

Pompeo, Esper to visit India next week

AFP, Washington

US Defense Secretary Mark Esper has announced that he and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will visit India next week to strengthen the two countries' alliance in the face of China's strategic challenge.

"India will well be the most consequential partner for us, in the IndoPacific for us for sure, in this century," Esper said in an address to the Atlantic Council.

He said his visit is part of a broader US initiative to strengthen older alliances and develop new ones against Russian and Chinese efforts to build their own global power networks.

According to reports, talks in New Delhi could cover increased intelligence sharing.

It comes as Indian and Chinese troops remain in a standoff following clashes in a disputed Himalayan border region.

Esper's comments also followed an announcement by Australia that it will take part in a large-scale military drill off the coast of India next month, the Malabar naval exercise, together with India, the United States and Japan.

Last November the United States held its first-ever bilateral air, land and sea exercises with India. In July the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz also held exercises with the India navy.

The two countries also opened a cyber defense dialogue last month, Esper said.

His and Pompeo's meetings with Indian counterparts will reflect the need for "a lot more close collaboration" on challenges in the IndoPacific region, where China is building its presence, he said.

Together these efforts will strengthen what may become one of the most consequential partnerships of the 21st century."



A pro-democracy protester wearing a helmet and face mask looks at a line of police during an anti-government rally in Bangkok, yesterday. Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha backed down yesterday over emergency measures he imposed last week to stop three months of protests, but which spurred even bigger demonstrations against his government and the monarchy.

PHOTO: AFP

US ELECTION 2020



11 DAYS TO GO

Trump records show business pursuits in China, bank account: NYT

AFP, Washington

Donald Trump spent years cultivating business projects in China, where he maintained a previously unknown bank account, The New York Times reported Tuesday, as the US president attempts to portray election rival Joe Biden as weaker on Beijing.

Trump has spent recent days promoting a murky claim that Biden's son Hunter sold access to his father in Ukraine and China when he was vice president under Barack Obama.

It is Trump, however, who maintained an office in China during his first run for president, and partnered with a major government-controlled company, the Times reported.

Trump additionally keeps a previously unknown bank account in China, controlled by Trump International Hotels Management, according to an analysis of his tax records by the paper.

Trump Organization lawyer Alan Garten said the company had "opened an account with a Chinese bank having offices in the United States in order to pay the local taxes." "No deals, transactions or other business activities ever materialized and, since 2015, the office has remained inactive," he told The Times. "Though the bank account remains open, it has never been used for any other purpose."

Under his "America First" banner, Trump has portrayed China as the greatest threat to the US and global democracy.

Nagorno-Karabakh

Diplomatic solution not possible now

Says Armenia PM as world powers push for sustainable ceasefire

AFP, Yerevan

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan yesterday ruled out a diplomatic solution to the conflict with Azerbaijan over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region, dealing a fresh blow to efforts by world powers to secure a sustainable truce.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have been engaged in fierce fighting for almost a month over Karabakh, a region of Azerbaijan controlled by Armenian separatists in the wake of the break-up of the Soviet Union.

The flare-up of the conflict has left hundreds dead.

UK, France tighten curbs

AGENCIES

More than a million people in northern England will be banned from mixing with other households under new coronavirus rules announced yesterday, as France said it will extend curfew measures to curb the second wave of infections.

The novel coronavirus has killed at least 1,126,471 people since the outbreak emerged in China late last year, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP at 1100 GMT yesterday.

At least 40,856,210 cases have been registered worldwide. Of these, at least 28,035,900 are now considered recovered.

On Tuesday, 6,630 new deaths and 382,496 new cases were recorded worldwide. The countries with the most new deaths were the United States with 854, followed by India with 717 and Brazil with 651.

The United States remains the worst-affected country with 221,083 deaths, followed by Brazil with 154,837, India with 115,914, Mexico with 86,993 and Britain with 43,967.

The county of South Yorkshire, which includes the city of Sheffield, will enter into "very high" alert or tier three restrictions from Saturday, the UK government announced.



In France, authorities said they will place more regions on the highest health alert level and some of them may be put under curfew.

A nightly curfew from 9:00 pm to 6:00 am went into force at the weekend in Paris and several other French cities in response to daily new infections reaching record levels. Some 20 million French people have already been ordered to stay home every night under a curfew adopted after an alarming surge in new coronavirus cases.

