



A zebra crossing is being painted on Patuakhali-Kuakata road in Patuakhali town yesterday. The authorities made the move to prevent accidents. PHOTO: STAR

US not adhering to its side of the bargain

Accuses Pyongyang; Red Cross says North Korea facing food catastrophe

North Korea issued a forceful statement Thursday against what it said were elements of the US government which are not adhering to the spirit of the dialogue established by US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un at the Singapore summit in June.

Pyongyang said while it had taken "such practical denuclearization steps as discontinuing nuclear test and ICBM test fire" and "broadminded measures" like the repatriation of US Korean War remains, "the US responded to our expectation by inciting international sanctions and pressure against (North Korea)."

The statement, credited to North Korea's Foreign Ministry, notably did not blame Trump but singled out "some high-level officials within the US administration" who it said were going against the President's will. It also echoed criticism of previous administrations' approaches to North Korea that Trump himself has made.

The statement seems intended to hit a target audience in the US, being released in English by North Korea's mission to the United Nations in New York, rather than just through the state-run Korean Central News Agency, the usual avenue for government announcements.

The statement was also published by KCNA.

North Korea's criticism of the US came after Trump's national security adviser John Bolton said this week that the administration does not feel Pyongyang is living up to its end of the deal.

Bolton is a longtime Korea hawk and had been a critic of talking with North Korea before Trump opened diplomatic relations. Speaking to CNN on Monday, he said "we're waiting for the North Koreans to begin the process of denuclearization, which they committed to in Singapore and which they've not yet done."

ATM booth guard killed in Joypurhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

Police recovered the slit-throat body of a security guard of an ATM booth in Joypurhat town yesterday. The body of Shafiqul Islam, 33, was found inside a building in the town around 5:30pm, hours after an attempt to loot cash from the booth.

Based on primary investigation, police suspect that Shafiqul was involved in the attempted robbery, said Rashidul Hasan, superintendent of police in the district.

Muminul Haque, inspector (investigation) of Joypurhat Sadar Police Station, said some locals discovered a damaged ATM machine of a private bank in Batamour area yesterday morning.

On information, police rushed to the spot but found the booth's security guard, Shafiqul, was missing, said an official of the bank, wishing not to be named. His body was recovered later in the afternoon. It was sent to Joypurhat Modern Hospital for autopsy.

Police said they were investigating the matter.

Reporters Without Borders 'unblocks' website in Egypt

AFP, Paris

Reporters Without Borders said it had restored its website in Egypt yesterday, exactly one year after it was blocked by the authorities.

"Access to hundreds of websites are blocked in Egypt, placing journalists in a virtual jail," the press freedom body said on its site.

"To draw attention to this censorship, and to circumvent it, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) is making its own website accessible again in Egypt today."

More than 500 news and NGO sites are blocked in Egypt, according to the Cairo-based Association for the Freedom of Thought and Expression.

Around 100 news sites -- including Al Jazeera, Huffington Post Arabic and BuzzFeed -- were blocked last year, RSF said.

The sites of independent local news organisations have also been blocked.

Human rights groups regularly criticise moves by President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's government to curtail free speech.

"Online censorship is one side of the oppressive system that the regime wants to extend in Egypt," said Elodie Vialle, the head of Reporters Without Borders' journalism and technology desk.

"It entails putting journalists 'on mute' in order to make it easier to spread pro-government content."

"The other side is that the technology is used to spy on them, which in some cases is sold by European companies," added Vialle.

4 killed in Canada shooting

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Witnesses described to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) seeing the barrel of a rifle or shotgun poking out from the window of a low-rise apartment building and firing into a courtyard, while the bodies of two officers lay on the ground nearby.

Heavily armed police, paramedics and firefighters quickly descended on the scene and a lockdown of the neighbourhood was ordered, trapping some early risers in daycare facilities, coffee shops and other businesses.

Others were seen being escorted by police from their homes -- some still in pyjamas -- to safety beyond a police cordon.

Authorities in the provincial capital initially urged people in the Brookside neighbourhood to stay indoors, describing an "active incident" on Twitter.

Around an hour after giving first word of the killings, a second and then a third message from police said: "At this time, we can confirm that we have one suspect in custody" and "of the four people killed in this morning's shootings on Brookside Drive, two were Fredericton police officers."

Then came word that the threat had been neutralised, the lockdown was lifted and the police cordon was shrunk to a few blocks: "We can confirm that there is no further threat to the public, and lockdowns are not required at this time."

