

France shuts down dozen Israeli stands at defence trade show

AFP, Villepinte

A dozen Israeli company stands were shut down yesterday at a major international defence and security exhibition held outside Paris, sparking outrage from authorities in Israel.

Tensions have persisted in French-Israeli relations, with France recognising Palestinian statehood last year and two far-right Israeli ministers banned from entering the country in recent weeks.

The stands at the Eurosatory arms and security trade show were “closed due to non-compliance with participation conditions set by the French authorities,” the organiser, Coges Events, said in a statement to AFP.

It said it was required to enforce decisions of the French authorities.



CHAMPIONS START THEIR JOURNEY: Four years after leading his country to a third World Cup crown in Qatar, Lionel Messi is raring to go again as Argentina start their bid for a fourth title when they take on Algeria in their opening Group J fixture at the Kansas City Stadium on Wednesday. The match will kick off at 7:00 am Bangladesh time.

PHOTO: AFP

Pentagon chief denies US facing munitions stockpile shortage

AFP, Washington

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth denied that the American military was facing a munitions stockpile shortage, saying on Sunday that it was a “manufactured story” peddled by the media.

Hegseth’s comments came hours before the United States and Iran said they reached a deal to end the Middle East war on all fronts, including Lebanon, and to reopen the vital Strait of Hormuz.

Concerns over the Middle East war straining US weapons stockpiles deepened last month after Acting US Navy Secretary Hung Cao cited the conflict as a reason for pausing arms sales to Taiwan.

Hegseth dismissed the idea when asked on CBS News’ Face the Nation if there was a crisis in munitions stockpiles.

“That is a manufactured story that the media wants to peddle, and ultimately our stockpiles are great and they’re only getting stronger,” he said.

“We’re building more than ever before. The Biden administration gave away hundreds of billions to Ukraine, and so President Trump had to refill, and he has, and we have, in real time.”

At an April congressional hearing, Hegseth testified that it could take “months and years” to replenish the stockpile, describing it as a “fast” time frame.

10 killings a day fuel concerns

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a crowded market in Chattogram’s Raozan upazila. CCTV footage showed five to seven armed men arriving in an autrickshaw, three carrying pistols and two shotguns. They opened fire at close range, then fired shots in the air before fleeing.

Residents now describe Raozan as a “terror zone”.

Law enforcement sources say at least 25 people have been killed there since August 5, 2024, with 18 deaths linked to political disputes. At the same time, more than a hundred incidents of shooting and clashes were reported, leaving over 350 people injured, including many with bullet wounds.

Local sources said most victims were BNP leaders or activists, although police have not officially confirmed all political affiliations.

In Khulna, a BNP activist was shot dead on Friday, while assailants opened fire inside a mosque during Fajr prayers on Sunday in Khulna city’s Doulatpur, injuring two worshippers.

In Dhaka, Yeasin Khan alias “Kailla Palash”, described by police as a top-listed criminal, was shot in the head and critically injured in West Rampura on Friday, barely a month after his release from prison.

These incidents continue to occur despite ongoing law enforcement operations. Since May 1, police have arrested over 18,000 people under a special nationwide drive.

However, criminologists argue these measures are falling short.

Omar Faruk, a professor at the department of criminology and police science at Mawana Bhashani Science and Technology University in Tangail, criticised the government for failing to restore order.

“The law and order situation has not yet reached the level we had expected,” Faruk said, pointing out that law enforcement agencies have not been restructured.

Faruk noted that over 1,000 weapons missing from police stations remain unrecovered, while regular arms smuggling continues. He added that many criminals released after August 5, 2024, still possess weapons and are committing crimes under political patronage.

Faruk said the criminals are taking advantage of a lenient stance by law enforcement agencies, believing they can easily get away with their actions. He also alleged high-level involvement between these criminals

and influential figures.

“In this situation, what was needed was to reorganise the police force. Efforts to form an independent police commission did not succeed due to political disagreements. As a result, police accountability and professionalism have not improved as expected.”

Due to a lack of government and political will, the policy measures that needed to be taken could not be implemented. “As a result, the law and order is steadily deteriorating, creating a safe haven for criminals,” Faruk said.

POLITICAL, UNDERWORLD RIVALRIES

Law enforcement officials said violence has escalated since the political changeover in August, 2024, as several notorious gang leaders and convicted criminals returned to the streets after being released from prison or returning from abroad.

