



A YEAR OF ISRAEL'S INVASION

Gaza still bleeds

Death toll nears 42,000; rallies worldwide call for ceasefire

AGENCIES

Intensified Israeli airstrikes on Gaza yesterday killed dozens on the eve of the first anniversary of its offensive in the besieged territory that has killed nearly 42,000 Palestinians and left the enclave in ruins.

Israel's war on Gaza has since spread as it invaded Lebanon after months of trading fire across the border, raising the fear of a wider conflict in the Middle East with experts saying it risks sucking in major regional and world powers.

As the Israeli invasion enters its second year, tens of thousands of protesters marched in cities around the world calling for a ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon, a prospect which experts say is unlikely anytime soon.

The marches were held in almost all major cities across Europe,



- Two thirds of Gaza structures damaged or destroyed
- Nearly all of enclave's 2.3 million people displaced
- Humanitarian crisis amid bleak ceasefire hope

Africa, Australia and the Americas demanding an end to the conflict.

In Washington, more than a thousand protesters demonstrated outside the White House, seeking that the United States, Israel's top military supplier, stop providing weapons and aid to Israel.

One man attempted to set himself on fire, AFP journalists saw, succeeding in lighting his left arm ablaze before bystanders and police extinguished the flames.

On October 7, 2023, Hamas-led fighters streamed across the border from Gaza into southern Israel, killing about 1,200 people and kidnapping some 250 others, according to Israeli tallies.

The next day, Israel formally declared war on Hamas.

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People travel on a tractor trailer while others walk on a flooded road in Nalitabari, Sherpur. Some areas in the district have become completely inaccessible by roads as swollen rivers in the region continue to inundate villages and upend lives.

PHOTO : SAHIDUL ISLAM NIRAB

Floods worsen in Sherpur and Mymensingh

3.5 lakh marooned; three swept away by floodwaters

STAR REPORT

The bodies of three more people have been found who died over the last three days after being swept away by floodwaters in Sherpur, bringing the total number of deaths from the recent floods in the district to seven.

With the ongoing flood situation worsening yesterday, the number of people currently stranded in Sherpur and Mymensingh reached around 3.5 lakh.

A bulletin from the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre yesterday said the flood situation in the two districts may remain stable till 9:00am today.

The three deceased were identified as Zahura Khatun, 70, of Chenguria village under Jhenaihati upazila; Muktar Hossain, 50, of Urfa union under Nakla upazila; and Mahua Khatun of Namabatkuchi village

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A curious tale of two cases

Time of murders, victims different; complaints, accused almost identical

RAFIUL ISLAM and EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

Two cases were filed over the killing of two men in the capital's Jatrabari during the mass uprising that toppled the Awami League government.

The killings took place on July 18 and 19 and the circumstances surrounding the crimes were different but the seven-page first information statements (FIRs) filed with Jatrabari Police Station are

almost identical, with the names, addresses, and other details of the two victims being the only differences.

Abu Bakar, 55, who claims to be the convener of Ward 63 Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal, filed both the cases on September 2 over the deaths of Sakib Hasan, 22, and Jahangir Alam, 50.

The same 442 individuals are accused in both cases.

Furthermore, Bakar, who is not related to either of the victims,

filed the cases without informing the families. Grieving members of Sakib and Jahangir's families were surprised when they were informed of the cases.

Former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, former ministers—Obaidul Quader, Amir Hossain Amu, Hasan Mahmud, Asaduzzaman Khan, Dipu Moni, former inspectors general of police AKM Shahidul Hoque, Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun are among the accused.

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105 children killed in July uprising

Govt publishes draft list of 737 killed

STAR REPORT

At least 105 children were killed during the recent student-led uprising in July and August, Women and Children Affairs Adviser Sharmin S Murshid said yesterday.

Each victim's family will receive Tk 50,000 as compensation, Sharmin, also the social welfare adviser, announced during a press conference at the secretariat.

The list was finalised by the Health Services Division under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, reports UNB.

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A bustling kitchen market on the rail lines in the capital's Karwan Bazar. While this a blatant disregard for safety, food hygiene is also compromised because of the close proximity to moving trains. The photo was taken yesterday morning.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

August floods caused Tk 14,000cr loss: CPD

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The late August floods caused damage worth an estimated Tk 14,421.46 crore, and the government would need to increase its budget for relief distribution, according to a study of the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

The study highlighted that the damage was equivalent to 1.81 percent of the national budget and 0.26 percent of the projected GDP for FY25.

The findings were presented at a press briefing titled "Recent Flood Damage and Rehabilitation Process in Eastern Region: CPD's Analysis" at the think-tank's office in the capital yesterday.

The floods were caused by continuous heavy rains and onrush of water from upstream and affected 11 districts in the region.

