

PM returns home

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina returned home last night after wrapping up her four-day state visit to India.

In the afternoon, Education Minister of Rajasthan BD Kalla and Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Muhammad Inram saw the premier off at Jaipur airport.

The PM reached Jaipur of Rajasthan from New Delhi and offered prayers at Khwaja Gharib Nawaz Dargah Sharif, Ajmer, reports BSS.

She also offered munajat seeking development, prosperity and welfare of the country and its people.

Hasina reached India on September 5. The following day, she offered prayers at the Nizamuddin Auliya Dargah in New Delhi.

The PM held bilateral talks with her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi at the Hyderabad House.

Schoolboy killed near Dainpur border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, DINAJPUR

A Bangladeshi teenager was shot dead allegedly by the Indian Border Security Force near Dainpur border in Dinajpur Sadar on Wednesday, the same day Bangladesh and India issued a joint statement promising to bring the number of border killings down to zero.

The killing happened when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was still in India.

Minarul Islam, 17, a grade-IX student of Khanpur High School, was shot around 9:00pm, said Tanvirul Islam, officer-in-charge of Dinajpur Sadar Police Station.

Kamalpur Union Parishad Chairman Abu Bakkar Siddique said Minarul and some others intruded into Indian territory to fetch dried turtle from India.

As they approached the barbed wire fence, the BSF jawans of Hariharpur BOP under 174 BSF Battalion opened fire, leaving the boy dead on the spot, he said.

People who were accompanying the victim managed to flee, he further said.

Despite repeated attempts, The Daily Star could not reach the high officials of 29th BGB Battalion in Phulbari.

Naik Subedar Akhter Hossain of BPO under Phulbari 29th BGB Battalion said, they have sent a protest letter to BSF in this connection.

A flag meeting between the BGB and the BSF will be held tomorrow, he further informed.



A traditional Rajasthani dance troupe welcomes Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina through their performance at Jaipur International Airport yesterday. She is seen encouraging them for their performance upon her arrival. BD Kalla, minister of education of Rajasthan state government, received Hasina at the airport.

PHOTO: PMO

COUNTER-OFFENSIVE AGAINST RUSSIA

Ukraine claims gains in north, south, east

Zelensky says his forces recaptured several towns, villages; Blinken visits Kyiv with new military aid package

AGENCIES

Ukraine yesterday claimed a military breakthrough in its counter-offensive against Russian invaders as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, on a surprise visit to Kyiv, unveiled another \$2.8 billion in military aid.

Ukraine said its forces made gains both in the north, the south and the east, prying back land seized by Russia which had hoped for a swift victory when it attacked nearly seven months ago.

In the area around Kharkiv, Ukraine's second city, Kyiv's forces penetrated 50 kilometres beyond Russian lines and "liberated" more than 20 towns and villages, senior military official Oleksiy Gromov said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said late on Wednesday his forces had recaptured several towns, villages in the Kharkiv region but did not give their names.

Gromov said more than 700 square kilometres had been recaptured in the Kharkiv area. A Russian official said

Moscow's forces had put up stiff resistance and prevented Kyiv's forces from taking at least one key town.

Ukraine is also carrying out a counter-offensive on the southern front, including towards the Russian-held city of Kherson.

Gromov said Kyiv's troops had advanced "deep into the enemy's defences, defences from two to several dozens of kilometres" in the south. "A number of settlements have been recaptured," he added, without giving details.

Ukrainian troops claimed gains in the eastern Donbas region, including around Kramatorsk and Sloviansk, reports AFP.

Heavy fighting was also reported yesterday in areas near the Russian-held Zaporizhzhia nuclear power station in Ukraine after Kyiv warned it might have to shut down the plant to avoid disaster.

Such a Ukrainian thrust, if confirmed and the gains are held, would be a significant boost for Kyiv, which is keen to show its Western backers that it can change the facts on the ground by force and deserves continued support.

