Russian strikes cause power cuts in Ukraine: Kyiv

REUTERS, *Kyiv*

Russian forces hammered energy infrastructure around Ukraine's capital with missiles and drones overnight, straining Kyiv's power supply and heating systems as temperatures headed towards zero, officials said yesterday.

Three days before Russia and Ukraine are due to take part in US-brokered talks, explosions rocked Kyiv as Moscow unleashed waves of ballistic missiles, several of which hit and damaged the Northern Bridge across the Dnipro River, Mayor Vitali Klitschko said.

Strikes on energy facilities outside Kyiv — including systems sending power from two nuclear plants to the city and Ukraine's central regions — caused serious damage, the energy ministry said.

"The capital is facing serious difficulties with its electricity, water, and heat supplies," President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said on X, adding that substations in five other regions were also hit.



PHOTO: AFP

People stand among the ruins of a kindergarten damaged following a Russian mass missile attack in Kyiv yesterday. Russian attacks have damaged energy facilities in the Kyiv region as well as a key bridge in the Ukrainian capital, its mayor said.

US offers $20m reward for info on 'Iran's nuclear programme'

AFP, *Washington*

Washington is offering a $20 million reward "and possible relocation" for information about Iran's nuclear programme, the US military said Friday, as President Donald Trump reiterated Tehran wants to make a deal to end the war.

A State Department program, Rewards for Justice, "is offering a reward of up to $20 million and possible relocation for information about Iran's nuclear program, including its facilities, equipment, and associated personnel, such as those in the scientific community," US Central Command said on X.

The programme was established in 1984 under the State Department's national security rewards programme to offer money for information that protects American lives and interests.

In its statement about the reward, the State Department said Iran's "lack of compliance with the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) on safeguards obligations has led to the agency's loss of 'continuity of knowledge' regarding Iran's production and inventory of key components like centrifuges.

It gave no specific parameters on what information would yield a $20 million reward.

US MIDTERM POLLS

Nearly 100 Muslims won national, local races

AGENCIES

At least 97 Muslim Americans have won their races in this week's midterm elections, encompassing the federal, state, and local levels, according to the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR).

More than a dozen other candidates are still awaiting the full ballot count - depending on individual county rules and the way mail-in votes are handled - but they are ahead of their opponents as of Friday morning.

They come from a pool of 168 Muslim-American candidates who made it past the primary stage of their races, which is when they compete within their own party to earn the nomination.

Seven Muslim Americans are headed to Washington, DC.

Six are going to the House of Representatives, including incumbents Ilhan Omar, Rashida Tlaib, Andre Carson, and Lateefah Simon; and they will be joined by freshmen Adam Hamawy and Darializa Avila Chevalier.

If Aisha Wahab secures her win, which had not been decided by Friday morning local time, she would also join the incumbent House members.

One Muslim American is going to the Senate: Abdul El-Sayed. He will be the first to ever serve a six-year term in the upper chamber.

CAIR has tracked 39 other statewide offices where Muslim Americans won, ranging from attorney general to the state legislature and the state senate.

At the county and municipal level, there are 16 winners, and education and school boards saw 27 Muslim-Americans elected.

Eight were elected to be judges.

The wins make for an all-time record, and come as anti-Muslim sentiment and rhetoric, particularly among Republicans, are at their highest in a generation, according to groups like the Muslim Public Affairs Council (Mpac), the Center for the Study of Organized Hate (CSO), and the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU).

27 killed in Saudi strikes on Yemen's Sanaa province: Houthis

AFP, *Sanaa*

Houthi media said yesterday that Saudi strikes killed 27 people, most of them women and children, in Yemen's Sanaa province, as deaths mount in the country's revived civil war.

The United Nations says more than 1,600 people have been killed and more than 300,000 displaced since fighting resumed in the impoverished country.

The death toll from the Saudi-led coalition's strikes on Al-Shariya village has risen to 27, most of them women and children, with 36 people wounded, the Houthis' health ministry said in a statement to their Saba news agency.

Saba said earlier in the day that operations to recover victims from the rubble were ongoing and that "aircraft targeted paramedics with two strikes".

The Iran-backed group's Al-Masirah TV broadcast footage that it said was filmed in Al-Shariya, showing smoke rising from a struck site, piles of debris and wounded people in hospital.

Saudi Arabia, fighting in Yemen in support of the internationally recognised government, has not commented on the report.

The Saudi-led coalition in a statement yesterday said it had intercepted and destroyed a Houthi missile launched towards Riyadh province.

The Houthis, meanwhile, said they had launched multiple missile and drone attacks against Saudi troops and infrastructure both in the Gulf kingdom and Yemen.

The group said six operations targeted Aramco oil facilities, Riyadh airport and Saudi military positions on both sides of the border, Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree posted on X.

