

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



291
New cases in 24hrs



15,78,011
Total cases



28,010
Deaths



15,42,908
Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE



5,281,995
Deaths



266,936,779
Total cases

Two-Hour Video Summit Biden warns Putin against Ukraine invasion

AFP, Washington

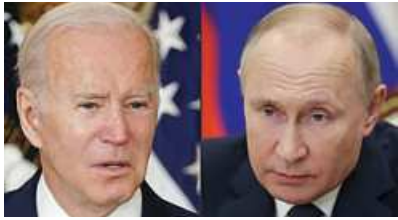
Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin held a two-hour video summit yesterday in which the US president said he would warn of painful sanctions and increased military support for Eastern Europe if Russia invades Ukraine.

"Greetings, Mr. President," Putin said in a brief video clip released by the Kremlin. Biden said it was "good to see" his Russian counterpart, adding that he hoped their next session would be in person.

Despite the friendly opening scene, the summit, lasting just over two hours, was steeped in tension.

Russia denies planning to invade Ukraine, but with satellite pictures showing massive troop concentrations on the border, fears are growing of war in Europe.

Reflecting the brittle atmosphere, Biden sat behind closed doors in the White House's high security Situation Room. By contrast, Biden held a similar video summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping three weeks ago in the more decorative Roosevelt Room,



with journalists invited to witness the opening minutes.

The United States says it doesn't know for sure what Russia intends to do in Ukraine, but is alarmed at the deployment of some 100,000 battle-ready Russian troops to the border. Russia already supports a powerful separatist rebellion across swaths of eastern Ukraine and annexed the Crimean peninsula from Kiev in 2014.

Moscow calls invasion talk "hysteria." Instead, Putin intends to tell Biden he sees Ukraine's growing alliance with Western nations as a threat to Russian security -- and that any move by Ukraine to join Nato or to host Nato missiles would be unacceptable.

AL in a spot of bother

FROM PAGE 1

Mujibur Rahman and women.

The central AL leaders are annoyed by such offensive remarks and activities but they said the party has sent a strong message to all tiers of the organisation about the wrongdoers irrespective of their positions in the party or the government.

Disgraced Murad Hassan, who resigned as state minister yesterday, is the latest one. He has been the eye of a social media storm for his untoward remarks on BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's granddaughter and former female Chhatra League leaders.

Amid the furore, a leaked audio clip, a voice purportedly belonging to Murad, began to make the rounds on Facebook, making the demand for his resignation even louder.

"Both the government and Awami League felt embarrassed by his [Murad's] indecent remarks," Information Minister Hasan Mahmud told reporters yesterday.

Murad stepped down from his cabinet post on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's order. The junior minister lost his party post in Jamalpur district unit as well.

Last month, two mayors who were the top AL leaders at the district levels, fell from grace after their controversial comments on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

On November 19, Gazipur City Corporation mayor Mohammad Zahangir Alam was expelled from the party over his controversial remarks on Bangabandhu and Liberation War martyrs.

Zahangir, also the general secretary of Gazipur city AL, was later suspended from the post of GCC mayor. Several cases have also been filed against him.

Five days later, Abbas Ali, mayor of

Katakhalhi municipality in Rajshahi's Paba upazila, lost his party post for his controversial remarks about a mural of Bangabandhu.

Like Murad and Zahangir, his remarks also went viral on social media.

Paba upazila AL revoked Abbas' post of convener in the municipality unit while the Rajshahi district AL also wrote to the party's central committee for his expulsion from the primary membership of the party.

Abbas is now behind bars.

Terming such incidents "unfortunate", AL Presidium Member Abdur Razzaque said, "We should have been more careful before giving them such responsibilities."

He said AL is a major political parity and different types of people are involved in it. Some of them might deviate from discipline and morality in the course of time, he added.

"However, the important matter is that the party is taking action against them. The party is not overlooking any of such matters and this is a warning to all," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

UNRULY BCL
Chittagong Medical College was closed for an indefinite period on October 30 following a clash between two factions of the BCL's college unit.

