

SUDAN DRONE ATTACK

Bodies of 6 peacekeepers return home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The bodies of six Bangladeshi peacekeepers, who were killed in a drone attack on a United Nations peacekeeping base in Sudan's Abyei region, were returned to Bangladesh yesterday.

Their remains reached Dhaka airport on an Emirates Airlines flight, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

The Chief of General Staff of the Bangladesh Army, Lieutenant General Mizanur Rahman Shamim, received the bodies at the airport. Senior officials, including the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh, the acting UN resident representative in Bangladesh, representatives of the UN mission in Abyei, the force commander of United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei, and senior military and civilian officials, were present.

A one-minute silence was observed, followed by a military salute in honour of the fallen peacekeepers.

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PHOTO: ISPR

A one-minute silence followed by a military salute was observed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday, as the bodies of six Bangladeshi peacekeepers killed in a drone attack on a UN base in Sudan's Abyei region returned home yesterday.

Death anniversary of Fazle Hasan Abed observed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The sixth death anniversary of Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, the visionary founder of BRAC, the world's largest non-governmental development organisation, was observed yesterday.

Abed passed away on December 20, 2019, aged 83 while receiving treatment in Dhaka.



Born in 1936, Abed studied accountancy in London and qualified as a cost management accountant in 1962. His life took a decisive turn during the 1970 cyclone and the 1971 Liberation War, events that reshaped his convictions while working for a multinational company in Pakistan.

He resigned and moved to London, helping establish "Action Bangladesh" and "HELP Bangladesh" to support the country's struggle for independence.

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Dengue cases cross 100,000

HELEMUL ALAM

With 70,402 dengue cases reported from divisions outside Dhaka out of a total 101,597 nationwide as of December 20, the mosquito-borne disease has spread far beyond the capital this year.

According to the DGHS, Barishal division recorded the highest number of cases at 21,410, followed by Dhaka division (outside the city corporations) with 17,245 cases. Chattogram ranked third with 14,815 cases.

Within Dhaka city, DGHS data show 16,795 cases in Dhaka North City Corporation and 14,428 cases in Dhaka South City Corporation areas.

Entomologist Kabirul Bashar of Jahangirnagar University said dengue spreads in waves and becomes uncontrollable when authorities fail to break any part of the epidemiological triangle.

"The host, the agent, and the environment — right now we have failed in all three areas. Mosquito control is weak, dengue patients are not being isolated properly, and environmental conditions remain

unchanged. As long as these factors persist, dengue will continue to spread," he said.

He stressed the need for effective mosquito control and stronger surveillance.

Local government bodies responsible for mosquito control must be strengthened with skilled and trained manpower, he said.

Bashar also called for specialised dengue wards in every district hospital, staffed by doctors trained in dengue management.

Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman said authorities lack modern and incentive-friendly tools such as *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (Bti) and other larvicides widely used elsewhere.

"Fogging alone is ineffective and does not reach inside homes properly. There are no targeted efforts to control Aedes mosquitoes," he said.

Last year, dengue cases crossed 100,000, and this year the figure has again exceeded that mark.

"If this trend continues, cases could reach millions in the coming years," Rahman said.

Zubaida leaves for London ahead of Tarique's return

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Zubaida Rahman, the wife of BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman, left for London yesterday, planning to return to Bangladesh with her husband and daughter Zaima Rahman.

She departed Dhaka at 8:30am on Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight BG-201 from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

Zubaida arrived in Dhaka from London on December 5 to be with her mother-in-law, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, who has been undergoing treatment at Evercare Hospital.

As a member of Khaleda Zia's medical board, she has been staying at the hospital round the clock, overseeing the treatment process.

Meanwhile, BNP has started preparing for the "historic reception" of its acting chairman Tarique, following his 17 years in exile. He is expected to arrive on December 25 morning with his family, the party said.

Upon arrival, he is scheduled to visit Evercare Hospital to see his mother Khaleda Zia before heading to his

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'Ensure justice for Osman Hadi'

Sommilito Nagorik Somaj condemns attacks on media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sommilito Nagorik Somaj, a coalition of civil society organisations, yesterday demanded a transparent investigation and exemplary punishment of those responsible for the killing of Sharif Osman Hadi.

The group also condemned recent violent attacks on media houses, cultural institutions and individuals.

At a press conference at Jatiya Press Club, speakers described the killing as a serious threat to political stability and democratic transition in the country. They alleged that the interim government has failed to ensure public safety even more than a year after the July uprising.

