

Man killed in Rangamati ‘gunfight’

A CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A man was killed in a “gunfight” with security forces in Rangamati’s Kaptai upazila yesterday, said police.

The dead, Nikhil Kumar Das, 35, was a resident of Kaptai Project area.

Police said a group of armed criminals opened fire at security forces in Kaptai’s Chowdhurychhara area around 10:00am. Members of security forces fired retaliatory shots, triggering a “gunfight”.

Gang member Nikhil died on the spot after being hit by bullets, said Rowson Ara Rob, additional superintendent (Kaptai circle) of police.

Police recovered the body from the spot in the afternoon, she added.

Rowson Ara claimed that the deceased was an activist of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS).

Denying the claim, a senior PCJSS leader said Nikhil was not an activist of their organisation.

Covid claims four more lives

STAR REPORT

Four people died from Covid-19 in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, read a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services.

The total number of Covid-19 deaths in the country is currently 29,284 and the death rate stands at 1.46 percent.

At least 618 new Covid-19 cases were recorded in the 24 hours.

The daily positivity rate is 6.62 percent while the total positivity rate stands at 13.74 percent.

With the new infections, the total number of cases rose to 2,004,188, added the release.

A total of 9,338 samples were tested across the country during this period.

At least 872 patients have recovered from Covid-19 within this time.

The total number of recoveries now stands at 19,40,083 and the recovery rate at 96.80 percent, said the release.

Of the dead, two were males and two females.

One of the dead was aged between 21 and 30 years, one between 51 and 60, and two between 61 and 70, added the release.



A picture taken on Wednesday shows the courtyard of shopping and office complex following an attack in central Kharkiv, amid Russian invasion of Ukraine.

PHOTO: AFP

Ukraine steps up drive to retake Kherson region

Five dead in Russian strikes on Kirovograd

AGENCIES

Ukraine stepped up its drive to retake the Russian-controlled south of the country by trying to bomb and isolate Russian troops in hard-to-resupply areas, but warned that Moscow was redeploying its forces to defend the territory.

Ukraine’s southern Kherson region, which borders Russian-annexed Crimea, fell to Russian forces soon after they began what Moscow calls “a special military operation” on February 24.

Ukraine, which describes Russia’s actions as an imperial-style war of conquest, said yesterday its planes had struck five Russian strongholds around the city of Kherson and another city in the area.

British military intelligence, which helps Ukraine, said it was likely that Ukrainian forces had also established a bridgehead south of a river which runs along the wider Kherson region’s northern border.

“Ukraine’s counter-offensive in Kherson is gathering momentum,” it said in a statement.

Ukraine has retaken some small settlements in the north of the region in recent weeks as it tries to push Russian

forces back, a potential prelude to what Kyiv has billed as a major counter-offensive to retake the south.

Russia said it was unfazed by Ukraine’s efforts. The Russian defence ministry said its planes had attacked a Ukrainian infantry brigade in the far north of the Kherson region and killed more than 130 soldiers in the last 24 hours.

Kirill Stremousov, the deputy head of the Russian-appointed military-civilian administration running the Kherson region, has also dismissed Western and Ukrainian assessments of the situation.

Ukraine also shelled an important bridge straddling the Dnipro river in Kherson, closing it to traffic. President Volodymyr Zelensky said Ukraine would rebuild the Antonivskiy bridge over the Dnipro and other crossings in the region.

“We are doing everything to ensure that the occupying forces do not have any logistical opportunities in our country,” he said.

Ukraine has used Western-supplied long-range missile systems to badly damage three bridges across the River Dnipro in recent weeks, making it harder for Russia to supply its forces on the western bank, reports Reuters.

Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of Ukraine’s National Security and Defence Council, tweeted that Russia was concentrating “the maximum number of troops” in the direction of the Kherson region but gave no details.

In the central Ukrainian region, Russian strikes on Kirovograd left five people dead and injured more than two dozen others, the region’s governor said.

“There are victims, dead and wounded. Twenty-five have already been taken to medical institutions – they were wounded. Five were killed, one of them from the military,” the governor said.

A military base north of the capital Kyiv was struck by Russian missiles yesterday. Senior Ukraine military official Oleksiy Gromov told reporters that Russian forces had fired “six Kalibr cruise missiles on a military base in Lyutizh”.

The office of Zelensky confirmed late on Wednesday that Russian forces had captured the Soviet-era coal-fired Vuhlehirsk power plant, Ukraine’s second-largest, in what was Moscow’s first significant gain in Donbas in more than three weeks.

But it played down the importance of the setback.

Man to walk gallows for killing own child

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A Sirajganj court yesterday sentenced a man to death for killing his own child in Belkuchi upazila.

The accused, Bodiuzzaman, 28, was also fined Tk 50,000.

Additional District and Session’s Judge Salma Khatun handed down the sentence, after which Bodiuzzaman was sent to jail.

According to the case, he and his wife Shundori Khatun were both displeased about having a daughter, as their firstborn was also a girl.

On September 13, 2019, Bodiuzzaman threw his nine-month-old daughter to the ground and stomped on her until she died. He then dumped the body into a pond near his home.

Shundori filed the murder case accusing her husband.

Rape victim gets justice after 20yrs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

A Rangpur court yesterday sentenced two people to life imprisonment for raping a teenager over 20 years ago in Mithapukur upazila.

The convicted are Shah Alam and Rafiqul Islam of Muradpur village in the upazila.

Md Mostafa Kamal, judge of Rangpur’s Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-1, handed down the sentence.

The court also fined them Tk one lakh each, in default of which they will have to spend an additional year in jail.

On May 14, 2002, the two men picked up a 14-year-old girl while she was on her way to fetch a jug of water. They took her to a secluded place, and raped her at knifepoint.

