

## Man dies as BSF enters Bangladesh, opens fire

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A man has died of the bullet wound he suffered from the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) opened fire after entering Bangladesh territory along the Tahirpur border in Sunamganj on Friday.

Delwar Hossain, 28, a resident of Burungachhara in Tahirpur, breathed his last on Saturday afternoon at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, said Md Mahbubur Rahman, director and commanding officer (CO) of Sunamganj BGB Battalion.

Talking to The Daily Star, locals said a group of people from Burungachhara village were lifting stones illegally from the bordering Barochhara river area near Tekerghat BOP around 2:00pm on Friday.

While lifting stones, a woman named Hanufa Begum crossed into India and BSF soldiers caught her and beat her up. On information, some locals rushed to the spot and started hurling stones at the Indian border guards.

At one point, BSF men chased the locals and entered Bangladesh territory, and opened fire. This was when Delwar sustained a bullet wound.

BGB CO Mahbubur said Delwar was first taken to a local hospital and then to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, where he passed away.

BSF soldiers shot three rounds and Delwar was hit with a bullet in his stomach, said a BGB press release sent by Mahbubur.

The BGB later on Saturday held a commander-level flag meeting with BSF and discussed the matter. The process is underway to send a formal protest letter to the BSF-193 Battalion.

When the BGB in the meeting demanded stern action against the trespassers, the BSF assured it of taking proper steps after investigating the matter, Mahbub said.

Later in the day, the BGB held an awareness meeting with the locals to stop the illegal lifting of stone and coal in the bordering areas.

The border guards have increased patrol along the bordering areas to increase vigilance and the tension along the border is now pacified.



Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen presenting books to visiting Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Lu, centre, at the former's ministry office yesterday. US Ambassador to Bangladesh Peter Haas was present.

PHOTO: PID

## RUSSIAN ATTACK ON UKRAINIAN APARTMENT BLOCK 25 confirmed dead in Dnipro 73 wounded; hope fades for finding survivors; Putin says Russian military ops going well in Ukraine

REUTERS, Dnipro

Ukraine said there was little hope of pulling any more survivors from the rubble of an apartment block in the city of Dnipro yesterday, a day after the building was hit during a major Russian missile attack, with dozens of people expected to have died.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said a child was among 25 people confirmed dead so far and 73 people had been wounded, including 13 children. Thirty-nine people had been rescued but a further 43 were missing, he said on the Telegram messaging app.

Emergency workers said they had heard people screaming for help from underneath piles of debris from the nine-storey apartment block in the south-central city and were using moments of silence to help direct their efforts. Freezing temperatures added to rescuers' concerns.

A group of firefighters found a lightly-dressed woman still alive more than 18 hours after the attack. They carried her to safety in their arms as dozens of grim-faced residents, both young and old, watched in horror from the street.

A body had earlier been retrieved by firefighters and lifted from the ruins on a

stretcher using a crane.

"The chances of saving people now are minimal," Dnipro's Mayor Borys Filatov told Reuters. I think the number of dead will be in the dozens."

Filatov said a Russian Kh-22 missile had struck the apartment block in the east-central, rocket-making city of Dnipro, destroying two stairwells totalling around 76 flats.

Russia fired two waves of missiles at Ukraine on Saturday, striking targets across the country as fighting raged on the battlefield in the eastern towns of Soledar and Bakhmut.

## US satisfied with Rab's progress

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He added that Rab's progress should continue and the sanctions will be lifted in future.

There was no discussion on reforms of Rab, he added.

Lu met Prime Minister's Private Industry and Investment Adviser Salman F Rahman over breakfast at the latter's residence. He then met Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen. US Ambassador Peter Haas was present.

Lu later attended the lunch hosted by the foreign secretary and held meetings with the home minister, Law Minister Anisul Haq, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam, civil society and labour rights groups.

He arrived at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on Saturday evening and left early today.

During the press briefing at the foreign ministry, he told reporters in Bangla that he travelled to Bangladesh to strengthen friendship at a time when the whole world was struggling for peace and justice.

Donald Lu said he had very honest and open discussions and reiterated the US commitment to democracy and human rights.

"We'll stand up for freedom of speech, freedom of expressions and

we look forward to working very closely with our partner here in Bangladesh."

Foreign Minister Momen then told reporters he informed Lu that Rab stopped terrorism in the country and after 2017 there was no major incident of terrorism. Also, many Rab officers were demoted and sacked.

"Seven Rab men were given the capital punishment - information that the US did not have. However, there are exceptions.

"The DSA [Digital Security Act] is a very good law. But sometimes some people misused it. We're rectifying it."

The home minister at his press conference said Lu was happy that the government allowed the BNP rally on December 10 and observed that all political parties should have rights to do politics and assembly.

He told Lu that the government allows rallies that are peaceful and do not block the roads. "We intervene only if they destroy public property or block roads."

He also said that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina wants a free and fair poll and is working towards that end ahead of the national polls early next year.

On this issue, Foreign Minister Momen told Lu that the Awami League always believed in elections

and always formed governments through ballots, not bullets.

