

## ARSA commander killed in 'gunfight'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A "gunfight" between an armed Rohingya group and police left an Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) commander dead in an Ukhiya camp of Cox's Bazar early yesterday.

The deceased, Abdul Monaf, 26, was a resident of Ghonarpara camp-19 where the gunfight took place around 4:30am, said police.

A foreign gun was recovered from the scene, said police, adding that Monaf was accused in several cases, including four for murder.

Superintendent of Police Fazle Rabbi, second-in-command of 8 Armed Police Battalion, said APBn members raided Ghonarpara camp acting on information that some criminals were staying in a house there.

As police reached the camp, criminals opened fire. Law enforcers shot back in retaliation, triggering the gunfight, he added.

At one stage, the criminals fled the area. A bullet-hit person was lying at the scene.

The injured, who was later identified as Monaf, was declared dead at Ukhiya Upazila Health Complex, Rabbi said.



**A worker drying vermicelli, a traditional delicacy during Eid, on the roof of a building at Chitrali Bazar of Khulna city's Kahlisapur yesterday. Demand for vermicelli goes up particularly during the two Eids. Many factories, however, disregard hygiene in the production process.**

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## 8 killed, 21 hurt in Russian strike on Ukraine

Says Zelensky; US unveils sweeping sanctions targeting Russia

AFP, Kyiv

President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday that a Russian strike on his home town in southern Ukraine had left eight people dead and wounded 21 more.

"A Russian missile attack on Kryvyi Rih. At the moment, 21 people are wounded and 8 are dead," he said in a statement on social media.

He posted video footage taken by emergency services at the scene showing rescue workers scouring debris for survivors, with smoke billowing from a destroyed building.

Zelensky in his post called on Ukraine's allies to step up deliveries of sophisticated aerial batteries to ward off Russian aerial attacks.

"Modern air defence systems can provide maximum protection for people, our cities and our positions. And we need them as much as possible," he wrote.

Meanwhile, the United States yesterday announced a raft of sanctions aimed at constraining Moscow's war in Ukraine while raising the stakes for foreign banks that still deal with Russia, ahead of G7 leaders' talks this week.

## It's humiliating

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continue ... We all were in the iron cage today [yesterday] throughout the entire period [hearing]. Although I was told to stay [outside the dock], I said that since everyone was standing [in the dock], I would also stay with them. I was in the iron cage [court dock] the entire time," he said.

Prof Yunus was speaking to reporters after a Dhaka court framed charges against him and 13 others in a case filed over misappropriation of about Tk 25.22 crore of Grameen Telecom Workers' Profit Participation Fund.

Prof Yunus and the others, now on bail, pleaded not guilty and demanded justice after Judge Syed Arafat Hossain of the Special Judge's Court-4 of Dhaka read out the charges.

Before that, the judge dismissed their petitions for discharging them from the charges. In an order, he said that the charges brought against Prof Yunus and others were primarily proved and thus charges were framed against them.

The court fixed July 15 for the start of the trial.

Emerging from the courtroom, Prof Yunus said, "I have raised the question before, and I am raising it again before everyone. Is it fair? Making an accused stand in an iron-cage against whom the trial is ongoing? I am not talking about my case.

"As far as I know, an accused is innocent until proven guilty. To me, it is very humiliating that an innocent person has to stand in an iron-cage during a hearing. It's very condemnable ... it shouldn't be applied to anybody," he said.

The microcredit pioneer urged everyone to raise their voice in this regard so that the matter is reviewed.

"Why would anything like this happen in a civilised country? Why would a citizen have to stand like an animal in a cage during a court hearing? The trial has not begun yet and there is no scope of getting convicted. I am raising this question as to why an innocent citizen was inside the cage."

Prof Yunus called upon the legal experts and those involved in the

judicial system to review whether there is any need for having such a provision or "we should follow what civilised countries do to be included in the list of civilised countries".

Replying to a journalist's query, Prof Yunus said, "I don't know if I have anything to do with words like 'money laundering', 'embezzlement', and 'fraud'. I never learnt those, nor did I do it. All of a sudden, these heavy words are being imposed on me ... This is something that neither I nor my colleagues can comprehend."