On Friday, an attack on a market in Taiz province killed 30 people. The Houthis said Saudi airstrikes were to blame, while Yemen's government forces accused the Iran-backed group of having fired a ballistic missile at the site.



PHOTO: AFP

Gunman kills six in historic centre of Poland's Krakow

AFP, *Kraków*

Six people were killed and a dozen others wounded yesterday when a gunman opened fire in the landmark historic centre of Poland's second city of Krakow, in the country's deadliest shooting in decades.

The man -- a Polish citizen -- drove a car onto Krakow's Main Market Square and began shooting at random people, said police. Officers shot a suspect who is now in custody, they added.

"The death toll now stands at six: four women and two men," the police said on X. A dozen others -- including police officers -- were wounded.

An AFP reporter at the scene saw ambulances and multiple police cars as police cordoned off the area -- one of Poland's landmark tourist hotspots popular with locals and foreign visitors.

"The perpetrator was shot by police" and was transported to a hospital, regional police said on X.

The police added that the man was wearing military fatigues at the time of the attack and was armed with a long gun.

In his car, "police officers discovered other firearms and a large quantity of ammunition", Krakow police spokeswoman Katarzyna Cislo told private broadcaster TVN24.

The police did not say what the motive was or disclose the nationalities of the victims of the attack, which is Poland's deadliest shooting since the fall of communism in 1989.

Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk, who headed to Krakow following the attack, called it "a tragic shooting" and said the police were investigating all the circumstances.

"Our highest praise goes to the heroic police officers who risked their lives in the line of duty," Tusk said.

Witnesses told AFP they saw people take refuge in shops and restaurants in the usually bustling streets around the Main Market Square.

"I saw a man shooting at people and walking around the square," Annette, a woman in her sixties, told AFP.

"It's a tragedy for Krakow, we've never seen anything like this before," she added.

"We were at Auschwitz today. And it was only when we got here that we realised what had happened," Stella, a 22-year-old tourist from Rennes, northwest France, told AFP, referring to the Nazi German Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp near Krakow.

"It's very frightening to think that there are still risks in Europe -- risks of a terrorist nature," she told AFP.

Deadly shootings are extremely rare in Poland, a European Union and NATO member of 38 million people.

But the country has been on high alert following a series of stabbings in October, which Tusk denounced as a "cult of violence".

Govt eyes a new 'Gram Sarkar' to reshape villages

FROM PAGE 1

Though the draft law makes no mention of an honorarium for nearly seven lakh members nationwide, an official involved in the process said discussions took place regarding remuneration in view of present-day realities. The finance ministry's opinion has been sought in this regard.

A provision of the proposed law leaves scope for individuals convicted of offences involving moral turpitude to become members of Gram Sarkar.

According to sub-section 9(d) of the draft law, individuals will be disqualified from membership only if they are convicted of a criminal offence involving moral turpitude and sentenced to at least one year in prison.

This means an individual sentenced to imprisonment for less than a year for an offence involving moral turpitude will be eligible to vie for membership. However, the provision stipulates that the individual must wait five years after release from prison to be able to contest the polls.

Legal experts have raised questions about allowing convicts into the local government body, which will be tasked with key responsibilities such as arbitration and dispute resolution.

Firoz Mia, a public administration expert and a former additional secretary, said, "Allowing someone convicted of an offence to serve as an arbitrator would call the entire system into question, even though similar provisions already exist for government employees.

"No individual convicted by a court of an offense involving moral turpitude -- be it a government employee or a politician -- should be involved in state affairs, big or small."

Public administration researcher Abdul Awal Mazumder said that if Gram Sarkar is reintroduced with good intentions, it will produce good results. However, it must be piloted before being launched nationwide.

"In the 1980s, arbitration by local elders in village courts was no less effective than court proceedings. But that picture has changed considerably over the last decade and a half. There are allegations that in many places, racketeers and swindlers act as arbitrators in exchange for money.

"If such people get the opportunity to enter Gram Sarkar, the government's primary objective may be undermined," Mazumder, a former secretary, told this newspaper.

He suggested piloting the system in 50 upazilas across the eight divisions before launching it nationwide.

When contacted, LGD Senior Secretary Shahidul Hassan declined to comment on the matter.

Seeking anonymity, a senior official at the LGRD ministry said the government wants to reintroduce the system without piloting it. However, no final decision has been made yet.

Mir Shahe Alam, state minister for LGRD and cooperatives, believes that the reintroduction of Gram Sarkar will make it possible to deliver various services efficiently to marginalised people.

Citing an example, he said, "The birth and death registration system faces numerous errors and complications. If the tasks related to the system are handled by grassroots representatives, these errors will be reduced significantly, easing public suffering."

Gram Sarkar can help gather accurate information on food demand, nutrition needs, and the status of childhood vaccination in rural areas, preventing fake and duplicate entries into the database, he added.

