

Iran pays homage to 7 Guards killed in Syria strike

Vows revenge on Israel

AFP, Tehran

Thousands of people chanted against Israel and the United States at yesterday's funeral for seven Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps members killed in a strike in Syria, which Iran blamed on Israel.

The IRGC members, including two generals, were killed in the air strike on Monday which levelled the Iranian embassy's consular annex in Damascus.

IRGC chief General Hossein Salami in a speech said that Israel "cannot escape the consequences". Israel has not commented on the strike, but analysts saw it as an escalation of its campaign against Iran and its regional proxies that runs the risk of triggering a wider war beyond the Israel-Hamas conflict in the Gaza Strip.

Israel suspends leave for combat units to deal with possible missile attack from Iran.

Iran has said among the dead were two brigadier generals from the Guards' foreign operations arm, the Quds Force, Mohammad Hadi Haji Rahimi and Mohammad Reza Zahedi.

Meanwhile, Israel has suspended leave for combat units and heightened its air defence command to deal with possible missile or drone attack from Iran following the killing of the senior Revolutionary Guard commanders.

The Israeli military is also considering reopening shelters in Tel Aviv as a precaution against a possible attack, according to Mehr News Agency.

In Tehran, mourners yesterday held Iranian and Palestinian flags, as well as those from the Iran-backed Lebanese Hezbollah group. "Death to Israel!" and "Death to America!" they chanted.

The Fars news agency reported that among those present was Ziyad al-Nakhlah, leader of the Islamic Jihad group that fights alongside Hamas in Gaza.

President Ebrahim Raisi and his predecessor Hassan Rouhani also attended, local media reported.



A member of the Israeli security forces and Palestinians waiting near the Lion's Gate scuffle as they wait to enter the Al-Aqsa mosque compound to attend the last Friday noon prayer of Islam's holy fasting month of Ramadan yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

'Scattered measures' for Gaza aid not enough

Says UN chief after Israel says it will allow 'meaningful increase' in aid

AFP, United Nations

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said yesterday that "scattered measures" for Gaza aid are not enough after Israel told the UN it will allow a "meaningful increase" in aid.

"It's not enough to have scattered measures -- we need a paradigm shift," Guterres told reporters at the UN's New York headquarters.

He had earlier said that in the aftermath of Israel's killing of seven humanitarian workers from World Central Kitchen, the UN "was informed by the Israeli government of its intention to allow a meaningful increase in humanitarian aid distributed in Gaza."

Israel announced yesterday that it would allow "temporary" aid deliveries into famine-threatened northern Gaza, hours after the United States warned of a potential shift in its policy over Israel's



offensive in the Palestinian enclave. Palestinians in northern Gaza have eaten an average of just 245 calories per day -- less than a can of beans -- since January, according to the charity Oxfam. Charities have accused Israel of blocking aid, but Israel had defended its efforts and blamed shortages on groups' inability to distribute aid once it gets in. Israel's offensive has killed at least 33,091 people, according to the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza, while the United Nations has warned of

"catastrophic" hunger.

Six months into the offensive in Gaza, the killing of the group of aid workers by an Israeli air strike summed up both the dire humanitarian crisis and the lack of a clear way out of a conflict that is leaving Israel increasingly isolated.

Israel's military has acknowledged the strike was conducted mistakenly by its forces and apologised for the "unintentional" deaths of the seven, who included citizens of Britain, Australia and Poland, a dual US-Canadian citizen and a Palestinian colleague.

But that has done little to ease growing alarm abroad, where public opinion even in traditionally friendly countries like Britain, Germany or Australia has swung against the Israeli campaign in Gaza.

Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu has so far resisted pressure to change course, insisting that Hamas remains an existential threat to Israel.

US, China resume talks on safe military interactions

AFP, Washington

The United States and China held talks this week on safety in interactions between their armed forces for the first time in more than two years, the US military said yesterday. The resumption of the talks came after US President Joe Biden and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping agreed at a summit in November to restore military-to-military communications and ease tensions between the two countries. US and Chinese military representatives met for the Military Maritime Consultative Agreement Working Group in Hawaii on Wednesday and Thursday -- the first such meetings since a virtual event in late 2021, the US Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) said in a statement. The agreement is INDOPACOM's "primary means to directly discuss air and maritime operational safety" with China's military, US Army Colonel Ian Francis, the head of the American delegation, said in the statement. "Open, direct, and clear communications with the PLA -- and with all other military forces in the region -- is of utmost importance to avoid accidents and miscommunication," Francis said.

