

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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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.



A bed 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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Abolish NTMC

FROM PAGE 8
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

Putin still intends to capture all of Ukraine

Say US intelligence reports
as Trump's peace push
gathers pace

AGENCIES

US intelligence reports continue to warn that Russian President Vladimir Putin intends to capture all of Ukraine and reclaim parts of Europe that belonged to the former Soviet empire, six sources familiar with US intelligence said, even as negotiators seek an end to the war that would leave Russia with far less territory.



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.

PHOTO: ISPR

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 artists 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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BNP blames govt inaction for spate of attacks

FROM PAGE 8

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.

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.

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