

## '80 shot dead' near Yangon

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blamed the crackdown on "rioters", and reported only one dead.

The violence in Bago will add to AAPP's current death toll of 618 civilians killed since the coup.

The junta has a far lower number -- 248, according to a spokesman Friday -- and has branded the victims as "violent terrorist people".

The United States and European nations pleaded for action at a meeting on Friday of the UN Security Council where a Southeast Asian summit on the crisis was taking shape, but the military leadership remained defiant and refused entry to a UN special envoy.

Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun, who has passionately rejected the February 1 coup and brushed aside the military's claims that he no longer represents Myanmar, told the Security Council that there has been a "lack of adequate and strong action" despite hundreds of deaths, including children.

He pushed for more concrete action -- proposing a no-fly zone, an arms embargo and more targeted sanctions against members of the military and their families.

"Your collective, strong action is needed immediately," Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun told the meeting. "Time is of the essence for us," he said. "Please, please take action."

Despite the daily bloodshed, protesters have continued to take to the streets, with demonstrators manifesting their discontent in pointedly creative ways.

In commercial hub Yangon, crimson paint -- representing the blood already spilled -- was splashed across the streets in view of the historic Shwedagon Pagoda.

"Let us unite and boldly show in red that the dictatorial regime will not be allowed to rule us at all," a student activist announced on Facebook.

Flyers with the words "They will not rule us" were scattered across Yangon neighbourhoods.

In Mandalay, activists pasted the same flyers on the statue of General Aung San, the father of Suu Kyi and a national hero.

Suu Kyi is currently facing a series of charges from the junta -- including accusations of corruption and for having unregistered walkie-talkies.

State-run media announced Friday night that 19 people had been sentenced to death for robbery and murder under a military tribunal -- with 17 of them tried in absentia.

Human Rights Watch condemned the sentences yesterday as a way to sow fear in the anti-coup movement, as Norway's foreign minister called the use of capital punishment "unacceptable".

## Journo Hasan Shahriar

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Brittan Fellowship by the Commonwealth Press Union in 1978.

He was elected president of the National Press Club management committee for 1993-94 tenure. He was also the existing president of Media Club Limited.

### CONDOLENCES POUR IN

President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, ministers, and distinguished personalities have expressed profound shock and sorrow at the demise of Hasan.

In a condolence message, the president recalled the contributions of Hasan in the field of journalism with due respect.

"The role of Hasan Shahriar in the country's journalism will be remembered for long," Hamid said.

He also prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved family.

In a separate message, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed deep shock and sorrow at the death of the veteran journalist.

In her condolence message, Hasina said the role of Hassan Shahriar in Bangladesh's journalism will ever be remembered.

She prayed for the eternal salvation

of the departed soul and expressed sympathy to the bereaved family.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Hasan Mahmud, now in Europe, expressed deep shock and sorrow at the death.

In the condolence message, the minister said Hasan Shahriar's dedicated contribution to journalism for a long time will be remembered.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said people will remember him for his contribution to the country's journalism.

Chairman of the Board of Directors of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, and BSS Managing Director and Chief Editor Abul Kalam Azad also expressed profound shock and sorrow at the death of the veteran journalist.

In a condolence message, Prof Arefin, also former vice-chancellor of Dhaka University, recalled the contribution of Hasan in the field of journalism.

BSS Managing Director and Chief Editor Abul Kalam Azad, in a separate message, expressed deep shock and sorrow at the death.

Diplomatic Correspondents Association, Bangladesh (DCAAB) also expressed shock and sorrow at the death of Hassan Shahriar.

## Seven killed after quake hits

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a hospital ward and debris strewn across the floor of the local parliament in Bliitar, a city southwest of Malang.

"I had just finished praying and was changing my clothes when suddenly the quake struck," Malang resident Ida Magfiroh told AFP.

"It was pretty strong and went for a long time. Everything was swaying... My heart was racing."

The deadly quake comes as the Southeast Asian nation reels from a cyclone that killed more than 200 people in the eastern part of the archipelago and neighbouring East Timor this week.

Indonesia experiences frequent quakes and volcanic eruptions due to its position on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", an arc of intense seismic activity where tectonic plates collide that stretches from Japan through Southeast Asia and across the Pacific basin.