The Czech government says it will curb movement and close all retail stores except food shops, drugstores and pharmacies to battle a huge spike in cases.

Measures will begin today morning and last until November 3.

STAMPEDE, TALIBAN ATTACK

Dozens killed in Afghanistan

AGENCIES

Taliban attack on security forces yesterday and a stampede triggered by jostling visa applicants near Pakistan's consulate killed dozens in Afghanistan.

An estimated 3,000 Afghans had congregated on an open ground, usually used for sports or public gatherings, outside the consulate in Jalalabad, waiting to collect tokens needed to apply for a visa, two provincial officials told Reuters yesterday, a day after the tragedy.

"The visa applicants jostled to secure their token from the consulate officials...the crowd got out of control, leading to a stampede," said an Afghan official.

Eleven of the 15 victims were women, and several senior citizens were among more than a dozen injured, Sohrab Qaderi, a provincial council member, said. Tens of thousands of Afghans every year travel to neighbouring Pakistan to secure medical treatment, education and jobs. The two countries share a nearly 2,600-kilometre border.

Meanwhile, at least 25 Afghan security force personnel were killed in an ambush in Takhar province blamed on the Taliban, officials said yesterday, as spiralling violence imperils ongoing peace talks.

The ambush came despite assurances by the Taliban to Washington last week that they would reduce bloodshed.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Khashoggi fiancee sues Saudi prince in US over murder

The fiancee of journalist Jamal Khashoggi sued Saudi Arabia's crown prince and other officials Tuesday in a US court, seeking damages for his brutal murder in Istanbul two years ago. Turkish citizen Hatice Cengiz and the human rights group Khashoggi formed before his death, Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN), is pursuing Mohammed bin Salman and 28 others for damages over the October 2, 2018 killing of the US-based writer. Cengiz claims personal injury and financial losses over Khashoggi's death, while DAWN said its operations and objectives were hampered by the loss of its founder and central figure. Khashoggi was killed inside Saudi Arabia's Istanbul consulate and his body dismembered and disposed of by a team of Saudis allegedly directed by right-hand men of the crown prince.

Floods kill 111 in Vietnam

At least 111 people have died and 20 others are missing in central Vietnam following weeks of severe flooding and landslides, authorities said yesterday, as the country braced for yet another storm this weekend. About 178,000 homes have been submerged by floodwaters, according to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, with rescuers mounting a desperate bid to get food and drinking water to those cut off. Roads, infrastructure and crops in the central region have also been devastated by the floods, the charity added, warning that hundreds of thousands would need housing and income support in the coming weeks.

India returns Chinese soldier

India yesterday returned a Chinese soldier detained after straying across a disputed border where the two countries have clashed in recent months, China's army announced. Corporal Wang Ya Long was handed over early yesterday, the Chinese military said in a statement. New Delhi on Monday said it had detained Wang after he crossed into Indian-controlled territory in the harsh mountainous area of Ladakh. China said Wang had got "lost after being asked by herders to search for yaks". The two countries have moved tens of thousands of troops and weapons into the high-altitude region after a violent clash in June left 20 Indian soldiers dead and an unknown number of Chinese casualties. Several rounds of talks have failed to significantly ease tensions.

Thailand welcomes first tourists since March

Thailand has welcomed its first group of tourists in seven months, as part of an experiment aimed at testing if a wider opening is possible as the coronavirus cripples the kingdom's economy. A plane load of 39 Chinese tourists flew into Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport Tuesday evening from Shanghai to a welcome from staff in full protective equipment. The visitors underwent health checks and had their luggage disinfected, before donning protective clothing themselves and being whisked away for two weeks' quarantine.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

Of promises, of legislature

FROM PAGE 1

Road safety campaigners continued to press that the 1983 ordinance does not cover many relevant issues and demanded increasing the punishment to at least 10 years for causing death to a person by rash driving.

The government then prepared a draft of the Road Transport Act in early 2017.

In March 2017, the cabinet approved in principle the proposed legislation. But it got shelved at the law ministry for more than a year for vetting amid opposition of transport owners and workers to some of its provisions.

In August 2018, the government was apparently forced to place the draft act before the cabinet following street agitations for road safety in the wake of the deaths of two college students in the capital on July 29.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader at that time said the aim of the proposed law would be to bring discipline in the road transport sector and reduce road crashes.

The cabinet approved the proposed act on August 6 and parliament passed the act on September 19 that year.

But the government did not make the law effective till November last year on a plea that formulation of rules of the act has not been completed.

