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TRUMP-PUTIN TALKS ON UKRAINE

Russia to halt attacks on energy sites

Leaders settle for more talks instead of 30-day truce

AFP, Washington

Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin yesterday agreed on a halt in Russian attacks against Ukrainian energy targets – but fell far short of securing a full ceasefire in a highly anticipated phone call.

The US and Russian leaders spoke for more than an hour and a half and both expressed hopes for repairing relations between the countries.

However, there was no agreement from the Russian president for Washington’s proposed full 30-day ceasefire in Russia’s invasion of its pro-Western neighbour.

The Kremlin said Putin agreed to pause strikes on Ukraine energy targets for 30 days and that Putin had already given the order to his military. The White House said separately that the “leaders agreed that the movement to peace will begin with an energy and infrastructure ceasefire.”

Russia has launched a series of devastating attacks on Ukraine’s energy infrastructure throughout the three-year-old war. According to the Kremlin statement, Ukraine – which has bombed multiple Russian oil installations – had also agreed to the truce on energy targets, although Kyiv had yet to comment.

The two leaders agreed that broader truce talks would “begin immediately in the Middle East,” the White House said in its statement, also citing a “huge upside” if Russia and the United States improve their relations.

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A man, his wife, and their daughter fall off a motorbike on Sadar Road in Barishal city, as a police officer rushes to help the family. Neither the woman nor the child was wearing a helmet at the time of the accident yesterday morning. Thankfully, they escaped with minor injuries.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Woman gang-raped in city, two held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A woman was allegedly gang-raped in the capital’s Pallabi area on Monday night.

The victim, a reporter of an online portal, was admitted to a One-Stop Crisis Centre yesterday evening.

She filed a case with Pallabi Police Station, accusing eight named and another eight unnamed persons.

Talking to The Daily Star before her hospital admission, the victim, aged over 40, alleged that she went to UCB Chattar in the Matikata area around 11:00pm on Monday from Turag area after hearing that a woman was being sexually harassed there.

As she reached there, a group of people forcibly took her to an under-construction building of a housing project in the Barontek area. Then 15 people raped her, she alleged.

Nazrul Islam, officer-in-charge of Pallabi Police Station, said locals rescued the victim around

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A dream comes true as Jamuna Rail Bridge opens

Country’s longest rail bridge to boost Dhaka’s connectivity with the north

STAR REPORT

The much-awaited Jamuna Rail Bridge, the longest dedicated railway bridge in the country, was formally inaugurated yesterday.

The 4.8-kilometre dual-gauge double-track bridge, replacing the existing road-rail bridge over the Jamuna River, is expected to improve railway connectivity between Dhaka and the northwestern region.

The new bridge will allow trains to travel across the river in less than three minutes. In comparison, it took trains 30 minutes to cross the old road-rail bridge.

However, because the new double-track bridge is currently connected to single-line tracks on both sides, trains will still have to wait for crossings.

This will be the case until two crucial projects are completed, which is unlikely before 2030. One involves the construction of a double line from Joydebpur to Ishwardi, while the other is for a direct railway link between Sirajganj and Bogura.

Unlike the grand inaugurations of similar mega projects under the previous government, the bridge—built at a cost of Tk 16,781 crore—was opened without much fanfare.

Railways Secretary Fahimul Islam inaugurated the bridge at Ibrahimabad Rail Station in Tangail. Japanese

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

HASINA, FAMILY

Court orders freeze on 31 accounts

Nearly Tk 400cr was deposited in them

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to freeze 31 bank accounts of ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, her sister Sheikh Rehana, her nephew Radwan Mujib Siddiq Bobby, and their affiliated organisations in connection to corruption allegations against them.

The affiliated organisations include Bangladesh Awami League and Jatir Janak Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Trust.

They deposited Tk 394,60,72,805.71 in these bank accounts.

Judge Md Zakir Hossain of Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge’s Court passed the order after ACC Deputy Director Md Monirul Islam, who is leading the inquiry team, submitted an application in this regard.