Among Indonesia's string of deadly quakes was a devastating 2004 tremor measuring 9.1 magnitude that struck off the coast of Sumatra and triggered a tsunami that killed 220,000 throughout the region, including about 170,000 in Indonesia.

The Boxing Day disaster was one of the deadliest natural disasters in recorded history.

## JMB in-charge held in Badda

FROM PAGE 1

the vigilance of the law enforcement agency and started living isolated, for which reason, Reza was invited to visit the country and take the charge there, said a top official of the CTIC unit, requesting anonymity.

The official, however, refused to disclose Salehin's present location. Asked why Reza was asked to visit India with a passport, the official said he wanted to do some other job after going to the country so that no one could suspect their movement.

"We have some details of JMB activities in India and movement of the Salehin and we would knock the Indian authority soon through proper channel," the official told this newspaper.

In the last two years, Reza allegedly managed to gather around a hundred members for the outfit.

Besides, Reza was also responsible to collect funds for the outfit.

Investigators claimed that they have detected a person in Saudi Arabia, who is working as the financier and sending money for the outfit.

"We are now trying to detect the financial channels and collect personal details of the financier to take lawful action," said another official of the CTIC unit, wishing not to be named.

Only in the month of Ramadan, the outfit fund collection reached Tk 20 to Tk 30 lakh, the official said, adding, this fund was gathered from different local sources in Bangladesh.

BDU Chief Rahmatullah said they would interrogate Reza after taking him on remand to verify some clues and financial issues related to the outfit and then further action will be taken.

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A health worker takes a swab sample from a shopkeeper for a RT-PCR Covid-19 coronavirus test in Chennai, India, yesterday

PHOTO: AFP

## 5 killed as violence mars 4th phase

FROM PAGE 12

as one Anand Burman. According to the police, he was dragged from a booth in Pathantuli area in Sitalkuchi by a group of unidentified people and shot dead.

Trinamool Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party blamed the violence on each other.

In another incident, BJP lawmaker and actress Locket Chatterjee's car and those belonging to the press were attacked by a mob at a polling booth in Hooghly district this morning. She is the party candidate in the assembly.

Voting in the fourth phase of the assembly elections covered 44 constituencies and a total of 1,15,81,022 voters were eligible to decide the fate of 373 candidates including that of many heavyweights like India's junior Minister for Environment Babul Supriyo and state cabinet ministers Partha Chatterjee and Arup Biswas.

The Assembly elections, which began on March 27, are being held in eight phases, with the last phase of polling scheduled to take place on April 29. Counting of votes will be taken up on May 2.

The Election Commission has deployed around 8,000 central armed police force (CAPF) in 15,940 polling stations spread across the 44 constituencies.

Addressing an election rally in Siliguri, Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday said Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee "and her goons provoked the paramilitary forces to open fire".

He requested the Election Commission to take stern action against those responsible for the incident.

"Mamata Didi and her TMC goons have become jittery because of ground swell of support for BJP," Modi told the rally.

"Didi, this violence, the tactic of instigating people to attack the security forces, the tactic of obstructing the polling process will not protect you. You have to go out of power. Didi is asking people to attack and gherao security forces who are here to protect the rights of the people of the state," he said.

The Election Commission had recently asked Mamata to explain her remark asking the people to gherao

federal security personnel deployed on poll duty.

In her reply to the EC, Mamata yesterday said that she did not incite or influence voters against federal security personnel with her remarks at a poll meeting.

Speaking at a public meeting in Baduria in North 24 Parganas district, Mamata sought Indian Home Minister Amit Shah's resignation over the killings by central forces at Sitalkuchi.

Mamata questioned the CISF version of the firing in self defence in Sitalkuchi and said the state CID would probe the incident. She also appealed to people to remain calm and said her party would take out protest rallies throughout the state today.

Mamata, one of Modi's most prominent critics, has accused the BJP of attempting to import divisive sectarian politics into the state, which has a large Muslim minority.

The BJP controls a dozen of India's 28 states, with alliance partners in several others. But it has never won power in Bengal, whose 90 million people make it the fourth most populous state.

## Tajuddin seeks arms support

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with about a section of my soldiers. Capt Haroon was there with a handful of EPR troops. Some brave, young college students were there along with us.

