

Insurgents attack Myanmar convoy on China border

REUTERS

A convoy of trucks bringing goods into Myanmar from China has gone up in flames in what state media reported yesterday was an insurgent attack, compounding surging insecurity that has raised concern in neighbouring China.

The fire in the town of Muse came as China's ambassador to Myanmar met top officials in the Myanmar capital for talks on stability on the border after recent signs that their relationship has been coming under rare strain.

"Due to this terrorist act ... about 120 out of 258 vehicles carrying household goods, consumer goods, clothes and building materials were destroyed by fire," the state-run Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper reported, referring to an opposition alliance that launched an offensive against the junta a month ago.

Li Kyar Win, a spokesman for one of the insurgent forces, denied torching the convoy saying it did not conduct attacks that would "destroy the people's interests".

Myanmar's military has lost control of several towns and military outposts in the northeast and elsewhere around the country as it grapples with the biggest coordinated offensive it has faced since it seized power in a 2021 coup.

More than 2 million people have been displaced in different parts of the country due to the surge of fighting, the United Nations said.

Earlier in the week, at least 10 people were killed in Laukkai town, which like Muse is also in Shan State on the border with China, media reported, when a rocket hit a vehicle of people trying to flee the fighting.

Spokespeople for the junta and a rebel group operating in the area both condemned the incident and denied responsibility.

China has called for peace and stability in Myanmar and the latest unrest came as its ambassador, Chen Hai, was meeting Myanmar's military-appointed foreign minister, Than Swe, and military officials in the capital, Naypyitaw.



Shoppers browsing makeshift warm clothes shops in the capital's Gulistan yesterday. As the winter season is drawing closer, people have started collecting such clothes.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Russia attacking Avdiivka ‘from all directions’

Says Kyiv; 16 Ukrainian drones downed in south, Crimea

AFP, Kyiv

A third wave of Russian forces is attacking the eastern Ukrainian town of Avdiivka and systematically shelling the centre of the industrial hub, its Ukrainian head said yesterday.

The nearly encircled town near the Russian-held regional stronghold of Donetsk has faced a fierce onslaught for more than a month.

"The third wave [of assaults] began. They are attacking from all directions, from the flanks of the south and north, as they did before. They are attacking the industrial zone," Vitaly Barabash, the head of the town, said.

Avdiivka has been on the front line since 2014 and is part of the Donetsk region, which the Kremlin has claimed to have

annexed along with three other regions.

"They are attacking from all sides, using a lot of infantry. Machinery went to the industrial zone, because the asphalt surface allows them to do so," Barabash told state media.

He said Russian forces were targeting Avdiivka with guided air bombs and cluster munitions resulting in between 30 and 40 "massive" strikes each day.

Barabash said 1,350 residents were remaining in the town that had a pre-war population of around 30,000 people, and that 102 people had been evacuated over the last week.

Meanwhile, Russia said yesterday it had destroyed 16 Ukrainian drones in the south of the country and over the annexed Crimean peninsula.

On Thursday night, "an attempt by the

Kyiv regime to carry out a terrorist attack using aerial drones against sites on the territory of the Russian Federation was thwarted," Russia's defence ministry said.

"Air defence systems destroyed 16 drones, including 13 over the Crimean peninsula and three over the territory of the Volgograd region."

Ukraine has ramped up drone and missile attacks on Russian military installations in and around the peninsula in recent months.

Crimea -- annexed by Russia in 2014 -- serves as the rear base for the Black Sea Fleet and key supply route for Russian forces in southern and eastern Ukraine.

Ukraine's military, meanwhile, said its air defence systems had downed three Iranian-designed attack drones launched by Russian forces overnight.

42 Bangladeshis return after 3 yrs in Indian prison

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Forty-two Bangladeshi women and children returned home yesterday after serving three years in an Indian prison.

Indian police handed over them to the immigration police of Bangladesh through the Benapole check-post.

Benapole's Immigration Officer-in-Charge Md Kamruzzaman said the returnees went to West Bengal three and a half years ago, but they were arrested by Kolkata police while working at various houses, shops, and restaurants.

