

Mali calls for immediate end of UN mission

REUTERS, New York

Mali's interim military authorities on Friday asked for a United Nations peacekeeping force to leave "without delay", citing a "crisis of confidence" between Malian authorities and the decade-long UN mission known as MINUSMA.

It marks a major turning point for the West African country, which has struggled to stem an Islamist insurgency that took root following an uprising in 2012. MINUSMA was deployed by the UN Security Council in 2013 to support foreign and local efforts to restore stability.

Frustrations over the growing insecurity spurred two coups in 2020 and 2021 and the ruling junta has been increasingly at loggerheads with MINUSMA.

"Unfortunately, MINUSMA seems to have become a part of the problem in fuelling inter-community tensions," Malian Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop told the 15-member council.

"This situation is begetting mistrust among the Malian population and also causing a crisis of confidence between Malian authorities and MINUSMA," he said. "The Malian government asks for the withdrawal, without delay, of MINUSMA."

Security Council members must adopt a resolution to extend MINUSMA's mandate by June 30. A resolution requires at least nine votes in favour and no vetoes by Russia, China, the United States, Britain or France to pass.

UN special envoy to Mali, El Ghassim Wane, said a decision on the future of MINUSMA was up to the council. "Clearly peacekeeping operations operate on the basis of consent from the host country and absent that consent operating in a specific country would be extremely challenging, if not impossible," he said.



A child runs as she holds a Ukrainian flag in front of the destroyed building of a cultural centre, hit in a missile strike, during a graduation ceremony of art students, in the town of Derhachi, Kharkiv region yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

AIR STRIKES IN SUDANESE CAPITAL 17, including 5 children killed

REUTERS, Dubai/ Cairo

Air strikes killed civilians and pummeled multiple parts of the Sudanese capital yesterday, residents said, as mediators pushed the warring factions towards a new ceasefire.

The Khartoum health ministry confirmed a report by local volunteers yesterday that 17 people including five children were killed in the Mayo area of southern Khartoum and 25 homes destroyed.

The strike was the latest in a series of air and artillery attacks on the poor and densely populated district of the city where most residents are unable to afford the cost of leaving.

Fighting between the Sudanese army and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces is entering its third month with neither side gaining a clear advantage.

The war has displaced 2.2 million Sudanese and killed hundreds, and has sent the war-weary Darfur region into a "humanitarian calamity," the United Nations has said.

The army has the advantage of air power in Khartoum and its neighboring cities Omdurman and Bahri, while the RSF has embedded itself in residential neighborhoods. On Friday and yesterday

the army appeared to ramp up air strikes, hitting several residential neighborhoods.

In a speech posted by the army on Friday, top general Yassir Al-Atta warned people to stay away from homes the RSF had occupied. "Because at this point, we will attack them anywhere," he said to cheers. "Between us and these rebels are bullets," he said, appearing to dismiss mediation attempts.

Late on Friday, the local resistance committee said 13 people had been killed by shelling in al-Lammab in western Khartoum, calling the neighborhood an "operations zone".

The RSF yesterday said it brought down an army warplane in the Nile, west of Khartoum.

Air strikes in central and southern Omdurman continued from Friday into yesterday, impacting homes and killing one person, according to the local committee in the Beit al-Mal neighborhood.

Residents said three members of a family were killed in the Sharq el-Nil district after an air strike on Friday.

In El-Geneina, in West Darfur, more than 270,000 have fled across the border to Chad, after more than 1,000 people were killed by attacks that residents and the United States have blamed on the RSF and allied militias.



Man dies in police custody

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Police, said Alal already had problems in his leg when the Detective Branch of police detained him.

He added that police took Alal to the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation [NITOR] as per a court order.

He added that Alal was moved to the NICVD from NITOR after his blood pressure shot up.

Police detained him in connection with the murder of a woman on June 6 at the building where he worked, his cousins Reaz Uddin and Zahidul Islam said, adding that Alal was working at the building when he was picked by the DB men. Reaz said he was there when the officers took him on June 6.

Reaz and Zahid both said Alal's body bore injury marks on the right

arm and leg.

"My brother Alal was in good health when the DB took him. Then all of a sudden we were informed that he had died at the cardiovascular diseases hospital. When we went to the hospital, we were told that his body had been sent to the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation [NITOR]," Reaz Uddin told The Daily Star.

The authorities at National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) said Alal was admitted to the NITOR on June 10.

According to the death certificate, Alal was admitted to NITOR following a court order with injuries to his right ankle.

The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue yesterday evening for autopsy.

Bangladesh may come up

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of the polls may also be brought up by India, said the sources.

The developments in India's neighbourhood is an area of interest to both India and the US, they said.

The issues may be discussed in the backdrop of China aggressively promoting its influence in these two countries in particular and South Asia in general, something New Delhi views with concern given the security implications. In doing this, India will be tapping into the US' own serious concern over China's heightened assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region, according to the sources.