On December 3, Khulna University of Engineering and Technology (KuET) was closed till December 13 following the death of a teacher. Prof Md Selim Hossain, also the provost of Lalan Shah Hall, died on November 30, hours after several Chhatra League activists allegedly confined him to his office and mentally tortured him.

On December 5, dormitories of Government Ananda Mohan College in Mymensingh were declared closed for an indefinite period following BCL infighting.

Sajid's six-for corners Tigers

FROM PAGE 1

With just over a session remaining, Bangladesh batters seemed to be in a hurry as they opted for an attacking approach instead of negotiating Pakistan spinners Sajid and Nauman Ali cautiously.

Except for a run-out, all the other wickets on the day were scalped by Sajid.

Debutant Mahmudul Hasan Joy was the first to depart as he edged one back to slip to become the second Bangladeshi opener to register a duck on debut after Saif Hassan.

And Shadman Islam's soft dismissal, presenting a simple catch to the fielder at point, and Bangladesh skipper Mominul Haque's nonsensical run-out meant the Tigers were left at 22 for three at tea.

Surprisingly, Bangladesh's aggressive approach continued even in the final session. Experienced Mushfiqur Rahim probably had a brain fade as he went for a big shot immediately after smashing

a boundary following a close LBW call. He only ended up gifting a catch to short mid-wicket, putting the hosts under tremendous pressure.

Liton Das, centurion of the first Test, was also guilty of throwing his wicket away as he handed a return catch to Sajid after coming down the track. Najmul Hossain, after living dangerously for a while, was trapped in front as Sajid picked up his maiden fiver in Tests.

Even the experienced Shakib Al Hasan, who came to bat at number seven, charged the Pakistani spinners.

In the dying hours of the day, Mehedi Hasan Miraz was bowled while going for a slog sweep. And it seemed as if the Bangladesh dressing room was relieved after the umpire finally called off the days' play an hour before the scheduled time due to bad light.

Shakib, unbeaten on 23, will have to take the responsibility to help Bangladesh avoid follow-on and save the Test when they resume play today.

Another univ student dies

FROM PAGE 1

Ajay died in the accident, which took place at the Sonapur zero point.

After the news spread, students of NSTU blocked the area and Majdee town road for hours.

"Ajay was going back to his house in Majdee after his class finished on the auto rickshaw," said Prof Newaz Mohammed Bahadur, the proctor of NSTU.

"After the lorry hit the auto rickshaw from behind, Ajay fell off and died on the spot."

Police said they seized the lorry but the driver had fled.

"We will conduct a drive to arrest the driver and helper," said Mohammad Shahed Uddin, officer-in-charge of Sudharam Model Police Station.

7 STUDENTS KILLED IN 15 DAYS

On November 24, Nayeem Hasan, a 2nd-year student of Notre Dame College was killed after being hit by a Dhaka South City Corporation vehicle in Gulistan of the capital.

The incident sparked outrage and students from various schools and colleges raised their voices against the killing, demanding safe roads.

Even during the movement, the number of students' deaths on roads

did not stop rising.

On November 29, Md Mainuddin Islam, 19, a candidate of the ongoing secondary school certificate exams was killed after an Anabil Paribahan bus ran over him near Rampura Bazar in Dhaka.

On November 30, two college students were killed as a freight truck ran over the motorcycle they were on in Bogra's Sherpur upazila.

On December 4, Mahadi Hasan Limon, 21, a fourth-year student of Green University, died after a lorry hit his motorcycle on the capital's Airport Road.

On December 6, Hafiza Akhter, a seventh-grader at Gopalidighi KP High School died in Tangail when she was run over by a bricks-laden truck after she fell from a battery-run auto-rickshaw.

Students across the country have been protesting and demanding the gazettee for half fare on buses and safe roads.

Today, a human chain programme will be held all over the country, including at Dhaka's Shantinagar intersection.

This information has been confirmed by Enzamul Haque, a master's student of Dhaka State University, who is one of the leaders of the safe road movement.



