

Israeli air attacks batter south Beirut

Witnesses say it was heaviest so far; Hezbollah strikes Israeli base with drones

REUTERS, Beirut

Israeli air attacks battered Beirut's southern suburbs overnight and early yesterday in the most intense bombardment of the Lebanese capital since Israel sharply escalated its campaign against Iran-backed group Hezbollah last month.

It was the single biggest attack of Israel's assault on Beirut so far, witnesses and military analysts on local TV channels said.

"Last night was the most violence of all the previous nights. Buildings were shaking around us and at first I thought it was an earthquake. There were dozens of strikes - we couldn't count them all - and the sounds were deafening," said Hanan Abdullah, a resident of the Burj al-Barajneh area in Beirut's southern suburbs.

Videos posted on social media, showed fresh damage to the highway that runs from Beirut airport through its southern suburbs into downtown.

Israel said its air force had "conducted a series of targeted strikes on a number of weapons storage facilities and terrorist infrastructure sites belonging to the Hezbollah terrorist organization in the area of Beirut".

Lebanese authorities did not immediately say what the missiles had hit or what damage they caused.

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) also issued new evacuation orders yesterday for residents of around 25 areas in southern Lebanon, calling on them to head immediately to the north of the Awali River.



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus poses for a photo with army chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman and other officials at the inauguration of the "Army Headquarters Selection Board-2024" at its headquarters in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PTI

Freeze accounts of Bashundhara Group chairman, MD, family

BFIU directs banks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) yesterday asked banks to freeze all personal accounts of Bashundhara Group Chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan, his son and group Managing Director Sayem Sobhan Anvir, and their family members.

The family members mentioned by the BFIU are Sadat Sobhan, son of Ahmed Akbar Sobhan; Sonia Ferdowshi Sobhan, wife of Sadat; Shafiat Sobhan, another son of Ahmed Akbar Sobhan and vice-chairman of the conglomerate; and Sabrian Sobhan, wife of Anvir.

The anti-money laundering agency sent a letter to the banks ordering them to freeze the personal bank accounts in their names for 30 days in the first phase.

The BFIU asked the banks to block their locker facilities as well.

The intelligence unit also sought an update on the account details of

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105 children killed Gaza still bleeds

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The monetary grant and a certificate will be distributed on World Children's Day today among families of the deceased children.

The ceremony is scheduled to take place at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium.

Additionally, Murshid noted that Tk 82,70,898 has been allocated to assist students injured during the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement through the Social Service Office and the Upazila Patient Welfare Association.

The ministry is also in the process of securing \$5 million from the World Bank to fund rehabilitation and treatment for those affected by the uprising.

She also said the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs currently operates 12 daycare centres and is advocating for the establishment of daycare facilities in all government institutions by June 2026.

The government is also exploring the possibility of introducing private-sector daycares to enhance employment opportunities and provide essential services.

Meanwhile, the interim government yesterday published a preliminary list of at least 737 people who were killed during the student-led mass protests in July and August.

The names and identities of the dead were collected from different public and private hospitals, reports our staff correspondent.

The list is available at <https://medical-info.dghs.gov.bd/>.

Being a preliminary list, it's a work in progress and is being updated. The website's filtering function was not working accurately as of last night. However, initial analysis indicates that the majority of fatalities occurred in Dhaka, and most of the victims were students.

Earlier on September 24, the government published a draft list of 708 names on the website of the Health Services Division under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

The draft list was scrutinised again and the preliminary list was released yesterday.

Saber Hossain

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several cases filed against Saber.

Police are yet to determine in which case he would be shown arrested.

Following the January national election, Saber was appointed the environment minister. Previously, he was the chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the environment ministry.

Saber was also appointed as a special envoy of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina for environment and climate change in June 2023.

He was the organising secretary of AL from 2001-2008, responsible for Dhaka division. During this period, he was also the political secretary to AL president and then leader of the opposition Hasina.

In another development, former land minister Narayan Chandra Chanda was held from Jhenaigati yesterday as he attempted to flee to India crossing the border illegally.

BGB members arrested him from Maheshpur border area, said Shariful Islam, public relations officer of BGB.

Chanda is former AL lawmaker from Khulna 5.

Meanwhile, the DB, in another drive, arrested Aminul Islam Khan, a former senior secretary of the home ministry, in Dhaka's Banani yesterday afternoon, Talebur said.

