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GAZA STRIP

15 killed in Israeli air strikes

Senior commander of militant group, child among the dead

AFP, Gaza City

A senior commander of Islamic Jihad was among more than 15 people killed in Israeli air strikes on the Gaza Strip yesterday, prompting the militant group to warn Israel has made a "declaration of war".

A child was among those killed in the strikes, the

enclave's health ministry said, while Israel's military estimated 15 combatants were killed. The Israeli army said the bombardment was part of an operation "against targets in the Palestinian Islamic

Jihad" group. Flames poured out of a building in Gaza City following the air strikes, while wounded Palestinians were evacuated

Islamic Jihad said the Israeli strikes amounted to a "declaration of war".

"We call on all the resistance forces and their military wings to respond in a unified front to this aggression," the group said in a statement.

Gaza's health ministry reported "a five-year-old girl, targeted by the Israeli occupation" was among nine



Zimbabwe batter Sikandar Raza jumps in the air to celebrate his century against Bangladesh during the first ODI at the Harare Sports Club on Friday. The veteran batter scored an unbeaten 135 runs off 109 deliveries as the hosts romped to a five-wicket victory. PHOTO: AFP

Raza, Kaia stun Tigers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sikandar Raza Innocent Kaia stitched together a record stand to down Bangladesh in their preferred format for the first time in nine years as Zimbabwe recorded a fivewicket victory in the first ODI of the three-match series at the Harare Sports

Riding on Raza and Kaia's 192-run fourth wicket stand -- the highest partnership for Zimbabwe for any wicket against Bangladesh -- Zimbabwe chased down a 304-run target with 10 balls to spare. It was the highest successful Zimbabwe against Bangladesh and also brought an end to Bangladesh's 19-match winning streak against them in ODIs.

In fitting manner, the winning runs were scored in style by Raza -- with a massive six over midwicket off a Mosaddek Hossain delivery in the penultimate over. Raza remained unbeaten for a boundary

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

Another tragedy on highway

Father, his 40-day-old baby girl killed in crash



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A father and his 40-day-old baby girl were killed when the driver of the car they were in lost controland the vehicle fell into a roadside canal in Laxmipur area of Sylhet's Jaintiapur upazila yesterday morning.

Three others of the family were also injured.

The accident took place on the Sylhet-Tamabil highway around 9:30am. The family from Narsingdi was going to visit some tourist spots in Sylhet's Gowainghat upazila.

Quoting locals, Golam Dastagir Ahmed, officer-incharge of Jaintiapur Police Station, said, "The approach road to a bridge over the canal is bent, and the private car lost its control and plunged into the canal. Locals rescued the passengers and took them to hospital."

The deceased are Rubel Ahmad, 35, of Kundarpar village of Narsingdi's Shibpur upazila, and his infant SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

HIRING FOREIGN WORKERS IN MALAYSIA

Eight IT officials held for taking bribe

PORIMOL PALMA

Eight top officials of an IT company that provides software to the Malaysian government were arrested Tuesday for accepting bribes to recruit workers, including Bangladeshis.

The arrests lend credence to longstanding allegations that corruption in the recruitment process leads to high recruitment

officials after months-long investigation by Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) will create a scope to clean up Malaysia's recruitment sector of huge anomalies that have been going on for years, said labour migration analysts.

According to Malaysian newspaper The Star, the MACC arrested CEO and seven other officials of Bestinet, which provides an online system -- Foreign Worker Centralized Management System to the Malaysian (FWCMS) government that is used to recruit foreign workers.

The CEO as well as other suspects, including a senior official in the firm were arrested when they were summoned to MACC on Tuesday night. However, only six were remanded, including the CEO, while two others were released on bail, according to the report.

The suspects were brought before Magistrate Irza Zulakha Rohanuddin on Wednesday who allowed a three-day remand order until August 5.

Malaysian daily The Star learnt that Bestinet had processed a total it learnt that the "payment" taken of 3,45,861 applications of foreign workers between May and July 29.

MACC director of investigations Datuk Seri Hishamuddin Hashim confirmed the remand and that investigation was ongoing, according to the report published on Wednesday.

