

Hezbollah fires **62** rockets at **Israel** in 'initial response' to killing of top Hamas leader

BEIRUT, Jan 6 (AP)

LEBANON'S Hezbollah militia fired dozens of rockets at northern Israel on Saturday, warning that the barrage was its initial response to the targeted killing, presumably by Israel, of a top leader from the allied Hamas group in Lebanon's capital earlier this week.

The rocket attack came a day after Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said that his group must retaliate for the killing of Saleh Arouri, the deputy political leader of Hamas in a Hezbollah stronghold south of Beirut.

Nasrallah said that if Hezbollah did not strike back,

all of Lebanon would be vulnerable to Israeli attack. He appeared to be making his case for a response to the Lebanese public, even at the risk of escalating the fighting between Hezbollah and Israel as the war between Israel and Hamas rages on.

Hezbollah said on Saturday that it launched 62 rockets toward an Israeli air surveillance base on Mount Meron and that it scored direct hits. The group said rockets also struck two army posts near the border.

The Israeli military said about 40 rockets were fired toward Meron and that a base was targeted, but made no

mention of the base being hit. It said it struck the Hezbollah cell that fired the rockets.

The cross-border escalation came as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was kicking off an urgent Middle East diplomatic tour, his fourth to the region since the Israel-Hamas war erupted three months ago. The war was triggered by a deadly Hamas attack on southern Israel in which militants killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took some 250 hostages.

In recent weeks, Israel has been scaling back its military assault in the north of the territory and pressing its heavy offensive in the south, vowing

to crush Hamas. In the south, most of Gaza's 2.3 million Palestinians are being squeezed into smaller areas in a humanitarian disaster, while still being pounded by Israeli airstrikes.

On Saturday, the Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said 122 Palestinians were killed over the past 24 hours, bringing the total since the start of the war to 22,722.

The count does not differentiate between combatants and civilians. The ministry has said two-thirds of those killed have been women and children. The overall number of wounded rose to 58,166, the ministry said.

Bangladesh goes to polls today; Hasina poised to win 4th term

DHAKA, Jan 6 (PTI)

BANGLADESH will go to the polls on Sunday in which Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to win a fourth straight term in the absence of the main Opposition BNP which on Saturday began a 48-hour nationwide strike against the "illegal Government" amidst sporadic violence.

A total of 119.6 million registered voters are eligible to vote at Sunday's polls in more than 42,000 polling stations, according to the country's Election Commission.

More than 1,500 candidates from 27 political parties are contesting in the election

besides 436 independent candidates. Over 100 foreign observers, including three from India, will monitor the 12th general election, which is being held under tight security.

The Election Commission said voting will start at 8 am and will end at 5 pm. The results are expected to start flowing from early on January 8. Prime Minister Hasina's ruling Awami League is expected to win for a straight fourth time as the main Opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) of former Premier Khaleda Zia, 78, who is under house arrest as a convict of graft charges, boycotted the polls.

Hasina, 76, in a nationally tel-

evised address this week has urged the pro-democratic and law-abiding parties not to fuel ideas that "disrupt" the country's constitutional process.

The BNP has called for a 48-hour nationwide general strike which began at 6 am and will end at 6 am on Monday.

The number of vehicles on the street is fewer compared to other days, but despite fear of arson attacks, public vehicles were plying the streets. The 27 political parties that are contesting the elections include the Opposition Jatiya Party (JAPA). The rest are members of the ruling Awami League-led coalition, which experts dub as "satellite parties."

GTRI

Red Sea crisis may push costs for traders, Govt should consider financial help

- GTRI said the crisis could push shipping costs up to 60 per cent and insurance premium by 20 per cent

NEW DELHI, Jan 6 (PTI)

THE increasing Red Sea crisis may impact trade as it is expected to push shipping and insurance costs for exporters, and to deal with the situation the government should consider extending financial assistance to exporters, a report by economic think tank GTRI said on Saturday.

GTRI said the crisis could push shipping costs up to 60 per cent and insurance premium by 20 per cent. The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said India

must prepare for long-term shipping disruptions due to the current situation.

"The attacks by drones and missiles on merchant vessels have seen shipping costs and time to deliver a cargo go through the roof putting margins of exporters under severe pressure. The real problem is being faced by those whose contracts also included costs of delivering goods at buyers' ports," it added.

The report suggested steps such as diversifying crude oil imports from regions like West Africa, the Americas, and the Mediterranean; relying on ports outside conflict zones, like Oman and Djibouti, for transshipment and regional trade; and offering financial support and insurance schemes to Indian companies affected by trade disruptions.

"India may take the steps to

safeguard its maritime interests and the steps can include offering financial support and insurance schemes to Indian companies affected by trade disruptions; and strengthening partnerships with regional players like Saudi Arabia and the UAE to encourage economic cooperation and stability," it added.

This conflict could also result in increased shipping costs (40-60 per cent) and delays due to rerouting (up to 20 days more), higher insurance premiums (15-20 per cent), and potential cargo loss from piracy and attacks.

The situation around the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, a crucial shipping route connecting the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean, has escalated due to recent attacks by Yemen-based Houthi militants.

Bharat Mata ki Jai



Indian crew rescued from hijacked MV Lila Norfolk thanks Indian Navy

NEW DELHI, Jan 6 (ANI)

INDIANS, who were a part of the crew onboard the hijacked vessel MV Lila Norfolk, thanked the Indian Navy for rescuing them. The Indian Navy on Friday safely evacuated the crew from hijacked vessel MV Lila Norfolk off Somalia's coast.

In a video posted by the Navy, the crew members can be seen chanting "Bharat Mata ki Jai" and thanking the Indian Navy. One of the Indians who was rescued by the Indian Navy said, "We were stuck for 24 hours.

We got relief after the Indian Navy came to rescue them." Another man said, "Proud of the Indian Navy."

The Indian Navy's marine commandos rescued 21 crew members, including 15 Indians, from the hijacked Liberian-flagged vessel MV Lila Norfolk on January 6, 2024.

The crew members were rescued in a swift operation in the North Arabian Sea after armed pirates attempted to hijack the vessel. In a statement posted on X, the Indian Navy on Friday stated, "Indian Navy's Swift

Response to the Hijacking Attempt of MV Lila Norfolk in the North Arabian Sea. All 21 crew (incl 15 Indians) onboard safely evacuated from the citadel. Sanitisation by MARCOs has confirmed the absence of the hijackers."

The attempt of hijacking by the pirates was probably abandoned with the forceful warning by the Indian Navy, MPA of interception by Indian Naval warship, the statement read. INS Chennai is in the vicinity of MV Lila Norfolk when the attempted hijacking took place.

Liberian-flagged vessel MV Lila Norfolk in the Arabian Sea after all crew members from the ship were rescued by the Indian Navy after a hijacking attempt by the pirates. (PTI)



Aditya-L1 reaches orbit near Sun

CHENNAI, Jan 6 (IANS)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday announced that India's first solar observatory Aditya-L1 has reached its destination successfully.

"India creates yet another landmark. India's first solar observatory Aditya-L1 reaches its destination. It is a testament to the relentless dedication of our scientists in realising among the most complex and intricate space missions. I join the nation in applauding this extraordinary feat. We will continue to pursue

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