

## Trump casts doubt on Nato mutual defence clause

REUTERS, the Hague

President Donald Trump yesterday cast doubt over the United States' commitment to defending its Nato partners, suggesting there were "numerous" definitions to the cornerstone of the alliance's mutual defence clause.

Trump was speaking to reporters en route to a Nato summit in the Netherlands, a two-day gathering which is intended to signal to Russian President Vladimir Putin that Nato is united, despite Trump's past criticism, and determined to expand and upgrade its defences to deter any attack from Moscow.

However, pressed by reporters on Air Force One over whether he remained committed to mutual defence among allies as set out by Nato's Article 5, Trump responded:

"I'm committed to saving lives. I'm committed to life and safety. And I'm going to give you an exact definition when I get there."

Trump also posted a screenshot of a message from Nato Secretary General Mark Rutte congratulating him on his "decisive action in Iran" and getting all Nato allies to agree to spend more on defence.



Piling work is underway at Anandabazar in Chattogram's North Halishahar as part of the Bay Terminal project. The terminal expected to serve as the country's key port for the next century. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## Ceasefire takes hold after Trump rebukes

FROM PAGE 1

continue to "assert its legitimate rights" to the peaceful use of atomic power.

Meanwhile, Israel's chief of staff Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir said the country's focus will now shift back to its fight against Hamas in Gaza.

"Now the focus shifts back to Gaza -- to bring the hostages home and to dismantle the Hamas regime," chief of staff Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir said in a statement shared by the army.

The statement came as there were reports of violations of the ceasefire, hours after it went into effect.

Explosions rang out in Tehran from Israeli airstrikes hours after Trump said Israel had called off strikes at his command.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office acknowledged that Israel had struck a radar site near Tehran in what it said was retaliation for Iranian missiles fired three and a half hours after the ceasefire started.

Tehran denied it had launched any missiles after the ceasefire.

According to Israel, two Iranian ballistic missiles were launched toward Israel. At the White House, Trump later described it as "one rocket that didn't land -- that was shot -- perhaps by mistake, that didn't land."

Israel later said it decided to refrain from further attacks following a call between Netanyahu and Trump, but did not explicitly say whether the strike on the radar site took place before or after they spoke.

Oil prices fell and share markets were lifted around the world at the prospect of an end to the biggest ever confrontation between the Middle East foes, lifting a threat of disruption to Gulf oil supplies.

Trump, en route to a Nato summit in the Netherlands, had rebuked Israel with an obscenity in an extraordinary outburst at an ally whose military campaign he had joined two days earlier.

"All planes will turn around and head home, while doing a friendly 'Plane Wave' to Iran. Nobody will be hurt, the Ceasefire is in effect!" Trump said in a post on Truth Social.

That followed a post in which he had said: "Israel. Do not drop those bombs. If you do it, it is a major violation. Bring your pilots home, now!"

Before departing the White House, Trump told reporters he was unhappy with both sides for violating the ceasefire, but particularly unhappy with Israel, which he said had "unloaded" shortly after agreeing to the deal.

"We got to get Israel to calm down now," Trump said. Iran and Israel had

## Govt warns of strict action against mob attacks

FROM PAGE 1

emerged from a meeting of the law-and-order advisory council.

He assured of all necessary measures to prevent such incidents in the days to come.

A significant number of people involved in such incidents have already been brought under legal action, he said, without providing the exact number.

Referring to the recent assault on former Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda in Uttara, he said: "We are deeply saddened by the incident -- it is unacceptable."

One person has already been arrested.

"We are investigating to identify other possible perpetrators. If any member of law enforcement is found negligent, we will also take action against them," he said.

In response to questions about the perceived passivity of police, he said: "The police are now more humane

than before. They try to resolve issues through discussion first instead of using force immediately.

Their capacity and morale have significantly improved."

Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sheikh Md Sajit Ali echoed the same, saying they will not permit vigilante action in the name of catching suspects.

"We are not allowing any mob justice. In such incidents, we have filed cases under severe charges, including robbery and mugging," he told reporters at a road safety event organised under the Japan-supported Dhaka Road Traffic Safety Project.

"In some cases, I even suspended officers from my own force for their failure to respond properly," he said.

Referring to the incident involving Huda, he said a case was filed.

The frequency of such incidents has decreased significantly compared to three or four months ago, he said.

the number of bombs that the US had used" against Iran.

Ali Vaez, Iran project director for the International Crisis Group, told AFP: "This was calibrated and telegraphed in a way that would not result in any American casualties, so that there is an off ramp for both sides."

