

## Japan’s flagship H3 rocket fails to launch satellite

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's flagship H3 rocket failed to launch a geolocation satellite into orbit yesterday due to engine failure, the country's space agency said.

The second stage engine "terminated prematurely" after the rocket blasted off at 10:51 am (0151 GMT) from the Tanegashima space centre in southern Japan, according to the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA).

It could not release into orbit the sixth satellite to the seven-unit "Michibiki" system, "resulting in a launch failure", the space agency said.

The agency has begun an investigation into what caused the problem, it said.

The Japanese geolocation system is designed to offer improved data for the country, enabling better consumer services such as car navigation systems and smartphone maps, according to JAXA.

However, the space agency announced around 40 minutes after the rocket's launch that its second-stage engine -- which ignites after the first stage of the rocket detaches -- had stopped earlier than expected.



Favourable weather has led to a bumper green chilli harvest in Jamalpur this season. Every day, Farmers from the char areas bring maunds of fresh chillies by horse carts to the wholesale market at Adra Bazar in the district's Sarishabari upazila. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: SAHIDUL ISLAM NIRAB

## Hadi murder case

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motorcycle, two foreign pistols, two magazines, 41 rounds of ammunition and a toy pistol.

When asked about the whereabouts of the killer, Jahangir Alam said, "If we knew where he was, he would have already been arrested." He, however, declined to disclose more details, saying that might hinder the case's progress.

Replying to a query, Jahangir also said 10 people were arrested over the killing of a garment worker in Mymensingh, who was beaten and burned to death.

### 20 PEOPLE GET GUNMEN

He said gunmen have been provided to around 20 people following security assessments by intelligence agencies. "Those on hit lists or concerned about their safety have already been given gunmen," he said.

When journalists cited a list claiming around 50 members of Gono Odhikar Parishad were at risk, he said DGFI, NSI and Special Branch had jointly identified those facing threats and provided protection accordingly.

He added that while some individuals declined gunmen for personal reasons, intelligence agencies were ensuring alternative security measures based on risk assessments.

Regarding BNP acting chairman

Tarique Rahman's return, Jahangir said the highest level of security arrangements had been taken ahead of his scheduled arrival on December 25.

**2,000 CHECKPOINTS FOR DEVIL HUNT**  
About 2,000 checkpoints have been set up under Operation Devil Hunt Phase II, with searches of private cars and motorcycles continuing alongside arms recovery drives, the home adviser said.

He said the core committee reviewed progress of the operation, election preparations and ongoing drives to recover looted and illegal firearms.

Since the operation began on December 13, a total of 6,598 people were arrested until December 20, he said. During this period, law enforcers recovered 56 firearms, 437 rounds of ammunition, 1,007 cartridges, 62 locally made weapons and other items, including grenades, mortar shells, gunpowder, fireworks and bomb-making materials.

Separately, the home ministry yesterday said joint forces arrested 698 more people and recovered 14 additional illegal firearms on December 21.

Jahangir said police training ahead of the election is under way in three phases, with two-thirds already completed, including instruction on the use of body-worn cameras.

He said adequate preparations have been taken to ensure peaceful observance of Christmas. Public fireworks will not be allowed on Christmas or Thirty First Night, and no programme will be permitted to block roads.

Security has been ensured at every church, with additional measures taken in Gulshan, Banani and other areas of the capital, the home adviser said.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police have been instructed to keep traffic movement normal, while patrols and search operations will be intensified, he added.

The meeting also reviewed measures against violence instigators, theft, mugging, extortion, land grabbing and organised crime; progress of investigations into the July killings; actions against provocative cyber propaganda; steps to counter violence against women and children, including rape; monitoring of top criminals released on bail; operations against banned organisations; the border situation; and law and order in Rohingya camps.

A separate discussion focused on preparations for the Jagannath University Central Students' Union election, attended by the vice-chancellor, Dhaka University proctor, election commissioner and other officials.