In the application, the ACC said Hasina and others were trying to

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INSURGENCY IN ROHINGYA CAMPS

AL govt downplayed the problem for years

Says Fortify Rights; blames Rohingya armed-groups for repeated violence there

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite the rising violence in the Rohingya camps of Cox’s Bazar over the years, the Bangladesh authorities have repeatedly downplayed or denied the presence of Rohingya militant groups, allowing them to operate unchecked.

Refugees and rights groups have long raised concerns over killings, abductions, and torture carried out by armed factions, but official inaction has left vulnerable communities unprotected, said a report by Fortify Rights launched at Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday.

The report, titled “I May Be Killed at Any Moment” – Killing, Abduction, Torture and Other Serious Violations by Rohingya Militant Groups in Bangladesh – accuses the authorities of failing to admit the existence of these groups, contributing to a worsening security crisis in the camps.

According to the report, Rohingya refugees

have suffered years of violence at the hands of militant groups. The number of killings by camp-based militants was 22 in 2021, 42 in 2022, 90 in 2023, and at least 65 in 2024.

According to the findings of the rights body, the camps were under the control of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) till January 2023. But after that, the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) emerged and started taking control of the camps.

Soon after the conflicts began between the two armed groups of the refugees, abduction, extortion, and gunshot incidents in the camps jumped a couple of times higher compared with 2022.

The report mentioned that there were 91 abductions in the camps by the Rohingya militants and criminal groups in 2022, but it rose to 384 in 2023, and 446 in 2024. Similarly, there were only 26 extortion incidents in 2022, which jumped to 149 in 2023, and 136 in 2024.

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YEAR	KILLINGS	ABDUCTIONS	EXTORTION
2022	42	91	26
2023	90	384	149
2024	65	446	136

2 NGO workers abducted, tortured in Cumilla

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Two NGO workers, including a woman, were abducted, tortured, and extorted by four men in Cumilla’s Chandina upazila on Monday night, police said.

The men of Tulatoli village allegedly electrocuted the male victim after tying him to a tree and stripped the female victim naked on camera.

They also used the footage to blackmail her family into giving them Tk 20,000.

Locals heard the victims’ screams and rescued them around 11:00pm. They were later taken to the Chandina Upazila Health Complex.

A case was filed at Chandina Police Station yesterday, accusing four men of extortion, said Nazmul Huda, officer-in-charge of the police station.

The accused are on the run, he said without revealing their identities.

ROUNDTABLE:
Barriers to ensuring women’s land rights and the way forward

P10

Prime Bank

AL-SALAFI ISLAMIC BANKING



PRAYER TIMING
MARCH 19

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-48 12-45 4-30 6-10 7-45
JAMAAT 4-58 1-15 4-45 6-25 8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN	MARCH	SEHRI	IFTAR
18	19		6:10
19	20	4:46	6:10
20	21	4:45	6:10



A six-coach special train carrying guests and officials crosses the 4.8km Jamuna Rail Bridge that was formally inaugurated yesterday. The train departed from Ibrahimabad Station in Tangail and reached Sayedabad Railway Station in Sirajganj. The new bridge will allow trains to cross it in less than three minutes. In comparison, it took trains 30 minutes to cross the old road-rail bridge.

PHOTO: STAR

Stranded astronauts finally head home after nine-month

AFP, Washington



A pair of astronauts stranded in space for more than nine months were finally headed home yesterday after their capsule undocked from the International Space Station.

The SpaceX craft carrying Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams detached from the orbital outpost at 0505 GMT, ending their prolonged mission that has captivated global attention.

The NASA duo are joined onboard by American Nick Hague and Russian cosmonaut Aleksandr Gorbunov.

The crew are now settling in for the 17-hour journey back to Earth, and were given permission to change from their space suits into more comfortable clothes.

If all goes smoothly, the capsule will deploy its parachutes off the coast of Florida for an ocean splashdown around 2157 GMT Tuesday, when a recovery vessel will retrieve the crew.