AMMO FOR ISRAEL US approves 'emergency' sale

AFP, Washington

The United States on Friday announced the approval of a USD 147.5 million sale of 155mm highexplosive artillery munitions and related equipment to Israel under an emergency provision that waives the usual congressional review.

The same provision was used earlier this month to approve the sale of nearly 14,000 rounds of 120mm tank ammunition to Israel.

Israel requested that 155mm fuses, primers and charges be added to previous foreign military sale cases, increasing their estimated total cost from USD96.51-147.5 million and requiring a new notification, the US Defense Security Cooperation Agency said in a statement.

The secretary of state has determined that "an emergency exists that requires the immediate sale to the government of Israel," according to the statement, which said the munitions will come from US Army stocks.

'ISRAEL BOYCOTT' CALLS McDonald's Malaysia sues group

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

McDonald's Malaysia has sued a pro-Palestinian group for USD1.3 million over its calls to boycott companies allegedly supporting Israel.

In a statement issued Friday, the fast-food chain said the civil suit against BDS Malaysia was aimed at protecting "our rights and interests in accordance with the law".

McDonald's said it "does not support nor condone the current conflict in the Middle East"

"While we understand and respect that the act of boycotting is an individual decision, we believe that it should be based on facts and not false allegations," McDonald's said.

McDonald's has sought six million ringgit in damages.



A Palestinian man evacuates a wounded girl from the site of an Israeli strikes on the Zawayda area of the central Gaza Strip vesterday.

GAZA INFECTIOUS DISEASE THREAT

WHO chief 'very concerned'

AFP, Geneva

INTERNATIONAL

Adhanom Ghebreyesus said Friday he was 'very concerned" about the growing threat of infectious diseases in the Gaza Strip.

"As people continue to be massively displaced across the south of Gaza, with some families forced to move multiple times and many sheltering in overcrowded health facilities, my WHO colleagues and I remain very concerned about the increasing threat of infectious diseases,' Tedros said on X, formerly Twitter.

Israel has vowed to destroy Hamas in retaliation for the October 7 attack which left about 1,140 people dead, mostly civilians, according to Israeli figures.

Israel's relentless aerial bombardment and ground invasion in Gaza have killed at least 21,320 people, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza.

Tedros said that since mid-October until mid-December, people living in shelters had continued to fall sick.

He said that close to 180,000 people to increase disease surveillance and were suffering with upper respiratory World Health Organization chief Tedros infections, while 136,400 cases of diarrhoea have been recorded -- half of those among children aged under five.



The UN health agency chief said there had been 55,400 cases of lice and scabies; 5,330 cases of chickenpox; and 42,700 cases of skin rash, including 4722 cases of

"WHO and partners are working tirelessly to support the health authorities have life-long impacts.

control by supplying medicines, testing kits to support prompt detection and response to infectious diseases such as hepatitis, and trying to improve access to safe water, food, hygiene and sanitation services," said Tedros.

Earlier, WHO said over 1,00,000 cases of diarrhoea was reported since mid-October to December 21. Half of these were among young children under the age of five years, case numbers that are 25 times what was reported before the conflict.

Over 1,50,000 cases of upper respiratory infection, and numerous cases of meningitis, skin rashes, scabies, lice and chickenpox were reported. Hepatitis was also suspected as many people presented with the tell-tale signs of jaundice.

Malnutrition increased the risk of children dying from illnesses like diarrhoea, pneumonia and measles, especially in a setting where they lack access to life-saving health services, WHO added.

Even if a child survives, wasting can

Serial muggers

FROM PAGE 12

19 in an area of around 1.5km -- from Chand Uddyan in Mohammadpur to Rayerbazar.

The muggers targeted people and pedestrians along

The most recent serial mugging occurred on December 24. The attacks started in the Rayerbazar area. The muggers advanced via Hossein Saheb Lane and Pabna House Lane and continued to Beribadh.

In a 40-minute episode that unfolded around noon, the criminals looted valuables and mobile phones from everyone in their path.