Media reports said that Qatar played a role in brokering the truce, despite being targeted by a "coordinated missile attack" by Iran on a US base in its territory.

Both Israel and Iran appeared to claim victory following the ceasefire.

The international community reacted with cautious optimism to news of the truce.

Saudi Arabia and the European Union welcomed Trump's announcement, while Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia hoped "that this will be a sustainable ceasefire".

China's foreign ministry said it supported Iran in "achieving a genuine ceasefire so that people can return to normal life".

Rafael Grossi, the head of the UN's nuclear watchdog, said he hoped to meet Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi soon, hoping to resume cooperation between the IAEA and Iran.

Meanwhile, Foad Izadi, a professor at the University of Tehran, told Al Jazeera that Iran has been cooperating with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) because it is a member of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, but this collaboration has not benefited Tehran.

So, Iran is likely to use Article 10 of the treaty, which allows countries to leave it, "in the coming days and weeks", he said. "You don't have to be a member of that treaty, there are many countries that are not members. Israel, for example, is not a member," Izadi noted.

Meanwhile, French President Emmanuel Macron warned there was an "increased" risk that Iran would attempt to enrich uranium secretly following the US and Israeli strikes on nuclear sites.

Some turned their sights to the ongoing fighting between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, arguing it was time to bring an end to that war too.

Israel's opposition leader and the families of Israeli hostages held in Gaza yesterday called for an end to the war in the Palestinian territory after a ceasefire was announced with Iran.

"And now Gaza. It's time to finish it there too. Bring back the hostages, end the war," opposition leader Yair Lapid of the centre-right Yesh Atid party wrote on X.

"We have sent a clear message by registering cases and taking legal steps. No one has the right to break down doors or confront suspects directly. Inform the police -- we will take legal action. If police personnel fail to act, we will take disciplinary steps against them," he added.

Regarding the upcoming national election, Jahangir said ensuring peaceful and credible polls is a top priority.

"All the security force chiefs assured us that law and order will be maintained during the polls. But fair elections also depend on the political participants. We want a process where even a losing candidate accepts the result with dignity."

All security arrangements during the election period will be under the authority of the Election Commission, he said, adding that the government would provide all necessary support to the EC to conduct a peaceful and credible election.

## Mob violence now alarmingly routine

FROM PAGE 1

Over the last 10 months, mobs had assaulted individuals, ransacked offices and homes, desecrated heritage sites, shrines, akhras, and even shut down women's football matches.

According to Ain o Salish Kendra, at least 174 people were killed in mob attacks between August 2024 last year and May this year.

"Even in the face of horrifying incidents, we are not seeing any visible action from the government that could send out a strong message," said human rights activist Nur Khan Liton.

Mob violence becomes frequent amid political unrest, he told The Daily Star. "But now these types of incidents are happening at an abnormal scale and frequency."

Those who are involved in such incidents must not feel that they can get away with it, he added.

He said Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Dhamondi 32 residence was demolished following public announcements.

"The government did not take proper measures to prevent it. Rather, those who committed the act proudly celebrated what they had done."

"Such instances send out a kind of message that the government will not take any legal action. This is the message these people are receiving, because no action has been taken."

Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik in a statement last night said the wave of mob violence that began across the country after the mass uprising last year was now spiralling out of control.

Also yesterday, Home Adviser Jahangir Alam Chowdhury told reporters at the Secretariat that the government had not been able to stop mob violence, but the frequency of the incidents had been lowered.

Asked how many people faced action for mob violence, he said, "I don't know the exact number ... But action has been taken against a large number of people."

He added that law enforcement members would be punished if they were found negligent in curbing violence.

He made the comments amid widespread outrage stemming from the assault on former CEC Huda on June 22.

According to witnesses, a group of men entered Huda's home in the capital's Uttara and assaulted him. In viral video footage, some people are seen putting a garland of shoes around his neck and hitting him across the face with a shoe before handing him over to police who were at the scene.

The joint forces yesterday arrested a suspect named Hanif Mia on charges of assaulting Huda.

On Sunday, a barber and his son were beaten up by a mob and

later detained by police allegedly for hurting religious sentiment in Lalmonirhat town.

Slating the attack, different rights bodies yesterday demanded thorough investigations into every such case to bring the perpetrators to justice and called for strict measures to ensure such incidents do not recur.

After the fall of the Awami League regime on August 5 last year, the police force virtually disappeared for around two weeks. Mob violence shot up at the time.

