

UN rights chief due tomorrow To visit Rohingya camps

AFP, Geneva

Michelle Bachelet is to make the first visit by a UN rights chief to Bangladesh tomorrow, including to the sprawling refugee camps home to nearly a million Rohingyas.

Bachelet's office announced yesterday that the trip from Sunday to Wednesday was at the Dhaka government's invitation.



Michelle Bachelet

It will be one of the former Chilean president's final acts as the United Nations high commissioner for human rights before her four-year term expires at the end of the month.

During her visit to the capital Dhaka, the UN rights chief is scheduled to meet with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and other ministers.

"The high commissioner will also travel to Cox's Bazar where she will be able to visit camps housing Rohingya refugees from Myanmar and meet with refugees, officials and non-governmental organisations," her office said in a statement.

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DEMAND FOR PAY HIKE

Tea workers go on work abstention today

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Tea garden workers across the country go on indefinite work abstention from today demanding wage hike.

Currently, a worker gets a daily wage of Tk 120. The workers are demanding Tk 300.

"We will go on work abstention for an indefinite period if our demand is not met by today [Friday]," said Nipen Paul, acting general secretary of Bangladesh Tea Workers' Union, after a meeting with tea workers at the union office in Moulvibazar's Sreemangal yesterday morning.

The workers in the last four days enforced a two-hour work abstention (9:00am to 11:00am) daily.

"As prices of essentials are increasing, it has now become difficult for us to survive with a daily wage of Tk 120," said Nipen.

"We have been demanding our

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina stands in solemn silence to pay respect to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman after placing a wreath at his grave in Tungipara of Gopalganj yesterday.

PHOTO: PTD

CHINA'S TAIWAN MILITARY DRILLS

An opportunity for US, allies to gather intel

REUTERS, Hong Kong/Washington

While China's expanded drills surrounding Taiwan have marked an unprecedented military and political warning against outside interference over the island, they opened a window to gather intelligence for the United States and its allies.

The four days of intense drills last week - and extended manoeuvres this week - provide an opportunity to scrutinise the missiles China would use to drive off foreign militaries intervening in any future invasion as well as its command, control and communications systems, regional diplomats and security analysts say.

And on the strategic intelligence front, the exercises have given a clue to China's ability to blockade the island as a prelude or alternative to any invasion, showcasing the firing of ballistic missiles over Taiwan for the first time as well as simulated air and sea attacks on ships on its east coast.

While acknowledging ongoing data gathering, two US military officials have cautioned that the drills are unlikely to offer the type of in-depth intelligence opportunity provided by other manoeuvres beyond the headlines.

China is unlikely to display its best

tactics and strategies during drills that it knows are being watched closely, said one of the officials, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The officials said that most of the systems and missiles used by China appear to be known to the United States and



allies, so it was unclear how much more could be gleaned on their capabilities over the past few weeks.

Singapore-based security analyst Collin Koh said rather than weaponry, the drills offered a prime chance to monitor key Chinese elements - China's reformed Eastern Theatre Command, its Rocket Force and Strategic Support Force - operating together in a fully coordinated and integrated way.

"I fully expect the US to be collecting from a full spectrum - signals, communications and electronic intelligence - it is just a too good opportunity to miss."

Online trackers of aircraft and ships have reported the presence of specialist electromagnetic intelligence gathering assets in the area, including powerful US RC-135S Cobra Ball aircraft and a missile monitoring ship. Taiwan also launched its locally produced Albatross reconnaissance drones during the Chinese drills, according to video footage reviewed by Reuters.

The US Indo-Pacific Command did not respond to Reuters questions on the deployment of intelligence gathering assets in the area.

The Chinese and Taiwanese defence ministries did not respond to Reuters' questions. The two US military officials said it would take time to digest any intelligence harvested.

While the drills appeared to show that Beijing was able to coordinate its military forces from air, land and sea, the exercises could only reveal so much since there wasn't an active adversary, they said.

"Things are easy when you're not being shot at," one of the officials said.

Two killed in fire at filling station

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Two people were killed and another person was injured in a fire at a filling station in Kushtia's Bheramara upazila yesterday evening.

Identities of the deceased, both employees at the filling station, could not be ascertained till filing of this report last night.

Jane Alam, deputy director of Kushtia fire service, said the fire broke out in Dafadar Filling Station in Satbaria while oil was being unloaded from a tanker around 7:30pm.

On information, firefighters from Bheramara fire service station rushed to the spot and brought the flames under control, he said.

Mojibur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Bheramara Police Station, said the origin of the fire could not be ascertained immediately.

