

# Disarming 'a red line' amid Gaza truce impasse

Says Hamas leader as Israel demands 'full demilitarisation'

AGENCIES

Hamas leader Sami Abu Zuhri told AFP yesterday that disarming is a red line for his movement and other Palestinian groups in negotiations to extend the fragile Gaza ceasefire.

"Any talk about the resistance's weapons is nonsense. The resistance's weapons are a red line for Hamas and all resistance factions," Abu Zuhri said shortly after Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar demanded the "full demilitarisation" of Gaza to proceed to the second stage of the January truce.

"We don't have an agreement on phase two. We demand total demilitarisation of Gaza, Hamas and Islamic Jihad out, and give us our hostages. If they agree to that we can implement tomorrow," Saar told a news conference in Jerusalem. He also charged that humanitarian aid had become the "number one source of revenue" for Hamas, as he defended his government's decision to block all deliveries to Gaza.

Arab leaders yesterday gathered in Cairo to discuss an alternative to a widely condemned plan from US President

- Arab summit draft communique adopts Egyptian plan for Gaza
- Hamas urges Arab summit to 'thwart' Gaza displacement plan

Donald Trump to assume control of war-battered Gaza and displace its Palestinian population.

A summit draft communique adopted an Egyptian plan for Gaza's future and called on the international community and financial institutions to provide support for the plan quickly, reports Reuters.

Hamas urged Arab leaders to "thwart" the relocation of Palestinians from Gaza.

"We look forward to an effective Arab role that ends the humanitarian tragedy created by the occupation in the Gaza Strip... and thwarts the (Israeli) occupation's plans to displace (Palestinians)," a statement by the group said.

After the first phase of the truce ended over the weekend without agreement on how to continue, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office announced a halt to "all entry of goods and supplies" into the territory.

Israel's "closure of the Gaza Strip crossings for the third consecutive day, and its prevention of the entry of aid and goods, represents a Zionist insistence on violating the ceasefire agreement, and a clear war crime", Hamas said in its statement.



Serbian opposition lawmakers throw smoke grenades and tear gas inside parliament in Belgrade, Serbia, yesterday, as seen in this screengrab taken from a video. They were protesting against the government and supporting demonstrating students. During the chaos, one legislator suffered a stroke.

PHOTO: AFP

## US MILITARY AID PAUSE Ukrainians see Trump helping Putin

AFP, Kyiv

Ukrainians were furious and in shock yesterday following a decision by US President Donald Trump to suspend military aid to Kyiv, saying the move played into the Kremlin's hands.

Denys Kazansky, a Ukrainian media commentator said that while Washington had paused military aid to Kyiv "North Korea and Iran did not stop military aid to Russia".

Both Moscow-allied countries have provided critical military support to the Russian military since the Kremlin launched its invasion in February 2022.

"We live in a reality where the United States has become an ally of North Korea, Russia and Iran and it is helping them carry out aggression against a European country," Kazansky added on social media.

Igor Romanenko, a military analyst who previously served in the Ukrainian army, said European countries would probably continue to support Kyiv but that aid would not make up for the loss of US military supplies.

"That is why we must rely on our own strength and reserves. This does not mean that we should despair," he said. He was optimistic Washington would not halt aid entirely but said it was unclear what kind of aid Ukraine might be able to rely on.

Sergiy Takhmazov, a member of the Ukrainian military, questioned how long Ukrainian would be able to hold out without US support for air defence systems and intelligence sharing. "All those who demand peace from us ignore that the price of our peace will be higher than the price of our war," said Pavlo Kazarin, a journalist.

## WHO says it won't 'give up' after US aid funding cuts

AFP, Geneva

The World Health Organization (WHO) yesterday acknowledged that the US freeze on foreign aid funding has hit vital global health programmes but vowed to find a way to keep delivering to those in need.

The United Nations health agency said it was still too early to determine the full impact of the freeze on foreign aid spending by the United States -- traditionally the world's largest aid donor.

But WHO spokeswoman Margaret Harris admitted that some programmes had clearly been affected.

## Putin hails Myanmar ties as junta chief visits Moscow

AFP, Moscow

President Vladimir Putin yesterday praised Russia's developing ties with Myanmar, during a visit by the Asian country's junta chief to its key ally.

Russia is a crucial arms supplier to the isolated state, which is struggling to quell violent opposition to the junta's military rule.

"The relations between our countries are steadily developing," Putin told junta chief Min Aung Hlaing in a televised meeting at the Kremlin.

"We have great potential," he said, hailing growing trade ties.

Min Aung Hlaing, who seized power in a 2021 coup, saluted Putin as a "king" and backed Moscow's full-scale military offensive on Ukraine.

"I believe that victory must be yours under your strong and decisive leadership," he told Putin.

