

Indian army killed leaders in Myanmar strikes

Says India rebel group

AFP, NEW Delhi

Separatist militants in northeastern India said the Indian army carried out cross border drone strikes on the group's camps in neighbouring Myanmar yesterday, killing three of its leaders.

Some rebel groups in northeastern India have ethnic, linguistic and cultural ties with minorities across the border in Myanmar and maintain a presence there.

A top commander of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) was killed and 19 others wounded in a drone attack in Myanmar near the border, the separatist group said.

"Two more senior commanders were killed" in subsequent strikes, ULFA said, adding: "Several other members and civilians were also wounded."

Several hurt in anti-migrant unrest in Spanish town

AFP, Madrid

Several people were hurt in a second night of anti-migrant unrest in the Spanish town of Torre Pacheco after a pensioner was beaten up, authorities said yesterday.

Despite a major police presence, groups armed with batons roamed the streets looking for foreign-origin people, regional newspaper La Opinion de Murcia reported.

The regional government did not say how many people were injured but stated that at least one person had been arrested for the violence.

The unrest erupted after a 68-year-old man told Spanish media he was beaten up in the street on Wednesday by three youths of North African origin.

The attack was filmed and put on social media.

The town hall organised a demonstration on Friday that was intended to be peaceful but where far-right elements shouted anti-migrant slogans.

One group, named "Deport Them Now", posted a message on social media calling for attacks against people of North African origin.

Spanish authorities launched an appeal for calm yesterday in the town of 36,000 people.



People gather around the Freedom Flotilla ship "Handala" ahead of the boat's departure for Gaza in Syracuse, Sicily, southern Italy, yesterday. "The vessel will carry life-saving humanitarian aid and a message of solidarity from people around the world refusing to stay silent as Gaza is starved, bombed, and buried under rubble," The Freedom Flotilla Coalition (FFC) said in a statement.

PHOTO: AFP

Israel increased Rafah demolition

Aims to transfer entire population of Gaza to 'humanitarian city' in the south

AGENCIES

Demolition operations being conducted by Israel in Gaza's southern Rafah Governorate have been stepped up sharply, an investigation by Al Jazeera's Sanad investigations unit has found.

Israel's defence ministry has announced a plan to relocate 600,000 people into what observers say would be "concentration camps" in the area in southern Gaza, with plans to expand this to the Strip's entire population.

Sanad's analysis of satellite imagery up to July 4, 2025, shows the number of demolished buildings in Rafah rising to about 28,600, up from 15,800 on April 4, 2025, according to data from the United Nations Satellite Centre (UNOSAT).

This means that approximately 12,800 buildings were destroyed between early April and early July alone – a marked acceleration in demolitions that has coincided with Israel's new push into Rafah launched in late March 2025.

Israel's defence minister, Israel Katz, told reporters last Monday that an initial 600,000 Palestinians living in the coastal al-Mawasi area would be transferred to Rafah, the location for what he called a new "humanitarian city" for Palestinians, within 60 days of any agreed ceasefire deal.

According to Katz, the entire civilian population of Gaza –



more than 2 million people – will eventually be relocated to this southern city.

A proposal seen by Reuters carrying the name of the US-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) detailed plans for a "Humanitarian Transit Area" in which Gaza residents would "temporarily reside, deradicalise, re-integrate and prepare to relocate if they wish to do so".

The minister said Israel hopes to encourage Palestinians to "voluntarily emigrate" from the Gaza Strip to other countries, adding that this plan "should be fulfilled".

He also stressed that the plan would not be run by the Israeli army, but by international bodies, without specifying which organisations would be implementing it.

Australia defence ties repaired after submarine row

Says France

AFP, Sydney

France's defence relations with Australia have recovered after their 2021 bust-up over a major submarine contract, the country's ambassador said yesterday.

Paris expressed its "strong regrets" when Australia tore up a multibillion-dollar deal to buy a fleet of diesel-powered submarines from France, Ambassador Pierre-Andre Imbert said.

Since the 2022 election of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, however, the defence relationship had been "restarted", he said.

"Now, the first pillar of our cooperation is defence and security, so we have a very good level of cooperation," the ambassador told AFP as French forces joined major military drills around Australia.

