

## Iran won't start war but will respond to bullies

### Says Raisi as US plans to hit Iranian targets in Syria, Iraq

REUTERS

Iran will not start a war but would "respond strongly" to anyone who tried to bully it, President Ebrahim Raisi said yesterday, a day after the US said it was planning attacks on Iranian sites in Iraq and Syria.

There has been mounting speculation this week about how Washington might retaliate after three US soldiers were killed last Saturday in a strike on their base in Jordan by an Iranian-backed group.

CBS News, citing US officials, reported on Thursday that the United States had approved plans for multi-day strikes in Iraq and Syria against multiple targets, including Iranian personnel and facilities in those countries.

**“The Islamic Republic's military power in the region is not and never has been a threat to any country.”**

President Ebrahim Raisi

"We will not start any war, but if anyone wants to bully us they will receive a strong response," Raisi said in a televised speech.

"Before, when they (the Americans) wanted to talk to us, they said the military option is on the table. Now they say they have no intention of a conflict with Iran," Raisi said.

"The Islamic Republic's military power in the region is not and never has been a threat to any country. Rather, it ensures security that the countries of the region can rely on and trust," Raisi added.

The US has assessed that the drone that killed three of its soldiers was made by Iran.

Sources said Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards were pulling senior officers out of Syria. Iranian advisers assist armed groups in both Iraq, where the US has around 2,500 troops, and Syria, where it has 900.



Palestinians, some wearing leftover Hazmat suits from the pandemic to keep warm, transport some of their belongings. They are fleeing the Israeli ground offensive in Khan Younis, southern Gaza to further south yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

## 17,000 children in Gaza separated from parents

Says Unicef, raises alarm as a million children in enclave need mental health support

AFP, Geneva

The United Nations said yesterday it estimates that at least 17,000 children in the Gaza Strip have been left unaccompanied or separated nearly four months into the offensive.

"Each one has a heartbreaking story of loss and grief," said Jonathan Crickx, spokesman for the UN children's agency Unicef in the Palestinian territories.

"This figure corresponds to one percent of the overall displaced population -- 1.7 million people," he told a media briefing in Geneva, via video-link from Jerusalem.

Each one "is a child who is coming to terms with a horrible new reality".

Crickx said that tracing who the children were was proving "extremely difficult", as sometimes they were brought

to a hospital where they may be wounded or in shock, and "they simply can't even say their names".

He said that during conflicts, it was common for extended families to take care of children who lost their parents.

However, in Gaza, "due to the sheer lack of food, water or shelter, extended families are themselves distressed and face challenges to immediately take care of another child as they themselves are struggling to cater for their own children and family", said Crickx.

Broadly, Unicef terms separated children as those who are without their parents, while unaccompanied children are those who are separated and also without other relatives.

He said the mental health of children

in Gaza was being severely affected by the offensive.

"They present symptoms like extremely high levels of persistent anxiety, loss of appetite, they can't sleep, they have emotional outbursts or panic every time they hear the bombings," he explained.

Before the conflict erupted, Unicef estimated that more than 500,000 children in the Gaza Strip needed mental health and psycho-social support.

Now it believes that "almost all children are in need" of such help -- more than one million children, said Crickx.

"Children don't have anything to do with this conflict... No child should ever be exposed to the level of violence seen on October 7 -- or to the level of violence that we have witnessed since then," Crickx said.

## Doubt Congress will get 'even 40 seats'

Mamata on Lok Sabha polls

NDTV ONLINE



In a scathing attack, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee yesterday challenged the Congress to take on the BJP in the Hindu heartland states and said she has doubts whether the grand old party will secure "even 40 seats" in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Banerjee also criticised

the Congress's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, which traversed through the state's six districts, comparing it to a "mere photo opportunity" for "migratory birds" who have descended upon the state. "I proposed that Congress contest 300 seats (across the country where BJP is the main opposition), but they refused to heed. Now, they've arrived in the state to stir up Muslim voters. I doubt whether they will secure even 40 seats if they contested 300," Banerjee asserted. Speaking during a dharna in Kolkata, Banerjee reiterated that her party was willing to form an alliance with the Congress for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections in West Bengal, but highlighted that it was the grand old party which declined her offer.

## Russia-Ukraine genocide case can go forward: ICJ

REUTERS, The Hague

Judges at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) yesterday ruled that the case Ukraine started accusing Russia of violating international law by accusing Ukraine of genocide can move forward. Ukraine brought the case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), also known as the World Court, days after Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. In a preliminary ruling in March 2022, the ICJ sided with Ukraine and ordered Russia to halt its invasion immediately. But Russia objected to this judgement, saying the ICJ, which decides on disputes between states, had no legal right to decide in this case. The ICJ yesterday tossed out Moscow's argument, saying it did have jurisdiction to rule on this. However, Ukraine also said in its submission that Russia's use of force during the invasion was itself in contravention of the Genocide Convention. The ICJ said it did not have competence to decide on this part of case. Ukraine won a small victory at ICJ on Wednesday when judges ruled Russia violated UN treaties against financing of terrorism in a different case.

## Probe to go on

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would take 50 years.

"My point is that there should be a fair investigation, and the real culprit should be arrested. What our legal framework says is that a person who is not a criminal cannot be harassed. The real culprit must be caught. That's why I said this. And you got angry."

Referring to murder cases around the world, Anisul said, "The accused in a murder case was arrested after 42 years in the United Kingdom. A few days ago, the mystery of a killing case was revealed in the United States after 24 years."

