

Determined to reach Gaza despite 'drone attack'

Say aid flotilla activists

AFP, Tunis

Activists on a Gaza aid flotilla that alleged it was targeted by a "drone attack" off Tunisia overnight said yesterday they remained "determined" to reach the war-ravaged Palestinian territory.

The flotilla organisers had said late Monday that one of their boats was hit by a suspected UAV off the coast of Tunisia, but authorities there said "no drones" had been detected.

"Our will is stronger and we are more determined (than ever) to break the blockade against Gaza," Tunisian organiser Ghassen Henchiri told a crowd in Tunis.



Rescue workers evacuate residents from flooded areas in Jalalpur Pirwala, Punjab province, Pakistan, following monsoon rains and rising water levels of the Chenab River yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Gen Z-led protests topple Nepal govt

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"In view of the adverse situation in the country, I have resigned effective today to facilitate the solution to the problem and to help resolve it politically in accordance with the constitution," Oli said in his resignation letter to President Ramchandra Paudel.

An aide to Paudel told Reuters the president had begun the process of finding a new premier, but also summoned protest leaders for talks.

Jubilant youths entered the parliament complex on hearing the PM's resignation news, waving their hands in the air and shouting slogans as smoke rose from sections of the building.

"We won," one protester wrote in huge orange letters on the wall of the parliament building.

Although the protesters were still on the streets of the city, there was no more violence as security forces kept their distance.

The Nepali Army has issued a public appeal to citizens protesting to remain calm and exercise restraint, The Himalayan Times reported.

"Considering the current situation, it is our shared responsibility to prevent further escalation, preserve social harmony, and maintain national unity. The Nepali Army calls upon all youth and citizens to act with restraint," the appeal stated.

Oli, 73, was sworn in for his fourth term in July last year as Nepal's 14th prime minister since 2008. Two of his cabinet colleagues had resigned on "moral grounds" late on Monday.

Early in the day, Oli had called a meeting of all parties, saying violence was not in the interest of the nation and "we have to resort to peaceful dialogue to find solutions to any problem". However, protesters continued

gathering in front of parliament and elsewhere in Kathmandu, defying an indefinite curfew.

They set fire to tyres on some roads, threw stones at police in riot gear and chased them through narrow streets.

Witnesses also said protesters were setting fire to the homes of some politicians in Kathmandu, and local media reported that some ministers had been plucked to safety by military helicopters.

The Singha Durbar area, which houses the Prime Minister's Office and other ministries as well as Parliament House, and Oli's private residence were also set on fire, they said.

Footage circulating on social media showed former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and his wife Arzu Rana, foreign minister under Oli, and Finance Minister Bishnu Paudel being attacked by protesters.

The demonstrators broke into the residence of Deuba in Budanilkantha, Kathmandu. Footage shows the ex-PM bleeding from his face in the aftermath of the attack. Before the authorities arrived at the scene to rescue Deuba and Arzu, their residence was desecrated.

Bishnu Paudel was chased through Kathmandu streets with people running behind him. A young protester, from the opposite direction, jumps and kicks the minister down, who is thrown off balance and crashes into a red wall.

Reuters could not immediately verify the information.

President Paudel, whose offices were also set on fire by mobs, pleaded for "all parties to exercise restraint, to not allow further damage".

The call was echoed by neighbouring India, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying that the "stability, peace and prosperity of Nepal are of utmost importance to us".

The United Nations rights chief, Volker Turk, said he was "appalled" by the violence and called for talks.

Kathmandu airport, Nepal's main international gateway, was closed because of smoke from fires set by protesters, the Civil Aviation Authority said.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh embassy in Nepal yesterday strongly advised Bangladeshi nationals currently living or visiting Nepal to stay at their respective places.

"All Bangladeshi nationals seeking to travel to Nepal are also advised not to fly to Nepal owing to prevailing security situations," said the Bangladesh embassy in Nepal in a statement yesterday.

There are nearly 300 Bangladeshis, mostly tourists, currently in Nepal. Some of them are businessmen or employees of international aid agencies.

The embassy in a statement said, a 51-member delegation from the Defence Services Command and Staff College (DSCSC), Mirpur, who went to Nepal as part of their overseas study tour, is staying in Kathmandu. They are scheduled to fly to Dhaka on September 12.

India said it has strengthened security along the border with Nepal in light of the mass anticorruption protests.

Organisers of the protests, which spread to other cities, have called them "demonstrations by Gen Z", driven by young people's widespread frustration with a perceived lack of action to tackle corruption and boost economic opportunities.

"The protest was intended, first and foremost, against the rampant corruption in government," a protester said in an email to Reuters, signing off as 'A concerned Nepali citizen'.