There is additional pressure on Kyiv to demonstrate that before winter sets in, amid threats by Russian President Vladimir Putin to halt all energy shipments to Europe if Brussels goes ahead with a proposal to cap the price of Russian gas.

In a boost for Kyiv, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Ukraine yesterday and announced \$2.8 billion in new foreign military financing to Ukraine and 18 other countries at risk of future Russian aggression.

Amid Ukraine's reports of gains, Russia trumpeted battlefield successes, saying it had hit five command posts and downed 13 drones yesterday.

Addressing a forum in Moscow, Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said Russia had withstood Western sanctions over the war better than expected, estimating that GDP had fallen just over one percent year-on-year in the first six months of 2022.

The Institute for the Study of War (ISW), a Washington-based think tank, said the Ukrainian military looked to have made significant progress on Wednesday.

Gang attacks and kills Swechhasebak League leader

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Shariatpur

A Swechhasebak League leader was beaten to death allegedly by a gang of drug peddlers at Shariatpur's Naria municipality on Wednesday night.

The deceased was identified as Mamun Khan, 32, former publicity secretary of the municipal unit of Swechhasebak League, said police.

The victim's elder brother Kuddus Khan filed a murder case with Naria Police Station, accusing 16 people, the police station's OC Mahub Alam said. The prime accused, Mokhles Bepari, was arrested yesterday, he added.

The victim's family members said Mamun used to speak against some local goons, led by Mokhles Bepari, who sell drugs in the area.

Around 7:00pm on Wednesday, when Mamun was going to Naria Bazar, a gang of 15 to 20 people attacked him and hit him in the head with a rod and hammer, alleged the victim's uncle Anwar Mallick, also a ward councillor of the municipality.

Mamun was taken to Shariatpur Sadar Hospital where on-duty doctor declared him dead around 9:00pm, said Anwar and police.

Tofail Ahmed, a doctor at the hospital, said, "We found that he was hit by a blunt object. We will be able to know details after receiving autopsy report."

Woman hacked to death by husband

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A woman was hacked to death by her husband at in Habiganj Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The deceased was Rupia Khatun, 40, wife of Rongu Miah, a resident of Richi village in the upazila.

Habiganj Sadar Circle additional superintendent of police (ASP) Mahfuza Akter Shimul said Rongu struck his wife Rupia's throat with an axe at night, leaving her critically injured.

She was taken to Habiganj Sadar Hospital where the on-duty doctor declared her dead early yesterday.

Meanwhile, locals detained Rongu and handed him over to police.

Filing of a case in this regard is underway, the ASP added.

Indian student dies after falling from roof in Sirajganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

An Indian medical student died after "falling from the roof" of a rest house in Shahzadpur upazila of Sirajganj on Wednesday.

Khusbu Monjur, 19, daughter of Monjur Ahmed Tarai, from Kashmir, was a third year student of Khwaja Yunus Ali Medical College of Sirajganj.

OC Md Anisur Rahman of Enayetpur Police Station said Khusbu along with other students of the college went on a field visit to the PPD rest house in Shahzadpur on Tuesday.

Khusbu fell from the roof of the four-storey building on Wednesday morning, he said.

She was taken to Khwaja Yunus Ali Medical College Hospital where she died on Wednesday afternoon, he added.

Police are investigating the incident, the OC said.

After autopsy, the body was handed over to Khusbu's brother, who is an intern at the hospital, the OC said.

Demise of an erudite soul

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hospital dead around 10:40 pm, said Dr Arif Mahmud, deputy director of Evercare Hospital.

His demise has created a vacuum in the intellectual space of the country.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held at the Azad Mosque after Juma prayers today, and he will be buried at the Mirpur Martyred Intellectuals' graveyard later in the day, family sources said.

"He was a genius, a gold medallist in history and an excellent economist by any standards. His understanding of economics, political economy and sociopolitical history was unparalleled," said economist Ahsan H Mansur, who knew Akbar for many years.

