

Ukrainian strike cuts power to Crimean city

AFP, Moscow

Ukrainian strikes on Crimea triggered power outages in its largest city, Sevastopol, both sides reported yesterday, as Kyiv intensifies its attempts to cut off the peninsula, which Moscow annexed in 2014.

Crimea has been forced to suspend fuel sales to the public as Ukraine's army targets Russian logistics to the region and has hit a series of oil refineries and depots across southern Russia that provide supplies.

Sevastopol's Moscow-installed governor Mikhail Razvozhayev urged residents to help vulnerable neighbours and reserve phones for emergency communication to save battery and avoid overloading the grid.

"The enemy is once again striking treacherously, attempting to deprive us of normal living conditions and sow panic," he posted.

He said some areas of the city -- where temperatures are approaching 30C -- would be without power until at least yesterday evening.

Ukraine's SBU security service said it had hit two military airfields and air defence systems in Crimea.



Late-season Aman paddy being harvested with a combine harvester in Kaliganj of Rajshahi's Tanore upazila. While harvesting has already been completed in many parts of the district, including the Barind region, crops planted after potato cultivation are still being reaped. Farmers are increasingly relying on machines, which charge Tk 1,400-2,500 per bigha, but many say low paddy prices and high fertiliser costs are making it difficult to recover production expenses.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

National health hotline going cold

FROM PAGE 1

The hotline received more than 1.09 crore phone calls during the pandemic.

"We are in trouble and do not know how long we will be able to continue the service," said Shohorab Ahmed Chowdhury, managing director of Synesis IT, which has been providing the service since its launch.

After the latest contract expired on April 30, the company sought a one-year extension. The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) proposed a six-month extension, and the proposal is still awaiting approval from the health ministry.

Shohorab, however, said such an extension would be inadequate as the tendering process for a new contract usually takes eight to 10 months.

"Even if the extension is approved now, nearly two months have already passed. That would leave only around four months of effective operation before another gap emerges," he said.

Shastho Batayan was launched under the e-health operational plan of the Management Information System (MIS) of DGHS. The free service offers doctor consultations, health information and ambulance-related information.

Doctors listen to patients' complaints and send prescriptions directly to their phones. Until recently, around 100 MBBS-qualified doctors and 25 health information officers hired by the service provider provided the service on a roster basis.

In April, the call centre received 1.97 lakh calls, including 1.16 lakh calls for doctors' consultancy. The number came down to 1.82 lakh, including 1.06 lakh calls for doctor consultancy, in May, exposing the impact of manpower cuts.

Last year, it received 23,46,773 calls, while the total number of calls this year as of June 24 stood at 10,43,446, shows the official data of the service.

Rezaul Karim, a private sector employee and regular user of the service, said he last availed the service

two months ago.

"It is a very good service, especially because you can get care at any time. If I had to seek the same treatment at an outside hospital, it would take much more time, and of course, it would cost money as well," he said.

Another user, Mithu Halder, said he received their services thrice in the last year.

When informed about the uncertainty over the continuation of the service, he said: "It would be a big setback for thousands of people like us. It is a reliable service and the government should continue it at any cost."

The problem arose after June 2024, when the tenure of the fourth Health, Population and Nutrition Sector Programme (HPNSP), also known as the operational plan under which the service was funded, expired.

The interim government scrapped the proposed fifth programme in March 2025, creating a funding gap.

Although a project was approved in December last year to complete the unfinished tasks of the fourth HPNSP and the service was incorporated, the project is yet to start rolling as its project director was appointed only earlier this month.

In the meantime, the service providers did not receive their monthly payments for 22 months, leaving around Tk 14 crore in dues.

The situation deteriorated as the contract with the service provider ended in April.

Shohorab said they had been pursuing the matter with the DGHS for over a year, as the tendering process for the service -- being an intellectual or consultancy-based one -- takes a long time to complete, but to no avail.

No tendering process has yet begun, but following the change in government and subsequent changes in the DGHS leadership, the new administration decided to extend the contract for six months, The Daily Star has learnt from DGHS officials involved with the proceedings.

