

# Rockets fired at US embassy in Baghdad

REUTERS, Baghdad

The US embassy in Baghdad was attacked with two salvos of rockets yesterday morning but there were no casualties, an embassy spokesperson said.

The attack was believed to have been carried out by Iran-aligned militias in Iraq, the spokesperson said. No group immediately claimed responsibility.

It was the first reported rocket attack against the embassy since an umbrella group of Iran-aligned Shia militias initiated attacks against US forces on military bases in Iraq and neighbouring Syria in mid-October.

The armed groups have linked more than 70 such attacks to Washington's backing of Israel in its devastating assault on Gaza.

"We again call on the Government of Iraq... to protect diplomatic and Coalition partner personnel and facilities," the embassy spokesperson said.

# 12 Chinese fighters cross Taiwan Strait

REUTERS, Taipei

Taiwan said yesterday that 12 Chinese fighter jets and a suspected weather balloon had crossed the Taiwan Strait's sensitive median line, in a ratcheting up of tensions about a month before the island's presidential election.

Democratically governed Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory, has complained for the past four years of regular Chinese military patrols and drills near the island.

Taiwan holds presidential and parliamentary polls on January 13 and campaigning has kicked into high gear with how the next government handles relations with China a major point of contention.

Taiwan's defence ministry said 12 fighter jets had crossed the median line, that once served as an unofficial barrier between two sides but which Chinese planes now regularly fly over.

In an unusual addition to its statement, the ministry said that around midday on Thursday it had also detected a Chinese balloon 101 nautical miles (187 km) southwest of Taiwanese city of Keelung.



Palestinians inspect damages at the site of Israeli strikes on a house, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

# Gaza's health system on its knees: WHO

Only 14 out of 36 hospitals are functional

AFP, Geneva

Gaza's health system is on its knees and cannot afford to lose another ambulance or a single hospital bed more, the World Health Organization warned yesterday.

"The situation is getting more and more horrible by the day... beyond belief, literally," WHO spokesman Christian Lindmeier told a press briefing in Geneva.

"The health system is on its knees. Gaza cannot afford to lose any more health facilities, another single ambulance, any more hospitals... or even a single hospital bed more."

The United Nations' humanitarian agency OCHA said late on Thursday that only 14 of the 36 hospitals in the Gaza Strip were functioning in any capacity.

Israel's air and ground assault on Gaza has killed 17,177 people, mostly women and children, according to the Hamas-run health ministry in the besieged

**The UN says about 80 percent of the population has been displaced, facing shortages of food, fuel, water and medicine, along with the threat of disease.**

Palestinian territory.

Weeks of fighting have reduced vast areas of Gaza to wasteland.

The UN says about 80 percent of the population has been displaced, facing shortages of food, fuel, water and medicine, along with the threat of disease.

"Children and people begging and crying for water -- we're at that level, where the most normal and basic supplies are not available anymore," Lindmeier said.

"Right now the calculation for Gaza is one to two litres of fresh water a day -- that's water for everything, not only for drinking.

"People are starting to cut down telephone poles to have a little bit of firewood to keep warm or maybe cook, if they have anything available. Civilisation is about to break down."

Lindmeier said a convoy was supposed to take medical supplies to Al-Ahli Arab hospital in Gaza City yesterday and evacuate 12 patients to the south.

"That mission, we were told this morning, had to be suspended because of the security situation," he said.

Health workers in the Gaza Strip do not have enough food and water to continue working, he said.

"Patients are bleeding on the floor, trauma wards resemble battlefields," said Lindmeier. "This callousness must end. We need a ceasefire and we need it now."

The ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza is expected to "severely depress" the Palestinian economy, the IMF said Thursday.

# Israeli TV shows video of stripped detainees

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli TV appeared to show Thursday scores of stripped Palestinian men sitting on a Gaza street in military custody, with a London-based news outlet saying one of its journalists was among them.

The clips had already circulated widely on social media, with a preliminary AFP Factcheck review suggesting the scene was filmed in Beit Lahia in the north of the Gaza Strip, though geolocating the footage precisely was difficult.

One clip showed the arm of a soldier in the foreground, suggesting it was filmed by a member of the military.

In another clip, a group of blindfolded men are seen sitting with their hands tied behind their backs.

