

YEMEN PROVINCE

Seven killed as Saudi coalition strikes UAE-backed forces

AFP, Mukalla

Airstrikes killed seven people in Yemen yesterday as a Saudi-led coalition attacked UAE-backed separatists who have seized huge swathes of territory, an official for the group.

More than 20 people were also wounded as seven airstrikes hit a camp in Al-Khasah, said Mohammed Abdulmalik, head of the separatist Southern Transitional Council in Wadi Hadramaut and Hadramaut Desert.

Saudi-backed forces in Yemen's Hadramawt province launched the operation to "peacefully" take back military sites yesterday after a sweeping advance by UAE-supported separatists raised fears of a major confrontation.

The weeks-long separatist offensive has already prompted airstrikes by the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen and escalated tensions between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, its fellow Gulf oil producer.



Hadramawt governor Salem Al-Khanbashi announced the operation shortly after he was also appointed to lead the Saudi-backed National Shield forces in the resource-rich province bordering Saudi Arabia.

"This operation is not a declaration of war, nor an attempt to escalate tensions," Khanbashi was cited as saying in a statement by the official Saba Net news agency.

"This operation does not target any political or social group, nor does it target civilians," he said, adding that it "aims to peacefully and systematically hand over military sites".

A source close to the Saudi military warned: "It will not stop until the Southern Transitional Council withdraws from the two governorates."

The STC seized much of Hadramawt, bordering Saudi, and neighbouring Mahra last month.

The wealthy Gulf powers formed the backbone of the military coalition aimed at dislodging the Iran-backed Houthis, who forced the government from the capital Sanaa in 2014 and seized Yemen's most populated areas.



US actress Angelina Jolie speaks with aid agency staff at the Egyptian Rafah border crossing during her visit to North Sinai to inspect aid entering the Gaza Strip. Israel on Thursday said 37 humanitarian agencies supplying aid in Gaza had not met a deadline to meet "security and transparency standards", and would be banned from the territory.

PHOTO: AFP

Gaza survivors face harsh weather in tents

Israeli bulldozers destroy farmland near Ramallah

AGENCIES

The Palestinian Meteorological Department yesterday warned of very cold and unsettled weather across Palestine, with a risk of flash flooding in some areas.

Hundreds of thousands across Gaza are trying to survive in makeshift tents with no electricity or heating. It came a day after another Palestinian child died in the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, due to the extremely cold weather.

Displaced from northern Gaza to the centre of the territory, Ahmad is now living in a tent with his daughter after losing their two homes. "I no longer remember how many times I have been forced to flee," he said, in a post on X by UNRWA.

As winter conditions worsen, he described a daily struggle to keep his child safe. "I am trapped between two fears: The cold that seeps into my daughter's small body at night, and the fear for my own life when the rain comes and the tent can no longer protect us."

In the occupied West Bank, Israeli forces bulldozed agricultural land and uprooted olive trees in the town of Turmus Aya, north of



Ramallah, according to the Wafa news agency.

Witnesses told Wafa that Israeli forces stormed the area around the home of the Abu Awwad family, destroying farmland and uprooting dozens of ancient olive trees, reports Al Jazeera online.

Israel's military yesterday issued a statement on its latest incursions across the West Bank, claiming it rounded up more than 100 "wanted" individuals over the past week.

It claimed several of those arrested were "Hamas members plotting attacks against Israeli forces". During a raid in Hebron, the military said its forces seized weapons and more than 1 million shekels (\$310,000) in what it called "terror funds".

A group of Israeli settlers yesterday surrounded Palestinian homes in the Khala'il al-Luz area, near Bethlehem in the West Bank, and hurled stones at them.

According to local sources quoted by the agency, the settlers were shielded by Israeli forces who fired sound bombs and tear gas in the area.

Meanwhile, the Israeli military said yesterday it intercepted what it described as a "false target" in the northern town of Bar'am after sirens were triggered by a suspected drone.

7 dead as migrant boat sinks off Gambia

96 rescued

REUTERS, Banjul

Seven bodies were recovered and 96 people rescued after a boat potentially carrying more than 200 migrants capsized overnight in northwest Gambia, the country's defence ministry said on Thursday, adding search and recovery operations were continuing.

It was the latest deadly incident along one of the world's most dangerous migrant routes frequented mostly by West Africans trying to reach Spain via the Canary Islands.

The boat was reported to have capsized around midnight in the vicinity of a village in North Bank region, and it was later found "grounded on a sandbank," the defence ministry said.

Russia accuses Ukraine of firing drones at hotel

Kyiv denies targeting civilians

AFP, Kyiv

The Ukrainian army said yesterday it only hit "military targets", a day after Russia accused Kyiv of firing drones at a hotel and cafe in Ukraine's occupied south, killing 27 people.