Fake navy officer held in Chattogram

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police yesterday arrested a man on charges of pretending to be a sub-lieutenant of Bangladesh Navy and swindling around Tk 20 lakh from a businessman in Chattogram.

Nur Mohammad Shahed, 21, son of Feni, was arrested by police in the city's Halishahar Artillery area after a businessman named Omar Faruk lodged a complaint with Khulshi Police Station.

"The uniform, a badge, bank cheque, and Tk 1 lakh in cash were recovered from him," said Sontosh Kumar Chakma, officer-in-charge of the police station.

Shahed introduced himself as a Navy officer to Omar and offered to sell grocery items at lucrative prices, the OC said, citing the complaint.

After giving him the money and not receiving any of the products, Omar recently filed a case, he added.

Road crashes claim two more lives

STAR REPORT

Two people were killed and five injured in road accidents in Dhaka and Chattogram yesterday.

Shahidul Islam, 50, driver of a CNG-run three-wheeler, was killed in the capital's Banani area.

His three-wheeler was hit by an unidentified vehicle near Bangladesh Army Stadium around 2:00am, said Jubaidul Islam, sub-inspector of Banani Police Station.

Malati Rani, 45, and her son Biswajit, 30, both passengers of the three-wheeler, were injured and sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, he added.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Forkan, 42, a microbus driver, was killed as his vehicle was hit by a truck in Chattogram's Sitakunda.

The collision took place around 7:00am and the victim died on the spot, said Nurul Alam Dulal, senior station officer of Sitakunda fire department.

Three people were injured in the accident and were sent to Chattogram Medical College Hospital, he added.

Two more die from Covid

UNB, Dhaka

Two more people died from coronavirus and 218 tested positive for the virus in Bangladesh in the last 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

While the country's total fatalities reached 29,312, the new number took its caseload to 2,008,500, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The daily case positivity rate rose to 4.75 percent from Thursday's 4.45 percent as 4,585 samples were tested.

The mortality rate remained unchanged at 1.46 percent. The recovery rate rose to 97.11 percent from Thursday's 97.10 percent.

In July, the country reported 142 Covid-linked deaths and 31,422 cases, the highest monthly death toll and caseload since March this year.

Bangladesh registered its highest daily caseload of 16,230 on July 28 last year and daily fatalities of 264 on August 10 in the same year.

Although the current pandemic phase may be characterised by relatively low incidence and risk for hospitalisation and death, the Omicron variant remains highly transmissible.

The potential for surges highlights that "countries cannot afford to ease up" on vaccinating their populations against Covid, "especially their health care workers, the elderly and those with comorbidities," according to the World Health Organization.

Further blow

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19,000 for tuition of his two daughters, Tk 5,000 for utility bills, Tk 11,000 bank loan and Tk 10,000 for his own expenditures and medicine.

"The rest of the money is not enough to cover the food cost. I cannot send my family to the village because the children are studying at a reputed school. So, it left me with one option -- lowering my living standards," he said.

3 more projects may get costlier

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If approved, the total project cost would reach Tk 1,751 crore, of which the government will bear Tk 1,018.25 crore while the rest will come from an Indian line of credit.

Ashuganj was officially recognised as a river port in 2014. It was later classified as the port of call in the Inland Water Transport and Trade Protocol between Bangladesh and India.

TWO OTHER PROJECTS NEEDING REVISIONS

An extension of the deadline will be needed for a project called "Construction of road on the bank of River Karnaphuli from Kalurghat bridge to Chaktai Khal".

With an estimated cost of Tk 2,275 crore, the project was taken up in July 2017. It was supposed to be complete by June 2020. It was already revised once with a two-year extension with no additional cost.

Chattogram Development Authority is implementing the project which aims at saving commercial and industrial areas and some major structures in the port city from floods and tidal surges.

Now, it is seeking an additional Tk 471 crore and another year, according to the planning ministry proposal.

The proposal said inclusion of new components like bus-bay, footbridge, pavement, approach road, slope

protections and prefabricated vertical drains required more funds and time.

The other project titled "Printing Industrial City" was approved in January 2016 with an aim to relocate printing factories from the capital to a 50-acre property in Sirajdikhan, Munshiganj, at a cost of Tk 138 crore.

Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation was supposed to complete it by December 2018. The project already saw a three-year extension.

But the authorities are now seeking two more years and funds, taking the cost to Tk 264.55 crore, because several new components have been included in the plan.

Bangladeshis are 'living in heaven'

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been done. They don't give information when it's sought. Not only them, many other countries, where money is laundered, do not give information."