Police are trying here and continuing the investigation, but they are yet to arrest the real perpetrators, so the probe is still taking time, the minister added.

He asked, "Do you want a stop to the investigation? The probe will continue until the actual criminals are caught."

Md Rezaul Karim, public relations officer of the law ministry, said Anisul went to his district on a two-day visit to inaugurate various development projects and take part in a reception and a rally organised by Kasba Upazila Awami League and Akhaura Upazila AL respectively.

Sagar Sarowar, who was the news editor at Maasranga Television, and his wife Meherun Rumi, senior reporter at ATN Bangla, were killed in the early hours of February 11, 2012, in their rented flat in the capital's West Razabazar.

Nearly 12 years have passed, but no substantial progress has been made in solving the case.

## Ijtema begins

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Police rushed to the spot and took them to Tongi Shaheed Ahsan Ullah Master General Hospital. They were later sent to the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation in Dhaka.

Hasanuzzaman succumbed to his injuries while undergoing treatment there, said Mostafizur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Tongi East Police Station.

[Our Gazipur correspondent contributed to the report.]

## US to keep working

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areas where we believe we can cooperate on shared priorities."

Miller earlier said that the US is interested in working with Bangladesh in various security areas, including counterterrorism, border security, cyber security, maritime security, and regional stability.

On January 8, the State Department spokesperson issued a press statement saying that the US "supports the people of Bangladesh and their aspirations for democracy, freedom of peaceful assembly, and

## India to start

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statement on the meeting made no explicit reference to any withdrawal.

The two had "agreed on a set of mutually workable solutions to enable continued operation of Indian aviation platforms that provide humanitarian and medevac services to the people of Maldives", New Delhi's foreign ministry said.

Official sources in the Maldives said it was likely that the aircraft will remain in the nation of 1,192 coral islands, but could be operated by civilian Indian staff.

Tensions between the neighbours flared last month after three of Muizzu's junior ministers reportedly called Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi a "clown" and a

## N Korea fires more cruise missiles in testing spree

AFP, Seoul

North Korea fired multiple cruise missiles yesterday, Seoul's military said, continuing a fresh streak of weapons testing as Kim Jong Un's regime ramps up what it calls "war preparations".

So far this year, Kim has declared South Korea his country's "principal enemy", jettisoned agencies dedicated to reunification and outreach, and threatened war over "even 0.001 mm" of territorial infringement.

Pyeongyang has also carried out ever more weapons tests, including multiple cruise missile launches,

freedom of expression."

Miller noted that the US remained concerned about the suppression of the political opposition and irregularities during the election. He said the US did not recognise the elections as free or fair.

On May 24 last year, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken announced that visa restrictions would be imposed on individuals and their immediate family members if they are responsible for, or complicit in, undermining the democratic election process in Bangladesh.

"terrorist" in since-deleted social media posts.

In another development, the Maldives defence ministry accused India's coastguard of entering its exclusive economic zone and harassing fishermen in three Maldivian trawlers.

The defence ministry said it called for an "explanation" from New Delhi after coastguard personnel boarded the three boats on Wednesday.

The incident came as Indian celebrities urged compatriots to boycott the island nation and instead book their next holidays closer to home.

Tourism accounts for nearly a third of the Maldives's economy, with Indians making up the largest share of foreign arrivals.

an "underwater nuclear weapon system" test, plus firing a solid-fuelled hypersonic ballistic missile.

Yesterday, Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the military had "detected at around 11 am (0200 GMT) the firing of multiple unidentified cruise missiles" into the sea off the country's west coast.

The South Korean military has "stepped up surveillance in close coordination with the United States", the JCS said in the statement.

The military is "closely monitoring for signs of additional activity" by the North Korean army, it said, adding they were "closely analysing" the launch.



People stand on the wall of a damaged building to see the wreckage of burnt truck and tanker, the day after a gas explosion created severe damages in the Embakasi area of Nairobi, Kenya yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

## World needs 'torrents' of cash for green transition

Says UN climate chief

AFP, Paris

The world needs to urgently start investing trillions of dollars in the green transition, the United Nations climate chief said yesterday, warning that finance was the "make-or-break" factor in the battle to curb global heating.

Countries at last year's COP28 UN climate negotiations in Dubai agreed to triple global renewables capacity this decade and "transition away" from polluting fossil fuels.

But the deal lacked important details, including on funding.

Now the world will need to come up with a clear plan to find "torrents -- not trickles -- of climate finance," UN climate chief Simon Stiell said in a speech in Baku, Azerbaijan, which

will host this year's climate summit (COP29) in November.

"Whether on slashing emissions or building climate resilience, it's already blazingly obvious that finance is the make-or-break factor in the world's climate fight -- in quantity, quality, and innovation," said Stiell, who is executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

"In fact, without far more finance, 2023's climate wins will quickly fizzle away into more empty promises."

In a speech which traced backwards from a vision of success in 2050 to the actions of the next two years, he said the changes over the coming decades would be "comparable in scope to the industrial revolution" or the growth of the digital economy.

The world is currently far off track in delivering on its cornerstone climate deal, agreed in Paris in 2015.

Under the Paris Agreement, world leaders pledged to keep the rise in Earth's average temperature to "well below" 2.0 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial level and preferably the much safer threshold of 1.5C.

The 2020s are critical for keeping that 1.5C target in view, with UN climate experts estimating that planet-heating greenhouse gas emissions need to be slashed by some 43 percent by 2030.

There is progress, with a surge in clean energy technologies like solar, wind and batteries, as well as electric vehicles.

But emissions continue to rise.