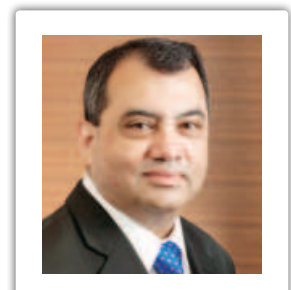
The CPD's damage assessment focused on Sylhet, Moulvibazar, Habiganj, Feni, Khagrachhari, Cox's Bazar, Cumilla, Noakhali, Chattogram, Lakshmipur, and Brahmanbaria.

The CPD collected primary data through key informant interviews, focus group discussions, NGO representatives, and government officials. It also conducted field visits to Noakhali, Lakshmipur, and Feni.

The agriculture and forest sectors were the hardest hit. They suffered damage worth Tk 5,169.71 crore, or 35.85 percent of the total. Damage worth Tk 2,407.31 crore, 16.69 percent of the total, were done to homes.

Noakhali accounted for 29.07

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Saber Hossain Chowdhury arrested

Ex-land minister, MP, secy also held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Detective Branch of police yesterday arrested Saber Hossain Chowdhury, former environment forest and climate change minister and Dhaka-9 lawmaker, in the capital's Gulshan.

DMP Deputy Commissioner (media) Talebur Rahman told The Daily Star that there were

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ADVERTORIAL

Bashundhara Group Calls for Immediate Action to Halt Defamatory Campaign and Safeguard its Reputation and Business Operations

Dhaka, October 7, 2024 – Bashundhara Group, one of Bangladesh's largest and most reputed business conglomerates, has issued an urgent appeal to the interim government, calling for swift intervention to stop the spread of defamatory and false allegations against the Group, its Chairman, and Managing Director. In a letter to Dr. Muhammad Yunus, Chief Adviser of the Interim Government, Bashundhara Group's Chairman, Ahmed Akbar Sobhan, emphasized that recent unsubstantiated accusations—disseminated by some media—have caused severe damage to the Group's reputation, business operations, and the livelihood of thousands of employees and their families.

Background

On September 5, 2024, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) issued a press release announcing that it would undertake an inquiry regarding some allegations of land grabbing and money laundering alongside other irregularities. These accusations and media publications, made without prior investigation or legal basis, have significantly harmed the conglomerate's local and global standing. Bashundhara Group has vehemently denied all such claims, stressing that no court or legal authority has ruled against the company on these matters.

The letter expressed deep concern that the widespread media coverage of these speculations, prior to any inquiry or investigation as per the law, has caused confusion among the Group's stakeholders, trade partners, and financial institutions. Bashundhara Group has emphasized that such serious accusations should be based on thorough investigations and credible evidence - not mere speculation. It further stressed that the conglomerate consistently adhered to regulatory compliance, upholding the principles of law.

Response to Allegations

A key allegation evolves around the conglomerate's real estate wing for illegally seizing government land and purported lack of regulatory approval for part of its residential projects. Bashundhara's Chairman has responded that these matters fall exclusively under the jurisdiction of civil courts, and to date, no court has ruled against the Group based on such claims. Furthermore, allegations of siphoning funds abroad and involvement in trade-based money laundering have been outrightly denied as baseless. The conglomerate has maintained a flawless 40-year history of regular loan repayments, with no concerns ever raised by its banking partners or Bangladesh's central bank.

Moreover, the Group categorically denied the unsubstantiated accusations of gold smuggling and tax evasion, emphasizing that no such formal complaints had ever been lodged, and no official investigation had been undertaken to substantiate these allegations. The media report, which speculatively tainted the conglomerate as guilty before completion of any inquiry or investigation, have severely disrupted its business operations and damaged its reputation both domestically and internationally. It has also violated the basic presumption of innocence of the Group, its Chairman and Managing Director before proven guilty, contrary to international legal and journalistic standards.

Economic Contributions at Risk

The letter to the interim government underscored that since its inception in the 1980s, Bashundhara Group has played a critical role in Bangladesh's economic development. The Group's ventures in real estate, bitumen, cement, paper, food, shipping, and essential commodities contribute to the country's housing, infrastructure, and food security. Its oil and gas projects are vital for Bangladesh's energy needs, while upcoming ventures in diverse sectors aim to reduce the nation's dependency on imports, preserving valuable foreign currency reserves.

Bashundhara Chairman's letter further stressed that the ongoing defamatory campaign threatens to destabilize the conglomerate's widespread business operations across diverse industries. Such outcomes would inevitably have a ripple effect on the national economy, jeopardizing thousands of jobs and harming Bangladesh's international credit rating on the global stage. It would also injure the Group's significant contributions to the government exchequer.

Appeal for Government Action and Commitment to positive contributions

Bashundhara Group has urged the interim government, led by Dr. Muhammad Yunus, to protect its businesses, the livelihoods of thousands of employees, and its hard-earned reputation.

Chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan also emphasized that even though the conglomerate has fostered positive relationships with successive governments during the last four decades to ensure business continuity, none of his family members were ever involved in politics. He further reaffirmed the Group's commitment to contributing to Bangladesh's socio-economic development and upholding transparency, fairness, and accountability in all its endeavors.