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Another Bangladeshi on Mt Everest

AZMIN AZRAN and SIFAYET ULLAH

On Sunday morning, Liakat Ali and Lutfun Nahar's home in Burischar of Chattogram's Hathazari upazila was filled with utter elation as their son Babar Ali, a doctor and already a source of immense pride for the family, became the newest Bangladeshi to summit the Mount Everest.



Babar Ali

Yesterday, at 8:30am local time (8:45am Bangladesh time), Babar submitted the 8,849 metre peak, the highest in the world. He is the first Bangladeshi to do so in the last 11 years.

Sitting in the middle of a living room with showcases stacked top to bottom with crests and trophies as proof of their son's many achievements in life, Liakat Ali and Lutfun Nahar were the perfect image of two proud parents.

"Babar was a bit restless and adventurous as a child, but he was always very talented. He couldn't sit down and study for long, he'd get up and walk around a bit and then

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Locals of Trimohoni Khilgaon's Notun Nasirabad area in DSCC's ward-75 had to build this makeshift bamboo bridge over a canal by themselves, as their repeated requests for a concrete bridge remain unheeded. The authorities concerned seem oblivious to the fact that many people, including children, may be at risk, as hundreds cross this rickety structure every day. The photo was taken yesterday.

KYRGYZ CAPITAL Bangladeshis stay indoors for fear of mob attacks

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Out of fear, foreign students, including Bangladeshis, are mostly staying indoors in Bishkek of Kyrgyzstan even though the situation, following attacks on foreigners, has largely been stable since Saturday night.

"The situation is now stable. A good number of police personnel have been deployed. We have been, however, instructed to stay indoors," Samia Kabir, a Bangladeshi medical student in Bishkek, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The Bangladeshi students are trying to come home on charter flights amid a tense situation after mob attacks on international students since the evening of May 17, said a representative of Bangladeshi students there.

The tension boiled over after videos of a fight between Kyrgyz students and medical students from Egypt on May 13 were shared online.

According to the Kyrgyz health ministry, 29 people were injured. According to the police, four citizens of Egypt were detained over a brawl in a hostel on May

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METRO RAIL SERVICES PM requested to review NBR's decision on VAT Says Obaidul Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said he requested Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to reconsider NBR's decision to impose 15 percent VAT on metro rail service.

He said this while speaking at a branding seminar on Dhaka Metro Rail at a city hotel.

He said metro rail service is getting popular day by day, but the National Board of Revenue suddenly decided to impose 15 percent VAT.

Even neighbour India has not imposed any VAT on metro rail service, he said. "I have pleaded the prime minister that this decision is not right, it is wrong. She has given assurance to reconsider it," Quader said.

Earlier in the day, MAN Siddique, managing director of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited (DMTCL), said the metro users will have to bear the VAT burden.

In April this year, NBR decided to cancel the tax exemption it has been given since the beginning of metro rail operation in December 2022. As per the NBR's fresh decision, 15 percent VAT will have to be paid on metro rail's revenue earned from passengers from July 1 this year.

Al-Aqsa hospital overwhelmed as Gaza camp bombed

31 more Palestinians killed; US security envoy visits Israel for talks on more focused military campaign

AGENCIES

An Israeli strike killed 31 Palestinians and wounded 20 more in a family house in the central Nuseirat refugee camp, Gaza's civil defence agency said yesterday, as White House national security adviser travelled to the region amid US calls for a more focused military campaign.

Rescue workers were continuing to search for missing people under the rubble, the agency said. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital had said it had received the bodies of 20 people killed in the strike which witnesses said occurred around 3:00am local time.

The attack was not carried out in Nuseirat only. In the north of the enclave, there were two strikes. One targeted an evacuation centre. Three Palestinians have been reported killed in that attack. Six people were killed when the Israeli army targeted a residential building, reports Al Jazeera online.

Residents in the enclave said Israeli planes and tanks pounded areas across the Strip overnight. Israel has been pushing into the Rafah city that it says is the last bastion of Hamas forces. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have fled the area that was one of their few remaining places of refuge.

Israeli forces also pushed deeper into the narrow alleyways of Jabalia in northern Gaza, returning to an area that they said they had cleared earlier in the conflict, residents said.