A small truck trundles on Bijoy Sarani in the capital yesterday carrying used iron rods that are sticking out, putting other road users at risk. Clearly the load should have been on a longer truck that could fit all of it on its bed and not put other road users at risk. Trucks are banned on Dhaka streets during the day.

PHOTO: STAR

Now facing party action

FROM PAGE 1

In another development, the High Court directed Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) to delete all videos and audios of Murad Hassan's objectionable comments from online and social media platforms within 24 hours.

RESIGNATION ACCEPTED

President Abdul Hamid has accepted Murad's resignation letter, says a gazette notification.

Around noon yesterday, Murad emailed his resignation letter to his ministry office, less than 24 hours after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked him to step down following a firestorm of criticism over his comments in online interviews and a leaked audio recording.

Citing "personal grounds", he requested the PM to accept it and relieve him from his cabinet duties.

After the resignation letter was emailed to the ministry, it was then sent to the Prime Minister's Office from the Cabinet Division, confirmed Emrul Karim Rashed, his personal assistant.

After the PM's approval, the cabinet would send the letter to the president, said sources at the ministry, explaining the procedure.

In the letter, Murad mistakenly wrote 2021 as his year of appointment as state minister instead of 2019, and so the Cabinet Division asked him to send a hard copy with his signature and the date corrected, the sources added.

Later at night, the government issued a gazette notification, saying the president has accepted the resignation letter of the state minister.

Murad, lawmaker from Sarishabari upazila, was appointed state minister for health following the formation of the new cabinet on January 7, 2019.

He was transferred to the information ministry a few months later.

Now the fate of his parliament

membership will be decided by Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, said AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader, also road transport and bridges minister.

"If any serious allegations arise, the speaker can take a decision," he said while replying to a query.

Besides, Awami League Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif said recommendation will be made for disciplinary action by the party against Murad. If allegations against a leader are proven, he or she must be punished, he said.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Hasan Mahmud told reporters at the Secretariat that he saw "some changes" in Murad in the last three months.

His activities embarrassed the government and the party, the minister said.

Murad is the second AL leader who lost his cabinet post for making "derogatory comments" since the party took power in 2009.

Latif Siddique was removed on October 12, 2014 from the position of posts, telecommunications and ICT minister for his remarks about some religious issues.

He was also removed from the party membership and he himself resigned from the position of lawmaker.

EMON INTERROGATED

During an interview on a Facebook page on Saturday, Murad made some offensive comments about BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, acting chairman Tarique Rahman and his daughter Zaima Rahman.

Then an audio clip of a phone call, between him on one end and actors Emon and Mahiya Mahi on the other, leaked and went viral on social media early Monday.

In the audio clip, Murad was heard making sexually abusive remarks directed at Mahi, and at one point even threatened to rape her.

Rapid Action Battalion yesterday interrogated Emon over the leaked audio. On Monday night the actor went to the DB office and discussed the issue with Harun Or Rashid, joint commissioner (north) of DB.

Harun said they will talk to Mahi upon her return from Saudi Arabia as DB's cybercrime unit always conducts shadow investigations when anything controversial goes viral of social media. He also said detectives will interrogate Murad if anyone formally files a complaint against him.

Meanwhile, Dhaka University student Zulas Cizar Talukdar, also former general secretary of Salimullah Muslim Hall Students' Union, yesterday filed a complaint with Shahbagh Police Station against Murad for making derogatory comments about Dhaka University and its female students.

"We went to the police station to file a case under Digital Security Act but police received a complaint," he told The Daily Star.

Contacted, Moudut Hawlader, officer-in-charge of the police station, said they received a complaint from a DU student against Murad and it was sent to the DMP Cyber tribunal team for investigation.

MURAD APOLOGISES

In a Facebook status yesterday, Murad apologised to all women.

On his verified Facebook profile, he wrote, "Forgive me if I've done anything wrong, or if my words have hurt any mother or sister."

"I will forever abide by all the decisions of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina," he added.

Meanwhile, BNP demanded arrest of Murad.

