

Iran navy receives new cruise missiles

REUTERS, Dubai

The Iranian navy has taken delivery of cruise missiles with a range of 1,000 km (621 miles) as well as reconnaissance helicopters, state media reported yesterday, as the US accused Iran of a drone attack on a chemical tanker in the Indian ocean.

"The Talaieyh cruise missile has a range of over 1,000 km and is a smart missile that can change targets mid-mission," state media cited the head of Iran's navy, Shahram Irani, as saying.

Reconnaissance helicopters, drones and marine cruise missiles were among new weapons added to the navy's arsenal, Irani said, adding that "all of this equipment has been designed and produced by Iran's military industry".

Although military analysts say Iran sometimes exaggerates its capabilities, Iranian-made missiles and drones are a key element in Tehran's military hardware.

8 Chinese fighter jets crossed strait's median line Says Taiwan defence ministry

REUTERS, Taipei

Taiwan's defence ministry said yesterday that over the previous 24 hours it had detected eight Chinese fighter jets crossing over the median line of the Taiwan Strait, as well as one Chinese balloon.

Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory, has repeatedly complained of Chinese military activity around the island over the past four years.

China has been stepping up its missions near Taiwan as the January 13 presidential and parliamentary elections on the island approach.

Taiwan's defence ministry said the Chinese J-10, J-11 and J-16 fighter jets had crossed the median line at points to the north and centre of the strait.

The median line once served as an unofficial barrier between the two sides, but Chinese planes now regularly fly over it. Taiwan sent its own forces to monitor, the ministry said.

The ministry also reported another Chinese balloon in the strait, the latest in a spate of what Taiwan says are most likely for monitoring the weather, driven by prevailing winds at this time of year.

It said the balloon was spotted after crossing the median line late on Saturday morning 97 nautical miles (180 km) northwest of the northern Taiwanese port city of Keelung at altitude of approximately 20,000 feet.

The balloon headed east and disappeared around one hour later, the ministry added.

The potential for China to use balloons for spying became a global issue in February when the United States shot down what it said was a Chinese surveillance balloon. China said the balloon was a civilian craft that accidentally drifted astray.

Meanwhile, an earthquake of magnitude 4.6 struck off Taiwan's sparsely populated eastern coast yesterday, the island's weather bureau said, but was barely felt on land. The earthquake's epicentre was in the sea off Taiwan's Taitung county, at a depth of 16.5 km (10.3 miles), the weather bureau said.



Palestinian youth members of the scouting movement hold up banners condemning and calling for an end of the conflict in the Gaza Strip between Israel and Hamas during a procession welcoming the arrival of the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem for Christmas Eve celebrations in the biblical city of Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Retired cop shot dead by terrorists in J&K

HINDUSTAN TIMES ONLINE

A retired Indian police officer was shot dead by terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla district yesterday morning, the police said.

The incident took place when the retired senior superintendent of police, identified as Mohammad Shahi, was praying at a mosque in the city's Gantmulla Baramulla area, the police added. After the incident, the police cordoned off the area.

Several targeted killings have taken place in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) in recent past. Earlier this month, a police constable was shot at and injured by terrorists in Srinagar.

The constable, identified as Mohammad Hafiz Chad, was attacked near his house at Hamdaniya Colony Bemina. Before this in October, a police inspector was attacked outside his house at Eidgah while he was playing cricket.

The officer was being treated in Srinagar's Paras hospital and was later shifted to AIIMS in the national capital where he succumbed to his injuries.

Meanwhile, a search operation is underway to nab terrorists in the forest area of Dera ki Gali.

ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR Gripped by hunger, Gazans queue for meagre food

AFP, Gaza City

When Bakr al-Naji realises the meals he prepares each day for a charity in the Gaza Strip won't be sufficient to fill the stomachs of the children, his heart sinks.

In Rafah, a city at the southern end of Gaza, thousands of people queue up for a little food at the Tkiyeh centre, said Naji.

The 28-year-old was displaced from Gaza City, but volunteers to cook for those facing the same circumstances. "The most difficult moment, for me, is when I hand out the meals," he told AFP.

"I feel a pang in my heart when there is no more food and the children complain and say they haven't eaten enough," he said.

Faced with those pleas, most volunteers sacrifice their own meals. According to UN's hunger monitoring system (IPC) by the start of December more than two million Gazans were already facing acute food insecurity, with more than 378,000 experiencing "catastrophic hunger".

The IPC report said that there was a risk of famine which was "increasing each day" and warned that within weeks the entire population will face "acute food insecurity" or worse.

Humanitarian aid is only trickling into the besieged coastal territory, which Israel's army has been pounding since October 7.

In Rafah, people crowded against a barrier separating the crowd from large, steaming pots of food.



Adults and a large number of children were waiting with plastic bowls and small pots.

"Lentils and bulgur wheat have disappeared from the markets, as well as peas and white beans," said Khaled Sheikh al-Eid, an official at the charity which serves around 10,000 people a day.

His centre survives thanks to donations and volunteers and must constantly juggle what few supplies are available. "A can of beans has gone from one shekel (\$ 0.28) to six)," said Naji.

"People were poor before the war, even those who worked had barely enough to feed their children.

How can they cope now?" he asked. "I fear that people will die of hunger."

In the morning, Salam Haidar, 36, was queuing outside the food centre.

"They told me that it's too early but I want to be sure that I get something," said the mother of three small children.