When Australia ditched the French deal, it opted instead to acquire nuclear-powered vessels in a new three-way AUKUS pact with the US and Britain.

But a US defence official last month revealed that a review of AUKUS was underway to ensure it "aligned with the President's America First agenda" and that the US defence industrial base was "meeting our needs".

TIBET'S DALAI LAMA Succession issue a 'thorn' in ties with India: China

REUTERS, New Delhi

The succession of Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, is a thorn in China-India relations, the Chinese embassy in New Delhi said yesterday, as India's foreign minister prepares to visit China for the first time since deadly border clashes in 2020.

Ahead of celebrations this month for his 90th birthday that were attended by senior Indian ministers, the head of Tibetan Buddhists riled China again by saying it had no role in his succession. Tibetans believe the soul of any senior Buddhist monk is reincarnated after his death, but China says the Dalai Lama's succession will also have to be approved by its leaders.

The Dalai Lama has been living in exile in India since 1959 following a failed uprising against Chinese rule in Tibet, and Indian foreign relations experts say his presence gives New Delhi leverage against China. India is also home to about 70,000 Tibetans and a Tibetan government-in-exile.

Yu Jing, a Chinese embassy spokesperson, said on social media app X that some people from strategic and academic communities in India had made "improper remarks" on the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama.

Yu did not name anyone but in recent days, Indian strategic affairs analysts and a government minister backed the Dalai Lama's remarks on his succession.

ISRAELI STRIKE Iranian president lightly hurt during war last month

ANADOLU AGENCY

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian sustained minor leg injuries during an Israeli strike that targeted a meeting of Iran's Supreme National Security Council during the war between both countries last month, the Fars News Agency reported.

According to the report on Saturday, the missile attack occurred on June 17 as top Iranian leaders, including the heads of the three branches of government, were meeting in a secure lower level of a building in western Tehran.

The strike involved six projectiles that hit the entrances and exits of the building, an approach similar to an assassination operation on Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, Fars said.

Officials managed to evacuate using a pre-planned emergency hatch, the agency reported, noting that Pezeshkian was "injured during the evacuation but was able to exit safely".

The report also said Iranian authorities suspect a possible internal leak, citing the accuracy of the strike.

Fars criticised Western and Israeli-affiliated media outlets for ignoring a "blatant act of state terrorism" while condemning Iranian leaders' religious rulings against figures like US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

A 12-day armed conflict between Israel and Iran erupted on June 13 after Tel Aviv launched airstrikes on Iranian military, nuclear and civilian sites, killing at least 606 people and injuring 5,332, according to Iran's Health Ministry.



Polls possible in this state of law and order

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no difficulty. If the public stands with you, then no mob or law and order disruption will be able to harm you."

When asked whether the current law and order situation would be an obstacle, he replied, "The kind of election we're preparing for – a free, fair, and credible election – I believe the law and order situation will not be a problem."

Regarding the election date, he said, "It's very difficult for me to respond, because I myself don't know the exact date. It's being discussed for the first half of April. That kind of thing will be communicated to us with some idea like, 'please go ahead, this is the range.'"

He clarified, "According to our RPO (Representation of the People Order), we must announce the schedule at least two months before polling day."

Because the activities required between announcement and voting day take, on average, not

less than two months, he added.

About his meeting with the chief adviser, Nasir Uddin said, "The election obviously came up in conversation. The chief adviser asked about the state of our preparation."

"Informed him in detail about what I've already done, what I'm currently doing, what's pending, what our timeline is, and when we expect to complete preparations," he added.

Asked whether such a meeting was unusual in Bangladesh, the CEC said, "... The chief adviser doesn't have a party of his own. He is not aligned with any political group. He is neutral... I did not see any problem in meeting him."

Asked if the EC is ready for a February election, he said, "We are fully ready."

On EC's neutrality, Nasir Uddin said, "Absolutely neutral. It is a commitment given to the nation."

"Some may raise questions about the Election Commission – again, that's political rhetoric. As our work

grows and they observe us functioning impartially, they will eventually realise this commission is impartial."

Responding to allegations about possible ties to BNP, he said, "I'm not a BNP member, nor a leader. Anyone may say we have some bias – that's a political statement. You hear such things. Some even call me Jamaat. Everyone has their own interpretation. These are political statements."

