

Over half of cropland in hungry Gaza damaged: UN

REUTERS, Geneva

More than half of Gaza's agricultural land, crucial for feeding the territory's hungry population, has been degraded by conflict, satellite images analysed by the United Nations show.

The data reveals a rise in the destruction of orchards, field crops and vegetables in the Palestinian enclave, where hunger is widespread after eight months of Israeli bombardment.

The World Health Organisation warned on Wednesday that many people in Gaza were facing "catastrophic hunger and famine-like conditions".

Using satellite imagery taken between May 2017 and 2024, United Nations Satellite Centre (UNOSAT) and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization



(FAO) found that 57 percent of Gaza's permanent crop fields and arable lands essential for food security had shown a significant decline in density and health.

"In May 2024, crop health and density across the Gaza Strip showed a marked decline compared to the average of the previous seven seasons," UNOSAT said yesterday.

"This deterioration is attributed to conflict-related activities, including razing, heavy vehicle movement, bombing, and shelling."

The decline, UNOSAT said, marked a 30 percent increase in damaged agricultural land since it published its last analysis in April, reports Reuters.



From left, President of the European Council Charles Michel, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, French President Emmanuel Macron, Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, US President Joe Biden, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen pose for a group photo at Borgo Egnazia resort during the G7 Summit hosted by Italy in Apulia region, Savelletri yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

UKRAINE SUPPORT PLAN

G7 leaders agree \$50bn deal

REUTERS, Borgo Egnazia

Leaders of the Group of Seven (G7) major democracies yesterday agreed an outline deal to provide \$50 billion of loans for Ukraine using interest from Russian sovereign assets frozen after Moscow launched its invasion of its neighbour in 2022.

The political agreement was the centrepiece of the opening day in southern Italy of the annual summit of G7 leaders, attended for a second successive year by Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky.

The Ukrainian leader was scheduled to sign a new, long-term security accord with US President Joe Biden later yesterday, as well as one with fellow G7 member Japan.

Many of the G7 leaders are struggling at home but determined to make a difference on the world stage as they also seek to counter China's economic ambitions.

"There is a lot of work to be done, but I am sure that in these two days we will be able to



have discussions that will lead to concrete and measurable results," Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni told her G7 guests as their talks started in a luxury hotel resort in the southern region of Puglia.

The G7 plan for Ukraine is based on a multi-year loan using profits from some \$300 billion of impounded Russian funds.

The technical details will be finalised in the coming weeks, a G7 diplomatic source told Reuters. The source, who asked not to be named, said the additional funding would arrive by the end of this year.

A senior US official said the United States had agreed to provide up to \$50 billion itself, but that amount could decline significantly as other countries announced their participation.

The aim of the deal was to ensure it can run for years regardless of who is in power in each G7 state - a nod to concerns that US Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump might be much less sympathetic to Kyiv if he beats Biden in November, according to a person close to the talks.

While Meloni is flying high after triumphing in weekend European elections, the leaders of the other six nations - the United States, Japan, France, Germany, Britain and Canada - face major domestic woes that risk undermining their authority.

Hezbollah attacks 9 Israeli military sites with rockets

REUTERS, Beirut

Lebanon's Hezbollah said yesterday it had launched rockets and weaponised drones at nine Israeli military sites in a coordinated attack, ramping up hostilities on Lebanon's southern border for the second consecutive day.

The attacks were made in retaliation for an Israeli strike on Tuesday that killed a senior Hezbollah field commander.

The group said in a statement it had fired volleys of Katyusha and Falaq rockets at six Israeli military locations. Its Al-Manar television reported more than 100 rockets fired at once.

Hezbollah's statement said it had also launched attack drones at the headquarters of Israel's northern command, an intelligence headquarters and a military barracks.

A security source told Reuters that involved firing at least 30 attack drones at once, making it the group's largest drone attack to date in the eight-month-old Israeli offensive in Gaza.

The group said yesterday's attack was in response to the killing. It had already carried out at least eight attacks on Wednesday in retaliation.

Israeli strikes have killed more than 300 Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon - more than it lost in 2006, when the sides last fought a major war, according to a Reuters tally.



WSJ says its journo will face 'sham trial' in Russia

AFP, New York

The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) yesterday lashed out at Russia's "outrageous" announcement that its imprisoned reporter Evan Gershkovich will face trial on spying charges.

"Evan Gershkovich is facing a false and baseless charge. Russia's latest move toward a sham trial is, while expected, deeply disappointing and still no less outrageous," Journal chief editor Emma Tucker and top executives said in a statement.

Russian authorities accuse Gershkovich, a Russia correspondent for the leading US business newspaper, of spying and working for the CIA.

He has been imprisoned since his arrest in March 2023 while on a reporting trip to the Urals city of Yekaterinburg.

The Journal's statement said he has so far been held 441 days "for simply doing his job. Evan is a journalist."



Smoke rises following a fire at an oil refinery, on the outskirts of Erbil, Iraq yesterday. At least 10 people including firefighters were injured while battling to control the blaze, the civil defence agency reported.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Over 300,000 troops now on high readiness

Says Nato amid threats from Russia

AFP, Brussels

Nato countries have "comfortably exceeded" a target of placing 300,000 troops on high readiness as the alliance grapples with the threat from Russia, a senior alliance official said yesterday.

