

Khaleda admitted to Evercare

STAR REPORT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was admitted to the city's Evercare Hospital last night for some medical tests and treatment.



AZM Zahid Hossain, personal physician of Khaleda, told journalists that the BNP chief will undergo some more medical tests today as per the advice of the medical board set up for her.

The BNP chief reached the hospital around 6:45pm from her Gulshan home.

She was later admitted to the hospital as per doctors' advice, he said. Zahid said the medical board is expected to review the test reports and decide on the next course of her treatment.

Khaleda, a 77-year-old former prime minister, has been suffering from various ailments, including liver cirrhosis, arthritis, diabetes, kidney, lung, heart and eye problems.

Since her conditional release in 2020, the BNP chief has been receiving treatment at the hospital under a medical board headed by cardiologist Prof Shahabuddin Talukder.

She visited the same hospital for health check-ups on February 27. Khaleda received treatment at the hospital six times since she was infected with Coronavirus in April 2021.

IMF LOAN

Bangladesh compromised its policy sovereignty

Says Debapriya

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's "policy sovereignty" was compromised when the country agreed to the IMF loan programme, said CPD Distinguished Fellow Debapriya Bhattacharya.

"We have surrendered at least partially our policy sovereignty and have agreed to that money, and we have taken that money [from IMF] and we have to deliver it now."

He was delivering his speech at a dialogue titled "Taxing the Digital Economy: Trade-offs and Opportunities" at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka. The CPD organised the event in partnership with the European Union.

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Fishermen place bamboo fishing traps in the Kirtankhola river to catch shrimps -- a kilogramme of which goes for Tk 1,000 in the local fish markets. The photo was taken recently in the Charbaria area of Barishal Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Attacks rock Russia-controlled territories

Fire at Crimea fuel depot after 'drone attack', Novaya Kakhovka under 'intense artillery fire'

AFP, Kyiv

A huge fire erupted in Moscow-annexed Crimea after a suspected drone attack hit an oil depot yesterday, as fighting intensified on the southern Ukrainian front and shelling deprived Russian border villages of power.

The attacks came one day after Kyiv said preparations for a long-awaited counteroffensive were nearly complete, having vowed to expel Russian forces from territory they seized in the east and south following their 2022 invasion.

Officials in Moscow-controlled Crimea, towns under Russian occupation in southern Ukraine and a governor of a border region reported attacks yesterday.

In Sevastopol, home to Russia's Black Sea Fleet, clouds of smoke rose high into the sky as a fuel reserved burned.

Russian-installed authorities said the Crimea fire was caused by a suspected drone but sought to downplay the incident, amid rising security fears on the peninsula.

The Kremlin said nothing about the



attack.

Ukraine did not claim the Crimea attack, but military intelligence implied it was revenge for Uman.

On the Russian-annexed peninsula, the governor of Sevastopol, Mikhail Razvozhayev, urged Crimeans to "remain calm" and said "nobody was hurt."

He estimated the fire was "around 1,000 square metres" (10,764 square feet).

Razvozhayev insisted that the peninsula's reserves were not impacted

and that authorities had enough fuel for all civilian needs.

In southern Ukraine, Russian occupation authorities said a key city they control -- Novaya Kakhovka -- had come under "intense shelling" and had been cut off from power.

The attacks came less than 24 hours after Russia struck a typical Soviet-era housing bloc in the historic city of Uman, killing more than two dozen of its residents.

Kyiv yesterday identified five children killed in the attack as an 18-month-old boy, three girls aged eight, 11 and 14, and a 16-year-old boy.

"One woman is considered missing. The search continues," Ukrainian Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said.

Elsewhere, Russia accused Poland -- with whom it has historically poor relations -- of a "blatant violation" of international norms after Warsaw impounded a school run by the Russian embassy in the Polish capital.

Moscow called the move an "illegal act" and promised "harsh" consequences against Warsaw.

Ill-fitted for tricky city fires

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"Police or Rab have their specialised units like bomb disposal unit or cybercrime unit but for firefighters, there are no specialised units," he said.

EXPENDITURE ON FIRE SERVICE

In the current fiscal year, the FSCD got a budget of around Tk 733.57 crore, which translates to around Tk 44 per capita. It is far less than what the Delhi state government spends, around Tk 332, and West Bengal spends, around Tk 65.