The speakers condemned what they called planned terrorist attacks carried out on the night of December 18 on Prothom Alo, The Daily Star, Chhayanaut and Nalanda School.

Journalists were inside the buildings during the arson attacks, forcing several to take shelter on rooftops to save their lives. They also alleged that women journalists were assaulted while leaving the premises.

The civil society leaders further condemned attacks on Udichi's office and the Indira Gandhi

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'Interim govt failed to prevent attack'

Udichi leaders say at protest march

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Bangladesh Udichi Shilpi Gosthi, a social and cultural organisation, yesterday accused the interim government of failing to prevent attack and arson at its central office despite clear threats made a day before.

"The government has moved away from the spirit of the July uprising and is effectively appeasing fundamentalist forces," Udichi general secretary Amit Ranjan Dey said while addressing a protest march in the morning.

Udichi's artistes and activists as well as cultural workers and journalists, brought out the procession around 11:00am from Paltan intersection, which ended in front of the organisation's central office, opposite to the Jatiya Press Club at Satyen Sen Square on Topkhana Road.

Udichi Central Committee vice president Shibani Bhattacharyya presided over the event.

Speakers demanded immediate action against those responsible for the attack. They linked the attack on Udichi to a broader threat against freedom of expression.

"Our office was vandalised, looted, and torched in the same manner as attacks on The Daily Star,

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Abolish NTMC

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Detailed accounts of NTMC's alleged abuses have also emerged through court proceedings and the Commission of Inquiry on enforced disappearances formed by the government, which is why there has been a strong demand for the agency's complete dissolution, the statement said.

According to media reports cited by the signatories, divisions have emerged within the government over whether to abolish the NTMC, indicating a retreat from plans for comprehensive surveillance reform.

Without meaningful citizen participation, a new draft law was prepared on October 15 proposing three alternative names for the NTMC.

The draft was prepared by the NTMC itself with the aim of strengthening, rather than dismantling, its surveillance capacity, according to the statement.

The statement also referred to a November 17 meeting of the law and order core committee, where the head of an agency reportedly claimed that surveillance capabilities were being weakened, which would make it difficult to monitor threats to national sovereignty.

Following this, the home affairs adviser reportedly instructed that a meeting be convened on the Telecommunication Ordinance.

The citizens warned that at least

two key citizen-protection provisions from the published draft will be removed in a new version expected to be placed next week, without public consultation.

They expressed concern that the Home Affairs Ministry is seeking to centralise control over surveillance, which they said could recreate the surveillance powers exercised during the previous government.

They also criticised proposed changes that would weaken transparency and accountability, including the removal of mandatory public reporting on surveillance requests and the dilution of plans for an independent, quasi-judicial oversight council involving citizens and judges.

The signatories demanded that internet services must never again be shut down or restricted, that the NTMC be dismantled and that officials involved in surveillance be held accountable through judicial oversight.

They urged the chief adviser and the government to approve the draft ordinance prepared with public participation, ensuring that post-uprising Bangladesh does not return to past practices of repression.

The statement was signed by prominent figures including TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman, economist Anu Muhammad, philosopher Salimullah Khan, and writers, academics, journalists and human rights activists.

Khaleda

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board comprising specialist doctors from home and abroad.

She has developed several additional complications, including endocarditis, acute pancreatitis, and severe bacterial and fungal infections. Khaleda, 80, has long been battling multiple health complications, including liver cirrhosis, arthritis and diabetes, as well as chronic issues affecting her kidneys, lungs, heart and eyes.

The BNP chief was admitted to the hospital on November 23 on the advice of her medical board after being diagnosed with infections in her heart and lungs.

Her treatment is currently being supervised by a medical board led by Professor Shahabuddin Talukder, with the involvement of both local and foreign specialists.

BNP blames govt inaction for spate of attacks

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after another. This means it is a planned design," he said.

BNP leaders cited further incidents as evidence of official inaction, including the vandalism and arson at two newspaper offices, the harassment of New Age Editor Nurul Kabir, the killing of a Hindu youth by a mob in Mymensingh, arson at Mahmududdin Chowdhury's house in Chattogram, the attack on 32 shops in Uttara, and the burning of an Awami League leader's house.

They claimed that the absence of a firm response from the government and law enforcement agencies has allowed violence to spiral, "jeopardising the country's stability", and warned that continued inaction could embolden those intent on blocking timely elections.

Govt urges Meta to act against violence-inciting content

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working to restore order and prepare for credible national elections.

The BTRC alleged that social media, "especially Facebook," has been used to incite "large-scale violence, intimidation, and calls for the disruption of the upcoming elections."