Young Nepalis had been posting on social media about the "luxurious lives of the families and children of corrupt politicians and civil servants" until the government clamped down on the platforms, the email said.

People aged 15-40 make up nearly 43 percent of the population, according to government statistics -- while unemployment hovers around 10 percent and GDP per capita is just \$1,447, according to the World Bank.

What happens next is unclear. "In the context of a revolution, constitutional or legal provisions do not apply right now," constitutional lawyer Dipendra Jha told AFP, saying that the "normal" process would have been for the president to call on the next leader in parliament to gather a majority.

"The protesters, leaders who are trusted by them and the army should come together to pave the way for a caretaker government," Jha added.

Crisis Group analyst Ashish Pradhan echoed that, saying a "transitional arrangement will now need to be charted out swiftly and include figures who still retain credibility with Nepalis, especially the country's youth".

Balendra Shah, the 35-year-old engineer-turned-rapper who was elected as Kathmandu's mayor in 2022, and who is seen as a popular figure in the transition ahead, used Facebook to call on people to "be restrained".

"We had made it clear: this is purely a Gen Z movement," Shah wrote after Oli's resignation, referring to young people aged largely in their 20s.

"Your generation must take the lead in running the country. Be ready!"

Another 26-year-old protester said, "This frustration has been building for over two decades, fuelled by corruption. What you see now is just a spark ignited by social media."

'Forced to conceal pellet wounds in inquest report'

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zone) Arifuzzaman Arif arrived and asked him to examine the body. "I found multiple pellet injuries all over the body and a wound on the back of the head, bleeding onto the stretcher."

But Arif ordered him not to mention the pellet injuries. When the SI declined, the officer hurled abuse and threatened, "If you don't obey, I'll frame you as a Jamaat Shibir man."

As the situation worsened, Arif pressed him further, saying that he was under pressure, then verbally abused his deceased parents and threatened to have him killed by Awami League men.

Around 10:30pm, Arif returned with Executive Magistrate Ahmed Sadat and again forced him to prepare the report. "With no option left, in the presence of the magistrate, I was compelled not to mention the pellet injuries and instead wrote that there were multiple small wounds and a head injury," he told the tribunal.

Meanwhile, six prosecution witnesses testified before the ICT-1 yesterday in a case against deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, and ex-inspector general of police Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun.

With this, ICT-1 has so far recorded testimonies of 45 prosecution witnesses.

The witnesses are Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate of Dhaka Md Zakir Hossain, who recorded the statement of former IGP Mamun; Associate Professor at the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (Nitor) Mohammad Serajus Saleheen, who treated July victims; CID Dhaka's Digital Forensic Lab experts Inspector Rokonujaman and SI Md Shahed Jobayer Lorence; CID's forensic expert SI Golam Eftakhar Alam; and CID ballistic expert SI Sheikh Nazrul Islam, who examined two bullets and three metal pellets.

Inspector Rokonujaman and SI Lorence told the tribunal that they had conducted forensic analysis of two audio conversations -- one between Hasina and former Dhaka South City Corporation mayor Fazle Noor Taposh, and the other between Hasina and former Dhaka University vice-

chancellor ASM Maksud Kamal.

They said that upon examinations, the female voice matched the specimen voice of Hasina, while the male voices matched Taposh and Maksud Kamal's specimen.

Inspector Rokonujaman also testified that he examined the voice of former Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner Habibur Rahman, an accused in an ICT case, and found it matched his specimen.

At one point, prosecutor Mizanul Islam rebuked Rokonujaman and sought to recall parts of his testimony, saying he had made mistakes. Presiding Judge Md Mohitul Hoque Anam Chowdhury cautioned him. "Please do not scold a witness in front of the tribunal. If the witness is not prepared, withdraw him and produce again after preparing the witness," said Mohitul. Mizanul later apologised.

Magistrate Zakir Hossain told the tribunal that he recorded ex-IGP Mamun's statement on March 24 in the presence of the investigation officer and Mamun's lawyer, after giving the accused time in his chamber from 12:15pm to 2:45pm. He said Mamun had confessed voluntarily.

During the cross-examination, state-appointed defence counsel Md Amir Hossain, representing accused Hasina and Kamal, asked whether he had informed Mamun of the consequences of such a confessional statement.

Zakir said he did not, adding that all necessary details were included in the certification (form of record of confession) and that as a former IGP, Mamun was fully aware of the implications of a confessional statement.

Speaking to journalists during a break, Amir claimed the recording of the statements was somewhat illegal and perhaps not in line with regulations.

