

UN urges Ethiopia, Eritrea to respect border pact

AFP, Addis Ababa

The United Nations on Friday urged Ethiopia and Eritrea to respect each other's territorial integrity, voicing concern over "renewed tensions" between the two neighbouring countries.

For months, the Horn of Africa nations have traded accusations of destabilisation, raising the spectre of a new war.

Eritrea, which gained independence from Ethiopia in 1993 after a long armed struggle, accuses its landlocked neighbour of eyeing its Assab port.

Ethiopian authorities, meanwhile, say Eritrea is "actively preparing for war" and funding armed groups fighting federal forces.

UN chief Antonio Guterres urged both sides to "recommit to the vision of lasting peace and the respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity" under the Algiers Agreement, which ended a border war that killed tens of thousands between 1998 and 2000, his spokesman Stephane Dujarric said in a statement.

The two countries have had strained relations since then, with fighting flaring up again in Ethiopia's war-scarred Tigray region.



Dozens of organisations brought out a torchlight procession from the Central Shaheed Minar last night as part of the “Protiroddh Jatra” to press home their nine-point demands, including the release of Baul artiste Abul Sarkar and justice for ongoing attacks on spiritual communities, the general public, and nature across the country.

PHOTO: STAR

Former Iraqi president Salih appointed UNHCR chief

AFP, Geneva

Former Iraqi president Barham Salih will become the next United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, a UN source told AFP on Friday, taking over an agency tackling swingeing budget cuts.

Salih was president of Iraq from 2018 to 2022. He will take over as UN refugees chief next month from Filippo Grandi, who is leaving at the end of December after 10 years in the post.

The Geneva-based UNHCR, like many other UN agencies, has been hit by drastic international aid cuts. It has shed nearly 5,000 jobs this year – more than a quarter of its workforce.

Salih was a longstanding top official of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the second-largest Kurdish Iraqi party.

A moderate and veteran Kurdish politician, Salih's long political career has included several senior positions in the Iraqi government and in the country's autonomous Kurdistan region after the 2003 US-led invasion that toppled longtime ruler Saddam Hussein.

Salih was also part of an interim authority established by the United States following the invasion.

He was one of Iraq's deputy prime ministers from 2006 to 2009, then served as the Kurdish prime minister from 2009 to 2012.

Fluent in English, Arabic and Kurdish, UK-educated Salih served for four years as Iraq's president – a largely ceremonial office traditionally held by a Kurd since 2005.

Dhaka-8 aspirant Hadi shot

FROM PAGE 1

Md Rafi, an Inqilab Moncho activist who was in another rickshaw behind Hadi's, said, "After Juma prayers, we were heading to the High Court area for lunch. At Bijoynagar, two men on a motorcycle fired at Hadi and then fled."

Hadi was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital around 2:40pm and later shifted to Evercare Hospital.

DMCH Director Brigadier General Asaduzzaman said Hadi underwent surgery at the hospital. "He suffered a bullet wound to the head, as well as injuries to his chest and leg. The leg injury is believed to have resulted from falling off the rickshaw after being shot."

Dr Zahid Raihan, head of the neurosurgery department at Dhaka Medical College, said Hadi's overall condition is extremely critical.

"He has suffered two cardiac arrests. He has lost a massive amount of blood. After completing the surgery, we must say that we cannot express any optimism about his condition. He remains in the worst possible state ... though still alive. From here on, it is in God's hands.

"The bullet entered from one side and exited through the other. However, some bullet fragments have remained inside the brain. During the operation, we found and collected a few of those fragments. They were very small."

Dr Abu Zafar, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said, "When Hadi arrived at DMCH, his Glasgow Coma Scale (GCS) was at its lowest, which ranges from 3 to 15. Thanks to the doctors' efforts, his condition has improved somewhat. He is currently on artificial ventilation."

The GCS is a neurological tool scoring consciousness from 3 (deep coma) to 15 (fully alert) based on three responses: eye opening, verbal response, and motor response.

Dr Zafar said the bullet entered from Hadi's right side near his ear and exited from the left side. Typically, bullet wounds are smaller at the entry point and larger at the exit, and that was the case here.

"Brain injuries cause swelling and increased pressure inside the skull, which is extremely dangerous."

Neurosurgeon Dr Zahid Raihan and his team performed a decompressive craniectomy, removing a part of the skull to relieve the pressure.

Initially, the government had decided to transfer Hadi to the Combined Military Hospital, but his family requested that he be taken to Evercare Hospital instead. Authorities coordinated with Evercare Hospital and arranged the transfer around 7:30pm.

