Hajrat Shahjalal Shrine, as different intelligence agencies reported flaws in the security arrangements for the British high commissioner who was wounded in the attack.

The SP of Sylhet was suspended and withdrawn within three days of the

attack. The then ASP Sylhet Police Headquarters was transferred next, followed by OC Kotwali, who was also the first investigation officer of the shrine blast case.

At that time a list of 12 inspectors, 28 SIs, 30 ASIs and over 600 constables was prepared for immediate withdrawal from Sylhet Range. But all of the short-listed policemen had not been moved that time.

Last week it was decided that the planned shuffling would be carried out to full this time, a police source said yesterday.

Meanwhile, family members of British citizen S M Nunu Miah, who was arrested in connection to the August 7 blast near an Awami League meeting venue, alleged to the British High Commission officials in Dhaka of police torture on him during interrogation.

Nunu Miah's brother Lucky Miah also took the matter to a deputy inspector general of police, while some community-based associations in UK have expressed concerns over the allegation.

The Joint Interrogation Cell is now interrogating Nunu Miah in the capital. Earlier, he was remanded by Sylhet Kotwali police for three days.

Mercury

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no-shows.

Sporting controversies also rumbled on as Greece digested the suspensions of local sprint heroes Kostadinos Kenteris and Ekaterini Thanou pending the outcome of a drugs probe.

Meanwhile Sunday's judo competition will see Japan attempt to add to the two golds won by heroes Tadahiro Nomura and Ryoko Tani.

But the action was overshadowed by the failure of Iranian two-time world champion Arash Miresaeili to make the weight for his contest against an Israeli fighter he had previously vowed to boycott.

Two more gold medals were decided on the shooting range, Ukraine's Olena Kostevych winning the women's 10-metre air pistol event and Alexei Alipov of Russia taking the men's strap final.

Nation mourns

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Senior leaders of the AL and its front organisations, and different political and socio-cultural organisations placed their tokens of respect next. Among them were Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal leaders Hasanul Haq Inu and Syed Zafar Sazzad.

The waiting mourners then proceeded slowly and offered the flowers they brought with them in memory of their beloved leader. They carried black banners demanding immediate execution of Bangabandhu's killers. Banners with mourning messages were also on display.

From Dhanmondi, Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina went to Banani Graveyard and offered fateha and placed wreaths at the graves of her kin killed on the night of August 15.

On this day in 1975, Banga-bandhu and all his family members except two daughters -- Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana -- were ruthlessly assassinated by a splinter group of the armed forces.

National and party flags were flown at half-mast, besides hoisting black flags, at all offices of the AL and its front organisations across the country to observe the day.

The AL organised a photo exhibition on Bangabandhu in front of Bangabandhu Bhaban and Awami Secchasebak League held a blood donation programme as part of its programme in observance of the day.

AL workers organised milad mahfils and fed the destitute in various areas of the city and elsewhere of the country. The historic March-7 speech of Bangabandhu and songs on him were played at different places.

Hasina and central AL leaders will attend a mourning programme today at Tungipara, the village home of Bangabandhu.

GOPALGANJ

Our Gopalganj correspondent adds: The 29th death anniversary of Bangabandhu was observed at his birthplace through a number of programmes including placing wreaths at his grave, offering fateha and distribution of food among the destitute.

Senior AL leaders including Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Obaidul Kader, Mukul Bose, Faruk Khan and Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah placed wreaths at the grave on behalf of the AL central committee.

HARTAL PEACEFUL

The six-hour hartal from 6:00am yesterday passed off more or less peacefully except in Barisal where ruling coalition activists obstructed, attacked and foiled some programmes organised by the AL and its front organisations to mark the day and injured at least nine AL leaders and workers.

The AL enforced the hartal to press home its demand for immediate execution of the verdict in Bangabandhu murder case and to protest the scrapping of the official status of August 15 as the national mourning day.

During the hartal hours, opposition leaders and workers brought out mourning processions on Bangabandhu Avenue and Russell Square at Dhanmondi in the capital.