They were produced before a local court and sentenced to three years in prison, and later they landed in Kolkata Central Jail.

After all immigration formalities, they were handed over to Benapole Port Police Station with the intervention of the Ministry of Home Affairs of the two countries.

Benapole Port Police Station OC Kamal Hossain Bhuian said the returnees were trafficked through brokers to West Bengal.

SI closed for carrying out unauthorised operation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

A police sub-inspector has been withdrawn from duties for conducting unauthorised operations outside his jurisdiction in Barishal.

Kaunia Police Station SI Redwan Islam was attached to Barishal Police Lines on Thursday night, confirmed Barishal Metropolitan Police Commissioner Md Saiful Islam.

The SI's actions came to light after one Muslim Jamaddar complained to the commissioner on Thursday that he and other cops had frisked and detained him and his son at the Barishal launch terminal on Tuesday.

The terminal does not fall under the jurisdiction of Kaunia Police Station, police sources said.

Muslim said that SI Redwan had also filed a false case of drug recovery accusing his son after they failed to pay a bribe that the law enforcers demanded.

He said they were detained for six hours at the terminal, after which two police personnel allowed Muslim to go but took his son at Kaunia Police Station, claiming to have recovered three yaba pills from him.

Muslim said the court granted bail to his son on Thursday afternoon, after which he complained to the police commissioner about the sub-inspector's conduct.

The BMP commissioner said that in a primary investigation, the allegation against SI Redwan of conducting operations outside his jurisdiction was found to be true. Commissioner Saiful said an inquiry committee has been formed, headed by deputy commissioner (north).

BNP facing 2-pronged challenge

FROM PAGE 1

According to the top leaders, it is difficult for the party to continue such programmes for long.

Since October 29, the BNP has called hartal for four days every week. The party demands election under a non-partisan government.

The BNP is now considering whether to hold demonstrations or lay siege to important buildings.

According to a standing committee member, it is almost certain that there will be a change in programmes after November 30. "But hartal or blockade may be called if the situation demands."

The party has decided to call

hartal on November 30. However, some leaders suggest laying siege to the EC secretariat in the capital or offices of the returning officers across the country on the day, sources say.

When the submission of nomination papers is done, the conflicts within the AL and rifts among its allies will become visible, a senior BNP leader says.

The EC has hinted that the deadline for submission of nomination papers could be extended if the BNP joins the polls. But the BNP leaders believe that this may happen because the AL has yet to complete the "seat-sharing"

process with its partners.

"It will be better to observe the political polarisation rather than calling hartal and blockade," says the leader.

The BNP rejected the election schedule, saying that free and fair elections are not possible under the AL government. It also maintains that the EC announced the schedule as per the will of the government.

The party boycotted the January 5, 2014 election, demanding a caretaker government system that was scrapped through a court verdict. It participated in the 2018 election marred by allegations of irregularities.

26 parties, mostly small ones, in polls

FROM PAGE 1

The Daily Star recently interviewed leaders of 37 parties and examined the documents submitted to the Election Commission by seven other parties to learn about their stance on the election.

The EC announced the polls schedule on November 15. The announcement came at a time when the BNP and its allies are waging a movement demanding resignation of the government and polls under a non-party interim administration.

With the government trying to bring as many registered parties to the polls as possible, a number of little-known and recently-formed parties have started announcing that they will participate in the election.

Political analysts say these parties are being propped up to make the January 7 election appear democratic.

Such moves are seen by many as part of the government's attempts to have more parties on the opposition bench in the next parliament, as the Jatiya Party's role as the main opposition over the last two parliaments has been criticised.

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader on Wednesday reiterated that many political parties and individuals would eventually decide to run.