Also, police added: "We can confirm that the suspect in custody is currently being treated for serious injuries related to this morning's shooting incident."

The circumstances of the shooting in Fredericton, about 75 kilometers (45 miles) from the border between Canada and the US state of Maine, were not immediately clear.

The shooting happened in a sleepy residential area of the city north of downtown.

FIRECRACKER SOUNDS

Public broadcaster CBC quoted Robert DiDiodato, who lives in the area, as saying he heard a series of "firecracker" sounds around 7:00 am.

"With the tempo, it might've been a gunshot," he said. "It was sort of like a pop, pop, pop, pop."

He said that about five minutes later he could hear similar sounds near his home.

"Doors are locked and everybody's

inside," he said, according to CBC.

Another resident, who gave his name only as Justin, told the broadcaster: "I woke up and I heard gunshots and I looked outside my window."

"The cops were trying to put one of the officers in their vehicle to take them out to safety," he said, adding that he tried to help but was told by the officers to take cover.

Another resident, Pierre Huard, told Radio-Canada he initially thought the sounds were "children playing with firecrackers."

The mass shooting is the second in the province in recent years, and comes only weeks after a man opened fire on July 22 in a bustling nightlife district of Toronto, killing an 18 year old woman and a 10 year old girl and wounding 13 other people.

The latter triggered a public debate on rising gun violence and gangs in Canadian cities, and calls for a handgun ban.

"Awful news coming out of Fredericton," Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said in a Twitter message.

"My heart goes out to everyone affected by this morning's shooting. We're following the situation closely," he said.

Pushed off

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The mother of two died at the scene from head injuries, said AKM Mizanul Haque, officer-in-charge of Mirzapur Police Station.

Ashikuzzaman, senior judicial magistrate of a Tangail court, sent Ruhul to jail after recording his confessional statement and placed his younger brother and assistant Sohel Rana and Arif on a three-day remand, the OC said.

Sheuli Begum, 28, and Arif, 35, were residents of Charpara village of Mirzapur. They worked at Comfit Composite Knit Ltd in the upazila.

They boarded the bus at Charpara around 7:15am on July 26 to go to work. They were the only passengers in the bus, the ASP said.

Arif tried to grope Sheuli right after they boarded the vehicle, the officer added.

Although Sheuli struggled to protect herself and screamed, Ruhul kept driving. At one point during the scuffle, Arif pushed her off the bus, he said.

Her body was recovered by Gorai Highway Police.

Her husband Sharif Hossain filed a case three days later with Mirzapur Police Station accusing unidentified criminals.

Mirzapur police later seized the bus and arrested its staff in Ashulia area on August 6. Arif was arrested the next day, the ASP added.

Govt to bring back

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believe the arrest of Mizan would help them get details about JMB's strength, members and blueprints. They are also hopeful about solving a number of militant-related cases, including the one filed for the attack on the prison van.

In 2014, an armed gang ambushed the prison van and snatched Mizan and two other dreaded JMB militants Salauddin Ahmed alias Salehin and Rakib Hasan Russell alias Hafez Mahmud.

Since then, Mizan, and Salehin, now the chief of mainstream JMB, had been hiding in India, according to Bangladesh law enforcers. Hafez Mahmud was arrested and killed in a "gunfight" with law enforcers within five hours of the incident.

Mizan, who according to the National Investigation Agency is the top leader of JMB in India, is wanted in the Burdwan blast case in West Bengal. He is also the mastermind of the Bodh

Gaya blast in January 19 this year, NID said.

After years of hunt for him, the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) on May 14 in 2009 captured "Boma" Mizan, at Taltola in the city's Mirpur area. He joined JMB as a full-timer in 2001 and had close relations with executed militant kingpins Shaekh Abdur Rahman and Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai.

In Bangladesh, he has been sentenced to different terms in prison, including for life, on various charges.

Our New Delhi correspondent adds: In initial interrogation by the NIA, "Boma" Mizan revealed that the group led by him had planned to cause IEDs explosion at Bodh Gaya to "avenge the atrocities on Rohingyas in Myanmar".

He also said Mizan had been residing in Bengaluru since 2014 at different places on rent and was selling clothes as a hawker to conceal his identity.



An Indian man carries a basket of bananas next to houses immersed in flood waters in Ernakulam district of Kochi, in the Indian state of Kerala yesterday. Flash floods have claimed at least 27 lives Kerala, prompting the US to advise its citizens to stay away from the tourist hotspot. PHOTO: AFP

Call to free Shahidul gets

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by law enforcers from his house in Dhanmondi on August 5, hours after he posted a video on Facebook and participated in an interview with Al Jazeera about the road safety protests in Dhaka, where more than 40 journalists and media workers were injured by groups of armed men, the statement said.