Fire officials said that their budget increased since 2009 but they need more.

The fire DG said they need helicopters, drones, a huge number of fire-extinguishing balls and other modern equipment.

Developed countries use simulators to train firemen, which is not available here, he said.

Citing an example to explain equipment shortages, he said there were 116 fires in high-rises last year

and to deal with those the FSCD had five tall ladders.

"We need at least two such ladders in every division," he said, adding that high-rises are now seen in every divisional headquarters and their numbers are rising.

MANPOWER CRISIS

In 2009, the FSCD had 6,175 people and now it has 13,347, which fire officials said is not enough.

Ex-DG of the FSCD Ali Ahmed said in any modern city, the ratio of police and firemen is 2:1, which means one firefighter against two policemen. In Bangladesh, there are only 14,000 firefighters against 2.13 lakh of cops.

The fire DG said recruiting people is not the challenge, properly training them is.

Md Maksud Helali, a professor at Buet, said, "No doubt that the number of firefighters is very low. We need to increase the number of real firefighters, not support staff."

City traffic is a serious problem

for the FSCD. The ideal response time for the FSCD is eight minutes but Dhaka's traffic and narrow alleys cause delays in reaching the scene.

Officials and experts said setting up satellite stations at various city points could help.

Brig Gen (LPR) Md Sazzad Hossain, another former DG of the FSCD, said the main obstacles for firefighters are reaching the scene, finding sources of water there, and getting the job done amid hundreds of onlookers.

Prof Maksud said it is not possible to deal with fires by placing the responsibility solely on the FSCD. Community engagement is needed. "Fire department needs a good number of volunteers..."

Experts said that to tackle any disaster, the participation of individuals, neighbourhoods, public-private entities, and the government are required and if one is missing, then the response becomes incomplete.

Israel strikes wound 3 civilians in Syria

AFP, Damascus

Three civilians were wounded yesterday in Israeli air strikes near the Syrian city of Homs, state media reported, with a war monitor saying a Hezbollah munitions depot was hit.

During more than a decade of war in Syria, Israel has launched hundreds of air strikes on its territory, primarily targeting Iran-backed forces and Lebanese Hezbollah fighters as well as Syrian army positions.

While Israel rarely comments on the strikes it carries out on Syria, it has repeatedly said it will not allow its arch-foe Iran to extend its footprint in the war-torn country.

AL out to talk Zahangir out of race

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BNP nominee MA Mannan partly because Zahangir, as an independent, bagged nearly 30,000 votes even though he announced quitting the race a few days before the polls took place.

Zahangir was elected Gazipur mayor in 2018 on the AL ticket. He also became the general secretary of Gazipur city AL.

But on November 19, 2021, he was expelled from the party after he was seen in a viral footage making derogatory remarks about Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and expressing doubts about the number of martyrs in the Liberation War.

Seven days after his expulsion, the government suspended him as mayor. The ruling party, however, granted him amnesty on January 21 this year.

He lusted after the AL nomination this time, but it went to Azmat.

Late last week, he bought a nomination form for himself and his mother Zaheda Khatun.

An Election Commission officer will examine his nomination papers today.

AL insiders say most of the top AL leaders in Gazipur support Azmat, but Zahangir has significant sway over activists and junior leaders.

Since the BNP is not in the election, some of its supporters may end up voting for Zahangir, and in that case, he may actually defeat Azmat, local AL activists say.

With the national election less than a year away, the last thing Awami League wants is a "rebel" defeating a party nominee.

Meanwhile, sources in the government say it is highly likely that Gazipur Metropolitan Police will get a new commissioner in a day or two.

Ensure 'energy justice'

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is hated in politics, but in 2010 we got such an act in the power and energy sector and renewed it several times," said chief guest Rashed Khan Menon, president of the Workers Party of Bangladesh.

He said, "Due to this act, there is no scope to raise any kind of questions related to the government decision regarding electricity generation, usage, and transmission."

"We made the power sector import-dependent. We didn't empower Bapex enough to explore local gas. We had raised questions in the parliament in this regard... even we talked about the indemnity act, but we did not have the majority to abolish the act."

"The environment of the parliament became narrow. We can't say what we had said earlier in 2008 or in 2014," he added.