# Hunter Biden indicted on tax evasion charges

AFP, Los Angeles



Hunter Biden was indicted late Thursday on multiple counts of tax evasion, the second time this year President Joe Biden's troubled son has been charged by a special counsel investigating his personal and business dealings. Hunter Biden "engaged in a four-year scheme to not pay at least \$1.4 million in self-assessed federal taxes he owed for tax years 2016 through 2019," special counsel David Weiss said in the 56-page indictment filed in US district court in California. Biden was charged with nine counts of failing to file and pay taxes, tax evasion and filing false tax returns, the indictment shows. The new charges serve up more acute embarrassment for Joe Biden as he wages an uphill battle for reelection and fends off a Republican bid to impeach him on grounds that he benefitted from his son's overseas business dealings. The previous charges accuse the younger Biden of lying about his drug use on a federal application when he purchased a gun. The new charges mean that Hunter Biden could in theory go on trial twice next year as his father almost certainly faces Donald Trump in the race for the presidency.

# Rich nations need to ditch fossil fuels by 2040: scientists

AFP, Paris

Rich countries need to stop using coal by 2030 and oil and gas by 2040, with poorer nations following a decade behind, to give the world a chance of limiting warming to 1.5C, climate scientists told the UN yesterday. In a note to the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and UN Climate Change body, shared with AFP, climate scientists from the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) and Exeter University said there was very little room for anything but a total phase-out of fossil fuels. The steep timeline they laid out comes as climate negotiators at the COP28 talks in Dubai are tussling over the future of oil, gas and coal, responsible for the lion's share of humanity's planet-heating emissions. The UN climate negotiations are tasked with helping the world meet the Paris deal goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels, but have often been vague on how that target will be achieved. PIK director Johan Rockstrom said that the new calculations sent to the UN show the world unwinding fossil fuel use at a speed and scale that makes debates at COP28 about decarbonising by 2050 or a gradual "phasedown" plan beside the point. The note to Guterres uses estimates of the amount of carbon dioxide that the world can pump into the atmosphere and still limit warming to 1.5C from the UN's IPCC climate panel.

# Get out of comfort zones, work together

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decades of UN climate summits that have never addressed the future role of fossil fuels head on.

The UN climate agency yesterday published a new draft of its COP28 agreement which included a range of options for the future of fossil fuel use.

The Canadian environment minister was optimistic that a compromise could be reached.

"I'm confident we have to leave Dubai and COP28 with some language on fossil fuels," Canada's Steven Guilbeault said. "Even if it's not as ambitious as some would want, it will still be an historic moment."

The UN climate agency's chief made an impassioned plea to countries, reminding that the science behind the world's goal of holding warming to within 1.5 degree Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) of pre-industrial temperatures is clear.

"From the planet's perspective 1.5 is a tangible limit. It is not simply a choice," said Simon Stiell, a Grenadian national who is executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

"Pass 1.5 degrees and we're likely to irreversibly lose ice sheets" and 10 meters of sea level rise, the demise of coral reefs that sustain the world's fisheries, and temperatures so extreme that "2 billion people will live in areas ... beyond the human limit and are a threat to life," he said.

Meanwhile, eastern European countries are working to resolve an impasse over where to hold next year's COP29 summit after Russia said it would block any EU member as COP president.

As of yesterday, the candidates included Azerbaijan, which offered to host the event. Both Moldova and Serbia have also offered to take on the rotating presidency.

# Plots afoot to use

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Stating that the government is ready to carry out any reform for the betterment of the garment sector, Quader said, "The government tries to keep the situation in the garment sector under control for the sake of our economy. There is no reason to create any unnecessary panic centring the sector."

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, said the Awami League is not worried about any sanctions.

"We are moving towards a free, fair, and peaceful election under the independent Election Commission as per the constitution. If any sanction is imposed, it should be imposed on the BNP," said Quader.

"They are carrying out sabotage; they are carrying out covert attacks. These are obstacles to a fair election. If the US wants to impose sanctions, only BNP and its allies deserve to be sanctioned," he added.

Referring to the transfers of deputy commissioners and officers-

in-charge, the AL leader said it was done to make the election free from influence.

"Many of our members of parliament and ministers were served show-cause notices from the Election Commission for violating the electoral code of conduct, which is rare," added Quader.

Speaking on the nomination of many AL nominees and independent candidates being cancelled by the EC, the AL general secretary said there was no intervention from the party.

"It is up to the Election Commission. They are following the code of conduct. Candidates can go to the court. We have nothing to say about the decision that will be taken there ultimately," he added.

Asked whether the election in the 32 constituencies where no AL leader is running as independent candidate would be competitive or not, Quader said it was better not to speak on the issue before December 17 [the last date for withdrawing candidatures].

# Mirpur Test on knife edge

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first innings to take an eight-run lead, courtesy of Glenn Phillips' 72-ball 87-run knock which included four sixes and nine fours.

