## **GOLAN SETTLEMENTS** Israel seeking to 'expand borders'

Warns Turkey; Kremlin says fate of Russian military bases in Syria undecided

AFP, Ankara

Turkey yesterday denounced an Israeli plan to double the population living in the occupied and annexed Golan Heights as a bid to "expand its borders".

"This decision is a new stage in Israel's goal of expanding its borders through occupation," the foreign ministry said in a statement condemning the move.

Israel's government on Sunday evening approved a plan to double the population of the annexed Golan Heights, just days after its troops seized a UN-monitored buffer zone bordering Syria as rebel forces moved on Damascus.

"This step by Israel is a source of grave concern, taken together with Israel's entry into the area of separation in violation of the 1974 Disengagement Agreement, its advance into adjacent areas and airstrikes in Syria," it said, warning the move would "seriously undermine" efforts to bring stability to Syria after Bashar al-Assad's

The Golan Heights is a mountainous plateau at Syria's southwestern edge, most of which was captured by Israel during the 1967 Six-Day War and later annexed.

Meanwhile, the Kremlin admitted yesterday that the fate of Russian military bases in Syria following the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad was still unclear.

The Tartus naval base and Hmeimim air base are Russia's only military outposts outside the former Soviet Union and have been key to the Kremlin's activities in Africa and the Middle East.

The ousting of Moscow's long-time ally Assad in a shock rebel offensive has brought their future into question.

"There are no final decisions on this," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters yesterday.

"We are in contact with representatives of the forces that now control the situation in the country," he added.



Members of Syria's White Helmets civil defence service prepare to transport bodies uncovered at a mass grave in Damascus, Syria yesterday. Bashar al-Assad said his departure from Syria was not planned and that Moscow requested his evacuation from a military base that was under attack, in the former president's first statement since his ouster.

# Gaza death toll surpasses 45,000

INTERNATIONAL

Israel's military offensive in the Gaza Strip has killed at least 45,028 Palestinians and wounded 106,962 since October 7, 2023, the Palestinian enclave's health ministry said yesterday.

The campaign has displaced nearly the entire population and left much of the enclave in ruins. A bid by Egypt, Qatar, and the United States to reach a truce, which would also include a hostage deal, has gained momentum in recent weeks, yet there has been no news of a breakthrough.

Meanwhile, relatives of Palestinians killed by Israel in Khan Younis gathered around their white-shrouded bodies yesterday before carrying them to their graves.

Palestinian health officials said on Sunday at least 20 people, including children, were killed in the strike at the school sheltering displaced families in the city in the southern Gaza Strip.

The Israeli military said vesterday it had struck Hamas members operating from a compound that previously served as a UN-run school. It said the compound served also as a training camp to prepare and plan attacks against Israeli forces.

members were carried away on medical stretchers by men who laid them on the ground to perform funeral prayers. "People were safe, staying in their homes

Women wept as the bodies of the family

(shelters) after they prayed the dinner prayer. They were sitting, sleeping, and staying put in their places," said Manal Tafesh, whose brother and his children were among those killed.

"Our children are gone, our children are gone. Our youth are gone. Our children are gone, and our lineage ended. When will this darkness end?" she told Reuters outside the

### India plans to supply LNG to Lanka: Modi

REUTERS, New Delhi

India plans to supply liquefied natural gas to Sri Lanka's power plants and will work on connecting the power grids of the two countries as well as lay a petroleum pipeline between the neighbours, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said yesterday.

Modi was speaking at a joint press briefing with Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake in New Delhi. Dissanayake is on his first official visit to India after winning presidency September and securing parliamentary polls victory last month.

RUSSIAN KURSK FRONT

# 30 North Korean soldiers killed, injured: Ukraine

AGENCIES

Ukraine said yesterday that North Korean units fighting for Russia sustained losses of at least 30 soldiers killed or wounded around several villages on the front in Russia's Kursk region over the weekend.

The Ukrainian military spy agency's statement came after President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Saturday that Russia was using North Korean troops in significant numbers for the first time to conduct assaults in Kursk, a Russian region where Ukraine launched a cross-border incursion in August.

The statement is the first time Kyiv has claimed North Korean losses on this scale and in some detail. It said the casualties occurred around the villages of Plekhovo, Vorozhba and Martynovka in the Kursk region. It provided no evidence, reports

Meanwhile. President Vladimir Putin said yesterday his troops had the upper hand across the entire front line in Ukraine and were accelerating their advance.

"Russian troops are firmly holding the strategic initiative along the entire line of contact," Putin told his military generals in a televised meeting.

# Germany's Olaf Scholz loses confidence vote

AFP, Berlin

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz yesterday lost a confidence vote in parliament, paving the way for an early general election on February 23.

Out of the Bundestag deputies, 394 voted against Scholz while only 207 expressed confidence in the chancellor, with 116 abstentions.

Scholz had been expected to lose the vote after his three-way coalition fell apart last month.

Scholz's three-party coalition fell apart last month after the promarket Free Democrats quit in a row over

debt, leaving his Social Democrats and the Greens without a parliamentary majority just when Germany faces adeepening economic crisis.

# The hands that turned 'rhythm into magic'

FROM PAGE 1

ages across the globe.

He was a marvel not only for his incomparable talent with the tabla. but for his humility and down-toearth nature. When he performed, of seven. He was the eldest of three were many, many more. he kept the audience engaged with brothers and one sister. His brothers words and beats alike. But one could not help but get completely hypnotised by his fingers dancing across his dava while his other hand steadily stroked the baya.

