

INTERNATIONAL

Israel strikes Hodeida port

Threatens naval, air blockade

REUTERS, Dubai

Israel's navy said it struck Houthi targets in Yemen's Red Sea port of Hodeidah yesterday, and Defence Minister Israel Katz threatened the Iran-aligned movement with a naval and air blockade if attacks on Israel continue.

Houthi-run Al Masirah TV said Israel targeted the docks of Al Hodeidah port with two strikes. The Israeli army said in a statement that the navy struck Houthi targets, adding the port is used by the group to transfer weapons.

There were no immediate reports of casualties. Israel has been hitting Houthi targets with air strikes in a military campaign launched after the country severely weakened Iran's other Middle East partners.

The Israeli military on Monday urged the evacuation of the Houthi-controlled ports of Ras Isa, Hodeidah and Salif.

10 killed in Austrian school shooting
Shooter among dead; 30 injured

REUTERS, Graz

A gunman killed at least nine people at a secondary school in the southern Austrian city of Graz yesterday, in the worst school shooting in the country's modern history.

Police said the attacker also died and that they were working on the assumption that he had operated alone. National broadcaster ORF said about 30 people were wounded. Austrian media reported that most of the dead were pupils at the school.

Police did not publicly identify the killer, but Austrian media cited unconfirmed reports saying he was a former pupil who had entered the school and opened fire on pupils.

"The rampage at a school in Graz is a national tragedy that has deeply shaken our entire country," Austrian Chancellor Christian Stocker said in a statement.

"There are no words for the pain and grief that we all - all of Austria - are feeling right now."

At the scene, police had set up a perimeter a few hundred meters away from the school, barring access routes with police cars.



Fireworks explode around police officers in riot gear during a protest in response to federal immigration operations in the Little Tokyo neighbourhood of downtown Los Angeles, US on Monday night. President Donald Trump's administration said that it was sending 700 US Marines and thousands more National Guard troops to Los Angeles, sparking a furious response from California's governor over the "deranged" deployment.

PHOTO: AFP

Russian drone attacks hit Ukraine's Kyiv, Odesa

Three killed; European Commission unveils 18th package of Russia sanctions aimed at energy, military

REUTERS, Kyiv

Russia launched one of its largest air strikes on Kyiv in over three years of war and struck a maternity ward in the southern city of Odesa in attacks that killed at least three people, officials said yesterday.

The overnight strikes followed Russia's biggest drone assault of the war on Ukraine on Monday night and were part of intensified bombardments that Moscow says is retaliation for attacks by Ukrainian forces on Russia.

Loud explosions shook Kyiv and blasts and fires lit up the sky in the early hours of yesterday morning, leaving plumes of heavy smoke over the city, Reuters witnesses said.

At least four people were treated in hospital after seven of the capital's 10 districts were hit, city officials said. "Today was one of the largest attacks on Kyiv," President Volodymyr Zelensky said. "Russian missile and Shahed (drone) strikes down the efforts of the United States and others around the world to force Russia into peace."

Meanwhile, the European Commission has proposed an 18th package of sanctions against Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, aimed at Moscow's energy revenues and military industry, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said yesterday.

Zelensky urged Ukraine's allies to take steps to force Russia into peace, and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha called for



immediate new sanctions and air defence systems.

Although Moscow and Kyiv have held two rounds of direct peace talks in recent weeks, the only tangible progress has been an agreement on exchanges of prisoners of war, and Russia has continued to advance along the front line in eastern Ukraine.

Moscow and Kyiv blame each other for the lack of progress towards ending the war, which has raged since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, and US President Donald Trump has expressed frustration with both sides.

Russia temporarily halted flights overnight at four airports serving Moscow, at St Petersburg's Pulkovo Airport and at airports in nine other cities after the

Defence Ministry said Ukraine had launched more drones at Russia, officials said.

Flights in Moscow and some other cities were later restored but restrictions were still in place in St Petersburg at 0430 GMT. No damage was reported.

Ukraine's air force said Russia had fired 315 drones across the country, of which 277 were downed. All seven missiles launched by Russia were also brought down, it said.

Air raid alerts in Kyiv and most Ukrainian regions lasted five hours until around 5:00 am (0200 GMT), according to information released by the military.

"A difficult night for all of us," Timur Tkachenko, head of Kyiv's city military administration, said on Telegram.

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CONVICT'S RELEASE

Lanka prison chief kept in custody

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's prison chief was remanded in custody yesterday in connection with the illegal release of a convicted financial fraudster under the guise of an amnesty for minor offenders.

