

Next few days critical

EU's Barnier says 'narrow path' to post-Brexit trade deal visible after deadline ditched

REUTERS, Brussels

European Union Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier said yesterday that sealing a trade pact with Britain was still possible before the country's final break with the 27-nation bloc on Decembr 31 but the next few days of negotiations would be critical.

A senior EU diplomat who attended a closed-door briefing by Barnier on the state of play in Brussels said the tortuous trade talks could collapse but for now "the patient is still alive".

"There might now be a narrow path to an agreement visible - if negotiators can clear the remaining hurdles in the next few days," another EU diplomat said, adding that success depends on London accepting "inherent trade-offs" for a fair deal.

Despite missing multiple deadlines, Britain and the EU agreed on Sunday to "go the extra mile" to try to break

deadlocks on access to UK fishing waters for EU trawlers and corporate fair play rules in order to avert a turbulent split in trading ties at the end of the month.

"It is our responsibility to give the talks every chance of success," Barnier said in a tweet after his meeting with EU national envoys, adding "the next few days are important" if a trade deal is to be in place for January 1.

Going into the meeting, he told reporters that differences over free and fair competition and an access to markets and fishing waters still stood in the way of an agreement.

"And it's on these points that we haven't found the right balance with the British. So we keep working," he said.

The estranged allies are racing to seal a new partnership deal to carry on trading freely and govern ties from energy to transport beyond December 31, when Britain leaves the EU's single market and customs union after Brexit.



Police officers surround a suspect who was shooting outside the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine in the Manhattan borough of New York City, New York, US, on Sunday. The gunman was shot dead by police after he opened fire near crowds who had gathered to watch carol-singing outside the church. No one else was struck by gunfire thanks to quick action by three officers on the scene who confronted the suspect, New York City Police Commissioner Dermot Shea told reporters.

PHOTO: REUTERS

PROTEST OUTSIDE PAK MISSION IN US

Protesters demand apology for Bangladesh genocide

ANI, Washington

A US-based Bangladeshi organisation along with other South Asian minorities held a protest outside the Pakistani Embassy in Washington, demanding an apology for the 1971 'genocide' named Operation Searchlight.

Dozens of protestors raised flags, held placards, and chanted anti-Pakistan slogans.

During the protest outside the Pakistani embassy, Pranesh Halder, an organiser, told ANI in addition to the apology, the protestors also demand from Pakistan the Extradition of 195 Pakistani war criminals.

"We demand that Pakistan holds a trial for raping and killing thousands of women and children in 1971," Halder added.

On March 25, 1971, at midnight under the name Operation Searchlight, seen by many as the first step in the Bengali genocide, Pakistan Army killed about 100,000 Bengalis in a single night. They targeted academics and scholars, specifically murdering many university students and professors.


The protestors say that the goal of the operation was to crush the Bengali nationalist movement through fear - they attacked Pilkhana, Rajarbagh Police Lines, Jagannath Hall, a non-Muslim dormitory of Dhaka University, Iqbal Hall, Ramna Sri Ramna Kali Temple and other major institutions.

While interacting with ANI, Debatosh Majumdar, a Bangladeshi American narrated how a family member went missing almost seven decades ago in Bangladesh. After a relentless search, the Mujumdar family learned that their loved one had been killed, allegedly by the Pakistan Army.



Security personnel stand guard next to barricades as farmers protest against the recent agricultural reforms, at the Delhi-Haryana state border in Singhu, India yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



বাংলাদেশ ডেভেলপমেন্ট ব্যাংক লিমিটেড
Bangladesh Development Bank Ltd
Head Office, 8, Rajuk Avenue, Dhaka-1000
IT System Department

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e-Tender Notice

e-Tenders are invited through the National e-GP Portal for the procurement of following goods & services:

e-Tender ID	Name of goods & related services	Closing & opening date & time
518554	Supply, installation, testing and maintenance of the HR & Payroll Management System with necessary training for Bangladesh Development Bank Limited.	December 30, 2020 Time: 12.00pm
524490	Supply, installation and testing of Biometric Attendance Device for Bangladesh Development Bank Limited.	December 30, 2020 Time: 12:30pm

These are online tenders, where only e-Tenders will be accepted and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks' branches up to banking hours.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd) (01762625528-31) (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

-Sd-

Md. Nazrul Islam
Deputy General Manager
Tel: 02-57160451

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Chinese dams under scrutiny

US-funded project using satellites will track water levels on Mekong river; Beijing critical of past research

REUTERS, Bangkok

A US-funded project using satellites to track and publish water levels at Chinese dams on the Mekong river was announced yesterday, adding to the superpowers' rivalry in Southeast Asia.