Meanwhile, Paltan Police Station's Officer-in-Charge Mostafa Kamal Khan told this newspaper that as of 11:45pm yesterday, no case had been filed and no arrests made over the shooting.

"However, multiple teams from this station, along with other law enforcement agencies, are working to apprehend the attackers. We are treating the matter with the highest priority."

Meanwhile, Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus expressed concern over the incident and directed law enforcement agencies to carry out a thorough and swift investigation to identify all those involved and bring them to justice.

Political leaders also condemned the attack. BNP acting chairman

Tarique Rahman, Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman, and National Citizen Party Convener Nahid Islam called for the immediate arrest of the attackers.

Hadi studied political science at Dhaka University in 2010–2011 academic session and came to prominence for his role in the anti-discrimination student movement.

Following the July mass uprising last year, he founded the cultural and political platform Inqilab Moncho on August 13.

ASSAILANTS STALKED HIM

Officials of law enforcement agencies suspect the assailants had been following Hadi since the morning. With fewer crowds on Box Culvert Road at that time, they seized the opportunity to carry out the attack.

"We are collecting CCTV footage from all the places he visited this morning. Analysing this footage should help identify the suspects," a senior Detective Branch official told

BNP candidate for Dhaka-8, visited the hospital to see Hadi. Supporters of Hadi and various political groups who gathered outside Dhaka Medical College Hospital chanted slogans such as "Bhua, Bhua" (fake, fake), which escalated tensions.

Jubo Dal and Chhatra Dal members escorted Mirza Abbas out of the premises.

Among others, Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman, Amar Bangladesh (AB) Party General Secretary Barrister Asaduzzaman Fuad, National Citizen Party (NCP) Convener Nahid Islam, Senior Joint Member Secretary Tasnim Jara, and Chief Organiser (South) Hasnat Abdullah also visited DMCH.

Despite the deployment of army and police personnel, ambulances and patient vehicles struggled to access the emergency department due to the large crowd. Hundreds of activists from different political groups assembled outside the hospital, disrupting patient care.

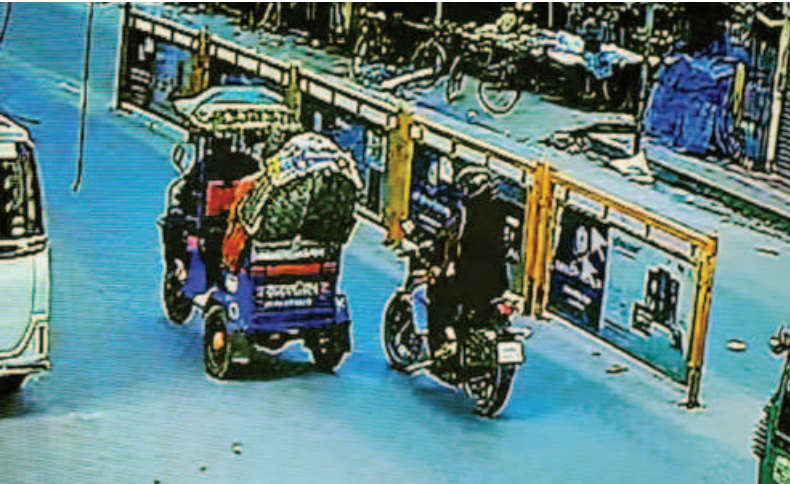


PHOTO: COLLECTED

CCTV footage shows a motorcycle pulling up to the right side of a rickshaw carrying Hadi moments before he was shot by the pillion rider.

The Daily Star.

Investigators said shooting a moving target from a motorcycle is extremely difficult. The shooter managed to do exactly that with a single bullet, suggesting professional expertise.

MM Al Minhaj, health and environment secretary of Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducusu) and a member of Hadi's public relations team, told The Daily Star that two unidentified men had been tailing Hadi since morning.

"When Hadi's PR team was filming, those two prevented us from recording. We suspect they are behind the attack," he said.

At the scene in the afternoon, bloodstains were visible on one side of the road, with a bullet casing lying nearby. Around 4:00pm, the CID's crime scene unit arrived and cordoned off the area.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police said officers visited the scene immediately after the shooting, and collected and analysed nearby CCTV footage. They are working diligently to identify and arrest those responsible.

The Detective Branch is conducting search operations in suspected locations and on persons of interest.

Talebun Rahman, DMP spokesperson, said, "We believe the perpetrators will be swiftly brought to justice, as in other recent high-profile cases."

The DMP urged the public to remain calm and report any relevant information to the nearest police station or via the emergency hotline 999.

