

Israeli forces killed 27 heading to aid site, says officials

AP, RAFAH (GAZA STRIP): Palestinian health officials and witnesses say Israeli forces fired on people as they headed toward an aid distribution site on Tuesday, killing at least 27, in the third such incident in three days. The army said it fired "near a few individual suspects" who left the designated route, approached its forces and ignored warning shots.

The near-daily shootings have come after an Israeli and US-backed foundation established aid distribution points inside Israeli military zones, a system it says is designed to circumvent Hamas. The United Nations has rejected the new system, saying it doesn't address Gaza's mounting hunger crisis and allows Israel to use aid as a weapon.

The Israeli military said it was looking into reports of casualties on Tuesday. It previously said it fired warning shots at suspects who approached its forces early Sunday and Monday, when health officials and witnesses said 34 people were killed. The military



A plume of smoke erupts as vehicles move along a road used by displaced people fleeing from Khan Yunis westwards to al-Mawasi in the southern Gaza Strip after the Israeli military had issued an evacuation order the previous day

denies opening fire on civilians or blocking them from reaching the aid sites.

The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, which operates the sites, says there has been no violence in or around them. On Tuesday, it acknowledged that the Israeli military was investigating whether civilians were wounded "after moving beyond the designated safe corridor and into a closed military zone," in an area that was "well beyond our secure distribution site."

"Either way we will die," she said. "Either way we will die."

The shootings all occurred at the Flag Roundabout, around a kilometre from one of the GHF's distribution sites in the now mostly uninhabited southern city of Rafah. The entire area is an Israeli military zone where journalists have no access outside of army-approved embeds.

Yasser Abu Lubda, a 50-year-old displaced from Rafah, said the shooting started around 4 am on Tuesday and that he saw several people killed or wounded.

Neima al-Aaraj, a woman from Khan Yunis, said the Israeli fire was "indiscriminate." She added that when she managed to reach the distribution site there was no aid left.

"After the martyrs and wounded, I won't return," she said. "Either way we will die."

Rasha al-Nahal, another witness, said "there was gunfire from all directions." She said she counted more than a dozen dead and several wounded along the road.

When she reached the distribution site, she also found that there was no aid left, she said. So she gathered pasta from the ground and salvaged rice from a bag that had been dropped and trampled upon.

"We'd rather die than deal with this," she said. "Death is more dignified than what's happening to us."

Spain cancels contract for anti-tank missiles built by Israeli subsidiary

AP, MADRID: Spain is cancelling the purchase of anti-tank missile systems that were to be manufactured in Spain by a subsidiary of an Israeli company, the Defence Ministry said Tuesday, confirming Spanish media reports.

The decision will affect the purchase of 168 SPIKE LR2 anti-tank missile systems with an estimated value of 285 million euros (\$325 million). The systems would have been developed in Spain by Pap Tecnos, a subsidiary of Israel's Rafael Advance De-

fence Systems, according to local press. The Spanish government approved the project on Oct 3, 2023, four days before an insurgent assault led by Hamas on southern Israel that sparked a devastating war in Gaza.

Spain's leftist government says it stopped exporting arms to Israel as of Oct 2, 2023, but there where reports some shipments slipped through.

In May last year, Spain formally recognised a Palestinian state in a coordinated effort with Norway

and Ireland. Israel faces legal action at two international courts in The Hague, Netherlands. South Africa has filed a case at the top United Nations court, the International Court of Justice, alleging genocide by Israel against Palestinians in Gaza. Israel strongly denies the charge.

Judges at the International Criminal Court last year issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former defence minister, Yoav Gallant.

Telangana: One patient dead, 70 complain of diarrhoea at Institute of Mental Health

PTI, HYDERABAD: A patient died and about 70 others suffered from vomiting and diarrhoea at the Telangana government's Institute of Mental Health (IMH) here on Tuesday, officials said. The patient who died was found motionless in the morning and medical personnel on duty tried to revive him by performing CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation), but in vain, they said. He was shifted to the state-run Osmania General Hospital (OGH) where doctors declared that he had already died, Hyderabad District Collector Anudeep Durishetty, who visited the IMH, told reporters.