The DGHS has sent the file to the health minister for approval in the last week of April.

"But the extension has not yet been approved," Shohorab told this correspondent on June 23.

Meanwhile, the company has cut its manpower by 40 to 50 percent after April, he said.

"Although we have not been paid by the government for 22 months, we still have to pay salaries to doctors and other staff. I have had to take bank loans to pay their salaries. We have kept the service intact as it is a national issue."

But after the expiry of the contract and amid uncertainty over its extension, Synesis IT was forced to cut its manpower by 40 to 50 percent, he added.

Contacted, Abu Ahammad Al Mamun, director (MIS) of DGHS, said they are working to keep this vital service operational and have already sent a proposal to the health ministry seeking an extension of the current contract.

"The proposal is now awaiting approval," he said, adding that a fresh procurement process is expected to be initiated next month.

He said they could not clear the dues of the service provider for various reasons but hoped the provider would receive the payments from the budget of the next fiscal year.

Replying to a question, Al Mamun said the tendering process for appointing a new service provider is expected to begin in July, as the component has already been incorporated into a project.

Contacted, Health Secretary M Quamruzzaman Chowdhury said they were aware of the problem and hoped to resolve it soon.

When this correspondent mentioned that the extension proposal had remained pending with the minister for around two months, he said: "This is not supposed to happen. I will look into the matter."

similar reviews were conducted in nine private banks, leading to the merger of five lenders into Sommilito Islami Bank.

In its programme documents, the World Bank said that state-owned banks are considered the most vulnerable segment of the sector, holding \$50 billion or 27 percent of total banking assets, equivalent to around 12 percent of GDP. Three state-owned commercial banks are classified as systemically important.

WEAKNESSES RUN DEEP

According to the World Bank programme documents, Bangladesh's banking sector held assets worth \$212.2 billion at the end of June 2024, accounting for 88 percent of total financial sector assets and about half of GDP.

The sector comprises 62 scheduled banks regulated under the Bangladesh Bank Order and five unscheduled banks established through separate laws.

The documents identify structural weaknesses including poor corporate governance, regulatory capture, and politically influenced related-party lending.

Loopholes in legal definitions allowed complex inter-family relationships to conceal the true scale of related-party lending, contributing to fraudulent lending, wilful defaults, and embezzlement by bank owners and management, the World Bank said.

"A few big business groups siphoned off billions of dollars from the banking sector. In addition, the lack of proper enforcement and regulatory forbearance has exacerbated the problems, encouraging risky behaviour, undermining market discipline, and delaying necessary reforms," it said.

City

'Loophole in draft law could enable secret detention'

FROM PAGE 1

formed by the interim government, documented "the systematic use of incommunicado detention followed by later court presentation, often with falsified arrest dates".

The letter was jointly issued by Gabriella Citroni, chair-rapporteur of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; Ganna Yudkivska, vice chair on communications of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; Morris Tidball-Binz, special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; and Bernard Duhaime, special rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.

The letter also pointed out that the draft bill applies different standards of liability to civilian and military superiors.

If civilian superiors "consciously disregarded" information indicating that the crime was being committed, they could be held culpable, it noted, adding, "It sets a higher threshold to prosecute civilians compared to military superiors."

The UN experts further said, "We wish to emphasise that the draft bill should ensure criminal liability for any person participating in the offence, and apply the principle of command responsibility equally, autonomously, and without distinction across all state structures, and that it is firmly grounded in the superior's duty to exercise effective control."

They added that this is essential to ensure no gaps in accountability arise from differences in institutional hierarchy and that all authorities who tolerate or willfully ignore a disappearance are held fully responsible.

The letter also noted that the draft act fails to explicitly prohibit military or special tribunals from taking over cases involving personnel from the armed forces or intelligence agencies.

The UN experts said the draft law "conflate[s] the search for disappeared persons with criminal investigation and does not clearly establish a distinct and proactive duty to search".

They added that the state has a duty to search for victims of enforced disappearance and that such efforts should continue until the fate and whereabouts of the person are clarified.

