

## Heavy fighting near key town in Karabakh

AFP, Yerevan

Armenia yesterday reported that “fierce combat” with Azerbaijani forces took place overnight near the town of Shusha, a key stronghold in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region.

After weeks of heavy fighting over the mountainous province, Azerbaijan appears to be closing in on the strategic town, 15 kilometres (nine miles) from Karabakh’s main city Stepanakert.

The hilltop town of Shusha is located on a main road that links the unrecognised republic’s capital with the territory of Armenia, which backs the separatists fighting for Karabakh’s independence.

Armenian defence ministry spokeswoman Shushan Stepanyan reported “especially intensive and fierce combat” overnight outside Shusha, adding that numerous attacks from Azerbaijan were thwarted.

Armenia also said that throughout the night there was regular shelling on Shusha, home to an iconic Armenian cathedral that was damaged in attacks last month.

The Azerbaijani Defence Ministry rejected this claim saying the information of shelling on Shusha is “completely untrue”.

Clashes broke out late September between Azerbaijan and Armenia-backed separatists over control of Karabakh, a region that proclaimed its independence from Baku during a war in the 1990s.

The recent flare-up has been the worst in decades, killing more than 1,000 people, including civilians, although the death toll is believed to be much higher.

The fighting has continued despite several attempts by Russia, France and the United States to help reach a lasting ceasefire.

Those three countries make up the Minsk group of mediators which helped broker a truce between the ex-Soviet rivals in 1994 but are yet to find a lasting solution to the long-simmering conflict.

Both sides have accused the other of targeting civilian areas and the United Nations this week decried indiscriminate attacks that could amount to “war crimes”.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has appealed to ally Russia for military support, while Azerbaijan has won the backing of Turkey, which is accused of sending mercenaries to Karabakh to fight against the separatists.

## First Eid

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There was a stream of people to Gono Bhaban to meet Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to convey their Eid greetings. Bangabandhu met hundreds of people both at his private residence and at the official residence and exchanged happy wishes. The prime minister also called on the President Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury at the Bangabhaban to convey Eid greetings. **SADRUDDIN’S EID GREETINGS TO BANGABANDHU** Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, the United Nations high commissioner for refugees, has sent congratulations to Bangabandhu and through him to the people of Bangladesh on the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr and sent his best wishers for the health and happiness of the prime minister and the people of Bangladesh. The prime minister in his reply thanked the UN high commissioner for refugees for his Eid greetings and expressed similar sentiments on this auspicious occasion.

### BANGLADESH WILL BE INCLUDED IN UN AGENDA

The Yugoslav resolution, supported by 20 countries, calling for the admission of Bangladesh in the United Nations at an early date is today sent for registration to the General Assembly Secretariat. The Yugoslav resolution will now be included in the General Assembly Agenda for discussion sometime in the third week of November, 1972. *SOURCES: November 11, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Dainik Ittefaq.*

## 13 more die

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Republic, according to worldometers. info.

Meanwhile, a total of 1,541 Covid-19 patients recovered in the same 24 hours, raising the total number of recoveries to 336,568.

With this, the recovery rate rose to 80.37 percent.

Among the 13 deceased, 11 were males and two females. All of them died in hospitals, according to the press release.

One of them was aged between 21 and 30 years, one between 41 and 50, two between 51 and 60 and nine were above 60 years.

One of the deceased was from Khulna division while two were from Sylhet, three from Rangpur and the rest seven were from Dhaka division, added the press release.

As of yesterday noon, a total of 2,511 Covid-19 patients were undergoing treatment in general beds of hospitals while 265 were in ICUs across the country.



PHOTO: STAR

The memorial of Wickliffe Syiem, the deputy king of Nongstoin state, one of 25 Khasi states in present-day Meghalaya, stands at Rajai village in Tahirpur upazila of Sunamganj. Wickliffe, who fought for his state’s independence from the Indian government, lived in exile here till his death in 1988.

## A free man and a lost kingdom

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Father felt it was like home and settled down, marrying my mother here,” said his son.

