

INDIAN OCEAN Iran hosts jt drills with Russia, Oman

REUTERS

Naval drills hosted by Iran with the participation of Russia and Oman and observed by nine other countries began in the Indian Ocean yesterday, Iran's state TV said.

The exercises, dubbed "IMEX 2024", are aimed at boosting "collective security in the region, expand multilateral cooperation, and display the goodwill and capabilities to safeguard peace, friendship, and maritime security", the English-language Press TV said.

Participants would practice tactics to ensure international maritime trade security, protect maritime routes, enhance humanitarian measures, and exchange information on rescue and relief operations, it said.



Children sift through waste at a landfill in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on October 15, 2024.

PHOTO: AFP

Boat carrying 100 Rohingyas sighted off Indonesia

AFP, Banda Aceh

A boat carrying more than 100 Rohingya refugees was spotted off Indonesia's westernmost province with at least one dead body seen on board, local officials said yesterday.

The mostly Muslim ethnic Rohingyas are heavily persecuted in Myanmar, and thousands risk their lives each year on long and dangerous sea journeys to try to reach Malaysia or Indonesia.

The Rohingya boat is anchored around three to four miles (five to six kilometres) off the coast of South Aceh district with its engine turned off, community leader Muhammad Jabal told AFP.

He said the boat was first seen on Friday when he and others set off to deliver food and water to the refugees, estimating more than a hundred were on board.

"I saw with my own eyes there was a body. There were many children too aboard the boat," Jabal said.

The day before the sighting of the boat, the body of a Rohingya woman was found at sea.

Local police chief Sabda Man Sobri confirmed she was a member of the ethnic group, but could not comment on whether she was connected to the boat.

Yuhelmi, a South Aceh district spokesperson, confirmed the boat sighting but said locals were waiting for an immigration team from provincial capital Banda Aceh to arrive before deciding the next step for the refugees.

Gaza 'hell on Earth' for one million children: UN

AFP, Geneva

The one million children in Gaza are living a "hell on Earth", the UN said Friday, with around 40 children having been killed there every day over the past year.

More than a year into Israel's war against Hamas in the besieged Palestinian territory "children continue to suffer unspeakable daily harm", said James Elder, spokesman for the United Nations children's agency UNICEF.

"Gaza is the real-world embodiment of hell on Earth for its one million children," he told reporters in Geneva. "And it's getting worse, day by day."

Since Hamas's deadly October 7 attack inside Israel, which sparked the war, "conservative" estimates put the death toll

among children in Gaza at over 14,100, Elder said.

That means that "on a conservative measure, around 35 to 40 girls and boys are killed every day in Gaza, since October 7", he said.

Elder said the numbers -- provided by authorities in Hamas-run Gaza, who put the total death toll at over 42,400 -- were unfortunately trustworthy.

"There are many, many more under the rubble," he added.

And those who have survived the daily airstrikes and military operations have often faced harrowing conditions, he said. Children were being repeatedly displaced by violence and frequent evacuation orders even as "deprivation grips all of Gaza".

"Where would children and their families go? They are not

safe in schools and shelters. They are not safe in hospitals. And they are certainly not safe in overcrowded camp sites," he said.

AMPUTATION

Elder described the experience of a seven-year-old girl named Qamar, who was struck in the foot during an attack on Jabaliya camp in northern Gaza.

Taken to a hospital that was then placed under a 20-day siege, she could not be moved or get the treatment she needed for her growing infection, and her leg was amputated.

"In any vaguely normal situation, this little girl's leg would never have needed to be amputated," said Elder.

Faced with fresh evacuation orders from Israel, the girl, her mother and her sister, who was also injured, were forced to move

south, on foot.

"They now live in a ripped tent, surrounded by stagnant water," Elder said, adding that Qamar was "of course deeply traumatised", and without access to prosthetics.

UNICEF had already warned that Gaza had become "a graveyard for thousands of children" a year ago, he said.

Last December, the agency had declared Gaza "the most dangerous place in the world to be a child".

"Day after day, for more than a year now, that brutal evidence-based reality is reinforced," Elder added, describing a feeling of "deja vu, but with even darker shadows".

"If this level of horror doesn't stir our humanity and drive us to act, then whatever will?"

Migrants leave Albania for Italy as judges reject detentions

Bangladeshis among them

AFP, Shengjin

Twelve Bangladeshi and Egyptian men left Albania for Italy yesterday after judges ruled against their detention in the non-EU nation under a controversial deal between Rome and Tirana.

Sixteen men from Bangladesh and Egypt arrived at the Albanian port of Shengjin on Wednesday, nearly a year after an agreement to house asylum seekers in Italian-run centres in Albania until their cases are handled remotely by Italian judges.

However, four of 16 were identified as "vulnerable" and were immediately sent back to Italy.

