

Pakistan take command

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unbeaten on 52. Pakistan will resume the third day trailing by 185 runs and all wickets intact.

Bangladesh's bowling attack posed no threat to the two Pakistani openers as pacers Abu Jayed and Ebadot Hossain were unable to extract any purchase with the new ball.

The only chance that Bangladesh managed to create was in the 13th over when Taijul Islam's armer zipped through Shafique's back leg when he was on nine.

Initially, it seemed it had hit the bat first but despite an appeal from Taijul and wicketkeeper Liton Das, skipper Mominul Haque opted not to review.

It was later shown that the ball had hit the pad first but would have otherwise gone on to hit the stumps.

Abid stayed positive with his shot-making and reached his fifty off 84 balls while Shafique displayed great patience and reached his fifty off 153 balls.

Earlier, Pakistan's seamers again used the new ball to perfection to

begin the second day as Hasan trapped centurion Liton Das leg before with a brilliant in-swing, ending his magnificent 206 run fifth-wicket stand with Mushfiquir Rahim.

Debutant Yasir Ali struck a gorgeous cover drive to Shaheen Afridi and was looking good until he was undone by another deadly in-swinging delivery from Hasan which went through the gap between the bat and pad and struck timber.

Mushfiquir exercised caution in his nineties, playing 14 dot balls before edging to the keeper off the bowling of Faheem Ashraf. It was the fourth instance when Mushfiquir was dismissed in the nineties in Test cricket -- the most by a Bangladeshi.

Mehedi Hasan Miraz then added some crucial runs, striking six fours during an unbeaten 38 before Afridi and Hasan removed the lower-order inside the first session.

Hasan ended with figures of five for 51 while Afridi and Faheem bagged two wickets each.

India, Russia, China alarmed

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exams yesterday for a Turkish foundation in Kabul that runs some of Afghanistan's most highly regarded schools, despite a delay by the Taliban in allowing the 13-year-olds to return to the classroom.

Some 3,500 students sat the highly competitive exams for the Afghan-Turk school system, with girls making up almost 40% of candidates, Reza Parsa, a school official, said.

The move came despite the Taliban government's delay in authorising girls above grade 7 - aged about 13 - to return to school following a ban imposed when the movement seized power in August.

"We want all girls to be educated. This is our president's and our government's wish and that of Afghans," the Educational Councillor at Kabul's Turkish Embassy, Changez Idmir, said at a news conference to mark the holding of the entrance tests.

Facing mounting global pressure, the Taliban have said they will allow

older girls to resume classes once arrangements are made to ensure they can do so in conformity with what the movement considers proper Islamic standards.

Afghan-Turk schools are regarded among the top schools in Afghanistan and admission is highly competitive.

Unofficially, many parts of the country have seen older girls restart classes, while officially the Taliban say they are still working on a national system.

An official of the Taliban-led education ministry, Ehsan Khateb, also attended the ceremony and thanked the Turkish government.

Afghan-Turk schools have had to make changes to their curriculum, shutting music, theatre and dance departments at the request of Taliban officials, the head of the Turkish educational foundation, Salleh Saghar, told Reuters.

The foundation respected the rules and culture of the host country, he said.

No justice expected

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the resolution which called for meeting of the Security Council on the "threat to peace" in the Indian subcontinent. **YAHYA'S MESSAGE TO THANT**
Pakistan president Yahya Khan sent a message today to the UN secretary-general U Thant inviting his attention to the rapidly deteriorating situation in the subcontinent.

In the message, Yahya proposed the stationing of UN observers and reported on the "violations of Pakistan territory by India".

ON THE WAR FRONT

On the night of November 28, Mukti Bahini attacked Pak troops at Gaurinagar and captured portion of Gaurinagar from enemy occupation.

Calm returns to Solomons capital after deadly riots

AFP, Honiara

Calm returned to the Solomon Islands' capital Honiara yesterday after days of rioting left at least three dead and reduced sections of the city to smouldering ruins.

Petrol stations, shops and other businesses began to reopen, with Honiara residents flocking to buy basic provisions as the violence ebbed.

"The situation is very tense and anything could happen anytime," said Audrey Awao, a working mother who worried there would soon be no food left in the shops.

What began as a small protest on Wednesday quickly descended into a violent free-for-all, with poor Honiara residents joining anti-government protesters to rampage through the shattered glass and burnt-out remains of businesses for things to eat or sell.

For three straight days, angry mobs cut through the usually sleepy seaside capital, demanding the removal of Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare.

