

## Israeli jets fly low over Beirut

Says Israeli minister as tens of thousands mourn Hezbollah's slain leader in mass funeral

AFP, Jerusalem

Defence Minister Israel Katz said Israeli Air Force jets flying over the funeral of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in Beirut yesterday were sending a "clear message" to anyone threatening Israel.

Nasrallah was killed in an Israeli strike in the southern suburbs of Beirut in September.

Tens of thousands of black-clad mourners vowed support for

**Israel's military strikes southern and eastern Lebanon.**

Hezbollah at the Beirut funeral of the slain leader, after the group was dealt major blows in its last round of hostilities with Israel.

Women wailed as a truck carrying the coffins of Nasrallah and Hashem Safieddine -- Nasrallah's chosen successor killed in another Israeli air strike -- slowly moved through the crowd, topped with two black turbans and draped in Hezbollah's yellow flag.

Iran's parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi were in attendance, with representatives of Iraq's main pro-Iran factions also expected to come.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei vowed "resistance" against Israel.

"The enemy should know that resistance against usurpation, oppression, and arrogance is never-ending and will continue until the desired goal is achieved," Khamenei said in a statement published on his official website.

As crowds gathered in Beirut, the official National News Agency (NNA) reported Israeli strikes in Lebanon's south, including a location about 20 kilometres (12 miles) from the border, but also in the east.

Israel's military said it had struck "sites containing rocket launchers and weapons" in those areas.

The Israeli army in a tweet ahead of the start of the funeral said "the world is a better place".



A vehicle transports a mock coffin for former Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, who was killed in Israeli airstrikes in Beirut, during a symbolic funeral in Baghdad, Iraq, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Gaza ceasefire gravely endangered

Says Hamas after Israel delays release of over 600 Palestinian prisoners

AFP, Jerusalem

Hamas yesterday said Israel has gravely endangered a five-week-old Gaza truce by delaying the release of Palestinian prisoners under the deal because of the manner it has freed Israeli hostages.

The first phase of the truce ends early in March and details of a planned subsequent phase have not been agreed.

With tensions again hanging over the deal -- which halted more than 15 months of offensive



crowds at various locations in Gaza.

Armed masked fighters escort the captives onto stages adorned with slogans. The hostages have spoken and waved in what Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called "humiliating ceremonies".

The Red Cross has previously appealed to "all parties" for the swaps to be carried out in a "dignified and private" manner.

In the seventh such transfer, Hamas released six Israeli captives on Saturday but Israel put off the planned release of more than 600 Palestinian prisoners in exchange.

Senior Hamas official Bassem Naim said postponing the release exposes "the entire agreement to grave danger".

Naim said the mediators, "especially the Americans", must pressure Israel's government "to

implement the agreement as it is and immediately release our prisoners."

Alongside the Gaza offensive -- which displaced almost the entire population of 2.4 million -- violence has also soared in the West Bank.

Yesterday, Israel's military said "a tank division will operate in Jenin" as part of "expanding" operations in the area, where the military began a major raid against Palestinian militants just after the Gaza truce began.

The United Nations has said the military activities have led to "forced displacement" of 40,000 Palestinians from Jenin and other refugee camps.

Defence Minister Israel Katz said he has told troops "to prepare for a prolonged presence in the cleared camps for the coming year.

## Germans vote in national election

Polls suggest shift to far-right

REUTERS, Berlin

Germans were voting in a national election yesterday that is expected to restore power to Friedrich Merz's conservatives while the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party is forecast to achieve its best result yet in Europe's ailing economic powerhouse.

Polls opened at 0800 local time (0700 GMT) and closed at 1800 (1700 GMT) when vote counting will start and exit polls will be released. About 60 million people in Germany were eligible to vote.

Merz's CDU/CSU bloc has consistently led polls but is unlikely to win a majority given Germany's fragmented political landscape, forcing it to sound out coalition partners.

Those negotiations are expected to be tricky after a campaign that exposed sharp divisions over migration and how to deal with the AfD in a country where far-right politics carries a particularly strong stigma because of its Nazi past.

That could leave unpopular Chancellor Olaf Scholz in a caretaker role for months, delaying urgently needed policies to revive Europe's largest economy after two consecutive years of contraction.

## Double cases for single victim

FROM PAGE 12

the phone, but he said he could not talk since he was travelling. He also said he would call back but he did not.

Mahmudul Hasan Joy, 14, died on August 6 last year, a day after he was shot near Shanir Akhra Bridge. On September 5, his neighbour, Julhas Sheikh, filed a murder case against 94 people, including Hasina, with Demra Police Station.

