

## Sri Lanka navy rescues boat of 102 Rohingya refugees

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's navy said yesterday it had rescued 102 Rohingya refugees from war-torn Myanmar adrift in a fishing trawler off the Indian Ocean island nation, bringing them safely to port.

The group, including 25 children, were taken to Sri Lanka's eastern port of Trincomalee, a navy spokesman said, adding that food and water had been provided.

"Medical checks have to be done before they are allowed to disembark," the spokesman said.

The mostly Muslim ethnic Rohingya are heavily persecuted in Myanmar and thousands risk their lives each year on long sea journeys, the majority heading southeast to Malaysia or Indonesia.

But fisherman spotted the drifting trawler off Sri Lanka's northern coast at Mullivaikkal at dawn on Thursday.



Lawmakers from the main opposition Kuomintang (KMT) (in white) try to break into Parliament, where members from Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) occupy the podium to avoid the passing of the third reading of amendments to the Civil Servants Election and Recall Act and other controversial bills at the Legislative Yuan in Taipei, Taiwan yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

### POST-COUP MYANMAR

## Fighters from civil war aggravate India's ethnic conflict

REUTERS, Imphal

Indian militant groups that took refuge in Myanmar and fought in its civil war have been streaming back across the border to Manipur state this year, Indian security officers said, inflaming the bitter 19-month ethnic conflict there with weapons and battle-hardened cadres.

This has led to an increase in violence between Manipur's dominant and mostly Hindu Meitei community and the mainly Christian Kuki tribes - a conflict that critics say is the biggest law-and-order failure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 11-year-old government. Since May 2023, some 260 people have been killed in the fighting and more than 60,000 displaced.

Nine Indian military and police officers who spoke to Reuters, plus several politicians and rebel sources in Myanmar, described a conflict that is spreading to new areas as militants from the rival groups come across the border to Manipur.

Fighters are equipped with more sophisticated weapons, including rocket launchers, and 20 people were killed in fighting in November alone. In response, the federal government announced it was deploying 10,000 more soldiers in

Manipur, taking the total number of troops to nearly 67,000 in addition to the 30,000-strong police force.

The escalation has been accompanied by an increase in crime - mainly extortion and illegal drugs trade - to the weapons and operations of the rival factions, the police and military officers said.

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"The insurgents who we had controlled about 10 years ago are gaining relevance again," said Yumnam Joykumar Singh, a former Manipur police chief and the state's deputy chief minister between 2017 and 2020. "Some of them are coming back from Myanmar, some have already come," said Singh, a Meitei, who led operations against Meitei militants in Manipur as a hardline chief of police between 2007 and 2012.

The federal interior ministry, Manipur

Police and the Myanmar junta did not respond to requests for comment.

Manipur is a hilly, forested region of 3.2 million people in India's northeast, bordered by Myanmar.

The fighting there was sparked last year by a court order that proposed giving the Meiteis, who live in the prosperous Imphal valley region of the state, the same government benefits as those given to historically disadvantaged Kukis, who live in the more-impooverished hills.

Security forces have manned a buffer zone between the two groups to try to limit the violence. The state has a history of insurgencies and in recent decades many militants fled across the porous border following military crackdowns.

Security officers said Meitei groups have been fighting on the side of the ruling junta in Myanmar's civil war and an estimated 2,000 of their cadres had been camping in Myanmar's Sagaing region, just across the border from Manipur, as of December.

They have fought anti-junta rebels like the People's Defence Force - Kalay (PDF-K) and the Kuki National Army - Burma in Sagaing, Kachin and Chin areas of northern Myanmar, Indian security officers and tribal leaders said.

## Pakistan's missile program is 'emerging threat'

Says top US official

REUTERS, Washington

A senior White House official on Thursday said nuclear-armed Pakistan is developing long-range ballistic missile capabilities that eventually could allow it to strike targets well beyond South Asia, making it an "emerging threat" to the United States.

Deputy National Security Adviser Jon Finer's surprise revelation underscored how far the once-close ties between Washington and Islamabad have deteriorated since the 2021 US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. It also raised questions about whether Pakistan has shifted the objectives of nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs long intended to counter those of India, with which it has fought three major wars since 1947.

Speaking to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Finer said Pakistan has pursued "increasingly sophisticated missile technology, from long-range ballistic missile systems to equipment, that would enable the testing of significantly larger rocket motors."

If those trends continue, Finer said, "Pakistan will have the capability to strike targets well beyond South Asia, including in the United States." The number of nuclear-armed states with missiles that can reach the US homeland "is very small and they tend to be adversarial," he continued.