In 2010, the Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provision) Act was introduced and extended until 2026 last year. A clause in the act gives the indemnity.

Prof M Shamsul Alam, who placed the demands, said, "The government recently took the authority of energy pricing into its hands bypassing the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission. This means, the government will do business in this sector and regulate the sector, which is absurd."

Last year, the government added a clause to the BERC Act 2003 that enabled the government to adjust power and gas prices without any public hearings. Using the provision, the government has increased electricity and gas prices several times this year.

"No share of any government-owned company would be held by any individual. All bureaucrats should be withdrawn from the state-owned companies' board of directors," said Shamsul.

He said at least half the state-owned power plants must sell power at cost.

Energy expert Prof Badrul Imam said that the government initiative to drill at least 46 gas wells in the next two years is much appreciated. However, the government should have done this 10 years ago, he said.

Father, son killed in Bogura road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

An elderly man and his son were killed after a lorry hit their motorcycle on Bogura-Naogaon regional highway in Bogura's Adamdighi upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased -- Lokman Ali, 72, and his son Md Jahidur Rahman, 47, -- were residents of the same upazila.

The accident took place around 9:30am when the two were on their way to Adamdighi from Laxmikul village, said Rezaul Karim, officer-in-charge of Adamdighi Police Station.

As they reached Indoil area, a Naogaon-bound lorry coming from the opposite direction hit their bike, leaving Lokman, who was riding pillion, dead on the spot.

Jahidur, an assistant teacher of Adamdighi Admia Dakhil Madrasa, was pronounced dead after being taken to the upazila health complex, said the OC.

Police seized the lorry but its driver managed to flee.

Three injured in BCL factional clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

At least three people were injured in a clash between two factions of Bangladesh Chhatra League in Mymensingh city on Friday night.

Injured BCL members Mahmudul Hasan Joy, 20, and Asmoon, 18, were hit by bullets, said police.

Shah Kamal Akanda, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said an altercation broke out between two BCL factions, led by Shrabon and Gopal, over senior and junior issues in Banshbari Colony area on Thursday.

Local Ward Councillor Delwar Hossain and some other influential people arranged arbitration on Friday night to bring the feud to an end.

But the two BCL factions had another altercation during the arbitration, which led to the clash around 8:00pm. Crude bombs were exploded and shots were fired during the incident, said the OC quoting witnesses.

On information, police rushed to the scene and brought the situation under control.

The three injured, including local resident Badal, 40, were sent to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital. The two BCL men were later referred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital as their condition deteriorated.

Run over by train, woman dies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A woman died after being run over by a train in Kamalganj upazila of Moulvibazar yesterday morning.

The deceased, Shorna Debi, 35, was a resident of Gopalnagar in Kamalganj town.

The accident took place in Kamalganj rail crossing area around 8:30am when the Dhaka-bound Kalni Express from Sylhet was entering Kamalganj, said Kabir Ahmed, station master of Kamalganj Railway Station.

Railway police recovered the body and sent it to Moulvibazar Sadar Hospital for an autopsy.

Bangladeshis

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said, adding that one kilogram of rice is now Tk 420 -- up from about Tk 100 before the conflict.

There is a severe shortage of food in the few shops that are open now, which is why local criminals have been raiding houses to snatch food.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh government has taken measures to bring back Bangladeshis from Sudan via Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, a foreign ministry press release said yesterday.

The Bangladeshi nationals will be taken to Port Sudan from Khartoum. From there, they will be moved to Jeddah. Later, they will be flown to Bangladesh on several flights of Biman Bangladesh Airlines.

The Bangladesh embassy in

Khartoum has already arranged nine buses to take the Bangladeshis to Port Sudan from Khartoum and adjacent cities. A team from Bangladesh's Consulate General in Jeddah will reach there to assist them.

All Bangladeshis stranded in Sudan will be taken to Port Sudan by May 2 and reach Jeddah in a day or two.

Two Bangladeshi schools in Jeddah are providing food, water, medicines and temporary accommodation for the Bangladeshi nationals being brought from Sudan.

The Bangladeshis, however, said surviving the entire journey back home would be a challenge as Port Sudan is about 1,600 kilometres away from Khartoum and the road between the two locations is risky.

afternoon.