Early in the morning of April 11, Pakistan army started heavy artillery shelling on our position. After about half an hour of shelling, our position was attacked by the enemy with more than a company's (about 200 men) strength. Our total strength was about 20 men including elements of EPR.

As the battle raged on, casualties on both sides occurred. Soon Capt Haroon was wounded. I asked the brave students to carry Capt Haroon across the bridge to the other side where he could receive medical attention. We managed to inflict casualties on the enemy. After some time, it became difficult for us to stay and fight because we were badly outnumbered and seriously outgunned.

As Capt Haroon was being carried

across the bridge, the Pakistan army started firing at him. So, I took up the task of covering his evacuation. At the same time, I asked my troops to start withdrawing. I covered their withdrawal. By the time the last sepoy had crossed the bridge to safety, I was left absolutely alone.

By then my position was surrounded on all sides. Withdrawal for me became impossible. I became desperate, came out of my bunker and wildly fired away at the advancing enemy. I can clearly remember that I had hit and killed three of the enemy and a fourth one was lying down wounded.

Just then I was hit. My weapon flew off my hand and landed some distance away. I fell flat on the bridge. I tried to get up but I failed to move. I have been hit on my left thigh. The bullet had passed all the way through the lower portion of my belly and was lodged in my right hip. The Pakistan army was now very near and I was apprehending that very soon they

will reach me and then torture me to death. I thought it better to commit suicide then to be caught by them. But suicide became impossible as my weapon was lying too far away from me to reach.

Finding no other way, I continued to lie down and await death. But death spared me. The Pakistani army walked up to me, repeatedly kicked me in my stomach, calling me a traitor. They then decided to take me as a prisoner of war. I was to remain a prisoner until December 17.

SCHOLARS CALL FOR AN END TO KILLING IN EAST PAKISTAN An appeal circulated by Robert Dorfman, professor of economics, and signed by more than two dozen specialists on modern Pakistan urged the president of Pakistan to stop using military force against rebellious East Pakistan. The appeal appeared today as an ad in the Washington Post.

Shamsudoza Sajen is a journalist and researcher. He can be contacted at sajen1986@gmail.com

## Germany's divided far-right AfD to launch election bid

AFP, Dresden

The far-right AfD will firm up its election manifesto this weekend as Germany prepares for the post-Merkel era, with the party seeking to reverse a lag in support amid infighting and an ailing effort to capitalise on the pandemic.

Members of the anti-Islam, anti-immigration Alternative for Germany gathered on Saturday despite coronavirus restrictions for a two-day congress in Dresden, to finalise their strategy ahead of the general election on September 26.

With Angela Merkel stepping down after 16 years as chancellor, the AfD's "Merkel must go" slogan will need an overhaul.

The AfD caused a sensation in Germany's last election in 2017 when it secured almost 13 percent of the vote, entering parliament for the first time as the largest opposition party.

But it has lost support as Germany reels from the coronavirus pandemic, and has lately been plagued by internal divisions, links to radical Covid-19 deniers and accusations of ties to neo-Nazi fringe groups.

Latest surveys have the party polling at between 10 and 12 percent, with Merkel's CDU/CSU on around 27 percent and the surging Greens not far behind.

In key regional elections in the southern states of Baden-Wuerttemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate in March, the AfD saw its support plunge by around a third.

The drop in support has coincided

with AfD members courting controversy by joining anti-vaxxers and "Querdenker" (Lateral Thinkers) at various demonstrations against coronavirus restrictions.

AFD co-leader Joerg Meuthen on Saturday vowed to dispel "these orgies of bans, these jailings, this mania for locking down".

With Merkel and state leaders expected to tighten infection control measures further Sunday, the far right unveiled its election slogan of "Germany. But normal" -- at least in part targeting coronavirus restrictions.

During a violent mass protest in November, AfD members were accused of letting far-right activists into the Reichstag parliament building.

The party has also been hit by revelations that the government intends to place it under surveillance for posing a threat to democracy.

Media reports in March said the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV) had classified the AfD as a "suspected case" of right-wing extremism, paving the way for intelligence agents to tap its communications and possibly use undercover informants.

The AfD is challenging the classification in emergency proceedings, accusing the BfV of not taking sufficient care to prevent the information from leaking to the press.

Against a backdrop of infighting between the hard right and a more moderate wing around Meuthen, motions calling for the party to elect its top candidates for the September

elections were withdrawn.