He went on to say, "We have spent our entire lives serving the people. We did not come here to embezzle money. We have come here spending our own money. This is our history. But we do not understand why we have to face harassment."

Referring to the charges brought against him, Prof Yunus said, "Use of words like I am a bloodsucker; a loan shark; an enemy of the state; I blocked the money for the Padma Bridge; and I am hatching conspiracies everywhere are instances of harassment. These words are being said time and again."

"We were forced out of the Grameen Bank. New stories are being written like this every year. These things have been continuing. And this is harassment," he added.

The 13 other accused are Grameen Telecom Managing Director Nazmul Islam, directors Ashraful Hassan, Naznin Sultana, Parvin Mahmud, M Shahjahan, Nurjahan Begum, and SM Huzzatul Islam Latif, Sramik-Karmachari Union President Kamruzzaman, General Secretary Firoz Mahmud Hasan, and representative Mainul Islam, Jatiya Workers Federation Office Secretary Kamrul Hasan, and lawyers Zafrul Hasan Sharif and Yusuf Ali.

On June 2, Anti-Corruption Commission's Public Prosecutor Mosharraf Hossain Kazol placed his arguments in favour of framing charges against the accused. Defence lawyers, including Abdullah-Al-Mamun and Mohammad Shaheenoor Islam, submitted their arguments before the court in favour of discharging the 14 accused, including Prof Yunus.

wife, and a daughter leased the land in 314 Suaolok Mouza of Bandarban Sadar from one Shahjahan, son of Abul Kashem of Moddhom Para village in Ward-2 (presently Ward-5).

The Daily Star correspondent visited Moddhom Para village and talked to several locals, who said they do not know anyone named Shahjahan.

Shahjahan getting the lease was mysterious, they said.

Headman Mong Thwaiching Chowdhury of 314 Suaolok Mouza said he does not know who Shahjahan was and how he got the lease.

Locals said Mong Wai Ching, president of Bandarban Swachhchasebak League, used to look after the land.

They said a fish and cattle farm was built there. There were 35 heads of cattle, but those were recently sold.

They claimed that Benazir used his influence to get his farm connected to the power grid and road network. A two-storey luxury farmhouse was also constructed there.

Asked about the land in Bandarban, Deputy Commissioner Shah Mujahid Uddin of the district said Benazir leased the land from a person. He declined to comment further.

A leased government land cannot be leased out to another person. It has to be returned to the government after the expiry of the lease. It could not be known whether the 75.8 bighas was khas land.

## Confiscate 8 flats

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The moveable properties include shares of Citizen Television Ltd and Tigerfit Apparels Ltd.

The court issued the order after ACC Deputy Director Md Hafizul Islam, also the enquiry officer, asked for the confiscation order.

The ACC yesterday told the court that the former IGP and his family members were trying to get the assets off their hands. If they could do that, the investigation would be hampered.

The ACC had earlier found that Benazir and his family bought at least 613.41 bighas of land in different districts, including 605.77 bighas in Gopalganj and Madaripur that belonged to the Hindu families.

The ACC told the court that Benazir stands accused of amassing illegal wealth worth hundreds of crores of taka at home and abroad. He resorted to abuse of power and corruption. The properties were registered in the names of Benazir, his wife, and three daughters.

Meanwhile, the court ordered the anti-graft body to appoint administrators to look after the confiscated assets located in Cox's Bazar, Gopalganj, Madaripur, Dhaka's Savar, and four flats in Gulshan.

**BANDARBAN FARM** Benazir leased 75.8 bighas in the hills of Bandarban from a man unknown to locals.

According to a document this newspaper obtained, Benazir, his

## Dhaka footpaths, a money-spinner

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"We often evict the hawkers, but they come back. The city corporation tried a lot to free Gulshan of hawkers. But it didn't work out," he said.

At Motijheel Shapla Chattar, shops on footpaths and roadsides operate even on weekends. Depending on the size of the space, the hawkers pay between Tk 100 and Tk 300 a day. Ahead of festivals, the amount goes up to Tk 400.