Aminul joined as the senior secretary of the home ministry on October 30, 2022. He retired on March 31 last year.

Rab arrested former AL lawmaker of Rajshahi 3 Asaduzzaman Asad in Dhaka's Baridhara yesterday, according to a text message sent by Rab.

Asad was accused in several cases following the ouster of Hasina on August 5.

Rab officials said the process is underway to hand Asad over to Boalia Police Station in Rajshahi.

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Since then, indiscriminate Israeli bombardment has damaged or destroyed two thirds of the total structures in the Gaza Strip, The United Nations Satellite Centre (UNOSAT) said on September 30. It also damaged or destroyed around 68 percent of cropland and roads.

Only 17 of 36 hospitals remain partially functional, and all suffer from a lack of fuel, medical supplies, and clean water.

According to United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), an estimated 1.9 million Palestinians in Gaza (more than 90 percent of the population) have been displaced, with many experiencing multiple forced displacements as a result of persistent Israeli relocation orders.

The blockade on humanitarian goods has caused a hunger crisis in the Palestinian enclave and led to genocide allegations at the World Court that Israel denies.

The offensive has not only destroyed the present day Gaza but also robbed its future as children, who make up almost half of Gaza's entire population, are the primary victims. Of the 42,000 killed in the enclave, at least 16,456 are children.

According to UN, none of them have been able to attend school since October 7. The longer fighting goes on, the greater the chance of losing an entire generation, it said.

The offensive intensified early yesterday with Israeli airstrikes hitting a mosque and a school sheltering displaced people in the Gaza Strip killing at least 26 people and wounding 93 others, the Hamas-run Gaza government media office said.

Palestinian health officials said at least another 20 people had been killed since Saturday night in northern Gaza, after the army sent tanks into areas there for the first time in months and urged residents to leave.

The Israeli military said it had conducted "precise strikes on Hamas terrorists" who were operating within command and control centres embedded in Ibn Rushd School and

Floods worsen in Sherpur and Mymensingh

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under Nalitabari upazila, said police.

Mohua had been missing since Friday noon when she was going to one of her relative's houses and was swept away by floodwater. Her body was recovered from a neighbouring village on Saturday night, said Sanowar Hossain, officer-in-charge (OC) of Nalitabari Police Station.

On Saturday evening, Zahura Khatun was working in the yard of her house when, all of a sudden, a stream of rushing water entered into the yard, sweeping her away. Her floating body was recovered from near her residence around one hour later, said Habibur Rahman, OC of Nakla Police Station.

Muktar's body was recovered from Urfa area yesterday morning. But locals couldn't say when he drowned, Al Amin, OC of Jhenaigati Police Station.

Earlier bodies of four other victims were recovered from different areas of Sherpur's Nalitabari upazila on Friday and Saturday.

Around 1.5 lakh people in Sherpur's five upazilas - Sherpur's Sadar, Jhenaigati, Nalitabari, Sreebordi, and Nakla - are marooned, according to Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) officials.

Although Sherpur's major rivers were flowing above the danger marks last morning, as the day progressed,

the Shuhada al-Aqsa Mosque, in the area of Deir al-Balah in central Gaza.

Hamas rejects accusations it uses civilian facilities such as schools, hospitals and mosques for military purposes.

Amid the violence, the International Committee of the Red Cross urged all parties to ensure all civilians were protected.

"This is a year marked by heartbreak and unanswered questions. Families have been torn apart, with many loved ones still held against their will. Tens of thousands of people have been killed and millions have been displaced across the region," it said.

The Hamas-run Gaza government media office said Israel had struck 27 shelters, schools and displacement shelters across Gaza in the past 48 hours.

Medics said an Israeli airstrike killed three Palestinians in Rafah, near the border with Egypt, where Israeli forces have been operating since May.

On Saturday, Israeli army issued new evacuation orders in parts of Nuseirat camp in the central Gaza Strip, just north of Deir al-Balah, forcing hundreds of families to leave their houses. The military statement said its forces aimed to operate against Hamas fighters who waged attacks from the territory.

Meanwhile, Israeli tanks pushed into the northern Gaza areas of Beit Lahiya and Jabalia overnight, and planes hit several houses, killing at least 20 people, according to medics.

The Israeli military said its forces had encircled the area of Jabalia.

In one air strike, 10 people were killed in one house, and five others in another strike on a second home. Residents described it as one of the worst nights in many months.

"The war is back," said Raed, 52, from Jabalia, before he and his family left for Gaza City yesterday.

