

Man shot by London cops after stabbings

Police describe it as terror-related incident

AFP, London

British police yesterday said they had shot a man in Streatham, in south London, after several people were stabbed in a suspected "terrorist-related" incident.

"A man has been shot by armed officers in #Streatham," London's Metropolitan Police said on Twitter. "At this stage it is believed a number of people have been stabbed. The circumstances are being assessed; the incident has been declared as terrorist-related."

It was not immediately clear what condition the man and those stabbed were in.

London's Ambulance Service said it had "a number of resources" attending the incident on Streatham High Road in the largely residential

neighbourhood. Police said people should avoid the area.

Unverified footage posted to social media purporting to capture some of the incident showed armed police officers surrounding a man lying on the ground on Streatham High Road.

They then abruptly moved away, urging onlookers to move back, as other emergency vehicles arrived at the scene. Another video showed helicopters overhead and police cars in the surrounding streets.

Britain has seen a spate of terrorist attacks in recent years.

In the most recent incident on November 29, 2019, convicted terrorist Usman Khan killed two people before being shot dead by police on London Bridge.

Organisational weaknesses

FROM PAGE 1

stand by me when I will be put behind bars and face cases? Currently, I am facing around a dozen cases, but the party rarely stands by me," said a ward-level BNP leader.

Polling agents or supporters of BNP candidates were hardly seen on election day though the party could assemble a good number of leaders and activists in the run-up to the elections.

"Dhaka city BNP leaders failed again and again to show their strength because the party could not motivate its city leaders. If the city's top leaders turn up at the polling centres, their followers would certainly appear and the situation would be different," said a vice-chairman of the party, wishing not to be named.

The BNP has been in a tight spot after its humiliating defeat in the 2018 national polls. Even before that the grassroots leaders repeatedly asked the party's top leadership to strengthen the Dhaka city BNP but it could not.

"Our candidates came under attack several times, houses of our leaders and activists were raided before the election, and our polling agents were detained. When the agents went to the polling centres, they were driven out by the ruling party men," BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir told The Daily Star yesterday. He also blamed the Election Commission for failing to ensure a congenial atmosphere so that voters could vote without any fear.

Media reports say how aggressive the ruling party men were and how inactive the EC was, he added.

Ruling party leaders announced that they would guard the polling centres on election day, but the BNP could not devise its strategy to ensure the presence of its leaders and activists at the polling stations. Even they could not encourage the voters to vote, said

party insiders.

Party sources said some BNP agents went to the polling stations, but they could not stay there. In most cases, they left the centres silently.

On Saturday, Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda said polling agents should have the strength to stay put at polling centres.

"The agents must have the strength to persist ... They shouldn't leave whenever anyone asks," the CEC said after a reporter drew his attention to allegations that polling agents of BNP mayor candidates were being driven out of centres.

BNP leaders said if the EC was strong, then the situation would have been different. The EC completely failed to hold a free and fair election, they said.

"By making such comments, the EC shows how subservient the commission is to the government," Fakhrul said.

BNP leaders said through this election, it was proved once again that a free and fair election was not possible under this government. The electronic voting machine is a tool of "vote rigging", they alleged.

Some party leaders also raised question why it rejected the polls results in the middle of vote count and called for a strike suddenly.

Asked about this, Fakhrul said, "Usually in these cases, decisions come promptly."

Some senior leaders said the party called for the hartal to boost up confidence of its leaders and activists. They added that the hartal was enforced yesterday as SSC exams begin today.

The party announced that it would stage demonstrations at every ward in Dhaka city tomorrow, demanding cancellation of polls results.

The BNP mayor candidates would give their formal reactions over the election results on the day.

In quarantine

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The World Health Organisation (WHO) has issued nine technical guidelines to tackle the situation.

According to the WHO, highest eight people suspected to be infected could be kept in a single room one meter apart. Negative air pressure has to be ensured inside the room with managed airflow and exhaust.

Availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other infection prevention and control supplies, like hand hygiene supplies and masks, have to be ensured for healthcare personnel and the people quarantined.

The Daily Star, however, saw the rooms in Ashkona Hajj Camp were ventilated.

"If any of the returnees carries the virus, there is a chance of transmission. It, however, could be prevented by maintaining PPE and other measures," Prof Saifullah Munshi, chairman of virology at the BSMMU told The Daily Star.

Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora, director of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control, and Research (IEDCR), told The Daily Star, "We have decided to use the camp after exploring all possible options within the short time we had.

"We have taken preparation as per the WHO guidance."

She welcomed suggestions of alternatives from experts.

The US centre for disease control (CDC) has also published a set of guidelines on its website.

The WHO and the CDC guideline suggested a contingency plan in case the demand for PPE or other equipment and materials exceeded supply capacity.

The ministry of health has so far made arrangements for isolation in Kurmitola General Hospital, Infectious Disease Hospital and the Kuwait Moitree Hospital in Dhaka.

The Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka has also been readied to deal with such patients.

Government hospitals across the country have designated five beds for coronavirus infected patients in case there was a nationwide outbreak.

Of the 312 who returned from China on Saturday, seven suspected to be infected by coronavirus were taken straight to Kurmitola General Hospital isolation from the airport. One was taken to CMH.

An IEDCR team collected samples from the patients for test in its lab in Mohakhali. The IEDCR is yet to come up with their test results.

The eight hospitalised are said to be in good health.

"In such a situation, I would suggest arranging a one-stop service center where patients with symptoms could get test and treatment facilities. The whole setting should be isolated and away from locality," Prof Munshi suggested.

He said the test to detect coronavirus could be done within 12 hours.

ON-ARRIVAL VISA BAN
Bangladesh has decided to stop issuing on-arrival visas to Chinese nationals amid concerns over the spread of coronavirus, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said yesterday.

This is a temporary restriction, he told reporters at a press conference at the ministry.

He said the foreign ministry communicated the decision to the Chinese ambassador in Dhaka and the ambassador had told them that they had no objections.

Now, before flying for Bangladesh, Chinese nationals would now have to get visas beforehand with a medical certificate stating they are not infected. "We also requested Chinese authorities that the Chinese nationals working in Bangladesh not visit China for a month," he added.

Meanwhile, authorities at Teknaf land port yesterday issued an alert. They alert was issued as Chinese products enter Bangladesh through Myanmar, our correspondent in Cox's Bazar reports citing officials.



Posters for the recent city polls kept on one side of the road by city corporation workers in Kakrail yesterday. Inset, workers busy removing posters from the street. The Election Commission directed all city polls' contestants to remove all campaign posters and other materials within the next 24 hours.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Lamination woes

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Meanwhile, the roads are being littered with some of the tattered posters and some posters have ended up in open drains.

In the weeks preceding Saturday's elections to Dhaka north and south city corporations, millions of laminated and polythene-covered posters blocked whatever is left of the city skyline.

As environmentalists raised concerns over disposal, the High Court on January 22 ordered the production and display of laminated posters to stop. But the posters became more ubiquitous by the hour.

The Environment and Social Development Organisation (ESDO) last month said around 2,472 tonnes of plastic waste would be generated

from the campaigns.

"We've started taking down the posters the morning after the election... But I think it will probably take 8-10 days," Air Commodore Zahid Hossain, chief waste management officer at the DSCC, told The Daily Star.

He noted that many of the posters were paper-only and that it would be a blessing if rag pickers collected those posters and sold those to people who make single-use paper bags, he added.

DNCC spokesperson ASM Mamun said they had cleared six areas of posters yesterday.

"Our 2,850 cleaning staff are working and we hope that we will be able to take down all the posters soon," he told this newspaper.

The DNCC is piling up the posters at the secondary transfer station at every ward.

"We are not dumping or burning these considering the environmental impacts. We are looking for organisations interested in recycling," Mamun said.