Meuthen wants the decision to be made later by a vote among all party members.

The AfD has long been bitterly divided between those who support Meuthen and a more radical faction, known as The Wing, loyal to firebrand Bjoern Hoecke.

Another motion from a handful among the 600 delegates calling for Meuthen's removal was rejected, although a second that would impose term limits for the party leadership could yet see him leave by the end of the year.

The AfD is expected to choose a two-person team to lead it into the election, with Meuthen's co-president Tino Chrupalla considered the likely contender.

Many members would like to see him joined by economist and parliamentary group co-leader Alice Weidel, but Meuthen's supporters would prefer the more moderate Joana Cota.

Starting out as an anti-euro outfit in 2013, the AfD capitalised on public anger over Merkel's 2015 decision to allow in a wave of asylum seekers from conflict-torn countries such as Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq.

The hard-right party has often courted controversy by calling for Germany to stop atoning for its World War II crimes.

Parliamentary co-leader Alexander Gauland once described the Nazi era as just "a speck of bird poo" on German history.

## Second whale

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Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute in Cox's Bazar.

He assumed that large mother ships which ply the route beyond Bangladesh's exclusive economic zone injured the whales.

"Whales like to move in pods. Such deep injuries to marine mammals cannot be caused without the involvement of large vessels," he added.

Shafkur expressed fear that more whale carcasses might wash ashore in Cox's Bazar in the next few days.

The 48-foot long female whale weighed around 10 tonnes and it was aged around 40, he said.

## 2 held for raping

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police station.

Hours after arrest, the three were sent to jail after they had been produced before a court, the OC added.

## Daily cases keep

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the 100,000 mark for the first time on Monday. Only the United States has reported more cases in a day since the pandemic began over a year ago.

Despite that, Prime Minister Modi again addressed an election rally crowded with thousands of people, many without masks, in the eastern state of West Bengal.

The government has blamed the resurgence mainly on crowding and a reluctance to wear masks as businesses across the country have reopened since February, only to be partially shut again to control the current surge.

"Mass gatherings for elections and religious events have accelerated Covid, for which all of us are responsible to some extent," Sonia Gandhi, the chief of the main opposition Congress party, said in a statement.

In Mumbai, hundreds of poor migrant workers crammed onto trains this week to flee, potentially risking a wider outbreak in smaller towns and villages.

The railways department called it a usual rush this time of year for people to harvest crops back home and celebrate festivals.

Many states have complained of a vaccine shortage though immunisations are currently restricted to only about 400 million of India's 1.35 billion people.

The health minister said on Thursday the government had more than 43 million doses in stock or in the pipeline, which may be enough for only about 10 days going by the immunisation trend.

India, the world's biggest maker of vaccines, has so far administered 97.5 million doses, using the AstraZeneca shot and another developed at home by Bharat Biotech.

## Italy to pay 1.1m euros over India fishermen killing: lawyers

AFP, New Delhi

India will accept compensation of 1.1 million euros from Italy for the families of two fishermen shot dead by Italian marines in 2012, signalling an end to a long-winding case that soured relations between the two nations.

Suhail Dutt, an advocate representing Italy, told India's Supreme Court Friday that after prolonged negotiations with the Indian government, Rome was ready to pay 100 million rupees to the families of the fishermen and the owner of the boat which was damaged in the shooting.

India's solicitor general Tushar Mehta said the victims' families have agreed to receive the "determined compensation amount".

The bench asked the Indian government to deposit the money with the court within a week of receiving it from its Italian counterpart, according to the order seen by AFP. The case will be next taken up on April 19.

The latest order comes after The Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague announced last July that the two marines were entitled to immunity from prosecution.

Salvatore Girona and Massimiliano Latorre spent years facing charges in India for shooting the fishermen when their boat neared the Italian oil tanker MV Enrica Lexie off the coast of Kerala.

Italy took the issue to the PCA in 2015, saying that the tribunal should hear the case under maritime law as the incident happened in international waters off India's southern coast.

Italy argued that the marines were stationed on the tanker because the region was prone to piracy, and said they had fired on the fishing boat because it failed to heed warnings to stay away.

But New Delhi insisted that the two marines -- one of whom was allowed home in 2014 for medical reasons and the other in 2016 -- should both return to India for a final judgement by a local court.