PARTIES IN POLLS

The 26 parties that have decided to take part in the polls are the Awami League, Jatiya Party (Manju), Bangladesh Samyabadi Dal, Krishak Shramik Janata League, Gonoatntri Party, Bangladesh National Awami Party, Workers Party of Bangladesh, Bikolpodhara Bangladesh, Jatiya Party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Inu),

Zaker Party, Bangladesh Tarikat Federation, National People's Party, Gono Front, Bangladesh Jatiya Party (Mukit), Islamic Front Bangladesh, Bangladesh Kalyan Party, Islami Oikya Jote, Bangladesh Islami Front, Bangladesh Muslim League, Bangladesh Sangskritik Muktijote, Bangladesh Nationalist Front, Bangladesh Congress, Trinamool BNP, Bangladesh Nationalist Movement, and Bangladesh Supreme Party.

Only five of those -- the AL, Jatiya Party, Workers Party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, and Jatiya Party (Manju) -- had representation in the ninth parliament.

Seven of them this time have written to the EC to allow them to use the AL's electoral symbol "boat". They are Jatiya Party (Manju), Samyabadi Dal, Gonoatntri Party, National Awami Party, Workers Party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Inu), and Tarikat Federation.

Some little-known parties like Bangladesh Sangskritik Muktijote and Bangladesh Congress said they were planning to field candidates in all 300 constituencies.

PARTIES BOYCOTTING POLLS

The 14 parties which have decided not to run are the BNP, Liberal Democratic Party, Communist Party of Bangladesh, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Rob), Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal, Bangladesh Jatiya Party (Partha), Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Islam Bangladesh, Gonoforum, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish, Islami Andolon Bangladesh, Bangladesh Biplobi Workers Party, Jatiyatatabadi Gonoatntrik Andolon, Insaniat Biplob Bangladesh, and Bangladesh Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Ambia).

Speaking to this newspaper,

several leaders of these parties said they would not participate in the elections without a neutral polls-time administration.

The four parties that are still undecided about running are Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon, Bangladesh Muslim League (Lantern), Bangladesh National Awami Party and Khelafat Majlish.

Bangladesh National Awami Party Secretary General Golam Mostafa Bhuiyan told this newspaper that his party was yet to decide on taking part in the election.

He, however, recently sent a letter to the EC saying his party gave him the authority to sign the nomination papers of the party candidates. The Daily Star has obtained a copy of the letter.

Leaders of nine Islamist parties, including Khelafat Andolon, Bangladesh Muslim League, and Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Islam Bangladesh, met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban Thursday night.

The premier requested the leaders to take part in the election, and they assured her of running, two leaders present at the meeting told The Daily Star.

Asked about joining polls, leaders of Khelafat Andolon and Muslim League yesterday said they would make a decision soon.

However, Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Islam Secretary General Manjurul Islam said the party would not take part in the election.

The party also suspended its Vice President Shahinur Pasha Chowdhury, who met the PM on Thursday night, for "violating party discipline", according to a press release.

AL makes surprise picks

FROM PAGE 1

A total of 3,362 AL leaders, celebrities, former bureaucrats and police officials collected AL nomination forms.

AL sources say the party chose Shakib over incumbent lawmaker Saifuzzaman Shikhor.

The cricket ODI captain bought AL nomination forms for Magura 1, Magura 2, and Dhaka 10 constituencies.

The nomination board chose Nanak, a former MP, over Dhaka-13 lawmaker Sadek Khan, and actor Ferdous over Dhaka-10 lawmaker and former FBCCI president Shafikul Islam.

Bahauddin Nasim, a former MP from Madaripur, will vie for Dhaka-8, where Rashed Khan Menon, leader of AL ally Workers Party, is the current MP.

According to sources, current MP Shah E Alam was dropped while former lawmaker Talukder Mohammad Yunus was picked to run from Barishal-2.

The AL chose its International Affairs Secretary Shammi Ahmed to vie for Barishal-4, dropping lawmaker Pankaj Nath.

AL central working committee member and Barishal-1 MP Abul

Hasanat Abdullah got the party ticket, while Zaheed Farooque, state minister for water resources, got the ticket to run for Barishal-5 again.

Khaled Hossain Swapan, Babuganj upazila AL president and former chairman of Babujang Upazila Parishad, was picked for Barishal-3, and Maj Gen (ret'd) Hafiz Mallik for Barishal-6. No AL leader from these two constituencies participated in the 2018 election.