"Mugging takes place almost every day near Beribadh and its surrounding areas. Police during the drives arrested drug addicts or local vagabonds instead of arresting the real criminals," claimed a shopkeeper on Pabna House Lane in Beribadh.

Requesting anonymity, the shopkeeper said police even showed the recovery of knives and machetes. "The real culprits are never arrested, and so the muggings

At least a dozen people from the area echoed the same

Mrityunjoy Dey Sajal, additional deputy commissioner of (Mohammadpur zone) Tejgaon division, however, refuted the allegation and said, "We've arrested some muggers, and they've given confessional statements in court admitting their involvement in the muggings."

Meanwhile, locals claimed some political leaders sheltered these criminals to establish dominance over rivals.

On this matter, Shiekh Mohammad Hossain, councillor of Ward 34, told this newspaper that there is a possibility of muggers enjoying political backing. He, however, did not identify any such backers.

Hossain said the ward administration has volunteers working to guard the area to prevent muggings and

Residents blamed lax police surveillance and their failure to apprehend the actual criminals. They went on to allege that the criminals managed to evade arrest due to the protection they get from local politicians.

But another local political leader, requesting anonymity, said these criminals are from Bhola, and they live in Chand Housing, Shat Mosque Housing, and Dhaka Uddyan areas, largely dominated by former Ward 33 councillor Tarequzzaman Rajib.

Rajib, however, refuted the allegation. "I was in jail for the last three years and got bail only eight to nine months ago. My rivals are spreading rumours and hatching conspiracies against me," he told The Daily Star.

Kh Mahid Uddin, additional commissioner (crime and operations) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told this newspaper on Wednesday, "We have already arrested many muggers involved in these incidents by identifying them from CCTV footage. Drives are underway to arrest the absconding ones."

"Due to the recurring nature of these incidents, we have already instructed the local police to beef up security, vigilance, and drives so that robberies and muggings no longer take place in the coming days," he added.

A step forward yet concerns remain

components, but the more demanding aspects, like cooking, still pose a challenge," said Susmita.

Speaking to The Daily Star, several teachers said training, logistical support and getting parents on board are the biggest challenges for the successful implementation of the new curriculum.

Mohammad Nurul Amin, a senior teacher at Rangamati Government High School, said the training was nothing out

"There was a lot of confusion about the assessment method, which has been changed multiple times. How are we supposed to grade students using triangles, circles and squares if there is no exam or written scripts?'

Amin also highlighted the logistical challenges a rural student would face compared to a student in an urban area where the schools are better equipped.

"Students [in rural areas] often seem confused about what they should study. Some of them can use the internet, but not everyone has reliable access. The level of creativity being asked of students is excessive given their level of basics," he added.

Masud Alam, head teacher of Maharaja Girijanath High School in Dinajpur, said the five-day training they received was not enough to understand the intricacies. He said further training was needed to better prepare teachers for the complexities of the new educational structure.

Nasreen Sultana, an assistant teacher at Viqarunnisa Noon School and College, however, was optimistic.

"If the students are enthusiastic, then there is a lot to learn from these textbooks. Students of our school are enjoying the new curriculum. They are no longer scared of exams but lack seriousness. It has only been a year, though. Any new

the University of Dhaka's Institute of Education and Research (IER), voiced concerns about the preparedness to adopt this curriculum.

"Transformations in education can be incremental or drastic. This change is drastic. It's a good approach that we are becoming skill-focused. But are we ready

In the new curriculum, the subject knowledge of a teacher is very important. and for that extensive training is required.

"Training for the new curriculum was conducted using the cascade model under which training is provided to some teachers initially and then those teachers train others. But this model has a negative perception among many experts.'

Infrastructural support for such a change is not available in many schools, Hafizur said.

"Besides, after the implementation, visible monitoring should be done to collect data and for that enough manpower must be deployed."

Regarding the parents' concerns, Hafizur said the government should have prepared more for the ongoing debate as the parents of 2023 are more conscious than the parents of 2012.