"My son cries when he sees another child holding a piece of bread. He tried to steal sweets from another child, I had to tell him it was very bad."

Nur Barbakh, five months pregnant and displaced from Khan Yunis, was also waiting hours before the opening of the centre in Rafah.

"Sometimes I send my 12-year-old eldest son but he gets beaten up. He comes back crying and empty handed," said Barbakh.

"If it wasn't for this centre, we would have nothing at all," she said, holding three tomatoes and two shekels in her hand.

Russian strikes kill 4 in Ukraine's Kherson

Critical facilities hit

AFP, Kyiv

Russian bombardment killed four people and injured nine over 24 hours in the frontline southern Ukrainian city of Kherson, the region's governor said yesterday. Russian forces fired 71 shells at Kherson from Saturday to yesterday morning, hitting the city centre, residential areas, medical and educational institutions and "critical infrastructure facilities", Oleksandr Prokudin wrote on Telegram. "As a result of Russian aggression, four people died and nine others were wounded, including one child," Prokudin said an 87-year-old man and his 81-year-old wife were among the victims after an artillery shell hit a residential building. Rescuers found a third male victim under rubble, he added. Ukraine recaptured Kherson following several months of Russian occupation in November last year. It is now a regular target for Moscow's forces based on the opposite bank of the Dnipro river, which became a natural front line as the conflict slowed to a war of attrition. Separately, Ukraine's air force yesterday said it had intercepted all but one of 15 drones launched by Russia overnight. "As a result of air combat, Ukraine's Air Force and defence forces destroyed 14 shaheds in Mykolaiv, Kirovohrad, Zaporizhzhia, Dnipro and Khmelnytskyi regions," the Ukrainian Air Force said on the Telegram messaging app.

Large parts of Australia endure heatwave

REUTERS, Sydney



Large parts of Australia yesterday sweated through heatwave conditions as authorities warned of a high bushfire risk in many parts of the country's vast Western Australia state. The nation's weather forecaster yesterday issued heatwave alerts for the western state, the neighbouring Northern Territory and Queensland state, warning temperatures in some regions could hit around 45 degrees Celsius. In Perth, the capital of Western Australia, a maximum temperature of 35 C was forecast for yesterday, more than five degrees above the December mean.

EXPLOSION AT PLANT

13 dead, 38 hurt in Indonesia

AFP, Jakarta

At least 13 people were killed and 38 injured in eastern Indonesia in an explosion at a Chinese-funded nickel-processing plant yesterday, the owner of the industrial park that hosts the facility said. The island of Sulawesi is a hub for the mineral-rich country's production of nickel, a base metal used for electric vehicle batteries and stainless steel, and Beijing's growing investment has stoked unrest over working conditions at its facilities. The accident occurred around 5:30 am (2130 GMT Saturday) at a plant owned by PT Indonesia Tsingshan Stainless Steel in the Morowali Industrial Park in Central Sulawesi province, a spokesperson for the complex said. "The death toll increased by one person, from 12 to 13," he said. He identified the dead as eight Indonesians and five Chinese workers. An initial investigation showed the explosion happened during repair work on a furnace.

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একটি সুখী, সমৃদ্ধ, ক্ষুদ্রা ও দারিদ্রমুক্ত স্বপ্নীল ও ডিজিটাল বাংলাদেশ গড়ার অঙ্গীকার এবং সন্ত্রাসমুক্ত পরিবেশ প্রতিষ্ঠার প্রত্যয় নিয়ে বান্দরবান পার্বত্য জেলা পরিষদ নিজস্ব উন্নয়ন কর্মসূচি এবং ২৮টি ন্যস্ত বিভাগের বিভাগীয় কার্যক্রমের সমন্বয় সাধনসহ নিম্নবর্ণিত কার্যাদি গ্রহণ ও বাস্তবায়ন করছেঃ

- ১) শিক্ষা
- ২) স্বাস্থ্য সেবা
- ৩) কৃষি
- ৪) মৎস্য ও প্রাণি সম্পদ
- ৫) ক্ষুদ্র ও কুটির শিল্প
- ৬) যোগাযোগ
- ৭) পানীয় জল ও স্যানিটেশন
- ৮) সমবায় ও সমাজ সেবা কার্যক্রম
- ৯) ক্রীড়া ও সংস্কৃতি বিষয়ক কর্মকান্ড
- ১০) স্থানীয় পর্যটন
- ১১) আইসিটি সেक्टर উন্নয়ন এবং
- ১২) মানব সম্পদ উন্নয়ন ইত্যাদি।

একটি উন্নত, সমৃদ্ধ, আধুনিক ও সম্প্রীতির মডেল জেলা হিসেবে বান্দরবানকে গড়ে তোলাই হলো আমাদের দৃঢ় অঙ্গীকার-

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চেয়ারম্যান
বান্দরবান পার্বত্য জেলা পরিষদ

জিডি-২০০৮

ANTI-DRUG RAID

Lanka police detain 13,666

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's police yesterday announced the arrests of nearly 15,000 people during a week-long military-backed anti-narcotics drive, a crackdown denounced by rights activists.

Police said their operation, code-named "Yuktiya" or "Justice", led to the seizure of almost 440 kilograms (970 pounds) of narcotics, including 272 kg of cannabis, 35 kg of hashish and nine kilograms of heroin.

Authorities believe the Indian Ocean island is being used as a drug trafficking transit point.

Police said 13,666 suspects were arrested while 1,100 addicts were detained.

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