Around 4:00pm, Mirza Abbas, the

Hadi, who announced his candidacy on Facebook on September 14, had posted on the morning of the attack, "Since I don't have any posters or festoons in Dhaka-8, there's no pressure of them being torn down either. Juma Mubarak from in front of the ACC."

Dhaka-8 includes the Motijheel, Shahbagh, Ramna, Paltan, and Shahjahanpur areas.

The attack on Hadi has sparked protests across the country. Various political groups and organisations condemned the attack and staged demonstrations in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Munshiganj, Gazipur, Jhalakathi, Jhenaidah, Kushtia, and Chattogram. Students at various universities around the country also protested on their respective campuses.

This attack follows a spate of targeted killings and daylight shootings in crowded areas, raising serious concerns about law and order ahead of the national election. Just the day before, a businessman was shot dead in broad daylight in Old Dhaka's Shyambazar area.

In recent weeks, two men linked to a criminal gang were gunned down outside the Khulna Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, and on November 17 in Dhaka's Mirpur, Golam Kibria, member secretary of Pallabi Thana Jubo Dal, was shot dead inside a shop.

Earlier, listed top criminal Tariq Saif Mamun was killed near Dhaka's busiest court area, and last month, Chattogram's underworld figure Sarwar Hossain Babla was assassinated during a voter outreach event.

Families pushed into migration, debt traps

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With debts mounting, Matiur headed for Dhaka city in mid 2016. He began pulling a rickshaw to survive. Two years later, he returned home and tried his luck again in aquaculture. This time, he invested in shrimp farming, using his small savings and loans from relatives and a local NGO.

But natural disaster struck in quick succession. Cyclone Bulbul in November 2019 and Cyclone Amphan in May 2020 tore through the coast and breached his ponds, washing away everything he had.

"I lost the Tk 3 lakh I had paid in advance for the lease. My fish, my income, my dreams, everything was gone," he said.

"I had no option but to head back to Dhaka and start pulling rickshaw again."

Matiur's story is eerily familiar. Across Bangladesh's southwestern coast, rising salinity, driven by sea-level rise, repeated cyclones, and tidal floods, is triggering a wave of migration and displacement.

As fields turn barren and local jobs dry up, men, especially from marginalised or landless families, leave their ancestral lands in search of work, adding to the growing flow of climate-affected workers in the informal labour force. They move to nearby districts or cities to pull rickshaws or work as labourers in brick kilns, construction sites and farms. Back home, women shoulder the burden of keeping families together with dwindling resources.

A 2023 study by Oviyashi Karmi Unnayan Program (OKUP) found that 59 percent of households in Shyamnagar's three unions had at least one member who migrated for work.

Of them, 86 percent moved to different districts while 14 percent went abroad. Among the internal migrants, 93 percent engaged in short-term "seasonal migration" and 7 percent in "longer-term migration".

The OKUP report said migration decisions in the Sundarbans region are rarely voluntary; they are "mostly triggered by a compulsion to pay off loans and rebuild lives in the context of persistent threats by climate-induced disasters".

A special report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that by 2050, sea-level rises may lead to migration of around nine lakh people in Bangladesh. By 2100, the number could reach 21 lakh – mostly internal migrants – with profound implications for nutrition, shelter and employment in affected areas.

Some families become displaced after losing their homes and livelihoods to recurring disasters, forcing them to move to other districts and live in shanties under inhumane conditions. Beyond poverty, they face various problems, from unsafe water and poor sanitation to persistent health problems, with little support to rebuild their lives.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that more than 49 lakh people in Bangladesh are now internally displaced due to natural disasters.

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Earlier in the day, Yunus directed the authorities concerned to ensure the best possible medical care for Hadi, an independent MP candidate for Dhaka-8 and spokesperson of Inqilab Moncho, who was shot in broad daylight in the Paltan area.

At last night's meeting, Yunus said the attack is a deliberate strike at Bangladesh's democratic progress and that through this act, the defeated forces have dared to challenge the very existence of the country.

"We will foil any such attempts at any cost. Attacks of this nature on the nation by evil forces will not be tolerated."

The agency launched a comprehensive nationwide assessment of disaster-induced displacement on December 10.

The assessment covering all 64 districts found that two out of three internally displaced people had to leave ancestral land before April 2020. One in four were displaced between April 2020 and April 2024.

According to the Global Internal Displacement Report 2025, Bangladesh is one of the five countries that reported the highest number of internally displaced people due to natural disasters, with 24 lakh people displaced last year.

LEAVING HOMES FOR SURVIVAL

Salinity intrusion has contaminated freshwater sources, degraded soils, and squeezed incomes from traditional farming across the coastal villages, driving many to migrate to district towns like Satkhira, Khulna, Jashore, Dhaka and Chattogram either temporarily or permanently. When cyclones strike, the crisis deepens.