MK Anwar

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reputation (of a public representative) as well as people's love for BNP earned over the years," Anwar was quoted as saying.

ABM Wadudul Huq, father of BM Enamul Huq Kaiyum, commissioner of ward-25 of the Dhaka City Corporation, filed the GD on August 1 with Khilgaon Police Station accusing the minister of filing "false cases" against his son one after another by hired people.

Ward Commissioner Kaiyum hailed from Homna that falls under the constituency of Anwar in Comilla.

Mannan appeals

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which the HC order for deploying army personnel at each polling centre was violated.

The EC had heard both sides on the petition but did not deliver its judgement.

Following a writ petition by ruling BNP lawmaker Mosaddak Ali Falu, winner of the by-polls, an HC division bench on July 17 stayed further proceedings on the petition for three months.

Rahman yesterday told The Daily Star that the court will decide after hearing whether it will vacate the stay order.

Mob beats

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criminals of Kafrul Police and is an accused in seven criminal cases. Russell, Imran, Monsur and Liton, the accomplices, however shot their way through the mob.

Police rescued Babu and rushed him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), but doctors declared him dead at 6:30pm.

Mannan, who owns nine shops in the neighbourhood, and his staff Kalam suffered serious injuries in the head and legs. The criminals beat them with iron rods when they were sitting inside Mannan's Brother Engineering Workshop.

Babu's father Ali Ahmed alleged his son was killed as part of a plot by local pug-doggers for his taking a stand against their illegal business.

Mannan is undergoing treatment at the DMCH, while Kalam was treated at a local clinic.

Kamrangirchar police, meanwhile, retrieved the body of Shahid, 35, scrap plastic trader, floating near Shaheed Nagar Bailey Bridge on Buriganga river at around 10:30am.

The police suspect unknown criminals strangled him with a towel that they found tied around the victim's neck before dumping the body into the river.

Quoting the family, police said Shahid went out of his Shaheed Nagar house in Lalbagh on Saturday morning for his shop in the locality and he was missing since then.

In the other incident, Khilgaon police retrieved the decomposed body of an unidentified youth from a water body in east Rampura in the afternoon. Details of the incident could not be known immediately.

6 more infants die

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people fell sick from dysentery yesterday bringing the number of the patients to 26,357 so far.

Skin and eye diseases also worsened in the flood shelters. As many as 21,647 people have so far fallen sick from eye and skin diseases. Snakebites in the flood-hit areas claimed 60 lives including one yesterday.

Dengue, a mosquito borne disease, has claimed five lives since June, while 36 got affected yesterday. Sources in the health directorate said 1,987 patients are now receiving treatment for dengue at different city hospitals.

US to donate

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Programme (WFP).

He assured the government that the US will consider further help to Bangladesh for post-flood rehabilitation on completion of its flood-damage assessment.

The US has already provided 1.6 million water-purifying tablets for the flood victims, with other funds for the rehabilitation and emergency relief currently being carried out by the WFP and Care, Bangladesh, said Thomas.

Initially, \$50,000 was given as relief by the US Embassy in Dhaka from the ambassador's discretionary funds.

The ambassador also met with Food and Disaster Management Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf yesterday. Thomas returned from his yearly vacation earlier this week.

India's Independence

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to determine whether Kashmir should be folded into India or merged with Pakistan.

Singh, speaking from the ramparts of the 17th-century Red Fort in the old quarter of Delhi, said cross-border violence in Kashmir could be a stumbling block to peace efforts with Pakistan.

"Trends of cross-border terrorism and violence make our task more difficult and complex," he said speaking from behind a bullet-proof glass.

Guerrilla violence has mounted in recent weeks in Kashmir where the main separatist alliance All Parties Hurriyat Conference called for a strike on the Indian independence day.

Ahmadiyya mosques

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The KNPB leaders said they are suspicious of motives of the statement by the Human Rights Commission of the UN that expressed concern over Ahmadiyya repression in the country.

The United Nations, however, keeps mum when Muslims are repressed in Iraq and Palestine, they added.