On August 6, a Dhaka court placed Shahidul on remand in a case filed under the controversial section 57 of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Act on charges of "spreading propaganda and false information against the government".

Shahidul told the court that he was tortured in custody. Police refuted the allegation.

In response to a writ petition filed by his wife Prof Rahnuma Ahmed on Tuesday, the High Court directed the authorities to immediately send him to the BSMMU and arrange his medical examination and submit a report by 10:30am on August 9.

The Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) authorities formed a four-member medical board to examine his physical and mental condition. The board's report submitted to the HC mentioned that he was physically and mentally sound.

During a hearing on Thursday, Rahnuma's lawyer Sara Hossain argued before the HC that there was no psychologist in the medical board to examine his mental condition.

After the hearing, the court directed the home secretary to arrange examination to determine whether Shahidul was tortured in custody and submit a report to this effect before the lower court concerned by August 13.

The statement said journalists and rights activists have consistently raised concerns that the ICT Act is incompatible

Dozens killed as Taliban attack

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A statement from US military headquarters in Kabul said fighting had ceased by 8:00am (0330 GMT) and Afghan forces had held their ground and maintained control of all government centres.

"US forces responded with close-air support (U.S. attack helicopters) and conducted one strike (drone). In addition, US aircraft conducted a show of presence," Lt Col Martin O'Donnell, spokesman for US Forces-Afghanistan, said in an emailed statement.

Officials said clashes between security forces and the Taliban started at around 2:00am, forcing the closure of the main highway linking Ghazni to Kabul, 150 km (95 miles) to the northeast.

"The Taliban are dropping missiles near residential and commercial areas. There has not been a single minute of silence for the last eight hours," said a senior government official in Ghazni early in the day.

Local residents said Taliban fighters were walking openly in the streets in parts of the city.

Ghazni police chief General Farid Ahmad Mashal said the Taliban seized several parts of the city, which has been under threat for months, with local officials warning that heavy fighting in surrounding districts showed the city was increasingly vulnerable.

President Ashraf Ghani held a meeting with top commanders in Kabul to discuss the situation in Ghazni, where the Taliban appear to have repeated the tactics that almost gave them control of the western city of Farah in May.

As helicopters circled overhead in the early morning a second government official said it was too dangerous for people to venture out to the streets.

"It is not possible to get out of our homes to help the injured or collect bodies," he said.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid issued a statement saying multiple attacks were launched overnight in Ghazni. As many as 140 Afghan soldiers and police had been killed and large quantities of weapons and equipment had been seized, he said.

However, O'Donnell said initial reports indicated minimal casualties among security forces.

"This is yet another failed Taliban attempt to seize terrain, which will result in yet another eye-catching but strategically inconsequential headline," he said.

The attack came amid growing hopes of talks to end 17 years of war in Afghanistan and less than two weeks before the Eid al-Adha festival, when the Western-backed government in Kabul had been considering offering a ceasefire.

In June, a three-day truce over the Eid al-Fitr holiday brought unprecedented scenes of unarmed Taliban fighters mingling with security forces in Kabul and other cities, offering a glimpse of peace and fuelling hopes of negotiations to end the war.

However, even while conducting preliminary discussions with US officials, the Taliban have launched a series of operations that underscored their ability to inflict severe damage on Afghan forces.

Just last week, an attack on an army post in Uruzgan, a province bordering Ghazni, killed dozens of soldiers, adding to what one US report called the "shockingly high" casualties taken ever since Nato ended its main combat mission in 2014.

The Taliban have so far failed to take and hold any provincial centre since they overran the northern city of Kunduz in 2015 before being driven off with the support of US air strikes and Special Forces units.

They came close to repeating the feat in 2016, and in May this year they nearly overran Farah before being beaten back with the aid of US forces.

Three die

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became unconscious, AC Sohel said, adding that failing to get response from the duo inside the tank, Imran then entered the tank and inhaled toxic gas.

Their playmates later rescued the trio in an unconscious state and rushed them to CMCH, where doctors declared them dead, said ASI Alauddin.

Witnesses said the 10-feet long and 12-feet deep water tank was built one month ago.

Deputy Commissioner (North) Abdul Warish of CMP said they were looking into whether it was an accident.