

INTERNATIONAL

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The bodies of people killed in an Israeli strike on the al-Maghazi refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip are placed at the Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir el-Balah yesterday. At least 48 more Palestinians were killed across the Palestinian territory in the last 24 hours, according to Gaza's health ministry.

PHOTO: AFP

Brazil bridge collapse kills 10 people

AFP, Brasilia

The death toll after a bridge collapse in northern Brazil increased to 10 on Friday, authorities said.

The Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira bridge, which connects the states of Maranhao and Tocantins, collapsed on Sunday, sending vehicles and their occupants plunging into the water below.

The Brazilian Navy had been conducting rescues in the area, finding an additional body Thursday six kilometers (3.7 miles) from the accident site and a second victim Friday in the Tocantins River.

"As such, there are 10 dead and seven missing victims so far," the Navy said in a statement.

More than 70 rescuers continued the search nearly a week after the collapse, using a hyperbaric chamber to allow divers to search depths of more than 30 meters (100 feet).

On Tuesday, Brazilian authorities had warned the Tocantins River could have been contaminated with sulfuric acid being transported by two trucks that tumbled into the water. A third truck involved in the accident was carrying pesticides.

CROSS-BORDER ATTACK ON AFGHANISTAN

One killed in Pakistan as Kabul retaliates

AFP, Peshawar

A Pakistani paramilitary soldier was killed and seven others wounded in cross-border exchanges of fire with Afghanistan's forces, a security source said yesterday, while hundreds of Afghans protested against the deadly air strikes that sparked the clashes.

Sporadic fighting, including with heavy weaponry, erupted overnight between border forces on the frontier between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan and Khost province in Afghanistan, officials from both countries said.

The exchanges of fire come after Afghanistan's Taliban authorities accused Pakistan of killing 46 people, mainly women and children, in air strikes near the border in the southeastern province of Paktika this week.

A Pakistan senior security source said they targeted "terrorist hideouts", though Islamabad has not officially confirmed carrying out the bombardment.

"One frontier corps (FC) soldier has been reported dead, and seven others have been injured," a senior security source at the border told AFP, adding clashes took place in at least two locations in Pakistan's



border district of Kurram.

The Afghan defence ministry said on X that "several points" across the border with Pakistan "where the attacks in Afghanistan were organised... were targeted in retaliation".

A provincial official in Khost told AFP the clashes forced residents to flee border areas, but that there were no reports of casualties among Afghan forces.

In Khost city, the provincial capital, hundreds of Afghans demonstrated against Pakistan yesterday, calling for accountability for civilian deaths.

The strikes were the latest

spike in hostilities on the frontier between Afghanistan and Pakistan, with border tensions between the two countries escalating since the Taliban seized power in 2021.

Islamabad has accused Kabul's authorities of harbouring militant fighters, allowing them to strike on Pakistani soil with impunity -- allegations the Taliban government denies.

Skirmishes along the frontier escalated after Pakistan's military conducted deadly air strikes in Afghanistan's border regions in March, which Taliban authorities claimed killed eight civilians.

Everything was wrong with the bus

FROM PAGE 12

A video of the incident showed that the speedy bus, instead of stopping at the toll plaza, hit a car from behind, then a microbus, and a motorcycle.

Rab arrested the bus driver Nuruddin on Friday night.

Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) cancelled the registration of the bus yesterday. Later in the night, police arrested bus company owner Dablu Bepari in Shibchar upazila of Madaripur.

A case has been filed with South Keraniganj Police Station by a family member of one of the victims.

FAILURE OF AUTHORITIES

The operation of buses and trucks without route permits and fitness certificates is nothing new in Bangladesh.

After many major road crashes, it was found that the vehicles were operating without valid documents, road safety campaigners said.

Speaking on the matter, Abdur Rahman, sub-inspector of Hashab Highway Police Station, said the documents of vehicles using the expressway were checked as much as possible.

"Whenever we find vehicles without proper documents, we file cases against them. Yet, somehow, they managed to operate on the roads," he told this newspaper yesterday.

On the other hand, BRTA can do

very little to take action against unfit vehicles due to a lack of manpower.

While it can conduct mobile court drives in some major cities, including Dhaka and Chattogram, the BRTA has to depend on local administration to carry out drives in the districts, sources said.

In April this year, 6,17 lakh vehicles did not go through the mandatory annual fitness test, according to BRTA.

NO ROUTE PERMIT, FITNESS

The bus involved in the collision (Dhaka Metro Ba 14 5170) was registered under Dhaka Metro Circle 2 (Ekuria) in July 2010.

According to BRTA officials, its fitness clearance expired in October last year.

On Friday, the bus was heading for Kuakata in Patuakhali, violating its approved route. The bus was approved for the Dhaka (Sayedabad)-Padma Bridge-Bhanga Khulna route. However, even that route permit expired in March of this year.

The bus was also operating without updated tax documents. The deadline for updating the bus's tax token had expired in July last year.

'GP MONEY'

The owner of the bus was mentioned as Nitol Motors, a major importer of commercial vehicles, when it was registered with BRTA 14 years ago.

A BRTA official said the bus appears to have been procured under

a loan, and that's why Nitol Motors' name was mentioned as its owner.

The official explained that the original owner might not have changed the ownership formally. As a result, Nitol Motors still appears as the bus owner on the BRTA database, he said, wishing not to be named.

A source in the road transport sector said a man named Md Mostafa of Bholia was operating the bus under Bepari Paribahan by paying the company Tk 800 daily.

Speaking to this newspaper around 6:40pm, Bepari Paribahan owner Dablu admitted that the bus was in operation under his company in exchange for "GP money" or "Gate Pass money". He, however, claimed he was not aware that the bus had no valid documents.

As per the rules of the Road Transport Act 2018, if a bus has to be operated under a company, that bus has to be registered under the specific company, a BRTA director said.

"So, operation of this particular bus under Bepari Paribahan is illegal," he said, wishing anonymity.

Currently, 10 buses are now being operated under Bepari Paribahan, and only three of these are owned by him, according to Dablu.

When this correspondent called Md Mostafa, the original owner of the bus, his daughter picked up the phone.

"My father fell ill after learning

about the crash. He is not in a position to talk right now," his daughter said.

INVALID DRIVING LICENCE

After arresting driver Nuruddin from Narayanganj's Siddhiganj, Rab said he had not renewed his driving license.

During the primary interrogation, Nuruddin claimed that the bus, which was put into service Friday after repairs, had brake issues, said Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police Taposh Karmakar, also media officer of the Rab-10.

The bus was sitting idle for a long time before repairs, Taposh said, quoting the driver.

However, the driver realised from the beginning that the vehicle's braking system was not working properly. When the bus owner was informed about it, he asked the driver to drive slowly, the Rab official said.

The bus driver claimed that the bus could not be stopped despite engaging the brakes several times before the crash, Taposh added.

While a probe committee is investigating Friday's crash, BRTA officials said that the driver seemed inexperienced after observing his manoeuvres moments before the crash.

They said even in the event of brake failure, skilled drivers, with control over the steering, are able to stop a vehicle and minimise damage by carefully contacting a sturdy structure.

Proclamation

FROM PAGE 1

this proclamation means. It is the formal declaration of a new political framework."

"The current government is illegal as per the constitution. But a proclamation directly challenges the constitution... the constitution needs to be interpreted and amended in light of the proclamation. It [proclamation] rejects the state system that has, until now, treated me, you, or anyone else as a mere pawn in a broken system..."

"The proclamation is vital to overhaul this outdated state machinery. It will discard the obsolete rules of the state apparatus and lay the foundation for a new state structure illuminated by the ideals of July. The dreams of a new Bangladesh that people have cherished will be realised through this..."

The proclamation will feature a timeline of events, from the quota reform movement to the departure of Sheikh Hasina. It will also address critical incidents from the past 15 years, including the BDR mutiny, the Shapla Chattar crackdown, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings.

A member of the platform drew parallels with other historical documents, such as the "Tin Jotter Ruprekha" from the 1990 anti-Ershad movement and the Proclamation of Independence from 1971.

It will critically evaluate key historical events, including 1947 and 1971, and examine why the aspirations

of various movements failed.

"The proclamation will serve as a documentary testament to the mass uprising," said Umama Fatima, spokesperson for the platform. "It will highlight how the quota reform movement evolved into a revolution and why people laid down their lives."

According to sources, the proclamation will explain the failures of past leadership and movements.

"The declaration will critique the proclamation of independence and the 1/11 caretaker government," said a member of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee, who along with others, drafted the proclamation.

Leaders of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee will be with the students at the Central Shaheed Minar at 3:00pm. Families of those martyred in the uprising will join the event.

Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuiyan, adviser to the ministry of local government, wrote on Facebook, "Comrades Now or Never".

"This is the declaration of the burial of Mujibbad", wrote Hasnat Abdullah.

The students and Jatiya Nagorik Committee, formed in September, plan to launch a political party by

Tuhin Khan, a member of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee, told The Daily Star, "This proclamation will serve as both a written acknowledgment of the revolution and its manifesto, embedding the public aspirations of the movement into its framework."

Mideast 'not a battleground for big powers'

China, Iran FMs agree in Beijing

AFP, Beijing

The top diplomats of China and Iran agreed Saturday that the Middle East is "not a battleground for the big powers" and should not be an arena of geopolitical competition between countries outside the region.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi agreed that "the international community should respect the sovereignty, security, stability, unity and territorial integrity of Middle East countries," according to a readout from Beijing's foreign ministry.

Araghchi is on his first visit to China since being appointed foreign minister of Iran.

The two major trading partners reiterated calls for a ceasefire in Gaza, the proper implementation of the ceasefire in Lebanon, and the "integrated promotion of counter-terrorism, reconciliation and humanitarian processes in Syria", according to the readout.

"The two sides agreed that the Middle East belongs to the people of the Middle East, and is not a battleground for the big powers, and should not be a victim of geopolitical competition and conflicts between countries from outside the region," the ministry said.

China and Iran were both supporters of ousted Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. Syria's new leader, Ahmed al-Sharaa, is an ardent opponent of Tehran.

Araghchi and Wang also discussed Iran's nuclear programme, which West say could be on its way to building weapons. China is Iran's largest trading partner and a top buyer of its sanctioned oil.

Unicef: One in six children live in conflict zones

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

About 473 million, or more than one in six children, are estimated to live in conflict areas worldwide, according to the United Nations children's agency.

Unicef's statement came yesterday as conflicts continue to rage around the world, including in Gaza, Sudan and Ukraine, among other places.

In Israel's devastating war on Gaza in particular, at least 17,492 children have reportedly been killed in nearly 15 months of conflict that has reduced much of the enclave to rubble.

"By almost every measure, 2024 has been one of the worst years on record for children in conflict in Unicef's history – both in terms of the number of children affected and the level of impact on their lives," said Unicef Executive Director Catherine Russell.

According to Russell, a child growing up in a conflict zone is far more likely to be out of school, malnourished, or forced from their home compared with a child living in places with no conflict.

"This must not be the new normal. We cannot allow a generation of children to become collateral damage to the world's unchecked wars," the director said.