"Bangladesh is a unique country where people fight for democracy, justice and human rights. Three million people sacrificed their lives ... all people of the country cast their votes whereas in many countries fewer people can cast votes. Therefore, no one should have doubts about it," he said.

When Donald Lu drew attention to the allegations of irregularities in elections, Momen said the government has introduced photo ID to prevent fake voting, and transparent ballot boxes to prevent stuffing.

"We've formed a strong Election Commission, which has full authority on its budget. And it is very powerful. So, we hope that we'll hold a transparent and nice election."

Momen then told Lu that allegations of vote rigging were also raised in the US.

"No country is perfect. Your country is not perfect either."

LABOUR RIGHTS, GSP

Lu said labour rights is an important issue for trade relationships, for getting back the GSP facility and funds from the US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC).

"I'm very confident we're going to

make progress this year," he said.

The US suspended the Generalised System of Preferences for Bangladesh following the Rana Plaza collapse in 2013.

Lu said he was still waiting for the Congress to authorise it. Bangladesh will be the first country on the list to get the GSP back when the Congress authorises it, he added.

Momen said the US should invest in Bangladesh.

He sought US support in renewable energy and technical assistance for climate resilient infrastructure.

They also discussed defence and security cooperation.

Lu said he discussed the Indo-Pacific Strategy and the US's desire to put more resources and more attention to the region, including Bangladesh.

He appreciated Bangladesh's humanitarian gesture extended towards the Rohingya refugees.

Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association Chief Executive Syeda Rizwana Hasan said participatory election, overall election process, and Chittagong Hill Tracts issues were briefly discussed.

Awami League International Affairs Secretary Shammil Ahmed, Dhaka University teachers Prof Imtiaz Ahmed, Lalulfar Yasmin, Delwar Hossain, among others, were present.

## Underground metro rail

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Purbachal site office over the preparation of the event, he said.

Civil work of the project, the biggest one in the transport sector, will start with land development for depot at Pitalganj in Narayanganj, said Kashem.

Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL), the implementing agency of the metro rail project, already signed a contract with Japan-Bangladesh joint-venture firm to develop the depot. The firm of Tokyu Construction Co Ltd of Japan and Max Infrastructure Ltd of Bangladesh will do this within 910 days for Tk 607.65 crore.

The 2,400MW Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant is the single largest project undertaken in Bangladesh with a cost of Tk 113,092 crore.

Once the MRT Line-1, which physical work was supposed to begin in December 2020, is completed, it will be able to carry 8 lakh passengers daily. The official deadline for the project is December 2026, according to the project documents.

The 31.24km rail line will have two parts - a 19.87km part from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport to Kamalapur (Airport route) will be underground and around a 11.36km part will be elevated from Notunbazar to Purbachal (Purbachal route).

The airport route will have 12 stations and the Purbachal route nine stations, seven of which will be above the ground. Two stations on the Purbachal route - Nadda and Notunbazar - will be underground

and used as an interchange for passengers to switch between routes.

MRT Line-5 (northern route) between Hemayetpur and Bhatara will have an interchange at Notunbazar station of MRT Line-1, the documents added.

Of the Tk 52,561.43 crore required for MRT-1, the government will provide Tk 13,111 crore and Japan Tk 39,450 crore as soft loan.

## SI stabbed during rescue operation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A sub-inspector was stabbed during a rescue operation in Brahmanbaria Sadar yesterday.

Atiqullah, 45, SI of Brahmanbaria Sadar Police Station, was flown to Dhaka in critical condition for treatment, said Mohammad Shakhawat Hossain, superintendent of Brahmanbaria police.

Following a call from the national emergency service (999), a team from the station rushed to Bihari village around 5:00pm after Saidul Islam, 28, had set his house on fire with his parents still inside.

Saidul suddenly appeared before the police after they had rescued his parents and stabbed the inspector, he added.

Fire service officials and other policemen rushed Atiqullah to Brahmanbaria General Hospital, from where he was flown to Dhaka Medical College Hospital by air ambulance.

"We have arrested Saidul and detained his father Bazlu for questioning," the SP further added.

## 68 killed in Nepal plane crash

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According to reports, the aircraft of Yeti Airlines took off from Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport at 10:33am. While landing at the Pokhara airport around 11:00am, the aircraft crashed on the bank of the Seti River between the old airport and the new airport.

The Kathmandu-Pokhara flight takes around 25 minutes.

The Yeti Airlines flight 9N-ANC ATR-72 was on its third sortie since the morning. It first flew from Kathmandu to Pokhara and back to Kathmandu earlier in the day, Hindustan Times reported.

A total of 68 passengers and four crew members were on board the aircraft when it crashed.

According to the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN), the passengers included 53 Nepalis, five Indians, four Russians, one Irish, one Australian, one Argentinian, two Koreans and one French.

The plane made contact with the airport from Seti Gorge at 10:50am (0505 GMT), the aviation authority said in its statement. "Then it crashed."