The cause of death is under investigation, the officials said. About 65-70 other patients have reported

vomiting and diarrhoea by Tuesday evening, Durishetty said.

Two patients whose blood pressure was low were admitted to the OGH and their condition was not serious, he said.

The remaining patients were under observation in the mental hospital and a special team of doctors has been called to attend to them. All the patients are stable, he said.

The district collector said water samples from the source in the IMH were sent to the state government's Institute of Preventive Medicine (IPM) and the reports did not indicate any problem.

Other samples collected from the water distribution network were sent for analysis and the reports are awaited, he said.

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WAR CRY TO SAVE MHADEI ECHOES ACROSS BORDERS

"Activists in Belgaum, Khanapur and Kankumbi Karnataka are demanding that Mhadei waters should not be diverted. Why then are the Goans silent?" he asked. Polgi warned of looming water scarcity: "It is only when the people of Porvorim, Mapusa or Anjuna need water and have to hit the streets will they understand why there is a scarcity of drinking water despite heavy rains."

Meanwhile, in Karnataka's Belagavi district, environmentalists launched a rally to oppose the Kalsa-Bhandura water diversion project, warning of catastrophic ecological consequences for the Western Ghats if the project proceeds. The rally, led by Capt Nitin Dhond, drew participation from citizens, leaders, and climate activists.

Dhond explained that environmentalists were trying to make the local residents understand that the diversion of river water would affect the entire region. "Thousands of hectares of forests and all their biodiversity would be destroyed due if the Kalsa-Bhandura water diversion project is implemented."

Echoing these concerns, environmentalist Dilip Kamat stressed the need for an uninterrupted natural river flow to sustain forest ecosystems.

In Khanapur, hundreds of activists submitted a formal objection to the Bhandura Mini-Hydel Project proposed on the Hiranyakeshi River. They warned that the project would threaten biodiversity, disrupt natural water cycles, and damage the region's ecological balance.

In a written representation to the Deputy Commissioner of Belagavi, activists claimed the project lacked transparency and proper public consultation. "The proposed project violates the principles of ecological justice and sustainable development. It also goes against the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) recommendations," the letter stated.

They also highlighted the religious significance of the Hiranyakeshi River, near which lies a revered temple. Any alteration to the river's course, they argued, would harm not only the ecosystem but also local cultural heritage.

KALSA WATER ALREADY GONE, MHADEI STARES AT DOOM?

"Kankumbi was once known as the Cheerapunjee of Western Ghats but with the destruction of the forest to disturb the flow of the water and by building the canal, its own people are now struggling to get drinking water

— Suraj Malik, advocate and environmental activist

"They have diverted the water in such a way that the canal no longer flows through Surla village to Nanoda, where it ultimately joined Mhadei at Utse in Sattari," Kerkar, who has long tracked the canal's impact on Goa's ecology, stated.

The once active Kalsa canal now lies dry along much of its original course, with only residual water from natural springs forming stagnant pools. Forested catchment areas have been cleared, and water is instead being funnelled through an underground canal system constructed by the Karnataka government.

"Around 3.5 km of Kalsa river is destroyed due to this diversion and most of the ground water in Kankumbi village has disappeared, leading to shortage of drinking water to the villagers," added Kerkar, highlighting the environmental fallout of the redirection.

When contacted, Dnyaneshwar Salelkar, recently appointed Chief Engineer of Goa's Water Resource Department (WRD), admitted he was unaware of the change in canal flow. "I am unaware of this. I will send my engineer to check and based on the report will see the avenues open to rectify the problem," he stated.

According to WRD Superintendent Engineer Dilip Naik, the Goa government has already filed two contempt petitions, citing diversions at multiple locations. "The government has filed two contempt petitions because water has been diverted at two locations. Unfortunately there has been no hearing and no meeting and site inspections under the umbrella of Progressive River Authority for Water and Harmony (PRAWAH), which we have asked for some time back," Naik revealed.