While India was gaining independence, all 25 states in the Khasi Hills signed the Standstill Agreement on August 9, 1947, according to historians David R Syiemlieh and Helen Giri.

Syiemlieh in his article “Constitutional Developments in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills 1824-1950” and Giri in the book “Khasis under British rule” shed light on the events centring on the Khasi states soon after the 1947 Partition.

Besides, the article titled “An Administrative History of Hima Nongstoin in the Colonial Period” by P Gracefulness Bonney also discussed this historic episode of Indian sub-continent.

On December 15, 1947, 19 Khasi states signed the Instrument of Accession that made them part of the Indian Dominion.

But six other states did not sign it and of them, Nongstoin declared independence on January 13, 1948.

King Sib Singh Syiem, Wickliffe’s uncle, was elected as president with deputy king Wickliffe as secretary of the state.

According to historian I Nongbri, the writer of “Ka Histori Ka Ri Hynniewtrep (Khasi land)”, the troops from India came to Nongstoin on March 10 that year, said Andrew Sholomar.

King Sib Singh Syiem was detained and Nongstoin was forced to sign the Instrument of Accession on March 18, 1948. Five other remaining states were also included in Indian Domino eventually, historians say.

As Wickliffe was out of the state capital at the time, the Indian government barred his entry to the kingdom.

Hearing of the takeover, Wickliffe wrote a letter to the then Indian Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on March 20.

In the letter, a copy of which was shown to The Daily Star by Andrew Sholomar, who lives in Rajai, Wickliffe urged the Indian PM to order the provincial Assam government to stop its activities in Nongstoin.

As an exiled leader, he camped in Dhaka and on March 24, sent a telegram to then UN secretary-general Trygve Lie to save the independence of his state, according to a report by The Statesman on March 28, 1948.

T Rngaid, in his book “U Wickliffe Syiem”, claimed that Wickliffe also went to the UN Headquarters in New York to gain support.

Wickliffe’s struggle eventually failed and Nongstoin remains a part of India.

The Instrument of Accession only gives authority of defence, communications and foreign affairs to the central government. Till today, no Khasi state has signed the Instrument of Merger, which makes it a full-fledged part of India.

### WICKLIFFE’S LIFE AND LEGACY

Born on August 15, 1909, in Nongstoin, Wickliffe completed a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering from a college in Baroda, Gujarat in 1937, and became the first engineer from the Khasi community.

After completing his post-graduation in London, he joined as Attorney General of Nongstoin in

1940.

During the Second World War, he also served in the British Army as a wing commander.

Wickliffe made a career as an engineer at the Fenchuganj Fertiliser Factory, Mitsubishi Motors Factory, and Joypurhat Sugar Mill in the then East Pakistan, said his son.

He was the chief engineer of the Tekerghat Limestone project at Tahirpur upazila before he retired in 1971.

The once deputy king lived by his word of not returning to Nongstoin till the day he breathed his last in exile -- on October 21, 1988.

After his death, he was buried at Rajai village. His descendants from two wives live in Meghalaya of India and in Bangladesh.

Like Khasi king Tirot Singh and Khasi freedom fighter U Kiang Nangbah, who fought against British rule in the 19th century, Wickliffe too is remembered as a Khasi revolutionary.

Wickliffe is considered the founder of Hynniewtrep (Khasi) nationalism by the Khasi community.

## US sees record Covid cases 3rd day in a row

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The infection figures came as President Donald Trump, who survived a bout of Covid-19 in October and has been widely criticized over his handling of the crisis, trailed his Democratic challenger in the vote count.

US cases are fast approaching 10 million, with more than 236,000 deaths, and the pandemic has hammered the world’s biggest economy, leaving millions jobless.

Trump has been a vocal opponent of lockdown measures, citing their impact on the economy, and has repeatedly clashed with his own government’s experts over coronavirus policy.

Unlike Biden, Trump held massive campaign rallies ahead of the November 3 vote, insisting the US was “rounding the turn” despite the virus surges.

