

Iran vs Israel

A look at their air forces amid fears of extended conflict

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Iran's first direct attack on Israel on April 13 has brought renewed focus on their air-defence capabilities as Israeli leaders decide how best to respond. Below is a look at both countries' air forces and aerial defence systems:

IRAN

The Iranian air force has 37,000 personnel, but decades of international sanctions have largely cut the country off from the latest high-tech military equipment, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London (IISS).

The air force only has a few dozen working strike aircraft, including Russian jets and ageing US models acquired before the Iranian revolution of 1979.

Tehran has a squadron of nine F-4 and F-5 fighter jets, one squadron of Russian-made Sukhoi 24 jets, and some MiG-29s, F7 and F14 aircraft, IISS said.

The Iranians also have pilotless planes designed to fly into targets and explode. Analysts believe this drone arsenal numbers in the low thousands. Iran also has the domestically produced Bavar-373 surface-to-air missile platform, as well as the Sayad and Raad defence systems.

ISRAEL

Israel has an advanced, US-supplied air force with hundreds of F-15, F-16 and F-35 multipurpose jet fighters. These played a role in shooting down Iranian drones at the weekend.

The air force lacks long-range bombers, though a smaller fleet of repurposed Boeing 707s serve as refuelling tankers that could enable its fighters to reach Iran. A pioneer in drone technology, Israel has Heron pilotless planes capable of flying for more than 30 hours, enough for far-flung operations.

A multi-layer aerial defence system developed with US help after the 1991 Gulf war provides Israel with several additional options for shooting down long-range Iranian drones.

The highest-altitude system is Arrow-3, which intercepts ballistic missiles in space. An earlier model, Arrow-2, works at lower altitudes. The mid-range David's Sling counters ballistic missiles and cruise missiles, while the short-range Iron Dome tackles the kind of rockets and mortars used by Iranian-backed militias in Gaza and Lebanon.



A polling official marks the finger of a woman with indelible ink after she cast her ballot to vote in the first phase of India's general election at a polling station in Nagaon district, in the country's northeastern state of Assam yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Israel, Iran ready to de-escalate, for now: analysts

AFP, Paris

The limited nature of Israel's reported strike on Iran and the restrained immediate Iranian reaction shows both sides, in particular Tehran, are looking to de-escalate after weeks of tensions but the situation remains dangerously explosive, analysts say.

There have been fears over the last weeks that decades of enmity between Israel and the Islamic republic could spill over into all-out war as Israel pursues its offensive on Gaza.

An apparent Israeli strike on the Iranian consulate in Damascus on April 1 killed seven members of the Revolutionary Guards force, including its top commander for Iran and Lebanon, and enraged Iran as well as troubling Israel's Western allies.

Iran, which does not recognise Israel, responded by launching hundreds of drones and missiles to attack Israel in an unprecedented assault, all largely shot down by Israel and its allies, with the Israeli

strike overnight Friday seen as retaliation against Tehran.

Iran's state media reported explosions in the central province of Isfahan with Iranian officials quoted by the New York Times saying the attack was carried out by small drones, possibly launched from inside Iran.

We seem to be at a moment when both sides are seeking to exit the current escalatory cycle...

There was no indication the reported attack was directed against a site of Iran's controversial nuclear programme.

The International Atomic Energy Agency said there had been no damage to Iranian atomic sites.

Meanwhile, Iranians woke up to reports on state TV apparently intent

on minimising the impact of the strikes with reporters emphasising daily life was continuing as normal in Isfahan.

"We seem to be at a moment when both sides are seeking to exit the current escalatory cycle, with Israel conducting a very limited attack to demonstrate some response to the Iranian strikes and Tehran quickly playing down the incident in order not to be compelled to respond," said Julien Barnes-Dacey, director of the Middle East and North Africa programme at the European Council on Foreign Relations.

"What should be emphasised is a quasi-symmetry between the two strikes. There is a certain restraint on both sides," said Hasni Abidi, director of the Center for Studies and Research on the Arab and Mediterranean World in Geneva.

"Objective indications show us that for the Iranians this is a closed matter, and that for the Iranians, more than the Israelis, there is no interest in this tension continuing," Abidi added.

INDIA ELECTION

First-time voters rejoice in Maoist rebel heartland

AFP, Dugeli

In remote Indian forests home to a decades-old Maoist insurgency battling government rule, few in farmer Ajay Kumaroya's village had ever dared anger the guerrillas by voting. But when the 23-year-old rose at dawn, Kumaroya found dozens of his neighbours already queuing at the polling station as general elections began yesterday, defying the insurgents to exercise their democratic right. Known as Naxalites, the rebels have been fighting since 1967 for what they claim is for the rural poor -- and Chhattisgarh state's Bastar district, an area bigger than Belgium, was once their key heartland. But India has deployed tens of thousands of security personnel to crush them, and the crowd at Kumaroya's village reflects government efforts to boost infrastructure and connect villages like his to the rest of the country. "I am here for Prime Minister Narendra Modi," Kumaroya told AFP. "If he wins, our roads will get better." Poll workers rolled out a red carpet outside the booth for the people of Dugeli village, showering flower petals on the first few voters to enter. Fellow farmer Pradeep Kumar Karma, 27 said he was voting for Modi to "solve our Naxal problem", he said. "If that happens, we will prosper with tourism and investments", he added.