PRAWAH is a central committee established to monitor compliance with the Mhadei Water Dispute Tribunal's decisions and Supreme Court directives. "We have been asking for a PRAWAH meeting to go and check the place but with no success. Be careful whilst visiting the place because they tend to arrest people," Naik warned.

The diverted canal now passes beneath a road via an underground conduit, disrupting groundwater recharge

and triggering a drinking water crisis for local residents. Advocate and environmental activist Suraj Malik pointed to the paradoxical effects of the development.

"Kankumbi was once known as the Cheerapunjee of Western Ghats but with the destruction of the forest to disturb the flow of the water and by building the canal, its own people are now struggling to get drinking water as rain water does not seep into the ground," Malik explained.

The diversion at Kankumbi first came to official notice in 2015 when it was brought to the attention of then-Goa WRD Chief Engineer Sandip Nadkarni. Karnataka's legal team had then assured the Supreme Court that work would not continue. Yet, according to Kerkar, diversion continued in violation of that assurance.

"It was only after the matter was brought to the attention of former chief minister Manohar Parrikar that a Disobedience Petition was filed and it has been pending at the tribunal. So far, there has not been a single hearing at the Supreme Court," Kerkar disclosed.

In Sattari, where residents once relied on the Kalsa canal for irrigation and household use, expectations have given way to dismay. The flow remains cut off even during the rainy season. "We expect the water to flow down the canal with only some of it getting diverted to Malaprabha, but this is shocking," said Malik, noting the presence of CCTV surveillance and restricted access at the site.

"One can never say. There are times when they come and start questioning people roaming around the area where the huge open-cut and underground canal is located and do not allow photography, though it is not banned by the District Magistrate," cautioned Malik.

CABBIES KNOCK ON LOBO DOOR, BUT HE WON'T PLAY SAVIOUR

It is unacceptable to impose terms on our local businesses without meaningful discussions. Any reform impacting their livelihoods must involve their active participation and consent

— Captain Viriato Fernandes, MP from South Goa

The rent-a-car and rent-a-bike businesses should be shut down, or taxi drivers will lose their edge. Some operators have eight to ten cars they rent out every day... My father owns one car and barely gets work, while others with multiple rentals are earning well even if their taxis sit idle

— Sanjeev, son of a taxi driver

The rates we quote are government-approved. GoaMiles has different rates. What's transparent about that?

— Taxi union leader

"I'm not saying the new guidelines have to be implemented. There should be discussion before implementation," he said, responding to the drivers' impassioned arguments. The taxi operators, however, were unequivocal, claiming the guidelines are designed to marginalise local taxi owners. "If we are finished, then MLAs will also be finished," one driver warned.

Lobo stressed that verbal fare quotes are outdated in the digital era. "Gone are the days when taxis could state their rates verbally. That was before the digital era. Now, everything is digital. There has to be digital transparency. Telling rates by mouth will not work," he said.

He highlighted the inconsistency in fares that frustrates tourists: "One driver will charge Rs 1,500 and another Rs 1,200 for the same trip. This should not happen. When customers book a cab through an app, the local taxis outside the resorts create problems. Guests should not leave Goa with bad memories. For transparency, I'm with the government."

The drivers, however, rejected the notion that apps ensure fairness. "The rates we quote are government-approved. GoaMiles has different rates. What's transparent about that?" union leaders questioned, accusing MLAs and ministers of failing to protect their interests while pushing aggregator models.

Across the political spectrum, South Goa MP Captain Viriato Fernandes sharply criticised the government's push to mandate aggregator apps, calling it a "scam" that threatens the autonomy of Goan taxi drivers. "Our taxi operators are more than just drivers — they are the first point of contact for most visitors and act as informal guides and ambassadors for Goa," Fernandes said. He warned that forcing operators onto aggregator platforms without consultation risks eroding the traditional fabric of the sector, potentially

harming employment and tourism quality.