The victim’s father filed a case with the court after police denied registering his complaint.

One killed, two injured in clash between teen gangs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

A teenager was killed and two others were injured as two teen gangs clashed in Narayanganj city on Wednesday night.

Eman, 18, a first-year student of Ali Akbar School and College, was stabbed to death by his rivals during the clash in Madani Nagar, said police.

Injured Shahriar Joy and Mashhur Rahman Rony received first aid at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Police detained Mashhur in connection with the murder.

Mashhur and Eman were friends first and operated two teen gangs in their area, claimed Mashhur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Siddhirganj Police Station.

Rab-11 even arrested the duo a few days ago in connection with multiple cases including drugs and violence, he added.

Since then, they had been blaming each other for their arrests. This led to the clash, said OC Mashhur.

At one stage, Eman sustained critical injuries. He was then rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

Talking to journalists, Eman’s mother Shahinur Begum said her son was an innocent college student and she demanded justice for him.

Meanwhile, around 5:00pm yesterday, locals protested the murder with Enam’s body. They blocked the Dhaka-Chattogram highway for around 30 minutes.

Govt turning to all partners for budget support

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said a finance ministry official involved with the proceedings on the condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the matter.

The government would soon be writing to the Beijing-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and Japan International Cooperation Agency asking for financial assistance, he said.

“We are taking a similar approach to the Ukraine war as the one deployed during the global coronavirus pandemic.”

To bounce back from the pandemic, as of October 2021, Bangladesh received about \$3 billion in budget support from development partners, \$732 million from the IMF as balance of payment support and \$1.4

billion to implement the countrywide vaccination programme, according to ERD.

“This time, we have new pressure points by way of inflated import bills and inflation. That is why we are looking for budget support from global donors alongside the austerity measures already in place.”

Budget support would be reflected in the country’s balance of payment and shore up the country’s delicate foreign currency reserves, which stood at \$39.5 billion as of July 27.

It would also help the government extend cash assistance to the poor and the vulnerable to cushion them from the impacts of inflation, the finance ministry official added.

Experts welcomed the

government’s proactive steps.

“This is necessary – we do need to add a few billion dollars to our reserves,” said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the WB’s Dhaka office.

He went on to advise the government to follow through on its loan request to the IMF with urgency.

“If the IMF is on board, everyone will feel a sense of comfort. This would have a domino effect. It would become easy for the WB, ADB and others – they would fast-track the loan approval process.”

Even when applying for loans from the WB, the IMF’s position is sought, according to Hussain.

“So if an IMF programme is ongoing, it would mean there is supervision on macroeconomic

stability. This gives confidence to everyone.”

Besides, the multilateral lenders’ conditions would be complementary to one another, he said.

The IMF might be focusing on one set of issues and the WB on another set.

For instance, the WB might go for tariff rationalisation, while the ADB would be focusing on carbon taxes and other environmental issues.

“It has been a while since we saw transformative institutional and policy reforms – those will get impetus under the loan programmes. We will see multi-pronged reform programmes like in the 90s. It will be a game-changer for the Bangladesh economy,” Hussain added.

In the first five months of this year, at least 2,023 people were killed in 2,384 road crashes.

However, different road safety organisations that keep track of crashes put the numbers much higher.

According to Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity, at least 7,809 people were killed in 5,629 road crashes last year.

‘It was an accident’

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Federation yesterday. The latter proposed holding the national polls over two or three days.

The party chairman Syed Nazibul Bashar Maizvandary said army personnel should be deployed to guard the ballot papers and the electronic voting machines.

Both the Bangladesh NAP and the Gono Forum leaders expressed opinions against the use of the machines.

Four years on, road fatalities keep rising

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Shajahan Khan in April 2019, said Hadiuzzaman.

But reducing road crashes is not possible without proper implementation of the law, he said.

Several sections of the act still remained unimplemented due to pressure from the transport associations and absence of rules, which were not framed in the last four years, road transport and bridges ministry sources said.

A taskforce led by Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan was formed in October 2019 to implement the III recommendations, but as of Wednesday, it held five meetings but could make little progress in their task.

Among the PMO’s 17 directives on August 16, 2018, was an order for buses to pick up and drop off passengers only at designated spots and to keep doors of running buses shut at all times. These orders

continue to be flouted.

Contacted, Road Transport and Highway Division Secretary ABM Amin Ullah Nuri said the government is working to reduce road crashes but it is the people who have to be aware.

“We have to make people aware. We have to encourage them to practise road safety. Everything is not possible by enforcing law,” he told The Daily Star last night.

“Whenever we go for evicting three-wheelers from highways, you [journalists] write against it, bringing up humanitarian issues.”

On Tuesday, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority on Tuesday wrote to all deputy commissioners to conduct mobile courts, apart from their usual drives, at least one day a month for reducing road crashes.

ONLY GETTING WORSE

Transport expert Prof Moazzem Hossain told this newspaper yesterday that a sharp rise in crashes involving motorcycles and three-wheelers have

played a big part in the deterioration in road safety.

Prof Moazzem, a former director of ARI, said they have been talking about the risks involving bikes, terming them as “ticking time bombs” for the last few years, but it has gone unheeded.

He said the deterioration of the public transport system in the last few years compelled people to go for unsafe vehicles like bikes and three-wheelers, increasing the number of crashes.

“So, the worst is yet to come,” he said.

At least 2,635 people were killed in 2,609 road crashes in 2018 – the year of the protests. According to police reports, in 2021 deaths have nearly doubled to 5,084 in 5,472 road crashes.

In 2019, 4,138 people were killed in 4,147 crashes, while 3,918 people were killed in 4,198 crashes in 2020, according to police reports.