

KURSK REGION

Russian forces destroy Ukraine unit

Repel 12 missiles targeting Crimea bridge

AGENCIES

Russian forces destroyed a Ukrainian reconnaissance and sabotage unit that was armed with weapons from Nato countries in Russia's western Kursk region, the RIA state-run media agency reported yesterday, citing unidentified security sources.

"Samples of small arms manufactured by the United States and Sweden have been seized at the liquidation site of a Ukrainian sabotage group near the village of



Smoke rises above the burning shopping mall Galaktika hit by shelling, which local Russian-installed authorities called a Ukrainian military strike, in Donetsk, Ukraine yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Kursk attack will force Russia to start 'fair' peace talks, says Zelensky aide

Kremyanoe in the Kursk region," RIA cited a Russian security official as saying.

Russian troops seized a Swedish-made Automatic Carbine 5 assault rifle as well as a US-made M4 carbine assault rifle and M2 Browning machine gun, RIA cited the official as saying.

Russia has been battling Ukrainian forces in Kursk since August 6, when Kyiv launched a lightning incursion in the largest attack on sovereign Russian territory since World War Two, reports Reuters.

A Ukrainian presidential adviser said yesterday that Kyiv's cross-border incursion into Russia's Kursk region was required to convince Moscow to start "fair" peace talks.

Meanwhile, Russia said yesterday that it had repelled a night-time attack using 12 US-made missiles on the landmark Crimea bridge built on the orders of President Vladimir Putin after Moscow annexed the peninsula.

ISRAEL'S MONTHS-LONG OFFENSIVE

Gaza's undertakers stack 'graves on top of graves'

AFP, Deir el Balah

Undertakers are working like bricklayers in a Gaza cemetery, piling cinder blocks into tight rectangles, side by side, for freshly dug graves.

More than 10 months into the Gaza offensive, so many bodies are arriving at the cemetery in Deir el Balah that the men, working in the hot sun, hardly have space to bury them.

"The cemetery is so full that we now dig graves on top of other graves, and we've piled the dead in levels," says Saadi Hassan Barakeh, leading his team of gravediggers.

Barakeh, 63, has been burying the dead for 28 years. In "all the wars in Gaza", he says he has "never seen this". Previously, Barakeh also oversaw burials at the nearby Ansar cemetery, which covers 3.5 hectares.

But now "the Ansar cemetery is completely full. There were too many dead", he says, his clothes smeared in dirt from digging graves.

He now handles just the Al-Soueid cemetery, with its 5.5 hectares of graves.

Yet even with one cemetery instead of two, he works "every day, from six in the morning to six in the evening".

"Before the offensive, we had one or two funerals per week, maximum five," he says, wearing a white prayer cap that matches his long beard.

"Now, there are weeks when I bury 200 to 300 people. It's unbelievable."

Gaza's death toll of just over 40,000 in more than 10 months of offensive, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry, is straining its people as well as its cemeteries.

Barakeh bears daily witness to the tragedies. Hoe in hand, he gives encouragement to his 12 workers as they prepare and close dozens of graves every day.

At night, however, some images are hard to forget. "I can't sleep after seeing so many mangled children's bodies and dead women," he said, adding: "I buried 47 women from one family."

"I buried a lot of women and children, and only two or three guys from Hamas,"

says Barakeh.

If Israelis "have a problem with (Yahya) Sinwar, why do they harm children?" he adds, referring to the alleged October 7 attacks mastermind who is now Hamas's overall leader. "Let them kill Sinwar and all the others, but why the women and children?"

Mounds of freshly dug soil are reminders of recent burials. Graves with white headstones fill nearly all the available space, while men dig new holes in the few vacant areas.

The team forms a human chain to carry the cinder blocks, whose price has soared since Gaza's factories closed due to a lack of fuel and raw materials.

"One shekel (\$0.27) before the war, 10 or 12 today," he lamented.

Besides gravediggers and the workers carrying cinder blocks, hardly anyone comes to funerals anymore, Barakeh says.

High above his head, the constant hum of an Israeli surveillance drone serves as a reminder of the aerial threat creating a steady stream of bodies.

Cementing

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who chairs a committee tasked with liaising between the government and social groups such as teachers and activists, said, "Right now we have no interest in forming a political party. Our focus for the time being is solidifying the mass uprising and assisting the government to sustain and consolidate."

Earlier in the afternoon, Reuters, quoting Mahfuj, reported that the student leaders were discussing the formation of a political party to end the duopoly of Hasina's Awami League or the Bangladesh Nationalist Party of her rival Khaleda Zia.

This newspaper also talked to Nasir Abdullah, another member of the liaison committee, who said, "We will reach out to people from all walks of life. If the people of Bangladesh think that something new is required, then it will happen."

He also said there would be propositions from their end to the people, adding, "If we want to end the chaos that had been prevailing post-independence, we have to start afresh and dream of a new Bangladesh."

