

17 killed at pro-Iran protests in Pakistan

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saw tear gas even before the planned start of a rally at 3:00 pm.

In the northern city of Skardu, protesters stormed and set fire to a United Nations office, causing black smoke to rise from the building, an AFP reporter saw.

At least three nearby vehicles were completely burned.

Thousands of people also took to the streets in the eastern city of Lahore.

Since the launch of the US-Israeli operations, Prime Minister Sharif has announced several calls with other regional leaders -- whose countries have been targeted by Iranian retaliatory attacks -- and urged restraint.

His statements have notably called the attacks on Iran an Israeli operation -- excluding mention of the major US involvement.

The killing also prompted governments across Muslim-majority South and Southeast Asia to reiterate calls for restraint as protests flared in several cities, with some religious and political movements hailing the cleric as a "martyr".

Dhaka calls

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residing in the affected countries.

The Middle East is Bangladesh's major labour market, including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and Oman.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister's Foreign Affairs Adviser Humaiun Kobir yesterday said the government's top priority is the safety of Bangladeshi expatriates living in the Middle East and assisting passengers waiting at airports.

"We are coordinating properly so that none of our citizens face distress, whether those waiting in the country or those abroad who may be worried due to the current situation in the Middle East," he told reporters after a meeting with Prime Minister Tarique Rahman at the Secretariat.

Kobir said he personally visited the airport along with the aviation minister to oversee the situation as per the directives of the prime minister.

The adviser added that the government is assisting outbound workers whose visas may expire due to travel disruptions and is in contact with the diplomatic community of destination countries to address such issues.

The Middle East is also Bangladesh's main source of petroleum, and experts say a prolonged war could affect oil supplies and push up prices.

Humaiun Kobir, however, said there was no reason for Bangladesh to be worried about fuel supplies despite growing instability in the Middle East following the attacks by the US and Israel on Iran.

"At this moment, with the stock we have, there should not be any major problem. We had faced similar crises before. There may be some fluctuation in energy-related matters, but overall, we are well prepared," Kobir said.

He added that Bangladesh wants de-escalation of the conflict through diplomacy and urged a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

Afghan, Pak forces

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Tariq Fazal has refuted social media reports that Pakistan halted its operations against Afghan Taliban, reports Dawn online.

"The reality is the opposite. In view of the current regional situation, sharing Pakistan Air Force and drone footage with the media has been temporarily stopped. The purpose of this decision is to safeguard national security and operational strategy, not to halt the operations," he wrote in a post on X.

Drones were also heard by an AFP journalist in the border province of Khost, while in Jalalabad city -- between Kabul and the border -- an AFP photographer saw a jet.

Diplomatic efforts have intensified, with Saudi Arabia, Russia, China, the European Union and United Nations urging restraint and calling for talks. The US said it supports Pakistan's right to defend itself.

The violence follows air strikes inside Afghanistan this week that Pakistan said targeted militant infrastructure. Afghanistan described the strikes as a violation of sovereignty and announced retaliatory operations along their shared border.

Iran, which shares borders with both Afghanistan and Pakistan, had offered to help facilitate dialogue before itself coming under attack on Saturday from Israel and the US bent on diminishing Iran's military capability.

Pakistan has said Afghanistan harbours Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants, which it said are waging an insurgency inside Pakistan.



Shiite Muslims gather during an anti-US and -Israel protest in Skardu in Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan region yesterday. Pro-Iranian protesters angered by the death of Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei tried to storm the US consulate in Pakistan's Karachi on the day, leaving eight dead.

PHOTO: AFP

Migrant workers in limbo as flights to ME uncertain

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welfare minister, was overseeing arrangements to ensure passengers do not suffer due to the disruptions.

The state minister further said rescheduled flights had been finalised and that arrangements were made to operate the previously suspended flights by tomorrow and transport affected passengers. "However, if the situation in the Middle East escalates or is prolonged, further steps will be taken through consultations."

He said the rescheduling was being done so that passengers, including those travelling from remote areas, would have sufficient time to reach the airport. He urged passengers to contact their travel agencies or airlines before heading to the airport.

Millat also said Prime Minister Tarique Rahman was personally monitoring the situation and issuing instructions. "Passenger care is being prioritised, including arrangements for liftar."