Two years of pandemic-induced closed borders have left the already ravaged Solomons economy in tatters, deepening widespread joblessness and poverty among the population of around 800,000.

An early estimate of the cost, released by the Central Bank of the Solomon Islands, said 56 buildings in the capital had been burnt and looted, with many businesses facing over a year-long recovery.

While the loss to the economy was expected to be at least \$28 million (24.7 million euros), with the bank's governor warning that the nation's accounts -- already struggling to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic -- had been further weakened by the riots.

A more thorough estimate of the damage would be released in the coming days, he added.

"Now the PM needs to step down," a self-employed 32-year-old who gave his name as Selson told AFP. "That's the demand for all citizens of the Solomon Islands."

Local police said a forensic team was working to identify the charred

remains of three bodies found in a shop in the city's burnt-out Chinatown district.

Heavily armed police were a visible presence on nearby streets as locals began clean up operations and limited bus services resumed.

A night-time curfew and the presence of roughly 150 foreign peacekeepers from Australia and Papua New Guinea appeared to have helped cool tensions.

But the scale of the recovery was coming into sharp focus, even as the city remained on edge.

"It is very frustrating as it took me more than three hours to reach the fuel pump to get my vehicle fuelled," Awao told AFP.

Many Solomon Islanders believe their government is corrupt and beholden to Beijing and other foreign interests.

"Most people are barely getting one meal a day, there are no tourists and very little economic stimulus," Douglas Kelson, chief officer at St John Ambulance Service, told AFP.

"People do things they normally wouldn't when they are hungry," Kelson said.

Protesters channelled their anger directly at Sogavare and his government, with mobs attempting to torch parliament and the prime minister's private residence as police fired tear gas and warning shots.

Over 100 people have been arrested for riot-related activity, Solomon Islands police said yesterday as they tried to restore order.

"No one is above the law," said commissioner Mostyn Mangau, urging residents to "respect each other, as well as our visiting friends from abroad".

As tensions escalated, Sogavare had begged neighbours for urgent help.

In a letter obtained by AFP, the prime minister told his Papua New Guinea counterpart James Marape that "certain elements" had "attempted to overthrow a democratically elected government" and called for peacekeepers to be sent for a "period of three to four weeks".



A member of Tunisia's national guard delivers food rations to migrants rescued during an attempted crossing of the Mediterranean by boat, at the port of el-Ketef in Ben Guerdane in southern Tunisia near the border with Libya, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Bangladesh's exclusion bewildering

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has not been invited.

"Our goal is to be as inclusive as possible, within logistical constraints," she said, adding, "In the long run, we seek to engage any and all countries that show a genuine willingness in making commitments that support the Summit's goals."

Former Ambassador Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury said the US and Bangladesh have a very strong relationship, which is even going to be stronger given the fact Bangladesh is in a strategic location in the Asia-Pacific and that the US is looking at Bangladesh to boost trade, defence and security relations.

Also, Bangladesh is a major Muslim country whose core values are democracy and human rights. It is also making a significant contribution to world peace, including in the UN and other multilateral bodies while sheltering more than a million Rohingya refugees that drew applause globally.

It is not only the US but also Europe that will be strongly supporting the initiative, which is part of the US's policy of return to global leadership to face down authoritarian forces led by China and Russia, he said.

"Bangladesh might have flaws in democratic practices...whatever, the US could have engaged Bangladesh before the exclusion," Chowdhury said, adding, "Not including Bangladesh suggests a contradicting and confusing US stance."

Also, he said, Washington has created a scope for Dhaka to complain if the US speaks of democracy later.

He suggested that Dhaka seeks to know the factors that led to Washington's exclusion.

Bangladesh Enterprise Institute President Humayun Kabir said the Summit for Democracy, as pledged by Biden before the elections, will have significant implications in the wake of deteriorating democratic and human rights values globally.

This initiative will be stronger if

Biden is elected in the next elections, he added.

"It seems Biden administration is going strongly and institutionally against the authoritarian regimes," said Humayun Kabir, a former ambassador.

He said analysis of the list of the invitees reveals it has two types of countries -- strong democracies and the US' strategic allies, whose democracies are, however, questionable. Some of the US's strategic allies, including Egypt and Turkey have not been invited.

"This could be a comfort for Bangladesh," he said.

However, one needs to keep in mind that the Summit for Democracy will be a trendsetter in the future. This can also contribute to who's a US friend and who's not.

"Though not invited, we need to take note of what's happening and the implications of the summit. Accordingly, we need to act," Humayun Kabir told this correspondent.