Locals say former councillor Mominul Haque Sayeed's men take the money from shops between Kamalapur Railway Station and the northern side of Bangladesh Bank.

Sayeed, popularly known as Casino Sayeed, could not be contacted over the phone.

In November 2019, the Anti-Corruption Commission sued him amid reports that he ran illegal casinos in the city.

Hawkers on the other streets of Motijheel pay local ruling party leaders and police informants, sources said.

Those who have shops between the

New Market and Elephant Road pay Tk 10,000-Tk 20,000 twice a year and Tk 150-Tk 300 every day.

Several hawkers said local Jubo League leader Golam Samiran was in control of the footpaths.

Samiran said the allegation was baseless.

ASM Ferdous Alam, councillor of Ward-18, said, "Political leaders in collusion with police extort the hawkers. I am not involved in such activities."

Aminul Islam, officer-in-charge of New Market Police Station, said, "We regularly evict the hawkers. We recently filed a case against extorters and we are investigating."

**FIVE LAKH HAWKERS IN CITY** According to Bangladesh Hawkers' Sangram Parishad, there are 5 lakh hawkers.

President of the association Abul Hossain said, "The authorities evict hawkers without rehabilitating them. If there was a proper policy and system, the government could have earned a significant amount of revenue from them."

He added that his organisation was not involved in collecting money from the footpath occupiers.

Arif Chowdhury, president of Jatiya Hawkers' Federation, said, "We request the mayors to issue ID cards to hawkers and collect fees."

In October 2016, the then mayor of Dhaka South City Corporation Saeed Khokon raided footpaths in Gulistan, Paltan, Fulbaria, and Motijheel areas for several days.

The initiative ended amid protests by hawkers. Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, the current mayor, took steps to fix a time and place for hawkers. But the steps did not work either.

Mayor Taposh said, "We are conducting our regular drives against the illegal occupancy and it will continue."

Kh Mahid Uddin, additional commissioner (crime) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said, "We have already taken steps to rid the footpaths of illegal occupants. It may not be possible overnight."



**Left, Footpaths in New Market occupied by hawkers. Right, No space for pedestrians' movements in Gulistan. Inset, Even construction work was not able to stop footpath occupancy in Motijheel. The photos were taken recently.**

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Traffic jam mars Eid journey north

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More people are expected to leave Dhaka this evening as it is the last working day for government employees until the Eid holidays end on Tuesday.

However, the Eid rush is likely to reach its peak on Saturday after the closure of garment factories, transport operators and police said.

Eid-ul-Azha will be celebrated in the country on Monday.

Bangladesh Railway started its special Eid service yesterday, but passengers had to suffer amid sweltering heat due to train delays.

Anwar Hossain went to Kamalapur Railway Station at 1:00pm to go to Chattogram by Chatatala Express. But the train did not leave the station until 3:45pm.

"Waiting for such a long time with children amid the intense heat is very difficult," he told The Daily Star.

Sylhet-bound Parabat Express left Dhaka two hours behind schedule while the departure of Jayantika Express, bound for the same destination, was delayed by an hour and 40 minutes.

Chattogram-bound Mohanagar Provati ran one and a half hours behind schedule while Rangpur-bound Rangpur Express left Dhaka 45 minutes late.

Chapainawabganj-bound Rajshahi

Commuter left Dhaka three and a half hours behind schedule while the departure of Chattogram-bound Karnaphuli Commuter was delayed by four and a half hours.

Rajshahi-bound Silkcity Express and Sylhet-bound Kalni Express were 30 minutes behind schedule.

Rajshahi-bound Modhumati Express was supposed to leave Dhaka at 3:00pm, but it did not depart until 3:45pm when this correspondent visited Kamalapur Railway Station.

Speaking to The Daily Star at 3:00pm, Masud Sarwar, Kamalapur station manager, said only two trains - Parabat Express and Mohanagar Provati Express - were behind schedule.

Asked about the long delays in services of mail and commuter trains, he said those delays should not be taken into consideration given the huge rush of home goers.

**ROADS** A huge pressure of vehicles lead to a 18-km tailback on Dhaka-Rangpur highway, stretching from the east end of Bangabandhu Bridge to Rasulpur, reports our Tanga correspondent citing police.

