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**1.5 million fled war in Ukraine in 10 days: United Nations**



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**Revive the past glory of Bangladesh railway**



A man helps an elderly woman to run for cover after heavy shelling on the only escape route used by locals, while Russian troops advance towards the capital, in Irpin, near Kyiv, Ukraine, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Stop trying to halt offensive

**Putin tells Ukraine as diplomacy gathers pace; bid to evacuate residents from Mariupol fails again**

AGENCIES

Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday said his campaign in Ukraine was going according to plan and would not end until Kyiv stopped fighting, as efforts to evacuate the heavily bombed city of Mariupol failed for a second day in a row.

He made the comments in a phone call with Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, who appealed for a ceasefire in the conflict that the United Nations says has created the fastest growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War Two.

"It was underlined that the suspension of the special operation is only possible if Kyiv stops military operations and carries out well-known Russian demands," the Kremlin quoted Putin as saying.

Russian media said Putin also held almost two hours of talks with French President Emmanuel Macron, who has stayed in regular contact but, as with other

international efforts, has yet to persuade Moscow to call off a campaign now in an 11th day.

On Saturday Vladimir Putin threatened the existence of Ukrainian statehood.

"The current (Ukrainian) authorities must understand that if they continue to do what they are doing, they are putting in question the future of Ukrainian statehood," Putin said.

"And if this happens, they will be fully responsible."

Authorities in Mariupol had said yesterday they would make a second attempt to evacuate some of the 400,000 residents, after the Ukrainian coastal city endured days of shelling that has trapped people in without heat, power and water.

But the ceasefire plan collapsed, as it had on Saturday, with each side blaming the other for the failure.

Putin told Erdogan he was ready for

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## Sailors finally out of war zone

PORIMOL PALMA and MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Leaving behind the horrors of war, the 28 Bangladeshi crew members safely reached Bucharest, capital of Romania, yesterday after they were rescued from a ship attacked at a Ukrainian port on March 2.

The attack on the Banglar Samriddhi, owned by Bangladesh Shipping Corporation, left Third Engineer Hadisur Rahman dead.

The ship had been stranded at the Port of Olvia since February 23, a day before Russia began its invasion of Ukraine.

After the "missile" attack on the ship, some of the 28 crew members pleaded for help on social media, which prompted Bangladeshi authorities to step in. On March 3, the crew was evacuated from the ship and taken to a bunker in Nikolayev city in the south of Ukraine.

There, the Bangladesh embassy in Poland, with the help of a Bangladesh-origin Ukrainian businessman and Mahbub Alam, adviser to Bangladesh's honorary consul in Ukraine, provided food and other support to the crew.

But their journey to Romania was arduous, risky and uncomfortable. There was heavy traffic all the way to the

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## A mission to save THE SPEECH

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

April 9, 1971. Amzad Ali Khondaker was moving a trunk out of the Secretariat building that housed the then office of Department of Films and Publications.

Only a handful of people knew that the young cameraman of DFP was on a life-threatening mission to save a treasure of history from destruction by the Pakistan occupation army.

Inside that iron box, he was carrying the video footage and audio tapes of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's March 7 speech — a watershed in the nation's struggle for independence.

With the Pakistan military manning the Secretariat compound, Amzad knew this could cost him his life if he got caught.

He had already talked to a Bangalee police officer named Farid to help him out through Gate No 2. Still, he was tense about any last-minute complications.

Around 2:00pm, he boarded a two-stroke three-wheeler widely known as "baby taxi" with the trunk and reached Gate No 2. Farid assisted him in crossing the first major hurdle.

"I was in panic. But that could not stop me from going on that mission. We all were inspired by that monumental speech of Bangabandhu," Amzad said while recalling the day.