Russian-installed authorities in Ukraine's southern Kherson region said those killed were revellers celebrating the New Year and that two of the dead were children, describing the incident as a "terrorist act".

A source in Ukraine's defence forces confirmed a strike took place, but said the attack targeted a military gathering that was closed to civilians.

The hotel where Moscow says the strike took place lies in Khorly, a Black Sea resort town the Russian army has occupied since early 2022.

The region's Russian-installed governor, Vladimir Saldo, published images on Thursday that appeared to show the burned-out interior of a building as well as fragments of charred bodies.

In comments to AFP, Ukrainian army spokesman Dmytro Lykhoviy accused Russia of repeatedly resorting to "disinformation and false statements".

"Ukraine's Defence Forces adhere to the norms of international humanitarian law and strike exclusively at enemy military targets," he said.

Trump blames bruised hand on aspirin

Denies falling asleep

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump blamed aspirin for large bruises on his hand and denied falling asleep while attending public meetings in an interview with The Wall Street Journal published Thursday.

In the interview defending his health, Trump also changed his previous statement about receiving an MRI scan in October, saying it was instead a quicker CT scan.

Trump, who at 79 is the oldest person to assume the US presidency, told the Journal "my health is perfect" and expressed frustration with scrutiny of his well-being. Trump has based much of his political image on projecting vigor -- whether through his frequent interactions with journalists, constant social media posting, or AI memes depicting him as a superhero.

However, the first year of his second term in office has raised growing questions.

His right hand shows persistent bruising, often covered with thick makeup and at times a bandage, and his ankles have appeared swollen.

On occasion, Trump has clearly struggled to keep his eyes open, including during a televised Oval Office meeting with health representatives in November -- a politically sensitive issue for someone who constantly frames his Democratic predecessor Joe Biden as "sleepy."

Labour shortages

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Ruhul Amin, who shops for around 100 people living in a mess in Shahinbagh, said prices of fish, vegetables and other essentials are comparatively lower, though prices of some vegetables have gone up.

He noted that ginger, garlic and onions have declined over the past month.

Yesterday, he bought new onions at Tk 50 per kg, down from Tk

Dense fog disrupts flights

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country, people will not feel much difference from the temperature rise due to the lack of sunlight," he said.

"January is the coldest month in the country, so people will feel cold throughout this month," he added.

Meteorologist Bazlur Rashid said heavy fog during winter may be linked to the absence of western low-pressure systems, which usually bring rain and stronger winds and help reduce fog.

He also said air pollution is a major factor, as tiny dust particles in the air keep fog dense.

Dhaka's air quality remained unhealthy yesterday morning, with the Air Quality Index standing at 155. Earlier on Thursday night, it rose sharply to 277. The main pollutant was fine particulate matter known as PM2.5.

Dense fog caused severe disruption to flight schedules at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, with nine flights diverted yesterday due to low visibility -- four to Chattogram, four to Kolkata in India and one to Bangkok in Thailand.

Airport authorities said normal flight operations resumed once weather conditions improved later in the day.

Aviation experts said frequent flight diversions during winter are caused by low visibility and the lack of a Category 2 Instrument Landing System (ILS) at the Dhaka airport.

Currently, the airport operates with a Category 1 ILS, which requires at least 800 metres of visibility for landing.

Experts said upgrading to Category

2 or ideally to Category 3 ILS would allow aircraft to land in dense fog or near-zero visibility.

Pilots said diversions lead to flight delays, passenger suffering and financial losses for airlines due to additional fuel consumption and airport charges.

Meanwhile, several road accidents occurred due to dense fog on the Dhaka-Bhanga Expressway, leaving one person dead and at least 30 others injured.

The accidents occurred in Feni's Sonagazi upazila, Munshiganj's Srinagar and Louhajang upazilas, and Madaripur's Shibchar upazila between Thursday night and yesterday morning, police and fire service officials said.

In Sonagazi, a motorcyclist named Mohammad Faisal Badsha died after losing control of his steering amid dense fog on the Feni-Sonagazi regional road yesterday morning.

He was taken to Sonagazi Upazila Health Complex, where doctors declared him dead.

Police said the motorcycle was recovered from the scene. Legal action will be taken if the victim's family files a written complaint.

In Srinagar, two buses crashed near the Beigaon bus stand around 8:45pm on Thursday, injuring at least nine passengers.

Later, around 1:15am, a collision occurred near the Chhanbari area involving two trucks and a bus, leaving at least 10 people injured.

Traffic on the expressway was temporarily halted and later restored using alternative routes.

'We will govern expansively

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Mamdani, New York's first Muslim mayor, emphasised the cost of living issues that were central to his mayoral campaign, pledging to help those "betrayed by the established order."

Left-wing allies Senator Bernie Sanders and Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez also spoke in front of some 4,000 ticketed guests.

