Israeli strike kills 5 more in Gaza

AFP, *Gaza City*

Gaza's civil defence agency and a hospital yesterday said that an overnight Israeli airstrike on an apartment in Gaza City killed five Palestinians, including four women.

Gaza City's Al-Shifa hospital told AFP it had "received at dawn five martyrs and a number of injured... following the Israeli airstrike on an apartment" in the Rimal neighbourhood.

It said the dead were two women and their daughters, as well as a young man.

Mahmoud Bassal, the spokesperson for the civil defence, told AFP that his team took "five bodies and several wounded" to the hospital after the strike.

He said two missiles directly hit the apartment, causing a fire to break out and damaging the building.

The Gaza war was sparked by Hamas's unprecedented 2023 attack against Israel, which resulted in the deaths of 1,221 people, according to an AFP tally based on official Israeli figures.



PHOTO: **TARIQUE RAHMAN'S FACEBOOK PAGE**

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman and his wife Dr Zubaida Rahman pose for a photo with US President Donald Trump at the Lotte New York Palace Hotel in New York on September 22. The US president had hosted a dinner at the hotel in honour of world leaders attending the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly. The photo was released yesterday.

Throat-slit body of 3-yr-old found in sack

Police detain his neighbour's son; locals set fire to suspect's home

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Shariatpur*

The throat-slit body of a three-year-old boy, stuffed in a sack, was recovered from a ditch in Damudya upazila of Shariatpur this afternoon.

The deceased, Sowaif Hossain, son of Selim Sardar and Shimuli, went missing around 7:00am after leaving his home to play, said police.

Police detained Russel Shikdar, 45, son of neighbour Abu Alam Shikdar, for questioning after the victim's family named several neighbours as suspects, Shamsul Arefin, additional superintendent of police (Gosairhat Circle), told The Daily Star.

Following the body recovery, agitated locals set fire to Abu Alam's house.

Shamsul Arefin, additional superintendent of police (Gosairhat Circle), told The Daily Star that police recovered the body from a ditch in Paschim Adasan area of Sidhalkura union after locals spotted it around noon. The family had earlier filed a general diary (GD) after the child went missing.

Police said they are investigating others accused by the family.

According to the family, an altercation had taken place between Selim's family and Abu Alam on Friday evening over a "trivial matter".

The family alleged that the child might have been killed over the dispute. No member of the accused family could be reached for comments.

The body was sent to Shariatpur Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

India had 'hardly any choice' but to receive Hasina

Trivedi says legal process concerning her return under way

STAR REPORT



Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Dinesh Trivedi yesterday said India had "hardly any choice" but to allow the aircraft carrying Sheikh Hasina to land in the country in August 2024, while saying the legal process concerning her return to Bangladesh is underway.

"There is a process, and the process involves legality. And it is very structured. As far as that is concerned, the process is on. And the courts are involved. So nobody can give you a time frame," Trivedi said when asked about Hasina's repatriation.

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Saudi Arabia launches dozens of strikes on Yemen capital

Say Houthis; Aramco facility south of Saudi capital reportedly hit by drone

AFP, *Sanaa*

Yemen's Houthis accused Saudi Arabia of launching dozens of strikes on Sanaa yesterday, while an AFP journalist in Riyadh reported seeing flames and smoke coming from an oil facility on the outskirts of the Saudi capital.

Though Saudi officials and the Houthis have not yet commented on the refinery fire, the Iran-backed group has in recent weeks launched attacks on oil facilities in the kingdom as part of the war in Yemen, where Riyadh backs the internationally recognised government.

The foes have traded strikes since the Houthis seized all of Yemen's Red Sea coast and took control of the Bab al-Mandeb strait in a lightning offensive.

Houthi-affiliated channel Al-Masirah TV reported that "Saudi enemy aircraft" hit Sanaa with 26 strikes, after earlier reporting "Saudi aggression" against the Yemeni capital, without providing details on the targets or casualties.