SUICIDE BLAST ATTACK

Five Japanese escape unhurt in Pakistan

REUTERS, Karachi

Five Japanese nationals in Pakistan yesterday escaped unhurt from a suicide bomb attack on their vehicle as police shot down a gunman accompanying the bomber, a police spokesperson said, but two bystanders were among the three injured. Islamist militants seeking to overthrow the government and set up their own strict brand of Islamic rule have launched some of Pakistan's bloodiest attacks during the last few years, with some separatist groups targeting foreigners, including Chinese. No militant group immediately claimed responsibility for the rare attack on Japanese nationals, however, with Pakistani authorities identifying them as engineers working for the management of an export processing zone in the port city. The Japanese have been moved to a safe place in police custody, the spokesperson, Abrar Hussain Baloch, said, although the bystanders and a guard with the visitors suffered injuries.

Prevent another

FROM PAGE 2

"This was the same kind of hateful narrative that fuelled communal violence in 2012 and the horrendous attacks against the Rohingyas in 2017," he said.

Myanmar's junta came to power in the February 2021 coup that ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government, ending a 10-year experiment with democracy and plunging the Southeast Asian nation into bloody turmoil.

The junta is struggling to crush resistance to its rule by long-established ethnic rebel groups and newer pro-democracy forces.

Met office issues

FROM PAGE 12

Jaminur Rahman said that the season's highest temperature was recorded at 41.3°C in Chuadanga, Meherpur, and Jhenaidah at 3:00pm. But it increased to 41.5°C at 6:00pm. It was also the country's highest temperature till now.

"Intense heatwave is sweeping the area. The heat may continue for a few more days as there are no chances of rain in the meantime," he added.

The district administration has issued a heat alert due to intense heat.

The public was alerted by loudspeaker announcements in the important areas of the district town. They were asked not to venture out of their houses unless necessary. Residents were asked to take extra caution for children and the elderly.

Animals are also reeling in the unbearable heat.

G7 ministers

FROM PAGE 12

coordinator in country," said the G7 countries, noting that accountability for serious crimes committed in Myanmar remains essential.

The continuing attacks by the military destroying civilian infrastructure, the repeated and serious violations of human rights and the alarming humanitarian situation are unacceptable, said the joint statement.

"We also condemn the recent implementation of the 2010 conscription law by the military regime."

The forced recruitment of young people can only lead to further violence and trigger a massive exodus to neighbouring countries, the statement added.

Shib Narayan, first designer

FROM PAGE 12

son Arnab Das.

His father Satish Chandra Das was killed by the Pakistan army during the Liberation War.

Shib Narayan, who was born in Cumilla, joined politics following Language Movement Hero Dhirendranath Dutta. He participated in the education movement of 1962 and was imprisoned.

He was a leader of the Chhatra League.

On June 7, 1970, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was scheduled to take part in a student parade at Paltan Maidan in Dhaka. For this, the "February-15 Force" was formed. Student leaders decided to make a flag of this force.

On June 6, 1970, then Chhatra League leaders ASM Abdur Rab, Shahjahan Siraj, Kazi Aref Ahmed, and Marshal Monirul Islam sat in room No-118 of then Iqbal Hall, now Sergeant Zahurul Huq Hall, of Dhaka University to discuss the matter.

Chhatra League leader Swapan Kumar Chowdhury, its Jagannath College leader Nazrul Islam, Cumilla district unit Chhatra League general secretary and central leader Shib Narayan Das, Buet Chhatra League

general secretary Hasanul Haq Inu and student leader Yusuf Salauddin were present in the meeting.

After a discussion based on the proposal of Kazi Aref, it was decided to make a flag with a yellow map of Bengal in the middle of a red sun on the green ground. Kamrul Alam Khan then stitched a red circle in the middle of a large piece of green cloth from a Bihari tailor's shop in New Market.

Then the map of East Pakistan was drawn on a tracing paper.

Shib Narayan Das finally drew the map in the middle of the red circle. Later, at the instruction of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Patua Kamrul Hasan gave a new look to the national flag of Bangladesh.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed profound shock at the demise of Shib Narayan. In condolence messages, they prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved family members.

Among others, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haque Inu and General Secretary Shirin Akhtar also expressed shock.

24 more BGP members

FROM PAGE 12

infiltration. The situation in Rakhine is being monitored closely, he added.

On February 15, a total of 330 Myanmar nationals who had entered Bangladesh were returned to their country. Among them were 302 BGP members and four of their family members, two army personnel, 18 immigration officials, and four civilians.