"Thank you for giving us, from coast to coast, the hope and the vision that we can create government that works for all, not just the wealthy and the few," said Sanders, a former presidential hopeful.

At one point during his speech, the crowd broke into chants of "tax the rich." Mamdani wants to raise taxes on New York's wealthiest residents.

Thousands of people also thronged downtown Manhattan, many wearing yellow and blue beanies emblazoned with "Zohran," to watch the ceremony on large screens.

"This is the first time that either of us in our entire lives has felt some kind of political hope at all," 31-year-old Jacob Byerly, a scientist, told AFP alongside his wife Auburn.

Mamdani, a self-described democratic socialist, comes to power at a time when Trump has pushed a hard-right agenda.

But it remains to be seen if Mamdani can deliver on his ambitious program, which envisions rent freezes, universal childcare and free public buses.

Rhymester Sukumar Barua dies

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blood pressure, diabetes and other ailments.

Born on January 5, 1938, in Madhyam Binajuri village of Raozan upazila, Chattogram, Sukumar began his career in the 1960s as an employee at Dhaka University.

In 1963, he rented a small house on Tophkhana Road and started writing independently.

His rhymes were published in

Kochikachar Ashor, Khelaghar and Mukuler Mahfil.

He retired in 1999 as a storekeeper at Dhaka University.

Over nearly six decades, Sukumar earned titles such as "Chhararaj", "Chharashilpi" and "Chharasamrat".

His works blended satire, humour, moral lessons, and themes of the Liberation War and politics.

His notable rhyme collections

include "Pagla Ghora", "Bhije Beral", "Chandana Ranjanar Chhara", "Elopathari", "Nana Ronger Din", "Chiching Fak", "Kichu Na Kichu", "Priyo Chhara Shatak", "Nodir Khela", "Chhotoder Haat", "Juktoborno", "Chandanar Pathshala" and "Jiboner Bhetore Baire".

For his contribution to literature, the government of Bangladesh honoured him with the Ekushey Padak in 2017.

When the sea stands between life and death

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trained professionals willing to stay on the island.

A field study conducted by the environment ministry in September 2025 also noted that staff shortages, lack of equipment and isolation continue to weaken healthcare, often forcing patients to risk dangerous travel to the mainland for treatment.

Sadia (not her real name), a 26-year-old mother of four expecting her fifth child, said, "The hospital doesn't have proper equipment or medicines. For the past year, there wasn't even a doctor here. Only a few days ago did doctors arrive from outside."

"I can't afford to leave Saint Martin. But if any complications arise during my pregnancy, I'll have to go to Teknaf."

After a year with no officials at the hospital, a 12-member team from Chattogram Ma O Shishu Hospital, including two medical officers and one senior nurse, recently arrived under a one-year agreement with the government.

Speaking to The Daily Star, team leader Dr Md Adib Al Faisal, now in charge of the hospital, said, "We arrived and began working from December 1. I prepared a list of equipment needed for proper treatment and sent it to the Upazila

Health Complex. But it may take time for those to arrive."

He said residents are still facing a "life-threatening" gap in medical care. "If someone has a serious illness, they must leave the island for treatment. Forget drugs for critical conditions -- there isn't even basic medication here."

"We can only provide care at the earliest stage of complications, such as managing asthma attacks or reducing labour pain. If a woman needs a C-section, we have no option but to refer her outside the island."

"It takes over two hours to reach Teknaf by trawler. A speedboat can make the journey in 30 minutes, but most people cannot afford it. Many deaths occur while families are still trying to arrange transport."

He suggested deploying a naval ambulance or Navy or Coast Guard speedboats for patient transport, saying such an initiative could be lifesaving.

Medical Officer Dr Nusrat Jahan, also part of the 12-member team, is currently providing gynaecological care at the hospital. "After arriving, the most shocking thing I learned was that most deliveries were conducted at home by inexperienced people, resulting in maternal and neonatal deaths."

"Before we arrived, there was only a sub-assistant community medical officer, and people depended entirely on him. There were no proper doctors."

She said high illiteracy rates and a lack of awareness have further worsened the situation. "The education rate is far lower than expected. Most girls are married by the age of 11 or 12, and by their early 20s, many are already mothers of three or four. They conceive at short intervals due to a lack of knowledge about contraceptives, increasing maternal deaths."

Dr Nusrat emphasised the need for adequate manpower, proper equipment, at least one permanent doctor and a full-time consultant to ensure consistent medical care.

Cox's Bazar Civil Surgeon Mahmudul Islam said, "The hospital was built with a modern design, yet there is no manpower or budget to operate it properly. While we are doing our best to support Saint Martin's Island, limited funding remains a major barrier."

"We have submitted a proposal to establish a community clinic. If approved, it will help reduce the crisis. The one-year contract for the new team of doctors will also be renewed, subject to continued support and funding."