Hasnat Abdullah, another key coordinator of the platform, told this newspaper that they do not have any plans to form a political party as of now.

"The time for discussing the formation of our own political party has not yet come. We are now busy with those who are now in the hospitals after being injured in the protests," Hasnat told The Daily Star.

Hasina, Quader

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that AL men killed his brother after getting orders from Hasina and Quader.

As of yesterday, Hasina was facing a total of eight cases, including five for murder, one for abduction, and two filed with the International Crimes Tribunal for crimes against humanity and genocide.

Pakistan

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Sweden's Public Health Agency told AFP on Thursday that it had registered a case of the Clade 1b subclade – the same new strain that has surged in the DRC since September 2023, and the first such infection outside the African continent, according to the agency.

The patient was infected during a visit to "the part of Africa where there is a major outbreak of mpox Clade 1", epidemiologist Magnus Gisslen said in a statement from the agency.

The mpox strain that caused the case in Pakistan was not immediately known yesterday, the Ministry of Health said in a statement. "The affected person has come from a Gulf country," the statement said.

It's violation of human rights: Sarjis

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Sarjis termed the incidents in different parts of Dhaka, including Dhanmondi 32, as "unexpected" and said these do not go with the "spirit of the mass uprising".

"In a viral video, we saw that a person of my father's age was made to perform squats while holding his ears; a person of my father's age was stripped; the phones of many people were checked; a woman of my mother's age was beaten up; and we witnessed various incidents of attacks on our journalist brothers and sisters," Sarjis said.

"Our uprising was against corruption and oppression. We want a Bangladesh where everyone will be able to speak, express their opinion, and work according to whatever ideology they believe in.

"We saw several such incidents where the students were involved. We do not know which ideology they hold, nor can we define them," Sarjis said.

The leaders of the platform sat on Thursday night and took two decisions, according to Sarjis.

The first decision was to expel any coordinator or co-coordinator from their team if they were found to be

involved in Thursday's incidents.

Their second decision was to take whatever step was necessary as a "pressure group" to ensure legal steps against those involved in the incidents. Justice will be ensured through the two coordinators in the interim government.

"Those, who carried out incidents like stripping people or assaulting them, violated human rights. These incidents are not legitimate by any means," Sarjis said.

Speaking of the history of Bangladesh, Sarjis said the contribution of some people is undeniable and each of them should be remembered for their contribution.

"No one can be belittled deliberately for political purposes. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman should be given the respect he deserves; Similarly, Ziaur Rahman should be given the respect he deserves," he said.

PRESSURE GROUP, NOT AUTHORITY
Sarjis made it clear to the students that the Movement, which led the uprising that replaced the government of Bangabandhu's daughter Sheikh Hasina with an interim administration headed by Professor Muhammad Yunus, was "not an authority, but a

pressure group".

"Our clear message is that where the police, traffic police and other law-enforcing agencies come to, the students should hand over their responsibility and leave. They must go back to their educational institutions and classes," he said.

"The Anti-Discrimination Student Movement does not promote anything like searching hostels and hotels or forcing a professor to step down. We are not an authority. We are a pressure group. We can demand the removal of corrupt or power-abusing people, but we cannot force them to do it [resign]."

Sarjis alleged a large group of people have become fake coordinators or co-coordinators of the movement.

"We have even received information that a committee [of the movement] was formed in Uttara Sector 12. They went to a mosque and asked its governing body to resign.

"But we only gave committees in universities and other educational institutions. These people [fake coordinators] are doing things to fulfil personal and political objectives. We will decide on this platform after the interim government becomes stable."

Sacked army officer Ziaul arrested

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investment adviser to former premier Sheikh Hasina, and ex-law minister Anisul Huq were also placed on a 10-day remand in the same case on Wednesday, a day after they were arrested in Dhaka's Sadarghat area.

Ziaul, former director general of the National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre (NTMC), an intelligence agency under the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence, was arrested based on secret information, according to a Whatsapp message from the Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Later in another message, DMP said Ziaul was handed over to police on Thursday night after he went to the army for shelter. He was later arrested.

NTMC is responsible for monitoring, collecting, and recording information and communication data as well as for the interception of electronic communication such as phone calls, emails, and social media accounts.

Ziaul was detained in a dramatic circumstance around midnight on August 7 after the plane on which he was fleeing was brought back from the Dhaka airport runway to the

boarding bridge, sources said earlier.

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COLLEAGUE'S MURDER

Indian doctors step up protests

Call for work stoppage

AFP, Kolkata

Indian doctors stepped up nationwide protests and strikes yesterday after the rape and murder of a colleague, a brutal killing that has focused outrage on the chronic issue of violence against women.

The discovery of the 31-year-old's bloodied body on August 9 at a state-run hospital in the eastern city of Kolkata sparked nationwide protests.

