

YEMEN CIVIL WAR

100 believed killed in Saudi-led air strike: ICRC

More than 100 people are believed to have been killed when the Saudi-led coalition fighting Huthi rebels launched an air strike on a detention centre in Yemen, the International Committee of the Red Cross said yesterday.

"We estimate over 100 people were killed," Franz Rauchenstein, head of delegation for the ICRC in Yemen, told AFP after he travelled to the city of Dhamar where the air strikes hit.

He said that at least 40 survivors were being treated for their injuries in hospitals in the city, which lies south of the capital Sanaa.

The Saudi-led military coalition said earlier that it launched air strikes against a Huthi military target that "stores drones and missiles".

However, the Huthi television channel Al-Masirah said that "dozens were killed and injured" in seven air strikes that hit a building the rebels used as a prison.

The ICRC has sent medical teams and hundreds of body bags to Dhamar, saying that it had visited detainees at the location before.

"As we speak, the teams are working relentlessly to find survivors under the rubble" and are "currently collecting bodies,"

Rauchenstein said, adding that the chances of finding anyone else alive in the heavy debris "are very low".

The coalition intervened in 2015 in support of the government after the Iran-aligned Huthis swept south from their northern stronghold to seize Sanaa and much of Yemen -- the Arab world's poorest nation.

Fighting over the past four years in Yemen has already claimed tens of thousands of lives and sparked what the United Nations calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis.



A burning barricade is pictured during a protest near Hong Kong International Airport yesterday. Inset, an elderly man implores police not to charge at Tung Chung MTR train station in Hong Kong. More than a dozen flights were cancelled yesterday as thousands of pro-democracy activists blocked routes to Hong Kong's airport, a day after protesters and police fought pitched battles in some of the worst violence seen in the city since unrest began three months ago.

TEXAS MASS SHOOTING

5 dead, 21 injured

AFP, Washington

A gunman hijacked a US postal truck and opened fire at random in the US state of Texas Saturday, shooting dead at least five people and wounding many others before dying in a shootout with officers.

Police identified the suspect as a white man in his mid-30s, but could not yet name him or say why he carried out the attack in the West Texas cities of Midland and Odessa.

Coming less than a month after a gunman killed 22 people in the Texas city of El Paso, the latest bloodshed immediately ignited fresh calls for gun control to stem the US scourge of mass shootings.

"We have at least 21 victims, 21 shooting victims and at least five deceased at this point in time," Odessa city Police Chief Michael Gerke told reporters.

Three police officers were injured, he said. The Odessa Police Department had earlier reported that a suspect was "driving around Odessa shooting at random people" and "just hijacked a US mail carrier truck."

Troopers had initially tried to pull over a passenger vehicle on the Interstate 20 highway but before it stopped, "the male driver (and only occupant in the vehicle) pointed a rifle toward the rear window of his car and fired several shots toward the DPS patrol unit," the Texas Department of Public Safety said in a statement.

One trooper was wounded, the suspect fled the scene, "and continued shooting innocent people," the department said.

Some of the shots were fired on the highway linking the cities of Odessa and Midland, where cars were left with bullet holes.

"I just found out a friend of mine passed away," David Turner, the mayor of Odessa where the incident ended, told Fox News.

Ready for talks with India

Says Pak FM in an apparent turnaround, calls for release of Jammu & Kashmir leaders as precondition for dialogue

TNN, DAWN ONLINE

After Pakistan PM Imran Khan had ruled out dialogue with India until it reversed the decision to revoke J&K's special status, his foreign minister S M Qureshi in an apparent turnaround on Saturday said that Pakistan was open to dialogue if India released the J&K leaders and allowed him to meet them.

Qureshi was quoted as having said that Pakistan had never said no to dialogue with India. However, he added that "we cannot see the environment of dialogue being created by India". Some of the conditions for dialogue Qureshi was said to have specified in his interview to BBC included India lifting restrictions in the Valley, releasing the imprisoned Kashmiri leaders and allowing him to meet them.

In his NYT opinion piece, Khan was quoted as having said that dialogue was possible only when India reversed "its illegal annexation of Kashmir, ends the curfew and lockdown, and withdraws its troops to the barracks".

While Khan and other Pakistani leaders have threatened that the situation the Valley could lead to a war, if not a nuclear exchange, Qureshi also said Saturday war was not

an option to deal with the issue of Kashmir.

Qureshi's emphasis on dialogue came even as India again underscored its position that talks were possible only if, as the government has repeatedly said, Pakistan took verifiable and irreversible action against cross-border terrorism.

Meanwhile, Imran Khan and US Senator Bernie Sanders yesterday raised the plight of Kashmiris, who have been living under a lockdown for four weeks in occupied Kashmir, while separately addressing the 56th Convention of Islamic Society of North America (ISNA).

