

J&K FIREFIGHTS

Indian soldier, suspected militant killed

AFP, Srinagar

Separate firefights in India's Jammu and Kashmir killed a soldier and a suspected militant near the disputed territory's militarised unofficial frontier with Pakistan, India's military said yesterday.

Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since their independence from British rule in 1947, and each side claims it in full.

The soldier was the 10th killed in the area this month following several deadly militant attacks on a southern Hindu-dominated part of the otherwise Muslim-majority region.

He died after a clash with a group of militants attempting to cross over the Line of Control from the Pakistan side at Poonch early on Tuesday morning, the Indian military's White Knight Corps said in a post on social media platform X.

The army offered its "deepest condolences" to the slain soldier's family.

SOUTHERN PAKISTAN

Over 100,000 schools remain closed due to extreme heat

AFP, Karachi

School summer holidays will be extended by two weeks in southern Pakistan because of high temperatures, affecting more than 100,000 schools, an education official said Tuesday.

Pakistan is increasingly vulnerable to extreme weather conditions resulting from climate change, including heatwaves that are hotter and more frequent and monsoons that are heavier and longer.

"We decided to close schools for an additional 14 days for the children's well being," Atif Vighio, a spokesperson at the education department in Sindh province, told AFP.

Planned power cuts, also known as load shedding, happen frequently in Pakistan due to an ongoing power supply crisis.

The load-shedding varies from city to city, but in rural areas of Sindh they can last for more than 12 hours a day, leaving schools without fans.



Migrants of different nationalities walk along a road in a caravan towards the US, in Tapachula, Chiapas state, Mexico on Tuesday. Thousands of migrants fleeing violence and poverty travel across Mexico every year for the US border.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Israel carries out new raids in Gaza

55 more Palestinians killed; thousands forced to head west of Khan Younis to seek shelter

REUTERS, Gaza

Israeli forces carried out new raids in the Gaza Strip yesterday, hours before Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was due to address the US Congress.

The latest Israeli attacks destroyed homes in towns east of Khan Younis in southern Gaza and thousands of people were forced to head west to seek shelter, residents said.

The Palestinian Civil Emergency Service said it had received distress calls from residents trapped in their homes in Bani Shuhaila, east of Khan Younis, but were unable to reach the town.

Israel's military, which is trying to eradicate the Hamas, said it had been operating in areas from which fighters had been able to fire rockets into Israel and attack Israeli troops.

Gaza health officials said Israeli military strikes in the past 24 hours had killed at least 55 people, the latest casualties in an offensive that health authorities in the enclave say has killed at least 39,145 Palestinians.

"Where should we go? Shall we cross into the

sea?" said Ghada, who has been displaced with her family six times during the offensive, said from Hamas City in northwestern Khan Younis.

"We are exhausted, starved, and want the offensive to end now, now not an hour later. Every day means more families are wiped off the registration book," she told Reuters via a chat app.

Local residents said they had been ordered to head west towards a designated humanitarian area, but that the area was now unsafe.

Israeli forces also carried out airstrikes on several areas of central and northern Gaza Strip, killing and wounding several Palestinians, health officials said.

Residents of Rafah, near the border with Egypt, said Israeli forces had blown up several houses in the west of the city.

Some Palestinians who gathered at a hospital in Khan Younis before funerals criticised the US for welcoming Netanyahu.

The Israel leader was due to address Congress later yesterday and to meet President Joe Biden at White House today. Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump said he would meet Netanyahu in Florida tomorrow.



Asean seeks to tackle Myanmar crisis

REUTERS

The Southeast Asian bloc Asean met in Laos yesterday as it seeks to advance a stalled bid to resolve a crisis in Myanmar and cool tensions in the South China Sea, days ahead of a gathering of top diplomats from the world's biggest powers.

The meeting of the foreign ministers from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations will be followed by two summits in Laos on Saturday set to address key global issues that will be attended by officials from the US, EU, Japan, China, Russia and more.

Asean's foreign ministers will discuss so far fruitless efforts to end a conflict that has morphed into a civil war in Myanmar.

UAE did not impose restrictions

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including a metro rail station in Mirpur, Setu Bhaban, Sarak Bhaban, health directorate building, and BTV Bhaban, that were vandalised or torched during the last week's violence centring the quota reform protests.

Representatives from the 49 foreign missions in Dhaka, including 23 ambassadors, visited the sites. The foreign minister led them.

Hasan said arrests were also made in some Middle Eastern countries, including in Saudi Arabia, over demonstrations.

Asked if Bangladesh would raise the issue before the UAE or Saudi Arabia, the minister said the expatriates were punished under their domestic law.

He said some Bangladeshis held protest rallies in front of Bangladeshi missions abroad and Pakistani citizens were also involved in those programmes.

"We have specific information on this."

About the diplomats' visit to the affected sites, the foreign minister said the envoys were shocked at the level of destruction. "They said they are with us."