He stressed his commitment to equal opportunity and a level playing field for everyone.

On Awami League's position and participation, Nasir Uddin said, "All their activities have been banned until the legal proceedings conclude. They cannot carry out political activities. That's why we've suspended their registration."

Asked whether their exclusion could raise questions about election inclusiveness, he said, "Such questions may very well arise; that's natural. Our concern is the voters."

We want the election to be participatory. A participatory election is to include the voters as much as possible."

On proposals to hold local elections before the national vote, he said, "From our experience, those elections tend to be violent. Sometimes candidates from the same household contest against each other – it leads to conflict, even killings. That's why these are done in phases. It helps mobilise law enforcement and other resources. We usually conduct them in five to seven phases."

"If done in phases, the process takes 10 months to a year. We don't have that kind of time before the national elections."

On the controversy over NCP's request to use "Shapla" (water lily) as their election symbol, he said, "We've considered the matter very seriously."

Two parties asked for it. "... We've decided not to include Shapla as a symbol. No one is getting it."

US sends list of items, seeking zero duty

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"Both the countries have agreed on almost all the issues, except a few things during the negotiations with the USTR in Washington, DC," he said.

Speaking about the products for which the US demanded the zero duty facility, Mahbubur said, "We've already been providing zero duty benefit to many American goods over many years. For instance, the import of cotton, wheat, soybean seeds and oil and other agricultural products from the US is free of duty."

But adding more products to the list does not solely depend on the commerce

ministry, so a meeting will be held next Saturday to take the opinions of the other ministries, Mahbubur said.

Later, Bangladesh will hold another important meeting with the US to finalise the tariff rate before the 35 percent announced by Trump takes effect on August 1.

During the talks in the US, Bangladesh requested tariff rates between 10 percent and 20 percent. The next meeting is also scheduled to take place in Washington, DC.

After Trump announced reciprocal tariffs on April 2, Bangladesh offered zero duty facility for many American goods and also promised to increase import volume of products such as aircraft, LNG, cotton, wheat, soybean and other agricultural products.

The US is the single largest export destination for Bangladesh, which shipped goods worth more than \$8 billion to the US and imported \$2 billion American products last year.

FRAMEWORK DEAL

Power and Energy Adviser Fouzul Kabir Khan yesterday said that before engaging in further talks on tariff and non-tariff issues, the US is first looking to sign a framework agreement with Bangladesh, which would include a range of matters, including its security concerns.

The adviser said the tariff talks with the US extended beyond the scope of trade negotiations.

"Not just tariffs, there have

been discussions on non-tariff barriers as well. They [the US] are prioritising their national security," Fouzul told reporters at a press conference on NBR reforms at the energy ministry.

According to him, the US was assessing how Bangladesh interacts bilaterally with other countries. "A framework is being worked out in this regard, and the matter is under discussion."

The US wants to sign the framework agreement before signing the deal on tariff and non-tariff issues, Fouzul said.

Talks between Washington and Dhaka have made notable headway, the adviser said, with an expected wrap-up by August 1, ahead of Trump's reciprocal tariff rollout.

Police identify 3 suspects from CCTV footage

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Meanwhile, a writ petition was filed with the High Court yesterday, seeking its directive on the government to form a judicial commission to probe the killing of Sohag.

Supreme Court lawyer Eunus Ali Akond submitted the petition as a public interest litigation, praying to the High Court to order

the authorities concerned to arrest those responsible for the killing and to provide adequate compensation to the victim's family.

In another development, Ansar Director General Major General Abdul Motalab Sazzad Mahmud yesterday said that no members of his force were responsible for the murder.

Speaking to reporters at the Ansar headquarters, he said that no Ansar personnel were on duty at the scene during the time of the incident. He clarified that Ansar members work in shifts, and no one was assigned at the gate after 2:00pm when the murder took place.

Students of Sir Salimullah Medical College Hospital (Mitford Hospital) declared

a "shutdown" yesterday, protesting lax campus security following Sohag's murder narrowly.

At a rally on the campus, they demanded immediate action, warning of continued class boycotts unless steps are taken.

Intern doctors also observed a one-day work stoppage in protest of the prevailing security concerns.