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Insecurity grips city as many police stations deserted

Firearms, ammunition looted from several stations in city, elsewhere

SHARIFUL ISLAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

With many police stations unmanned and arms and ammunition looted, there is a sense of serious insecurity among people in the capital and elsewhere in the country.

During a wave of violent mob attacks, many police stations were vandalised and set on fire after former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's resignation and departure on Monday.

These correspondents saw Mirpur and Pallabi police stations, from where arms and ammunition were looted, being guarded by students yesterday afternoon.

The buildings that were set on fire the night before resembled skeletal remains, completely stripped bare.

At Mirpur Police Station yesterday afternoon, this correspondent saw that the collapsible gates were bent out of shape and shards of broken glass littered the floors of the ransacked rooms of the two-storey building. A coat of soot and ash covered the charred furniture, and the air was still hot from the fire.

Around a dozen students guarding the police station put a bamboo fence at the main gate. There were several burned vehicles, motorcycles, and a riot vehicle on the premises.

The students said they found a shotgun behind the building. They also recovered a grenade, two broken firearms, ammunition, and a wireless radio, and requested that these correspondents to inform the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



People looking at the damage done to Jatrabari Police Station, a day after a mob set it on fire. Several vehicles, furniture and valuables were burnt in the arson attack. There were no law enforcers at the facility yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Md Mainul Islam is now IGP

Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun's contract cancelled



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Md Mainul Islam has been appointed as the Inspector General of Bangladesh Police (IGP). He was the commandant of the Traffic and Driving School.

The Public Security Division of the home ministry announced his appointment in a circular issued last night.

Mainul Islam, 58, began his police career in Jan
SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

Attacks on Hindu houses, temples, businesses go on

STAR REPORT

Within the first day and a half since the fall of Sheikh Hasina-led government, the country witnessed a spate of violence, specifically targeting Hindu homes and places of worship across multiple districts as law and order is yet to be restored.

In the absence of law enforcers, attacks on Hindus have flared unprovoked in many communities since Monday.

In Dhaka's Dhanmondi, the home of band Joler Gaan's frontman Rahul Ananda was set on fire and burnt to the ground on Monday.

"As soon as they broke down the gate, they started ravaging the house, taking whatever they could find for themselves. They took everything -- from furniture and mirrors to valuables. After that, they torched the whole house along with Rahul da's musical instruments," a close family source of Rahul told The Daily Star.

The home was nearly 140 years old, according to an earlier report of this newspaper.

Rahul and his family managed to flee to safety.

Later that same day, the Dhanuka Manasa Bari temple in Shariatpur was ransacked by an angry mob. They crushed the idols of Radha-Krishna and razed the temple to the ground. They also damaged all 16 CCTV cameras installed inside the temple premises.

Gobindo Chakrabarty, the temple committee's general secretary, said, "After attacking the temple, they surrounded our homes and were going to attack us. The army intervened and saved us."

Also on Monday, the Dinajpur Centre Cremation yard was vandalised, said Sunil Chakraborty, president of Dinajpur Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikya Parishad.

Besides, five temples, including a Kali temple, in the district's Parbatipur upazila were attacked.

The homes of some Hindu families came under attack in Chirribandar upazila. A place designated for Harisobha

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

Rights bodies voice concern over looting, arson attacks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rights bodies have expressed grave concerns over widespread violence, arson, looting, and vandalism following the resignation of Sheikh Hasina on Monday.

Condemning the attacks, they urged everyone to refrain from violence and act with patience.

They also called on the authorities to take appropriate steps to maintain peace and order.

In a press statement, the Human Rights Forum Bangladesh urged the authorities to take a responsible role in protecting the lives and properties of people, especially those of minority communities.

They highlighted heinous incidents such as vandalism of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's mural, arson at the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum, and attacks on the residences of the chief justice and other judges.

The rights body also noted attacks on police stations, administrative buildings, media outlets,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

US working 'round the clock' to avert Middle East war

Says Blinken as Israel remains high alert for potential Iranian retaliation

AGENCIES

The United States said it was working "round the clock" to avert an all-out war in the Middle East, as Israel remained on high alert yesterday for potential Iranian retaliation for two high-profile killings.

US President Joe Biden, whose country has sent extra warships and fighter jets to the region in support of Israel, held crisis talks on Monday evening with his national security team.

