

INTERNATIONAL

Russia teams up with BRICS to create AI alliance

Says President Putin

REUTERS, Moscow

President Vladimir Putin said yesterday that Russia would develop artificial intelligence with BRICS partners and other countries, a bid to challenge the dominance of the United States in one of the most disruptive technologies of the 21st Century.

"I am confident that the international alliance of national associations and development institutes in the field of AI of BRICS countries and other interested states will give a significant boost to such cooperation," Putin told an AI conference in Moscow.

"We will launch this alliance today," he said.

SPYING FOR IRAN
Israel arrests almost 30 Jews citizens

REUTERS, Tel Aviv

Israel's arrest of almost 30 mostly Jewish citizens who allegedly spied for Iran in nine covert cells has caused alarm in the country and points to Tehran's biggest effort in decades to infiltrate its arch foe, four Israeli security sources said.

Among the unfulfilled goals of the alleged cells was the assassination of an Israeli nuclear scientist and former military officials, while one group gathered information on military bases and air defences, security service Shin Bet has said.

Last week, the agency and Israel's police said a father and son team had passed on details of Israeli force movements including in the Golan Heights where they lived.



Protesters attend a rally calling for the impeachment of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, who declared martial law which was reversed hours later, in front of the National Assembly in Seoul, South Korea yesterday. South Korean police tried to search Yeol's office yesterday but have not been able to enter the main building, Yonhap news reported.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Israeli strikes kill 38 in Gaza
Women, children among dead; several trapped under rubble

REUTERS, Cairo

Israeli air attacks across the Gaza Strip killed at least 38 Palestinians yesterday, most of them in an airstrike on a house in Beit Lahiya town in the north of the enclave, medics said.

The Beit Lahiya strike killed at least 22 people, including women and children, health officials said. Relatives listed the names of the dead on social media.

More than 30 people were living in the multi-storey building before it was struck, and several family members remained missing as rescue operations continued through the morning, the Palestinian Wafa news agency said.

At least 44,805 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's military offensive on Gaza since October 7, 2023, the Gaza health ministry said in a statement yesterday.

In nearby Beit Hanoun, where the Israeli forces have operated since October, medics said an Israeli airstrike killed and wounded several people, without giving an exact toll. Rescue workers said several

people were trapped under rubble.

Earlier yesterday, at least seven Palestinians were killed and several others wounded in an Israeli airstrike on a house in the Nuseirat camp in central Gaza, medics told Reuters.



The Palestinian Civil Emergency Service and medics said four other people were killed in separate Israeli airstrikes on two houses in Gaza City.

The Israeli military said in a statement that two rockets were fired from the central Gaza Strip into Israel, but fell in

open areas and caused no injuries. It signalled the ability of Hamas rebels in Gaza to continue to stage rocket attacks despite 14 months of devastating Israeli aerial and ground offensives.

Later yesterday, the Israeli military ordered residents in the Al-Maghazi camp in central Gaza to evacuate, citing rocket launches from the area. It urged them to head towards a humanitarian-designated zone near the Mediterranean coast.

Palestinian and United Nations officials say there are no safe areas in the devastated enclave. Israel accuses Hamas of hiding among the civilian population, a charge Hamas denies as a pretext by Israel to "justify its indiscriminate attacks".

Israeli forces have been operating in Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahiya and the nearby Jabalia refugee camp since October 5. The UN General Assembly was set to vote yesterday on a draft resolution that seeks an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, a symbolic gesture after the US previously vetoed a similar action in the UN Security Council.

12pc Bangladeshis undernourished

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The values of four component indicators — undernourishment, child mortality, child wasting, and stunting — are used to calculate GHI scores.

Although Bangladesh has made strides in tackling hunger, the country's moderate score emphasises the continued need for all-encompassing approaches to fight malnutrition and guarantee food security.

"We cannot satisfy our hunger by bringing food from outside. We must therefore grow our own food," said Fisheries and Livestock Adviser Farida Akhter, highlighting the importance of food self-sufficiency.

She also stressed ensuring food safety since contaminated food is making people sick, adding, "If the food is unsafe, it is useless to be free from hunger."

"Bangladesh has made remarkable strides in reducing hunger," said Pankaj Kumar, country director of Welthungerhilfe Bangladesh.

"However, nearly 12 percent of the population remains undernourished, and over 23 percent of children are stunted. To break the cycle of hunger, we need community-driven

solutions, inclusive policies, and climate resilience. We must empower youth and marginalised groups to design and govern food systems, ensuring no one is left behind."

This year's GHI report also highlighted how gender discrimination limits people's access to and control over resources, which in turn limits their ability to cope with climate shocks and food insecurity.

"Besides assessing trends and rankings in hunger by country, this year's GHI report takes a deeper look at the importance of addressing gender inequality in achieving climate resilience and zero hunger," said Manish Kumar Agrawal, country director of Concern Worldwide.