The FWCMS, which was used for recruiting Bangladeshi workers in 2016-18, was also in place when Bangladesh and Malaysia resumed the process of labour recruitment in early July under a new deal signed in December last year.

In September, 2018, Malaysia suspended hiring Bangladeshi workers on allegations of malpractices in the recruitment process and high recruitment costs.

After resumption, recruiting agents and civil society groups in Malaysia and Bangladesh have been calling for stopping syndication of recruiting agents, saving it would drive upmigration cost, just as it had between 2016 and 2018 when each worker had to pay up to Tk 4 lakh, even though the two countries initially set the cost at only Tk 40,000.

According to The Star report, [Ťk 17,000-32,000] per approval ofrecruitment application.

Asked about the matter, Malavsia-based Anti-Human Trafficking Council Taskforce Member Abdul Aziz Ismail vesterday told this correspondent that the agents from Bangladesh, through their partners in Malaysia, make payments through hundi.

He said his research in the past found that agents in Malaysia bribe employers as well as Malaysian officials concerned for issuing job approvals. For example, if a company needs 10 foreign workers, 100 approvals will be secured for recruiting additional workers SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

Priceless treasures recovered from Spanish shipwreck

Stories of buried treasure and ancient shipwrecks have captivated for centuries, from pirate tales to Hollywood blockbusters. For one team of explorers, however, legend became reality when they uncovered a trove of artifacts from a 350-yearold sunken Spanish galleon -- including coins, gemstones and priceless jewels once belonging to seafaring knights. The Nuestra Señora de las

Maravillas (or Our Lady of Wonders) sank in 1656 after it collided with another boat from its fleet and crashed into a Bahamas. The vessel was carrying a haul of treasure, some of which was reserved

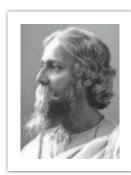
as royal tax for King

Philip IV, from Cuba

to Seville, Spain. The 891-tonne ship contained more cargo than usual, as it had also been tasked with transporting treasure retrieved from another

ship that had sunk two years earlier. There have already been several successful attempts to retrieve the ship's cargo, with almost 3.5 million items recovered between 1650s and 1990s, according to shipwreck specialist Allen Exploration, which carried out a two-year expedition from 2020.

Tagore's 81th death anniv today



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 81st death anniversary of Biswakabi Rabindranath Tagore is being observed in the country today.

Different socio-cultural organisations have drawn up programmes to observe the day in a befitting manner.

According to calendar, Gregorian Rabindranath died at the age of 80 on August 7, 1941, but his death anniversary is traditionally observed on 22th Sraban of Bengali calendar.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5



A human haulier that is barely held together and missing the front bumper plying the Dhaka-Aricha highway near the Savar bus stand yesterday morning. The ramshackle state of the vehicle strongly indicates that it is not fit for the road and its continued operation poses risks to its passengers and others.

World food prices drop again

Says FAO after Ukraine grain pact

World food prices fell sharply in July, partly thanks to a deal between Ukraine and Russia lifting a sea blockade that had stopped Ukrainian grain shipments, a UN agency said vesterday.

Food prices soared to a record high in March after Russia invaded Ukraine, raising fears that the conflict between two of the world's breadbaskets would spark hunger in countries relying on their exports.

While prices remain high, they have now dropped for a fifth straight month, falling by 8.6 percent in July compared to June, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization's food price index.

The index, which measures the monthly change in international prices of a basket of food commodities, was still 13.1 percent higher than in July 2021.

The biggest drop was for vegetable oil prices, which fell by 19.2 percent between June and July to hit a 10-month

The cereal price index logged a monthly drop of 11.5 percent, the FAO said.

The decline for cereals was led by a fall in world wheat prices, "partly in reaction to the agreement reached between Ukraine and the Russian Federation to unblock Ukraine's main Black Sea ports", the UN agency said.

Shipments under last month's UN-brokered deal began this week, with a first vessel carrying corn leaving Ukraine for Lebanon on Monday.