

MYANMAR FIGHTING

50,000
civilians
displaced

Says UN

AFP, Yangon

Almost 50,000 people have been displaced by fighting in northern Myanmar after an alliance of ethnic armed groups launched an offensive against the military two weeks ago, the United Nations said yesterday.

Fighting has raged across northern Shan state near the Chinese border in what analysts say poses the biggest military challenge to the junta since it seized power in 2021.

The Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, Ta'ang National Liberation Army and the Arakan Army have blocked vital trade routes to China and say they have captured dozens of military outposts.

"As of 9 November, almost 50,000 people in northern Shan were forced into displacement," the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) said in an update.

There were still clashes yesterday in the town of Hsenwi, which sits on the important Muse and Chinshwehaw trade routes to China, a resident told AFP.

Internet and phone services were disrupted outside Lashio, hindering humanitarian responses to the fighting, UNOCHA said.

Restrictions on transport and availability of cash were also hampering efforts by local humanitarian groups to give out aid, it said.

A further 40,000 people have been displaced by clashes between the military and its opponents in neighbouring Sagaing region and Kachin state since early November, UNOCHA said.

The military has made little comment on the surprise offensive but the junta-appointed president warned this week that Myanmar could end up "split into various parts" if the military was unable to "manage" the fighting.



People are transported on an animal-drawn cart while Palestinians fleeing north Gaza move southward as Israeli tanks roll deeper into the enclave yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

INDIA-US ANNUAL 2+2 MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE

Blinken, Jaishankar push
defence deals

REUTERS, New Delhi

India and the United States announced progress on key defence deals and said they would expand their growing partnership in the face of geopolitical challenges as their top diplomats and senior ministers met yesterday.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin met Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in New Delhi as part of their annual "2+2 Dialogue", focused on the Indo Pacific region.

The two countries which were once on opposite sides of the Cold War are now working on landmark deals including for the US to supply and manufacture engines for Indian fighter jets.

Indian Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane said that deal between the aerospace unit of General Electric GE.N and India's state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics HIA.E.N.S was on track.

"We are finalising the commercial arrangements and the necessary legal requirements are being put in place," he told reporters after the talks.

A more than USD three billion deal for India to buy 31 armed drones made by General Atomics is also being processed and India is waiting for the company to get US government clearances for the next steps, Aramane said.

Washington had offered several infantry combat vehicle systems and New Delhi has expressed interest, he added without giving details.

Indian media reports have said the

Pentagon has offered the Stryker family of eight-wheeled armoured fighting vehicles produced by General Dynamic Land Systems GD.N and that New Delhi is interested in jointly manufacturing them in India.

Before the talks, Defense Secretary Austin said it was more important than ever that the world's two largest democracies exchange views and find common goals "in the face of urgent global challenges".

"We're integrating our industrial bases, strengthening our inter-operability and sharing cutting edge technology," he said.

India-US relations have steadily grown stronger on several fronts in the last two decades. A joint statement issued after yesterday's talks said the two sides called for the "immediate release of all remaining hostages" in Gaza.

BRAZILIAN AMAZON
Deforestation
down by 22% in
a year

AFP, Brasilia

Brazilian Amazon deforestation fell 22.3 percent in the year through July, hitting a five-year low, officials said Thursday, as President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's government fights to curb destruction of the world's biggest rainforest. Satellite monitoring found 9,001 square kilometres (3,475 square miles) of forest cover was destroyed in the Brazilian Amazon from August 2022 to July 2023, according to national space agency INPE's annual deforestation tracking programme, PRODES. It was the first time the figure came in at less than 10,000 square kilometres since 2018, before the presidency of far-right ex-leader Jair Bolsonaro (2019-2022), who presided over a sharp increase in clear-cutting in the Amazon. Under Bolsonaro, there was "an explosion of crime, following a complete dismantling of the government's environmental structures," Environment Minister Marina Silva told a news conference. Since taking office on January 1, the Lula administration has dramatically increased anti-deforestation operations and fines for environmental crimes.

