



US cutting 'a lot' more than 5,000 troops from Germany

President Donald Trump on Saturday doubled down on Washington's decision to withdraw 5,000 US troops from Germany...

Kyiv hits Russian oil sites

Drones hits port, oil tankers, military ships; five killed in both countries

AGENCIES

Ukraine yesterday said it had hit several Russian ships -- a cruise missile carrier and three shadow fleet tankers -- as both sides fired hundreds of drones in a spree that killed at least five people.

Three were killed in Ukraine, one in Russia and one in Russian-occupied southern Ukraine, according to statements by local officials.

The two neighbours have been firing hundreds of explosive-packed drones at each other on a daily basis throughout the four-year war, as talks to end the conflict have gone nowhere.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday vowed to step up Kyiv's retaliatory strikes on Russian energy sites if Moscow did not halt its invasion.

The Ukrainian leader said his troops had struck a vessel equipped with cruise missiles at the port of Primorsk in Russia's northwestern Leningrad region.



The region's oil export terminals have been hit several times in recent weeks, knocking out billions of dollars' worth of exports, according to Kyiv.

Zelensky said three of Russia's so-called shadow tankers -- ageing vessels that ferry its sanctioned oil around the world -- were struck, one at Primorsk and two off the southern Black Sea port of Novorossiysk.

He posted black-and-white night-vision footage of a naval drone approaching one tanker at Novorossiysk.

Oil and gas revenues -- boosted by the war in the Middle East -- are critical for Russia's economy and funding its army.

The Russian governor of the Leningrad region had earlier confirmed a fire at the port after Ukrainian attacks.

The extent of the damage was not immediately clear and Russian officials gave no details.

Russian attacks on Ukraine's southern Odesa region -- a key maritime logistics hub -- killed two people, and one person was killed in the frontline Kherson region.

Russia fired 268 drones and one ballistic missile in the overnight barrage, Kyiv's air force said.

Ukraine's army launched 334 drones at Russia, Moscow's defence ministry said.

Kyiv's attacks killed a 77-year-old man in the Moscow region, which surrounds the capital, and a 15-year-old boy in the Russian-occupied part of Ukraine's southern Zaporizhzhia region, the local governors said.

Kyiv calls its attacks on Russia fair retaliation for Russia's nightly barrages of its cities.

Fourth term for TMC

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voter turnout stood at 91.74 percent.

If exit polls are correct, a BJP win this time would mean the party that rules at the Centre gets to govern the key state of over 100 million people for the first time.

The Election Commission's Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls has further complicated predictions. While the TMC used the exercise -- which led to the deletion of 91 lakh voters, mostly Muslims -- to attack the BJP, its impact on the ground remains unclear.

Exit polls in India have a mixed record and can be inaccurate.

In 2021, several exit polls not only failed to capture the TMC's dominant showing of 215 seats in the 294-member assembly, but some also gave the BJP an outright majority. The BJP won 77 seats, well short of the 148 seat majority mark.

In every assembly poll since the TMC first came to power in 2011, the party has increased its seat tally, from 184 in 2011 to 215 in 2021.

Journo barred

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official alleged that the journalist behaves rudely with officers whenever he goes abroad.

Mithu dismissed the claim as "baseless", stating that he rarely travels and had simply documented the facts of the encounter.

In a Facebook post, Mithu recounted the incident, saying that all of this happened at a time when national and international events were being held to mark World Press Freedom Day.

He said the ordeal began while he was waiting in the immigration queue. A blue-uniformed officer called his name and seized his travel documents before escorting him to the office of the superintendent of police in charge of immigration.

"The SP came out and wanted to know about my profession," Mithu wrote.

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

Pope laments violations, honours slain journos

AGENCIES

Pope Leo yesterday marked World Press Freedom Day by condemning persistent violations of media freedom around the world and paying tribute to journalists killed while reporting from conflict zones.

Speaking at the end of his weekly Sunday prayer, in a sun-flooded Saint Peter's Square, the pontiff said the day highlighted both the importance of independent journalism and the growing threats faced by reporters.