Two correspondents in Sanaa reported hearing loud explosions and seeing warplanes firing missiles on the city.

Slum dwellers bleed in the clutches of utility syndicates

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(CAB), said, "Though the government has changed, the system continues to run as before. Slum dwellers use electricity, water and gas from government supply lines but have to pay these syndicates to get these services."

SYNDICATES' CONTROL ON KORAIL

According to DESCO's latest tariffs effective from June, residential electricity tariffs range from Tk 5.32 to Tk 17.35 per unit depending on consumption.

Mizanur estimated that a household using a 65-watt fan for 22 hours and a 40-watt light for eight hours a day consumes about 52.5 units of electricity per month.

Based on this calculation, Jannat's estimated monthly bill would be below Tk 450.

"My room's rent is Tk 5,000. I pay Tk 300-400 a month for water and Tk 500 for a gas connection to a single-burner stove," said Jannat, who received utility connections from a man named Md Jamal Badsha.

Several other slum residents showed this correspondent four main electricity meters and said one of those was registered in the name of Jamal who provides electricity to 179 households.

They further said that Jamal, who had close ties with local Awami League leaders in the past, continues to run his illegal utility business by making arrangements with a group of BNP loyalists.

When contacted, Jamal said 139 of his customers have sub-meters, while 40 are provided electricity through direct lines. He charges sub-meter users Tk 13 per unit and others Tk 250 per electrical device.

This correspondent obtained a copy of Jamal's electricity meter bill for June 2026, which shows he paid DESCO Tk 7.47 per unit.

According to residents, people linked to the AL controlled utility distribution in parts of Korail before the AL government's ouster on August 5, 2024. Following the political changeover, control shifted to individuals associated with the BNP.

They said Asma Begum, joint convener of BNP's Banani Thana Mahila Dal, oversees electricity distribution to around 200 families through bills issued in the name of her son, Md Qayyum Sarkar.

When contacted, Asma said DESCO had previously provided one meter for several families. Later, a main meter was obtained in her husband's name to provide sub-meters to beneficiary families.

"We cannot always get assistance from DESCO staff when needed... We have employed a few workers who fix problems and work throughout the month. There is a service charge for this. That's why customers are charged an additional amount," she said.

Residents of Kalyanpur Pora Basti said they used to get electricity supply through two main meters during the AL government's tenure. The number of meters rose to eight after the July uprising.

They said the syndicates that control the meters charge them between Tk 15 and Tk 18 per unit.

- Syndicates exploit electricity meters intended for slum residents
- Electricity in slums costs **Tk 15-18** a unit against govt tariffs of **Tk 5.32-17.35**
- Some Korail residents pay Tk 600 a month for electricity against estimated official cost of **Tk 450**
- Control of distribution networks in some slums shifted after the 2024 changeover
- Many pay **Tk 500-600** monthly for illegal single-burner gas connection
- Some families pay **Tk 300-400** a month for water supply
- Experts call for stronger regulation, formal utility access

"Following the uprising, the charge dropped to Tk 12 per unit. But it rose again," said 30-year-old Johny, who grew up in the slum.

Md Jewel Hossain Billal, who collects bills for one of the syndicates, said the increase resulted from higher government tariffs.

"We charge Tk 17 per unit. DESCO charges us Tk 9.75 excluding taxes. The rate went up after the new tariffs took effect in June," he said.

ILLEGAL GAS CONNECTIONS

Residents of Korail slum alleged that a group led by Jamal provides illegal gas connections, with the help of Md Shahabuddin, who claimed to be a BNP member from Ward 19 under Banani thana.

They pay Tk 500 to Tk 600 monthly for a single burner and Tk 1,000 to Tk 1,200 for a double burner.

When asked, Jamal said, "I give Shahabuddin all the money collected from gas bills. He controls the lines. He comes every month to collect the money."

He further said he provided gas connections to around 50 families in the slum.

Shahabuddin, however, denied controlling the gas lines.

"I'm merely a worker... I don't run this business," he said.