Commissioner-General of Prisons Thushara Upuldeniya was arrested late Monday by the Criminal Investigations Department, over the release of fraud convict Athula Thilakaratne.

The government suspended Upuldeniya following reports the convict's name was smuggled into a list of nearly 400 minor offenders who were granted a presidential amnesty last month.

Colombo Additional Magistrate Manjula Rathnayake ordered Upuldeniya be held in custody until today, pending a criminal investigation.

"It was decided to suspend the Commissioner-General until the investigations are concluded," the Justice Ministry said in a statement.

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's office ordered the police investigation last week after the release of Thilakaratne.

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The Daily Star

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HARVARD UNIVERSITY

State Dept resumes processing student visas after judge's ruling

REUTERS, Washington

The US State Department directed all US missions abroad and consular sections to resume processing Harvard University student and exchange visitor visas after a federal judge in Boston last week temporarily blocked President Trump's ban on foreign students at the Ivy League institution.

In a diplomatic cable sent on June 6 and signed by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the State Department cited parts of the judge's decision, saying the fresh directive was "in accordance with" the temporary restraining order.

Under that order granted to Harvard late on Thursday, US District Judge Allison Burroughs blocked Trump's proclamation from taking effect pending further litigation of the matter.

Trump had cited national security concerns as justification for barring international students from entering the US to pursue studies at Harvard.

Trump administration has launched a multi-pronged attack on the nation's oldest university, freezing billions of dollars in grants and other funding. Harvard argues the administration is retaliating against it for refusing to accede to demands to control school's governance, curriculum and ideology of its faculty and students.

MYANMAR CONFLICT

Guerrillas claim rare downing of junta jet

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar anti-coup guerrillas claimed to shoot down a junta jet yesterday, declaring a rare victory over the air force which has kept them at bay in a grinding civil war.

The military swiftly denied their claim, saying the plane crashed near the central village of Min Taing Pin around midday because of "sudden engine failure" while on a "practice flight".

Myanmar has been consumed by civil war since the military ousted a democratic government in 2021, but analysts say its air force backed by Russia and China has allowed it to fend off a myriad of lesser-equipped opposition groups.

The military and some of its adversaries have pledged a truce this month as the country continues to recover from March's devastating magnitude 7.7 earthquake which killed nearly 3,800 people.

But the People's Liberation Army (PLA) -- the armed wing of a Myanmar communist group -- said its fighters downed the plane after four days of fierce conflict in central Sagaing region, one of the areas worst-hit by the quake.

"Our fighters were able to shoot down an attack jet today. This is a first in the history of the PLA," said a spokeswoman.

Zaw Tun, a member of the local anti-coup People's Defence Force, said they were fighting alongside the PLA when "our joint forces used machine guns and shot it down".

A local administrator from the rebel-held area, Zaw Htet, said two planes were returning from a bombing run when one was hit as both "flew very low on the way back".

BNP 'disappointed', Jamaat, NCP 'satisfied'

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their stance on elections by December this year.

On May 28, BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman said the next general election must be held by December and called on party activists and leaders to prepare to ensure that.

Yunus had previously indicated that elections would occur between December 2025 and June 2026, depending on reform progress.

NCP, composed of July uprising leaders, supports holding elections only after reforms are complete.

Jamaat-e-Islami initially aligned with NCP's position but later suggested elections could take place in February before Ramadan. Last week, Jamaat leaders indicated elections might happen between December and April.

On May 21, Chief of Army Staff General Waker Uz Zaman said that elections should be held by December, stating, "Bangladesh needs political stability, which can only come through an elected government, not unelected decision-makers."

MIXED REACTIONS FROM POLITICAL PARTIES

Following the announcement, BNP convened an emergency standing committee meeting and issued a press release reiterating its demand for elections by December. They cited Ramadan, public exams at secondary

and higher secondary levels, and weather concerns as reasons.

BNP also warned that the combination of weather and campaigning during Ramadan might lead to the postponement of the polls.

On Saturday, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, who was returning from Thailand after receiving treatment, stated that the announcement not only "disappointed" his party but also the whole nation.

In contrast, Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman welcomed the tentative election date, expressing hope that the government will ensure a free, fair, neutral, and acceptable election within the declared timeframe.

He said the nation has a strong desire for reform, justice, and elections, and that through the formation and implementation of the "July Charter", Bangladesh can return to a proper democratic path.

NCP, in its reaction, said it would not oppose elections by April next year if key reforms and constitutional changes are completed before that.