Getting out of the Secretariat, he breathed a sigh of relief though his job to take the films to safety was only half way

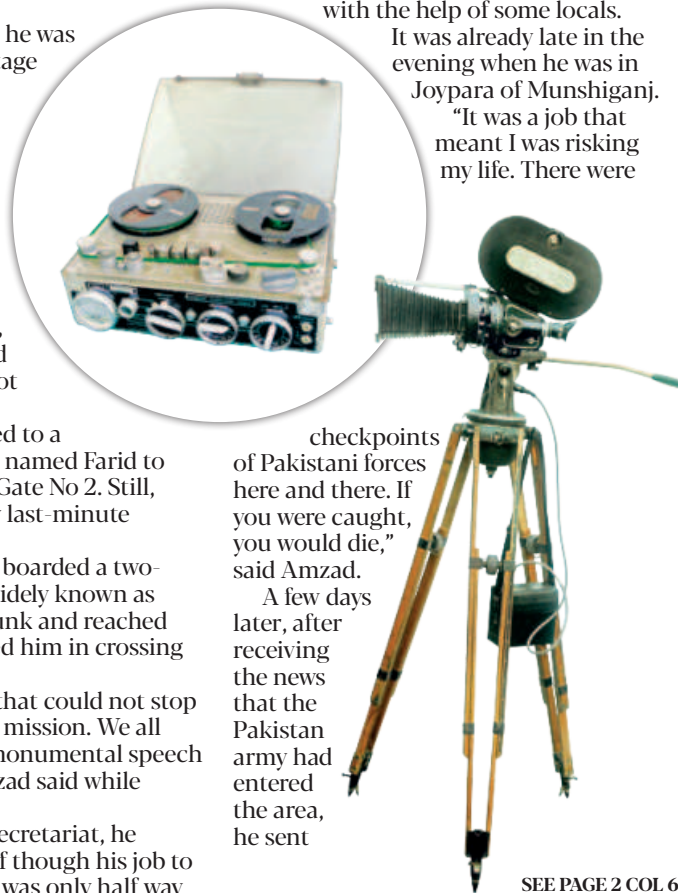
through.

"I took the road by the Curzon Hall to reach Swarighat via Chawkbazar. I crossed over the Buriganga to Jinjira by boat," said Amzad, a recipient of this year's Ekushey Padak, the second highest civilian award in Bangladesh.

He got on a bus to Bakhsnagar in Nawabganj. From Bakhsnagar, he walked for seven kilometres with the trunk carried by a horse, which he managed with the help of some locals.

It was already late in the evening when he was in Joypara of Munshiganj.

"It was a job that meant I was risking my life. There were



checkpoints of Pakistani forces here and there. If you were caught, you would die," said Amzad.

A few days later, after receiving the news that the Pakistan army had entered the area, he sent

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## In the driving seat in a man's world

NILIMA JAHAN

After her husband lost his job at a pharmacy in 2017, Leuza Akter Kristy's family plunged into a struggle to put food on the table.

An aspiring singer who would perform in shows occasionally, Leuza had to let go of her dream of a singing career to take care of her children.

The 34-year-old woman is also passionate about driving and bought her first car in 2007, which she would drive herself. But with the financial strains arising from the loss of her husband's job, she thought of selling the car to support her husband and children.

"But it [the car] was so dear to me that I eventually couldn't sell it. We even thought of giving it away to a rent-a-car service, but I was wary of my car getting damaged.

"A few days later, I learned that Uber started operations in Bangladesh a year ago and I immediately decided to make it my source of income as I knew driving. It was initially a challenge to convince my family as they were afraid of me driving around unknown people — knowing very well that Dhaka roads and transports are anything but safe for women.

"However, soon we all realised that if there is no food on the table, there was no point worrying about safety. They decided to let me give it a shot. I also took it as a test drive at the beginning but once I began, I started feeling the difference... I found it safe, it was time-saving, and I was earning enough to support my family."

Leuza joined in June 2017 as one of the few female Uber drivers in the country.

Since then, she has been supporting her two sons' education, her parents' medical treatment, looking after her family and job

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LEUZA AKTER KRISTY



Workers of a plastic factory wash raw materials in the Buriganga as the chemical residue turns the water whitish. The river doesn't get a break from pollution as industrial and other waste are mindlessly dumped in its water.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON