

Ukraine battles to restore power

Millions suffer in cold, darkness as Russian strikes target grid

AFP, Kyiv

Ukraine yesterday struggled to repair its battered power and water services after Russia targeted the electricity grid with dozens of cruise missiles and temperatures plunged.

The Ukrainian energy system is on the brink of collapse and millions have been subjected to emergency blackouts for weeks due to systematic Russian bombardments of the grid.

The World Health Organisation has warned of “life-threatening” consequences and estimated that millions could leave their homes as a result.

Mayor Vitali Klitschko said more than two-thirds of the capital was still cut off despite municipal workers in Kyiv restoring some water service overnight.

“Seventy percent of the capital remains without electricity,” Klitschko said. “Energy companies are making every effort to return it as soon as possible,” he added.

Kyiv shivered yesterday as temperatures hovered just above zero degrees Celsius (32 degrees Fahrenheit) with some rain.

Ukraine’s military accused Russian forces of firing around 70 cruise missiles at targets across the country on Wednesday and of deploying attack drones.

Ten people were killed and around 50 wounded, Ukrainian Prosecutor General Andriy Kostin told local media.

But Russia’s defence ministry denied striking any targets inside Kyiv and said damage in the capital was the result of Ukrainian and foreign air defence systems. “Not a single strike was made on targets within the city of Kyiv,” it said.

President Volodymyr Zelensky urged the United Nations Security Council to act against Russia over air strikes on civilian infrastructure.

“When we have the temperature below zero, and scores of millions of people without energy supplies, without heating, without water, this is an obvious crime against humanity,” Zelensky told the UNSC late Wednesday via video link.



Two workers readying different species of sea fish for drying in the sun at Kuakata beach in Patuakhali. Prices of the shutki (dried fish) vary according to size and species. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh, EU agree to enhance partnership

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The European Union and Bangladesh have opened a “new page of relationship”, agreeing in principle to sign the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, as Brussels wants Dhaka by its side amid the new global geopolitical shift following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The EU wants to engage with Bangladesh for the interests of both in the Indo Pacific region and the UN and other international forums.

Enrique Mora, deputy secretary general for political affairs at EU’s European External Action Service (EEAS), said this after the first ever political dialogue held between him and Bangladesh’s State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam at the state guesthouse Padma yesterday.

The priorities of the new agreement will be climate change, cyber and maritime security, defence, connectivity, and the basis of the relations is human rights and democracy, he told reporters.

At present, “Everything But Arms” is the legal basis of the EU-Bangladesh relationship, he said, adding that signing the Comprehensive Cooperation Partnership means a higher level of the tie, which is a recognition of Bangladesh’s significant socio-economic growth and its influence in the international arena.

“We really want to work with Bangladesh for security in the Indo-Pacific region. This is an important region. We want to protect our interest in the region as well as Bangladesh’s interest,” Enrique said.

Shahriar said there was not much difference between the aspirations of

Bangladesh and the interests of the EU in the Indo-Pacific.

The security elements have to be discussed before the agreement is signed, he said. “If you talk about military cooperation, we don’t have that capacity, but we have the capability of peacekeeping operations.”

Enrique Mora said, “We are living in a completely different world after Russia’s invasion in Ukraine. In this situation, partnership among those who believe in the principles of the UN is very important.”

According to a foreign ministry statement, Bangladesh sought the EU’s support for continued trade preferences under the EU’s new Generalised Scheme of Preferences beyond 2029 in order to make its LDC graduation smooth and sustainable.

BNP to get permission

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The minister said the opposition party was holding programmes in different areas of the country. The government didn’t obstruct them and won’t do so in the case of the BNP’s Dhaka rally, he added.

“They are saying that 25 30 lakh people will join the rally. Where will such a large number of people sit? We expressed apprehension that the capital would come to a standstill,” Asaduzzaman said.

That is why the BNP was asked to select a venue where such a large number of people could be accommodated, the home boss said. “Their latest demand is that the government grant them permission to hold the rally at Suhrawardy Udyan.”

He said as per the prime minister’s directive, it has been decided that the BNP would be granted the permission.

Earlier on November 15, a BNP delegation went to the office of DMP Commissioner Khandaker Golam Faruk to seek permission for a rally in front of the party’s Nayapaltan central office on December 10.

The BNP has been holding rallies in divisional cities, protesting the price hike of essentials and fuel.

Meanwhile, BNP men started pouring into Cumilla city to join the party’s rally at Town Hall ground tomorrow.

“Around 10,000 party men from Laksam, Monoharganj and Chandina upazilas of Cumilla as well as Haziganj and Kachua upazilas of Chandpur have already reached Cumilla city to take part in the rally,” said Monirul Haque Sakku, former joint secretary of Cumilla district (south) BNP.