Referring to recent incidents, the letter said the situation escalated after the death of Usman Hadi, a key figure in the uprising, alongside attacks on media institutions.

"Most alarmingly, in the name of freedom of expression, some individuals aligned with different ideologies publicly expressed approval of his death, while others openly called for violence against media institutions and journalists," it said.

The regulator said such calls contributed to vandalism and arson at several installations, including two media houses — The Daily Star and Prothom Alo.

Expressing concern over delays by Meta in removing or blocking such content, the letter warned that the unchecked circulation of such

"We have met with the government multiple times, urging them to take necessary steps to maintain law and order, but no visible action has been taken," a BNP leader said.

Echoing these concerns yesterday, Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said a "long-identified vested quarter" is deliberately pushing Bangladesh towards chaos to impose "a new form of fascism".

Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed called for vigilance to prevent political exploitation of Hadi's killing. "We have strongly condemned this brutal killing. But fallen fascist forces or anyone trying to disrupt the election must not be allowed to use this incident for political gain. Everyone must remain vigilant," he said.

content poses a direct threat to national stability, social harmony, media freedom, and the safety of minority groups.

The BTRC also noted that Meta has no local office in Bangladesh and that "multiple urgent requests sent through formal channels did not receive timely responses, while violent content continued to circulate widely."

The commission urged Meta to strictly and swiftly enforce its community standards, strengthen Bengali-language moderation, ensure "immediate action on reported content that incites violence," and heighten monitoring of Bangladesh-related content at least until the national election scheduled for February 2026.

"This is a matter of national importance," the letter said, linking the election to citizens' lives, democratic rights, minority safety, and long-term stability.

Meanwhile, the government-run National Cyber Security Agency sent a similar letter to Meta yesterday.

NDF President Anisul's home attacked, set ablaze

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, CTG

The ancestral home of Anisul Islam Mahmud, president of the National Democratic Front and chairman of a faction of the Jatiya Party, was vandalised and set on fire by a group of miscreants in Chattogram's Hathazari upazila early yesterday.

No casualties were reported as none were inside the house, located in Gumanmardan, during the attack around 12:15am, police said.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Kazi Tarek Aziz, additional superintendent of police of Hathazari Circle, said, "A few cooks

and domestic helpers were preparing for a scheduled family programme in the yard of the residence. At that time, around 40 unidentified youths arrived in private cars, minibuses and motorcycles, entered the premises and started vandalising the house. They set the house on fire and left after around 15 minutes."

Locals, with assistance from the fire service, extinguished the blaze.

"On receiving information, police visited the spot and spoke to witnesses. Our teams are working to identify and trace the attackers. We have advised the family to lodge a complaint," he added.

Celebrating empathy and kindness

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The congress was attended by participants from diverse professional backgrounds. The programme began with the national anthem performed by children with deafness, blindness and intellectual disabilities.

Valerie Ann Taylor was born on February 8, 1944, in Bromley, Kent, United Kingdom. A Fellow of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, she first came to Bangladesh in 1969 with Voluntary Service Overseas to work as a physiotherapist at the Christian Hospital in Chandraghona, in the hill tracts.

In 1973, she went back to England to raise funds to establish a rehabilitation centre for people with paralysis. She returned to Bangladesh in 1975, and CRP admitted its first patients in 1979.

During this period, she worked at Shaheed Suhrawardy Hospital in Dhaka. CRP initially operated from two cement storerooms on the hospital premises before relocating permanently to Savar in mid-1990, where its head office remains.

Valerie received the Order of the British Empire in 1995, the Arthur Eyre Brook Gold Medal in 1996, and the Bangladesh Independence Award

in 2004. She was granted Bangladeshi citizenship in 1998.

She has served as the legal guardian of two Bangladeshi girls, Poppy and Jyoti. Valerie lives near the CRP Savar campus with her younger adopted daughter, Poppy, while Jyoti works at CRP and was married in 2007.

Meanwhile, The Moralogy Foundation, established in August 1926 by Dr Chikuro Hiroike, is a Japanese research and educational organisation.

It promotes social education based on the principles of "morality," a concept developed by Hiroike that compares conventional and supreme morality to demonstrate the impact of moral practice. The philosophy aims to promote human well-being, global happiness and world peace.

In his welcome address, Prof Matur Rahman Molla, president of the congress, highlighted Bangladesh's resilience despite poverty and natural disasters and called for stronger international cooperation to support vulnerable communities.

Prof Rubaiul Murshed delivered the keynote presentation at the event.

The programme also marked the launch of the book Why Kindness Matters.