Armenia, Azerbaijan agree to ease tension under Putin's watch

AFP, Moscow

The leaders of arch foes Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to ease tensions left over after their war over Nagorno-Karabakh last year under the mediation of Russia's Vladimir Putin on Friday.

Both Armenia's Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijan's Ilham Aliyev hailed talks held with Putin in the Black Sea resort of Sochi as positive.

Putin announced that the pair had agreed to begin the process of demarcating their borders, re-building transport links in the region, as well as moving forward on "humanitarian issues."

He thanked Pashinyan and Aliyev -- whose countries have been at loggerheads for years and who rarely meet face-to-face -- for agreeing to the talks.

The trio met less than two weeks after the worst fighting between the ex-Soviet Caucasus republics since their six-week war last year that claimed more than 6,500 lives.

The meeting was timed to coincide with the anniversary of a Moscow-

brokered ceasefire that ended last year's conflict.

"We agreed on a number of issues that I think are key," Putin said in a joint press conference after the talks.

Armenia's Pashinyan said the talks were held in an "open" and "positive" atmosphere.

"The results of the meeting are positive. (The region) will be safer," Azerbaijan's Aliyev said.

Putin had earlier urged the leaders to ease tensions.

"We were part of a united state for centuries, we have deep historical links," Putin told the pair after holding separate talks with each of them.

"We should aim to rebuild them and nurture them in the future," he said.

He pressed the pair -- who last met in January -- to hold more direct contacts.

"The more contacts, including direct ones, the better," Putin said.

Putin welcomed the foes' planned meeting in Brussels on December 15, saying he had discussed the matter with European Council President Charles Michel.



A person holds a sign during a protest against the proposed changes to anti-terrorism and gagging laws, which police officers say will undermine their authority and jeopardise the safety of citizens, in Madrid, Spain, yesterday. Sign reads: "Sanchez go away".

PHOTO: REUTERS

Seoul trials

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teacher Byun Seo-yeon told AFP during a visit to the bright and busy Maru nursery in Seoul.

The robot's eyes wink and blink -- and its pupils become heart-shaped during conversation.

With a camera on its helmet, it takes photos that are instantly sent to a tablet for viewing.

"In the future, knowing how to manage AI and related tools will be very important," Han Dong-seog, from the Seoul government's childcare division, told AFP.

The robots are being trialled in 300 Seoul nurseries and childcare centres, with the government recommending the programme for children aged three to five.

"We believe having this experience in nursery schools will have a lasting effect throughout their youth and as adults," Han said.

The Alpha Mini has been adopted as part of a daily schedule for the class of four- to five-year-old students at Maru, with its ability to "fart" on command being a highlight during playtime.

"When I tell it to sing, it sings well. I tell it to dance and we dance together," said five-year-old Lee Ga-yeon.

Two more die

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hospitals during the past one day.

From the beginning of the pandemic, 97.74 percent Covid-19 patients recovered among the infected people while 1.78 percent died, the DGHS statistics showed.

The DGHS said among the total 27,975 fatalities, 12,209 occurred in Dhaka division, 5,680 in Chattogram, 2,050 in Rajshahi, 3,609 in Khulna, 946 in Barishal, 1,270 in Sylhet, 1,367 in Rangpur and 844 in Mymensingh divisions.

Trudeau tours flood-ravaged western Canada

AFP, Ottawa

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Friday visited areas of Canada's Pacific coast hit by catastrophic floods, warning of further climate mayhem as the region braces for more torrential rains.

"This will not be the last crisis Canadians go through," Trudeau told a joint news conference with British Columbia's premier, John Horgan.

"Extreme weather events are going to become more frequent," he said, adding: "We need to address the long term climate change problems," including by cutting CO2 emissions and making infrastructure more resilient.

Heavy rains hit British Columbia in mid-November, causing widespread flooding and mudslides that damaged or destroyed roads and bridges, forced thousands to evacuate their homes and left at least four dead and one missing.

This followed record-high temperatures over the summer that killed more than 500 people in the province, as well as wildfires that destroyed a town.

"We're facing the brunt of climate change, not in the future, but right now," Horgan said.

"Our farms have been flooded, our roads have been washed away and our communities are underwater, and more rain is coming," he said.

Horgan's government on Friday ordered sections of three major highways closed ahead of two more major rain storms expected over the coming days.

Environment Canada has forecast up to 120 millimeters (4.7 inches) of rain over the weekend, warning it could lead to flash floods and washouts.

A second storm is expected to slam the province on Monday.