Both countries are under heavy Western sanctions -- Myanmar following the 2021 coup and Russia after its 2014 annexation of Crimea and its ongoing three-year-long offensive on Ukraine.

## 2 explosive-laden cars ram into Pak military compound Six civilians killed

AFP, Peshawar

Two suicide bombers belonging to a militant group drove two explosive-laden cars into an army compound in northwestern Pakistan yesterday evening, triggering massive explosions, police told AFP.

"Suicide bombers rammed two explosives-laden vehicles into the entrance gate of Bannu Cantonment, triggering massive explosions... after which multiple militants attempted to storm the compound," a senior district police official said on condition of anonymity.

"Security forces present at the scene engaged them in a gunfight. Initial reports confirm that four militants have been killed," he said, adding that six civilians were killed.

Bannu, a district in Pakistan's turbulent Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, lies adjacent to the country's formerly self-governed tribal areas and close to Afghanistan.

The attack was claimed by the Hafiz Gul Bahadur armed group, which actively supported the Afghan Taliban in its war against the US-led Nato coalition since 2001.

## One authority to serve them all

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the National Identity Registration Act 2010. Bangladesh launched NID cards with photographs in 2007-2008, as part of updating the voter list.

The Directorate of Registration under the Law and Justice Division deals with the marriage and divorce data while the Directorate General of Health Services collects health data, including causes of death.

A new Birth and Death Registration Act was passed in 2004. The law allowed local government bodies and Bangladesh embassies abroad to register births and deaths. The Office of the Registrar General of Birth and Death under the Local Government Division was established in September 2013 to establish a permanent central database of birth and death records.

The authorities so far have issued

birth certificates to at least 16.80 crore people. Birth registration is free if it is done within 45 days of a child's birth. For getting death certificates, children of deceased person should notify the authorities within 45 days of death.

Birth registration is needed for enrolment in educational institutions, registration for secondary school certificate examinations, applying for NID, passport, and driving licence.

Zahid Hossain, registrar general (Birth and Death Registration), told The Daily Star, "I believe that bringing NID and birth registration under one umbrella will expedite the delivery of citizen services."

An interim government adviser told The Daily Star yesterday that several advisers are in favour of keeping the NID activities under the EC.

Shipping Adviser Brig Gen (ret'd) Sakhawat Hussain, who is also a former election commissioner, told this newspaper that they would look into the matter when the draft ordinance is placed before them.

Earlier in May 2021, the government took an initiative to shift services relating to NID cards to the Security Services Division under the home ministry from the EC.

Ignoring objections of EC officials, the National Identity Registration Bill was passed in parliament in September 2023. The bill aimed to transfer the national identity registration operation from the EC to the home ministry's Security Services Division.

The interim government in mid-January repealed the new law paving the way for returning the NID services to the EC.

## Deceased were Jamaat members

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When asked about the possible motive behind the killings, the SP said, "We don't rule out any possibilities, and we are investigating the incident. We tried to find CCTV footage but failed to get it as there was none."

"Police found a blood-stained pistol at the spot, and upon inspecting the firearm, police suspect that the pistol might have been looted from a government office right after the July uprising," the SP said.

Police and local sources said Nezam returned to Kanchana union after the fall of the Awami League government on August 5 last year.

Around the same time, other Jamaat men started to return and

began taking control of different business establishments and other assets.

Nezam and some Jamaat men had a rivalry with other local influentials.

However, Chattogram South District Jamaat's spokesperson Ayub Ali said in a press statement, "It's a planned murder. The area where the two were gruesomely beaten to death has long been a crime-prone area. A group has been trying to take control of the hills, trees, and brick kilns in the area."

"In the name of an arbitration meeting, the victims were called to that area and later beaten to death," said the press release.

No case had been filed till the filing of this report at 6:00pm yesterday.

## Father of victims files murder case

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The case statement further mentions that around 10:00am on February 24, air force personnel detained and allegedly tortured a local youth, triggering anger among residents.

When locals attempted to rescue him, a clash erupted. Nahid, who went near the house of a local named Nayeem to see what was happening, was shot in the head. Air force personnel then took him away and wasted time in taking him to the hospital. He died due to excessive bleeding, read the case statement.

Air Force Sergeant Md Ziaul Haque in his case filed on February 27 named Rahat Iqbal alias Iqbal Bahar,

42, and Ejabat Ullah, 43, along with 300 unidentified individuals.

Cox's Bazar Sadar Model Police Station OC Md Elias Khan said that investigations into both cases are ongoing.

"The autopsy report will confirm how Nahid died," he said.

While Nahid's family and locals claim he was shot, the police inquest report does not mention gunshot wounds. The report, prepared at the hospital morgue by SI Muhammad Ali Uddin of Cox's Bazar Sadar Model Police Station, reads that Nahid had a six-to-seven-inch-deep hole in his skull, with his brain completely exposed.

