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Once there was a forest here



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Russian forces hit air defence HQ in Ukraine's Dnipro



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Haraprasad Shastri: An Unusual Pundit



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Tigers' transition in Tests continues



PHOTO: AFP

Women and children in tears after a house close to them was hit by Israeli bombs in Khan Yunis in southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

Gaza 'seems like a death zone'

Says UN as 700 more killed in 24 hours; int'l concern mounts for civilians as Israeli bombardment continues

AGENCIES

At least 700 hundred Palestinians were killed in Gaza in 24 hours as Israel yesterday stepped up its bombing campaign from air, sea and land across the enclave, which the UN said now resembles a "death zone".

The renewed bombing campaign also comes defying mounting international concerns over the spiralling civilian death toll in Gaza.

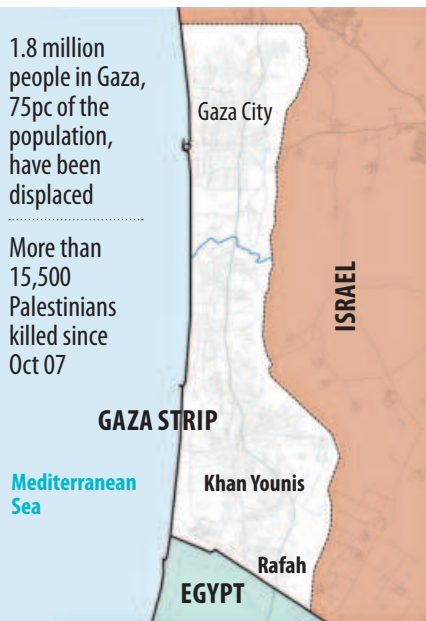
The Director General of the Government Media Office in Gaza told Al Jazeera yesterday at yesterday noon that more than 700 Palestinians have been killed in the last 24 hours.

The bombardment followed the collapse on Friday of a seven-day pause in the fighting between Israeli forces and Hamas fighters to allow an exchange of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners.

In a new estimate, UN said around 1.8 million people in Gaza, over 75 percent of the population, had been displaced, many to overcrowded and unsanitary shelters.

Overnight and into yesterday, intense Israeli bombing was reported in Khan Yunis, Rafah, and some northern parts, according to Reuters.

Gaza residents yesterday said they feared an Israeli ground offensive on the southern areas was imminent. Tanks had cut off the road between Khan Yunis and Deir Al-



“Everywhere you turn to, there are children with third-degree burns, shrapnel wounds, brain injuries and broken bones.”

JAMES ELDER
Unicef's global spokesperson

Balah in central Gaza, effectively dividing the Gaza Strip into three areas, they said.

The Israeli military issued a statement ordering Palestinians to immediately evacuate half a dozen areas in and around Khan Yunis. It posted a map highlighting shelters they should go to west of Khan Yunis and south towards Rafah, on the border with Egypt.

But residents said that areas they had been told to go to were themselves coming under attack.

Israeli tanks were shelling the eastern sector of Rafah yesterday morning, residents said.

There was hardly any space for more displaced people in the south after hundreds of thousands had fled the Israeli ground invasion in the north of the enclave, the residents said.

"Before, we used to ask ourselves whether we will die or not on this war, but in the past two days since Friday, we fear it is just a matter of time," said Maher, a 37-year-old father of three, who spoke to Reuters by telephone.

"I am a resident of Gaza City, then we moved to Al-Karara in southern Gaza Strip and yesterday we fled to deeper shelter in Khan Yunis and today we are trying to flee under the bombardment to Rafah," he said.

UN officials and residents said it was

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\$8b climate fund rolled out for Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a first in Asia, development partners have come together to announce an \$8 billion fund to help Bangladesh mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change.

This collaborative approach is being spearheaded by the International Monetary Fund.

"Bangladesh has been at the forefront of those warning about the elevated risks of climate change for vulnerable countries as well as stressing the importance of international collaboration to support those in need," said Kristalina Georgieva, the MD of IMF, in a statement yesterday.

The country has made significant strides to bolster climate resilience, adaptation, preparedness and conservation, she said in a statement released on the sideline of COP28 that is currently taking place in Dubai.

"We commend Bangladesh's steadfast implementation of their climate agenda and their tireless efforts to promote global collective action to address climate change," she added.

The development partners that have

come together for the Bangladesh Climate and Development Platform (BCDP) are the Asian Development Bank (ADB); World Bank; International Finance Corporation (IFC); Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA); Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB); Agence Française de Développement (AFD); the EU and the European Investment Bank (EIB), as part of Team Europe; the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the government of South Korea; Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Standard Chartered Bank and the UK.

