

Israeli artillery fires on Gaza every 30 secs

AFP, Netivot

Like clockwork, every 30 seconds Israeli artillery goes into action against a barely visible target somewhere in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip.

Israel has vowed to "crush" Hamas after gunmen from the Palestinian Islamist group stormed across the border and killed over 1,300 people – the deadliest attack on the country since it was founded 75 years ago.

Six days since the offensive took Israel by surprise, its army has kept pounding the densely populated Gaza Strip with artillery shells and air strikes, as it prepares for a possible ground invasion.

Israel has massed forces, tanks and other heavy armour around Gaza and called up 300,000 reservists.

In a statement the army said it has bombarded Gaza with approximately 6,000 munitions containing a total of 4,000 tonnes of explosives since last Saturday.

Troops have deployed 150 mm artillery guns in fields along the border with Gaza, placing them a few metres (yards) apart, near the towns of Netivot and Sderot.



Palestinians with their belongings flee to safer areas in Gaza City after Israeli air strikes yesterday. Israel has called for the immediate relocation of 1.1 million people in Gaza amid its massive bombardment in retaliation for Hamas's attacks, with the United Nations warning of "devastating" consequences.

PHOTO: AFP

NORTHERN FRANCE

Teacher fatally stabbed in school attack Prosecutors open terror probe

AFP, Arras

A man of Chechen origin stabbed to death a teacher and severely wounded two other adults yesterday at a school in northeastern France, with prosecutors opening a probe into a suspected act of terror.

The attack in the town of Arras comes with France, which has large Jewish and Muslim populations, on high alert for security risks following the Hamas attack on Israel last weekend.

The attacker, 20, who has not been named, was from Russia's mainly Muslim southern Caucasus region of Chechnya and was already on a French national register known as "Fiche S" as a potential security threat, a police source, told AFP.

The perpetrator cried an Arabic phrase, according to the preliminary elements of the investigation, a second police source added.

ISRAELI AIRSTRIKES ON GAZA

Thousands hold protest rallies around the world

AGENCIES

Tens of thousands of people demonstrated across the world yesterday in support of the Palestinians and against Israeli airstrikes pounding Gaza, underscoring the risk of a wider regional conflict erupting as Israel prepares for a possible ground invasion in the coastal strip.

From Amman, Jordan, to Yemen's capital of Sanaa, Muslims poured out onto the streets after weekly Friday prayers, angered by the Israeli strikes in a war that began after Hamas launched an unprecedented surprise attack on Israel last Saturday.

At Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, Israeli police had been permitting only older men, women and children to enter the sprawling hilltop compound for prayers, trying to limit the potential for violence as tens of thousands attend on a typical Friday prayer.

"We can't live, we can't breathe, they are killing everything that is good within us," said Ahmad Barbour, a 57-year-old cleaner in a clean white thobe, seething after police blocked him from entering for prayers. "Everything that is forbidden to

us is allowed to them," he added, referring to Israelis.

In Beirut, thousands of Hezbollah supporters waved Lebanese, Palestinian and Hezbollah flags, chanting slogans supporting Gaza and calling "death to Israel." The Iranian-backed group in



neighboring Lebanon has launched attacks since the Hamas assault, but largely hasn't entered the war.

Across Iran, a supporter of Hamas and Israel's regional archenemy, demonstrators protested. In Tehran, the country's capital, they burned Israeli and American flags, chanting: "Death to Israel," "Death to

America," "Israel will be doomed," and "Palestine will be the conqueror."

In Indonesia, Islamic cleric Abu Bakar Bashir, the suspected mastermind of the 2002 Bali bombings that killed 202 people, joined dozens of people in a march against Israel in the Javanese city of Solo, reports Reuters.

In the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka, Muslim activists chanted slogans as they protested against Israel's actions after Friday prayers at the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque.

Members of Japan's Muslim community staged a protest near the Israeli embassy in Tokyo. Participants held signs and chanted slogans such as "Israel, terrorist" and "Free Palestine".

In Sri Lanka, protesters held up signs saying, "Palestine you will never walk alone".

Protesters also took to the streets in India's Kashmir region although Friday prayers at the main mosque in the regional capital Srinagar were cancelled to avoid unrest.

Pro-Palestinian rallies were also planned in Rome, Munich, Istanbul, Belgrade and other cities.

Ground attack on Gaza would be unacceptable

Putin cautions Israel

REUTERS, Bishkek



Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday called for an end to the bloodshed in the Middle East and cautioned Israel that a ground offensive in Gaza would lead to an "absolutely unacceptable" number of civilian casualties.