In his testimony, doctor Saleheen said that between July 19 and August 4 last year, 17 patients admitted to Nitor, also known as Pangu Hospital, had one of their legs amputated, while three others had one of their arms amputated. He added that two patients were declared dead upon arrival during that period, while six more died after undergoing operations.

Govt to buy 300 vehicles

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Mitsubishi Pajero SUVs, each worth Tk 1.69 crore, for advisers, ministers and officials of equivalent rank; 195 Pajero Jeeps for UNOs at the same price; and 25 microbuses for DC offices at Tk 52 lakh each.

The proposal argued the current fleet has exceeded its nine-year lifespan, causing frequent breakdowns and high maintenance costs.

The adviser further said that 30 to 40 vehicles, including BMWs imported during the previous government for MPs, remain stuck at Chattogram Customs.

Their assessed value is around Tk 6 crore, but bids in auction have reached only Tk 10 lakh.

"These vehicles have therefore been recommended for inclusion in the government transport pool," Salehuddin said.

Committees to identify those

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provisions under Section 173A are being followed properly, with a focus on ensuring that investigation officers submit accurate interim investigation reports when required.

The home ministry disclosed the updates in a circular, signed by Shafiul Alam, assistant secretary of the ministry.

A senior official at the home ministry clarified to The Daily Star last night that although Section 173A mandates the submission of interim investigation reports in all criminal cases, the newly formed committees -- effective immediately -- will specifically focus on uprising related cases.

According to Section 173A, before completion of an investigation of any case, the police commissioner or the district superintendent of police or any other officer of equivalent rank supervising the investigation may require the investigating officer to

submit an interim investigation report.

And, if the interim investigation report finds insufficient evidence against any accused, the police commissioner, district superintendent of police, or equivalent officer may direct the investigating officer to submit the report to the magistrate concerned, who may, if satisfied, order the discharge of the accused.

At the district level, a four-member committee will be headed by the district magistrate, with the superintendent of police and public prosecutor as members, while the additional superintendent of police (crime and ops) will be the member secretary.

For metropolitan areas, a similar committee will be set up under the leadership of the metropolitan police commissioner. This committee will also include a representative of the divisional commissioner and a metropolitan public prosecutor as

members, and an officer of the rank of superintendent of police, will be the member secretary.

The ministry-level committee will be chaired by the adviser to the law ministry, with the senior secretary, additional secretary (law and order), joint secretary of the home ministry as the members, and the deputy secretary/senior assistant secretary from the home ministry will be the member secretary.

The district and metropolitan committees will monitor the submission of interim investigation reports and document how many individuals are being discharged based on the reports.

The committees will submit reports twice a month to the ministry-level committee, detailing their findings and recommendations.

The ministry-level committee will oversee the work of the district and metropolitan committees.

PSC working

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development initiatives, and increased stakeholder engagement.

Prof Saima made the comments at an event titled, "Transformation of Bangladesh Public Service Commission: Achievements, Challenges, and Way Forward" held at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka, yesterday evening.

During her presentation, she said the PSC currently enjoys only 10 percent autonomy. The commission has already submitted a draft amendment to the relevant law to increase its autonomy, but it is still awaiting approval, even after four months.

On the circular system, she said 55 percent of the work has already been completed. The commission has developed protocols and rubrics and has sought financial approval from the finance ministry. Once introduced, the circular system is expected to reduce the cost of each BCS exam by 51 percent.

Regarding the in-house digital printing press, Prof Saima said 95 percent of the tasks have been done. The project preparation and approval are finished, and installation is underway.

The commission has completed 20 percent of the work on setting up the assessment centre. Research on core competencies and Competency-Based Interview (CBI) training has already been conducted, with UNDP monitoring the overall installation and management process.

The PSC has also identified several issues in four previous BCS exams, which include process inefficiency, lack of infrastructure, and the risk of question leakage affecting both written and viva exams.

Additionally, the commission identified five underlying causes for the delay in completing the BCS process: question setting, printing dependency, lengthy script evaluation (taking eight to twelve months), viva procedures, and result processing and recommendation. These issues currently stretch the timeline to three and a half years.

Speaking as the chief guest at the event, Finance Adviser Salehuddin

Ahmed acknowledged that the PSC must have both operational and financial autonomy to function effectively.

"We will try to ensure this ... but we cannot provide full autonomy. Therefore, we will try to provide as much autonomy as possible to the PSC."

Salehuddin assured that efforts would be made to strengthen the PSC and make it more transparent and meaningful for the country.

Law Adviser Asif Nazrul said, "During the previous regime, it was as if the PSC exams had been turned into private property."

He also supported the proposal to hold a BCS exam every year. He added that the overwhelming rush for government jobs reflects a lack of opportunities elsewhere and a sharp disparity between public and private sector employment benefits.