The partnership takes place in the context of the \$1.4 billion Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF) arrangement approved by the IMF in January, the programmatic series of Green and Climate Resilient Development (GCRD) Policy Credits by the WB totalling \$1 billion, and the ADB's ongoing funding for climate projects in Bangladesh.

The ADB is processing a \$400 million policy-based loan to Bangladesh, while about 53 percent of its 2023 project financing (\$1.9 billion) has been allocated towards climate financing so far.

The Manila-based lender is also committed

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Any trade sanction to hit economy hard

Say economists in a Noab view-exchange meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Any trade sanction on Bangladesh from the West would significantly impact the economy, said the noted economist Wahiduddin Mahmud yesterday.

With foreign exchange reserves at a precarious position, any obstacles to the country's exports, which are mainly headed to the West, would be injurious to the economy, he said in a view exchange event of the Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (Noab).

"Sanctions on some individuals and institutions are not a big deal for the economy. But, if any trade sanction comes, it will impact the economy significantly," he added.

Bangladesh's economic crisis is not a full-blown crisis yet, said Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of Policy Research Institute.

When the balance of payments crisis was in a moderate stage, the government needed to make some policy decisions but it was not interested.

"For instance, the government was not interested in devaluing the local currency even though the situation demanded it. The market forces finally compelled them to take that step," he added.

Some people are blaming external issues for the present economic situation, but internal issues are the main factors, said Salehuddin Ahmed, a former central bank governor.

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POLITICAL VIOLENCE Another 22 BNP-Jamaat activists jailed

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-two more leaders and activists of BNP and Jamaat yesterday were given different jail terms in four cases filed between December 2012 and September 2018 over political violence in the capital.

The cases were lodged over illegal gatherings, setting fire to vehicles, carrying out vandalism, damaging properties, assaulting police, and obstructing law enforcers from discharging their duties.

Since November 7, at least 446 BNP Jamaat leaders and activists have been jailed in 23 cases filed between December 2012 and October 2018 over political violence in Dhaka.

Yesterday, 11 BNP-Jamaat activists were sentenced to 30 months' imprisonment in a case lodged in connection with violence in Bhatara in September 2018.

They are Ali Miah, Mofizur Rahman Maru, Kazi Hazrat Ali, Ataur Rahman, Helal Dhali, Lalon Bepary, Babul Sheikh, Zakir Hossain Bepary, Zakir Hossain Bagmar, Ershad Ali Khan, and Moizul Islam Dorji.

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Candidature of 202 scrapped or put on hold

Mahi, Mannan among them

MD ABBAS

Returning officers have cancelled the candidatures of some well-known aspirants, including Mahi B Chowdhury and Abdul Mannan of Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh and Mokabbir Khan of Gono Forum.

Two Awami League and several Jatiya Party nominees were among the at least 202 candidates who saw their candidatures get cancelled.

Their candidatures were scrapped on different grounds, including loan and tax defaults. They can appeal against the EC decision between tomorrow and December 15.

Jatiya Party Co-chairman ABM Ruhul Amin Howlader's candidature for Patuakhali-1 was withheld as he had not paid Tk 88.69 lakh in taxes.

Seven other candidates' nominations were also withheld in the district. Four others had their candidatures cancelled.

The nominations of Mahi B Chowdhury for Munshiganj-1 and party Secretary General Major (retd) Abdul Mannan for Noakhali-4 were cancelled as they had defaulted on loan repayments, according to returning officers.

Eight candidates hand their nominations cancelled in Munshiganj and seven others in Noakhali.

Gono Forum's Mokabbir Khan of Sylhet-1 was among 14 candidates whose nominations were cancelled in Sylhet.

Mokabbir had his candidature cancelled for failing to

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PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Due to discharge of effluents from dyeing factories in the area, the water of Kanchpur canal next to the Dhaka-Chattogram highway is dark and smelly. The polluted water flows directly into the Shitalakkhya nearby. The photo was taken yesterday.

Shorna scripts historic win over SA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh leg-spinner Shorna Akter spun circles around South Africa batters as her maiden T20I five-wicket haul turned the tide in favour of the Tiggers in a 13-run win in the first T20I in Benoni yesterday.

This marked a historic maiden win for the Tiggers against South Africa in their backyard as the Nigar Sultana Joty-led side took a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

Shorna kept her wits about, bowling a full quota in the final seven overs of the innings. She took five wickets for 28 runs as her effort was pivotal in restricting the hosts to 136 for eight while chasing a 150-run target set by Bangladesh.

The 16-year-old became the fourth Bangladesh player to take a five-wicket haul in the format after Nahida Akter, Jahanara Alam, and Panna Ghosh.

South Africa got off to a solid start as openers Anneke Bosch and Tazmin Brits put on a 69-run stand before leg-spinner Rabeya Khan removed

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