ESDO Secretary General Shahriar Hossain said the plastic films on the posters would not decompose if dumped in a landfill or somewhere else.

"These are not recyclable. The hard PVC or polyvinyl chloride used in making something like an identity card can be partially recycled. But the double-layer plastic [in the posters] is not recyclable at all," he said.

The posters should be kept from being exposed to the environment, he

added.

Contacted, AKM Rafique Ahammad, director general of the Department of Environment, said he didn't know that the laminated posters were not recyclable.

He added that his department had written to the Election Commission about the matter.

"We also informed the local government department and copies of the letter has been sent to the city corporations so that they dispose of these in an environment-friendly manner.

"We requested the Election Commission to include the issue in future code of conducts. Rather, we recommended using information technology and digital displays for campaigning," he said.

Tainted figures, rebels fare well

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AL-backed candidates won 98 of the 129 general ward councillor posts in the two city corporations. AL rebel candidates won in 19 wards.

Besides, nine BNP-supported candidates, and one each from the Jatiya Party, the Bangladesh Jatiya Party and the Islami Andolan won the elections, say sources in the parties. No BNP rebel candidate succeeded in any ward.

Of the 43 councillor seats reserved for women in the two city corporations, 31 were won by AL-backed candidates, seven by BNP-supported contenders and five by independent candidates. No AL or BNP rebel candidates won in the reserved seats.

In the DNCC, AL-backed councillor candidates won in 41 wards and AL rebels in 10 wards. BNP-supported candidates won in two wards. Only one JP-backed councillor contender emerged victorious.

In the south, AL-supported

candidates won in 57 wards and AL rebels in nine wards. BNP-backed contestants secured victory in two wards while one candidate backed by the Bangladesh Jatiya Party and one by the Islami Andolan succeeded in the polls.

CONTROVERSIAL FIGURES
In the DNCC, nine controversial councillor candidates, backed by the AL, secured victory in the city polls.

They are Jamal Mustafa from ward-4, Abdur Rouf Nannu from ward-5, Tofazzal Hossain from ward-7, Abu Taher from ward-10, Zakir Hossain from ward-18, Faridur Rahman Iran from ward-27, Mohammad Harun-ur-Rashid from ward-13, Forkan Hossain from ward-28 and Abul Hasem Hasu from ward-30.

In the South, eight controversial AL-backed councillor candidates won the polls.

They are Anisur Rahman from ward-2, Farid Uddin Ahmed Ratan from ward-20, Hasibur Rahman

Manik from ward-26, Abu Ahmed Mannafi from ward-38, Kazi Habibur Rahman Habu from ward-51, Atiqur Rahman from ward-70, Mahmudul Hasan Polin from ward-68 and Mohammad Hossain from Ward-56.

AL REBELS
The AL rebel candidates who won the polls in the DNCC include Quazi Zahur from ward-3, Taijul Islam Chowdhury from ward-6, Tofazzal Hossain from ward-7, Humayun Rashid Jony from ward-14, Salimullah Salu from ward-29, Abul Hasem from ward-30, Abdul Matin from ward-41, Ayub Ansari from ward-42, and Anisur Rahman from ward-49.

In the DSCC, the successful AL rebel candidates include Sultan Mia from ward-8, Mamunur Rashid from ward-12, Kamal Uddin Kabul from ward-28, Irfan Selim from ward-30, Sahana Akhter from ward-47, Ruhul Amin from ward-52, and Salahuddin Ahmed from ward-69.

Researchers become prime targets in Mideast power plays

AFP, Paris

Authoritarian governments in the Middle East are increasingly willing to seize researchers and academics, who are seen as valuable bargaining chips in their jousting with Western nations, analysts warn.

"The risks now facing researchers in the Middle East are unprecedented," said Jean-Pierre Filiu, a historian at France's Sciences Po university.

Filiu was speaking on Friday at a forum dedicated to two French colleagues, Fariba Adelhkhah and Roland Marchal, who have been imprisoned in Iran since their arrest last June.