## 17 held, 31 IDed over attacks

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the Secretariat.

According to police, the arrestees include Md Naim, Md Akash, Ahmed Sagar, Abdul Ahad, Nazrul Islam alias Minhaj, Md Jahangir, Sohel Rana, Abdul Barek Sheikh alias Al Amin, Rashedul Islam, Shafulul Islam, Pranto Shikdar alias Faisal, Ahmed Pranto, Abul Kashem Raju Hossain, and Saidur Rahman.

Fifteen of the arrestees were produced before a Dhaka court yesterday, and the court sent them to jail.

Naim was arrested with Tk 50,000 allegedly looted during the incident. During preliminary interrogation, he admitted to looting Tk 1.23 lakh and using most of it to buy a television and a refrigerator.

Sohel, arrested from the Karwan Bazar railway area, has 13 cases against him at different police stations in Dhaka under narcotics and other laws.

Shafulul, arrested from the same area, has two previous cases related to arson and crude bomb explosions.

Three other individuals were identified through video footage for allegedly attempting to create disorder near the residence of the Indian Assistant High Commissioner in Chattogram.

At the DMP Media Centre, Nazrul stressed that while protest or anger could be expressed lawfully, entering offices to vandalise, loot and set fires amounted to criminal acts.

Asked about the political identities of those arrested, he said police were

not looking into political affiliations. "Those involved in the attacks are criminals. They broke the law and took it into their own hands. Regardless of their political identity or views, they will be tried under the country's existing laws and judicial system."

Responding to questions about police action during the incidents, Nazrul Islam said between 4,000 and 5,000 people were present at the scenes, and a forceful crackdown with limited manpower could have led to casualties.

"The fact that no human life was lost in such a major incident is what we see as our achievement."

Asked about DMP's ability to prevent mob violence, he said police are capable but cannot control every situation at all times.

## Unite against moves to stir instability

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under the guise of "protest for justice", describing the administration's inaction during the attacks as "terrifying". They also demanded swift identification of the perpetrators.

The Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (Noab) and the Editors' Council organised the protest meeting titled "Bangladesh Attacked by Mob Violence", hitting out at recent attacks on The Daily Star and Prothom Alo, and the targeted harassment of New Age Editor Nurul Kabir.

Speaking at the meeting at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka, Nurul Kabir said that all newspapers in the world have their own editorial policies.

"If someone does not like those policies, setting fire to media outlets is not a democratic action. The attackers tried to destroy them in a medieval way," said Kabir, also president of the Editors' Council.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said the attacks were not limited to two newspapers, but struck at the heart of democracy itself.

"It is an attack on my right to think freely, my right to speak. Furthermore, the attack has come upon the July Uprising; the July Uprising was a war to establish the rights of the people of this country."

"I have struggled all my life for a free, sovereign, and democratic Bangladesh. The Bangladesh I see today -- I never dreamt of this Bangladesh," he added.

Appealing for unity, Fakhrul said, "My request to you -- not as any political thought, party, or organisation -- it is time for all democratic people to unite. Today, in all sectors, with all your strength, all of you who love Bangladesh must unite; this evil force must be resisted."

National Citizen Party Convener Nahid Islam alleged that a section of the government was involved in the incident. "The whole incident was planned," he said.

Nahid alleged a conspiracy had been hatched to manipulate events in Bangladesh following the death of July uprising frontliner Sharif Osman Hadi after he was shot in the head in Dhaka.

"This is what we think after seeing what happened. That is why I say it is unfortunate," he said, adding, "It is even more unfortunate that those who carried out this incident used the slogans of the July uprising and the name of Hadi to justify the attacks."

Calling for accountability, he said, "It is very clear who carried out these incidents. They went there, committed the crimes, and we must ensure the government conducts a fair investigation and punishment. Those who shot Hadi in broad daylight, including a parliamentary candidate, must also be held accountable."

Ganosamhati Andolon Chief Coordinator Zonayed Saki said the government must answer for its "mysterious silence". "If justice is not delivered, their failure will be the verdict," he said.