First ever whole
eye transplant
performed in US

AFP, Washington

A team of surgeons in New York has performed the world's first transplant of an entire eye in a procedure widely hailed as a medical breakthrough, although it isn't yet known whether the man will ever see through the donated eye. The groundbreaking surgery involved removing part of the face and the whole left eye — including its blood supply and optic nerve — of a donor and grafting them onto Aaron James, 46. Doctors at NYU Langone Health, a leading medical centre for facial transplants, carried out the procedure on May 27. Transplanting an entire eye has long been a holy grail of medical science, and though researchers have had some success in animals — where they have restored partial vision — it's never before been performed in a living person. "It's uncharted territory, but we're looking forward to the exploration," Eduardo Rodriguez, who led the surgery, told AFP in an interview. It was Rodriguez' fifth face transplant.

PM opens Ctg to Cox's Bazar

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an economic corridor with proper land use plan, he added.

RAIL LINE

The government in 2010 had taken up the project to lay metre-gauge track from Dohazari of Chattogram to Ghundum of Bandarban spending Tk 1,852.35 crore.

But it later changed its plan and decided to build the dual-gauge line to Cox's Bazar town. As a result, the cost shot up to Tk 18,034.47 crore.

The government backed out on constructing the rail line to Ghundum border because Myanmar did not take any step to build a rail line to its border, source said.

The 102km Dohazari-Cox's Bazar rail line is part of the Trans-Asian Railway Network. There are nine new stations on the route.

Although the project, funded by the Asian Development Bank, was supposed to be completed within June 2013, laying of tracks began in March 2018.

The prime minister will

inaugurate the line at a programme at the oyster-shaped railway station near Cox's Bazar town at 11:00am.

Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujon yesterday said train services on the Dhaka-Cox's Bazar route would begin on December 1 with an inter-city train.

DEEP-SEA PORT

The government in March 2020 had taken up the project to build the country's first deep-sea port in Matarbari aiming to enhance its port logistics capacity to boost export and import.

Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) and Roads and Highways Department (RHD) is jointly implementing the Tk 17,777.20 crore project.

The CPA is building the port while the RHD is constructing the road to connect the port with the national highway. Japan is providing a loan for the project.

Hasina will lay the foundation stone of the port's first terminal at a programme at the port site

at 2:30pm today. The port is likely to be opened by 2026.

Although the construction of the terminal is yet to start, a 14.3-km artificial navigation channel, stretching from the terminal to the sea, has been built.

Coal Power Generation Company Bangladesh Limited has built the channel under the Matarbari Ultra Super Critical Coal Fired Power Project. On September 20, it handed over responsibility for the operation of the channel to the CPA.

The PM will also inaugurate the channel today.

According to shipping ministry, the deep-sea port will be a game-changer for Bangladesh economy as it would be able to handle container ships with a capacity of 8000 TEU.

TEU, or a twenty foot equivalent unit, is the standard measure of container capacity on a ship.

Ballot stuffing 'Full prisons and false charges'

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announced by next week," said Election Commissioner Anisur Rahman.

Another Commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) Ahsan Habib Khan urged the field-level officials to do their duties with honesty and sincerity like they did during other elections held under this commission.

"By taking lessons from the past, we will hold a beautiful, free, and fair, election, which will be an example for future generations."

Commissioner Rashida Sultana said, "Whenever we lose neutrality, a question arises. That creates resentment between people and candidates. We don't want to see such resentment. You should carry out your duties with sincerity by treating everyone equally."

Another Commissioner Md Alamgir also spoke at the event that was presided over by EC Secretary Jahangir Alam.

Progress

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time, having served three consecutive terms. [In all this time, I was able to successfully change the fate of the people. I have [dramatically] changed the country. Not everyone will view this [success] favourably," she said.

The premier sought everyone's cooperation to maintain the country's image.

She said movement in the name of arson and blockade has recently resurfaced. "I am not sure who benefits from it. But ordinary people are becoming the victims."

The PM extended her sincere thanks to the Bangladesh Association of Banks (BAB) for its initiative to make donations for her relief fund ahead of the upcoming winter season, as it did in the past.

She sought cooperation from BAB to maintain a good reserve of foreign currency, arrest the high inflation, and run the economy properly amid the global economic recession-like situation.

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extreme the crackdown on dissent has become," the Guardian quoted Angelita Baeyens, vice-president of international advocacy and litigation at the Robert F Kennedy human rights organisation, as saying.