INDIA'S UTTAR PRADESH SC puts order banning Islamic schools on hold

REUTERS, New Delhi

India's Supreme Court put on hold a lower court's order that effectively banned Islamic schools in the country's most populous state, lawyers involved in the case said yesterday, giving a breather to thousands of students and teachers in the system. The directive comes days before the country begins voting in a national election where Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are seeking a third term. The top court was responding to a challenge to the March 22 order of the Allahabad High Court which scrapped a 2004 law governing the schools, called madrasas, in Uttar Pradesh state, where one-fifth of the 240 million population is Muslim. Saying the law violated constitutional secularism, the High Court also directed that pupils at these institutions be moved to conventional schools. "We are of the view that the issues raised in the petitions merit closer reflection," the Supreme Court said yesterday. The matter will now be heard in July, and "everything will remain stayed" until then, lawyers said.

Malaysia govt extends visa deadline

FROM PAGE 12

on Thursday said the extension was due to the large amount of active quotas amounting to 132,000 that have yet to apply.

"This extension takes into account the approximate number of active quotas that have not applied for VDR, which is 1,32,000.

"It was also due to the technical glitches that occurred in the Foreign Workers Centralised Management System (FWCMS) on March 21, 22, 23,

27, 28, and 29," he added.

Saifuddin also said that an expected 1,05,600 workers would be granted VDR Approval Letters out of the 1,32,000 quotas that had not yet applied.

Saifuddin however said that the deadline for the entry of foreign workers in the formal sector would remain on May 31.

Previously, Malaysian industry associations requested that the VDR applications be extended to September from March 31 to meet

their quota obligations.

They said that the longer time-frame was necessary due to the complex and time-consuming process of hiring foreign personnel.

More than four lakh Bangladeshi workers have migrated to the Southeast Asian nation after it reopened its labour market in 2022.

Last year, Malaysia was the second largest overseas job market for Bangladesh after Saudi Arabia after 3.5 lakh workers migrated there.

Joint drive against KNF begins today

FROM PAGE 1

Rowangchhari police stations to fend off further attacks.

Visiting the area yesterday, Chattogram Range Additional Range DIG Sanjoy Sarkar told reporters there was nothing to fear, and that police were prepared to resist the armed group.

Locals said the fact that the attacks took place despite there being Border Guard Bangladesh, army and police camps in the area has added to the panic among residents.

The two banks in Thanchi Bazar robbed by the armed groups on Wednesday morning -- Sonali Bank and Krishi Bank -- are within 150 yards of Thanchi Police Station, which is close to an army camp and two BGB camps.

Some alleged that the BGB were late in responding to the attacks, further emboldening the armed group. Lieutenant Commander Taimoor Hassan, the commanding officer of BGB 38 Battalion, refuted the allegation and said BGB acted promptly after the attacks, because of which the armed group had to leave the area quickly.

Our correspondent, who visited the area yesterday, saw people living near Thanchi Bazar leaving their homes on pickups for safe shelter. Those who stayed behind only left their homes for urgent business.

Didarul Alam, a boatman and a resident of the upazila's TNT Para, said, "I am sending my wife and two sons to Satkania. We are frightened. There is nothing else to do considering the situation."

Similarly, people of at least seven families, mostly women and children, were seen leaving Thanchi with bags. People in Taikkhon Para, TNT Para and Shahjahan Para are passing a tense time.

Around 11:30am a team of BGB from the nearby camp was seen patrolling Thanchi Bazar, which is under the jurisdiction of 38 BGB Battalion. They were seen quizzing people and verifying their identities. Traders said Thanchi bazar has nearly 240 shops and a kitchen market.

A worker at a bookshop in the market said, "We closed our shop around 8:30pm [on Thursday] after the gunfight started. We stayed inside the shop along with other shopkeepers till 10:30pm and later shuttered the market after the armed criminals left the spot."

Local traders said the armed criminals are still positioned at Shahjahan Para near Thanchi Bazar.

Additional Range DIG Sanjoy Sarkar visited Thanchi Police Station around 1:30pm. After checking the security measures, he briefed reporters about the recent attack on police.

"Police is very much capable of dealing with KNF members and have the capacity and skill. They [KNF] have limited members, and police are investigating the intention behind the recent attacks."