## Manikganj youth builds aircraft

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He said the aircraft was built primarily for experimental training rather than commercial purposes. However, with government funding and sponsorship, commercial production could be possible. The aircraft can reach an altitude of over 50 feet.

Deputy Commissioner Manowar Hossain Molla said the government would support Julhas's research.

While acknowledging the technical complexities involved, he said initial financial assistance had been provided to encourage his efforts.

## Two Iranians hurt

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which was a rental, and assaulted the two foreigners."

The victims claimed that \$950 and three iPhones were stolen from their possession during the attack.

A video of the mob attack circulated on social media following the incident.

The injured Iranians were taken to Kurmitola General Hospital for treatment. They were later escorted back to their Banani hotel.

Bhatara Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Mazharul Islam said that the incident originated from a dispute over the money exchange rate. "However, the whole story is yet to be clear. A case is being prepared."

He added that police are trying to find the alleged thieves.

## India break Australia jinx

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and Ravindra Jadeja took two wickets each.

India will now face the winner of the today's second semifinal between South Africa and New Zealand in Sunday's final in a bid to become the first team to win the tournament three times.

The outcome also means that the final of the tournament will be played in Dubai, not Lahore.

The last ODI between the two sides was the final of the 2023 World Cup, which ended in a heartbreaking loss for India in front of a home crowd.

But this time, after not allowing Australia to post an imposing target on the board, India pulled off a comfortable chase where they looked

mostly in command with a few minor bumps along the way.

After India lost Shubman Gill (eight off 11) and skipper Rohit Sharma (28 off 29) in the Powerplay, Kohli took control of the chase, forming a 91-run partnership with Iyer for the third wicket, followed by a 44-run stand with Axar Patel (27 off 30) and a 47-run partnership with Rahul.

However, Australia was also guilty of relieving Kohli when he was on 51, with Glenn Maxwell diving to his right but failing to hold onto a catch at short mid off of the bowling off Zampa.

Kohli made Australia pay for that dropped chance and although he could not finish the chase, getting caught off Zampa at long on in the

43rd over, Rahul and Pandya ensured India went over the line.

Earlier, Australia lost opener Cooper Connolly for a nine-ball duck off Shami before Travis Head hit back with a flurry of fours and two sixes to raise memories of his onslaught against India in the 2023 World Cup final won by Australia.

But wrist spinner Chakravarthy struck on his second ball to get Head caught out at long off for 39 off 33 balls. Smith and Marnus Labuschagne chipped away against the spinners in the middle phase and Carey played his shots in the final overs, but India kept picking wickets in regular intervals and eventually bundled them out for a gettable total.

## China, Canada retaliate to US tariffs

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by the US" and said it would impose 10 and 15 percent levies on a range of agricultural imports from the United States.

Experts have warned the higher import costs could push up prices for consumers, complicating efforts to bring down inflation.

That includes at grocery stores -- Mexico supplied 63 percent of US

vegetable imports and nearly half of US fruit and nut imports in 2023, according to the US Department of Agriculture.

Housing costs could also be hit. More than 70 percent of imports of two key materials homebuilders need -- softwood lumber and gypsum -- come from Canada and Mexico, said the National Association of Home Builders.

Truck drivers at the Otay Mesa

border crossing in Mexico told AFP they were already feeling the impact as they waited to cross into the United States early yesterday.

Work was drying up because many companies in the Mexican border city of Tijuana export Chinese goods, said driver Angel Cervantes.

"And since the tariffs are also against China, work is going down for the (transport) companies," he added.

## Reshuffle in police top order

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from Sunamganj.

The notification also named their replacements.

Abul Fazal Mohammad Tariq Hossain Khan, DMP deputy commissioner, has been made SP of Nilphamari, DMP DC Rawnak Jahan SP of Jashore, Khulna range DIG Tofayel Ahmed SP of Sunamganj, and Rajshahi Metropolitan Police DC Saifuddin Shaheen SP of Cox's Bazar.

Besides, Rezaul Karim, deputy inspector general of the highway police, and Ashrafur Rahman, Mymensingh range DIG, have also been transferred to the PHQ.

DIG Ataul Kibria from the PHQ has been posted as the new Mymensingh range DIG.

DIG Shoaib Riaz Alam of the PHQ has been transferred to the Sardah Police Academy, while Industrial Police DIG Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman has been made commandant of Rangpur Police Training Centre.

Meanwhile, CID DIG Harun-or-Rashid Hajari has been transferred to the Industrial Police and Sardah Police Academy DIG Rokhfir Sultana Khanom to the highway police.



A wildfire continues to rage in a mountainous area in Ofunato, Iwate Prefecture, northeastern Japan, early yesterday. Firefighters were battling Japan's worst wildfire in half a century, which has left one dead and forced the evacuation of nearly 4,000 local residents.

PHOTO: REUTERS