Speaking at the event, Sanders, a Democratic presidential hopeful for the US Elections 2020, termed India's move to annex occupied Kashmir as "unacceptable".

"I am also deeply concerned about the situation in Kashmir where the Indian government has revoked Kashmiri autonomy, cracked down on dissent and instituted a communications blackout.

"The crackdown in the name of security is also denying the Kashmiri people access to medical care. Even many respected doctors in India have acknowledged that the Indian government-imposed restrictions on travel are threatening the life-saving care that patients need," he said.

KASHMIR TENSIONS

Qureshi calls for lifting restrictions in the Valley

Pak PM, US Senator Sanders raise plight of Kashmiris



Bloc won't change deal

Says EU's chief negotiator Barnier as MPs' Brexit showdown looms

AFP, London

EU negotiator Michel Barnier said in an interview published yesterday the bloc will not change the divorce deal agreed with Britain as MPs prepare for a showdown week over Brexit.

Barnier insisted the agreement's most contentious element, a so-called backstop mechanism to keep the Northern Irish border open in all post-Brexit circumstances, must remain in place.

"The backstop is the maximum amount of flexibility that the EU can offer," Barnier wrote in the Sunday Telegraph newspaper, following what he called "intense discussions" among member states.

He added he was "not optimistic" of avoiding Britain crashing out of the European Union without an agreement on October 31.

The stance is an apparent setback for British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who since taking power in July has called for the backstop to be scrapped.

Johnson has insisted the country must depart the bloc with or without a deal

on the latest delayed deadline in order to honour the 2016 referendum which saw 52 percent of Britons vote to leave.

His bid to reopen the agreement struck with Brussels by predecessor Theresa May was encouraged by recent meetings with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron.

The British premier said in a Sunday Times interview he saw "some very interesting signs of progress in our conversations".

However he conceded: "There's a good chance we'll get a deal and there's a good chance that we won't."

Johnson stoked intense controversy and protests Saturday across Britain after announcing Wednesday he had instructed Queen Elizabeth II to suspend parliament in the final weeks before Brexit.

The move was widely seen as a bid to limit the time his opponents will have to thwart a no-deal departure from the EU.

Thousands took to the streets of towns and cities across the country to decry the move to close parliament -- known as proroguing -- from mid-September until October 14.



Assam unit of BJP demands nationwide NRC

INDIA TODAY ONLINE

The Assam unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is extremely anxious over the speculation of a large number of 'Hindustani' names excluded from the final National Register of Citizens (NRC) list.

The Assam BJP has demanded a nationwide NRC at the earliest.

However, the Assam BJP is also increasingly worried over the speculation that a large number of illegal foreigners' names were included in the final NRC list and those of Hindus were excluded.

Several BJP leaders are also speaking publicly against the NRC saying that the government will do anything for the genuine Indians if any Indian names were excluded from the final NRC.

Unhappy with the final NRC, Assam BJP chief Ranjeet Kumar Dass said that the party is now demanding a nationwide NRC.

"We have seen that a large number of Indian citizens' names have not been listed in this NRC list. Among these many are coming from Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, West Bengal, Tripura and they have valid documents. But their names have not been listed. They have applied on several occasions but their names are missing. NRC is a national phenomenon, but it has been started from Assam. So the Assam state BJP has demanded to implement it entire the nation in the interest of the Hindustani," Ranjeet Kumar Dass said.

Another Assam BJP MLA Dilip Kumar Paul claimed that lakhs of illegal Bangladeshi Muslims have been included in the list.

Hurricane Dorian strikes Bahamas

AFP, Miami

Hurricane Dorian closed in on the Bahamas yesterday as a catastrophic Category 5 storm that forecasters said will pummel the low-lying island chain with devastating winds, towering storm surges and torrential rains for 30 hours or more.

The slow-moving storm was packing sustained winds of 175 mph (280 kph), gaining in power as it bore down on the Bahamas' northern Abaco islands 35 miles (56 km) away.

"The eyewall of #Dorian is reaching the Abaco Islands. Residents there should take immediate shelter," the Miami-based National Hurricane Center tweeted.

Many residents of the Abaco Islands were reported to have opted to ride out the monster storm rather than heed government warnings to evacuate.

The Nassau Guardian quoted local resident Troy Albury as saying 150 people stayed behind in Guana Cay, in the center of the Abaco islands, to face the storm's fury. Only eight left on the last ferry out, he said.

Power went out as the storm approached, a resident of Man-o-war Cay in the Abacos told AFP.

"You're talking a major hurricane over the Bahamas for 30 hours plus," said NHC director Ken Graham on Facebook Live.

"That's major hurricane winds, that's storm surge of 10 and even 20 feet in some of those areas," he said.



A fire burns a tract of the Amazon jungle as a truck goes by near the Xavante indigenous people's village of Babaco in Aroeos, Mato Grosso state, Brazil on Saturday night. The number of fires in Brazil's Amazon basin is still on the rise, even though the government has banned burning, officials said.