Ehsanul Mahbub Zubayer, assistant secretary general of the Jamaat e-Islami, criticised the interim government for failing to ensure security.

"The fourth pillar of the state is connected to the existence of all of us. No one can accept attacks on it under any

circumstances. We cannot accept this," he said, adding that such incidents must come to a complete stop.

A minute of silence was observed to demand justice for Hadi and punishment of those involved in the attacks and arson on media houses.

The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam said journalists of both The Daily Star and Prothom Alo were facing death threats.

"On the day of the attack, 26 to 27 staff members were trapped inside the building, and the fire service was not allowed to enter. Their goal was not only to set the building on fire but also to commit murder," he said.

"Set aside fighting for the right to freedom of expression, we are now fighting for the right to live," he added.

Irene Khan, UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, held the government responsible for the attacks.

"Freedom of expression has been eroded over the last few months. Anger and aggression have been directed at whoever has attempted to express an opinion. Public anger was weaponised to attack the Daily Star and Prothom Alo offices. Through this, those working in the media have been intimidated," she said.

Iftekharruzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh, said "mob rule" had entered the state structure because those in power viewed the forces behind mob violence as a pillar of their authority.

"The current situation is the responsibility of all citizens, but the main responsibility lies with the government. The government must answer what it is doing to ensure the safety of the people," he said.

Debapriya Bhattacharya, distinguished fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said the interim government must remember that it is not an elected one.

"A government has the right to rule only as long as it has moral legitimacy. By failing to act, the current government has weakened its moral legitimacy in many ways," he said.

Kader Gani Chowdhury, secretary general of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists, demanded compensation for Prothom Alo and The Daily Star.

"An attack on the media is an attack on democracy and the very existence of the state. We have seen this manifest through the targeted actions against Prothom Alo and The Daily Star," he said.

Ayub Bhuiyan, general secretary of the National Press Club, described the attacks as part of a wider cultural crisis, saying the newspapers were not merely commercial entities but institutions carrying the nation's intellectual and cultural history.

In his closing remarks, NOAB President and Samakal Publisher AK Azad said speakers had unanimously stressed the need for unity.

He said the movement would continue until justice is delivered for the attacks on The Daily Star, Prothom Alo, Chhayanaut, Udichi Shilpi Goshthi, and others.

Editors, journalists, politicians, civil society representatives, professionals and business leaders, among others, attended the protest.

They included Prothom Alo Editor

Matir Rahman Chowdhury; Ajker Patrika acting editor Kamrul Hasan; Samakal Editor Shahed Muhammad Ali; The Business Standard Editor Inam Ahmed; Dhaka Tribune Editor Reaz Ahmed; and Daily Sun Editor Rezaul Karim Lotus.

Among others were Former caretaker government adviser Rasheda K Choudhury; human rights activist Irene Khan; Women's Affairs Reform Commission chair Shireen Parveen Haque; senior Supreme Court lawyer Sara Hossain; BRAC Executive Director Asif Saleh; Chhayanaut President Sarwar Ali; CPD Executive Director Fahmida Khatun; and photojournalist Shahidul Alam.

International Chamber of Commerce Bangladesh Mahbubur Rahman; Pran-RFL Group Chairman and CEO Ahsan Khan Chowdhury; Apex Group Managing Director Syed Nasim Manzur; Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Kamran T Rahman; City Bank Managing Director and CEO Mashrur Arefin; and Envoy Group Chairman Kutub Uddin Ahmed also joined the protest.

The demonstrators pledged to resist mob violence collectively.

After the meeting, members of the Editors' Council and NOAB formed a human chain in front of the hotel. The programme was moderated by Dewan Hanif Mahmud, editor of Banik Barta and general secretary of the Editors' Council.

Barrister Sara Hossain, executive director of BLAST, said the interim government failed to respond when journalists were trapped inside a burning media building despite repeated pleas for help.