"We had a plan to take them to some other places like the Data Centre. But due to traffic congestion and rain, we could not go there."

He said that many who were involved in arson attacks in 2014-15 were punished, but some others came out of jail due to legal loopholes.

"This time we are very tough. The prime minister said it. There are video clips of all those who attacked the BTB Bhaban. We are committed to take action against each of them."

Asked if there was any failure on the part of the law enforcers and intelligence agencies and if the government would probe the failure, Hasan said the army and law enforcement agencies are working and peace is being established now.



Foreign diplomats visiting a damaged room of BTB Bhaban in the capital's Rampura yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

"When I went to the BTB, I asked them how it happened. They said police had no permission to open fire that day...."

"If the police had the permission to shoot, the BTB Bhaban would not have been damaged. There are a few other factors."

On the UN's concerns of using UN-marked vehicles by the law enforcers during the violence last week, the minister said those vehicles belonged to Bangladesh and were rented out to the UN missions.

"However, the UN logos were not erased mistakenly. Those have been erased now," he said.

Sramik League leader

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unidentified person of torching two BRTC buses on Saturday night.

After scrutinising the CCTV footage of the area, police first held Soheli Rana on Monday. After his confession during primary interrogation, police arrested Didar the same day. The duo was presented before the court on Tuesday evening.

Speaking to The Daily Star on Tuesday, Anwar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Hathazari Model Police Station, said, "Didar, the Sramik League president in Baizid Bostami thana, took the opportunity during the countrywide unrest triggered by the

quota reform movement, and ordered his aide Soheli to torch the buses inside the depot."

In his confessional statement, Soheli said Didar offered to pay him Tk 4 lakh if he torched five buses and had given him an advance payment of Tk 500.

Soheli added that he was able to set two buses on fire as the security guards sensed his presence before he could torch the rest.

Hathazari police Sub-Inspector Rahmat Ullah, also the investigating officer of the case, told The Daily Star, "Soheli admitted to his crime before the magistrate saying Didar paid him Tk 500 advance money to torch the

vehicles... We will place a remand prayer before the court for Didar in this regard today."

Police and BRTC sources said Didar used to rent BRTC buses on contract from the depot. However, due to some incidents of irregularities, BRTC cancelled his contract and stopped supplying the vehicles to him, which infuriated him.

According to OC Anwar, Didar was accused in a murder case in 2022.

Court sources said the case is now under trial and according to the charge sheet, the victim Abdul Halim Rubel was stabbed to death by Didar and others over a feud over the appointment of BRTC bus officials.

How it all unfolded

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Outside, around 15 motorcycles and private vehicles were set on fire.

Nazimur Rahman, the guard of the jail building's main gate, said, "When the main gate was being broken down with hammers, we tried to block it with sacks and tables but we failed. No one was helping us. We couldn't prepare the weapons we had to use in time and each of their lockers were locked. The miscreants looted them after breaking in."

Md Abul Kalam Azad, a jail superintendent who was suspended after the incident, said, "There are only 104 personnel working in three shifts. We repeatedly sought the police's help but they arrived at the scene around 10:00pm.

If they had assisted us in time, this situation might not have been created."

Narsingdi District Commissioner Dr Badul Alam told The Daily Star, "Jail super Abul Kamal Azad and Jailer Kamrul Islam have been temporarily suspended for negligence. Such a heinous incident has never occurred in the subcontinent before. Those responsible will be brought to book."

Meanwhile, 348 inmates, who had escaped or were forced to, surrendered to a court and police since the incident. Of them 155 surrendered yesterday.

"The escapee inmates who surrendered are being housed in various district jails. We are trying to repair the damages in the district jail to rehabilitate them."

Narsingdi Superintendent of Police Mohammad Mostafizur Rahman said, "102 people [suspected to be linked to the incident] have been arrested, while 39 out of 85 weapons, and 1,085 rounds of ammunition have been recovered. Efforts are on to arrest the rest."

"Four separate cases have been filed for obstructing government work, attempting to kill police officers, attacking the jail to free inmates, and looting weapons."

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, Army Chief Waker-Uz Zaman, and Inspector General of Police Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, along with other senior officials, have already visited the district jail.

'Mockery of justice'

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the fairness of the judicial proceedings and amounts to an unfair trial, said the New York-based global rights watchdog.

"There is no way defendants can receive a fair trial when the investigation was launched and completed, trial commenced, and verdict rendered in less than 48 hours. These sentences make a mockery of justice and Emirati authorities should immediately release all those sentenced for peacefully protesting in solidarity," said Joey Shea, UAE researcher at the HRW.

Human Rights Watch verified six videos of the protests posted to TikTok

and X (formerly known as Twitter) on July 19 or the days following. The videos, filmed in the evening, show peaceful protesters chanting and marching down streets across the UAE, including Abu Dhabi, Ajman and in two areas in Dubai: Al Satwa and Downtown Dubai.

From these videos and the others analysed by HRW, none of the protesters were engaging in violent acts or using language to incite violence in their chants.