Fernandes condemned the lack of dialogue, stating, "It is unacceptable to impose terms on our local businesses without meaningful discussions. Any reform impacting their livelihoods must involve their active participation and consent." He urged the government to pause the policy and engage in a transparent, consultative process. "We must protect the rights and dignity of our taxi operators, not treat them as obstacles to progress," he concluded. His remarks have struck a chord with many in Goa's tourism and transport sectors, who fear aggregator platforms will bring unfair competition and erode the personalised service that defines Goan taxis.

Meanwhile, protests continued in Panjim and Morjim, though Tuesday's turnout at the Department of Transport office in Panjim was smaller than Monday's large gathering. A handful of drivers arrived to file objections, sharing personal frustrations in a quieter atmosphere with no visible police presence.

Sanjeev, accompanying his father, who has been a taxi driver for 50 years, expressed dismay: "These apps don't benefit taxi drivers. My father works in the Panjim bus stand area. The rent-a-car and rent-a-bike businesses should be shut down, or taxi drivers will lose their edge. Some operators have eight to ten cars they rent out every day. No one responded when asked about it yesterday. Everyone's divided. My father owns one car and barely gets work, while others with multiple rentals are earning well even if their taxis sit idle. This fight is about personal survival."

Srikhand Gavkar, a driver from Valpoi with two decades of experience, was equally blunt: "We don't want aggregators. We work day and night while they take a commission. They get rich, and we stay where we are. Goa is small, with a population of just 15 lakh. Half live in villages. There are about 25,000 taxis in Goa. If they all operate at once, none of us will survive. Our leaders don't listen. They call us the taxi mafia, but we're just trying to support our families. Politicians take our votes and then forget us. They bring in outsiders for our jobs. Taxis are one of the last businesses still run by Goans. These apps won't work in villages. If we get called to a remote area, we rarely get one coming back. Fares here match those in other states. That's why we're against apps."

When confronted with claims that Goa's taxi fares are among India's highest, Gavkar defended the pricing: "If I travel 100 km and charge Rs 1,500 — that's Rs 15 per km. It's a standard rate. But if that's my only fare of the day, I still need to pay for fuel, food, and children's school fees. Sometimes I go two or three days without a fare." He dismissed Revenue Minister Babush Monserrate's suggestion to try the aggregator model, saying, "Last time, they just renamed the app GoaMiles and handed it to outsiders. No one consulted us."

Rohan Kandolkar, a second-generation taxi operator, highlighted the mismatch between Goa's traditional fixed pricing and app-based per-kilometre models. "In Goa, we've always had fixed point-to-point pricing — 0-5 km, 5-10 km, etc. When meters were introduced seven years ago, the government pushed for per-km pricing. But that's not practical. We need a digital display showing prices to passengers — not an app. These apps make it easy for anyone to come here and start operating. The meter system fails. I'm from Candolim. If I get a trip to Baga, I earn Rs 300 — that's not sustainable. GoaMiles didn't solve our problems; it added to them."

In Morjim, taxi operators gathered at Datta Mandir Hall to submit group objections, emphasising their opposition to the app-based system. Many, having taken loans to buy their vehicles, felt betrayed. They demanded a direct meeting with the Chief Minister to address their concerns.

Mohan Nair, Executive Committee Member of the Association of Tourist Taxi Owners, was adamant: "No matter what anyone says, these apps won't work — not in Goa. Maybe on the coast, but not in the heartland. Every household has two or three bikes. Everyone drives their own vehicles. Out of every 100 people, 80 own cars. Barely five percent use taxis for long distances. We want to work independently. I've been in this business for 35 years and have two cars. Goa is not an 'app' state."

As the debate intensifies, there is growing pressure on policymakers to prioritise local voices and seek sustainable solutions that balance modernisation with the preservation of Goa's unique taxi culture.

OPPN PARTIES DEMAND SPECIAL PARLIAMENT SESSION ON OP SINDOOR

"Sixteen parties have written a letter to the prime minister demanding a special session of Parliament. The govern-

ment is responsible to Parliament, Parliament is responsible to people," O'Brien told reporters after the meeting.

O'Brien added that the decision to make a joint effort to demand a special session was made by the presidents of the respective parties, and not just the Parliamentary Party leaders.

Lok Sabha Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi and Rajya Sabha Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge of the Congress, Akhilesh Yadav of the Samajwadi Party (SP), Abhishek Banerjee of the TMC, T R Baalu of the DMK, and Arvind Savant of the Shiv Sena (UBT) are among the signatories.

The Rashtriya Janata Dal, the National Conference, the CPI(M), the IUML, the CPI, the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), and the JMM, among others, are also among those who signed the letter. The DMK could not join the meeting as it coincided with Karunanidhi's birth anniversary.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) will write a separate letter to the prime minister raising the same demand.

While the Nationalist Congress Party (SP) had earlier said it did not have any demand for a special session of Parliament, Raut said he will talk to NCP leaders over the issue.

Sharing a copy of the letter on X, Jairam Ramesh said the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha had written to the prime minister to call a special session of Parliament on May 10.

"Such a session has become all the more necessary and urgent following the revelations of the CDS (Anil Chauhan) in Singapore the day before yesterday. It would have been more appropriate and in keeping with the finest of our democratic traditions if the information revealed in Singapore had first been shared in an all-party meeting or in a Parliament session, or in a briefing in New Delhi.

"President Trump and his colleagues continue to insist that they stopped Operation Sindoor using trade as an instrument of coercion. They have also repeatedly talked of nuclear escalation. The PM has maintained a deafening silence on President Trump's claims," Ramesh said.

ACTIVE COVID CASES CROSS 4,000 MARK IN INDIA

India has seen a spike of 65 cases within the last 24 hours, as per the health ministry data, with 512 people getting discharged or recovering in the same period.

The country also reported five Covid-19 deaths between Monday and Tuesday, with one each in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal and two in Maharashtra.

As per the health ministry, the Covid-related death in Kerala was an 80-year old male with severe pneumonia, acute respiratory distress syndrome, diabetes mellitus, hypertension, and coronary Artery Disease. In Maharashtra, it was a 70-year-old female with DM, and 73-year-old female with DM (diabetes mellitus) and (hypertension) HTN.

In Tamil Nadu, the Covid patient who passed away was a 69 year old female with type 2 diabetes mellitus and parkinsons disease, while in West Bengal it was a 43 year-old female with acute coronary syndrome, septic shock, and acute kidney injury.

Apart from Kerala, Maharashtra and Gujarat, significant rise in Covid cases was also reported by Delhi, West Bengal, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh, with infection count being in triple digits.

Delhi's reported 393 cases in the last 24 hours, West Bengal 372, Karnataka 311, Tamil Nadu 215 and Uttar Pradesh 138.

INDIAN-ORIGIN MAN ON LIFE SUPPORT IN AUS AFTER COPS KNEEL ON HIS NECK

Kaur said, "Maybe he will wake up if his brain works, or maybe he will not."

Police say Kundi violently resisted arrest after leaving his home intoxicated. The couple had allegedly been arguing, and a passing patrol reportedly mistook the incident for domestic violence. However, Kaur said his husband was simply drunk and loud, not violent.

Meanwhile, South Australian Police Commissioner Grant Stevens said he believes the officers acted in line with their training, the 9news reported. Police have launched an internal investigation and are reviewing body-worn camera footage.

"I can say that from that evidence I've looked at, from that body-worn video, but it is only one portion, I'm comfortable, but that is only one police officer," Acting Assistant Commissioner John DeCandia was quoted as saying by australiatoday.com.

Premier of South Australia, Peter Malinauskas, also voiced strong support for police, saying they have a "really difficult job" and deserved backing, the news portal said.