In September, former Chhatra League leaders Shamim Molla of Jahangirnagar University and Abdullah Al Masud of Rajshahi University were killed.

At Dhaka University, a mentally challenged man named Tofazzal Hossain was beaten to death by resident students who thought Tofazzal was a thief.

The DU authorities later expelled eight students, and six men were arrested in connection with the killing.

At least two were arrested in connection with the killing of Shamim.

According to The Daily Star's own findings, along with counts made in media reports, over 70 shrines and akhras across the country were attacked, vandalised, set ablaze or looted in August and September last year.

The Chief Adviser's Press Wing on January 18 said 23 suspects were arrested over the attacks on at least 40 shrines following August 5.

On March 6, a mob stormed and ransacked a flat in Gulshan, falsely claiming it belonged to Tanvir Imam, son of Sheikh Hasina's former adviser HT Imam, and alleging that illegal weapons and large sums of cash were hidden there.

Despite police presence, the mob broke open the door. Police and army personnel eventually intervened to restore order and arrested three.

In May, a group of men tried to break into the residence of Golam Mostafa, proprietor of Hakkani Publishers, accusing him of being a "fascist agent".

When police went to the scene, they asked officers to arrest the publisher. As police pointed out that there was no complaint against him, the men engaged in an argument with police.

The law enforcers then detained three men, including a now former leader of the Students Against Discrimination.

Police later released them after Abdul Hannan Masud, senior joint chief coordinator of the National Citizen Party, gave an undertaking that the men would not engage in such activities in the future.

On May 9, a man named Nehal Ahmed Jihad dragged two women

## LALMONIRHAT MOB 4 rights groups slam assault on father, son

Family leaves town, fearing attacks

STAR REPORT

Four rights organisations have expressed deep concern over the incident in Lalmonirhat town, where a barber and his son were detained after being beaten up by a mob on Sunday for allegedly hurting religious sentiments.

In separate statements issued yesterday, the groups demanded that the culprits be brought to justice.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad said incidents of mob violence and communal provocation are occurring in different parts of the country, yet the state has failed to take any urgent or effective measures to hold the perpetrators accountable. The organisation called for an impartial investigation into the Lalmonirhat incident.

Ain o Salish Kendra described allegations of "hurting religious sentiments" or "blasphemy" as extremely sensitive and emphasised the need for transparent, impartial, and evidence-based investigations in such cases. It further said the prevailing culture of impunity poses a serious threat to social harmony and the rule of law.

Naripokkho expressed deep anger and frustration over the rise in mob violence, oppression, and torture across the country under various pretexts, including accusations of blasphemy.

The group stated that the government has taken no effective initiative to prevent such

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

out of a launch cabin and whipped them with a belt in front of more than a hundred passengers at Munshiganj launch terminal.

Nehal was arrested but released on bail three weeks later. As he walked out of prison, a large group of men received him with garlands.

Three women's football matches in Rangpur, Dinajpur, and Joypurhat were stopped by groups claiming that such events were against religious norms.

These matches were eventually held after the authorities ensured safety.

**MOB KILLINGS HIGHEST IN 10 YEARS**

Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), reports show that at least 179 people were killed in mob attacks between August 2024 and June 23 this year.

Over the last 10 months, the average mob killing, 17.9 each month, has been the highest in 10 years. In 2015, the monthly average was 11.25.

At least 51 people were killed by mobs in 2016; 50 in 2017; 39 in 2018; 65 in 2019; 35 in 2020; 28 in 2021; 36 in 2022; 51 in 2023; and 32 between January and July last year. From August to December last year, at least 96 people were killed by mobs, ASK data shows.

This year, at least 83 people had been beaten to death by mobs.

**WARNINGS IN VAIN**

Time and again, the advisory council members made statements against mob violence. But the warnings fell on deaf ears.

On September 19, 2024, Adviser Asif Nazrul said the government would not tolerate mob violence or extrajudicial killings.

The same day, Home Adviser Jahangir said, "If anyone commits any crimes, then the person should be handed over to the law enforcers. You have no right to take the law into your hands."

On March 6, he said, "The government is taking legal action against mob violence whenever and wherever it occurs."

On February 10, Mahfuj Alam said the government adopted a firm stance against "so-called movements and mob drills".

The following month, he said, "From now on, the government will take a strict stance against any form of 'mob justice'."

Contacted, Lawyer Sara Hossain said, "We see government inaction in every case. They say that they won't tolerate it. But what does non-tolerance even mean?"