The Bangladeshi authorities, especially the mission in the UAE, should call on the Emirati authorities to release the 57 detained, HRW said.

The UAE-based migrant workers from climate-vulnerable countries like Bangladesh are exposed to escalating climate risks, especially when working in the UAE's extreme heat without adequate protection.

Workers – who are unable to protest these horrific labour conditions due to the abusive kafala system, the ban on trade unions and restricted freedom of speech and assembly – are being convicted unfairly for peacefully protesting for a cause unrelated to the UAE, HRW added.

Protests and demonstrations are fully prohibited in the UAE.

Broadband restored

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"Social media platforms, especially Facebook and YouTube, haven't been complying with Bangladesh's laws. They're also not taking into account the situation on the ground, violating their policy guidelines... Amid this, who will take the risk [of opening the social media platforms]?"

He said the government will send letters to the platforms seeking explanations as to why they are not complying with orders. These platforms' reopening will be considered once they promise to comply, he added.

While the government and the BTRC claimed that the internet shutdown occurred due to an attack on the data centres in the capital's Mohakhali, the sources said the outage was ordered by

the government.

The Daily Star has visited the data centres in question and found no sign of damage to the building that housed them. Officials of these data centres also confirmed that the fire did not reach their offices.

However, they said the fire that partially burnt the adjacent building of the Department of Disaster Management (DDM) damaged several overhead cables connected to the centres.

On July 17, after the government ordered the shutdown of mobile internet, Palak had said the decision was made in light of the current unrest in the country and to stop the spread of fake news on social media.

On July 18, Gramophone said the

'I apprehended such an attack'

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and killings before and after the 2014 general election. Hundreds of people were killed and thousands injured at that time.

"I did not want to see any incident that might lead to an unwanted situation in the country. Their target was to destroy the country's economy."

She questioned the understanding of those people who supported the recent mayhem.

Hasina, also the Awami League president, said that the only aim of the vested quarter is to harm the country's independence and halt the continuation of democracy.

She said that she never wanted to deploy army personnel. "We called in the army after they [students] declared that they were not involved in subversive activities."

The PM also said she did not want to impose curfew as the country has been seeing a democratic environment for 15 years.

She requested the people to resist those who have caused harm to the country.

"They have destroyed all the structures built to ensure the welfare of the people Who will be the worst sufferer? Of course the mass people.

Now it is the responsibility of the mass people to resist terrorism and militancy."

Hasina said that the targets of the recent violence were the AL, freedom fighters, and pro-liberation forces.

She questioned why the students gave the scope to the militants for carrying out heinous activities even though all their demands were met.

Speaking at the meeting, editors and senior journalists demanded the perpetrators of the recent violence be punished.

They wondered whether there was any failure in executing the intelligence report to thwart the mayhem unleashed by the BNP Jamaat in the name of the quota-reform movement by students.

They stressed the need for strengthening the AL, evaluating the activities of the public representatives alongside and taking effective measures to attract more meritorious students to Chhatra League.

PM's Press Secretary M Nayeemul Islam Khan moderated the programme.

Editors' Guild President Mozammel Babu, senior journalist Abed Khan, Bangladesh Pratidin Editor Nayeem Nizam, DBC TV CEO Monzurul Islam, Bhorer Kagoj Editor Shymol Dutta, Jugantor Editor Saiful Alam, Jatiya Press

government had temporarily stopped the mobile internet services in the country due to the unrest.

"We're dependent on the authorities to restart the mobile internet services. We're in constant communication with the authorities in this regard," said a statement.

The same day, the fire at the Mohakhali's Department of Disaster Management occurred.

Around 8:00pm, officials of the Internet Service Providers Association of Bangladesh, said the fire may cut 30-40 percent of bandwidth supply, leaving some users disconnected and many with slow internet.

But around 9:00pm on July 18, entire Bangladesh was without internet.

Club President Farida Yasmin, Dhaka Journal Chief Editor Syed Istiaque Reza, Head of News of Nagorik TV Dip Azad, Amader Somoy Editor Mainul Alam, Bangladesh Journal Editor Shajahan Sarder, DBC News Editor Zayedul Ahsan Pintu, Ashish Saikat of Independent TV, Bangla Tribune Editor Zulfiquer Russell, Ekattor TV Head of News Shakil Ahmed, Editor of Energy and Power Mollah Amzad, Head of News of Kings News Nazmul Huq Saikat and Mamunur Rahman Khan of RTV were present.

Judicial body

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commission) was issued. Till now, the issues of the six people have been stated [in the terms of reference]," he said.

Responding to a query about the inquiry into other deaths, Justice Diliruzzaman said legal steps will certainly be taken in this regard.

According to The Daily Star reports, at least 154 people have died across the country in violence since July 16.

Justice Diliruzzaman said the commission's first meeting was held yesterday and hoped that it could complete the probe within the stipulated time (30 working days).