Five days later, a 34-year-old person named Rabiul Awal filed another case against 37 people with Jatrabari Police Station over Mahmudul's killing.

The descriptions of the incident varied in the cases. While Julhas claimed Mahmudul was shot at Bashpatti, Rabiul mentioned Shanir Akhra as the scene.

On August 4 last year, BNP activist Riazul Talukder, 39, was shot near Jatrabari intersection and he later died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

His younger brother Rubel Talukder filed a murder case on September 10 against 135 people, including Hasina, with Jatrabari Police Station.

On October 2, a man named Billal Hossain claiming to be Riazul's business partner filed another case with the court against 52 people, including Hasina, over Riazul's death. Shabbagh police registered it as an FIR on October 26.

In the case statement, he said Riazul got shot in the Topkhana Road area.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Billal said he filed the case because Riazul was his uncle's son.

However, Riazul's brother Rubel told this newspaper, "We have no cousin named Billal. I do not know for what purpose he filed another case with a different description."

Fatema-Tuz-Zahura filed a case on September 11 last year against Hasina and 14 others over the killing of her son Abdullah Bin Zahid, a student of Shaheed Ramiz Uddin Cantonment College, on August 5.

Earlier, on August 23, another murder case was filed with a court, accusing 33 individuals, including Hasina, by a person named Mohammad Zakillah Bahar, over Abdullah's death. The court directed the Airport Police Station to register the FIR.

The two cases named different witnesses.

Fatema's brother Aritul Islam told The Daily Star, "We know nothing about Bahar. We only learned about his case when we visited the police station."

Attempts to contact Bahar were unsuccessful as his phone number mentioned in the FIR was found unreachable. Md Tareq Jubayer, deputy commissioner (prosecution) at Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star yesterday, "We have noticed a couple of cases mentioning different places as the scene of occurrence. For such cases, we are preparing instructions, after discussing with legal experts as per existing laws and regulations, for the course of action, and it is under process."

A top police officer, citing

section 248 of the Police Regulations, Bengal, 1943, said, "If a duplicate case is filed over a single incident, the investigation officers [IOs] will verify the place of occurrence and the accused..."

Dhaka Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Omar Faruq Faruqi, however, said they did not notice such cases. "If found, the prosecution will take appropriate action."

He suggested forming a monitoring cell to track multiple murder cases filed for the same victim.

**MISUSE OF LEGAL SYSTEM** Tawohidul Haque, associate professor at Dhaka University's Institute of Social Welfare and Research, told The Daily Star, "The filing of multiple, contradictory cases for single victims with different police stations raises concerns about the potential misuse of the legal system, casting doubts on the credibility of such legal actions."

"A group of people is trying to misuse the July uprising spirit for personal and political vengeance, which needs to be stopped through proper verification and investigation."

The home ministry on October 14 last year issued a warning, stating that legal action would be taken against individuals who filed false cases or cases intended to harass people.

In an official notice, the ministry highlighted the growing trend of false cases, including murder charges, being used for extortion, blackmail, and harassment.

Tawohidul said the government's warning had no impact.

"The authority should scrutinise the cases before registering so that deceivers do not get any scope to misuse the law. Or else, the old practice of harassment with ghost cases will resurface," he said.

Al Shahriar Hossain Rokon, 23, and Mohammad Ismail, a 46-year-old rickshaw puller, were killed by gunfire in Mohammadpur and West Rampura respectively on July 19.

A Jubo Dal leader, Robiul Khan Hillol, 31, filed a murder case on August 22 with Mohammadpur Police Station over Rokon's death, claiming that Rokon's father Monir Hossain refused to file any case.

A week later, Monir filed another murder case over Rokon's death. Monir told The Daily Star he could not file the case earlier due to illness.

"Hillol did not say anything about filing the case. I did not even know him before filing the case," he said.

Rickshawpuller Ismail's wife Lucky Begum said a man named Sabbir Hossain obtained documents from her, claiming to be a journalist.

Three months after Lucky filed a case over her husband's killing, Sabbir filed another. Efforts to reach Sabbir were unsuccessful, as the number mentioned on the FIR was found switched off.

DU Associate Professor Tawohidul said, "The police or the state, not the neighbours or well-wishers, should take action if any victim's family fails to file a case."

## Strong defence key to effective foreign policy

FROM PAGE 1

FSDS Chairman Maj Gen (ret'd) Fazle Elahi Akbar in an inaugural speech at the Radisson Blu Water Garden Hotel in the city yesterday.

Speaking at the launch, Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz-Zaman said that without a strong defence, the country cannot implement its foreign policy.