"Not a single responsible person came. For hours the fire burned, and no one even tried to stop it," she said.

Warning of a broader collapse of law and order, she added, "If we want to protect democratic gains, we must resist together and hold the government and human rights institutions accountable."

Mahbubur Rahman, president of the International Chamber of Commerce, Bangladesh, said the two newspapers were targeted "because they practise independent journalism and express diverse opinions".

"Democracy does not mean only my opinion will be heard and no one else can protest. If we fail to tolerate differing views, our democratic future will be further endangered," he said.

Shireen Huq, head of the Women Affairs Reform Commission, said the incidents carried "a frightening signal", adding that the government's inaction in their aftermath was even more alarming.

Rasheda K Choudhury, former adviser to the caretaker government, said the attacks were not only on freedom of speech but on "education, culture and society as a whole".

Questioning the vandalism of cultural institutions, she asked, "Why was Chhayanaut targeted, and why are cultural and minority communities under attack?"

Warning of a slide into anarchy, she criticised the government's response, saying, "If the government had acted firmly from the beginning, this situation would not have reached this stage."

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## Complete Hadi murder trial by 30 days

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professional foreign intelligence agencies, such as the FBI or Scotland Yard, to ensure a transparent investigation.

Additionally, the platform demanded the identification, arrest, and trial of what it described as "Awami terrorists" allegedly hiding within civil and military intelligence agencies.

Around the same time the demands were made, Law Adviser Asif Nazrul said in a Facebook post that the murder trial would be held under a Speedy Trial Tribunal.

"According to Section 10 of the Speedy Trial Tribunal Act, 2002, the trial of this murder case will be completed within a maximum of 90 days after the police report is submitted," he wrote.

Earlier in the day, at around 12:00pm, Inqilab Moncho held an

emergency press conference in front of the National Museum.

"You cannot simply hold an election in a hurry and leave without identifying Osman Hadi's killers. This will not be allowed," Jaber said. "Justice must be ensured before the election; no election will take place before that."

He again threatened to launch a movement to oust the interim government if justice is not ensured for the murder of Osman Hadi.

Addressing the briefing, Jaber said a 24-hour ultimatum had been issued during Hadi's namaz-e-janaza.

"However, the deadline has passed without any visible steps from the home adviser or the concerned authorities regarding the arrest of the accused," he said.

He alleged that the absence of the home adviser or his special assistant at the ministry's briefing amounted

continue in India," the newspaper reported.

Leaders threatened to unhoist the national flag of Bangladesh in front of the office.

From the scene, Lakshman Bansal, the state secretary of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, informed a high-ranking official of the office via telephone about the organisation's firm stance.

He said the barbaric attacks targeting the Hindus in Bangladesh cannot be forgiven in any way.

Before yesterday's development, Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain on Sunday told reporters in Dhaka that he got information suggesting that Bangladesh High Commissioner Riaz Hamidullah was threatened with life on Saturday evening.

In a media briefing that day, Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson for Indian external affairs ministry, however, said there was no attempt to breach the fence or create a security situation at any time, and that the police stationed at the spot dispersed the group after a few minutes.

That day, the Indian Visa Application Centre (IVAC) in Chattogram city

suspended its operations until further notice, citing the recent security situation at the Assistant High Commission of India, Chattogram.

Last week, the IVACs in Dhaka and Khulna remained partially closed one day each over what it said was security situation amid protests in all the three cities.

Meanwhile, Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pranay Verma yesterday visited the IVAC at Jamuna Future Park to take stock of the functioning of visa services, reports UNB.

He also interacted with visa applicants, many of whom were applying for medical visas to travel to India for treatment.

During his visit to the IVAC, officials flagged problems related to the submission of a large number of fake documents, as well as disruptions caused by middlemen and touts who attempt to hack visa servers and create artificial traffic, depriving genuine applicants of appointment slots.

The high commissioner assured that these concerns would be raised with the relevant authorities in Bangladesh.