

'SIDING WITH THE AYATOLLAHS'

Pompeo blasts European powers for not supporting US as it seeks to reimpose all UN sanctions on Iran
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MUHARRAM 2, 1442 HJRI

12 PAGES PRICE : Tk12.00



BANGLADESH UPDATE



2,401
New cases in 24hrs



2,90,360
Total cases



3,861
Deaths



1,72,615
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE



798,150
Deaths



22,920,371
Total cases

'CROSSFIRES', 'GUNFIGHTS' IN LAST 2 YRS Body count high, not just in Teknaf

ZYMA ISLAM

While all eyes are on the Teknaf police right now, it is imperative to remember that deaths due to "gunfights", "shootouts", and "crossfires" happen all across the country -- and that the numbers have skyrocketed since the war on drugs was announced in May 2018.

These deaths happen primarily at the hands of three agencies: the police, Rapid Action Battalion, and Border Guard Bangladesh.

There are 649 police stations, 61 BGB battalions, and 15 Rab battalions in total -- but reports published by The Daily Star between August 1, 2018 and August 1 this year show that just like the Teknaf police, some units are more complicit than others in this national crisis.

The death toll of no other district comes close to the number of people killed in so-called gunfights in Cox's Bazar, which includes Teknaf upazila, in the last two years -- 184 people to be exact, of which 87 was by just Teknaf police.

But no matter what the body count of a certain district may be, the majority of the deaths happened in "gunfights" with one or two prominent law enforcement units in the area.

Take Rab-7 for instance, which serves 16 upazilas in Chattogram, Feni, Rangamati, and Khagrachhari districts.

'CROSSFIRE' DEATHS (SINCE AUG 2018)	
Cox's Bazar	184
16 upazilas in Ctg, Feni, Rangamati, Khagrachhari	68
Dhaka	60
Satkhira, Bagerhat	46
Kushtia, Meherpur	37

DATA SOURCE: TDS REPORTS

Between August 2018 and this month, this newspaper reported at least 68 deaths due to so-called gunfights in these upazilas -- giving this region the second highest death count after Cox's Bazar district -- 31 of which were by this one unit alone.

Most of the "shootouts" with Rab-7 happened in Banskhali, with Sitakunda a close second.

For all of these "gunfights", the rhetoric broadcast by Rab-7 was almost unanimously this -- the law enforcers received a tip-off that criminals gathered at a certain spot, and when they arrived, the criminals sensed their presence, shot at them, forcing them to retaliate.

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Children sitting on a tree stump looking at the Dhaleshwari, which might wash away their homes in Bhakurta area of Savar. With the river rapidly eroding its banks for over two weeks, residents are racing against time to dismantle their homes and save whatever they can so that they have something when they start over from scratch. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Stand beside newspaper industry

Noab urges govt

Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh has urged the government to firmly stand beside the newspaper industry amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

Following is the full text of a statement Noab issued yesterday:

Like many other economies across the globe, the economy of Bangladesh too, is at a standstill and the crisis has largely affected the newspaper industry and it is nearly on the verge of collapse. Sale of newspapers has plummeted severely, so did the number of advertisements. Many newspapers across the country have stopped publishing and shifted online. As a result, many of the newspapers are unable to maintain the regular payment of their employees. Newspapers that decided to continue

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Gas crisis hits parts of capital

Officials blame it on disruption in gas supply at Maheshkhali LNG terminal due to inclement weather

HELEMUL ALAM

A disruption due to bad weather in the gas supply in the Liquefied Natural Gas terminal in Moheshkhali has led to a severe gas crisis in the capital over the last week.

Residents of many parts of the city complained that the supply of gas in their areas was so low that they found it difficult to cook food during the daytime.

"The problem starts after 8:00am and continues throughout the day. In fact, by noon we find no gas. Things start to improve after 9:00pm. My wife prepares food for my children late at night," said Sirajul Haque Khan, a resident of Mirhajirbagh.

Officials said the problem is caused by the low pressure formed over the Bay of Bengal.

Md Kamruzzaman, director (operation and mines) of Bangladesh Oil, Gas and Mineral Corporation, said due to the bad weather, the level of the wave went above three metres which prevented the supply of LNG from ships anchored on the sea.

"It happened between August 12 and 13," he told The Daily Star. "We get nearly 600 million CFT LNG daily. After the disruption we had to adjust. Now we're getting about 560 million CFT daily," he said, adding that the situation would continue to prevail for five or six more days.

According to the Met office, the low pressure in the Bay is now at Urisya and Gangani, West Bengal, because of which weather at sea is very rough. Aftab Uddin, a meteorologist of the meteorological department, said

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SINHA KILLING PROBE 3 cops taken to the spot to reenact scene

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Officer-in-Charge Pradeep Kumar Das in handcuffs -- this is not a sight that the villagers of Shamlapur in Teknaf thought they'd ever see in their lifetimes.