About his humble nature, noted flautist Ronu Majumdar said, "Today [yesterday] is a very sad day for the music world, that Zakir bhai is no more with us. Our Zakir bhai, the one whom everyone considered their own, how great that artist was, is beyond imagination."

how he ensured this grand percussive instrument did not stay confined to the tag of an accompaniment. He raised it to become the star of the show. Many a time, those he would be accompanying on stage would be staring in awe as he took control of the entire atmosphere with just his hands.

Like popular playback Shreva Ghoshal wrote in her instagram handle yesterday, "He transformed tabla to a language of emotions, soul and beauty."

He was also one of the few musicians that united generations of music lovers – my mother and I are testament to that.

While he played alongside the greats like Hariprasad Chaurasia, Kumar Sharma, Amjad Ali Khan, he also got the rare opportunity to play with the greats of this generation as well – Hariprasad's nephew Rakesh Chaurasia, Amjad Ali's sons Ayaan Ali and Amaan Ali, Shiv Kumar's son Rahul Sharma and Ravi Shankar's daughter Anoushka

Shankar. Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, who shared the stage with the maestro uncountable times, wrote, "Words fail me at this point. I am completely heartbroken and devastated to hear about Zakir Bhai. Ustad Zakir Hussain was a phenomenon. He was indeed one of the most loved musicians the world saw."

Ustadji's joyfulness and casual demeanour on stage was a sight to behold. I remember during his performance in Bengal Classical Music Festival in 2015, his game with the audience was like no other. As he imitated the sounds of a galloping horse or a running train, he made us guess what sounds he was making. A mix of awe and fun filled every single

being in that stadium that night.

Ustad Zakir Hussain Allarakha Drum Project" and this year he won Qureshi began his foray into the world of rhythm under the guidance and tutelage of his father, legendary Ustad Alla Rakha Qureshi, at the age Taufiq Qureshi and Fazal Qureshi followed his footsteps towards the tabla.

From childhood, Ustad Zakir was considered a prodigy and while he began performing at seven, he began touring by the age of 12. Both father and son were given the title of "Ustad", meaning master. And the duo brought tabla to the fore as a major instrument in the world of music.

"The very first lesson that I What set Ustadji apart the most is received from my father Guru was that I should just try to be a good student and forget about trying to be a master," Ustad Zakir said at a tribute concert "Zakir Hussain Meets Berklee" in the Berklee College of Music in 2019.

His personality and demeanour with his equals and even junior artistes are proof that he had internalised this lesson throughout

Ustad Zakir is survived by his wife Antonia Minnecola; his daughters, Anisa Qureshi and Isabella Qureshi; his brothers, Taufiq and Fazal, and his sister, Khurshid Aulia.

Ustad Zakir's international career began after moving to the US in the 1970s. He founded the band Shakti, with the likes of English guitarist John McLaughlin, Indian violinist L Shankar, TH "Vikku" Vinayakram and later even Shankar Mahadevan.

In a Facebook post McLaughlin wrote, "The King, in whose hands, rhythm became magic, has left us.... RIP my dearest Zakir, we will meet again."

Ustadji's bandmate and admirer Shankar wrote, "Devastated, passionate yesterday shattered... I have lost my mentor, my guru and my inspiration. A huge part of my music is because of him. And now the world of music is going to be without the greatest musician from our country. There was, is and will never be another Zakir Hussain."

He also played alongside noted musicians such as George Harrison, Van Morrison and more.

It goes without saying that throughout his life, Ustad Zakir Hussain received many an accolade. In 1999, he became the youngest ever Padma Shri recipient. He won numerous Grammys - in 1992 for Mickey Hart's "Planet Drum Born on March 9, 1951 in Mumbai, Project", in 2009 for the "Global

three for "Pashto", "As we Speak" and "Motion". He also received the Padma Bhushan in 2002 and the Padma Vibhushan in 2023. In between, there

Actor Kamal Haasan shared a personal memory, posting an image of himself playing tabla with Ustad. "Zakir Bhai! He left too soon. Yet we are grateful for the times he gave us and what he left behind in the form of his art. Goodbye and thank you."

Throughout the day, more tributes poured in.

Ghazal singer Hariharan wrote, "The world has lost a legend and I have lost a brother. Zakir bhai wasn't iust a master of the tabla, he was the heartbeat of music itself. His hands could create worlds, his rhythms could tell stories, and his soul poured into every beat he played."

Internationally famed sitar player Anoushka Shankar wrote, "Maybe another day I'll have words for this grief. Right now, I'm just brokenhearted and thinking of his family with all the love in the world. He was like an uncle, he was an idol; I had the privilege of loving him up close and worshipping his musicianship at a distance..... He was utterly unique in the world of music but I don't have the words to describe that."

Academy Award-winning composer AR Rahman, who had long admired Hussain's work, expressed his regret over their missed collaboration: "Zakir Bhai was an inspiration, a towering personality who elevated the tabla to global acclaim. His loss is immeasurable for all of us. I regret not being able to collaborate with him as much as we did decades ago, though we had planned an album together. You shall be truly missed."

Young violinist Nandini Shankar, daughter of violin maestro Dr Sangeeta Shankar, shared, "Zakir uncle, no words can truly capture the depth and beauty you brought into this world. The heart refuses to accept a world without you but you live on through your music."

Despite confusion over his death since Sunday, the hearts of millions had already been breaking since the news of him being in critical condition came to the fore.

But as most condolence messages said, Ustad Zakir Hussain may have left the material world, but his beats will reverberate through the hearts of every music lover in the world for generations to come.

For now, our Ustad has played his final tehai and can rest in peace and rhythm.



- Executive Vice President (EVP)
- Senior Vice President (SVP)



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