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Blast rips thru Afghan mosque, kills 33

Children among the dead; dozens hurt

AFP, Kunduz

A blast ripped through a mosque during Friday prayers in northern Afghanistan, killing 33 people and wounding 43 more, a Taliban spokesman said, just a day after the Islamic State group claimed two separate deadly attacks.

Since Taliban fighters seized control of Afghanistan last year after ousting the US-backed government, the number of bombings has fallen but the jihadist and Sunni IS has continued with attacks against targets they see as heretical.

A string of bombings rocked the country this week, with deadly attacks targeting a school and a mosque in Shia neighbourhoods.

Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid tweeted that children were among the 33 dead in the blast on Friday at a mosque in the northern province of Kunduz.

"We condemn this crime... and express our deepest sympathies to the bereaved," he said, adding 43 more were wounded.

Images posted to social media -- which could not be immediately verified -- showed holes blown through the walls of the Mawlawi Sikandar mosque, popular with Sufis in the Imam Sahib district, north of Kunduz city.

Jihadist groups such as IS bear a deep hatred for Sufis who they view as heretics and accuse them of polytheism -- the greatest sin in Islam -- for seeking the intercession of dead saints.

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A boy performs a flawless high jump over the hurdle two of his friends have formed by linking their toes and fingers together at a homestead in Barishal yesterday. As school was closed on the weekly holiday, children were free to enjoy their games to their hearts' content.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

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Shazneen's 24th death anniversary today



STAR REPORT

Today is the 24th death anniversary of Shazneen Tasnim Rahman.

On this day in 1998, 15-year-old Shazneen was raped and brutally murdered in a premeditated manner at her home in Gulshan.

She was the daughter of late Latifur Rahman, former chairman of Transcom Group, and Shahnaz Rahman, current chairman of the group. Shazneen was the youngest among four siblings. Her elder sister Simeen Rahman is the group chief executive officer of Transcom Ltd.

9 more lives lost to road crashes

STAR REPORT

At least nine people, including a woman, died in separate road accidents in Habiganj, Noakhali, Laxmipur and Faridpur in the last two days.

Of them, three died as an auto-rickshaw collided head-on with a covered van in Shayestaganj upazila's Sutang area in Habiganj Thursday night.

The victims are Khokon Mia, 22, Rahim, 20, of Shayestaganj upazila, and Tolai, 25, of Chunarughat upazila.

All of them were passengers of the auto-rickshaw that was heading towards Shayestaganj upazila town from Sutang around 8:30pm, said police and locals.

At the same time, a covered van coming from the opposite direction collided head-on with the auto-rickshaw leaving five of its passengers injured.

Locals rushed them to Habiganj Sadar Hospital where the on-duty doctors declared Khokon and Jafu dead.

Hours later, Rahim was rushed to Sylhet MAG Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries around 11:30pm, said police.

Police seized the covered van and arrested its driver, said Saleh Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Shayestaganj Highway Police Station.

Meanwhile, in Noakhali, three people died after a power tiller fell into a roadside ditch in Hatiya upazila's Bejugolia area Thursday afternoon.

The dead are Belal Hossain, 26, Mohammad Rubel, 25, and Delwar Hossain, 15, of Tomuruddi union in the same upazila.

Locals and witnesses said the power tiller was heading towards Ochkhali Bazar from Tomuruddi.

As the power tiller reached Bejugolia area around

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The headlights were turned on earlier than usual on Dhaka streets yesterday as a nor'wester soaked the city in the afternoon, providing relief from the heat while also leading to traffic jams amid the busy shopping season. The photo was taken from Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in Farmgate.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

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DHAKA-WASHINGTON TIES ‘Feast’ ends, now it’s time for action

PORIMOL PALMA

After over two years of pause, Dhaka and Washington engaged in a series of dialogues early April when the two countries celebrated half a century of diplomatic relationship -- both promising to deepen the bond in the next 50 years.