Nato leaders agreed in the wake of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 to massively ramp up the number of forces that alliance commanders can deploy within 30 days.

"The offers on the table from allies comfortably exceed the 300,000 that we set," the official said on condition of anonymity.

"Those are forces which allies have said to us, 'They are available to you as of now at that level of readiness'."

The push to have more troops ready

to respond quickly is part of a broader overhaul of Nato's plans to stave off any potential Russian attack that was signed off at a summit last year.

Those plans laid out for the first time since the end of the Cold War what each member of the US-led alliance would be expected to do in case of an invasion by Moscow.

Nato commanders are currently trying to make sure they have the capabilities to execute those plans if needed.

But the alliance faces shortfalls in key weaponry such as air defences and longer-range missiles.

"There are capability gaps. There are things that we don't have enough of as an alliance at the moment and we need to tackle," the official said.

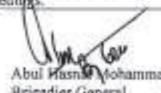
Fire erupts on ship after attack off Yemen

AFP, Dubai

A merchant ship caught fire after being attacked off Yemen, a British maritime security agency said yesterday, following months of attacks in the area by Iran-backed Houthi rebels.

The ship was hit by "two unknown projectiles, which has resulted in a fire on board", said the navy-run United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, which monitors security incidents.

According to security firm Ambrey, the ship was hit by a missile in the Gulf of Aden, south of war-torn Yemen.

BANGLADESH ELECTION COMMISSION				
Identification System for Enhancing Access to Services (IDEA) Project (2 nd Phase)				
Nirbachan Bhaban (Floor-8)				
Agargaon, Dhaka-1207				
Invitation for Tenders				
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH				
1	Ministry/Division	Bangladesh Election Commission		
2	Agency	Election Commission Secretariat		
3	Procuring Entity Name	Project Director, Identification System for Enhancing Access to Services (IDEA) Project (2 nd Phase), Bangladesh Election Commission.		
4	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka		
5	Invitation for	Purchase and upgradation of Network Equipment for Data Centre and Personalization Centre		
6	Invitation Ref. No. & Date	17.14.0000.240.07.171.2024/1961 ; Dated: 13 June, 2024		
KEY INFORMATION				
7	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)		
FUNDING INFORMATION				
8	Budget and Source of Funds	GoB (Development Budget)		
PARTICULAR INFORMATION				
9	Project / Program Code (if applicable)	224531200		
10	Project Name (if applicable)	Identification System for Enhancing Access to Services (IDEA) Project (2 nd Phase)		
11	Tender Package No.	GD-41.1		
12	Tender Package Name	Purchase and upgradation of Network Equipment for Data Centre and Personalization Centre		
13	Tender Publication Date	14 June 2024		
14	Pre-Tender Meeting Date and Time	01 July 2024 11:00 A.M.		
15	Tender Last Selling Date and Time	15 July 2024 04:00 P.M.		
16	Tender Closing Date and Time	16 July 2024 11:00 A.M.		
17	Tender Opening Date and Time	16 July 2024 11:30 P.M.		
18	Name & Address of the office(s)	Address		
19	Selling Tender Document (Principal)	Assistant Director (Finance), Room No. 818 (Floor-8), Nirbachan Bhaban, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207.		
NO CONDITIONS APPLY FOR SALE, PURCHASE OR DISTRIBUTION OF TENDER DOCUMENTS				
20	Pre-Tender Meeting	Conference Room No. 721, Nirbachan Bhaban (Floor-7), Agargaon, Dhaka-1207.		
21	Receiving Tender Document			
22	Opening Tender Document			
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER				
23	Eligibility of Tenderer	1. Tender shall have the legal capacity to enter into the contract under the applicable law. 2. Tenderers shall have to be enrolled in the relevant professional or trade organizations registered in Bangladesh. 3. Tenderers shall have to fulfil its obligation/obligations to pay taxes under the provisions of laws and regulations of Bangladesh. 4. Detail information is provided in the tender document.		
24	Brief Description of Services	"Purchase and upgradation of Network Equipment for Data Centre and Personalization Centre" As Specified in the Tender Document		
25	Price of Tender Document (Tk.)	BDT 3000.00 (Three thousand only) Non-refundable.		
26	Package No.	Identification of Package	Location	Tender Security Amount (Tk.)
	GD-41.1	Purchase and upgradation of Network Equipment for Data Centre and Personalization Centre	Dhaka	75,00,000.00 (Seventy-five lac only)
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS				
27	Name of Official Inviting Tender	Brigadier General Abul Hasnat Mohammad Sayem		
28	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Project Director		
29	Address of Official Inviting Tender	Identification System for Enhancing Access to Services (IDEA) Project (2 nd Phase), Nirbachan Bhaban (Floor-8), Agargaon, Dhaka-1207.		
30	Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Telephone: 00-88-02-53007594; e-mail address: pd.idea2.bd@gmail.com		
31	The Procuring Entity reserves the right to reject all the Tenders or annul the Tender proceedings.			
 Abul Hasnat Mohammad Sayem Brigadier General Project Director IDEA Project (2 nd Phase)				