ILLEGAL WATER PIPELINES

According to Dhaka WASA, Korail slum has around 1,500 metered water connections set up with assistance from BRAC, Dushtha Shasthya Kendra (DSK) and other NGOs.

Residents said several local groups illegally tapped into authorised water connections, extended pipelines to households and charged them for the service.

Jamal said he supplied water to 40 families at Korail for Tk 300-400 each per month.

Kanchana Begum, a garment worker, said, "No matter how little water we use, we have to pay Tk 300 for our family of three."

WHAT OFFICIALS, EXPERTS SAY

Rashedur Rahman, managing director for operations at DESCO, said, "We are working to install meters in all households as per government instructions. The process will take time, but implementation has started."

Titas Gas Manager Shah Newaz Chowdhury said local syndicates repeatedly reconnect lines after Titas personnel remove the illegal connections.

He also acknowledged that some Titas officials may be involved in the illegal business and said the problem could not be solved by Titas alone.

Nayan Sarkar, Dhaka WASA field officer for Korail, acknowledged that some connection holders illegally distribute water in the slum, turning it into a profitable business.

"There should be no additional charges for taking water from a metered line," he said.

When contacted, Mohammad Mamun Ul Hasan, chief of Social and Slum Development at DNCC, said the city corporation currently has no plan to provide new utility connections to slum households.

He further said DNCC would follow any policy or legal framework if introduced by the government in this regard.

Experts, however, suggested bringing slums under a formal system and adopting a comprehensive policy for their management.

"Such steps will not only help increase government revenue but also ensure that slum residents receive safe and affordable services," said Salma.

This would benefit both residents and the state, she added.

Give details on errants

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them to closely monitor leaders and activists in their areas and take initial steps when problems arise.

Therefore, district leaders have been asked to stay particularly alert to allegations of misusing the party's name to influence others or for personal gain, land or institution grabbing, extortion, and taking the law into one's own hands.

They have so far received the instructions verbally.

Abdul Qayyum Chowdhury, Sylhet district unit BNP president, said, "We are more cautious than before. The reason is that the party chairman [Tarique Rahman] is giving instructions on these matters from time to time.

"Everyone is taking extra precautions. If anyone does anything improper, we are taking strict action."

District leaders themselves could face action if they knowingly hide allegations or politically protect an accused member, several central BNP leaders said.

The party could examine who provided protection, who failed to act after learning of an allegation, and who tried to keep the matter from the central leadership.

District-level leaders, who spoke to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity, said factional conflicts remain common in many areas, with one group sometimes bringing allegations against another.

They therefore believe complaints should be checked before being sent to the central leadership.

Of the 68 incidents of political violence recorded by Human Rights Support Society in September, 35 were linked to internal conflicts within the BNP, according to the rights body's latest monthly report released yesterday.

WHY THE MOVE

The BNP's position became clearer after the attack, looting and vandalism at the Radda MCH-FP Centre in Mirpur-1, in which several local BNP and affiliated organisation leaders were named.

Afterwards, the BNP and its affiliates dissolved three major committees in Dhaka and expelled 14 leaders at different levels over indiscipline, anti-organisational activities and unethical conduct.

Reserved-seat MP Ferdousy Ahmed also resigned on the instruction of Prime Minister Tarique Rahman.

BNP leaders said the central leadership believes that ignoring grassroots allegations at the outset could cost the entire party later.

BNP Joint Secretary General Syed Emran Saleh Prince said those inside or outside the party who act against public interest and peace and order would not be spared.

Anyone misusing the party's identity would face strict punishment, he said.

"Unethical actions of a few politicians are causing heartache for millions of leaders and activists. It will not be tolerated," he said.

Over the past six months, the prime minister had sent a strong message to those who mistook his generosity for weakness and became involved in unethical activities, Imran said.

Those who undermined his commitment to public safety and welfare would not be forgiven, he added.

Imran also urged local BNP and affiliated organisation leaders and activists to remain united and work through discussion, saying the high command was monitoring the situation.