Meanwhile, Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Ariful Haque Choudhury yesterday said food and accommodation had been arranged for 850 passengers of cancelled flights.

Airport officials said that so far at least 40 flights departed Dhaka for various destinations, including Middle East, until 10:00pm yesterday, while 40 flights arrived from different destinations.

AIRLINES UPDATE SCHEDULES

Biman Bangladesh Airlines said that yesterday (March 1), all of its Middle East-bound flights would depart on schedule except those to Doha, Dubai, and Abu Dhabi. The airline also requested passengers to arrive at the airport at least four hours before their scheduled departure time.

Biman spokesperson and General Manager (public relations) Bosra Islam said a Saudi Arabia-bound flight (BG339), which was suspended at 1:15am on Saturday night, will leave from Dhaka for Riyadh at 1:00pm today.

At 4:35pm yesterday, Biman flight BG135 departed from Chattogram for Jeddah carrying 419 passengers.

Meanwhile, Salam Air flight OV 403 departed from Oman's Muscat for Chattogram at 5:50pm, local time (3:50pm BD time). It landed in the port city later around 10:47pm.

On Saturday, 20 international flights were cancelled from Shah Amanat International Airport, according to airport officials.

US Bangla Airlines spokesperson Kamrul Islam said the airline operated its scheduled flights to Jeddah, Riyadh, and Muscat yesterday but temporarily suspended flights to Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Sharjah in the UAE and to Qatar's Doha, considering the situation in the Middle East.

He added that US Bangla would contact passengers as soon as flights to the UAE and Qatar become

operational.

For flight-related information, he requested passengers dial 13605 or 0177777800 806.

FLIGHTS CANCELLED

HSIA authorities said that on Saturday, amid security concerns, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, and Jordan closed their airspace, triggering the cancellation of the flights from Dhaka and Chattogram.

Emirates cancelled one flight to the UAE, Gulf Air cancelled one to Bahrain, flydubai cancelled one to the UAE, Air Arabia cancelled three to the UAE, US-Bangla cancelled six, and Biman cancelled 11 flights to different destinations.

Later, 40 flights were cancelled on different Middle East routes. Jazeera Airways cancelled two flights to Kuwait, Emirates cancelled five to the UAE, Gulf Air cancelled two to Bahrain, flydubai cancelled four to the UAE, Qatar Airways cancelled two to Qatar, Salam Air cancelled two to Oman, Air Arabia cancelled eight to the UAE, Kuwait Airways cancelled two to Kuwait, US-Bangla cancelled four, and Biman cancelled nine.

With no update on the reopening of airspace, at least 11 flights were also cancelled yesterday afternoon, according to airport officials. Qatar Airways cancelled four flights, Emirates cancelled five, and Gulf Air cancelled two flights.

PASSENGERS LEFT WAITING

Md Kawsar, 26, from Feni's Parshuram, said he was travelling back to Saudi Arabia but does not know what fate is waiting for him.

He said his family was in two minds after watching reports about the situation, but he felt he had no option. He came to Bangladesh on a month-long leave and now had to return. "I asked my company what I should do. They said the situation was manageable, and that I should return if possible."

On the other hand, Mohon Bhuiya, 50, who came to the airport from Cumilla's Chouddagram with relatives, said he was travelling to Dubai, but his flight scheduled at 8:05am on Saturday was cancelled. "I came to the airport around 3:00am but was informed of the cancellation around 6:00am. I was then told to leave."

Golam Noor, a resident of Brahmanbaria's Nasirnagar, returned from Jeddah on three months' leave. He went to HSIA at 3:00pm for a flight scheduled for 8:45pm on Saturday and learned that flights were not operating and was asked to leave.

Noor said he tried again yesterday, as he must reach Jeddah since his visa will expire in two days. "I spoke to airlines authorities and my workplace, who told me to arrive within the stipulated time because they are not sure if they can extend my visa."

while ensuring the best possible service."

On the issue of weapons and ammunition, Salahuddin said the ministry decided from the first day that licensed firearms that were earlier ordered to be deposited would be reviewed for compliance.