- Israeli forces push deeper into Jabalia
- 8 lakh Palestinians flee fierce fighting in Rafah
- Death toll in enclave rises to 35,456

The UN said on Saturday that 800,000 people had been "forced to flee" Israel's assault in Rafah. Aid agencies have warned of widespread hunger and shortages of fuel and medical supplies.

Amid the political turmoil, White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan was scheduled to hold talks yesterday with his Israeli counterpart Tzachi Hanegbi and with Netanyahu on the Gaza offensive, after earlier meeting Saudi de facto ruler Prince Mohammed bin Salman in the kingdom.

Washington has pushed for a post-offensive plan for Gaza involving Palestinians and supported by regional powers, as well as for a broader diplomatic deal under which Israel and regional powerhouse Saudi Arabia would normalise relations.

Riyadh has demanded deeper security ties with the United States and that Israel agree to steps on ending the decades-old conflict and towards the creation of a Palestinian state, reports AFP.

Saudi state media said Prince Mohammed and Sullivan discussed "the semi-final version of the draft strategic agreements between the Kingdom and the United States of America, the work on which is close to being completed".

Govt mulling taxi service revival

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The government is thinking about reviving taxi service, which is almost non-existent in Dhaka and other major cities.

Road Transport and Highways Division will hold a meeting today with its Secretary ABM Amin Ullah in the chair to discuss the issue.

The move comes at a time when the economic life of almost all existing taxis has expired.

At least two new companies have sought permission to provide taxi services in Dhaka and Chattogram, officials said.

Although the shortage of transport services is a major problem in Dhaka and Chattogram, the companies will have to compete with the now popular ride-sharing services, they added.

In November 2010, the government formulated the Taxicab Service Guidelines 2010 to improve taxi service.

In 2014, two organisations -- Toma Construction Company Limited (Toma Tax) and Bangladesh Army Welfare Trust (Trust Taxi) -- started providing taxi services in Dhaka.

Two companies brought only 425 taxis, against their approval of 650, BRTA sources said.

The service lost popularity within a few years due to the small number of taxis and high fares. Besides, the launch of ride-sharing services in 2016 hit taxi services hard.

Taxis imported by the two companies were manufactured between 2011 and 2014, and all but 29

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49 constituencies go to polls in 5th phase today

Rahul Gandhi, Rajnath Singh, Omar Abdullah, among key candidates, in fray

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

An estimated 8.95 crore people are expected to vote in the fifth phase of polling in India's Lok Sabha elections covering 49 constituencies across eight states and union territories today.

The fifth phase will witness key contests in various constituencies. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, BJP leaders Rajnath Singh, Smriti Irani and National Conference leader Omar Abdullah, among others, will be looking for electoral success.

With the seven-phased voting exercise spanning 44 days already well into the second half, voting will be held in around 94,732 polling stations spread across Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

Metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Lucknow are going to polls in this phase which have in the past suffered from urban apathy in voting. The Election Commission (EC) yesterday said it has especially called upon these city-dwellers "to erase the stigma by turning out in higher numbers."

After the fifth phase, voting in 428 Lok Sabha constituencies out of a total of 543 will be completed. Polling in the sixth phase and seventh phase are scheduled for May 25 and June 1 before the votes are counted on June 4.



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A man carries the dead body of a Palestinian child recovered from a house hit by an Israeli strike in Nuseirat, in the central Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

4 Arsa men held with firearms, grenades

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Armed Police Battalion (APBn) arrested four members of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) with firearms and grenades following a reported gunfight between Arsa and APBn members at a refugee camp in Ukhiya upazila of Cox's Bazar early yesterday.

Based on a tip-off, APBn-14 conducted a raid on a hill near Camp 20 extension and arrested them, said Additional Deputy Inspector General (Addl DIG) Mohammad Iqbal, commanding officer (CO) of the battalion.

The arrestees are Amir Hossain, 29, and Zaiur Rahman, 32, of Camp 17, Syedul Amin, 28, of Camp 4, and Md Harun, 30, of Camp 7, said the CO at a press briefing in the afternoon.

The arrestees are behind the recent killings in the

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