

## Russia strike on Kharkiv kills 2

AFP, Kyiv

A late-night Russian strike on the northeastern Ukrainian region of Kharkiv killed two people, the region's governor said yesterday, as both Moscow and Kyiv reported a wave of overnight aerial attacks.

Kharkiv Governor Oleg Synegebov said Russia launched a "series of shelling" attacks on the town of Kupiansk, close to the frontlines, late on Thursday night.

"Houses and cars were damaged. A 36-year-old man was rescued from the rubble. A 64-year-old woman and a 58-year-old man died," he wrote on Telegram.

A separate missile attack on a residential area in the town of Chuguiv, also in the Kharkiv region, injured seven, the governor added.

Russia and Ukraine also said they downed dozens of drones overnight, as both sides keep trying to strike targets deep behind the stretched frontlines.

A Ukrainian drone attack on the Russian border region of Belgorod's Rozhdstvenska village killed two people yesterday, the Russian governor said.



Demonstrators hold placards in support of women's activism in Iran, including a portrait of Iranian artist Elham Modarresi currently detained in Iran for her alleged participation in anti-government protests, during a march as part of the International Women's Rights Day, in Paris, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## They're duped India raids network sending citizens to fight for Russia

AFP, New Delhi

Indian authorities said they had detained members of a "trafficking" network sending citizens of the country to fight for the Russian army in Ukraine after raiding several travel agents.

Two years since Russia's invasion began, tens of thousands of its soldiers have been killed in Ukraine and Moscow is on a global quest for more troops.

At least two Indian soldiers have been killed in the conflict, with several recruits telling AFP they were shipped to the frontlines under false pretenses.

Investigators from India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) conducted raids across 13 locations on Thursday and detained "certain suspects" for questioning, according to a statement issued late that evening.

"These traffickers have been operating as an organized network and were luring Indian nationals through social media channels like Youtube etc. and also through their local contacts/agents for highly paid jobs in Russia," the statement said.

"Trafficked Indian Nationals were trained in combat roles and deployed at front bases in Russia-Ukraine War Zone against their wishes."

The CBI said it had established "around 35 instances" of Indians being sent to Russia but added it was working to identify more potential victims.

India's foreign ministry had earlier said it was working to secure discharges for around 20 Indian nationals in the Russian army.

## UN decries 'record' Israeli settlement in West Bank

Says expansion eliminating any possibility of a Palestinian state

REUTERS, Geneva

Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories have expanded by a record amount and risk eliminating any practical possibility of a Palestinian state, the UN human rights chief said yesterday.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk said that the growth of Israeli settlements amounted to the transfer by Israel of its own population, which he reiterated was a war crime. The U.S. Biden administration said last month the settlements were "inconsistent" with international law after Israel announced new housing plans in the occupied West Bank.

"Settler violence and settlement-related violations have reached shocking new levels, and risk eliminating any practical possibility

of establishing a viable Palestinian State," Turk said in a statement accompanying the report which will be presented to the Human Rights Council in Geneva in late March.

Israel's diplomatic mission in Geneva said that the report should have included the deaths of 36 Israelis in 2023. "Human rights are universal, yet Israeli victims of Palestinian terrorism are ignored by the Office (of the High Commissioner) time and time again," it said in a statement.

The 16-page report, based on the U.N.'s own monitoring as well as other sources, documented 24,300 new Israeli housing units in the occupied West Bank during a one-year period through to end-October 2023, which it said was the highest on record since monitoring began in 2017.

It also said there had been a

dramatic increase in the intensity, severity and regularity of both Israeli settler and state violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, particularly since the deadly Hamas attacks on Israel on Oct. 7.

Since then, more than 400 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli security forces or by settlers, it said.

Israel, which captured the West Bank in the 1967 Middle East war, claims a biblical birthright to the land where settlements are expanding. Its military says it is conducting counter-terrorism operations in the West Bank and is targeting suspected militants.

Turk's report noted that the policies of Israel's government, which is the most right-wing in the country's history and includes religious nationalists with close ties to settlers, appeared aligned to an "unprecedented extent" with the goals of the Israeli settler movement.