With at least 84 "shootouts" under his belt, all committed in the upazila in Cox's Bazar, and no prosecution in any of the cases, this 2019 Bangladesh Police Medal recipient had gained a reputation of impunity.

But yesterday, investigators brought Pradeep, Inspector Liaquat and Sub-inspector Nandadulal Rakshit to the spot where Maj (ret'd) Sinha Rashed Khan was killed on July 31, to provide a blow-by-blow account of what happened. The media was invited to watch from the sidelines.

"Sinha left the Border Guard Bangladesh check-post at 9:23pm, on his way back to Cox's from Teknaf. He probably reached here by 9:26 pm, and was killed in the next two minutes or so. We are analysing every second of the few minutes within which the shooting took place, and the accused are being brought

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Extreme poverty may hit 100m

Warns World Bank chief as virus bites back in Europe; LatAm tops 250,000 deaths; cases in India nears 3 million

AGENCIES

The coronavirus pandemic may have driven as many as 100 million people back into extreme poverty, World Bank President David Malpass warned as global health authorities said European countries should be able to ride out a surge in cases without reimposing full lockdowns.

Worrying spikes in cases reported in France, Italy, Spain and Germany showed the pandemic was rebounding across the continent -- often due to travel, summer holidays and parties.

While Italy registered 845 new cases on Thursday, its highest daily tally since May, France reported 4,700 fresh infections -- a massive increase on the previous day. Spain's daily increases topped even those of France, and Germany was concerned about its own resurgence.

A jump in infections pushed India closer to the 3 million mark yesterday, piling pressure on authorities to prevent huge gatherings this weekend as Mumbai celebrates the Hindu elephant-headed god Ganesh. The country reported 68,898 new cases in the past 24 hours -- the third straight daily increase above 60,000 -- taking the total to 2.91 million, the third worst in the world after the United States and Brazil.

In an interview with AFP on Thursday, World Bank President David Malpass warned the pandemic may have driven as many as 100 million people back into extreme poverty.

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DETENTION IN KL Rayhan finally released, flies home today

SHARIFUL HASAN

Rayhan Kabir, a young Bangladeshi who was arrested in Malaysia, was finally released and he left for Dhaka on a Malaysian Airlines flight yesterday. He was scheduled to land in Dhaka at 1:00am today.

Malaysian immigration department Director-General Datuk Khairul Dzamee Daud said Rayhan, who was featured in an documentary of international news channel Al Jazeera, would be sent home via a flight from the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA).

"The deportation team will be transporting Md Rayhan to KLIA at 9:00pm," he said in a statement yesterday.

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Only 4pc of over 1 lakh patients now in hospital

Shows DGHS data; 39 die, 2,401 test positive in a day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Only four percent of active Covid-19 cases are undergoing treatment at hospitals while the rest are taking treatment at home, says the Directorate General of Health Services.

Since March 8, some 2,90,360 people have been diagnosed with the novel coronavirus. Of them, 3,861 died and 1,72,615 recovered.

The country has now 1,13,884 Covid-19 patients, according to the DGHS.

In its press release yesterday, the directorate said 4,631 Covid-19 patients are being treated at hospitals across the country.

Of them, 342 are admitted to intensive care units, it said.

Meanwhile, 39 more people died from

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People on Bangabandhu Avenue watching Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina give a speech from the Gono Bhaban yesterday, marking the day a grenade attack on her rally in 2004 killed and maimed many. Inset, flowers placed at the mural of Ivy Rahman who was killed in the attack.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

DISCUSSION ON AUG 21 Khaleda behind the attack: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Recalling the barbaric carnage, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday alleged that then PM Khaleda Zia was behind the August 21, 2004, grenade attack as carrying out killings is their habit.

"Returning to power, Khaleda Zia launched the grenade attack. Those involved in the conspiracy of August 21 grenade attack during interrogation later mentioned that Khaleda Zia's son Tarique Rahman was also involved in that conspiracy," she said.

Hasina made the allegation while addressing a discussion marking the August 21 grenade attack. The Awami League organised the event at its Bangabandhu Avenue central office. The PM attended the event virtually from the Gono Bhaban.

Hasina said it was not possible to launch an attack like that of August 21, had there been no direct patronage from the then BNP-Jamaat government.

She said the then BNP-Jamaat government assembled the terrorists and militants in one place, provided them training for carrying out such an attack and gave them a safe passage to flee abroad.

"They [BNP-Jamaat government] thought that I had died [in the grenade attack], but when they came to know that I didn't die, they allowed the militants to flee the country," Hasina said.

After the attack, she said police lobbed teargas shells and charged batons on AL leaders and activists instead of rescuing the victims.

Hasina said even the BNP-Jamaat-backed doctors did not attend the injured AL leaders and activists at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, and no patient was allowed to enter Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University as it was closed.

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