Former Indian president's family left out of NRC list

INDIA TODAY ONLINE

The family members of former President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed's nephew, who were left out of the draft National Register of Citizens (NRC) last year, have again not been included in the final list which was published on Saturday.

The updated final NRC, which validates bonafide Indian citizens of Assam, was out on Saturday, with over 19 lakh applicants who failed to make it to the list staring at an uncertain future. Some of them were a few family members of Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed.

Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed was the fifth President of India from 1974 to 1977. The family of the son of Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed's brother has not been listed in the final NRC.

Sajid Ali Ahmed, son of Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed's nephew, said that his name was not listed in the final NRC. Not just Sajid Ali Ahmed, his father, too, has not figured in the Assam NRC final list. Speaking to India Today TV, Sajid Ali

Ahmed said, "My grandfather's name is Ikramuddin Ali Ahmed and he is the brother of former President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed. I am his grandson. We are living in Barbhagia village under Rongia subdivision. We are local residents. Our names are not listed and we are worried about it. We are the family members of the former President of India, but our names are missing in the list."

Many government employees were also among the 19 lakh people who were left out of the final list of the NRC.

A retired SBI officer, his wife, and daughter, too, have been excluded from the final NRC.

Sabimal Biswas, a 73-year-old retired State Bank of India (SBI) officer, now seems totally helpless after he didn't find his name in the final NRC list.

Born in 1947 in Assam's Karimganj district, Sabimal Biswas said he was shocked upon finding that he, along with his wife and daughter, were excluded from the list.



Fakhruddin Ali

LEBANON BORDER

Israeli troops, Hezbollah fighters exchange fire

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Israel's military said yesterday anti-tank missiles from Lebanon targeted an army base and vehicles and that it responded with fire into southern Lebanon.

Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah group said its fighters destroyed an Israeli military vehicle, killing or wounding those inside. There was no immediate word from the Israeli military on any casualties.

Israel has been on alert for a possible confrontation with Hezbollah for the past week after drones attacked what security officials in the region described as a target in a Beirut suburb linked to precision-guided missile projects.

Hezbollah's leader said late on Saturday its field commanders were ready to respond to the drone attack, which he blamed on Israel.

Amid the Hezbollah threats, Israel had moved reinforcements into the border area, which had been largely quiet since both long-time enemies fought a month-long war in 2006.

In a statement, the Israeli military said several anti-tank missiles were fired from Lebanon day and "a number of hits were confirmed".

Following the missile attacks, Israelis living near the frontier were instructed by authorities to stay indoors. Reuters television showed smoke rising along the frontier, and explosions could be heard.

Earlier yesterday, Lebanese military said an Israeli drone had dropped incendiary material and sparked a fire in a pine forest by the border.

The fires near the border in Lebanon "originate with operations by our forces in the area," the Israeli military said in a statement, without elaborating.

German leader asks Poland's forgiveness for WW2

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier yesterday asked Poland's forgiveness for history's bloodiest conflict during a ceremony in the Polish city of Wielun, where the first World War II bombs fell 80 years ago. "I bow before the victims of the attack on Wielun. I bow before the Polish victims of German tyranny. And I ask your forgiveness," Steinmeier said in both German and Polish. Poland suffered some of the worst horrors of World War II: nearly six million Poles died in the conflict that killed more than 50 million people overall. That figure includes the six million Jews who died in the Holocaust, half of them Polish. Polish President Andrzej Duda for his part denounced Nazi Germany's attack on Poland, calling it "an act of barbarity" and "a war crime."

One dead, eight injured in French knife rampage

A man wielding a skewer and knife went on the rampage in the French city of Lyon on Saturday, leaving a 19-year-old man dead and eight others injured, including three critically. A police source said the alleged perpetrator was an Afghan asylum-seeker, unknown previously to both the police and the intelligence services. An eye-witness in Villeurbanne, a suburb of Lyon, described the attack as frenzied. "There was a man at the 57 (bus stop) who started striking out with a knife in all directions," said a young girl whose top was stained with blood. "He managed to hit, to cut open one person's stomach," she said. "He stabbed a guy in the head, he cut the ear of a lady and the lady was dying at the bus stop and no-one came to help," she added, sobbing.

Pope got stuck in Vatican lift, freed by fireman



Pope Francis said yesterday he was late to his weekly Angelus prayer because he had been stuck in a Vatican elevator and had to be freed by firemen. He followed the tale of his rescue with a surprise announcement about the creation of 13 new, red-hatted cardinals of the Catholic Church -- including 10 possible future popes. "I have to apologise for being late," the smiling 82-year-old pontiff told crowds of faithful patiently waiting for him to appear at his study window overlooking Saint Peter's Square.

SOURCE: NDTV, AFP