"Half of the plane is on the hillside," said Arun Tamu, a local resident, who told Reuters he reached the site minutes after the plane went down. "The other half has fallen into the

gorge of the Seti river."

Khum Bahadur Chhetri said he watched from the roof of his house as the flight approached.

"I saw the plane trembling, moving left and right, and then suddenly its nose dived and it went into the gorge," Chhetri told Reuters.

Nepal has announced a public holiday to mark a national day of mourning for the victims of the tragedy. The government has set up a panel to investigate the cause of the crash and it is expected to report within 45 days, the finance minister, Bishnu Paudel, told reporters.

In a letter to Nepalese PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed her deepest condolences at the loss of lives in the tragedy.

It was unclear if anyone on the ground was injured.

The journey to Pokhara, Nepal's second largest city tucked under the picturesque Annapurna mountain range, from the capital Kathmandu is one of the Himalayan country's most popular tourist routes, with many preferring a short flight instead of a six-hour-long drive through hilly roads.

Pokhara Airport spokesman Anup Joshi said the aircraft crashed as it approached the airport, adding that

the "plane cruised at 12,500 feet and was on a normal descent." The weather was clear.

Gyanendra Bhul, information officer at the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal, also said the weather was not the problem. He hinted at technical reasons for the crash citing primary information.

Flight tracking website FlightRadar24 said on Twitter the Yeti Airlines aircraft was 15 years old and equipped with an old transponder with unreliable data. It added that the last signal from the transponder was received at 0512 GMT at an altitude of 2,875 feet above mean sea level.

Pokhara Airport is located at about 2,700-2,800 feet above mean sea level, according to FlightRadar24.

Nepal's air industry has boomed in recent years, carrying goods and people between hard-to-reach areas, as well as ferrying foreign mountain climbers.

But it has been plagued by poor safety due to insufficient training and maintenance. The European Union has banned all Nepali carriers from its airspace over safety concerns.

The Himalayan country also has some of the world's most remote and tricky runways, flanked by snow-capped peaks with approaches that pose a challenge for even

accomplished pilots.

Last May, all 22 people on board a plane operated by Nepali carrier Tara Air - 16 Nepalis, four Indians and two Germans - died when it crashed.

Nearly 350 people have died since 2000 in plane or helicopter crashes in Nepal - home to eight of the world's 14 highest mountains, including Everest - where sudden weather changes can make for hazardous conditions.

## Bangladesh

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He said the target is to become a smart developed nation by 2041 and to attain that goal, "we have to mobilise adequate domestic and foreign resources".

The minister said he was expecting support from the development partners to achieve the goal.

Sayeh met Bangladesh Bank Governor Abdur Rouf Talukder at the BB office earlier in the day.

During the meeting, Senior Secretary of Finance Division Fatima Yasmin, Economic Relations Division Secretary Sharifa Khan, Financial Institutions Division Secretary Sheikh Mohammad Salim Ullah, and Energy and Mineral Resources Division Secretary Md Khairuzzaman Mozumder were also present.

## Running party with convicts contradicts BNP's own reforms proposal

Says TIB's Iftekharuzzaman

UNB, Dhaka

Executive Director of Transparency International Bangladesh, Iftekharuzzaman, has said that keeping Khaleda Zia and Tarique Rahman - sentenced by the court - in BNP's top leadership "contradicts" the party's 27-point outline for state reform, which includes a stance against corruption, and is a sign of "moral decay".

"What they [BNP] have is actually a wish list," he told media.

The TIB executive director observed that BNP is talking about taking a bold position against corruption and at the same time running the party with convicts in top leadership.

When in power, people do not consider themselves "guilty" - this is a common practice in the political system of all countries, Dr Iftekharuzzaman noted. "They think only their rivals commit corruption. And when the opposition is in power, they do the same."

Referring to BNP's 27 points, he wondered whether the party has the capacity to implement them.

"Considering BNP's history and its experience with the people of the country, it can be said that political parties make manifestos. When they come to power, the picture is different, however. In that sense, this is a wish list. Although, many of the issues mentioned are important for Bangladesh," he added.

On December 19 last year, BNP announced a 27-point outline of 'Structural Reform of the State' - proposing radical changes to the state system including balancing the executive powers of the president, prime minister and the Cabinet, and introducing the upper house of the legislature.

## 4 Bangladeshis killed in Qatar road crash

STAR REPORT

Four Bangladeshi expatriates were killed, while two others were injured, in a road accident in Qatar on Friday, according to sources at the Bangladesh embassy there.

Two of them died on the spot when the expatriates' car lost control and hit another private car on Al Shamal Road at 5:00am (local time), while two others succumbed to their injuries at the Doha Hamad Hospital yesterday.

Among the dead, Mohammad Shakil and Mohammad Yusuf Matbar were from Narayanganj, while Mohammad Rahat was from Moulvibazar, and Mohammad Sirajul Islam from Brahmanbaria.

Rahat's body was buried at Abu Hamour Cemetery in Qatar yesterday. The other bodies

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