Gender justice is central to effective climate action and food systems transformation, he said, adding that achieving gender justice requires change at all scales and levels, ranging from individuals to entire systems, and from formal conditions like legal rights and material resource claims to more informal social and cultural norms that often conflict with relationships of respect and dignity.

Mob beats man

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started beating Haider and ransacked his home. Haider died on the spot," said Nurul Alam, chairman of the local union parishad who witnessed the incident.

Contacted, Faridpur Additional Superintendent of Police Shoilen Chakma said there were some 15 to 20 policemen on the spot,

but they could not control the mob.

Later, police recovered both the bodies. The girl's body was sent to a hospital for medical tests.

Haider's body was sent to the hospital for autopsy.

Legal action will be taken upon investigation, said Md Asaduzzaman, officer-in-charge of Faridpur Kotwali Police Station.

Flourishing tech urgently needed

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"The naturally beautiful and resource-rich hill districts could have been the most developed region in Bangladesh, but it is lagging behind others. This should not be the case," Prof Yunus said.

He said crops, fruits and traditional products of the CHT could drive the economy forward.

Recalling his meeting with women's football team's players who have come from the hilly districts, Nobel Peace Prize winner Prof Yunus said the girls of Bangladesh have defeated teams of other countries and become champions in football.

"How splendidly your local girls played! How can you say they are behind?"

I have spoken to those who have come from your area. What a challenging situation! How hard it is for them to move through the hills to reach home!" he said.

Mentioning that when their parents come to Dhaka, they face difficulties, the chief adviser said despite these hurdles, they have won the world.

Expressing his hope that the youths of the hilly region will be turned into global citizens, he said, "Your girls have won the world in football. The youth must become not only citizens of Bangladesh but also global citizens."

Despite being people from remote areas, the youths of CHT should not be left behind, he said.

"There will be limitations, but you need to expand the boundaries of your mind. You must reach out to people around the world with your achievements," he added.

Noting that in January, he encouraged the youths of the hilly region to participate in the Youth Festival, Prof Yunus asked the hilly people to encourage their children and youths to join this festival.

They should participate in local games, writing, singing and dancing competitions — whatever they can and wish to do, he said.

This is a festival for everyone, and it should be a diverse one, he added.

The chief adviser also spoke about the need for reforms in the education

system of the hilly region and the importance of proper training.

He said the country's educational system is in a severe crisis, while it is even more challenging in the hilly region.

The teachers face hardships and students suffer, Prof Yunus said, adding the irregularities exist throughout Bangladesh, but it is even severe in the hilly region.

He said the interim government will try to determine what can be done from its perspective.

"The youths of the hilly region should not be left behind in education just because they are in remote areas. They must make progress in their studies," Prof Yunus said.

Death penalty provision

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international standards are maintained, some amendments are yet to be made.

Cadman is a prominent British attorney and co-founder of Guernica37 Law Chambers, a firm specialising in international law.

Cadman was once barred from entering Bangladesh, and he was Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami's legal adviser in London in 2011, during the trials of several top Jamaat leaders over war crimes committed during the 1971 Liberation War.

Briefing reporters at the

court yesterday, Cadman expressed hope that India will respect Bangladesh's judicial process and extradite former prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

"There is an extradition treaty between Bangladesh and India, but we are also aware of what has been stated so far. I don't want to prejudice what India is going to do."

If India refused, Cadman suggested that a trial, in absentia, could proceed under the relevant international law.

He added that Bangladesh can potentially seek assistance from the

International Criminal Court (ICC) if India refuses to give up Hasina.

"The International Criminal Court has jurisdiction over Bangladesh if Bangladesh is unwilling or unable to prosecute themselves.

The question will be whether, in light of certain individuals being outside of the jurisdiction [of Bangladesh], they can be brought back to the country or whether it is more appropriate for the ICC to issue warrants for arrest, as they have done in relation to Vladimir Putin and Benjamin Netanyahu

recently," he said. Cadman, however, believes the vast majority of those who should be prosecuted need to be tried in Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, speaking on Cadman's role in these proceedings, ICT Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam said, "Toby will advise and cooperate with the prosecution agency to ensure a free, fair, and impartial trial."

"He will make efforts to ensure that the trial is accepted as a legitimate judgement by the international community, and he will continue his efforts in this regard."

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CA press wing debunks more misinfo

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claimed that an attack took place on an ISKCON member in Dhaka's Uttara area. The outlets, however, did not reveal the victim's identity.

The Press Wing of CA said the news is also misleading.

Krishna Priya Nitai Das, the priest of Radharaman Temple (ISKCON Uttara), said that he was not aware of any such attack on any ISKCON devotees or

members in the area, the post cited him as saying.