"The government should not take its stance against 12 crore Muslims to protect the interest of a handful of Kadianis," Khaliqie told the press conference.

He observed it amounts to a gross misinterpretation of the Holy Qur'an when the Ahmadiyyas identify themselves as Muslims.

KNAPB leaders also claimed that Jamaat-e-Islami, a part of the coalition government, who too wants Ahmadiyyas to be declared non-Muslims, has extended its support to KNPB in its campaign against Ahmadiyyas.

"In 1993, a High Court bench of Justice Abdul Jalil and Justice Mohammed Fazlul Karim declared Kadianis non-Muslims and 50 Islamic states including Saudi Arabia declared Kadianis non-Muslims," Khaliqie said.

Our staff correspondent from Khulna adds: Security around the Ahmadiyya mosque in Khulna city was tightened as International Khatme Nabuwat Movement Bangladesh (IKNMB) stubbornly resisted removal of the signboard they posted there on Friday night.

IKNMB zealots on Friday night in presence of police hung a signboard reading "Khulna Nirala -- the Kadiani Upashanalaya" against the original signboard that read "Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, Khulna".

They forcibly hung the new signboard what they said was to caution the

Rab nabs Ctg criminal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested a top criminal of the city here yesterday.

The criminal identified as Shafiqul Alam alias Samrat is an accused in 13 criminal offences including two murders.

Sources said a Rab team in a pre-dawn raid arrested Samrat from Feroz Shah Colony under Pahartoli thana at around 4:00pm.

Qaeda deadline

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Muslims can celebrate your exit from Iraq."

The group has repeatedly threatened Italy and has claimed responsibility for attacks, including the Madrid train bombings in March, but has not been officially linked to any of them.

In the statement, the Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades warned Berlusconi he would "pay with his head for the crimes his troops committed and are still committing in Iraq."

"We declare Berlusconi as our target and... we will not stop our raids on his country and neither will it enjoy peace until Iraq is secure," it said.

Italian troops are part of the US-led multinational force in Iraq.

US officials say the group's links to al-Qaeda are unclear. But Italy has taken its threats seriously and has renewed security for religious sites after

attacks on Christian churches in Iraq earlier this month.

In earlier statements, the Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades has threatened to launch attacks in Italy similar to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks al-Qaeda staged in US cities.

The group has denounced European states for their support for US foreign policy and vowed to launch attacks in Europe after a "truce" issued by al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden expired in July.

That truce gave countries three months to pull out of Afghanistan, Iraq and other Muslim states or face attacks like the Madrid train bombings, which killed 191 people.

Last week, an Italian interior ministry source said secret services believed a single individual, most likely a north African, was behind all the threats.

Violence erupts

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vehicles into leaving. Meanwhile, a US soldier was killed in northern Baghdad yesterday, the military said in a statement.

The soldier was killed when a home-made bomb exploded at 1:30 am (2130 GMT Saturday) in the northern part of the Iraqi capital.

A Dutch soldier was killed and several wounded in clashes between multinational forces and insurgents in southern Iraq, a military spokesman said.

"Clashes occurred Saturday night in which one Dutch soldier was killed while several were wounded," said a spokesman for the British military from the southern city of Basra.

The Dutch defence ministry confirmed that a 29-year old soldier had died and five other were severely wounded but were now in a stable condition.

The ministry's statement said the soldiers were hit after a Dutch army vehicle near Ar Rumaythah close to the Dutch base in As Samawah came under attack.

According to the ministry it was not clear who was responsible for the attack, but the Dutch army will open an investigation.

This is only the second time a Dutch soldier has died in Iraq. The Netherlands has some 1,300 troops stationed in southern Iraq under British command.

A Ukrainian officer was killed by a mine blast yesterday south of Baghdad, a spokesman for the multinational division operating in central Iraq said.

The officer, Yuri Ivanov, died while patrolling the outskirts of the predominantly Shiite city of Suwayrah, Colonel Artur Domanski was quoted as saying by Polish news agency PAP.

"No other soldier in the patrol unit