Israel's military yesterday called for all civilians of Gaza City, more than 1 million people, to relocate south within 24 hours. Putin said Israel had been subjected to "an attack unprecedented in its cruelty" and had the right to protection, but that the bloodshed should cease, cautioning that a ground attack would lead to "serious consequences for all sides". "And most importantly, the civilian casualties will be absolutely unacceptable. Now the main thing is to stop the bloodshed," Putin said at a summit in Kyrgyzstan with other former republics of the Soviet Union. "Russia is ready to coordinate with all constructively minded partners," Putin said, adding that the key to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was the creation of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

NORTH AFGHANISTAN

Suicide bombing at Shia mosque kills 7 worshippers

AFP, Kabul

At least seven people were killed and 15 more wounded when a suicide blast tore through a Shia mosque in northern Afghanistan yesterday, the Taliban government said. The number of bomb blasts and suicide attacks has reduced dramatically since the Taliban ended their insurgency after seizing power in August 2021, ousting the US-backed government. However, a number of armed groups – including the regional chapter of the Islamic State organisation – remain a threat. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the blast, which rang out as Shia worshippers gathered for Friday prayers at the Imam Zaman mosque in Pol-i-Khomri, the capital of Baghlan province. "Security and investigative forces went to the area of the incident to investigate how this heartbreaking incident happened," said provincial information and media chief Mustafa Asadullah Hashimi. "Investigations are still ongoing," he said in a statement confirming the casualties. A source at Baghlan Provincial Hospital – who asked to remain anonymous – put the tally higher, saying 19 bodies and 40 wounded patients had been brought to the facility so far. "Some of the dead and wounded were taken to other private hospitals as well," he told AFP.

Let the drums roll

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rivalry comes close to matching the magnitude of the one between India and Pakistan, and very few sporting events can claim to be able to attract billions of fans.

When it comes to the World Cups, the excitement surrounding the match inevitably reaches fever pitch; to such an extent that the final match of the tournament ends up taking a back seat in terms of the anticipation factor.

A crown jewel of World Cup matches, no doubt; the two teams had lived up to the billing, time and again, producing timeless moments of dramatic affairs and brilliance under pressure that got rightfully integrated in the cricketing folklore.

Results in the apex event, however, have not translated to the level of competitiveness associated with an India-Pakistan clash as India's 7-0 lead hardly does justice.

Sustained political tension has denied fans from seeing the two neighbouring countries play a bilateral series since 2011-12. Pakistan last toured India in 2016 for the T20 World Cup and, therefore, there could be no better stage to make up for the vacuum than the world's biggest

cricket venue: the 132,000 capacity Narendra Modi Stadium.

The organisers of the recently concluded Asia Cup had tweaked the tournament rules to have a reserve day for the India-Pakistan Super Four fixture. While that decision garnered criticism, the reasoning behind it is understandable.

And regardless of how amusing it may seem, it is no surprise that traveling fans have resorted to checking in at hospitals near the Ahmedabad stadium to find reasonable lodging since hotel prices have shot up by 20 times ahead of the blockbuster match.

In World Cups or otherwise, India-Pakistan matches have rarely failed to keep audiences on the edge of their seats. The stage is thus set for stars to achieve legendary status, for unlikely heroes to emerge as household names, or suffer the worst case of being the villain; for any ball bowled, any run scored possesses the potential to forever be etched in one's memory.

Their timeless rivalry has, indeed, aged like fine wine. No matter who comes out victorious on the day, the sport itself will be the winner as yet another compelling contest awaits.

'Economy in a shambles for wanton graft'

FROM PAGE 12

irregularities in the banking sector. "Our economy is being destroyed because of the government's wrong policy, political weakness, and widespread corruption. The latest example of it is unlawfully giving Janata Bank's Tk 22,000 crore to a group or willful loan defaulters under political considerations."

Fakhrul said the biggest loan scam in Bangladesh occurred in Islami Bank as a big industrial group took a loan of Tk 30,000 crore from the bank against name-only companies.

"But the group is eligible to take a maximum loan of Tk 215 crore. There have been media reports that

this group has laundered at least one billion US dollars abroad."

Expressing concern over the rising inflation, Fakhrul said imports of necessary goods, raw materials, machines, and equipment are being hampered due to shortages of dollars, which slows down the economy.

He said the dollar crisis is becoming acute as the government and its beneficiaries have turned the country into a haven of corruption, and siphoning off money abroad.