Shariful Alam, a small farmer from Shyamnagar upazila, knows this all too well. His farmland remained submerged in saline water for months after Cyclone Aila hit the country in 2009.

Even after the water receded, the salinity level in his land was too high to plant rice for several years. When he finally managed to cultivate paddy, the harvest was so low that it didn't even cover the production costs.

"I started working in a fish hatchery in Shyamnagar but couldn't earn enough. I had to leave home to survive," he said.

Shariful first moved to Satkhira sadar upazila and worked as a labourer in a brick kiln. He then went to Khulna in search of steadier work.

A 2024 study by the Department of Environment found that 23 cyclones hit the coastal belt between 2000 and 2020 – 10 in the 2000s and 13 in the 2010s.

A recent synthesis by the International Centre for Climate Change and Development counted 185 extreme weather events in Bangladesh between 2000 and 2019, making it the world's seventh most climate-vulnerable country.

For many cash-strapped families, brick kilns have become a predictable fallback. Each year, kiln owners offer advance payments to families in salinity-hit areas before the season starts, binding those already burdened by crop failures or failed shrimp ventures to gruelling work for three to six months.

Mohammad Mozaffar from Khulna's Koyra upazila is one of them. He began working at a kiln in Savar in 2021 after years of struggle as a day labourer. Later, his father and brother joined him.

For a six-month contract, the kiln owner paid him Tk 1 lakh in advance. He returns home once every three months during the production season starting in October. For the rest of the year, he works in shrimp farms and occasionally ventures into the Sundarbans to catch fish for 10 to 15 days at a stretch.

Stating that this attack is part of a conspiracy to derail the national election and the referendum, he added, "Under no circumstances will we allow such conspiracies to succeed. No matter the challenges or storms ahead, no force will be able to sabotage the upcoming election."

"Together with the people of this country, we will ensure a peaceful election through our collective strength."

The chief adviser ordered immediate and appropriate measures along the borders, saying, "It must be ensured that the attackers cannot leave the country under any circumstances."

Mozaffar fell ill while working at the kiln in September this year and had to return home. It took him 20 days to recover. Even so, he must go back to the brick kiln.

"If I don't rejoin work, my father and brother will be in trouble. What else can I do? We have no other asset or land except our ancestral home."

Back in the village, his wife, Shirina Akhter, keeps the household running.

"I can't work because I have to look after my two daughters and mother-in-law," she said, sitting on the floor of their tin-roofed earthen home.

"It's very difficult to run the family alone... I have to manage everything. We don't even have enough drinking water. Life is full of hardship."

For Ahsed Ali Gazi, migration was a matter of necessity.

Unable to find work in his village in Shyamnagar upazila, the 55-year-old moved to Jashore with his family more than two decades ago.

Since then, he has been pulling rickshaws, raising five children and arranging their marriages.

"People think we left for Jashore seeking opportunities, but the truth is, we had no choice."

He hopes to return home one day. "I want to spend my last days on my forefathers' land... I wish to be laid to rest beside my parents."

OKUP Chairperson Shakirul Islam said many seasonal migrants, employed in agricultural farms, brick kilns or other informal sectors, face exploitation, deprivation, and human rights abuses – with virtually no recourse.

Those who are permanently displaced often end up in slums in nearby districts, where they live in harsh conditions, he added.

"Long-term support is scarce. Government assistance usually comes only in the immediate aftermath of major cyclones or floods, with no sustained improvements in the lives and livelihoods of affected communities," Shakirul said.

"As a result, many fall into debt traps. They take one loan to repay another."

Another segment of these people takes large loans to migrate overseas, only to fall into an even deeper debt cycle. Many end up undocumented and unable to find work; yet they cannot return home because of mounting debts.

Experts warn that more families will be pushed to the edge unless the government strengthens long-term freshwater management and promotes salinity-resilient agriculture. It is also essential to recognise climate-displaced people in social protection policies.

Shakirul said there is little coordination between the ministries working on the issue – and the same is true for NGOs and civil society.

"We need stronger, more unified coordination to ensure safe migration pathways, especially in global advocacy," he added.

[Our Khulna Correspondent Dipankar Roy and Satkhira Correspondent also contributed to this report]

He also said that those who may have become potential targets due to their involvement in the July uprising must be given due security consideration.

The meeting decided that a special hotline will be launched within the next few days to prevent any untoward incidents during the election period and to enable rapid response.

It was also decided to intensify operations to recover illegal weapons and to search locations where suspects may be hiding.

The chief adviser will soon meet with major political leaders to discuss the evolving situation.