The report says BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir hours before his arrest on October 29 spoke to the Guardian and expressed his fears of being picked up on false charges.

"It is clear that the government's goal is to put all of our leaders behind bars and hold a one-sided election," Fakhru told the newspaper.

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while Musrshida hit six boundaries during her 106-ball 54. Both, however, couldn't see their team through as the services of skipper Joty were required. She scored a 25-ball 18 and was aptly aided by Sobhana Mostary's 30-ball 19 as the duo wrapped it up for

The report comes amid growing political unrest in the country centring on the national election, slated for January. BNP and other opposition parties want the government to resign and install a non-party government to oversee the election. The ruling Awami League insists that the election will take place in line with the constitution, meaning under the Sheikh Hasina-led government.

The Guardian report also mentioned that jails in Bangladesh are already overcrowded with thousands of political prisoners inside cells for months, many facing dozens, perhaps hundreds,

of criminal charges.

About the violence centering BNP's October 28 rally in Dhaka, the newspaper talked to Ali Riaz, professor of political science at Illinois State University, who said, "The violence appeared premeditated by the authorities as a means to crack down on the BNP... The response of the police, which triggered the violence, seemed to be planned well ahead of the rally."

The newspaper talked to a number of BNP leaders, including Habibun Nabi Khan Sohel, who evaded arrest and are now in hiding. Sohel, the BNP's

joint secretary general, faces more than 450 cases.

The newspaper also talked to Law Minister Anisul Huq and spokesperson of Dhaka Metropolitan Police who deny that the mass arrests of the BNP members are connected to the forthcoming elections.

The report says since 2008 Bangladesh has seen an economic rise to become one of the strongest economies in South Asia, but the three terms of the present government have also been defined by democratic backsliding and increasingly authoritarian measures against dissent or any form of political opposition.

Tigresses move to sixth with Pak series win

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Bangladesh. "The batting department responded well. In the previous match, Pakistan struggled to chase a small total but the same did not happen today which is why we clinched an easy victory," Joty said.

"The way Murshida and Pinky were playing, I think

they should've finished the match. They were at the wicket for a long time and our plan is for set batters to always play as long as possible.

"The first match was indeed alarming for us. The biggest thing for us is the series win, it is a big achievement for us. The show of character from

the entire team is a huge success," she added.

The Bangladesh bowlers did the job again for their side, restricting the visitors to 166 for nine.

Left-arm orthodox Nahida Akter outshone the four other spinners in the side, picking up three wickets for 26 runs, while Rabeya Khan scalped two.

India, USA exchange views

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After imposing sanctions on the Rapid Action Battalion and seven of its officials in December 2021, the US in May this year announced a visa policy aiming at anyone who might undermine the democratic election process in Bangladesh.

On the other hand, India, a traditionally close ally of Bangladesh, has

deepened bilateral ties through connectivity and energy projects over the last decade. However, it has refused to comment on Bangladesh politics in recent times.

Asked if recent political developments and the upcoming election in Bangladesh were among the issues discussed in the dialogue, Kwatra said, "It is not our (India) space to

comment on the policy of a third country...the election in Bangladesh is their internal matter and it is for the people of Bangladesh to decide their future".

"We, as a close friend and partner of Bangladesh, respect the democratic process there and will continue to support the country's vision of a stable, peaceful and progressive nation," he added.

153 vehicles torched

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At least 10,091 BNP leaders and activists were arrested in the last 13 days in 208 cases across the country, said the party.

Meanwhile, Rab yesterday claimed to have arrested Dhaka City (north) BNP Joint Convener Golam Mostofa over the killing of

police constable Amirul Islam Parvez on October 28.

Mostofa was picked up from Ashulia on Thursday night.

Yesterday, a local court sent Dhaka City (north) BNP Member Secretary Aminul Haque and Dhaka City (north) Jubo Dal Member Secretary Sajjadul Miraj and its activist

Golam Kibria to jail in a case filed over theft and vandalism of Paltan Police Station.

Tangail District BNP General Secretary Farhad Iqbal and three Feni Jubo Dal leaders were sent to jail yesterday in two separate sabotage cases, report our Tangail correspondent and a correspondent from Feni.

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