Barkat Ullah Bulu, BNP vice-chairman, Ismail Zabiullah, adviser to party Chairperson Khaleda Zia, and Khairul Kabir Khokon, BNP joint secretary general, among others, were present at the press conference.

Stars, netizens applaud 'Mujib'

FROM PAGE 12

Liberation War through 'Mujib: The Making of a Nation.' "This film will forever remain unforgettable in the pages of history. The great personality and sacrifices of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman are vividly portrayed in this movie."

The National Film Awardee also shared, "The new generation and the generations to come will come to know about his [Bangabandhu's] significant contributions to the great

Liberation War through 'Mujib: The Making of a Nation.'"

Dolly Zahur, another National Film Awardee, also praised the production and congratulated the team of Mujib: The Making of a Nation. "I'd like to applaud the film's crew for successfully bringing obscure parts of our history to light. Many may say there are some technical faults, or the story may have been glorified to some extent. However, I'd say for a cinema, this

is absolutely fine. It was difficult for me to revisit the 1975 massacre on the silver screen since I had first-hand experience hearing the sounds of gunshots from my house that fateful night. Bangladeshi audience will definitely be on the edge of their seats during that sequence."

The film, a joint production between Bangladesh and India, has been directed by master filmmaker Shyam Benegal. It is scheduled to be released across India on October 27.

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Bangladesh, and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, India, are the producers, and Bangladesh Film Development Corporation (BFDC) and National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) Limited, India, are the executive producers of the film.

The cinema received a clearance certificate from censor boards of both countries on July 31 of this year.

'Where do we go?'

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In the meantime, Israeli warplanes have dropped thousands of leaflets on Gaza, urging residents to head south, though the timeline for the evacuation is unclear after the army acknowledged the process may "take time".

Hamas, which controls the densely populated Palestinian territory, vowed to fight until the last drop of blood and told residents to stay put after Israel said they should move to the south within 24 hours.

Still, many have chosen to remain in the north of the strip, amid the absence of transportation, and moreover nowhere else to go.

Mohamed Khaled, 43, similarly said he would stay. "What does the world want from us? I am a refugee in Gaza and they want to displace me yet again?"

"What will we do in Rafah?" he asked, referring to the city 40 kilometres south of Gaza City. "Sleep on the streets with our children? We won't do it. I don't want this humiliating life."

There have been repeated calls for the creation of humanitarian corridors into Gaza, particularly through the Rafah crossing to Egypt – the only one not controlled by the Israeli military.

But Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has said it is necessary for Gaza residents to "remain steadfast on their land", warning that any mass displacement of Gazans would spell the end of the Palestinian cause.

Meanwhile, countries yesterday

urged Israel to hold off on plans for an all-out assault on northern Gaza.

Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday said that calls to impose a blockade of Gaza similar to Nazi Germany's siege of Leningrad during World War Two were unacceptable and called for mediation to save civilian lives.

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said the United States must rein in Israel to avert a regional spillover of the war with Hamas.

'BCL, Jubo League men' swoop on protesters

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Yesterday, Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council organised rallies in different parts of the country, including the capital, protesting Munshiganj Mayor Faisal Biplab's "communal" comments against local MP Mrinal Kanti Das, Bahauddin's "disrespectful" remarks about Durga Puja, attack on poet Radhapada Roy in Kurigram, and vandalism of temples at different places.

Contacted, Bahauddin claimed that no incident of attack took place in Nazrul Avenue area.

He said Jubo League and Chhatra League held a "peace rally" at Pubali Square in the morning.

"But a group of people using the name of Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council tried to chant

provocative slogans, creating tension in the area. Police later intervened and calmed down the situation," the lawmaker told this newspaper.

Atiqullah Khokon, joint secretary of Cumilla city AL, said some rivals of Bahauddin have been trying to hatch a conspiracy by spreading part of the video footage of his statement regarding Durga Puja. "We will resist them."

Superintendent of Cumilla police Abdul Mannan said that police barred the two groups from getting close to each other.

He said law enforcers would take legal action against those who would create anarchy.

On October 4, Bahauddin during a meeting on the upcoming Durga Puja at the DC office spoke on

consumption of alcohol at the puja mandaps and making mandaps free from alcohol.

His remarks drew criticism from Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council which issued a statement on October 8 condemning the statements.

Meanwhile, the council yesterday staged a sit-in in the capital's Shabbagh protesting the Cumilla incident.

Rana Dasgupta, general secretary of the council, said, "MPs are being elected with our votes. They get tax-free cars because of our votes. But now we are facing threats."

He said the council will announce its next protest programmes if the attackers of the Cumilla incident are not arrested in 48 hours.