Mansur, executive director of Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, termed Akbar the best bureaucrat of his generation and said he was a man of integrity and possessed uncompromising personal ethics. "He never compromised on ethical issues," he said.

"He has left us but left his books containing his thoughts and wisdom for generations to come. He was a great man and a great Bangladeshi," Mansur added.

Debapriya Bhattacharya, convenor

of Citizen's Platform for SDGs, described the demise of Akbar as a "loss of an erudite and enlightened soul".

"He was a soldier of the country's independence, a fighter for national development and an activist for civic rights. Our deep and humble respect for him."

Born in 1944 in Brahmanbaria, Akbar graduated in history from Dhaka University and later emerged as an economist. He completed his post doctorate in economics from Queen's University in Canada.

He started his professional career in the civil service of Pakistan in 1967. He actively participated in the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971 and was sentenced in absentia by military rules to 14 years rigorous imprisonment, according to the brief bio in one of his books.

Akbar served as the deputy secretary of the defence ministry of the provisional government of Bangladesh during the Liberation War. He served at the high positions in government for about 10 years and retired as Cabinet Secretary, according to University Press Ltd, a leading publisher.

Akbar was finance secretary and

chairman of the National Board of Revenue. He was appointed as cabinet secretary in 2001.

He also held the position of alternate executive director in World Bank.

Akbar became adviser to the caretaker government in 2006-07 and later resigned in protest of the chief adviser's failure in ensuring a free, fair and impartial election.

He was a professor at BRAC University after his retirement from public service.

Akbar penned 17 books, including Friendly Fires, Humpty Dumpty Disorder and Other Essays; Discovery of Bangladesh; Gresham's Law Syndrome and Beyond; Pararthoparatar Arthaniti (Economics of Altruism); and Ajab O Jabor Ajab Authraneti. His latest book is Bangladesh Budget: Orththoniti O Rajniti.

He also wrote on politics and literature.

He was awarded Justice Mohammad Ibrahim Gold Medal for his book 'Discovery of Bangladesh', said University Press Ltd.

He was awarded Honorary Fellowship by Bangla Academy for his contribution to economics.

Mao Zedong to Soviet leader Joseph Stalin and US president Harry S. Truman.

Her 70-year reign straddled two centuries of seismic social, political and technological upheaval.

The last vestiges of Britain's vast empire crumbled. At home, Brexit shook the foundations of her kingdom, and her family endured a series of scandals.

But throughout, she remained consistently popular and was queen and head of state not just of the United Kingdom but 14 former British colonies, including Australia and Canada. New Zealand proclaimed Charles its new king.

She was also head of the 56-nation Commonwealth, which takes in a quarter of humanity, and supreme governor of the Church of England, the mother church of the worldwide Anglican communion.

Tk 25,000cr lost to hundi in last four months

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CID officials said they launched the probe after the country's forex market became volatile following the rapid appreciation of the US dollar against the taka in May.

Bangladeshi migrant workers and professionals working in different companies and universities were among those who sent home money through hundi, they said adding that this came to light after the arrest of 12 MFS agents and four hundi traders.

The bulk of the amount was collected by hundi traders in Dubai and Saudi Arabia, and the rest in Italy, Singapore, Malaysia and Kuwait, a CID high official told The Daily Star yesterday.

CID officials said these hundi gangs operate split into three groups. The first group collects foreign currency from expatriates abroad while the second group pays the amount to MFS agents in the local currency. The third group is comprised of MFS agents who transfer the money to the relatives or persons designated by the expatriates.

The 16 arrestees made suspicious transactions involving Tk 20.70 crore in the last four months. The CID arrested 11 of them from different parts in Chattogram and the rest in Dhaka.

The CID also seized 34 mobile phones, 33 SIM cards and Tk 10.46 lakh in cash from the arrestees. Four of the SIM cards were linked to agent accounts that had deposits of Tk 3.46 crore.