The search, they said, must be carried out by authorities empowered to access all detention centres, data registers, archives, and information, including those held by military and intelligence bodies.

"Without such safeguards, efforts to clarify the fate and whereabouts of disappeared persons risk remaining fragmented and ineffective," it said.

The UN experts also criticised the draft law's inclusion of the death penalty.

The letter said that enforced disappearance is characterised by the systematic destruction of evidence, falsified arrest records, and deliberate transfers between agencies to diffuse accountability, making it difficult to establish criminal responsibility. Therefore, it said, the punishment should not be irreversible.

The letter also underscored victims' right to reparations.

"The draft bill treats the judicial fine as compensation, and section 30 creates a fund for rehabilitation and compensation on a discretionary basis," it said, adding, "However, it does not establish a comprehensive reparation framework in line with international standards."

CR7 rewrites the narrative

FROM PAGE 1

Portugal had opened their campaign with a frustrating 1-1 draw against DR Congo, a match in which Ronaldo was largely anonymous and their much-hyped midfield struggled to impose itself.

That performance triggered familiar noise: doubts about structure, questions about cohesion, and even suggestions from critics that the 41-year-old was now a burden to the team and should be sidelined altogether, with some going as far as claiming Portugal function better without him.

Ronaldo had gone 10 consecutive competitive matches for Portugal without scoring. For a player defined by relentless output, the scrutiny only intensified.

Then came the sixth minute.

When Joao Cancelo delivered a teasing cross into the box, Ronaldo did what he has done across two decades of elite football -- he pounced, running in towards the ball with a predator's instinct, and hammered home a sharp, close-range finish with conviction. And suddenly, the invisible weight that had been building around him and his team seemed to lift.

Ronaldo's immediate reaction told its own story. Instead of wheeling away into his trademark celebration, he turned toward the dugout and embraced the coaching staff, team management, and manager Roberto Martinez. It wasn't just another celebration -- it was a gesture that acknowledged the trust placed in him and the noise he had just pushed aside.

It was also historically significant. That opening goal made Ronaldo the first and only player to score in six different FIFA World Cup editions, further extending a legacy that already stands alone in the modern game.

From that moment on, Portugal looked transformed.

Whatever tension had been discussed in the build up -- whether real or exaggerated -- seemed to have dissolved. Bruno Fernandes slid Ronaldo through for his second, a composed finish that

Dhaka rejects Delhi's explanation over Zahed's airport harassment

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh has termed India's explanation regarding the Delhi airport incident involving Prime Minister's Adviser Zahed Ur Rahman unsatisfactory, describing it as "unfortunate and regrettable".

Responding to questions on the remarks made by the spokesperson of India's external affairs ministry, the spokesperson of Bangladesh foreign ministry yesterday told BSS that the explanation provided by the Indian side over the incident was not satisfactory.

The spokesperson said the Indian authorities had been duly informed through diplomatic channels in advance that Zahed would lead the Bangladesh delegation at a meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).

"Despite this, the incident that occurred at Delhi airport involving him was unfortunate and regrettable," said the spokesperson.

India on Tuesday spoke about the incident, in which Zahed, policy and strategy affairs adviser of Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, had to wait for two hours at the airport on June 14.

The spokesperson for India's external affairs ministry said Zahed reached the airport on a private passport with a Saarc visa to attend the IORA's senior officials meeting.

"He was queried by immigration officials at the airport and subsequently permitted entry after

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6

showcased both chemistry and clarity in Portugal's attacking play. It also carried Ronaldo past the legendary Eusebio, becoming Portugal's all-time leading scorer in World Cup history with 10 goals -- one more than the icon who defined a generation.

Ronaldo was also happy to play the decoy as left-footed Nuno Mendes struck from a close-range freekick before Bruno Fernandes cleverly chipped the ball toward Ronaldo from another set-piece routine. It seemed, finally, that Portugal had shown up as a team eager to change the narrative that had been set about them.

This was Portugal functioning as a unit, not a collection of headlines.