Senior members of his

administration have contracted the virus recently with Trump’s chief of staff Mark Meadows the latest to test positive, media said late Friday.

Across the Atlantic, Greece became the latest European nation to enter lockdown yesterday with the continent reeling from a second, relentless coronavirus wave.

Under the measures, which came into force before daybreak, Greeks can only leave home if they receive authorization to a mobile phone request. Essential shops can stay open, including supermarkets and pharmacies. On the first day of the second lockdown Athens woke to checks on vehicle movements and doubled fines for not wearing masks, up to 300 euros.

The measures follow the imposition of restrictions in Italy, France, Ireland and Britain, while Switzerland is also

being hit hard by the virus.

Germany reported record daily figures yesterday with 23,399 new cases and 130 deaths.

Thousands of demonstrators were expected to gather in Leipzig on Saturday to protest against mask-wearing and new curbs to halt the virus spreading across Germany.

Poland was imposing fresh measures yesterday too, closing most shopping centers. The government is also shutting cinemas, theatres, galleries and other cultural institutions and making hotels available for business travellers only.

Governments are also exploring mass testing as a way to curb the pandemic.

In England, Liverpool on Friday began the country’s first city-wide coronavirus testing program. All 500,000 residents will be offered

## Myanmar goes to polls today

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More than 740,000 Rohingya fled from Myanmar into neighboring Bangladesh in 2016 and 2017 as the military waged a campaign of violence in Rakhine state. Survivors have recounted harrowing atrocities including gang rape, mass killings, torture and widespread destruction of property at the hands of the army.

Myanmar denies the charges and has long claimed to have been targeting terrorists.

Those Rohingya still inside Rakhine are segregated and forced to live in conditions akin to prison camps, with restrictions on movement, education, and access to healthcare.

“Rohingya are unable to vote and are blocked from accessing full citizenship rights under the discriminatory 1982 Citizenship Law,” said John Quinley, Senior Human Rights Specialist at Fortify Rights.

“Not only are Rohingya blocked from voting but Rohingya political parties were rejected for running in elections. These are courageous, smart, and qualified politicians that have been stripped for running for office based on their ethnicity.”

The disenfranchisement of the Rohingya, however, is unlikely to merit serious mention in Myanmar. When Suu Kyi defended her country against accusations of genocide at the International Court of Justice last year -- calling the claims “incomplete and misleading” -- it sealed the former human rights champion’s fall from grace in the West.

Domestically, though, her appearance proved popular with many in the country and analysts say it likely helped to bolster political support ahead of the elections.

And that’s really what these elections are about: Suu Kyi. She’s

Myanmar’s de facto leader and State Counselor -- a title invented as a loophole to the constitution barring her from becoming president.

The two big promises the NLD campaigned on in 2015 around constitutional reform and the peace process have not been accomplished. But that is unlikely to matter with her supporters.

A 2020 survey from independent election watchdog People’s Alliance for Credible Elections found that 79% of people had trust in Suu Kyi.

There is also a lack of an effective opposition, despite 91 parties contesting. The Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), formed by the military in 2010 as a vehicle to install a quasi-civilian government following decades of military rule, is the main opposition party.

Amid rising Covid-19 cases, opposition parties had called for the

November 8 poll to be postponed. But Suu Kyi resisted those calls, saying precautions would be in place so citizens could vote safely.

Myanmar has reported 57,900 Covid-19 infections nationwide, but the outbreak has recently surged from about 1000 cases a day at the start of September to a daily peak of 2,000 cases on October 10.

Many had hoped that Suu Kyi would usher in genuine democratic reforms, where political activists and journalists were no longer hauled off to shadowy prisons and citizens could criticize their leaders without fear.

“What many people found was a darker reality,” said Quinley. “The last five years, the NLD has pushed problematic policies including the silencing of the media. This includes a total crackdown on journalists and human rights defenders.”

## 3 held

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on Thursday when the woman was looking for her husband, who had left home two days earlier following a fight, the OC added.