## Tabla maestro Zakir Hussain laid to rest in San Francisco

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

The mortal remains of tabla maestro Ustad Zakir Hussain were laid to rest on Thursday at a cemetery near San Francisco as renowned Indian percussionist A Sivamani and other artists performed on their drums at a little distance away in a tribute to the departed artist.

On behalf of the government and people of India, Consul General K Srikanth Reddy paid tribute by draping the mortal remains of Zakir Hussain with the Indian national flag, offered condolences to his wife Antonia Minnecola and his family members and read out the condolence message of the Indian Prime Minister.

Around 300 persons, including his family, friends, musicians, including Indian percussionist A Sivamani, music lovers and Indian diaspora members, paid their last respects to the table wizard.

Hussain died at a San Francisco hospital on Monday due to complications arising from idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, at the age of 73.

Sivamani said: "Rhythm is God, that is you Zakir bhai. I learned a lot in our journey from 1982 till now. Every moment you are here with us in the rhythm. Every time I hit the rhythm, you are there. We love you Zakir Bhai. Have a lovely journey. Please give my pranam to all the masters."



## Buet student killed as car hits bike

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licence but refrained from making any further comments.

However, OC Liakat said Mubin could not produce any licence.

Police have seized the car and the motorcycle.

Mohammad's parents and other family members at their home on Green Road were shocked at the news of his death.

His mother Raisa Sultana kept breaking down in tears. "Why has my son gone? I raised him with so much love," she wailed.

According to the case filed by Masud, Mohammad and his two friends were returning from Neela Market after a late night dinner on the weekend.

"They were coming home. Around 3:00am, they were stopped at a

police check post when a speeding car crashed into them. Mohammad died on the spot, while his two friends were injured," reads the complaint.

After daybreak, over 100 Buet students demonstrated in front of Rugganj Police Station, demanding punishment of the driver.

They also held a rally near Buet campus around noon.

## WB okays \$1.16b for 3 projects

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It will also help reduce maternal and neonatal mortality by increasing the number of births, both normal delivery and Caesarian section deliveries, in public health facilities.

Alongside the WB financing, the Global Financing Facility for Women, Children and Adolescents (GFF) is providing a catalytic \$25 million grant to support the government in prioritising interventions such as child nutrition, adolescent health, quality maternal and newborn care, data use, and coordination.

The WB said it approved a \$280 million Chattogram Water Supply Improvement Project to provide safe water through new and rehabilitated piped water connections to over one million people in Chattogram.

The project will establish about

200,000 new household water connections and provide improved sanitation services to about 100,000 people in low-income communities, said the WB.

It is part of a World Bank South Asia regional initiative or program of programs to provide Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services to about 100 million people across the region by 2035.

The WB said the project will also help the Chattogram Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (CWASA) improve operational efficiency and financial sustainability and address issues related to water loss such as high levels of leakage, metering inaccuracies, and illegal connections.

World Bank Country Director for Bangladesh and Bhutan Abdoulaye

Seck said these new financing will bring to the people of Bangladesh essential services such as health and water and sanitation while laying the foundation for clean, climate resilient and sustainable development.

He said Bangladesh is among the most vulnerable countries to climate change and faces the greatest pollution challenges.

"Improving climate resilience in every sector and tackling the pollution scourge has become a critical development priority."

Since Bangladesh's independence, the WB has so far committed more than \$45 billion in International Development Association (IDA) financing in the form of grants, interest-free loans, and concessional credits to help the country address its development priorities.

## Tigers end year on a high

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to the series had not been satisfactory with series defeats against Sri Lanka, India and even the USA. Their only series win this year came against Zimbabwe on home soil.

This was a steep drop off for the Tigers in T20Is compared to how they had performed in 2023, where they had won 10 and lost three out of 14 T20Is.

Before the West Indies T20Is, Bangladesh's best result in this format this year was them qualifying for the Super Eights of the ICC T20 World Cup for the first time in 17

years in June, a tournament that was jointly held in the Caribbean and the USA.

But the Tigers perhaps reserved their best for the end of the year, completing a dominating 3-0 sweep over the hosts after not having won a single T20I against the side since December 2018.

Jaker showcasing his abilities as a finisher, Shamim Hossain rising to the occasion after a hiatus and the bowling attack looking clinical in all three matches orchestrated the splendid series win.

Although the Tigers ended 2024

on a high, their performance this year across the formats has been a mixed bag.