After the match, Ronaldo's immediate reaction was brief but striking: "I'm back." For some, it may have sounded theatrical. But in context, it felt more like catharsis than a declaration -- an emotional exhale from a player who has spent his career answering doubt with goals, yet still finds himself repeatedly framed by questions about age, decline, and relevance.

"It was a difficult week, a dark week. It felt like I'd retired from football," Ronaldo admitted afterward.

He went on to address the cycle that has followed him for years.

"I've been in this profession for 23 years now. When things go well, Cristiano is doing great. When they go badly, Cristiano is retired, he's too old. It will always be like that. But we responded well today. That's what we wanted."

Ronaldo is not wrong about that pattern -- and performances like this are exactly why it persists. For all the noise, he continues to respond the same way he always has: with goals that shift momentum and reshape narratives.

Portugal, however, will know this was only a beginning. Their sternest test awaits against Colombia, and while Group K remains finely balanced, Tuesday night in Houston may yet be remembered as the moment the pressure finally cracked open -- and what spilled out was Portugal at their very best.

'Hey Jude', England

FROM PAGE 1

"I didn't deserve it," England midfielder Jude Bellingham said after receiving the player-of-the-match award. "It probably should have gone to one of their lads who defended so well. They played for a draw, as it would have seen them through. Fair play to them."

Declan Rice struck a similarly calm note: "There's no need to be negative. We need to stay positive, keep going, and recover before the next match."

So why did England look so vibrant against Croatia but become stuck against Ghana?

The answer lies in the type of opponents they faced.

England's 19 shots were their most in a World Cup match without scoring since registering 25 against Nigeria in 2002, while their xG reached 1.28. Yet they rarely looked close to finding a breakthrough.

This England side thrives when opponents try to impose themselves. Tuchel's system is designed to lure teams forward, draw them out of shape and exploit the spaces left behind. Croatia obliged and fell into that. Zlatko Dalic's side pressed high, were repeatedly outnumbered and bypassed, and England's runners found themselves attacking isolated defenders.

Ghana, however, refused to play that game and fall into England's hands. They sat in a compact 4-5-1, defended deep and rarely ventured forward. England finished with 78.8 percent possession, the highest they have ever recorded in a World Cup match, and the highest possession figure by any team in World Cup history without scoring. Ghana, ranked 64th in the world, managed just two shots -- the fewest England have ever faced at the tournament.

England were completely dominant but struggled to transform that control into meaningful chances. It took until the 86th minute for the game's biggest opportunity to arrive, when Nico O'Reilly headed against the crossbar before Harry Kane blazed the rebound over.

Their three shots on target all came

from distance and required only routine saves from Ghana goalkeeper Benjamin Asare.

England repeatedly created overloads on one flank before switching play to the other side, a tactic that worked so effectively against Croatia. This time Ghana's full-backs coped admirably. England then resorted to delivering crosses into a crowded penalty area, and Ghana were equal to it as well. Ghana also went man-for-man on England's creative outlets -- Kane, Bellingham, Anderson -- stilling them successfully in midfield by aggressively marking them.

In many ways, this was the match that always threatened to trouble Tuchel's England. His system will likely become more effective as the tournament progresses because most elite opponents will attempt to impose themselves rather than simply survive. Against those teams, England's ability to manipulate space becomes far more dangerous.

Against deep, organised low blocks like Ghana's, however, the solution is less obvious. In those moments, Tuchel may occasionally need something Southgate often relied upon -- individual brilliance capable of succeeding where structure cannot. However, Tuchel is often short of ideas when it comes to solving in-game problems and flexible enough for a plan B.

England have encountered a problem, but not a crisis. Ghana did not expose England. They merely asked a question Croatia never did: what happens when nobody takes the bait? What happens when the spaces disappear? Ghana revealed the type of opponent that can make them uncomfortable. That is not the same thing.

Tuchel's side remain top of the group, remain on course for the knockout rounds and remain one of the more convincing contenders in the tournament. Every World Cup campaign encounters resistance sooner or later.

England's arrived in Boston. They survived it. The next step is proving they can overcome it.