Biden and his top diplomat Antony Blinken sought to calm tensions that have soared since a suspected Israeli attack in Tehran last Wednesday killed Ismail Haniyeh, the political leader of Palestinian group Hamas.

Biden called King Abdullah II of Jordan, which helped down Iranian drones and missiles in an attack on Israel in April, while Blinken called top officials in Qatar and Egypt, the key intermediaries seeking a ceasefire in the 10-month Israeli offensive in Gaza.

"We are engaged in intense diplomacy, pretty much around the

clock, with a very simple message -- all parties must refrain from escalation," Blinken said after joining other top officials in a White House meeting.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian hit out on Monday at what he called the "criminal acts" of Israel "against the oppressed and defenceless people of Gaza" as well as Haniyeh's killing.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is in no way seeking to expand the scope of war and crisis in the region, but this regime will definitely receive the response for its crimes and arrogance," Pezeshkian said during talks with a senior visiting Russian official, according to the official news agency IRNA.

Yesterday, five Hezbollah fighters were killed in an Israel strike on southern Lebanon, according to a security source. Israeli warplanes flew low over the Lebanese capital Beirut, with witnesses saying they could see the planes with the naked eye and creating one of the largest sonic booms heard by residents in years, reports AFP.



Interim govt must prioritise human rights

Says Amnesty

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Human rights group Amnesty International yesterday said any interim government, which will be formed after the ouster of Sheikh Hasina-led government, must prioritise human rights and not repeat the mistakes of the past.

"The first order of business for any interim government should be to ensure protection of people's right to life, right to free speech and peaceful assembly and to find ways of de-escalating any potential for further violence," said Smriti Singh, Amnesty International's regional director for South Asia, in a statement.

Any measures proposed to move forward from this deadly chapter in Bangladesh's history need to be rooted in the principles of justice, accountability and non-recurrence, she said.

"The human rights violations in the last three weeks that have led to the death of more than 300 people, with thousands injured and arbitrarily arrested, should be independently and impartially investigated in a transparent manner," said the regional director.

"We again call for the establishment of a prompt, independent and impartial investigation into the deaths and injuries resulting from the protests. Those found responsible must be held accountable and the victims of the violence should receive full reparations from the state, which includes compensation, rehabilitation and guarantees of non-repetition."

"It's an opportune moment for any new interim government in Bangladesh to show solidarity with its people, protect the most vulnerable, and not repeat the mistakes of the past."

Sons of Ghulam Azam and Mir Qasem released

DGFI to update on victims of enforced disappearance today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) said it would share an update today on the victims of enforced disappearance at the facility known as "Aynaghor".

This was conveyed at a meeting between human rights advocates and Brig Gen Tamjidul Haque, director of the Signals Intelligence Bureau of DGFI.

UN Resident Coordinator Gwyn Lewis; Mayer Daak cofounder Sanjida Islam Tulee; Senior Human Rights Adviser to UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Bangladesh Huma Khan; prominent photojournalist Shahidul Alam; women's rights leader Shireen Huq; and Vice-chair of Forum Asia Taskin Fahmina went to the DGFI headquarters yesterday morning.

At the meeting, they demanded access to the detention facility, alleged to be located inside the DGFI premises, and victims of enforced disappearances be set free.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4



Families of the victims of enforced disappearances yesterday in front of the DGFI headquarters holding the photos of their loved ones.

PHOTO: STAR

UN, US, Canada, EU want democratic transition of power

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The UN, US, Canada and the EU have called for democratic transition of power and immediate actions to restore law and order in Bangladesh.

In separate statements, they also emphasised on ending vandalism and violence against the minorities and vengeance attacks, while also holding accountable those responsible for the killing of hundreds and injuring of thousands of people.

"The transition [of power] must be conducted in a transparent and accountable way, and be inclusive and open to the meaningful participation of all Bangladeshis," said Volker Türk, the UN Human Rights chief, on Monday following the resignation and fleeing of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India.

It is vital the transition of power in Bangladesh is peaceful and guided by human rights, in line with the country's international obligations quickly and that all emergency measures must be strictly limited in accordance with international law, he said.

"Everyone arbitrarily detained must be released, and all those responsible for human rights violations must be held to account," he said, adding that underlying issues and grievances must be addressed.

Türk reiterated his calls for a comprehensive, impartial and transparent investigation into all alleged human rights violations since July.

"In the current circumstances, and to ensure public confidence, an investigation should be conducted
SEE PAGE 10 COL 1