India's concerns over China's growing footprints in South Asia also came up in discussions between Indian and US National Security Advisers Ajit Doval and Jake Sullivan in New Delhi a few days ago.

It is understood that Sullivan assured Doval that the US would not undertake any initiative that would jeopardise India's security interests in South Asia.

In the run up to Modi's visit, which begins on June 20, there had been two key interactions between New Delhi and Dhaka.

The first was a one-on-one meeting between Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Md Mustafizur Rahman and Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in New Delhi just a few days after the US had announced its new visa policy for Bangladesh on May 24. The second was held between Bangladesh Foreign Minister Abdul Momen and Jaishankar on the sidelines of the G20 Development Ministers meeting in Varanasi last week.

Sources said Jaishankar assured Momen that India will take up the issue of Bangladesh during Modi's conversations with the US leaders.

BNP leader lands

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a slogan - "This time, the fight is to kill Sheikh Hasina and finish off Awami League," said the document.

Rawshan Ali of Sirajganj DB said they detained Rashedul and later handed him over to the police.

In May, Rajshahi district unit BNP Convener Abu Sayeed Chand reportedly made a death threat against Hasina and was arrested later. He is behind bars now.

DU struggles to spend

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Requesting to be unnamed, a university official said the allocation DU gets has to be used within a fiscal year. Those who failed to finish the research work within that specific fiscal year cannot withdraw the total amount. Besides, some teachers abandoned their research projects halfway for foreign studies, the official added.

Prof Biman Chandra Barua, of DU's Pali and Buddhist Studies, who has recently done a research work with the university allocation, said if a teacher wants to conduct a research, they have to submit a proposal on their topic first. The teacher can start the work only after the university authorities approve the proposal.

"The process is time-consuming. As we start the work late, the work cannot be completed in due time. So, a teacher cannot get the full allocated fund for a research," said Prof Biman.

Talking to this correspondent, Prof Mamtaz Uddin Ahmed, treasurer of Dhaka University, said researchers and the authorities of the research centre are not serious. "If they demand money on time from us, we can use the full allocation."

"Although our research allocation is really insufficient, we cannot use it in full. It is regretful matter. If this situation goes on, we get less allocation that we now get. We are worried over the issue," he added.

A senior teacher and administrator of the university told The Daily Star, wishing to be unnamed, said some teachers' disinterest in conducting research became evident when a section of teachers opposed the university's decision, made last year, of mandating PhD degrees to get promoted as associate professors and professors.

Former teachers of the university, who have been demanding an increase in research allocation for a long time, expressed disappointment over the unused research grants.

Prof ABM Faroque, former teacher of DU's pharmacy department and an eminent researcher, said, "It is the failure of the university authorities that they could not use the funds properly. We have to be self-critical. Even many

of them who got the grants did not utilise these properly."

Prof Abul Kashem Fazlul Haque, former teacher of DU's Bangla department, told this newspaper that many of the university teachers, who are carrying out research work, opted for research with NGO funds as the amount is bigger than UGC allocation.

UGC member Prof Dil Afroza Begum said they know that Dhaka University cannot spend all the allocated funds. "If this situation continues, we will bring down the grants."

Prof Mohammad Tanzimuddin Khan, of Dhaka university's international relations department, said a research-oriented academic and administrative structure makes teachers more dedicated to research.

He said the objectives of universities are to find out new things through research which will help the universities notch up in global university ranking. Universities in Latin America even are doing much better in research.

"We failed to define the character of Dhaka university as a university. Enough research is not being done here and experts on different subjects are not made."

"For this, we cite the foreign scholars while writing books or research reports," Tanzimuddin added.

Hajj agency owner

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Anas Travels and Tours, Al-Amin International Travel Agents, and Khidmah Overseas.

Nazrul Islam, officer-in-charge of Shyampur Police Station, yesterday told reporters that police were looking for the swindlers.

M Shahadat Hossain Taslim, president of Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh, said people in rural areas often give money and passports to travel agents without asking for a receipt. This makes it easier for the agents to cheat people.

People willing to perform hajj should always make payments at the agency office and ask for a receipt, he added.

"We are trying our best to send the people who got cheated to Saudi Arabia to perform hajj," he added.

117 migrants rescued in Mediterranean

REUTERS, Rome

Spanish charity Open Arms said it rescued 117 migrants yesterday crowded onto a precarious wooden boat from Libya in the latest such perilous crossing over the Mediterranean sea.

Open Arms said in a statement that it had picked up 117 people including 25 women and a three-year-old boy, mainly from Eritrea, Sudan and Libya.

The rescue operation took place in international waters 30km off the coast of Libya after the boat left the port of Sabratha under darkness at 0100 GMT, according to the statement and a spokesperson for the charity.

All the passengers were receiving a medical assessment on board the Open Arms vessel, the charity said, without giving more details.