Police and transport workers said vehicles moved slowly on that part of the highway since midnight on Tuesday due to heavy traffic.

The tailback grew yesterday

morning. However, the situation became almost normal around noon.

Sajedur Rahman, in-charge at the highway police outpost in Elega, said the ongoing construction of the four-lane highway, stretching from the eastern end of the Bangabandhu Bridge to Elega, slowed down traffic.

He also blamed rush of vehicles and reckless driving at night for the traffic jam.

On Tuesday night, Dhaka-bound vehicles heading towards Bangabandhu Bridge were diverted to the Bhanpur Link Road, causing tailbacks on the link road as well.

The bridge authority said traffic pressure on the bridge was increasing. A total of 28,401 vehicles crossed the bridge in 24 hours preceding midnight on Wednesday and the authorities earned Tk 2.68 crores in toll.

Vehicles heading to 21 districts, including 16 in the north, use the highway and the bridge.

Meanwhile, many people left Dhaka by launches from Sadarghat Launch Terminal yesterday.

"The number of passengers has increased by 20 to 25 percent today [Wednesday] compared to other weekdays. The pressure of passengers will increase further from tomorrow [today]," Alamgir Kabir, joint director of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority, told this correspondent.

## Efforts on to arrest 15 fugitive

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Responding to another query of Laxmipur-1 MP Anwar Hossain Khan, the PM said, "Implementation of lightning strike prevention measures to prevent the loss of lives is underway in 15 districts, which are more prone to lightning strikes."

She added that under the proposed project, 6,793 lightning rods/lightning protection canopies would be installed. Answering a question from independent MP Abdullah Nahid Nigar, Hasina said that after the current government came to power, 56 cases were settled in the International Crimes Tribunal formed for the trial of crimes against humanity and war criminals and 153 accused got death penalties and other jail terms.

She said the present government is working relentlessly to establish the rule of law by ensuring fair trial to reduce suffering of the justice seekers.

In response to a question from Feni-1 MP Alauddin Ahmad Chowdhury, Hasina said Bangladesh Investment Development Authority has issued registration to 4,711 (4,130 local and 581 foreign) industrial projects between February 2019 and May this year.

The amount of proposed investment is Tk 28,30,537.85 million, which has created employment opportunities for 5,37,356 people.

From January 2022 to April this year, investment proposals of Tk 23,363 crore have been received from 43 countries. Between January 2022 and December last year, \$6,484.35 million have been received as Foreign Direct Investment, the premier added.

Hasina said an initiative has been taken to set up a state-of-the-art National Emergency Operation Centre with the cooperation of China on one acre of land in the capital's Tejigaon to deal with earthquakes and other calamities.

The implementation work will begin by formulating the project for this building that can withstand earthquakes measuring over 8 on the Richter scale, she said while responding to a query from AL MP Mainul Hossain Khan Nikhil.

## HC postpones

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observers of the annual general meeting and ensure that it is held in a transparent manner.

Today's NRBC Bank meeting was supposed to be held in person and virtually.

A group of sponsor shareholders sent a letter dated May 14, 2024, to BSEC asking it to ensure the AGM is held in a transparent manner, shareholders are present in person, and that they are not under duress.

The writ petition - filed by Sunahwar Ali, the son of the bank's sponsor shareholder Wajid Ali - alleged that the BSEC chairman failed to note the letter. The hybrid, in person and virtual, AGM meeting was approved by the BSEC.

In the writ petition, he alleged that a digital AGM allows for those present in person to gain undue advantage.

It alleged that the last 7 annual general meetings were purposely designed to limit the participation of the shareholders through digital platforms, and therefore the majority of the shareholders could not participate.

The HC order, passed by the bench of Justice Mustafa Zaman Islam and Justice SM Masud Hossain Dolon, directed all respondents of the writ, including the bank's current chairman Tamal SM Parvez, to show cause as to why they should not be instructed to hold a transparent AGM with full participation of all shareholders, where no one feels that they are under duress.

They were directed to respond within four weeks. The AGM was postponed till the end of the month.