Under the party charter, a leader may first be warned or face a show-cause notice over a minor allegation. In more serious cases, the leader may be removed from a party position or expelled.

"But these rules haven't always been followed properly. That is why the central leadership has now reiterated the instruction and asked the local units to comply with it strictly," said a senior BNP leader.

'Big powers using tariffs for bullying'

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The US is also using tariffs for political ends, pressuring Brazil, Canada and China, and even India over its trade with Russia, he added.

The disorder, he argued, is the dominant powers' "perverse" response to Asia's rise.

With capital surpluses now accumulating in Asia, developing countries no longer need to rely on Western aid and investment, which once gave the West leverage over their policies.

China, he said, is now the world's largest source of official aid and loans, a role once held by the US and Western Europe.

Unlike colonialism, which created captive markets through conquest, Asia's rise has come "largely within the marketplace", he said.

Yet the old powers are fighting it through market intervention rather than competition.

Trying to revive US industry by protecting its market, as former president William McKinley did in the 1890s, is a "non-starter for the most advanced economy in the world", he said, adding that the World Trade Organization has been marginalised.

Still, Asia "is going to progressively emerge as the centre of the economic universe", he said. China, already ahead of the US in purchasing power terms, is set to overtake it as the dominant economic power.

> **"To compel people to buy your goods suggests that you are no longer able to produce these competitively."**
>
> **Prof Rehman Sobhan**

The disorder has already hit Bangladesh, he said, citing the economic fallout of the US-Israel's war on Iran in the Middle East. He blamed the war on Israel, calling it a "rogue nation".

Bangladesh's exports remain confined to a narrow range of markets, though its imports and capital come from Asia, he said, urging deeper integration into Asian value chains.

Neighbours China and India, which he expects to be the world's largest and third-largest economies in a decade or so, offer an opportunity Bangladesh has yet to fully exploit.

"We have certainly integrated our manufacturing process into the value chains of these countries. But we have not integrated Bangladesh's export opportunities into the opportunities opening up for us over there," he said.

Blaming weak policymaking, he said, "We are not very effective in terms of strategic planning for the future and even less effective in the way we set out to implement our strategic plans."

Bangladesh's real strategic value, he argued, lies not in the Bay of Bengal but "in our land areas". The Padma and Jamuna bridges allow the country to link Southeast Asia, South Asia, West Asia and eventually Europe, as once envisaged under the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) initiative that he helped found.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Tarique Rahman inaugurated the fifth edition of the forum, organised by the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS).

The three-day event is hosting around 200 speakers, 300 delegates and over 1,000 participants from more than 100 countries, according to CGS.

CONTROVERSIAL VOTERS ROLL REVISION

India detains protesters demanding CEC's resignation

AFP, *New Delhi*

Indian police yesterday detained dozens of youth protesters in New Delhi during the second consecutive day of demonstrations demanding the chief election commissioner's resignation over alleged voter-roll irregularities.

The demonstrations have been backed by key opposition parties, including the popular Gen Z-led Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) online movement, who say voter-roll changes give an advantage to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party.

There was a heavy police presence around Jantar Mantar, a government-designated protest site in the heart of New Delhi, which remained sealed off behind police barricades.

Local media reports said over 100 protesters demanding Election Commission of India (ECI) chief Gyanesh Kumar's resignation were detained.

"Delhi Police must stop its crackdown on protesting students and activists," CJP chief Abhijeet Dipke said in a social media post yesterday.

Dipke's CJP has called for a "massive mobilisation of young Indians" in New Delhi on October 10. Other opposition parties and activists have also backed the protest call.

Opposition parties have announced plans for more protests, including a march to the Election Commission in New Delhi on Tuesday and "Save Democracy" rallies countrywide in the days following.

"Every attempt to suppress peaceful protesters will only bring more people to the streets and strengthen the march to Jantar Mantar," Dipke added. "Dissent is a democratic right. It cannot be crushed through intimidation or force".

Delhi police did not comment on the reported detentions.