"We believe fulfilling the July Declaration and July Charter and announcing a clear election timeline will meet national expectations," said Akhter Hossen, NCP member secretary. He added that reforms and justice must be visible before elections

and advocated for a Constituent Assembly election to implement a new constitution.

LEFTIST PARTIES EXPRESS DISSATISFACTION

Communist Party of Bangladesh General Secretary Ruhin Hossain Prince called the election timeline ignores public opinion.

"Most political parties, and ordinary citizens we've spoken with, want the election to be held within this year by December. We want the same," Prince said.

Revolutionary Workers Party General Secretary Saiful Huq said the chief adviser ignored "the consensus for December elections", warning that an April election would "frustrate many".

Questioned April's suitability, he said January to mid February would have been a better choice for arranging polls.

He warned that the decision could deepen the political crisis and widen the gap between the government and political parties.

Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal's General Secretary Bazlur Rashid Firoz also questioned the timing of the polls and argued that key reforms and judicial progress could be completed by December.

He also said polls in April may disrupt SSC exams, which are scheduled for April.

Yunus-Starmer meet uncertain

FROM PAGE 1

King Charles III is expected to formally confer the Harmony Award 2025 on Yunus on June 12 at St James's Palace in recognition of his lifelong work promoting peace, sustainability, and social harmony.

"This is a very prestigious award," said Shafiqul.

"He has worked tirelessly for the poor, the environment, and against wealth concentration. His advocacy for social business and youth upliftment is being recognised."

Yesterday, Yunus met separately with Wouter van Wersch, executive vice president of Airbus, and Charles Wyley, executive vice president of Menzies Aviation, the world's largest ground handling firm and a partner in Bangladesh's aviation sector.

"As you know, we are working to operationalise the Third Terminal in Bangladesh, and are therefore in discussions with various parties about who will handle ground services there. In that context, we also held talks with Menzies," the press secretary said.

A group of British MPs of Bangladeshi origin also met Prof Yunus. Topics included the Rohingya crisis, Bangladesh's democratic transition, progress of the Reform Commissions, and the upcoming July Charter.

"We also highlighted the government's achievements over the past 10 months, especially economic reforms. It was a cordial exchange. The MPs asked many questions, which the

chief adviser answered all," Alam said.

Meanwhile, Commonwealth Secretary-General Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey met Prof Yunus yesterday, expressing her organisation's willingness to support Bangladesh's political and constitutional reforms ahead of next year's election.

"We are happy to offer support, especially for constitutional reforms, if Bangladesh seeks it," she said.

Prof Yunus urged the Commonwealth to promote youth engagement and explore the power of sports as a tool for social change.

Botchwey also announced that a Commonwealth youth programme will be held in Dhaka later this month.

National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman, Special Envoy Lutfi Siddiqi, SDG Affairs Senior Secretary Lamia Moshred, and Bangladesh High Commissioner to the UK Abida Islam were also present.

Yunus is scheduled to deliver a keynote speech today at Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs. He will also meet with members of the Bangladeshi community and students involved in the July uprising.

The chief adviser is accompanied by Bangladesh Bank Governor Ahsan H. Mansur and Anti Corruption Commission Chairman Dr Mohammad Abdul Momen, who are expected to hold talks on asset recovery and enhanced cooperation with British agencies.

"This is one of the core objectives of

the tour. We hope it yields results," said Shafiqul Alam.

However, he cautioned that recovering stolen assets is difficult. "With increased engagement with agencies like the UK's National Crime Agency (NCA), we may see progress. But these are sensitive legal matters, and we can't disclose much publicly."

Meanwhile, three anti-corruption organisations -- Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), UK-based Spotlight on Corruption, and Policy at Transparency International UK -- have urged the UK government to support Bangladesh in recovering assets allegedly stolen by the previous regime.

They also called for sanctions against Bangladeshi elites suspected of serious corruption and stronger action from UK law enforcement to locate and recover stolen assets.

Separately, UK-based leaders, activists, and supporters of the Awami League staged protests in front of the Dorchester Hotel in London, where Prof Yunus is staying. They pledged to continue demonstrations throughout his visit, reports Prothom Alo.

Former MPs Ranjit Sarkar (Sunamganj-1), Md. Abu Zahid (Habiganj-3), and Sylhet Metropolitan Awami League Joint General Secretary Bidhan Kumar Saha appeared publicly in the protest for the first time. Former State Minister Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury and other senior party figures also participated, the Bangla daily reported.