They have been charged with conspiracy or collusion against national security, while Australian Kylie Moore-Gilbert of the University of Melbourne is serving a 10-year sentence on espionage charges.

Often authorities target their own citizens who have dual nationality, like Adelhkhah, with Tehran in particular refusing to recognise a second passport.

In October, Iran confirmed the arrest of British-Iranian anthropologist Kamil Ahmadi before releasing him, and in December it freed Xiyue Wang, a Chinese-American researcher serving a 10-year term on spying charges.

Wang was released in exchange for Masoud Soleimani, an Iranian who had been held in the US for allegedly breaching sanctions -- and Tehran said it was open to other such exchanges.

But over the decades, the targeting of academics has often been more violent.

"It started with gunshots at the office of Malcolm Kerr, president of the American University of Beirut, who was murdered in 1984 by Hezbollah, already an arm of the Revolutionary Guards" of Iran, Filiu said.

Two years later, French sociologist Michel Seurat died in a Lebanese prison after his arrest because he was "denied medical care," he said.

"They were victims of the settling of scores by Iran with Washington and Paris."

More recently, Italian doctorate student Giulio Regeni disappeared in Egypt while researching trade unions, one of the country's last independent civil actors -- and increasingly in the crosshairs of the authorities.

His badly mutilated body was found more than a week later by the side of a road on the outskirts of the Egyptian capital, with an Italian post-mortem later indicating he had been tortured.

First foreign death reported

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Philippines was a 44-year-old man from Wuhan, according to the World Health Organization, which has declared the epidemic a global health emergency.

India's second case of coronavirus has been reported in Kerala, health ministry said yesterday morning. Over 1,700 people are under surveillance at their homes in Kerala for possible exposure to the virus.

China has embarked on unprecedented efforts to contain the virus, which is believed to have jumped to humans from a Wuhan animal market and can be transmitted among people in a similar fashion to the flu.

LOCKDOWNS
Those efforts have included extraordinary quarantines in Wuhan and surrounding cities, with all transport routes out banned, effectively sealing of more than 50 million people.

But 10 days after locking down Wuhan, authorities yesterday announced similar draconian curbs on people movement in Wenzhou, 800 kilometres (500 miles) away.

Wenzhou is a coastal city of nine million people in Zhejiang province, part of the eastern industrial heartland that has powered China's economic rise over recent decades.

Only one resident per household is allowed to go out every two days to buy necessities, and 46 highway toll stations have been closed, authorities announced.

The city had previously closed public places such as cinemas and museums and suspended public transport.

Zhejiang has 661 confirmed infections, with 265 of those in Wenzhou, according to the government.

This is the highest tally for any

province in China after ground-zero Hebei.

CLOSING BORDERS
Internationally, governments continued their efforts to erect virtual borders against the disease.

The United States, Australia, New Zealand and Israel have banned foreign nationals from visiting if they had been in China recently, and warned their own citizens from travelling there.

Mongolia, Russia and Nepal closed their land borders, while Papua New Guinea went as far as to ban anyone arriving from ports or airports across Asia.

The news of the man's death in Manila was released yesterday shortly after the Philippines said it would immediately halt the arrivals of any foreign travellers from China, reports AFP.

The number of countries reporting infections rose to 24 after Britain, Russia and Sweden this weekend confirmed their first cases.

MORE DEATHS
The death toll in China climbed to 304 yesterday after authorities reporting 45 new deaths from the previous day.

There were 2,590 new confirmed cases in China, bringing the total to nearly 14,500.

The number of confirmed infections in China is far higher than the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome outbreak of 2002-03.

SARS, which is caused by a pathogen similar to the new coronavirus and also originated in China, killed 774 people worldwide -- most of them in mainland China and Hong Kong.

HOLIDAY ENDING

The emergence of the virus came at the worst time for China, coinciding with the Lunar New Year Holiday when hundreds of millions travel across the