He added that the finance ministry and Bangladesh Bank a long time ago requested for information on the money deposited to Swiss banks by 67 Bangladeshis. But only one

individual's information was provided. Momen said the finance secretary and Bangladesh Bank confirmed the matter to him.

He then added that the country's foreign currency reserve was enough for the next 8-9 months.

"Some experts are saying that the reserve has fallen. Our reserve used to be \$3.2 billion or \$3.3 billion, now it's over \$40 billion. It reached \$48

billion and then some of it was spent. Reserve rises and falls, it's not that bad.

"The country's credibility has increased. Reserves are important for poor countries, because they have to give money in advance when they buy something. Rich countries don't have to make payments in advance. America or Saudi Arabia don't have reserves..."

Cost to rise 5-fold as new design placed

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Mostafa attributed the cost escalation to major changes in the two-lane bridge's design.

Asked about the delay in preparing the new design, he said the Covid pandemic and search for potential financiers caused the delay.

The design is currently at the Prime Minister's Office for approval. A presentation is likely to be made there on it on August 17, he added.

Mostafa said the new bridge would be built 70 metres north of the existing one. The construction work would begin in 2024 and end within four years if everything is on track, he

told The Daily Star.

He said the revised project proposal is likely to be tabled in the Ecnc meeting in December next.

According to the proposal, 5.62 km approach road will be built on both banks of the river. The height of the bridge will be 12.2 metres above the high flood level.

The bridge will have eight pillars and each span of the structure will be 100-metre long.

Speaking to this newspaper requesting anonymity, a BR official said additional spending on the project could have been cut significantly had there been no delay

in the implementation.

Akter Kabir Chowdhury, secretary of Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik's (Shujan's) Chattogram chapter, said thousands of people have been suffering over the years because of the dilapidated Kalurghat bridge.

A new bridge would reduce the sufferings to a great extent, but the BR failed to start implementing the project due to inefficiency, incompetence, and lack of accountability of its officials, he said.

This is going to incur huge additional costs -- ultimately paid with public money, Akter added.

Rushdie stabbed

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the attacker into custody, police said.

State police said the condition of Rushdie, who wrote the novel "The Satanic Verses," was not known and did not give a motive for the attack.

Andrew Wylie, a spokesperson for Rushdie, said in an emailed statement that "Salman is in surgery," but did not have further details to share.

The author fell to the floor when the man attacked him, and was then surrounded by a small group of people who held up his legs, seemingly to send more blood to his upper body, as the attacker was restrained, according to a witness attending the lecture who asked not to be named.

Rushdie, who was born into a Muslim Kashmiri family in Bombay, now known as Mumbai, before

moving to the United Kingdom, has faced death threats for his fourth novel, "The Satanic Verses." Upon its publication in 1988, the novel was banned in many countries with large Muslim populations following claims that it contained blasphemous passages.

A year later, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, then Iran's supreme leader, pronounced a fatwa, or religious edict, calling upon Muslims to kill the novelist and anyone involved in its publication for blasphemy.

Rushdie, who called his novel "pretty mild," went into hiding for many years. Hitoshi Igarashi, the Japanese translator of the novel, was murdered in 1991. The Iranian government said in 1998 it would no longer back the fatwa, and Rushdie has lived relatively openly in recent years.

Huge meteorite

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that the processes that ultimately formed the continents began with giant meteorite impacts, similar to those responsible for the extinction of the dinosaurs, but which occurred billions of years earlier."

As well as deciding the shape of our planet, the formation of the continents is key in other ways. The

Earth's land masses remain home to almost all the biomass, humans and important minerals on the planet.

"Not least, the continents host critical metals such as lithium, tin and nickel, commodities that are essential to the emerging green technologies needed to fulfil our obligation to mitigate climate change," Dr Johnson said.

Mugger kills trader

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Anwar told The Daily Star that Sharif left their shop for his house in Tongi around 9:00pm on Thursday.

"He was with four to five friends on a microbusin Uttara. We learnt from police that his friends dropped him near the ATM booth. When the man [Samad] entered the booth, my brother's friends and the microbus were there ... They left the place immediately after the incident [stabbing]," he said.

"We want highest punishment of the man who killed my brother ... We also requested the law enforcers to

investigate whether there is any other motive behind the killing," he said.

Father of two minors, Sharif had been in Dubai for 14 years. After returning home in 2019, he joined the family business in Uttara. He was planning to go abroad again, his family said.

Meanwhile, Samad confessed to stabbing Sharif before a magistrate after police produced him before the court.

Samad was a lift technician at an office who lost his job two years ago. He was seen roaming in front of different ATM booths on Thursday night, police sources said.