Following the 8th Partnership Dialogue in Dhaka on March 20, US Undersecretary for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland said it was just an appetiser for the "feast to come". And it was a feast indeed, beginning on April 4.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen held meetings with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, USAID Administrator Samantha Power, a few congressmen and senators.

On April 6, Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen led the US-Bangladesh Security Dialogue and met US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman.

The discussions took place when the global geopolitics was shifting with the emergence of China and more so with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and

the US making clear distinction between the world's democracies and autocracies.

Washington is giving more importance to its ties with Dhaka because of Bangladesh's socio-economic progress and role in the international forums. Reflecting this, the back-to-back dialogues discussed the achievements while issues of

of preferences (GSP) for Bangladesh, which was suspended in 2013 following the Rana Plaza collapse, on the grounds of labour standards and workplace safety. The US imports apparels worth \$8 billion a year from Bangladesh.

A significant part of the Momen-Blinken meeting on April 4 was discussions on democracy and the human rights situation in Bangladesh.

The US was critical of the 2014 and 2018 elections. It also did not invite Bangladesh to the Democracy Summit last year. US officials said dropping Dhaka from the list of invitees may also be related to governance issues.

The US Human Rights Report 2021 published on April 13 highlighted the issues of human rights, democracy, good governance, labour rights, religious freedom and rights of marginal communities. It specifically spoke of widespread impunity for security force abuses.

On April 17, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam said much of the information in

NEWS ANALYSIS

concern were also put on the table.

Momen requested Blinken to withdraw the sanctions on the Rapid Action Battalion and seven of its present and former officials, arguing the force's role in counterterrorism. Washington recognised these points but made it clear that the withdrawal is a process and will take time.

The foreign minister called for the reinstatement of the generalised system

of preferences (GSP) for Bangladesh, which was suspended in 2013 following the Rana Plaza collapse, on the grounds of labour standards and workplace safety. The US imports apparels worth \$8 billion a year from Bangladesh.

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RABIUL'S DEATH IN CUSTODY Fearing reprisal, family hesitates to file case Demands judicial probe

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Family members of Rabiul Islam, who was beaten to death allegedly by police personnel in Lalmonirhat on April 14, are hesitant to file any case against the suspects as they fear reprisals.

They are now demanding a judicial enquiry into the incident.

"Many people in our village suggest that we should not file the case against police personnel saying that if we do so, we may be harassed by them. We are now in fear," Dulal Khan, father of Rabiul, told The Daily Star.

"As we are helpless, we demand a judicial enquiry into my son's death."

Victim's wife Monira Begum, 20, "We all know that my husband died in police torture. But we have neither enough courage nor strength to continue any legal battle against police. We are scared."

Rabiul, 26, of Kazir Chawra village in Lalmonirhat Sadar, got into an argument with officers when a police team detained him on suspicion of being a gambler at a Baishakhi Mela, a traditional event celebrating the first day of the Bangla new year, on April 14 night.

Police personnel then beat him up. Rabiul

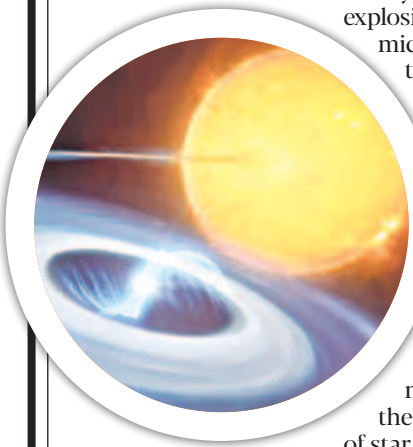
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Astronomers find new type of star explosion

REUTERS, Washington

Astronomers have detected a previously unknown type of stellar explosion called a micronova involving thermonuclear blasts at the polar regions of a type of burned-out star called a white dwarf after it has siphoned material from a companion star.

The researchers said on Wednesday a micronova is by far the least powerful type of star explosions now known - less energetic than a blast called a nova in which a white dwarf's



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