Investigators believe these figures are trying to reclaim lost turf, rebuild networks, and settle old scores.

Among those released or returned are Abbas Ali alias “Killer Abbas”, Sweden Aslam, Imamul Hasan

Emon for dominance in the capital’s underworld.

Besides, political violence also drew attention with several killings.

Human Rights Support Society documented 64 political violence incidents in May, leaving five dead and 289 injured, including 11 shot. In April, 98 incidents left six dead and 533 injured, with 37 shot. In March, 113 incidents left at least 18 dead and 912 injured, with 15 shot.

Many of these incidents involved BNP men, according to the rights organisation.

BNP activist Nasir Uddin, 55, was shot dead in Raozan on April 26, and BNP leader Kausaruzzaman, 36, was killed there on April 24. On April 2, Chhaura Dal leader Imran Hossain, 27, was shot and hacked to death in Pabna’s Ishwardi.

Former Rupsha Sramik Dal president Masum Billah, 55, was shot dead in Khulna on March 5, while Mollahat Sramik League general secretary Sheikh Sohail, 42, was killed in Bagerhat on March 14.

Khondaker Rafiqul Islam, additional inspector general (crime and ops) at the Police Headquarters,

Doubts swirl as US, Iran ink interim deal

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as details of the terms began to emerge.

However, doubts remain over the implementation of the deal. Israel, which has described the agreement as catastrophic, said it will not withdraw its troops from Lebanon, Syria, and Gaza – a demand Iran considers integral to the framework agreement reached with the US.

The reopening of the Strait of Hormuz could be another stumbling block. US President Donald Trump said the strait would reopen “toll free”, but Iran said it would charge maritime service fees on ships transiting Hormuz, rather than impose tolls, under the framework deal with the US.

Iran’s foreign ministry yesterday said that Tehran still holds “deep mistrust” of the US despite the agreed framework.

“The United States still has a long way to go before it can earn the trust of the Iranian people,” foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said, adding that the framework was “merely a step towards reducing tensions”.

Though the text was not yet published, its apparent call for hostilities to cease more broadly could be tricky for Israel, which was not part of the negotiations and has been waging war in Lebanon against the Iran-aligned Hezbollah group.

“Lebanon is an integral part of the agreement to end the war,” Baghaei said, adding the text calls for an end to war on all fronts.

Leaders of the Group of Seven wealthy nations, including Trump, arrived at a French lakeside resort yesterday.

While the US and Iran had largely ceased hostilities in early April to engage in negotiations, fighting has not ceased in Lebanon.

Iran’s Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said there must be a complete halt to Israeli attacks against Lebanon and wrote on Telegram that the US bears responsibility for implementing the framework deal.

Trump said before the memorandum was announced that there should be no more Israeli attacks on Lebanon or Hezbollah attacks on Israel.

Later, Israeli Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu said that the country’s forces would remain in Gaza, Lebanon and Syria “for as long as necessary”. He also vowed to do everything necessary to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

Israeli figures across the political spectrum yesterday slammed the deal, saying it would not protect their country’s security.

“Trump’s agreement does not bind us... we are not party to this agreement. It does not safeguard our security,” said National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir.

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich also echoed the sentiment, calling the deal “bad for Israel”.

“The joint (US-Israeli) campaign achieved many successes in weakening Iran, and those achievements have not been in vain,” Smotrich said.

“We will have to continue the campaign to bring down the regime ourselves, using creative means, and ensure that Iran never acquires nuclear weapons.”

Trump said the Strait of Hormuz, a major shipping route for global oil and gas supplies that Iran has effectively shut for months, would open on Friday, and that he had ordered the end of a US blockade of Iranian ports.

“Ships of the World, start your engines. Let the oil flow!” he wrote on Sunday. Yesterday, he said traffic was already resuming; “Ships are starting to move, many loaded up with Oil, out of the Strait of Hormuz.”

Later in the day, he, alongside President Emmanuel Macron in France, said the deal with Tehran was “all signed”, without elaborating on whether Iran also signed the document.

The US president said that Iran will receive sanctions relief only if it “does what they’re supposed to do”.

The US president reiterated that Iran will not be allowed to have nuclear weapons. “They agreed to that,” Trump said, adding that “strong policing” will enforce the agreement.

“Hopefully it’s going to be a good relationship ... and if we don’t, we go back to where we started,” he said.

The announcement also brought relief at market opening yesterday. Oil

prices plunged nearly five percent, with West Texas Intermediate approaching \$80 a barrel for the first time since early March.

Iran’s military hailed the agreement as a victory, claiming that it had “humiliated” the US and Israel in the war that began on February 28 with their massive campaign of airstrikes.

Iran’s Mehr news agency reported that the US would release \$12 billion in frozen assets to Iran before the start of negotiations.

It quoted a 14 point “memorandum of understanding” between the two nations, which it said stipulated “the release of 24 billion dollars in frozen Iranian assets during the 60-day negotiation period” that begins after the MoU is signed.

The Trump administration didn’t immediately comment on the details, which may prove contentious as the US presses its effort to end Tehran’s nuclear ambitions and deal with its stockpile of highly enriched uranium – said to have been buried by US strikes last year.

In an interview with the New York Times on Sunday, Trump said the US was still negotiating whether Iran would suspend its enrichment for 20 years. He hinted that he might settle for a 15-year suspension, but said he did not want to negotiate via the press.

The announcement of the deal sparked relief in the region and beyond, with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres calling it a “critical step” toward resolving the war.

Saudi Arabia, which Iran repeatedly targeted during the war, welcomed the deal, adding that a lasting agreement would be one that “takes into consideration the security interests of regional states”.

Egypt said the deal could be a “turning point” while Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called it a “historic step towards peace”.

The United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy said they were prepared to lift sanctions imposed on Iran and will work “with the US, Iran and regional partners to seize this moment, maintain momentum and achieve a long-term diplomatic settlement.”

“We don’t feel safe. Killings, shootings, and muggings have become alarmingly frequent. People expect safety and security, but it appears the law-and-order situation has not improved despite repeated assurances.”

Khairul Hasan, a local of Dhaka’s Mohammadpur

Helal alias “Pichchi Helal”, Sanjidul Islam Emon, Khondaker Nayeem alias “Titon”, Khorshed Alam alias “Freedom Rasu”, Molla Masud, and Tokai Sagor.

There has been a long-running rivalry between Emon of Hazaribagh and Pichchi Helal of Mohammadpur, both listed among 23 “top criminals” in 2001.

Titon, who was Emon’s brother-in-law, was shot dead near New Market on April 28. His family blamed Helal, while Helal pointed to Emon’s associates. No arrests have been made.

In January last year, Emon was accused of attacking Helal’s brother, Wahedul Hasan Dipu, on Elephant Road over extortion.

On November 10, another top-listed criminal, Tariq Saif Mamun, was gunned down near the court area in Dhaka. Detectives believe his killing was linked to a struggle with

said law enforcement forces are shaking off their inertia.

“We are putting a lot of effort into investigations after every incident, and success is also coming,” he said.

He said underworld criminals previously feared unconstitutional actions. Now, police are working by respecting human rights and international laws.

About political killings, Rafiqul said police alone cannot stop internal party conflicts.

“These are social crimes, and many things, including economic factors, are involved in this,” he said, adding that the government has issued clear instructions to show no leniency to criminals, regardless of their political identity.

“We are telling our members not to act based on any political identity. Those against whom indications of such crimes are found must be brought under the law.”

Govt moves to extradite Benazir

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sought documents, which the government has started compiling, Khandoker Rafiqul Islam, additional inspector general (crime and operations), told The Daily Star.

The police headquarters will forward the information obtained from the Anti-Corruption Commission to the home ministry, which will then send it to the foreign ministry for the subsequent procedures, he said.

Benazir’s arrest through Interpol is being viewed as one of the major achievements of the ACC and the matter has been given the highest priority, The Daily Star has learnt from multiple ACC directorates.

Six corruption cases have been filed against Benazir. He is the main accused in three of the cases, while his wife, Jesmin Mirza, and daughters, Farhin Rishta binte Benazir and Tahsin Raisa binte Benazir, are the primary accused in the other three.

One of the cases is currently under trial at the Dhaka Special Judge Court-5, whose charge sheet was filed on November 30 last year. The case alleges that Benazir acquired assets worth Tk 110.4 crore beyond his known sources of income.

As he failed to appear, the trial is proceeding in his absence.