Guatemalan MP, three cops killed in armed attack

AGENCIES

A Guatemalan lawmaker and three police officers were killed in an armed attack in the eastern department of Zacapa, President Bernardo Arévalo said, condemning the violence and ordering security forces to help identify those responsible.

Lawmaker Julio César Portillo Paz was attacked on Friday in Río Hondo, Zacapa, and initially taken to a hospital with serious injuries. His death was later confirmed by the National Unity of Hope party, or UNE, to which he belonged.

Arévalo said the three National Civil Police officers killed in the attack had died in the line of duty and instructed security forces to cooperate with prosecutors investigating the killings.

The suspects escaped and were not identified.

"We will not allow criminal violence to prevail over the lives and safety of Guatemalans," Arévalo said in a post on X.

"President Luis Contreras, members of the Board of Directors and lawmakers mourn the tragic passing of Congressman Julio Cesar Portillo Paz, representative of the Zacapa district," Guatemala's Congress posted late Friday on X.

Authorities have not disclosed a motive for the attack or identified who was responsible.

The killing comes about three weeks after former anti-corruption prosecutor Juan Francisco Solórzano Foppa was shot dead in Guatemala City, a case that heightened concerns over organized crime's influence and the possible return of politically motivated assassinations. Authorities have not established a connection between the two attacks.

The Lorenzana family cartel, which has links to Mexico's Sinaloa cartel, controls the drug trade in Zacapa.

Portillo won his seat in 2023 for the Cabal party, but has since switched to another opposition party, National Unity of Hope, led by former first lady Sandra Torres.

She is expected to run for president in Guatemala's elections next year.

7 Bangladeshis killed in Saudi road crash

FROM PAGE 1

Among the deceased were Ziaur Rahman and his three children -- daughter Bushra and sons Yasir and Yazan.

Ziaur's wife, Shakira, was injured and remains hospitalised at Kholais General Hospital, while their other daughter, Yusra, is receiving treatment at King Abdul Aziz Hospital in Jeddah.

In another family, Sanjida, wife of Alam Shah, and their daughter Faria were killed in the accident.

Alam Shah was injured but discharged after primary care at Al-Himna Hospital. Their son Faisal is being treated at East Jeddah Hospital.

Another victim, Afsana Bibi, wife of Md Ilias, was also killed in the accident. Her husband sustained injuries but was discharged after primary care at Al-Himna Hospital.

According to the consulate, Afsana had arrived in Saudi Arabia only a few days before the accident to perform Umrah.

The bodies of Ziaur Rahman and his three children, as well as Sanjida, have been kept at Al-Himna General Hospital. The bodies of Faria and Afsana Bibi are at Kholais General Hospital.

Another Bangladeshi passenger, Gafur Alam, is receiving medical care at Kholais General Hospital.

No one will be able to steal people's rights again

FROM PAGE 1

democracy has been threatened, the country has risen again with the spirit of unity and revolution of November 7."

Addressing the young participants, he said the historic day should inspire them to uphold the country's interests.

"Let the voice of the patriotic and democracy-loving people on this historic day of the revolution of soldiers and people be: Bangladesh comes first, not Delhi, not Pindi or any other country."

Tarique said the then army chief, Lieutenant General Ziaur Rahman, was placed under house arrest with his family in the early hours of November 3, 1975 as part of what he described as a conspiracy against the country's interests.

The people and patriotic soldiers united to resist that conspiracy, making November 7 a symbol of national unity for nationalists and democracy-loving people.

The forces defeated on November 7 had continued their conspiracies and later, under the banner of the Grand Alliance, turned Bangladesh into a subservient state again, he said.

He also accused them of undermining the armed forces through the planned killings at the BDR headquarters at Pilkhana and depriving people of their democratic and political rights by establishing fascist rule.

Those forces were defeated again through the mass uprising of 2024, in which students and people made sacrifices to free the country from "fascism".

Comparing the major turning points in the country's history, Tarique said the 1971 Liberation War was fought to achieve independence, while the 2024 uprising was aimed at protecting the freedom of the country and its people.

People from all walks of life had taken to the streets on August 5, 2024, to protect the country's freedom, just as soldiers and civilians had united on November 7, 1975, to resist threats to independence and sovereignty.

"Time has proved that November 7, 1975 was the day that determined Bangladesh's future course," Tarique said, adding that whenever the country deviated from that path, its sovereignty and the people's interests came under threat.

Describing November 7 as the "magna carta" of independent Bangladesh's history, he said its significance would remain relevant for as long as the country existed.

The day also helped establish the identity of the people as Bangladeshis, irrespective of party affiliation, religion, ethnicity or community.

"Whether Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian or from an ethnic minority community, everyone born as a citizen of this country has one proud identity -- we are Bangladeshis."