He said the government is aware of the reform proposals and is committed to implementing them.

Power, Energy, and Mineral Resources Adviser Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan said the interim government has brought some fundamental changes, even if many people fail to notice them.

He stressed that 10 to 18 months is not enough to bring major economic or organisational change, but the interim government has still tried to move the country forward.

Delivering the welcome speech, Prof Mobasser Monem, chairman of PSC, said that since 2011, PSC has been made dependent on ministries, which has slowed down its work.

Monem urged the interim government to quickly grant PSC the authority to make its own rules and spend its budget directly, similar to the Election Commission.

Diepakh Elmer, deputy head of mission at the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh, Stefan Liller, resident representative of UNDP Bangladesh, Md Mokhlesur Rahman, senior secretary to the Ministry of Public Administration, PSC member Prof M Sohel Rahman, and its secretary Sanwar Jahan Bhuiyan also spoke at the event, among others.

A glimmer of hope

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and become a lawyer."

The family includes Joy's mother, Maloti Rani Robidas, grandmother Lachia Robidas, elder sister Nupur Robidas, who is a first-year degree student, and younger sister Rupa Robidas, who is in class six.

Nupur told this correspondent, "When Joy had to take up our father's work, I cried. There was nothing I could do. Later, when many helped us, we found hope again. Our father was our pillar, our strength. He is no longer with us, but his dreams live on."

Joy's mother, Maloti Rani, said, "My husband was the only earner in our household. He used to mend shoes on the street but had dreams for his children's education. He is no longer with us, but that dream has kept us going. I feel relieved to see my son back in school, but I am still worried about our future."

Abu Musa, head teacher of Taraganj Government Model High School, where Joy studies in class nine, said, "Joy is a bright student. We are providing him with mental support. We want him to complete his education and grow up to be a decent person. Joy's story teaches society about the dangers of rumours and mob violence, and how empathy can bring new light."

Joy's classmate Abir Hossain said, "Joy has not yet fully overcome the void left by his father's death, but he continues to fight. We are always with him, supporting him."

Retired school teacher Moktar Hossain from the Burirhat area said, "This incident has shaken not only a family but the whole society. We are all ashamed. It is now our responsibility to protect this family."

Rubel Rana, upazila nirbahi officer of Taraganj, said, "The family has received government and private support. Employment for the elder daughter Nupur and a shop in the market for the family are in progress. The children's education is ensured. Joy and his younger sister Rupa now regularly attend school, and I am keeping track."

On August 9, Ruplal, 48, and his nephew-in-law Pradip Lal Robidas, 47, were beaten to death by a mob on suspicion of theft. Police have so far arrested six suspects based on video footage, while others remain at large.

Officer-in-Charge of Taraganj Police Station MA Faruk, said that suspects have been identified through video footage. The remaining accused are hiding, and police are conducting operations to arrest them.

5 killed as Israel attacks Hamas leaders

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Israeli government devised a plan to deal Hamas a fatal blow in what it says are the group's last strongholds.

Anxiety was spreading through a tent area in Gaza City housing displaced cancer patients.

"There's no place left, not in the south, nor the north, nothing. We've become completely trapped," said Bajess al-Khaldi, a displaced cancer patient, as people looked on at the rubble of several buildings destroyed in an Israeli attack.

Meanwhile, at least 21 people have been killed by Israeli attacks across Gaza since dawn. Among those killed are more aid seekers. Gaza's health ministry reported that six more Palestinians died of Israeli induced starvation, reports Al Jazeera online.

International critics say Israel's Gaza plan, which includes demilitarising the whole Strip as Israel takes security control, could worsen the humanitarian plight of the 2.3 million Palestinians who live there.

The Gaza City assault plan has provoked concern inside Israel, where public support for the war has wavered. Israel's military leadership

has warned Netanyahu against expanding the war, according to Israeli officials.

Israel has also launched airstrikes and other military action in Lebanon, Syria, Iran and Yemen in the course of the Gaza conflict.

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Ex-secretary

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Shafiqul and Abu Alam were arrested as suspects, even though their names were not included in the FIR, according to court records.

Along with Shafiqul, 18 others -- including former minister and expelled Awami League leader Abdul Latif Siddique, Dhaka University law professor Sheikh Hafizur Rahman, journalist Monjurul Alam Panna, and freedom fighter Golam Mostafa -- were arrested in a case filed under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

On August 29, police filed the case with Shahbagh Police Station against Latif Siddique, Hafizur, Panna, and 13 others, accusing them of "inciting terrorism" through a speech delivered under the banner of Mancha 71.

The 16 accused were sent to jail the same day after being produced before the court.