"His resignation is not enough, he [Murad] should be arrested," Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, senior joint secretary general of BNP, said at a press briefing at the party's Nayapaltan headquarters yesterday.

Kenyan policeman kills six in shooting spree

AFP, Nairobi

A Kenyan police officer yesterday shot dead six people, including his wife, and wounded two others before turning the gun on himself, police said.

The rampage in a poor area of the capital Nairobi triggered protests by angry residents who blocked the road with burning tyres.

Police said the AK-47-rifle-wielding officer first shot his wife in the neck before firing indiscriminately at neighbours.

"We have lost six people all shot by the police officer before he committed suicide," area police chief Francis Wahome said.

Two other people have been admitted to hospital with injuries.

Wahome said the motive of the shooting was still unknown, adding: "We are told that the couple had issues and were quarrelling before."

Cases of police officers shooting dead their spouses occur frequently in the East African country, where incidents of extrajudicial killings are rife.

Same drain

FROM PAGE 1

Chattogram Fire Service and Civil Defence divers.

Locals informed the fire service of Kamal's disappearance yesterday afternoon after his family could not find him for 24 hours.

Fire service divers rushed to the spot and started a rescue operation around 4:30pm, said Farid Ahmed, sub-assistant director of Fire Service and Civil Defence, Chattogram.

"Our divers started rescue operations, but there is no breakthrough till now," he told The Daily Star around 5:00pm yesterday.

Locals said two boys -- Rakib and Kamal -- from the nearby slum were playing in the area on Monday afternoon. Both had fallen into the open drain around 4:30pm; Rakib managed to get out, but Kamal could not.

Kawsar, Kamal's grief-stricken father, was found showing people his son's photograph in the hope that they had seen him.

The open drains in the port city have become a death trap for some time now. In June, a CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver and a passenger were killed as their vehicle fell into a drain at Chashma Hill in Hill View area.

Contacted, Town Planner Subhash Barua said drains in the port city have been left open and accidents are happening due to the sheer negligence of the authorities.

"The Chattogram City Corporation cannot avoid responsibility for these accidents," he said. "Why have the drains been left open? Why were they not covered up?"

"You need not be an engineer to sense it. Just common sense is enough to understand that leaving drains open may cause accidents," he said.

Contacted, Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, CCC mayor, said he has come to know of the incident of Kamal's disappearance.

Asked about his pledge to cover all open drains, Rezaul said this particular drain could not be covered up as the Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) has been working on it as part of a mega project to address waterlogging.

"We will cover it up after the CDA completes its work," he said.

Asked when the CDA would hand it over to CCC, the mayor said he did not know.

"We have already covered up many drains," he said when asked how many drains they covered up in the last two months.

Migrants priced out

FROM PAGE 1

lakh and that a passenger needs to pay Tk 87,000 to Tk 93,000 to go to Dubai.

M Tipu Sultan, president of Recruiting Agency Oikkya Parishad, said it costs Tk 64,000 for a 23-hour long flight to the USA.

"Whereas, a five-and-half-hour-long flight to Dubai from Dhaka needs Tk 80,000 to Tk 85,000, which is illogical."

Atab leaders said airfare from Dhaka to London on a 12-hour-long flight is around Tk 52,000, while the airfare on Dhaka-Riyadh route is almost double in some cases.

Ticket prices to Oman and Qatar now cost Tk 80,000 to Tk 1 lakh, up from Tk 25,000 to Tk 30,000 a year ago, said the Atab leaders and recruiting agencies.

Fakhrul said Bangladesh risks losing its labour market in the Middle East due to the high cost of air tickets.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Asadul Islam, a Saudi-bound expatriate, yesterday said he had to borrow more than Tk 1 lakh from his friends just to get a ticket to Saudi Arabia.

At yesterday's briefing, Atab made four recommendations, including operating additional flights to Middle Eastern destinations by Biman and other concerned airlines so that airfare can be brought back to normal rates.

Calling upon Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to give attention to the soaring airfares, Atab also recommended that the government fix special airfares for expatriate workers.