Md Yusuf, 30, a BNP activist from Cumilla’s Nangalkot upazila, said, “The government may try to obstruct us from joining the rally in different ways. That’s why we have come to Cumilla city two days ahead of the rally.”

The BNP men would not be allowed to enter the rally venue before the rally day, as per restrictions imposed by the local administration.

Earlier, the government-backed transport operators imposed strikes ahead of the BNP’s recent rallies in Mymensingh, Khulna, Rangpur, Barishal, Faridpur and Sylhet.

Kabir Ahmed, president of Cumilla District Transport Owners’ Association, yesterday told The Daily Star that they would not enforce any strike ahead of tomorrow’s rally.

[Our Cumilla correspondent contributed to this report.]

Vote for boat

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confirmed that we have enough money in banks,” she said.

“If you keep your money in your home after withdrawing from the banks, it will just create scopes for the thieves,” report UNB and BSS, quoting the PM.

Hasina said due to the pandemic, there is an economic crisis across the globe, but Bangladesh’s economy has been kept on a strong base.

“We have remittance inflow, foreign investment is coming, export income has increased, and our tax collection has also increased. When all the countries are struggling to avoid a recession, Bangladesh has remained economically strong.” The prime minister said the Awami League assuming power in 1996 inherited reserves of only \$2.5 billion. When it came to power again in 2009, it was \$5 billion.

During the pandemic, there was no export and import, as a result the reserve reached \$48 billion, she mentioned.

She said the government spent

money on vaccines, fertiliser, rice, wheat, and corn for the people and invested \$8 billion in various works.

“It [reserve money] did not go anywhere, it was spent for the welfare of the people.”

Coming down heavily on the BNP, the AL chief said, “They [BNP leaders] embezzled the country’s money and for that they have been convicted. Tarique Zia has been sentenced to seven years’ imprisonment and fined Tk 20 crore. He has also been convicted for smuggling arms.”

Hasina said BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia not only looted people’s money but also the money meant for orphans. “For siphoning off Zia Orphanage Trust’s money, Khaleda has been convicted. What will these convicted leaders and their party give to the people?” she said.

The rally, organised by Jashore district AL, was also addressed by AL General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, presidium members Piyush Kanti Bhattacharya, Agriculture Minister

Abdur Razzaque, and Jahangir Kabir Nanak and Hasina’s cousin and AL leader Sheikh Helal, MP, among others.

Jashore AL President Shahidul Islam Milon presided over the rally while its General Secretary Shahin Chaklader, MP, conducted it.

Jashore yesterday was in a festive mood as AL leaders and activists from the southwestern region swarmed the town with colourful placards and festoons and chanted slogans.

Earlier, Hasina addressed a ceremony at the parade ground of the Bangladesh Air Force Academy in Jashore marking the President Parade (Winter) 2022.

She asked the newly commissioned officers of Bangladesh Air Force to have a sense of responsibility towards the country and its people to gain public trust and confidence.

The PM inspected a smartly turned-out parade and took salute riding in an open vehicle on the BAF Academy Parade Ground and witnessed a spectacular colourful flypast and aerobatic display.

Show of strength can’t ensure free, fair election

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political parties. If they don’t create that balance, it will not be possible to hold the election in a fair and credible manner with the help of the police and military,” Habibul observed.

The CEC made the comments while sharing with journalists his experience of Nepal tour and observing the polls in the neighboring country.

He said the government is a separate entity with ministries and departments, with whom the EC needs to work. It will be impossible to make the election successful without the sincere support and goodwill of the government.

Habibul said the EC won’t be able to conduct fair elections without a consensus among the political parties. “There is no dialogue between the

political parties at all...but that needs to happen.”

The BNP is still refusing to join the next national election if it is conducted by the incumbent EC and under a political government.

The opposition party is holding a series of rallies in divisional cities to press home its demands, including formation of an election-time caretaker government ahead of the parliamentary polls and reconstitution of EC following the formation the interim government.

The last of the BNP’s 10 rallies will be held in Dhaka on December 10.

Addressing the rallies, some BNP leaders threatened that they would unseat the government. However, party leaders later said they do not have such

of the divisional rally in Rajshahi.

Meanwhile, police claim otherwise and are said to have recovered multiple undetonated crude bombs from different spots.

In Rangpur, police sued 200 BNP leaders and activists over Tuesday’s clash, which left at least 22 people, including five cops, injured.

Sub Inspector Rafiqul Islam sued 200 men on Wednesday for undermining law and order, and assaulting and obstructing police, Hossain Ali, inspector (investigation) of Kotwali Police Station, said yesterday.