According to the post, police also said they did not receive any such complaints.

According to the post, Hrishikesh Gouranga Das, a central leader of Bangladesh ISKCON, said an attempt is being made to give a communal twist to a recent incident of familial dispute in Uttara.

The youth in question is not an ISKCON member, he

added.

Since the student-led uprising toppled the 15-year rule of the Sheikh Hasina-led government, the relations between India and Bangladesh remain under considerable strain.

India — Hasina's biggest international patron and the destination of her exile — has accused the interim government led by Prof Muhammad Yunus of failing to protect minority Hindus. Dhaka

has accused New Delhi of destabilising the country by spreading fictitious stories.

The Yunus administration has acknowledged and condemned attacks on Hindus but said in many cases they were motivated by politics rather than religion.

It has accused India of exaggerating the scale of the violence and running a "propaganda campaign".

Court denies Chinmoy bail

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and fabricated case. He also cited Chinmoy's health issues, saying his client was a priest and was suffering from diabetes, asthma and other issues.

Chinmoy's lawyer Advocate Shuvashish Sharma did not attend Chinmoy's bail hearing on December 3 due to security reasons, Rabindra told The Daily Star, adding that he had applied for permission to conduct a hearing for Chinmoy, advancing the date for the bail hearing, and requested permission to submit documents related to the case.

"Despite having no Vakalatnama, I can handle any case in any court across the country as I am a High

Court lawyer, as per the Supreme Court's directive," he mentioned, adding that other lawyers at the court "misbehaved" with him.

According to court sources, hundreds of lawyers gathered in the courtroom during the hearing, which caused chaos. The judge rejected the bail plea amid the mayhem and left the court.

Rabindra, however, admitted that he did not go to the prison to obtain the document, adding, "I will visit Chinmoy in the prison now and obtain the Vakalatnama."

Public Prosecutor Advocate Mafizul Hoque Bhuiyan told The Daily Star that the application was denied as he failed to show

the necessary documents and Chinmoy's lawyer Shuvashish was also absent during hearing.

The court set January 3 for bail hearing of Rajesh and Hridoy as there was no lawyer representing them, he added.

This correspondent failed to reach Advocate Shuvashish Sharma.

Meanwhile, Bar president Advocate Nazim Uddin Chowdhury earlier said, "As president, I have no information that someone was assaulted or interrupted so far. It's true that some lawyers were made accused in a case but I have seen several lawyers who are accused in the case doing their regular tasks in the court."

Israeli strikes in Syria illegal

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weapons production sites, combat aircraft and missiles.

In addition, missile vessels struck the Syrian naval facilities of Al Bayda port and Latakia port, where 15 Syrian naval vessels were docked.

Israeli officials said the strikes across Syria were aimed at destroying strategic weapons and military infrastructure to prevent them being used by rebel groups that drove Assad from power, some of which grew from movements linked to al Qaeda and Islamic State.

"There is absolutely no basis under international law to preventively or preemptively disarm a country you don't like," said Ben Saul, UN special rapporteur on the promotion of human rights while countering terrorism.

"If that were the case, it would be a recipe for global chaos," he told reporters in Geneva, pointing out that "lots of countries have adversaries they would like to see without weapons".

"This is completely lawless," Saul, who like other

special rapporteurs is an independent expert who does not speak on behalf of the United Nations, said Israel's strikes on neighbouring Lebanon were different, "because there is a hot conflict there".

Meanwhile, US President Joe Biden's top aides were heading to the Middle East seeking to advance efforts to reach an elusive Gaza ceasefire and hostage deal and help ensure a smooth transition in Syria following the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken was set to visit Jordan and Turkey, while US national security adviser Jake Sullivan planned stops in Israel, Qatar and Egypt in coming days, US officials said.

Israel stepped up its campaign in south Lebanon in late September after nearly a year of cross-border exchanges begun by Hezbollah in support of Hamas since the violence erupted in the Palestinian enclave on October 7, 2023.

While Assad was propped up by Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group, along with Russia and

Iran, Saul decried that the current strikes were "a continuation of what Israel has been doing in Syria for at least a decade".

He pointed to "many, many hundreds of preventative attacks" launched by Israeli forces into Syria over the years against Hezbollah weapons dumps and storage facilities, despite the fact that the Lebanon-based militants were not attacking Israel from Syria.

"That would be the only circumstance in which it could use self defence against Hezbollah in Syria," Saul said.

"But you can't just follow your enemy wherever they are in the world, and bomb them in some third country, which has been Israel's approach."

George Katrougalos, the UN special rapporteur on the promotion of democratic and equitable international order, meanwhile described Israel's actions in Syria as "part of a pattern".

"It is another case of the lawlessness that Israel demonstrates in the area: attacks without provocation against a sovereign state."