With the help of MFS agents, hundi traders are also carrying out illegal businesses such as online gambling, drug trafficking, gold smuggling and yaba trade, the CID chief mentioned.

About the role of MFS companies, he said Bangladesh Bank will look into it. The arrestees are agents, the MFS companies should increase vigilance.

The CID has so far filed three money laundering cases against 45 people with Kotwali Police Station in Chattogram, and Khilgaon and Mohammadpur police stations in Dhaka.

It also identified six Bangladeshi hundi traders in Saudi Arabia, who collected money from migrant workers and asked their counterparts in Bangladesh to send the money to the workers' relatives with the help of MFS agents.

Investigators said the majority of these MFS agents are from Chattogram, Brahmanbaria, Cumilla,

Kushtia, Khulna and Bagerhat.

Most of the hundi transactions (27 percent of around Tk 25,000 crore) were made in Chattogram region, said one of the investigators.

According to the statement of the case filed with Kotwali Police Station, the investigators found suspicious transactions from the agent account of "Joy Computer" owned by Rupun Kanti Das Joy. In four months since April, 7,825 transactions involving Tk 6.06 crore were made from this account to different MFS accounts, mostly belonging to migrants' relatives.

In another case filed with Khilgaon Police Station, the investigators said Tk 11.97 crore was sent to expatriate's relatives from three merchant accounts through MFS in three months.

Many of these 5,000 agents are involved in hundi trade, online gambling, and cryptocurrency trade, said the CID official, adding that most of the online gambling sites are controlled from Russia.

A BB source said Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) provided the list of 5,000 agents to the CID following suspicious transactions.

The transactions were made from these accounts between 12:00am and 6:00am though the peak time for MFS transactions is between 6:00pm and 8:00pm. Each of these accounts made four transactions per minute between 12:00am and 6:00am, which is very unusual, the source added.

Asked about the beneficiaries of the hundi trade, a top CID official said a section of Bangladeshi businessmen abroad buys the foreign currency from hundi traders.

"Other buyers include people who are looking to purchase property or receive treatment abroad," added the official, seeking anonymity.

"Hundi traders have connections with migrant workers. They collect money from migrants at the latter's convenience and immediately arrange its transfer to their relatives," the official said.

The official suggested that the money transfer system be made more efficient so that remitters can transfer money to their relatives within the shortest possible time.

Source: The banking sector say many expatriates prefer hundi for sending home money as hundi traders offer exchange rates higher than the official one.

Referring to the list of 5,000 agents, Kamrul Ahsan, additional deputy inspector general of the CID, said more names may come up after further investigation.

"We have just started our probe... We will continue our drive to arrest those involved in hundi and other such illegal trades," he told this newspaper.

Lightning strike

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tragic that so many poor farmers died trying to make a living.

"Their death is a huge loss for the whole village."

Uzzal Hossain, upazila nirbahi officer, said the local administration has decided to give Tk 25,000 to each of the families of the deceased to help them with the burial procedures.

"We will talk to the higher authorities about the matter so that the victim families can get due compensation."

Mamata blasts

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the Netaji Subhash Indoor Stadium in Kolkata.

"I don't want to talk about external affairs or bilateral ties, but I have noticed that the Centre tries to stop me whenever I am invited to any foreign country. I want to know why the union government is so worried about me meeting foreign dignitaries."

Hasina, who wrapped up her India visit yesterday, during an interaction with the media at the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi on September 6, said Mamata was like her sister and expressed disappointment over not being able to meet the chief minister.

In July this year, Hasina had even written to Mamata saying she was keen to meet her during this visit.

A senior official of the Indian government rejected Mamata's criticism and said the central government does not invite chief ministers to events related to a visiting head of a government.

"Sometimes, chief ministers are invited for state banquets or some other ceremonial events but there was no such occasion during Sheikh Hasina's visit this time," said the official, preferring anonymity.