## From wheelchair to Paralympics

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spoke about her emotions after winning bronze. "I competed against national-level archers and even beat them. It gave me a lot of confidence that I can do well in abroad as well."

So, on Thursday, when she punched her ticket to compete in the 50m individual compound event of the Paralympic Games, it wasn't exactly a surprise.

The para archer from Narsigndi credited her coach, BPAA president Kazi Rajib Uddin Ahmed Chapol and especially her mother for urging her on in her journey.

"My mother always encourages me in sports and in my studies. She tells me to never lose hope."

Many of Jhuma's teammates in the para archery team found solace in the sport after tragedy struck their lives much like her.

Rupali Akhter is one of them, who like many others in the team, got burdened with a life of disability after a road accident.

Rupali was taking her mother to the hospital when the accident happened. But the Recurve event player has put that terrible incident behind her by devoting all of her time to archery. "After learning the game, I fell in love with archery. Now, I'm busy all day. Here, we train alongside

the BKSP students. So, I never feel that I'm a person with disabilities." Khorshed Alam and Al-Amin Hossain from the men's Recurve para archery team have a similar story, as both injured their spinal cord after an accident but have now found a new lease in life with the sport.

Indian coach Nishith Das has been with para archery from the start and has been entrusted to lay the foundation of para archery in Bangladesh.

"The more they understand the game, the more interested they get. And I never imagined that Jhuma or Rupali would progress so much in such a short time!" Jhuma has already started inspiring other archers, one of them being BKSP archery student Sumaiya Sultana Bithi.

"I used to complete in Recurve, but my scores weren't improving. Then I switched to Compound. When I saw Jhuma apu and others train hard while sitting down, it inspired me to work harder to improve. I felt that if they do it with just their hands and no legs, I have no excuse not to do it well."

Jhuma revealed that she strives to achieve new heights in para archery, not just for herself, but to set an example for persons with disabilities in Bangladesh.

"I want to inspire the ones who have disabilities like me. I want them to feel encouraged thinking if Jhuma can do so well in archery, we can also do it. I want them to feel that confidence and not consider themselves inferior in any way. I want them to not feel like they are a burden to the society."

Archery has given Jhuma the strength to endure sneers and overcome many obstacles laid in front of her as a person with disabilities. She now hopes that society will change its outlook on persons with disabilities. "Most people around me think that as I have a disability, I can't do anything, my life is over and I'm now a burden to my family and society. I want people to change their thinking and outlook. I want us to be considered as equals."

## BGMEA goes to polls today

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Two panels – Sammilito Parishad and Forum – are contesting in the elections. SM Mannan is the panel leader of the Sammilito Parishad and Faisal Samad is the panel leader of the Forum.

The tenure of the current board, which took charge in April 2021, expires this March.

Its term was extended for a total of one year in two phases, citing the critical phase the garment sector has been going through due to the severe fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, the dollar crisis and the energy shortage.

The extension in the last six months was allowed because many lawmakers, who are also garment manufacturers

and exporters, were not interested in participating in the BGMEA election before the national polls on January 7.

"I sincerely hope that all of our valued registered voters will come to the voting centre to cast their ballots and participate in the noble process," said BGMEA President Faruque Hassan in a statement.

Each voter will have to pick 35 directors: 26 from Dhaka and nine from Chattogram.

"If you choose more or less directors, the whole ballot will be cancelled," Hassan said.

The voters of both regions may turn up at any of the two polling centres to exercise their voting rights, the BGMEA chief said.

## Ex-BB governor suggests

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we are not taking the kerb market into consideration now, as it is a very small market."

"In case of currency swap, the central bank is withdrawing local currency as we are pumping the US dollar into banks from reserve."

The central bank is extending liquidity to banks through swaps, as the banking sector is facing a liquidity crisis at present, he added.

"The forex market is stable now and our currency is not depreciating thanks to the ongoing political stability."

"All indicators are improving after the national elections."

