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ARSON ATTACK 3 bodies found at shopping centre

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Three charred bodies were recovered from the second floor of Haji Ibrahim Shopping Centre in Shimrail area of Narayanganj yesterday.

Agitators torched the eight-storey building on Saturday during a clash with members of law enforcement agencies. The building was completely burnt.

The second floor of the building housed Shimrail Branch of Dutch Bangla Bank where several construction workers were working on its interior. When the clash broke out and the building was set on fire, all but the three of them were able to escape, said police.

Abu Bakar Siddique, officer-in-charge of Siddhirganj Police Station, said two injured workers, who were undergoing treatment at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, informed police that their three fellow workers got trapped in the building.

He said as the clash was going on, police and fire service personnel could not reach the building. Yesterday, locals went into the building and found the

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People throng the Desco office in the capital's Mirpur-1 yesterday to recharge their prepaid electricity meter cards. Thousands of electricity consumers are struggling to recharge their cards as the country has been without internet for the last four days. The photo was taken around noon.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

DEATHS DURING DEMO Judicial body to visit spots once situation calms down

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The judicial commission, formed to probe the deaths in violence centring the quota protests, will begin visiting the flashpoints of clashes as soon as the situation improves.

Led by Justice Khandaker Diliruzzaman, a High Court judge, the commission is now formulating its plan of action in order to properly conduct the inquiry into the violence, a source close to the commission told The Daily Star yesterday.

"The commission will work as per the relevant terms of condition," according to the source.

The source, however, did not clarify whether the commission will probe all deaths since the violence broke out or only the deaths of six people on July 16.

On July 18, Cabinet Secretary Md Mahbub Hossain issued a notification saying that the commission will learn the reasons behind the deaths of six persons

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IT, BPO firms staring at a bleak future

MAHMUDUL HASAN

The country's promising export-oriented IT firms and business process outsourcing (BPO) companies, which fetch close to \$1 billion a year, are fearing getting dropped by their foreign clients after abruptly going off the grid on Thursday night for the internet blackout.

The nature of their work needs them to provide services to their clients round-the-clock and also submit tasks within a strict timeframe.

Bangladesh's internet blackout from 9:00pm Thursday, which came without any warning, meant that the companies could not inform their clients of the impending service disruption.

"We have not been able to inform our clients of our current situation — even during the depths of the pandemic there was no service disruption," said Md Riajul Islam, chief executive officer of Bright River Bangladesh.

Bright River provides services to clients in 16 countries in North America and Europe and saw a bump in client intake following the pandemic as the firm proved itself to be a dependable service partner.

But now, due to this service disruption, the foreign clients will divert orders to other countries even if the rates are not as competitive as Bright River's.

"I don't know how many employees I have to say goodbye to now," Riajul said, while urging

the government to restore the internet service immediately and block social media if need be so that they can at least do some damage control.

Being without internet for even a day is disastrous for BZM Graphic, which does photo processing for e-commerce companies with 3-12 hours' deadline, according to its Managing Director Apel Mahmud Khan.

BZM mostly works as the production partner of Pixelz, which processes photos for 50,000 e-commerce platforms around the world.

"We have built this relationship with Pixelz over eight years of quality work with great reliability."

But now, this partnership is most definitely in jeopardy as BZM was not even able to ask the client to look for a temporary vendor.

"Our clients would not only be deserting our company but also our country. They may lose confidence in Bangladesh completely," Apel Mahmud added.

The daily financial losses to the IT industry due to the internet outage is about Tk 80 crore, said Russell T Ahmed, president of the Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services.

"If it continues longer, the overall image of Bangladesh as a reliable partner in IT services will be tarnished. The progress that Bangladesh made in digital services will also be on halt."

Supporting the government's move to stop the violence, he said a mechanism should be

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HQ of ex-Pak PM Imran's party raided

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan police raided the headquarters of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party yesterday, a week after the military-backed government vowed to ban the political movement.

An AFP journalist at the scene saw the headquarters of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) sealed off by police, who led a number of party workers into waiting vans.

Pakistani media initially reported party chairman Gohar Ali Khan, a barrister, was among those taken away.

However, an official at Islamabad Police, who asked not to be identified because he was not authorised to speak to the media, told AFP that they had not arrested him.

The official confirmed the arrest of Raoof Hassan, a founding member of the party and head of its press department.