After she reached Muslimnagar area, the three men forcefully took her to an abandoned place and raped her.

They told her they would kill her if she told anyone about the rape and then fled the area.

The woman filed a case in this connection with Fatulla Police Station on Friday night, after which was sent to Narayanganj General Hospital for tests.

## 4 ‘Neo-JMB’

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The DB team also recovered one pistol, one magazine, two rounds of bullets, one shooter gun, three Burmese knives, one kilogram of gun powder, two red tapes, four batteries and some Jihadi books from them, he said.

The DB police official claimed that Tanvir Ahmed is a second-year student of Jahangirnagar University and a fugitive accused in a terrorism case filed on January 14 with Ashulia Police Station. Tanvir joined the outfit in 2017.

Tanvir was trying to make a drone for conducting terrorist attacks, said the Rajshahi DIG.

On the other hand, Jakaria Jamil was also an accused in the case and he use to translate various terrorism-related articles from Arabic to Bangla and spread them online, police claimed.

Atikur, a student of North-South University’s Pharmacy department, was tasked with collecting money from different sources for the outfit, said Abdul Baten.

Accused Abu Saaïd, an active member of the outfit, was preparing to go to the Middle-East, said the police official.

## Freight train

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in a festive mood and very happy about successfully taking the spilled oil,” said Rajesh Bhowmick, a passerby who was traveling in the area.

Contacted, Shakawat Hosain, assistant station master of Sreemangal rail station, said the seven derailed wagons together contained around 1.60 lakhs litre of fuel.

How much fuel was spilled could not yet be calculated, he added.

Contacted, Alamgir Hossain, officer-in-charge (OC) of Srimangal Railway Police Station, said additional police have been deployed to prevent the looting of fuel.

Dulal Chandra Das, the railway’s senior deputy-assistant engineer, said the rescue operation has already started. It would take five to six hours more to complete rescue operation and to resume train communication.

He was talking to The Daily Star at around 6:30pm last evening.

Meanwhile in Gazipur, two people were killed and four others injured when a train hit a bus at Sonakhali level crossing in Gazipur’s Kaliakoir upazila early yesterday.

Rail communication between Dhaka and northern parts of the country remained suspended for five hours since the accident took place around 4:30am.

It occurred when the Dhaka-bound Nilsagar Express train from Chilahati hit the bus, said Monowar Hossain Chowdhury, OC of Kaliakoir Police Station.

The train stopped after dragging the bus half kilometer ahead, leaving two of its passengers dead, he added.

One of the dead was identified as Masud Rana, 35.

Locals rescued the injured and took them to Kaliakoir Upazila Health Complex.

Md Shajahan, stationmaster of Joydevpur Rail Station of Gazipur, said the train services between Dhaka and the northern districts resumed around 9:30am yesterday morning after a team from the local fire service removed the bus from the rail tracks.

(Our correspondents from Moulvibazar and Gazipur contributed to the report.)

## Ancient skeleton

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Investigations have shown that she was between 30 and 45 years old and died more than 5,000 years ago.

That means that she lived during the same period as Oetzi the Iceman, the stunningly preserved corpse found by tourists in the Alps in the 1990s.

“You can compare Oetzi and the Lady of Bietikow in terms of age,” said Philipp Roskoschinski, one of the two archaeologists who made the discovery in the state of Brandenburg, which surrounds Berlin.

Oetzi was found by two hikers in 1991 in the Oetztal Alps on the border between Austria and Italy.

His body was extremely well preserved, with organs, skin and other organic material still intact -- researchers were even able to see what he had eaten hours before he died.

“The discovery of Oetzi was much more spectacular due to the conditions of preservation,” Roskoschinski said.

All that is left of Lady Bietikow are bones and some fragments of clothing, but researchers have still managed to piece together some details about her life.

It was during the Neolithic period that humans first introduced grains into their diet, since they could be stored more easily than meat and could also be used as a means of payment, according to anthropologist Bettina Jungklaas.