## Tigers look for a 'first' against Sri Lanka

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Chandika Hathurusingha downplayed the factor that Tigers have not managed a T20I series win against Sri Lanka before ahead of the series decider.

"Nothing to do with what we haven't done before. There's opportunity for us to do it. We are in a position to change the history," Hathurusingha said at the press conference yesterday.

Sri Lanka will be bolstered by the return of Wanindu Hasaranga, who could not play the first two games due to suspension.

However, asked on Hasaranga, Hathurusingha said, "Wanindu Hasaranga is just another player for us. We play what is in front of us."

Sri Lanka batting coach Thilina Kandamby saw Hasaranga's availability as a big boost.

"I think Wanindu is back into the side, which is a good advantage for

us because it's a good morale boost. He can have a big impact especially when you are bowling in day game with no dew factor which is good for us."

"Confidence is very high with Wanindu coming back again. It's strengthening our bowling and batting because he has been batting well for last month or so and so confidence-wise, I think we are pretty high," Kandamby said.

He also claimed that Sri Lanka were not feeling extra pressure from the rivalry, despite the incident in the second T20I following the much-debated Soumya Sarkar not out decision from the third umpire, which the Sri Lankan players protested on the field.

"I don't think so [pressure]. Our boys have played a lot of cricket and know what is going around. We talked about it earlier and it's about how you handle it in the middle so

the boys are doing a pretty good job," Kandamby said.

Sri Lanka are waiting on Matheesha Pathirana, who walked off the field in the second T20I with a hamstring injury. The player was sent for a scan but team management could not say whether he was going to be available until the scan reports arrived.

Both teams were aware of the day game changing the nature of how the third T20I was to be played. Without dew factor, batting conditions will be pretty similar in both innings.

"We are in a position to win this series, but to do that, we have to consider other factors," Hathurusingha said.

"It is a day game. We are aware of those factors. If we execute our game plan, we are giving ourselves the best chance to win the series. Having said that, Sri Lanka is a very good T20 team," he added.

## 10 more lives lost on roads

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Pirojpur Sadar upazila on Pirojpur-Parerhat road at around 11:30am.

On information, police and firefighters rushed to the spot, recovered the bodies and rescued injured people.

"Three of the victims died on the spot. The rest died at Pirojpur district hospital while undergoing treatment," said Md Selim Mia, assistant director of the Fire Service and Civil Defence Station in Pirojpur.

Police seized the bus. But its drivers and helpers fled the scene, said Mohammad Ashikuzzaman, officer-in-charge (OC) of Pirojpur Sadar Police Station.

Meanwhile, in Joypurhat, two people were killed and six were injured after a microbus rammed into a parked truck in Kalai upazila.

The deceased Fahima Khatun, 38,

and Rokon Ahmed, 14, were relatives and residents of Shibganj upazila of Bogura.

Police said a group of people were returning to Bogura on the microbus after attending a wedding in Joypurhat Thursday night.

When the microbus reached Kalai municipality area of Kalai-Bogura road around 11:30pm, the driver lost control and hit the parked truck.

Seven passengers of the microbus and its driver were injured. On information police and firefighters rescued the injured and took them to Kalai Upazila Health Complex, said Kalai Police Station Inspector Anwar Hossain.

Two of the injured died while undergoing treatment in the early hours of yesterday, he added.

In Sylhet, a child was killed and

ten others were injured after a bus collided head-on with a truck in the Umanpur area of Jaintiapur upazila on the Sylhet-Tamabil Highway.

The deceased is Porosh Miah, 6, son of Rasel Ahmed of Mymensingh's Gouripur upazila, said police.

"The bus was carrying tourists on their way to Jafflong while the stone-laden truck from the opposite direction suddenly changed his lane and collided with the bus," said Tajul Islam, officer-in-charge of Jaintiapur Police Station.

"The child died on the spot and his body was sent to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital," he said.

Police seized the truck. But its driver and helper fled the scene, he added.

[Our correspondents from Pirojpur, Dinajpur, and Sylhet contributed to the report.]