The remaining 12 yesterday boarded an Italian coast guard vessel which will take them to Brindisi in southern Italy, Albanian port officials said.

Earlier, they were escorted by police from a temporary reception centre to Shengjin port, where they boarded the ship, an AFP journalist saw.



Far-right Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni signed the controversial deal in November with her Albanian counterpart, Edi Rama.

The five-year agreement, estimated to cost 160 million euros (\$175 million) annually, calls for male asylum seekers intercepted by the Italian navy

or coast guard vessels in international waters -- but within Italy's search and rescue area -- to be held in Albania.

From there, a determination will be made as to which individuals come from so-called "safe" countries, allowing for fast-track repatriation.

However, Italian judges on Friday ruled against the detention of the first migrants, saying a recent ruling by the European Court of Justice meant the men do not meet the criteria for detention in Albania and must instead be brought to Italy.

Italy's Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi said Rome would appeal the court's decision.

Meloni responded to the ruling on X, saying "Italians have asked me to stop illegal immigration, and I will do everything possible to keep my word."

Rome recently expanded to 22 countries its list of "safe" countries of origin -- defined as states where it deems there is no persecution, torture or threat of indiscriminate violence.

But on the list are nations that include areas not considered safe.



A woman boils water while another holds up a flashlight on a mobile phone during a nationwide blackout caused by a grid failure in Matanzas, Cuba, on Friday. Technical breakdowns, fuel shortages and high demand have caused the country's thermoelectric power plants to constantly fail, forcing the government to declare an energy emergency and take measures such as closing schools and factories.

PHOTO: AFP

Power outage puts Cubans on edge

AFP, Havana

Cuban Tania Ramirez walks alone along Havana's famous Malecon promenade to relieve the stress wrought by the massive blackout that has plunged the entire island into darkness.

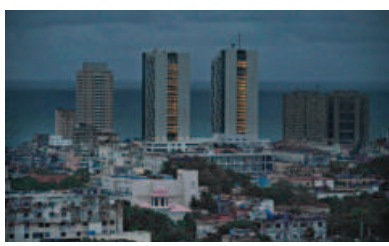
"I feel very disappointed, frustrated and hopeless," said the 39-year-old housewife.

"It's not only the lack of electricity but also of gas and water," she told AFP, 11 hours after the unplanned shutdown of Cuba's main thermal power plant triggered the collapse of the country's grid.

With a frown, she said her "generation wants to continue trusting" in the 1959 revolution that brought Fidel Castro to power, but her "resilience has limits".

Cuba is in the throes of its worst economic crisis in 30 years, marked by sky-high inflation and shortages of food, medicine, fuel and water.

And for the past three months, Cubans have been battling chronic



blackouts that have become longer and more frequent.

Cuban authorities have been trying since Friday night into Saturday to restore electricity.

The unexpected shutdown of the Antonio Guterres power plant, the biggest of the island's eight decrepit coal-fired power plants, caused the national grid to fail, Lazaro Guerra, director general of electricity at the Ministry of Energy and Mines, told state television.

When the power plant shut down, "the system collapsed," he said, adding that the government was working to restore service as soon as possible to the island's 11 million

people.

By nightfall, the only lights illuminating the capital of two million people were those from hotels, hospitals, and a few private businesses with their own generating plants.

The streets were almost empty, with no public transport and traffic lights out of service.

'IT HURTS A LOT'

Small groups of people could be seen, their cell phones lit, chatting with family and friends. Some came out of their homes to cool off from the night heat, with temperatures hovering around 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit).

"We have a little baby girl and we live in a building that isn't in the best condition. We have to go downstairs and sit here," said self-employed Betsabe Valdes, 40, in the downtown Paseo del Prado.

Her biggest fear is that the food in her refrigerator could spoil if power is not restored soon. "It hurts me a lot," she said.

GOVT. OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER EDUCATION ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT (EED) KURIGRAM.

Invitation for e-GP-Tender

Tender Notice No: eGP-07/TMED/6821/Fur/Kur/2024-25

Memo No: XEN/EED/KURI/2024/ 3189

Date: 15.10.2024

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. The Tender who have registered in the National e-GP portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is eligible to participate in this Tender. The fees of downloading the e-Tender documents of following Packages from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registered Bank's branches up to the following date and time.

SL No.	Package No.	Name of Works & Location	Tender ID No.	Tender Document Last Selling	Tender Closing Date & Time
1.	Exen/EED/Kur/Rev/Non Govt. TMED/6821/20 23-24/01	Manufacturing and Supplying of Furniture at Sonahat B.L. Dakhil Madrasha under Bhurungamari Upazila, District- Kurigram.	1022780	06-11-2024 Time 16:00	07-11-2024 Time 11:50

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

GD- 731

(Md. Sultan Mahmud)
Executive Engineer