MYANMAR POLITICAL SITUATION

‘No sign of improvement’

Say Blinken, Singapore foreign minister after meet

REUTERS, Washington

There has been no sign of improvement in the political situation in Myanmar since the 2021 coup, Singapore Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan said on Friday following a meeting in Washington with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who said he shared his counterpart's pessimism.

Balakrishnan told a press conference a lack of progress meant it was not the time to re-engage at a high-level with Myanmar's junta, but said current ASEAN chair Indonesia was engaging with "a wide spectrum of stakeholders" on Myanmar, a reference to talks involving opponents of the coup.

"You do need everyone ultimately to sit down and negotiate. I don't know how long it will take. The last time it took 25 years for some form of democratic transition to occur in Myanmar. I hope it won't take that long," he said, adding that he remained "pessimistic."

Blinken said he agreed with his Singaporean counterpart and that Washington supports ASEAN's efforts on Myanmar.

"It's very important that we continue - all of us - to sustain the appropriate pressure on the junta and look for ways, of course, to engage the opposition," he said.

The United States has issued sanctions against Myanmar's military and its companies, and urged other countries to stop weapons sales to the junta.

IRAN-KSA DETENTE

Saudi foreign minister arrives in Tehran

REUTERS

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan arrived in Iran yesterday amid a rapprochement between the two Middle East arch-foes, Iranian state TV said.

Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed in March, in a deal brokered by China, to end a diplomatic rift and reestablish relations following years of hostility that had endangered regional stability including in Yemen, Syria and Lebanon.

Iran officially reopened its embassy in Saudi Arabia on June 7.

The kingdom broke ties with Iran in 2016 after protesters attacked the Saudi embassy in Tehran in retaliation for Riyadh's execution of a prominent Shiite cleric.

Bin Farhan is due to meet with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amirabdollahian.

Iran has recently been trying to mend its strained ties with several Gulf Arab states.

Saudi Arabia's rapprochement with Iran has left Israel largely alone. The UAE, which was the first Gulf Arab country to sign a normalisation agreement with Israel in 2020, resumed formal relations with Iran last year.

UP chairman the mastermind

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picked up Rezaul Karim, 26, from Dupchanchia upazila of Bogura.

The detainees were later brought to Dhaka.

The Rab director said that 10-12 people took part in the attack on Nadim, Jamalpur district correspondent of Banglades24.com and also the Bakshiganj upazila correspondent of Ekattor TV.

He said Nadim, 42, was on his way back home in Pathai area of Bakshiganj Bazar around 10:00pm on Wednesday. Babu and his goons ambushed him at a quiet place.

When Nadim along with his colleague reached there on a motorcycle, Rezaul pushed the journalist off the bike and Monir hit him first, Al Moain added.

The incident was caught on a nearby CCTV camera.

Later, some of Babu's men came running from behind, dragged the journalist to a alley and started beating him, said the Rab official.

The attackers also beat up Nadim's colleague when he tried to save the journo. As some locals came forward hearing Nadim screaming, Babu and his men fled.

The journalist died of his wounds at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital on Thursday.

The Rab director said Nadim recently wrote several reports on Babu's misdeeds. This enraged Babu who threatened the journalist and also filed a case against him under the Digital Security Act.

"The Cyber Tribunal of Mymensingh dismissed the case. As Nadim wrote on Facebook about the dismissal of the case, Babu became more angry and planned to teach Nadim a lesson."

Following the incident, Babu hid at a distant relative's house in Panchagarh's Debiganj upazila to avoid arrest.

The Rab official said Babu is accused in several cases filed with different police stations of Jamalpur. Yesterday, Nadim's wife Monira

Begum filed a murder case with Bakshiganj Police Station, accusing 22 named and 20-25 unnamed persons. Babu was named as the prime accused, said Sohel Rana, officer-in-charge of the police station.

The other accused include Babu's son Fahim Faisal Rifat, 22, joint convener of Bakshiganj upazila Chhatra League, Rakibullah Rakib, 28, upazila AL assistant publicity secretary, and Gazi Aman Ali, 55, member of Sadharpura Union Parishad.

According to the case statement, Babu masterminded Nadim's murder for his reports on the former's corruption and anomalies.

The OC said that they arrested nine accused and the Rab picked up four more, including Babu.

Babu, his son Rifat, and Rakib were suspended from the AL and Chhatra League yesterday for violating discipline of the organisations.

We can have our own visa policy: Quader

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underway in collaboration with the World Bank.

Regarding the BRT project, he said, "This project has progressed quite far considering the timeframe. However, there is a doubt about its completion. It would have been better if the project was thoroughly evaluated before its initiation in Gazipur."

He expressed worries that the road infrastructure projects could exacerbate traffic congestion and adversely affect the entire capital.

The minister assured that the BRT project would be completed by September or October. He said preparations are underway for its inauguration.

"The metro rail project is also progressing, with the goal of reaching Motijheel by September or October," Quader added.