In response to Bangladesh's first-inning total of 172, New Zealand was reeling at 55 for five at the end of opening day. And after the entire second day and the following session were washed out without a ball being bowled, Phillips stole the show with a successful offensive approach, hitting his fifty off just 38 balls.

Phillips' knock may have demonstrated how Bangladesh batters could go about their business in Mirpur surface where the right-hander counterattacked with dogged determination and proper shot selection.

Bangladesh's spin combo of Taijul Islam and Mehedi Hasan Miraz were, again, the chief destroyers with the ball, taking three wickets apiece, with the latter remaining ineffective yesterday due to Phillips' onslaught.

However, off-spinner Nayeem Hasan and pacer Shoriful Islam stepped up to bag two wickets apiece, while Taijul grabbed the final wicket to bundle out New Zealand for 180.

Bangladesh were pinned on the back foot early in their second innings, having lost opener Mahmudul Hasan Joy (2) in the first over before skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto departed after scoring 15.

Greater hurdles await the batters today, given the pitch that materialised as many as 15 dismissals on the opening day is set to aid spinners even further.

# Dozens killed

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In Rafah, further south hard against the border with Egypt, Thaer Kadeeh is living with his family in a makeshift tent from sheets of thin plastic.

"We don't sleep. Fear, hunger and cold, the three combined and no one is looking out for us," he told Reuters. "You try to make the feeling of hunger go away for like an hour, but then the child asks again for food."

Reuters was unable to enter other parts of the enclave but reached residents by telephone who described similar scenes of desperation. With the fighting now in all directions, there was no place left to flee, said Yamen, sheltering at a school in central Gaza with his family.

"Inside the school is like outside it: the same feeling of fear of near death, the same suffering of starvation," he said. "Every day we say we somehow survived. But for how long?"

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority is working with US officials on a plan to run Gaza after the war is over, Bloomberg News reported, citing Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh.

The preferred outcome of the conflict would be for Hamas, which controls Gaza, to become a junior partner under the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), helping to build a new independent state that includes the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, Ramallah-based Shtayyeh said in an interview with Bloomberg News on Thursday.

"If they (Hamas) are ready to come to an agreement and accept the political platform of the PLO, then there will be room for talk. Palestinians should not be divided," Shtayyeh said, adding that Israel's aim to fully defeat Hamas is unrealistic.

In the occupied West Bank, which is ruled by PA, Israeli forces shot dead six Palestinians yesterday in a raid on a refugee camp, the Palestinian health ministry said.

# Unpaid domestic, care work made up 15pc of GDP

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number of the population aged 15 years and above.

Tanima said there are three sectors of unpaid work: unpaid domestic services for household and family members, unpaid caregiving services for household and family members and unpaid productive work for own consumption.

The researchers focused on the first two categories.

"We have adopted the replacement method for valuing the unpaid work," she said at a session chaired by Centre for Policy Dialogue's Fahmida Khatun.

The study used Tk 450 and Tk 300 per day as replacement wages for men and women, respectively, in rural areas. For urban areas, it was Tk 500

and Tk 350.

It found that the value of unpaid domestic and caregiving services was Tk 6,32,500 crore in 2021 with women's share being Tk 5,30,700 crore.

The study suggested recognition of unpaid care work and investing in care services to reduce and distribute the unpaid care responsibility of women.

"Unpaid caregivers should be prioritised in accessing public health, nutrition, and public social protection programmes," said Tanima.

"Male contribution to the unpaid household care work must be encouraged. This will help ensure the even spread of the care work across gender, ensuring gender equality in unpaid work."

# Bangladesh to get \$400n

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Both the ADB and the IMF's budget support loans will add \$1.08 billion to the country's forex reserves.

The ADB in its release said it approved the \$400 million policy-based loan to support the Bangladesh government in implementing its National Adaptation Plan 2023-2050 and Nationally Determined Contributions 2021 Update to the Paris Agreement to achieve a climate-focused inclusive development.

This loan is the first subprogram of the indicative \$700 million Climate-Resilient Inclusive Development Programme, which will help Bangladesh strengthen its climate resilience, transition to a low-carbon economy, mitigate its greenhouse gas emissions, and mainstream gender equality and social inclusion in the

government's climate actions, it added.

The proposal for ADB's loan was placed after Bangladesh met all conditions.

One of the conditions pertained to arresting pollution of water bodies. An enforcement guideline must be drafted for polluters, complete with an environment court and penalty for pollution.

Similarly, a multi-sectoral action plan to control air pollution was drafted. The government also has had to design a green energy policy.

Wishing anonymity, a finance ministry official yesterday said a deal between the Bangladesh government and the ADB on the \$400 million loan may be signed on Monday, and the loan is likely to be disbursed soon.