Irfan Selim, son of Dhaka-7 MP Haji Salim, was picked by the AL for the constituency. Irfan, his father, and brother Sulaiman Selim bought nomination forms.

A new face, Towhiduzzaman Tuhin, was picked for Jashore-2, dropping current lawmaker Nasir Uddin. Towhiduzzaman is a physician and son-in-law of veteran AL leader Tofail Ahmed.

Briefing reporters at the AL president's Dhanmondi office, AL General Secretary Oabidul Quader said some new faces have been nominated and some incumbent lawmakers have been dropped.

No individual likely to win has been dropped, he said, adding, "Young people who have the acceptability are ahead in this race."

JP descends into chaos

FROM PAGE 1

denied the opportunity to buy forms from the party chairman's Banani office, said party sources.

Raushan, also the leader of the opposition in parliament, and her son Rahgir Almahe Ershad were yet to collect forms for the January 7 national election. The deadline for collecting and submitting the JP's nomination forms expired yesterday.

Aggrieved at this, Raushan has sought an appointment with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to discuss all election-related issues, Golam Moshi, political secretary to the opposition leader, told The Daily Star last night.

Mahtab Uddin, a former JP presidium member who was expelled from the party for siding with Raushan, said he went to the Banani office yesterday to collect a nomination form, but party chairman's adviser Kholilur Rahman refused to sell one to him.

"I had been involved in Jatiya Party's politics for many years. When party founder HMErshad first formed Jonodol, I was with him. But Kholilur

Rahman who was in charge of selling forms refused to give one to me," he told this correspondent.

Two representatives of Ranga also went to the office to buy a form, but they were not given a form, Ranga told The Daily Star.

The opposition chief whip was relieved of all JP posts on October 28, 2022, over siding with Raushan and a conflict with party Chairman GM Quader.

Ranga said they will hold a meeting today to decide their next course of action.

Golam Moshi alleged that several JP leaders loyal to Raushan were manhandled at the Banani office on Thursday when they went there to collect nomination forms.

The JP started the sale of nomination forms on November 20. The party on Thursday extended the deadline for collection and submission of forms by a day as Raushan and Rahgir didn't collect forms.

"Extension of the deadline was nothing but a drama as they [pro-Quader leaders] didn't sell forms to any of us," Golam Moshi said.

UN worried for fate of Afghans driven from Pakistan

AFP, Geneva

Many of the Afghan families being driven out of Pakistan have no homes to return to and will struggle to feed themselves through the harsh winter, the United Nations warned yesterday.

The UN refugee agency UNHCR says more than 370,000 people have returned to Afghanistan since October 3, when Pakistan issued an ultimatum to the 1.7 million Afghans it says are living illegally in the country.

"There are no open arms for these families," said Hsiao-Wei Lee, Afghanistan country director for the UN's World Food Programme (WFP), who recently travelled to a border crossing to observe the distribution of food aid.

"Many of them have not heard back from their relatives (in Afghanistan)."

"Those who did were told there is no space for them or that there was too little to share."

Islamabad set a November 1 deadline for the voluntary return of all undocumented Afghans in Pakistan to their country of origin.

Meanwhile, JP Secretary General Mujibul Haque Chunnun yesterday once again claimed that there was no division in the party.

"There is only one group in the Jatiya Party, which is GM Quader group," he told reporters at the Banani office.

Asked about fresh tension regarding nomination forms not being collected by Raushan and her son, Chunnun said Raushan made many contributions to the party and also sacrificed a lot for it.

"If she wants to run in the election, we will give her all the support. There is no deadline for collection of Raushan Ershad's nomination form. She will be given the form whenever she wants to have one," he added.

However, this correspondent could not reach Chunnun for comments on the allegations raised by pro-Raushan leaders as he did not respond to phone calls.

The JP sold a total of 1,752 nomination forms until yesterday.

After interviewing the nomination seekers, the party will make the final list of its nominees public on November 27.