This series win has improved Bangladesh's T20 statistics as they finished the year with a win percentage of 50 (12 wins in 24 matches) - which is better than their win percentage in Tests (30) and ODIs (33.33).

A number of players from the new generation stepped up in the recently concluded series and it will be interesting to see whether they can carry this form into the next year or will it remain as a one-off.

## Adviser AF Hassan Ariff no more

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Mohammad Nasir Uddin told UNB that Ariff collapsed while having lunch at home yesterday.

He was rushed to Labaid Specialised Hospital where doctors confirmed he had suffered a cardiac arrest. He was pronounced dead at 3:10pm.

Ariff's first namaz-e-janaza was held at Baitul Aman Mosque on Dhanmondi Road 7 after Isha prayers. Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus and other dignitaries attended the janaza.

Ariff, a renowned lawyer, will be buried at Mirpur Intellectuals' Graveyard after another namaz-e-janaza on the High Court premises at 11:00am today, according to a statement from the Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry.

As the news of his death spread, tributes poured in from across the political spectrum.

In his condolence message, President Mohammed Shahabuddin expressed his deep shock over his death, which the president said was an irreparable loss for Bangladesh.

The president prayed for the eternal peace of the deceased's soul and expressed his deepest condolences to his bereaved family.

Condoling his death, Prof Yunus paid rich tribute to Ariff's decades-long public service.

"I am deeply shocked at his sudden demise. Adviser Hassan Ariff was a top lawyer who played a very significant role in the interim government," said Prof Yunus, who learnt the news of the adviser's demise as soon as he landed in Dhaka from Dubai after attending the D-8 summit in Egypt.

"He will be remembered as a brilliant lawyer and for his legal activism and defending human rights of dissidents, dissenting voices, and the marginalised people of our society," he added.

Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed also expressed deep shock at the demise of the adviser and conveyed his condolences to the bereaved

family.

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman expressed deep sorrow over the passing of Ariff, a former attorney general, the UNB reported.

In a message, Tarique extended his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family of Ariff. "His passing leaves a void, particularly in the current political landscape, where his expertise and wisdom as a legal luminary were invaluable," Tarique said.

"His contributions to the legal profession will continue to inspire colleagues and future generations of lawyers. His thoughts on the rule of law will remain a source of strength and motivation for democratic political movements," the BNP leader added.

Tarique also prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul and expressed sympathy to the grieving family, admirers, and well-wishers.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir visited the hospital to pay respects to the late adviser.

Describing Ariff as not only a renowned lawyer but also a man who deeply believed in democracy, Fakhru said, "I believe he was very much needed during this period of democratic transition."

In separate messages, advisers to the interim government, including Home Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, Finance Adviser Dr Salehuddin Ahmed, Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain, Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Law Adviser Asif Nazrul, also condoled the death of Ariff, reports BSS and UNB.

Ariff was appointed as an adviser to the interim government on August 8. The following day, he was entrusted with overseeing the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (LGRD).

On August 27, he took on additional responsibilities as the adviser to the land ministry.

On November 10, he was relieved

of his duty at the LGRD ministry and given the civil aviation and tourism ministry while continuing to oversee the land ministry.

Ariff had a distinguished legal career spanning over five decades. He began his practice at the Calcutta High Court in 1967.

In 1970, he relocated to Dhaka, enrolling in the High Court, and later founded AF Hassan Ariff & Associates, a leading law firm with offices in Dhaka and Chattogram.

He served as Bangladesh's attorney general from October 2001 to April 2005 and as the law adviser of the 2007-08 caretaker government.

An authority in constitutional law, commercial arbitration and public procurement, Ariff was a panellist at the Bangladesh International Arbitration Centre, SAARC Arbitration Council and Shanghai Arbitration Commission. He also held the position of Court Member at the ICC International Court of Arbitration.

He advised numerous government and corporate entities, including the Roads and Highways Department, Bangladesh Bank, and Chittagong Port Authority, along with telecom giants Robi Axiata and Grameenphone.

Beyond his legal practice, he was a resource person for the Bangladesh Bar Council's Continuing Legal Education and Human Rights Training Programme and a prominent member of the International Business Forum of Bangladesh.

In 2010, he led the Election Observer Mission for the Asian Network for Free Elections in Manila, Philippines.

## Landslide kills

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pronounced Syed Ullah dead. The injured, Syed Noor, 15, and Enayet Rahman, 10, who were also from the same Rohingya camp, were receiving treatment at a local hospital, said Arif Hossain, officer-in-charge of Ukhiya Police Station.