The 4,350-km (2,700-mile) waterway - known as the Lancang in China and flowing south through Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam - has become a focus of competition.

Beijing has dismissed US research saying Chinese dams have retained water to the detriment of downstream nations, where 60 million people depend on the river for fishing and farming.

The Mekong Dam Monitor, part-funded by the State Department, uses data from cloud-piercing satellites to track levels of dams in China and other countries.

The information will be open for everyone in near real-time from today.

A separate indicator of "surface



wetness" is to show which parts of the region are wetter or drier than usual: a guide to how much natural flows are being affected by the dams.

"The monitor provides evidence that China's 11 mainstream dams are sophisticatedly orchestrated and operated in a way to maximize the production of hydropower for sale to China's eastern provinces with zero consideration given to downstream impacts," said Brian Eyster of the Washington-based Stimson Center, a global think tank which operates the virtual water gauges.

Explosion hits oil tanker off Saudi port city

AFP, Riyadh

An explosion struck a tanker off the Saudi port city of Jeddah, maritime sources said yesterday, without elaborating on the cause.

Saudi authorities did not immediately confirm the blast, which the United Kingdom Marine Trade Operations (UKMTO) said occurred on Sunday off Jeddah, a key Red Sea port and distribution centre for oil giant Saudi Aramco.

The incident comes after an explosion last month rocked a Greek-operated oil tanker docked at Saudi Arabia's southern port of Shuqaiq, an attack that a Riyadh-led military coalition blamed on Yemen's Huthi rebels. Dryad Global, a London-based maritime intelligence firm, also reported Sunday's explosion, saying it struck a vessel while "carrying out operations within the main tanker anchorage at the Saudi Aramco Jeddah port". The affected vessel may be the Dominican-flagged tanker Desert Rose or the Saudi-flagged Al Amal Al Saudi, it added.

NEWS IN BRIEF

CureVac launches final trials for Covid vaccine

German biotech firm CureVac has enrolled the first participant for a Phase 2b/3 clinical trial of its Covid-19 vaccine candidate, it said yesterday. The trial, which is relevant for regulatory approval, will assess the safety and efficacy in adults and is expected to include more than 35,000 participants in Europe and Latin America, it added in a statement. The study aims to demonstrate the efficacy of its vaccine candidate in preventing first episodes of confirmed cases of Covid-19 of any severity as well as preventing moderate to severe confirmed cases of Covid-19 in participants who have never been infected with SARS-CoV-2, CureVac said.

British spy thriller author John le Carre dies aged 89



John le Carre, the British writer best known for his Cold War espionage novels "Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy" and "The Spy Who Came In From The Cold", has died aged 89, his agent and family said Sunday. The author, a former British intelligence officer whose real name was David Cornwell, wrote 25 novels and one memoir in a career spanning six decades, selling 60 million books worldwide.

Massive outage hits Google services worldwide

A massive outage knocked Google services including Gmail and video sharing platform YouTube offline across much of the globe yesterday. Within minutes, social media sites were awash with hashtags including #googledown and YouTubeDOWN as hundreds of millions of internet users tried vainly to connect to the US search engine. Google indicated the outage had affected all of its services for the "majority" of users. The outage began at approximately 1150 GMT and by 1230 GMT Google said that services had been restored for some users and said services should soon be restored for all users.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

EU watchdog warns of pitfalls in use of AI

REUTERS, Brussels

The European Union's rights watchdog has warned of the risks of using artificial intelligence in predictive policing, medical diagnoses and targeted advertising as the bloc mulls rules next year to address the challenges posed by the technology.

While AI is widely used by law enforcement agencies, rights groups say it is also abused by authoritarian regimes for mass and discriminatory surveillance. Critics also worry about the violation of people's fundamental rights and data privacy rules.

The Vienna-based FRA urged policymakers to provide more guidance on how existing rules apply to AI.