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# It's time to meet, talk

Says Zelensky as Moscow uses hypersonic missile in Ukraine; China unmoved after Biden warning on Russia

**AGENCIES**

Ukraine's leader Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday made a fresh appeal for talks with Moscow, while Russia admitted using advanced hypersonic missiles for the first time in the conflict.

Russian forces have taken heavy losses and their advance has largely stalled since President Vladimir Putin launched the assault on Feb 24, with long columns of troops that bore down on Kyiv halted in its suburbs.

But they have laid siege to cities, blasting urban areas to rubble, and in recent days have intensified missile attacks on scattered targets in western Ukraine, away from the main battlefields in the north and east.

Russia yesterday said its hypersonic missiles had destroyed a large underground depot for missiles and aircraft ammunition in the western Ivano-Frankivsk region. Hypersonic weapons can travel faster than five times the speed of sound and the Interfax agency said it was the first time Russia had used them in Ukraine.

Moscow also said its troops had broken Ukrainian defences to enter the strategic southern port city of Mariupol and destroyed radio and intelligence sites just outside Odessa.

Ukrainian authorities said they had "temporarily" lost access to the Sea of Azov although Russia has effectively controlled the coastline for weeks after ringing Mariupol. More than 3.3 million refugees have already fled



A significant number of underprivileged cancer patients, coming from different corners of the country, sleep on footpaths adjacent to the National Institute of Cancer Research and Hospital in the capital's Mohakhali area with a hope of securing beds for themselves at the hospital the next day. The photo was taken around 1:00am on Thursday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

**"This is the time to meet, to talk, time for renewing territorial integrity and fairness for Ukraine. Otherwise, Russia's losses will be such that several generations will not recover."**



Ukrainian President **Volodymyr Zelensky**

Ukraine through its western border, with around 2 more million displaced inside the country.

Unprecedented Western sanctions aimed at crippling Russia's economy and starving its war machine have yet to halt what Putin calls a "special operation" to disarm its neighbour and purge it of "Nazis". Kyiv and its allies have called this a baseless pretext for war.

Ukrainian authorities yesterday said they have not seen any significant shifts over the past 24 hours in front line areas.

Kyiv and Moscow reported some progress in talks this week towards a political formula that would guarantee Ukraine's security, while keeping it outside Nato, though both sides accused each other of dragging things out.

"This is the time to meet, to talk, time for renewing territorial integrity and fairness for Ukraine," Zelensky said in a video posted to Facebook.

"Otherwise, Russia's losses will be such that several generations will not recover."

Russia's ally China told US President Joe Biden on Friday that the war "in no one's interest," but showed no sign of giving in to US pressure to join Western condemnation of Russia.

Biden warned his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping of "consequences" for any financial or military aid for Russia, a move that could turn the standoff into a global confrontation.

But a day after US President Joe Biden warned China against giving Russia material support for its invasion, Lavrov said ties between Moscow and Beijing would only grow stronger.

**TONU MURDER**

# Hope for justice fading

**KHALID BIN NAZRUL, Cumilla**

The family of Sohagi Jahan Tonu is losing hope that her brutal murder would be solved anytime soon as the killers are still at large six years on.

On March 20, 2016, Tonu, a student of Cumilla Victoria Government College and also a theatre activist, was raped and murdered at Cumilla Cantonment.

The incident caused national outrage and led to protests from a wide range of people, including students.

"We are getting sick – the case has made no progress in these years," said Tonu's mother Anwara Begum.

The investigators are just delaying the probe in the name of carrying out the investigation, says a frustrated Anwara.

Since September 2020, the murder case is being

investigated by the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI).

Family members said PBI investigation officer Mujibur Rahman talked to them a year ago, but it seemed to them that the investigators had no interest in probing the murder.

Their assertion is not without any basis: the PBI is yet to make any headway in the probe and none has been arrested in the case.

"The state should stand for justice – it is shameful that law enforcement agencies have failed to submit a probe report in six years, said Advocate Shahidul Haque Sawpan, a

social worker in Cumilla.

Contacted, Rahman, who is also a PBI inspector, said they visited the place of the incident and talked to around 35 people, including some quizzed by CID officials earlier.

He said they were now working on some DNA samples.

Tonu's family members will be contacted again if needed, he added.

"We are trying our level best to solve the murder," said PBI chief Banaj Kumar Majumder, while expressing hope that PBI would be able to unravel the mystery of the murder.

But for Tonu's father, Yaar

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# TCB's mega sale begins today

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The countrywide mega sale of edible oil, lentil and sugar to one crore families begins today as the government looks to ensure the basic commodities for the poor amid their skyrocketing prices ahead of Ramadan.

The beneficiary households have received the token needed to purchase two litres of edible oil at Tk 110 per litre, two kilograms (kgs) of sugar at Tk 55 per kg and two kgs of lentil at Tk 65 per kg.

They can purchase the commodities at a subsidised rate twice: once in the window opening today until March 31 and another time from April 3 to April 18.

The beneficiary households are based on the poverty data of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, said Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi at a press conference held at the office of Trading Corporation of Bangladesh on Friday.

The commerce ministry used the list of 30 lakh families that received aid from the Prime Minister's Office in the thick of the pandemic and found another 57.1 lakh households from across the country afresh.

Separate offices have been created at the district level for administering the mega sale, said AHM Shafiquzzaman, director-general of the Directorate of National Consumers' Right Protection.

The local administrations will announce the dates and venue of the sales.

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A 23-year-old Bailey Bridge collapsed in Munshiganj's Gholtoli area when a loaded truck was crossing it. The incident disrupted road communication between Tongibari and Lauhajang upazilas. Story on page 5.

PHOTO: SAJJADUR RAHMAN

# Amir Hamza's posthumous Swadhinata Padak revoked

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The government has scrapped Amir Hamza's name from the list of Swadhinata Padak winners in 2022.

In a revised gazette notice, issued on Friday, the cabinet division published names of nine individuals and an institution as the winners of the highest civilian award in Bangladesh.

On Tuesday, the cabinet division published a gazette notice mentioning names of 10 individuals, including Amir Hamza in the "literature" category, and one institution for the award.

Amir Hamza, who died in 2019, had served a jail sentence for nine years in a murder case.

The cabinet division's revised notice says this year valiant freedom fighter

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# Finland world's happiest nation

**AFP, Helsinki**

Finland has been named the world's happiest country for the fifth year

running, in an annual UN-sponsored index that ranked Afghanistan as the unhappiest, closely followed by Lebanon.

The latest list was completed before the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia recorded the biggest boosts in wellbeing. The

largest falls in the World Happiness table, released on Friday, came in Lebanon, Venezuela and Afghanistan.

Lebanon, which is facing economic meltdown, fell to second from last on the index of 146 countries, just below Zimbabwe.

War-scarred Afghanistan, already bottom of the table last year, saw its humanitarian crisis deepen since the Taliban returned to power last August following the pull-out of US-led troops.

"This (index) presents a stark reminder of the material and immaterial damage that war does to

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