

## Iran Shows Missile, Launches Satellite Which Fails To Reach Orbit

Agencies

Tehran: In the space of a few hours on Sunday, Iran unveiled a new ballistic missile and launched a domestically-built satellite - which failed, however, to reach orbit.

The launch of the satellite happened at 7:15pm local time at Imam Khomeini Spaceport in Iran's Semnan province, some 230km (145 miles) southeast of the capital, Tehran. State television said, however, that a Simorgh rocket could not put the Zafar 1 communications satellite into orbit due to a low speed.

"Stage-1 and stage-2 motors of the carrier functioned properly and the satellite was successfully detached from its carrier, but at the end of its path it did not reach the required speed for being put in the orbit," Ahmad Hosseini, spokesman for the defence ministry's space pro-

Iranian Satellites!"

**New ballistic missile**

Earlier on Sunday, the elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), in charge of Iran's missile programme, unveiled a new ballistic missile it said was powered by a new generation of engines designed to send satellites into orbit.

The announcement came just days before the 41st anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, an occasion routinely used by Iran to display technological advances for its armed forces.

State television said the new short-range ballistic missile - dubbed the Raad-500 - has a range up to 500km (310 miles). That is some 200km (124 miles) more than the Fateh-110, a ballistic ground-to-ground missile first unveiled in 2002 that weighs twice as much as the new missile.



gramme, told state television.

The satellite, which Iran says was to be used for scientific observation, is part of a programme the United States has previously described as a "provocation".

Iran's Minister of Telecommunications Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi admitted in a Twitter post that "failure happened", adding: "But We're UNSTOPPABLE! We have more Upcoming Great

The Raad-500 is also equipped with new Zoheir engines made of composite materials lighter than earlier steel models, according to the IRGC's Sepah News website.

The IRGC also unveiled new missile engines made of the same material but with a "moveable nozzle" for the delivery of the satellites into space. The technology increases a missile's accuracy in hitting targets.

## Bahraini Protest Movement Urges Civil Disobedience On Uprising Anniversary

Agencies

Manama: A Bahraini opposition protest movement has called for nationwide dissidence on the eve of the ninth anniversary of the popular uprising against the Al Khalifah regime.

The February 14 Youth Coalition, named after the date of the beginning of the popular uprising against the Manama regime, demanded the action to start as of the evening of Wednesday, February 12, until the evening of Friday, February 14.

The opposition movement outlined some acts of civil disobedience as school strike on Thursday, and local residents switching off the lights of their houses at eight o'clock in the evening for two consecutive nights.

Bahraini officials arrest a Shia cleric as a heavy crackdown against members of the religious community persists in the kingdom.

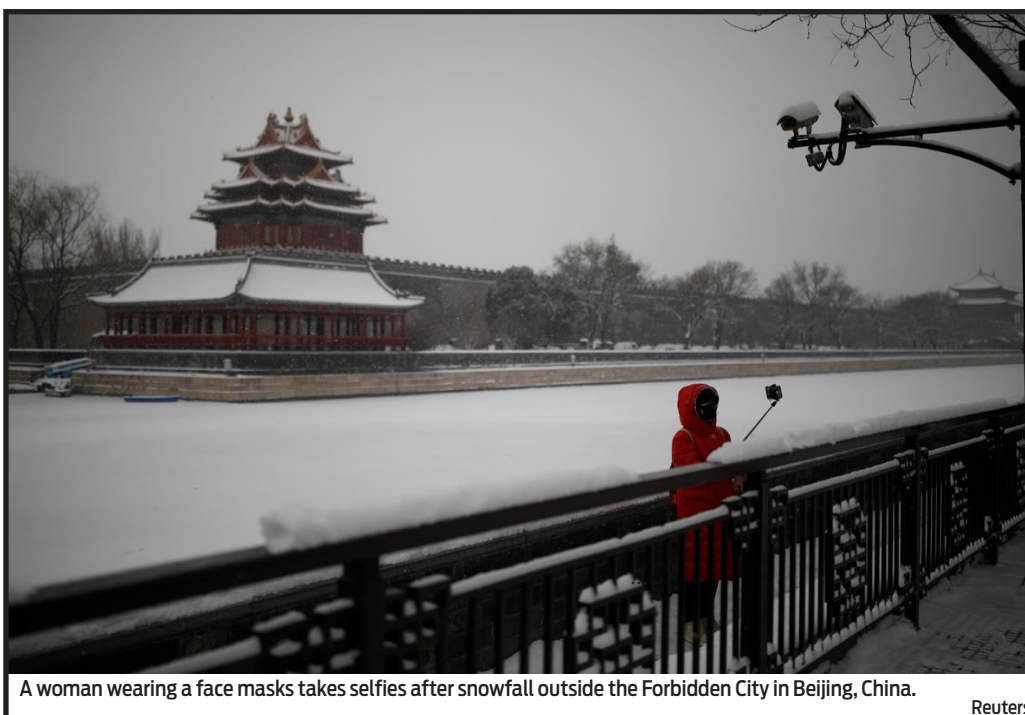
The February 14 Youth Coalition then urged Bahraini shop own-

ers to shutter their stores as of eight o'clock in the evening on Wednesday, and re-open them on Friday sunset, not to travel along King Fahd Causeway, which connects Bahrain to Saudi Arabia, on February 13 and 14, and to boycott shopping mall on the mentioned days.

It also called on Bahraini people from all walks of life to participate actively in the diverse popular movement as well as various peaceful demonstrations.

Thousands of anti-regime protesters have held demonstrations in Bahrain on an almost daily basis ever since a popular uprising began in the country in mid-February 2011.

They are demanding that the Al Khalifah regime relinquish power and allow a just system representing all Bahrainis to be established. Manama has gone to great lengths to clamp down on any sign of dissent. On March 14, 2011, troops from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were deployed to assist Bahrain in its crackdown.



A woman wearing a face masks takes selfies after snowfall outside the Forbidden City in Beijing, China.

Reuters

## Hiding Behind Passenger Planes, Israel's New Dirty Tactic?

Agencies

Jerusalem: Two separate images show an Israeli F-16 fighter jet (above) and a plane belonging to the private Syrian airline Cham Wings Airlines below.

A day after the Russian Defense Ministry said that an Israeli airstrike on the Syrian capital endangered a civilian aircraft with 172 passengers, questions have arisen over what appears to be an Israeli plot to further escalate the situation in the region.

According to Russia's Defense Ministry's Friday statement, Israel knowingly attacked Damascus as the passenger plane was preparing to land, with the aircraft only narrowly escaping the "lethal zone" of fire between Israeli missiles and Syria's missile interceptors.

The Airbus 320 was heading to Damascus from the Iranian capital Tehran early Thursday when it was forced to divert its route as the Syrian capital's air defenses intercepted Israeli missiles.

The Israeli attack took place as Syria troops were liberating the terrorist-held town of Saraqib in northwestern Idlib province, further tightening the noose on the foreign-backed terrorists there.

Russia says an Israeli airstrike, carried out as Syria troops were liberating the terrorist-held town of Saraqib in northwestern Idlib province, has endangered a civilian flight carrying 172 passengers.

A Russian Defense Ministry spokesman said, "The Israeli use of passenger jets as a cover for its military operations or as a shield from Syrian missile system fire is becoming a typical trait of Israeli air force."

Russia had warned that Israeli airstrikes against Damascus were endangering civilian jets.

Israel, which has long boasted its modern detection radars and advanced means of aerial warfare, clearly had full knowledge of the civilian aircraft's position and the possible fallout of attacking Damascus as the plane was preparing to land.

**'A deliberate attack'**

Publicly available information shows that the passenger jet belonging to the private Syrian airline, Cham Wings Airlines, was

in the vicinity of the capital, when it had to make a sharp 180 degree turn away from Damascus at the time of the attack.

The only aircraft I'm seeing on the FR24 playback during the attacks [-2320Z, 0120 local] is Cham Wings Airlines 6Q514 /SAW514 which got diverted to LTK #Latakia https://t.co/xCBc5DLQr pic.twitter.com/To0RnVoxq5

Later reports indicating that the Israeli airstrike hit civilian quarters with no military value further strengthened speculation

Radar images released at the time showed that Israeli F-16s had snooped behind the Russian plane, causing Syrian air defenses to drop the larger reconnaissance aircraft.

The tragic downing of Ukraine International Airlines Flight PS752 in Tehran, which led to the death of all of its 176 passengers last month, also happened in similar circumstances.

Many observers, including Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, have pointed that the



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that the airstrike had been intentionally planned to provoke an incident involving the civilian plane.

Such an incident could shift Damascus's focus away from pressing ahead with its anti-terror operation and capitalizing on its recent military gains against the foreign-backed terrorists in the northwestern Idlib province.

Given that the plane was reportedly carrying passengers from Tehran, the brazen attack also signaled that Tel Aviv had carried it out to send a message to Tehran, even at the price of killing a presumably large number of Iranian civilians aboard the flight.

**Civilians main victims of Israeli, US escalations**

Circumstances surrounding Israel's Thursday airstrike correspond with another similar scenario which led to the downing of a Russian reconnaissance plane in 2018.

## Rain Extinguishes Australian Wildfires, Causes Flooding

Agencies

SYDNEY: Weakening tropical cyclone "Damien" battered north-western Australia's Pilbara region on Sunday, as storms brought heavy rains and flooding to the country's bushfire-ravaged east.

The cyclone was downgraded to a Category One storm on Sunday after making landfall late Saturday as a Category Three, when it brought winds of up to 195 kilometres per hour at its peak and forced residents to hunker down indoors under a code red emergency warning.

The Bureau of Meteorology said "Damien" was weakening as it moved southeast through the sparsely populated Pilbara on Sunday, bringing winds of up to 100 kilometres an hour and heavy rainfall that was expected to cause flooding.