A Red Notice had been issued in the case and Benazir was arrested following two Interpol applications, said Akhtarul Islam, ACC deputy director (public relations), at a press briefing yesterday.

The ongoing trial is at the witness testimony stage, with statements of five

witnesses, including the complainant, already recorded, Mir Ahmed Ali Salam, a prosecutor of the Anti-Corruption Commission, told The Daily Star.

The next hearing is scheduled for June 23. A total of 38 witnesses are expected to testify.

The trial is expected to conclude quickly, Salam said.

If Benazir is brought back and appears in court to defend himself, witnesses will need to be re-examined, after which the trial will proceed, he added.

The other five cases are at the investigation stage.

In a case filed on October 14, 2024, the ACC accused Benazir and five others of obtaining a passport by falsely identifying himself as a private employee while in government service.

While serving as RAB chief and commissioner of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, he applied for multiple machine-readable passports and e-passports without departmental clearance. The applications were approved despite officials being unaware of the matter.

The ACC filed a money laundering case against Benazir, his wife, and two daughters on February 20 last year. The complaint said that Benazir withdrew Tk 11.35 crore in cash, but there is no information on where that money was invested.

ACC investigations further revealed that Benazir and his family members, at various times in 2024, encashed several fixed deposits (FDRs) held in their names before maturity, with no evidence of the lawful source of those funds.

In separate cases filed by the ACC, Benazir’s wife has been accused of acquiring Tk 31.69 crore in assets beyond known sources of income and concealing Tk 16.01 crore in information.

Their elder daughter, Farhin Rishta binte Benazir, has been accused of acquiring illegal assets worth Tk 8.75 crore, while their younger daughter, Tahsin Raisa binte Benazir, has been accused of acquiring Tk 5.59 crore in illegal assets.

Meanwhile, Benazir is facing around 10 cases at the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT), with warrants issued against him in three of them.

At a press briefing yesterday, Chief Prosecutor Aminul Islam said warrants have been sent to the government to forward to Interpol through the National Central Bureau (NCB) in Dhaka.

Proceedings in one case against him are already underway, while the investigation into a case over the 2013 Shapla Chattar crackdown is nearing completion, he said.

Formal charges have been prepared against Benazir in connection with the killing of Akramul Haque, a former councillor of Teknaf. The charges will be submitted very soon, he said.

According to Aminul, investigations are ongoing in six to seven other cases against him involving allegations of enforced disappearances, torture and extrajudicial killings.

“If he is returned to Bangladesh, he will be produced before the relevant courts in the ongoing cases. We will also seek remand in the cases that are under investigation,” Aminul said.

Argentina, France launch World Cup bids

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has managed since Brazil in 1962 – winning back-to-back World Cups.

Now 38, Lionel Messi is set to make history by appearing in a record sixth World Cup. The Argentine captain, who climbed football’s highest mountain in Qatar, insists his hunger remains intact.

“I’m happy, savouring every moment and excited as ever,” Messi said recently.

Scaloni has largely maintained faith in the squad that conquered the world four years ago. If left-back Nicolas Tagliafico recovers from his recent muscle injury, Argentina could field a starting eleven almost identical from the 2022 World Cup-winning side.

However, memories of their

stunning opening defeat to Saudi Arabia in Qatar remain fresh, and Algeria will hope to create a similar upset. The North Africans arrive unbeaten in four matches and boosted by the confidence of young attacking midfielder Ibrahim Maza, nicknamed “Mazadona”, who boldly declared his team can “beat Messi”.

A few hours earlier, France will begin their Group I campaign against Senegal, with Kylian Mbappe once again carrying the expectations of a nation seeking a third World Cup crown.

Despite enduring criticism after a trophyless debut season at Real Madrid, Mbappe’s record on football’s grandest stage remains extraordinary. The 27-year-old has

scored 12 goals in just 14 World Cup appearances and is only four goals away from Miroslav Klose’s all-time World Cup record of 16.

The French captain has received strong backing from within the squad, with teammate Ousmane Dembele describing the criticism aimed at him as unfair.

For France, the tournament also marks the final World Cup under Didier Deschamps, the coach who guided Les Bleus to glory in 2018 and the final in 2022.

The road to another final is long, but on the opening night for the champions of the last two editions, the world will once again watch the two modern giants of international football begin their pursuit of history.