The licensed firearms that were not surrendered as ordered have now become illegal and the licences of their owners are liable to be cancelled.

District administrations have been asked to compile lists of firearm licences issued between 2009 and August 2024, investigate cases of non-compliance and identify licences granted on political grounds or outside policy.

A district-level committee -- including senior civil, police, intelligence and legal officials -- will examine the cases and report to the ministry.

The government is assessing gaps in emergency services, he said, adding that 27 upazilas still lack fire service units and plans are being considered to expand coverage.

CIA intel guided

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for months, the Times reported, citing people familiar with the operation, and learned that a meeting of top Iranian officials was set for Saturday morning at a leadership compound in the heart of Tehran.

Washington and Tel Aviv originally planned to launch strikes on Iran at night, but officials adjusted the plan based on the CIA intelligence, according to the Times.

The US gave the information to Israel, which planned to carry out the attack on Iranian leadership, the newspaper reported.

The operation began about 6:00am in Israel (0400 GMT), and long-range missiles struck the compound about 9:40 am, the Times said.

Senior Iranian national security officials were in one building at the compound, and Khamenei was in a nearby building.

In addition to Khamenei, two top Iranian military leaders were killed in the bombing: the chief of the Revolutionary Guards, General Mohammad Pakpour, and another top security adviser, Ali Shamkhani, Iran's judiciary confirmed.

US President Donald Trump said in a post on his Truth Social platform that Iran's top leader was killed after intelligence pinpointed his movements.

"He was unable to avoid our Intelligence and Highly Sophisticated Tracking Systems and, working closely with Israel, there was not a thing he, or the other leaders that have been killed along with him, could do," Trump said.

The two US sources and the US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that confirmation of Khamenei's meeting with top advisers put the Israeli-US air and naval operation into motion.

The location of the meeting was not immediately clear. But Khamenei's high-security compound in Tehran was struck at the beginning of the operation, and satellite imagery reviewed by Reuters confirmed that it had been destroyed.

The impact of Khamenei's death remained to be seen.

But in a pre-attack assessment, the US Central Intelligence Agency concluded that he could be replaced by IRGC hardliners, according to two sources briefed on the intelligence.

ICT identifies

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verbal testimonies of three police constables -- Ajoy Gosh, Abdur Rahman, and Asif Khan -- instead of the documentary evidence on record?" the tribunal asked, citing contradictions between witness testimonies and official arms registers.

It noted that constable Ajoy, who claimed he refused to fire despite orders, returned only 18 out of 40 bullets, casting serious doubt on his assertion of non-participation. The court further questioned why he allegedly complied with the orders to surrender his weapon and ammunition if he had indeed defied instructions to shoot.

The tribunal also criticised investigators for failing to implicate or examine SI Md Ashraful Islam, who admitted before a magistrate that he had actively participated in the Chankharpul operation and provided a detailed account of events. Despite his self-incriminating statement, Ashraful was neither made an accused nor produced as a prosecution witness.

The verdict revealed that at least 25 officers were issued Chinese rifles, shotguns, and submachine guns (SMGs), along with a large supply of ammunition, yet most of these weapons were never accounted for.

The tribunal described the investigation as "seriously flawed" and questioned the absence of video evidence showing the actions of other armed personnel, beyond the three accused constables.

ICT-1 further expressed concerns over the mysterious absence of the Ramna Zone deputy commissioner from the case records, despite Chankharpul falling under his jurisdiction.

"It is not understood why all those forces deployed with lethal weapons and ammunition have not been implicated in the case. It is improper to decide without trial who used or did not use arms during the occurrence," the tribunal observed.

The court also observed that former DMP commissioner Habibur Rahman, joint commissioner Sudeep Kumar Chakrabarty, ADC Shah Alam Mohammad Akhtarul Islam, and assistant commissioner Mohammad Imrul fled the country following the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government, stating that their absconding "lends support to the presumption of their guilt".

However, it criticised law enforcement agencies for allowing ADC Akhtarul to remain at large for a considerable period after the regime change, effectively enabling his escape.

On January 26, the tribunal sentenced three former senior police officials, including Habibur, to death for killing six people in the Chankharpul area. Five other former policemen were handed various jail terms in the same case.