"Today we celebrate World Press Freedom Day ... unfortunately, this right is often violated, sometimes in blatant ways, sometimes in more hidden forms," he said.

The pope urged the faithful to remember journalists and reporters who have lost their lives pursuing the truth, particularly in areas afflicted by conflicts.

"We remember the many journalists and reporters who have been victims of war and violence," the pope said.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio will visit Rome and the Vatican this week, an Italian government source said yesterday, weeks after President Donald Trump's stinging criticism of Pope Leo.

Italian media reported that Rubio would meet the US pontiff himself on Thursday, but there was no immediate confirmation of this.



DCs seek PM's intervention on drug menace

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Meanwhile, the Cox's Bazar DC suggested disbursing funds for government land acquisition through the iBAS++, a government software, to curb corruption and public suffering.

During the session related to the Ministry of Health, several DCs said health services are being disrupted at district and upazila levels due to doctor shortages and the absence of appointed physicians.

Health Minister Sardar Sakhawat Hossain assured the DCs that the ministry would take the necessary steps to address this issue.

Additionally, the DCs of Netrokona and Pirojpur proposed the allocation of water ambulances to ensure healthcare services

in the remote haor areas.

Following the session, Education Minister ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milton said DCs had flagged declining student interest in schools and stressed the need for joyful learning. He added that classroom competitions, curriculum updates, midday meals and school-uniform support are on the government's agenda.

Regarding proposals for a unified curriculum, primary schools in tea garden areas, and free education for children with disabilities, Milton said, "Every proposal is accepted. We must accept it and go ahead."

On Qawmi madrasa education, the minister said he has held three meetings with

representatives regarding degree equivalence and standardisation. He added that the ministry would soon submit a proposal defining the equivalence of Qawmi levels to SSC, intermediate, degree, and Dawra levels.

Addressing teacher shortages, Milton noted that 32,500 primary headmaster posts are currently tied up in court cases, while 14,300 primary teacher recruits are being brought "into discipline". He added that primary schools require an additional 32,500 teachers and 15,000 staff, while government high schools need 7,000 teachers.

He said if the PSC cannot provide teachers, the ministry will consider holding a special exam.

New primary teachers may be sent to Primary Training Institutes after joining, Milton said. "Those who fail the training will not be retained, and teachers will only be made permanent after two years of service."

Following yesterday's session, the DCs met with President Mohammed Shahabuddin. Today, the second day of the conference, discussions regarding 24 ministries and divisions will take place across five sessions.

The DCs will pay a courtesy call on the Speaker of the National Parliament this evening. The conference will continue until May 6, with 34 sessions scheduled over the four day period.

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Tk 35,000cr
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being Tk 630,000 crore, according to the draft.
The revised budget for this fiscal year has been set Tk 788,000 crore, with the revenue budget increased by Tk 25,000 crore and development budget slashed by Tk 30,000 crore.
This year, Tk 84,114 crore has been allocated for salaries and allowances of government officials and employees, and Tk 35,657 crore for pensioners.
The Ninth Pay Commission has recommended partial implementation of the salary structure this year and the interim government has earmarked Tk 30,000 crore in this fiscal year's budget for partial implementation of the recommendations.
However, the implementation has been pushed back to the next fiscal year amid narrowing fiscal space due to low revenue mobilisation and rising fuel prices due to the Middle East conflict.
The commission recommended 20 pay scales, with the minimum salary proposed to rise from Tk 8,250 to Tk 20,000 and the maximum from Tk 78,000 to Tk 160,000, as it aimed to ensure that the real wages did not fall below the 2015 level.
Implementing the proposals would require an additional Tk 106,000 crore annually. Currently, the government spends Tk 131,000 crore a year for its 14 lakh employees and 9 lakh pensioners, the statement said.
The Eighth National Pay Scale was implemented in 2015 in two phases: the revised basic salary took effect from July 1, 2015, while revised allowances came into force a year later.
In fiscal 2014-15, the allocation for salaries and allowances stood at Tk 28,709 crore. Following implementation, the allocation rose sharply to Tk 50,775 crore the next year.

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