M Tariq Ahsan, a member of the Curriculum Development and Revision Core Committee at the NCTB and also a professor at the DU's IER, said that the competency-based curriculum is

"This had been already there at the primary level since 2012. The big transformation now is that it's happening in teaching-learning and assessment as well and not just the curriculum."

Commenting on preparedness, he said: "In the past, new curriculums were adopted across the country for all grades and subjects at once. This time, it will be

change like this needs time," Nasreen said. SM Hafizur Rahman, a professor at the curriculum is not the only objective, first drove the the whole education system will be transformed."

He said the concerns of different stakeholders are signs that the transformation is challenging the beliefs people regarding education.

"But spreading propaganda about what's not in the curriculum is not the same as expressing concern. We are listening to parents and have asked schools to hold parent-teacher meetings. Communication materials are also being prepared."

Moshiuzzaman, a member of the NCTB, said: "We are aware of the inconsistency in training, as we're dealing with a large number of teachers. We have planned to provide teachers with highquality online video resources following their training, so they can clear up the gaps in their understanding.

He also said more training will be conducted before classes begin next year. For the parents who are concerned that students are not studying as much, he said: "Children never accept anything that is forced upon them. But if they do it willingly, they will learn. In this curriculum, children will be active, they will do tasks themselves, so they

are bound to learn. They won't study

for exams, but they will learn through

enjoyment, through the desire to build

something." There are around 4.03 lakh teachers at about 1.19 lakh primary schools and kindergartens teaching more than 2 crore students. Besides, around 2.37 lakh teachers at 18,874 secondary schools are teaching 89.30 lakh pupils, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics and the

Arafat Rahaman and Kongkon Karmaker also contributed to this report.

Directorate of Primary Education.

A raid riddled with questions

first drove them out and then conducted the raid.

Meanwhile, two other persons, including the caretaker of a nearby building, were made witnesses in a case filed after the items were recovered.

They, however, said they did not see what happened during the raid and were just asked to sign a paper by the detectives.

Md Liton, foreman of Prime Printing Press, said, "We didn't print the black and white leaflets that the DB seized. We don't know who kept those here ... There was no question of explosives being kept here either." He said printing black-and-white

leaflets is costly for them as their setups can be used only for four colours, and so they take nothing but colour print orders. "We have [printing] plates for every

work. If we did print the black and white leaflets, there would be plates for those. The DB said they have recovered leaflets from here, but they did not find any such plates." Before and after the raid, the

Detective Branch arrested 11 BNP leaders and activists, including the president of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal's Dhaka University unit and central Krishak Dal joint convener. They were placed on a four-day remand each on Thursday.

According to DB, they first arrested three people, who were distributing leaflets at Nilkhet, around 10:30pm and then another eight after the raid at the printing press. DB Chief Harun-or-Rashid, at a press

briefing just after the raid on Wednesday night, said the arrestees were planning to sabotage the election by asking the public, through the leaflets, to foil it. They (the arrestees) were directed by

several senior BNP leaders to do so. According to the statement of the

case, filed with New Market Police Station, DB raided the Prime Printing Press, owned by a BNP activist, at 11:05pm and arrested eight party members from there. The detectives claimed to have

arrested the first three -- DU JCD President Khorshed Alam Sohel, Omar Faruk Mamun; DU Mohsin Hall Chattra Dal President Omar Faruk Mamun, and Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal President Baha Uddin Nobel -- with 260 leaflets in their possession while they were distributing those in Nilkhet area. DU JCD General Secretary Ariful

Islam, however, said the DB picked up Sohel and Mamun from their homes. Later that night, the detectives hauled

in eight others from the Prime Printing Press, detectives and witnesses said. BNP Senior Joint Secretary Ruhul

Kabir Rizvi, at a virtual press briefing on Thursday, said the DB is arresting their leaders and activists in false cases and the DB chief is telling one lie after the "It's very unfortunate that decent

leaders like Sohel and [Mehedi Hasan] Palash [a joint-convener of Krishak Dal] are being framed in a case for sabotage." These are being done to diminish the

opposition, he added. The Daily Star spoke to at least 10 booksellers and tea-stall owners at Nilkhet who said they did not see

distribution of such leaflets in the area. Prime Printing Press is one of the four printing presses in Katabon.