"Raoof Hasan was arrested but the police did not arrest Gohar Ali Khan," the police official said.

The government's information minister said last week it would ban Khan's PTI, just days after the Supreme Court made a crucial ruling in the party's favour that dealt a huge blow to the government.

Candidates loyal to Khan won the most seats in February elections but were kept from power by an alliance of usually feuding parties, led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, with the key backing of the powerful military.

On the run for 4th time

Residents of Khan Yunus flee as Israel prepares offensive; 45 more killed in Gaza

AFP, Palestinian Territories

The Israeli military yesterday ordered Gaza civilians to leave the eastern part of Khan Yunis city, saying it was preparing to "forcefully operate" there after rockets were fired from an area designated as a humanitarian zone.

"Due to significant terrorist activity and rocket fire toward the state of Israel from the eastern part of the humanitarian area, remaining in this area has become dangerous," the military said in a statement.

In recent months the Israeli army has launched intense military operations in several areas of Gaza that were previously declared free of Hamas fighters.

Yesterday, it prepared to launch an operation in parts of Khan Yunis governorate, whose namesake city is the largest in the Palestinian territory's south.

Youssef Abu Taimah, from the town of Al-Qarara in Khan Yunis, told AFP yesterday that this evacuation order was the fourth time his family was displaced.

"We left amidst ongoing air and tank shelling, and drones firing shots," said the 27-year-old, who saw "injured and dead people transported by tuk-tuk (three-wheeled motorcycle) and

donkey cart to Nasser Hospital" on the way.

Abu Taimah said his family headed to the humanitarian area of Al-Mawasi, but found there was no space for them in the crowded makeshift encampment.

"We will stay on the street, and even the sidewalks are full of people and tents. We are tired and fed up. Enough of this displacement."

Ahmed al-Bayouk, a 53-year-old man from Khan Yunis, felt similar despair. "Al-Mawasi is packed with people. There is no empty space," said Bayouk, who was displaced for the third time, "each time harder than the last".

"We barely settle for a few days before the army comes, bombs, displaces us, and destroys more," he told AFP. "Where should we go? Every place is at risk of bombing."

According to the Gaza health ministry, more than 39,028 Palestinians have been killed in the Israeli military offensive in Gaza since October 7. The toll includes 45 deaths in 24 hours, reports Al Jazeera online.

Earlier this year the military had carried out a sweeping operation in Khan Yunis for months that saw swathes of the city reduced to rubble and tens of thousands of people displaced to a nearby humanitarian zone.

- » Heavy tank shelling reported in town of Al-Qarara
- » No space for displaced in crowded makeshift encampment
- » Gaza death toll rises to 39,028

WOMEN'S ASIA CUP Tigresses bounce back

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh bounced back from a first game defeat with a seven-wicket victory against Thailand in their Women's Asia Cup Group B match in Dambulla yesterday.

Young leg-spinner Rabeya Khan took four wickets for 14 runs as Bangladesh restricted Thailand to 96 for nine after being asked to bowl first. Opener Nattaya Boochatham scored innings-high 40 off 41 deliveries for the Thai women.

Bangladesh, who suffered a seven-wicket defeat against Sri Lanka on Saturday, romped to the victory target in 17.3 overs, thanks to a 55-ball 50 from opener Murshida Akter.

The Tigresses will play against Malaysia in their final group match tomorrow.

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Due to a lack of rain, a farmer couple resorts to irrigating their farmland to ensure the proper growth of the Aman seedlings they planted this season. The photo was taken in the Shaktipur village of Gaibandha's Gobindaganj upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHOBUJ

US PRESIDENTIAL RACE Biden exit offers scope, pitfalls for Democrats

AFP, Washington

Joe Biden's withdrawal from the US election offers Democrats the precious opportunity for a late reset in a campaign that was going badly — but ushers in an uncertain few weeks that will make or break their chances against Donald Trump.

Grassroots voters will hope to be better served than they were during the initial nomination race, when Democrats put up no serious competition to the 81-year-old president's candidacy despite worries over his age.

"Remarkable leadership shown by Joe Biden. Now it falls to the (Democrats) to show equal leadership by having an open process to determine the best candidate(s) to take on Trump-Vance in November," said entrepreneur Andrew Yang, who ran against Biden for the party's nomination in 2020.

"The goal should be simple — to win," he wrote on X.

With Biden's endorsement, Vice President Kamala Harris, 59, starts out

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