The conflict between the junta troops and Arakan Army has intensified from the beginning of February along the Ghumdhum border in Naikhongchhari upazila.

The rebel group has captured a vast area of Rakhine state along the Bangladesh border and fighting has been continuing in the areas predominated by the Rohingya community, according to border sources.

Two killed

FROM PAGE 2

The injured were taken to Madhukhali Upazila Health Complex and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical College Hospital in Faridpur, he said, adding that two of the injured died while undergoing treatment around 1:00am and 4:00am on Friday.

Police said investigations are underway to determine whether the fire was accidental or deliberate.

Visiting the area, a local journalist said many adult men fled the area out of fear.

A number of locals said that a few days ago there was an altercation between the workers and the locals about some issues, although police could not confirm it.

Liton Mollah, one of the injured workers, said upon noticing the fire, they joined the locals to douse the fire.

"But the agitated locals suspected we had a hand in it, and tied our hands and feet and beat us up," he told local reporters.

He said a large number of angry people attacked the workers with sticks, rods and bricks. They also vandalised the doors and windows of the school.

Another worker, Nannu Mondol, said they saw devotees lighting up lamps in the temple every evening. Similarly on Thursday evening, someone lit a lamp in the temple and after a while, they heard about the fire.

He said they have been working there for 15-20 days, but never entered the temple.

Senior officials of the district administration and law enforcement agencies, including Additional DIG Maruf Hossain Sorder, visited the area yesterday.

The local administration formed a three-member committee to investigate the incident.

At a press briefing last night, the Faridpur SP said the attack was carried out by circulating rumours over the fire.

It is unclear if there is any connection between the fire and the workers, as there is no credible complainant or eyewitness yet, he said.

Some riotous crowd capitalised on the rumors that "some workers might be involved in the fire incident" to launch the attack, he said, adding that 11 police officers were injured during the incident.

Dinajpur farmers reel

FROM PAGE 12

hours with a diesel-run water pump, but now it's taking four to five hours because of lower groundwater levels. This is costing us more than double for the extra hours of water pump operation."

He said that running the irrigation water pump for an hour requires one litre of diesel, which according to the government costs Tk 106.

Besides paddy and maize, Khademul cultivates different types of vegetables also.

Zahangir Hossain, another farmer from Panchbari village under Dinajpur Sadar upazila, said the groundwater level in his village also fell below the reach of his deep tube well.

As a result, he, along with other farmers, has not gotten enough water to irrigate their cropland in the village for the last couple of weeks.

"So, we are also having to operate the water pump for extra hours for the required irrigation," he said.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Dinajpur, around 170,000 hectares of land have been brought under Boro rice cultivation in this district this year.

Besides, 508,000 hectares have been brought under Boro cultivation in five districts of the Rangpur region, including Rangpur, Nilphamari, Kurigram, Gaibandha, and Lalmonirhat.

Meanwhile, Rabi crops are being cultivated on over 367,000 hectares in the region, said DAE officials in Rangpur.

According to reports from the Rangpur Met Office, the amount of rainfall in Rangpur has been alarmingly low since November of last year, with near-zero precipitation

Diagnose dengue

FROM PAGE 1

"It's very good news. We have to follow procedure to purchase any product. We would like to promote our local products. If every criterion is met for purchasing, we will surely go for it," said Prof Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

recorded in December, January, and February.

Although there was a slight reprieve with 98.2mm of rain in March, April has seen no rainfall so far, exacerbating the already critical situation.

Meteorological officials in Dinajpur and Rangpur report an abnormal weather pattern persisting for two years. This causes a risk of drought and poses a significant threat to crop cultivation and food security in Rangpur, Dinajpur, and Thakurgaon.

Currently, farmers are in the middle of the Boro season, but with no rain in sight in April, they are forced to rely solely on irrigation to save their crops. This unplanned and excessive use of irrigation equipment not only incurs additional costs for farmers but also depletes groundwater levels, leading to environmental degradation and further exacerbating the crisis.

Mostafizar Rahman, a meteorologist at the Rangpur office, notes that, so far, there has been no rain in April this year and while there was little rainfall between December and February, it was insufficient to alleviate the water scarcity.

Contacted, Obaidur Rahman Mondal, additional director at the DAE in Rangpur, said, that despite the heat wave, there has been no report of crop damage thus far. "But the production will likely take a hit if the drought-like conditions persist."

Dhaka to seek

FROM PAGE 12

However, labour reforms, intellectual property rights, personal data protection, corruption and legal complexities have been some of the issues that Washington repeatedly asked Bangladesh to address.

Earlier, Washington said it would not provide funding to Bangladesh if the country does not improve its labour situation, including the trade union rights, checking unfair labour practices, and wage increase.

Bangladesh said the government has recently amended the labour law and continues dialogue among all parties for further reforms.

"We also need to understand the ground reality as we reform laws," said another official.