In Kolkata, hundreds of doctors and other healthcare workers gathered demanding action, with protests also held yesterday in the capital New Delhi, and Nangpur in Maharashtra state.

"We want justice", doctors chanted in Kolkata, waving handwritten signs that read: "No safety, no service!" The Indian Medical Association has called for a "nationwide withdrawal of services" for 24 hours starting today, with suspension of all medical procedures at private hospitals.

India's Kashmir to vote in polls from Sept 18

REUTERS, New Delhi

India will hold provincial elections in the Himalayan territory of Jammu and Kashmir from September 18, the Election Commission said yesterday, the first regional polls there in a decade and five years after New Delhi scrapped the region's special autonomy.

India's only Muslim-majority region, Jammu and Kashmir has been at the heart of more than 75 years of animosity with neighbouring Pakistan since the birth of the two nations in 1947 at independence from colonial rule by Britain.

The larger Kashmir region is divided between India, Pakistan and China. The part ruled by India enjoyed a special status that was revoked by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government in 2019 and the state was split into two federally-administered territories. The decision to hold fresh elections follows a December order by India's Supreme Court that rejected petitions challenging the revocation of Kashmir's special status and set a deadline of September 30 for holding provincial polls.

Nearly 9 million people are registered to vote for the 90-member legislative assembly, the election panel said. Voting will be staggered over three stages between September 18 and October 1.

Law enforcers used

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further intensifying the violence. In some cases, the security forces were reported to have employed vehicles and helicopters that bore the logo of the UN.

The number of reported killings in revenge attacks since that time still remains to be determined. Those killed include protesters, bystanders, journalists covering the events and a number of members of the security force, the OHCHR said.

"Thousands of protesters and bystanders have been injured, with hospitals overwhelmed by the influx of patients."

The majority of deaths and injuries have been attributed to the security forces and the student wing affiliated with the Awami League, it says.

"These casualties resulted from the use of live ammunition and other force against protesters who while acting violently reportedly were not armed, or only lightly armed, as well as from instances of security forces unlawfully using lethal force against protesters posing no apparent threat, unarmed protesters, and bystanders, including at least 4 journalists and at least 32 children, with many more injured and detained – a number of whom were seemingly deliberately targeted.

"From July 12 to August 3, at least 450,000 unknown persons and 2000 identified persons were reportedly registered for offences in at least 286 criminal cases in Dhaka alone, including a combination of named and unnamed individuals – many members of the opposition reportedly among them."

Suing hundreds of individuals as "unnamed" increases the risk of widespread arbitrary arrest and detention, it observes.

"Block raids were conducted in various locations of Dhaka city and near other university and college campuses. During these operations, large numbers of law enforcement personnel surrounded the area in question, prevented anyone from leaving, and conducted house searches based on intelligence information and, in several cases, without presenting judicial search warrants. Law enforcement agencies claimed that they were arresting individuals involved in violence and property destruction, based on analysis of their social media activity.

"Reports indicate that a number of those arrested were subjected to ill-treatment and even torture while in police custody."

The authorities also enforced widespread restrictions on communication, including internet, between July 18 and July 23 and again on August 4 and 5, severely affecting the rights to freedom of expression, and to peaceful assembly, and other fundamental rights.

The government had claimed the internet shutdown was due to the destruction of key infrastructure by protesters, but information the OHCHR received indicates the government did it deliberately.

Also, the prolonged countrywide curfew and restrictions on communications disproportionately restricted freedom of movement.

The UN body suggested that the political actors prioritise de-escalation and prevention of any further loss of life or injury and refrain from reprisals. They also need to uphold the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, protect minority communities, advocate for accountability and prevent further rights violations.

The UN also suggested that the transition process is transparent, accountable, inclusive and open to the meaningful participation of all Bangladeshis.

The interim government should take steps to restore democratic order and rule of law through an inclusive and participatory process guided by human rights, develop a systematic approach to vetting for any appointments to and dismissals from the judiciary, security sector and other institutions.

The recommendation to the interim government mentions, "Provide law enforcement agencies with clear instructions limiting the use of force, and especially firearms, in line with international human rights standards, ceasing any use of pellet guns, and, when use of force is absolutely necessary and proportionate, prioritising instead restrained use of less-lethal weapons; emphasise a de-escalation approach to all public order management."

"Refrain from deploying Border Guards and Rapid Action Battalions to any protest or other public order management tasks and initiate a comprehensive review of these forces, their functions, command, control and accountability mechanisms and operational doctrines."

It recommended providing reparations and effective remedies to victims and protecting all related evidence, including CCTV footage and other recordings.

It suggests establishing broader truth and accountability measures beyond investigation of the most recent events, while facilitating open dialogue to address social, economic, and political grievances.

The UN also recommends allowing media to operate freely and safely.

It urges the international community to support Bangladesh to ensure a transition in which human rights are fundamental and to support fact-finding and accountability efforts.

The full UN report can be found on OHCHR website.