"Dozens of explosions from airstrikes and tank shelling shook the ground and buildings, it felt like the early days of the war," he told Reuters via a chat app.

The armed wings of Hamas, the Islamic Jihad, and smaller factions said fighters were engaged

the water levels in these rivers fell.

At 6:00pm yesterday, the Bhogai river was flowing 92cm below the danger level at Nalitabari point, while the Chellakhal river was 17cm below the danger level at Batkuchi point, according to Sherpur BWDB.

Many fresh areas, including houses, farmlands, ponds and roads, have been flooded yesterday, said locals.

"I have not seen such massive flooding in recent years. My house is now under knee deep water. We currently don't have enough dry food to survive on," said Abdul Malek, a resident of Balughat village under Nalitabari upazila.

"Floodwater entered my house so quickly that we could not move our furniture. All of my furniture have been damaged," said Halima Bewa, a resident of Rajnagar village under Jhenaigati upazila.

Fish from over 2,000 fish enclosures have been swept away, said Sherpur district Fisheries Officer Pranab Kumar Karmakar.

In Mymensingh, around two lakh people are marooned in Dhobaura and Halaughat upazilas, according to the local administration.

Aman paddy of around 11,600 hectares have been damaged, said officials of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Mymensingh.

in gunbattles with Israeli forces in Jabalia, the largest of Gaza Strip's eight refugee camps.

Palestinian and UN officials say no place in the enclave is safe, including the humanitarian zones.

Ahead of the anniversary, Israel placed its forces on alert.

Military spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said at a televised briefing: "We are prepared with increased forces in anticipation for this day", when there could be "attacks on the home front".

In Washington, US Vice President and Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris said US will continue to pressure Israel and other players in the Middle East to reach a ceasefire deal in Gaza even as advocates say that the United States has not thus far used its leverage over its ally.

Washington's occasional condemnation of Israel over the civilian death toll has mostly been verbal with no substantive change in policy.

President Joe Biden laid out a three-phase ceasefire plan for Gaza on May 31 but a deal between Israel and Hamas has not been reached due to gaps in exchanges of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners, and Israel's demand that it maintain presence in a corridor on the southern edge of the Gaza Strip bordering Egypt.

As the war in Gaza enters its second year and a wider Middle East conflict is on the verge of breaking out, one question remains: How, if at all, does this end?

"I'm not sure that it does end," Mairav Zonszein, senior Israel-Palestine analyst for International Crisis Group, told the ABC.

"At this point, we can't talk just about the war in Gaza, but we have to talk about the war with Hezbollah, and the war in the West Bank ... and of course Iran and its proxies."

All of this makes the prospect of a ceasefire in Gaza even less likely, according to Zonszein.

"There's a spectrum," she said.

"It could get much, much worse on several fronts. They're all connected and the connecting theme ... is Gaza."

"I cultivated Aman paddy on 10 acres. All of my paddy plants have gone underwater," said Nurul Amin, a resident of Doshrrapar village in Halaughat upazila.

Fish from around 10,800 enclosures have been washed away, according to the district fisheries office.

"All the fish in my fish enclosures covering around 50 decimals have been washed away," said Abul Kalam of Doshrrapar village.

Contacted, Md Akhlaq Ul Jamil, executive engineer of BWDB in Mymensingh, said the flood situation may improve after three days.

Many flood-hit people alleged that they did not get any relief aid.

"People in our village who are stranded neither got relief materials nor any chance to be evacuated," said Masudur Rahman, of Boro Khalepar village in Halaughat.

However, Azim Uddin, Mymensingh's additional deputy commissioner, claimed that they were working to evacuate flood victims and distribute relief.

Army personnel, with eight speedboats, have joined the rescue operation in Mymensingh, said Major Ibrahim.

[Our correspondents from Mymensingh and Jamalpur contributed to this report.]

August floods caused

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percent of the total damage, followed by Cumilla, 23.51 percent; Feni, 18.61 percent; and Chattogram, 11.63 percent.

During the recent floods, homes were badly affected, with many hovels were destroyed. The loss of crops and fish was huge, said Muntaser Kamal, senior research fellow at the CPD, while presenting the findings.

The water bodies will require reinvestment before they can be used again. Poultry farms, particularly chicken farms, also suffered with entrepreneurs losing nearly all their investments.

Small businesses, especially grocery shops, faced severe challenges as they had to shut down, incurring heavy losses.