At least 10 staffers of the four presses told this newspaper that the DB team entered Prime Printing Press and drove out all the people from inside.

About the eight "arrested from inside Prime Printing Press", the workers said no outsiders were there before DB

conducted the drive.

Abdul Mannan, 59, an assistant machine operator of Anindya Printing Press, who was made a witness in the case, said, "We were preparing to go to sleep when the DB team came and asked us to leave immediately. No one was inside. We didn't see what happened during the raid."

He said the officers called him after the raid and told him to sign a piece of

Another witness Ekramul Haque, 65, caretaker of the adjacent building, said he saw four arrestees in handcuffs outside the press after the raid and that he too was told to sign a piece of paper. "I asked them [detectives] why I

should sign since I didn't see anything. They said it won't be a problem." Contacted, Mohammad Fazle Elahi. additional deputy commissioner

(Dhanmondi zone) of DB, on Friday, told this newspaper they found the leaflets at Prime Printing Press. "Even if they [Prime Printing Press] didn't print the leaflets, they might have been involved in supplying them."

He also asked The Daily Star to contact Humayun Kabir, deputy commissioner of DB's Ramna division, for comments.

Humayun did not respond despite repeated phone calls. DB Inspector AKM Mahbubul Alam, plaintiff of the case, on, also on Friday,

refuted the allegations made by the staffers and witnesses. "They [workers and witnesses] are not telling the truth. What I said in the case statement is true. The DB chief and journalists were present during the

However, a television journalist, who covered the event, told The Daily Star that all the journalists reached the spot

No wonder they are desperate

"If the Election Commission had exercised its powers properly, it could have taken appropriate action. It has the ability to take necessary steps, including disqualifying a candidate for concealing

information. "Similarly, the ACC [Anti-corruption commission] possesses specific jurisdiction to initiate accountability and legal proceedings against an individual if they have acquired assets in a manner inconsistent with legitimate means," he said, adding that the NBR can crosscheck tax payments.

Speakers also presented three policy briefs on gender-based violence; discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities; and strengthening the voice of the "silent (marginalized)

About the delay in enacting the draft anti-discriminatory act, Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, said, "Those of us working on enacting the anti-discriminatory act feel embarrassed to talk about it, while those responsible are not embarrassed at all. It's been 10 years since the law remains unenacted, while it's been 1.5

years since it has been lying stagnant at the parliamentary standing committee. Despite repeated commitment, it has not been passed yet.

"To end discrimination and deprivation, we must embrace diversity, respecting the rights of women and ethnic minorities. Lamenting institutional politicisation,

she asked, "If every institution is politicised, what can we expect from The event was moderated by Centre

for Policy Dialogue's distinguished fellow

Prof Mustafizur Rahman.

residents have been forced from their homes by Israel's 12-week assault, that began on October 7.

The offensive has killed at least 21,672 Palestinians, according to health authorities in Gaza, with more than 56,000 injured and thousands more feared dead under the rubble.

Meanwhile, South Africa launched a case on Friday at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Israel for what it said were "genocidal" acts in Gaza, with Israel rejecting the case

S Africa files genocide case against Israel

According to a statement, the ICJ application related to alleged violations by Israel of its obligations under the Genocide Convention, and said that "Israel has engaged in, is engaging in and risks further engaging in genocidal acts against the Palestinian people in

In The Hague application, South Africa also says that Israel has been acting "with the requisite specific Gaza as part of the broader Palestinian

national, racial and ethnical group." Israel rejected the charge, with Israeli foreign ministry spokesman Lior Haiat writing on X, formerly Twitter: "Israel rejects with disgust the blood libel spread by South Africa and its application" to the ICJ.

No date has been set for a hearing. Israeli invasion risks spreading across the region, drawing in Iranaligned groups in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Yemen, that have exchanged fire intent... to destroy Palestinians in with Israel and its US ally, or targeted merchant shipping.