Meanwhile, Saiful Islam, president of the district unit BNP, one of the accused in the case, claimed he was in Dhaka at the time of the clash.

Distributors move

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assured that the electricity price at the retail level would not increase now and urged people not to worry.

Now, the incoming proposals from the state-owned companies, all to hike the retail price by about 20 percent, raise questions about the sincerity of the government in giving people relief from the cost of living crisis.

Inflation averaged 8.75 percent in the first four months of the fiscal year – a long way off the target of 5.6 percent set in fiscal 2022-23’s budget.

Earlier on Monday, the West Zone Power Distribution Company Limited sent in its proposal but due to a lack

of procedure, BERC did not accept the application.

The remaining three distributor companies may submit their proposals next week.

BERC will then form a technical committee for this and call for a public hearing.

“It may take at least one and a half months to complete the process,” said a BERC official on the condition of anonymity to disclose sensitive discussions.

BERC Chairman Abdul Jalil told reporters that after getting all the proposals, they will verify those and will take necessary steps as per the laws.

Must make hay while

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finalists who landed on the same day in Qatar – have shared a parallel narrative so far, however unwanted for their fans, having faltered at the start of their quest with identical 2-1 score-lines.

Consequently, minnows in Saudi Arabia have shown they are no pushovers while Japan re-established the notion that the Blue Samurai can punch above their weight, which resulted in the two teams making a mockery of the gulf in FIFA Rankings, predictive algorithms and the consequent betting odds in their respective fixtures.

It was commendable how the Saudis and the Japanese stuck to their game-plan and never lost self-belief despite going a goal down. While Saudis kept an audacious high-line defence intact to subdue the impact of Lionel Messi and company, Japan did not give up at any point and apparently had made the most of the Belgium lesson in Russia ’18 – where they conceded three goals in around the last 20 minutes to succumb to a 3-2 knockout defeat.

At a World Cup stage, football pitches are often akin to battlefields, and it is a no brainer that warfare are almost always won on the psychological front. With traditional powerhouses unlikely to hit peak form early in the competition, underdogs are well aware that a timely blow could set the cat amongst the pigeons since the favourites have more to lose and would be unwilling to settle for a draw.

And timely blows those were – and aesthetically pleasing too, given the crisp precision and top-drawer finesse involved with the winning goals – leading to Argentina and Germany searching for the best version of themselves in the games’ dying moments like a needle in a haystack.

2 men land in jail for stabbing medical student

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

A Bogura court yesterday sent two men to jail for stabbing a medical student in Bogura Sadar upazila.

Shakil Bapary, 26, and his father Farid Bapary, 51, both residents of the upazila’s Malgram area, were arrested early yesterday by a DB team after the victim’s father filed a case with Bogura Sadar Police Station, said Nur-e-Alam Siddiqui, officer-in-charge of the Bogura Sadar Police Station.

The weapon used to attack Meheraj Hossain Fahim, 26, a fourth-year student of Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital (SZRMCH) on Wednesday evening, was also recovered by the police.

According to the case statement, Shakil stabbed Fahim after he locked in an altercation with his father Farid, who is a street snack seller. Shakil fled the spot while Fahim was rushed to a hospital where he had to undergo surgery.

Train runs over man with hearing loss

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A man with a hearing impairment was run over by a train on the Panchagarh-Parbatipur railway track in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila yesterday.

Juhan Dev, 23, son of Dulal Dev of the same village, died after Drutojan Express, a train from Panchagarh bound for Dhaka, hit him around 9:15am, said Ershadul Haque Bhuiyan, officer-in-charge of Dinajpur Railway Police Station, quoting witnesses and family members.

“The victim could not hear the whistle as he had a hearing disability,” the OC added.

Police recovered the body with the help of local firefighters and handed it over to the family without an autopsy upon their request.

8th BGB-BGP meeting begins in Myanmar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The eighth high-level border conference between the Border Guard Bangladesh and Myanmar’s Border Guard Police began in Myanmar’s Naypyitaw yesterday.

A 10-member delegation from Bangladesh, led by BGB Major General Shakil Ahmed, is participating in the conference, while a 15-member one, led by Police Major General Aung Naing Thu, is representing the Myanmar side, said a BGB press release.

Prevention of drug smuggling and the Rohingya repatriation will be top-priority issues discussed in the five-day conference, said BGB sources.

BGB also intends to discuss the de-escalation of border tensions brought on by the internal turmoil in Myanmar and the violation of Bangladesh’s airspace by the neighbouring country.

Richarlison brace

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Barcelona winger Raphinha was involved again within a minute of the restart when he hounded Nemanja Gudelj out of possession but was again denied by the goalkeeper.

However, Serbia’s resistance was broken just after the hour mark.