On April 7, 2019, Law Minister Anisul Huq, after a programme at Jatiya Press Club, told this newspaper that the formulation of the rules is a must for execution of some of the sections. So, they will make the act operational after enactment of the rules.

The government in October last year announced to bring the law into force from November 1. But the rules could not be framed even today.

In the meantime, leaders of transport associations -- powerful due to their affiliation with different political organisations, including the ruling party -- started opposing various sections of the law immediately after enactment of the law.

While citizens are witnessing the authority's dillydallying over implementation of the law, they simultaneously hear lofty promises given by the road transport and bridges minister.

Three days after he took charge of the ministry for the third term in January last year, Obaidul Quader said bringing the road transport sector under discipline will be his first priority.

Taking charge in May the same year after two months of illness, Quader reiterated that ensuring discipline in road transport would be the "biggest challenge in my second innings."

Even in December last year while speaking about his main challenge in 2020 he said, "My first, second and last words would be discipline."

Responding to how successful he has been in bringing discipline to the road transport sector, Quader, also the general secretary of the ruling Awami League, admitted his failure and said, "No. I haven't. We have to go a long way."

Meanwhile, the government in October last year formed a taskforce headed by the home minister to implement the recommendations

given by Shahjahan Khan-led committee for curbing road crashes and bringing discipline to the sector.

One year has gone by but the taskforce could not start its work. It held its first meeting in November last year and was scheduled to sit again within two months but no such meeting took place.

In the meantime, a police report on road crashes paint a gloomy picture.

Despite the Covid-19-induced shutdown for two months, a total of 2,211 people were killed in 2,291 accidents till July this year as per police figures, which are significantly lower than that of road-safety organisations.

Last year, 4,138 lives perished in 4,147 road accidents, the report said.

Amid this situation, the country will observe National Road Safety Day today for the fourth time. The authorities have chalked out several programmes where promises will be made again.

But the roads will remain as dangerous as before unless the authorities are firmly determined to bring an end to this "man-made epidemic" and act accordingly.

Stop rape

FROM PAGE 1

180 days, in line with the court's earlier directives.

The HC also issued a rule asking the authorities to explain in four weeks why holding salish to settle rape incidents should not be declared a criminal offence.

Headed by Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, the committee proposed reducing the fines stipulated under several sections for traffic law violations.

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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Dhaka South City Corporation

Office of the Project Director, PIU

Dhaka City Neighborhood Upgrading Project

(DCNUP)-IDA Cr 6361 BD

Nagar Bhaban (Level 10), Fulbaria, Dhaka-1000

Memo: 46.207.014.09.10.2020/182

Request for Expressions of Interest (Consulting Services-Firms Selection)

BANGLADESH

DHAKA CITY NEIGHBORHOOD UPGRADING PROJECT

IDA Credit No. 6361-BD

Assignment Title: Selection and employment of consulting firm for traffic study cum

junction design in DSCC-National

Reference No.: DCNUP/S-04

The People's Republic of Bangladesh has received credit SDR 72,800,000 (USD 100,500,000) equivalent financing from the World Bank toward the cost of Dhaka City Neighborhood Upgrading Project (DCNUP) to be implemented by Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) and intends to apply part of the proceeds for consulting services.

The consulting services ("the Services") are include, not limited to: (Detail scope of services are mentioned in the terms of reference):

- Prepare baseline data by conducting traffic surveys;
- Analysis of existing year traffic conditions with existing geometry;
- Preparation of the layout maps existing roads;
- Public consultations for environmental, social and economic analysis;
- Prepare Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) report of DSCC's Markets in the selected corridors/neighborhood.
- Preparing a detailed Traffic Circulation/Traffic Management Plan.
- Preparing a design stage safety audit of the recommended preferred alternative.

Expected date for commencement of the services may be September 2020 and completion within 6 (six) months. Estimated Key Professional staffs is about 26 (twenty-six) months as continuous/intermittent throughout the project tenure. TOR can be found at the following website: www.dscn.gov.bd or can be obtained at the address given below.

The Dhaka City Neighborhood Upgrading Project (DCNUP) to be implemented by Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) under Local Government Division, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Government of Bangladesh now invites eligible Consultancy Firm to indicate their interest in providing the Services. Interested consulting firm should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services. Key Experts will not be evaluated at the short listing stage. The short listing criteria are:

- Age of firm
- General experience of the firm