INTERNATIONAL

Russia strike on Kharkiv kills 2

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 Synegubov said Russia launched a "series of shelling" attacks on the town of Kupyansk, 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 Rozhdestvenska 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 Modaressi 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.

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 o 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 the occupied West Bank.

"Settler violence and settlementshocking new levels, and risk eliminating any practical possibility

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

Israel's diplomatic mission in Oct. 7. Geneva said that the report should have included the deaths of 36 Israelis in 2023. "Human

rights are universal, vet 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 a one-year period through to end-

began in 2017. It also said there had been a movement.

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

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

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 announced new housing plans in in the occupied West Bank during the country's history and includes religious nationalists with close October 2023, which it said was the ties to settlers, appeared aligned related violations have reached highest on record since monitoring to an "unprecedented extent" with the goals of the Israeli settler

Jan 7 election

restricted," were mission said in its final report released yesterday, more than two months after the polls.

At the EC's invitation, a delegation of EUEEM arrived in Dhaka on November 28, 2023, and stayed until January 24, 2024.

According to the report, decision-making was its legal consistent with mandate, and logistical preparations proficient. Although the EC has extensive powers, there was a lack of confidence amongst some stakeholders that it would be able to deliver a credible election.

It said there was a not fully guaranteed and that it lacked the capacity to enforce rules to ensure the integrity of voting and counting processes at local levels.

The EUEEM said the voter registration process was efficient, resulting in regular updates and good levels of data integrity. Procedures were clear and proportionate, with mostly reasonable requirements for inclusion in the register.

However, the opposition political parties' activities were severely limited by judicial proceedings and mass arrests. Voters did not have the opportunity to fully exercise their democratic right to vote for a diverse range of candidates following a decision by the main opposition party to boycott the elections.

The mission said seatsharing agreements between participating political parties, as well as the Awami League engineering a system of internal competition between its own official candidates and "independent candidates" affiliated with this party, did not offer voters genuine freedom of choice.

"The environment for media and civil society was also not conducive to guaranteeing freedom of speech and further limited critical public debate and transparency," it said.

The report said there was a lack of genuine competition with the BNP and its alliance partners boycotting the election, review of the provisions as their demands for the government to resign and the establishment of a 2016, including limits to caretaker system of interim the activities of civil society government to oversee the election were rejected as bureaucratic registration.

unconstitutional.

The EUEEM observed that legislation the regulating online content, the Cyber Security Act 2023 is particularly problematic with respect to its impact on freedom of speech in the media and online and falls short of international standards despite some marginal improvements on previous legislation.

The report said an increasingly restrictive civil and political rights environment has limited the role of civil society in the election.

"Important transparency measures provided domestic election observation at polling station level were, widespread perception that as a result, undermined. No its independent status was independent assessment of the election process was conducted by non-partisan civil society observer groups."

It said the voting was conducted in a generally organised and orderly manner. There were some isolated incidents of violence reported on election day. There were also reports of voting irregularities in localised attempts at fraud. Some of these were dealt with promptly by the Election Commission and returning officers and 25 polling centres were suspended, whilst other incidents were neglected and not adequately investigated.

The final turnout published by the Election Commission was percent. This was marked by wide disparities across the country, the report said.

The EUEEM suggested a comprehensive review of all legislation, regulations and rules related to parliamentary elections for increased legal certainty and consistency.

The system for appointing the board of election commissioners would be strengthened by a meritbased and independent appointments process that works in the public interest.

"A review of the provisions of the Cyber Security Act, 2023. could ensure better alignment of provisions with international standards on freedom of speech. Vague disproportionate restrictions or proscriptions on speech could be removed."

The EUEEM suggested of the Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Act, organisations and overly

From wheelchair to Paralympics the BKSP students. So, I never feel switched to Compound. When I saw

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

Two panels -- Sammilito Parishad and

Forum -- are contesting in the elections.

SM Mannan is the panel leader of the

Sammilito Parishad and Faisal Samad

which took charge in April 2021,

of one year in two phases, citing the

The tenure of the current board,

Its term was extended for a total

is the panel leader of the Forum.

expires this March.

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.



BGMEA goes to polls today



"The more they understand the game, the more interested they get.

Jhuma has already started inspiring other archers, one of them being BKSP archery student Sumaiya

"I used to complete in Recurve, but

disabilities. She now hopes that and I never imagined that Jhuma or society will change its outlook on Rupali would progress so much in persons with disabilities. such a short time!" have a disability, I can't do anything,

Sultana Bithi.

my scores weren't improving. Then I

as equals." Ex-BB governor

suggests FROM PAGE 2

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

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

achieve new heights in para archery,

not just for herself, but to set an

example for persons with disabilities

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

strength to endure sneers and

overcome many obstacles laid

in front of her as a person with

people around me think that as I

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

Archery has given Jhuma the

in Bangladesh.

burden to the society.

Jhuma revealed that she strives to

"I want to inspire the ones who

"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

"All indicators are improving after the national elections."

Tigers look for a 'first' against Sri Lanka us because it's a good morale boost. the boys are doing a pretty good job," Jhuma apu and others train hard

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 Hasaranga's saw availability as a big boost.

Hathurusingha He can have a big impact especially when you are bowling in day game with no dew factor which is good for

> "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 muchdebated Soumya Sarkar not out the Sri Lankan players protested on Hathurusingha said. the field.

boys have played a lot of cricket execute our game plan, we are giving "I think Wanindu is back into the talked about it earlier and it's about side, which is a good advantage for how you handle it in the middle so very good T20 team," he added.

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 decision from the third umpire, which have to consider other factors,"

"It is a day game. "I don't think so [pressure]. Our We are aware of those factors. If we and know what is going around. We ourselves the best chance to win the series. Having said that, Sri Lanka is a

10 more lives lost on roads

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 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 Staton 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

and Rokon Ahmed, 14, were relatives 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 Jaflong 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 Pirojpur, Dinajpur, and

contributed to the report.]

The extension in the last six months

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.

was allowed because many lawmakers, who are also garment manufacturers the BGMEA chief said.

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.

directors, the whole ballot will be cancelled," Hassan said. The voters of both regions may

"If you choose more or less

turn up at any of the two polling centres to exercise their voting rights,