Thanchi Police Station OC Jasim Uddin told The Daily Star, "KNF members are trying to get attention and establish supremacy in Thanchi. They tried to collect firearms from the police station and create panic in the police forces.

"We are ready to face them. We have arranged extra forces and firearms," said the OC.

Jasim Uddin, General Secretary of Thanchi Bazar Committee, told The Daily Star, "People are in extreme fear. BGB patrolling has intensified since Thursday but people are gripped by panic following the repeated attacks.

"The administration needs to be more sincere. We are all suffering," he said.

Sanjoy Sarkar told media, "Police filed six cases in Ruma and Thanchi in connection with the robbery at three banks, looting firearms from police and ansar, attacking the police station and abducting the bank manager.

He also denied that the armed men attacked the Thanchi Police Station directly on Thursday night. "Armed KNF members opened fire targeting the on-duty police officials in Thanchi Bazar, forcing police to retaliate with gunfire. The criminals came to Thanchi Bazar riding three jeeps."

Later, the fighting spread to the police station.

Contradicting reports of another gunfight with the armed men in Alikadam later on Thursday night, Chattogram Range DIG Nur E Alam Mina yesterday told The Daily Star, "The shooting incident at the combined check post on Dim Pahar in Alikadam was a misunderstanding. It was a sand-laden truck which tried to breach the barricade of the check post, forcing security officials to fire.

The driver was injured but he is now okay, said Nur e Alam.

6 Russian military planes destroyed

FROM PAGE 12

Kyiv has stepped up its aerial attacks on Russian territory in recent months, targeting both military sites and energy facilities in a bid to disrupt Russia's supply of fuel and equipment for its invasion.

On Tuesday, Ukrainian drones hit the central Tatarstan region -- around 1,100 kilometres (680 miles) from the countries' shared border -- in one of the deepest Ukrainian attacks of the two-year war.

He also reported windows were blown out in an apartment building but made no mention of the air base.

refinery and a factory assembling explosive drones.

Other Ukrainian drone attacks in the early hours of yesterday targeted the Belgorod and Kursk border regions, as well as Saratov and Krasnodar.

In Saratov, the governor said a drone had targeted Engels, a city around 500 kilometres (300 miles) from the border that is home to a major Russian air base that has previously been hit.

UNHRC passes resolution

FROM PAGE 12

its occupation of all Palestinian territories, lift its blockade of Gaza, and end "all other forms of collective punishment".

The text also expressed "grave concern at statements by Israeli officials amounting to incitement to genocide" and urged countries to "prevent the continued forcible transfer of Palestinians within and from Gaza".

It warned in particular "against any large-scale military operations in the city of Rafah in the south of the densely populated Gaza Strip, where well over one million civilians are sheltering.

The resolution also condemned "the use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare in Gaza", where the UN has warned that famine is looming.

Two other resolutions targeting Israel also overwhelmingly passed at the rights council yesterday. One demanded a halt to Israeli settlements, calling on countries to do more to counter settler violence against Palestinians, including through sanctions, and on businesses to terminate activities in or with the settlements.

Other deplored Israel's occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights and its "settlement policies and practices" there, in violation of the rights of Syrian inhabitants.

Chicken prices soar

FROM PAGE 12

sonali chickens at Tk 360 per kg and broiler chickens at Tk 245 per kg.

He vented frustrated over the sudden hike in the price of the essential poultry item and demanded that the government monitor the market properly.

Contacted, Sumon Howlader, president of the Bangladesh Poultry Association, acknowledged the hike in chicken prices.

"The prices of day-old chicks and poultry food rose at the start of the month of Ramadan. Farmers had to count loss by sell chicken at lower prices than the production cost.

"Now that the demand for the poultry has increased, farmers are making some profit."

Congress party

FROM PAGE 12

author P Chidambaram.

The party has promised to address India's "massive unemployment" on a "war footing", adding that it would earmark half of all government jobs for women.

Young people voted for Modi in droves when he was first elected a decade ago after he said he would create 10 million jobs a year.

But a recent International Labour Organization (ILO) report warned that India was hamstrung by a "grim" crisis, with unemployment on the rise.

Congress proposed an unconditional annual cash transfer of Rs 100,000 (\$1,200) "to every poor Indian family", without precisely defining who would qualify.

The BJP is yet to publish its own manifesto.