"We need to develop our defence ... But there's no emphasis on where we need to put emphasis. There's no guideline for it. Whether what we need at this moment to protect our sea line of communication or defend the territorial integrity or whatever it is, there is no focus," said the army chief.

He stressed the need for securing the sea line of communication. "We need a very secure sea line of communication. That means we need to develop our navy. Do we have that? I don't think we have a secure sea line of

communication. Without it, we'll starve to death. There will be no import, there will be no export."

The launch was attended also by Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan and Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Mohammad Nazmul Hassan.

In his speech, Akbar, also defence and security adviser to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, said, "We believe that Bangladesh needs an integrated and comprehensive defence and foreign policy. This policy should align the principles and methods of defence, security, peace, diplomacy, and development with the concept of placing the highest priority on national interest and 'Bangladesh First'."

He went on to say that Bangladesh's relationships with its neighbouring countries, particularly India and Myanmar, are crucial in shaping its foreign relations. "These connections are driven

by historical, economic, and security factors, which in turn influence regional dynamics. It is vital to emphasise that our national interest and national security, supported by a strong framework of strategic autonomy, can form the backbone of our diplomatic, political, and strategic initiatives. This has largely been missing in our political discourses."

Akbar also said that Bangladesh's main security challenges include notably the influx of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, the ongoing tensions in the Chattogram Hill Tracts region, climate-induced disasters, political violence, and threats of terrorism in different forms. "These issues demand careful management to ensure peace and stability within and beyond Bangladesh. Addressing these issues is vital for both national security and the nation's broader geopolitical

aspirations."

Political analyst Prof Dilara Choudhury, another speaker at the event, said the youth have shown what kind of foreign policy they want and that the nation needs to pay serious attention to that.

"They have already explained and they have already made it very clear what their hopes and aspirations are nationally and internationally. Nationally, they want a solidified nation. They want democracy.... They want a very balanced pragmatic relation for international relations and a foreign policy that will help Bangladesh take advantage of its geopolitical location."

Dilara observed Bangladesh's foreign policy should aim to bring peace and prosperity not only to the country itself but also contribute to the peace and prosperity in the region and the world.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul

Islam Alamgir, standing committee members Abdul Moyeen Khan, Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury and Major (ret'd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, Vice-Chairman Air Vice Marshal (ret'd) Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Nagorik Oikya Convener Mahmudur Rahman Manna, and Jamaat-e-Islami's Nayeab-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Muhammad Taher were also present at the event.

The event was also attended by former army chief Lt Gen (ret'd) Abu Belal Muhammad Shafiq Huq, Jahangirnagar University Vice-Chancellor Mohammad Kamrul Ahsan, Prothom Alo Editor Matir Rahman, Manabzamin Editor Matir Rahman Chowdhury, The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam, Daily Desh Ruptantor Editor Kamal Uddin Sabuj, and Ekushey Television (ETV) Chairman Abdus Salam, among others.

## Russia launches 'record' 267 drones at Ukraine

Buildings, cars damaged in Kyiv; Zelensky calls for 'unity' between US, EU for lasting peace

AFP, Kyiv

Russia launched 267 drones on Ukraine overnight, a "record" since the February 2022 invasion, the Ukrainian air force said yesterday.

Air force spokesman Yuriy Ignat called the 267 drones spotted in Ukrainian skies between Saturday night and yesterday "a record for a single attack" since the invasion began nearly three years ago.

Among them, 138 were intercepted by air defence while 119 were "lost" without causing damage, he said in a post on Facebook.

He did not say what happened to the remaining 10 but a separate armed forces statement on Telegram said several regions, Kyiv included, had been "hit". Officials said one civilian in Kryvyi Rih was killed and several buildings and cars in Kyiv and elsewhere were damaged, officials said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said yesterday his soldiers in Ukraine are defending "national interests" and vowed

"unchanged" determination to strengthen the country's armed forces in a rapidly changing world.

The comments come ahead of the third anniversary of Russia's offensive in Ukraine, which triggered the deadliest armed conflict in Europe since World War II.

The Kremlin also hailed dialogue between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin -- two "extraordinary" presidents -- as "promising", and vowed it would "never" give up territory seized in eastern Ukraine.

Ukraine's president in a Telegram post called for "unity" between the United States and Europe to achieve "lasting peace", on the eve of the third anniversary of the Russian invasion and in the wake of Donald Trump's pro-Moscow turn.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump said on Saturday evening he was trying to get money back for the billions of dollars sent to support Ukraine's war against Russia.

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US wants return on Ukraine aid money: Trump

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Russian soldiers in Ukraine defending Russia's future: Putin

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\$350bn Ukraine's resources in Russian-held territory: Kyiv