Electricity supply and internet access were disrupted.

Waterlogging persists in Noakhali and Lakshimpur, damaging roads, bridges, and culverts.

Educational institutions had their furniture and equipment on the ground floors destroyed, and children unable to go to school.

The study recommended social safety net allocations, particularly for elderly citizens, widows, and destitute women, be increased after careful assessment. Ensuring easy access to finance and providing debt relief were also highlighted.

The government needs to ensure that farmers can get agricultural loans easily. Small businesses, many of which have taken loans from microfinance organisations, may benefit from loan repayment moratoriums and extended repayment periods, the study said.

To protect the agricultural sector, it emphasised ensuring an adequate supply of seeds as the floods destroyed many seedbeds.

A curious tale of two cases

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Most of the other accused are leaders and activists of the Awami League, particularly from the Jatrabari, Demra, and Kadamtali areas.

Veteran Supreme Court lawyer ZI Khan Panna said such cases would not stand the scrutiny of a trial and it would be impossible to ensure justice for the victims.

"These cases seem to be aimed at harassing people," he said, adding the FIR is crucial for proving a complaint and it must mention facts only.

Contacted, Jahangir's 18-year-old daughter Mithila Akter, a resident of Jatrabari, said, "We lost our father. We should have been the ones filing the case."

"Besides, the man sued several hundred people of our neighbourhood. Now these people hate us for no reason." She added that Bakar, who filed the case, "definitely has ill motives. He has accused people he wants to harm".

"I want justice for my father. We also want punishment of the man who filed the case without telling us."

Sakib's father Mortoza Alam also said he was surprised when he heard about the case.

"Police shot my son dead. But the complaint is against political leaders and activists. I want justice. I will file a case with the International Crimes Tribunal soon. I will sue only those who shot my son."

Contacted on September 23, Bakar said he filed the cases to ensure justice for the victims.

About the identical wording in both cases, he said he could not discuss the matter further. He requested a follow-up call, but had not responded to calls later.

Like the two identical cases, this newspaper also found three cases filed with Badda Police Station on August

The study recommended immediate government preparations for rice imports and reductions in agricultural input import duties as the extensive damage to agriculture is also likely to affect food security.

Keeping inflation under control will be a significant challenge, it added.

The study also stressed the need for improving emergency response system.

Radio communication systems between administrative offices should be established for use when mobile networks are down, and ambulance boats must be available in flood-affected areas.

Effective coordination between various stakeholders, including the meteorological department and local government units, is vital for rapid emergency response, it said.

Enhancing the capacity of government relief offices by ensuring adequate personnel and training is also crucial, along with improving embankments and upgrading forecasting and early warning systems. Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director at the CPD, said Bangladesh should prepare with the understanding that the country will face floods more frequently.

He said recent floods have been particularly devastating as they were prolonged.

The damage at the individual level are more severe than ever before, necessitating long-term credit support for recovery, he added.

Fahmida Khatun, executive director at the CPD, said the nature of the floods was somewhat different from previous ones. Areas that typically do not experience flooding were inundated.

"As a result, the affected people, as well as those involved in relief efforts, were unprepared," she said.

20 and 21, over the killings of Sumon Sikder, 31, Hafizul Sikder, 28, and Sohag Mia, 30.

All the three cases contain almost similar narratives and same number of the accused though the victims were killed in three places at different times.

Masuma filed a murder case accusing 179 people over the death of her son Sumon on July 19 on Pragati Sarani in Uttar Badda while Abubakar Sikder filed another murder case accusing the same people over the death of his son Hafizul in Merul Badda area on July 20.

Bellal Mia, 35, filed the third one against 178 people over the death of his brother Sohag on Gulshan Link Road on August 5.

Though the place of murder and dates are different, the narratives of the cases are identical and 178 accused in each of the three cases are same.

Masuma could not be contacted but her husband Yousuf Sikder, a leader of the Badda BNP, said, "We made them accused following suggestions from the party men."

Another complainant named Abu Bakar said, "I know that if too many people are accused, justice can elude us. But a local BNP leader in Badda gave a list of people to accuse. I just signed the papers."

Bellal Mia said, "I gave the names of the accused. I don't know how these names matched with the names of previous cases."

Talebur Rahman, deputy commissioner (media) of DMP, said police are not harassing anyone for being sued in cases. Police submit an investigation report to the court after analysing evidence.

The Police Headquarters has recently ordered officers to drop the names of individuals against whom there was no evidence.