"Tropical Cyclone Damien will continue to weaken as it moves further inland," the bureau said. The storm reportedly downed trees, ripped roofs off sheds and knocked out power in the small coastal towns of Dampier and Karratha.

Meanwhile, Australia's east coast has been lashed with days of rainfall that has caused flash flooding in New South Wales and Queensland.

Flood warnings were issued for more than a dozen rivers across the two states, including in Sydney, home to about five million people and the country's biggest city, which has been drenched by heavy rainfall.

New South Wales police said they had rescued dozens of motorists who were trapped after driving their cars into floodwaters, as well as a teenager who spent two hours in waist-deep water after falling into a river in the Hunter Valley region.

Emergency services said they also received hundreds of calls



for assistance as trees, boulders and power poles fell onto cars and homes, and power went out in some areas.

The heavy rain comes after months of bushfires, with the downpours dousing blazes that have burned out of control for months and raising hopes for an end to the unprecedented crisis.

One major fire — a 500,000-hectare blaze south of Sydney — was declared out late Saturday as a result of the rains while several drought-stricken areas also received downpours

## UN Secretary General Likely To Visit Pakistan Later This Month

Agencies

WASHINGTON: United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres is likely to visit Pakistan later this month to attend a refugee conference, UN and diplomatic sources told Dawn on Sunday.

An official statement in Islamabad said that Pakistan would hold an international conference later this month to mark four decades of the presence of Afghan refugees in the country.

The two-day conference — "40 years of Afghan Refugees Presence in Pakistan: A New Partnership for Solidarity" — would be held in Islamabad on Feb 17-18. Prime Minister Imran Khan will inaugurate the conference, which will bring participants from 20 countries, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

Since the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is co-hosting the conference, the secretary general and other key UN officials will also participate, sources in New York said.

Besides the UN, multilateral development banks, international refugee agencies, and major non-governmental organisations are also sending their representatives. "The conference will be held at an important juncture as efforts

to consolidate peace in Afghanistan are making progress," a Foreign Office spokesperson told reporters in Islamabad. Diplomatic observers in Washington noted that the UN secretary general would be arriving in Islamabad in the middle of a major humanitarian and security crisis over India-held Kashmir.



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### NEWSMAKERS

## Citizen journalist covering coronavirus outbreak from Wuhan goes missing

**B**loomberg: Over the past couple of weeks, Chinese citizen journalists Chen Qiushi and Fang Bin have served as the world's eyes and ears inside the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak, the city of Wuhan. Broadcasting via their mobile phones, they've offered a glimpse of how dire things have been. Many of those videos have been posted to Twitter and reposted on YouTube.

**Now one of them is missing.**

Chen has been out of reach for more than 20 hours. Fang, who was silent much of Friday until a video posted in the evening, was previously detained briefly by authorities for his video of corpses in a hospital. When he filmed the dramatic moment people in hazmat suits broke



down his apartment door to take him into quarantine, it sparked hundreds of comments urging the authorities to release him.

It's no accident that their posts grew viral on American platforms. China's internet watchdog has stepped up its policing efforts, announcing

on Wednesday it would conduct "targeted supervision" on the largest social media platforms including Weibo, Tencent's WeChat and ByteDance's Douyin. The regulator has already frozen a raft of social media accounts, then stepped up online scrubbing to quiet a wave of con-

fused outrage over the death of the doctor that first raised red flags about the disease.

In this environment, US-based Twitter has emerged as the destination for locals seeking information about the spread of the virus. It's officially banned in the country, but many people hop the Great Firewall and access the platform via virtual private networks.

"There's a lot more activity happening on Twitter compared with Weibo and WeChat," said Maya Wang, senior China researcher at Human Rights Watch. There has been a Chinese community on Jack Dorsey's short-message platform since before President Xi Jinping rose to power, she added, but the recent crackdown has weakened that social circle.

## British Airways makes a record flight, crosses Atlantic in less than 5 hours

**L**ondon: For the first time in years, a commercial passenger plane has flown across the Atlantic in less than five hours.

A British Airways flight landed early Sunday morning at Heathrow Airport in London after leaving John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York just four hours and 56 minutes earlier.

That set a new speed record for subsonic — or slower than the speed of sound — commercial aircraft to fly between the two cities, according to Flightradar24, which tracks global flights.

The previous record was held by a Norwegian Air flight, which flew between the two cities with a flight time of five hours and 13 minutes.

The flight had been expected to take 102 minutes longer. The recent average flight time

between New York and London is 6 hours and 13 minutes, according to Flightradar24.

The wind and air currents were ideal for a fast flight, said Ian Petchenik, Flightradar24's

just narrowly beat out a Virgin Atlantic flight, which arrived in London at around the same time but one minute slower.

British Airways confirmed the flight time for the Boeing



director of communications. "In the winter, the jet stream dips down a bit," he said. "It's kind of in a perfect spot for flights across the North Atlantic to take advantage of it." British Airways

747 plane, saying the company prioritizes safety over speed.

The supersonic Concorde flights used to fly across the Atlantic in just over three hours, but stopped flying in 2003.