

Dhaka requires fresh deal

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killing, enforced disappearance and rape under colour of law as GVHRs when implementing the Leahy law. Incidents are examined on a fact-specific basis.

The Leahy Law includes an exception permitting the resumption of assistance to a unit if the Secretary of State determines and reports to Congress that the government of the country is taking effective steps to bring the responsible members of the security forces unit to justice.

An inter-ministerial meeting was held at the foreign ministry in the middle of the month on the matter, according to the official.

"We are further discussing the matter and will let the US government know our decision soon after a meeting next week," he added.

Apart from economic, trade and political ties, Bangladesh has strong security cooperation with the US.

Since 2015, the US provided \$66.9 million in foreign military financing and \$7.29 million in international

military education and training assistance to Bangladesh, according to the US State Department.

The US government has \$130.59 million in active government-to-government sales cases with Bangladesh under the foreign military sales system.

In 2012, Bangladesh acquired four C-130E transport aircraft worth \$180 million. In addition, Bangladesh received 20 aircraft engines provided with Title 10 security assistance funding under the Excess Defense Articles (EDA) programme.

Bangladesh also received two former US Coast Guard Hamilton Class cutters via EDA in 2013 and 2015, which now serve as the two largest vessels in the Bangladesh Navy.

Additionally, the country received 50 EDA MRAP vehicles in 2019 to support its peacekeepers in Mali.

The US also provides support including training and equipment for the Bangladesh Peacekeeping Missions in the UN.

Flying robots to hunt

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It is hoped that the aerobots would be able to cruise for several months to one year.

This buoyancy of the vehicle also means that it would be prevented from descending more than 50 kilometres from the surface of Venus. The temperature of the planet can reach approximately 475 degrees Celsius, and has melted numerous probes sent to it already.

While hybrid vehicle designs have been proposed since 2014, West Virginia University associate professor Guilherme Pereira said he was "not aware if any software has been created".

"One of the ideas of our project is to extend the battery life of the vehicle by planning energy-efficient paths, thus allowing it to fly during the night as well," the researcher added.

The software will have three main aims: creating a motion planner for the craft so it can be commanded to move by a NASA science team, localising the aerobot in the atmosphere using vehicles and maps of the planet, and coordinating vehicles for better estimation of atmospheric conditions.

The motion planner will have to consider movements for an "optimal energy strategy" because, over the four days it will be orbiting the Venuvian atmosphere, it will be exposed to long periods without light on the dark side of the planet and it needs to have enough energy to survive these periods.

This means knowing information

about wind direction, for example, and navigating the robot in that direction because it would require less power. This would all need to be done without GPS (which requires a satellite network).

It has been proposed that there may be biological life forms in Venus' acidic clouds due to the presence of ammonia.

"We know that life can grow in acid environments on Earth, but nothing as acid as the clouds of Venus were believed to be. But if something is making ammonia in the clouds, then that will neutralize some of the droplets, making them potentially more habitable," said Cardiff University's Dr William Bains.

Ammonia is made using hydrogen, but non-biological processes do not seem to be able to achieve the quantity that scientists believe is in the clouds - suggesting that a biological culprit is more likely.

"There are many other challenges for life to overcome if it is to live in the clouds of Venus," said Dr Bains. "There is almost no water there for a start, and all life that we know of needs water. But if life is there, then neutralizing the acid will make the clouds just a bit more habitable than we thought."

It will not be until further radio telescope examination that scientists might come to more concrete solutions, however, or the probes being sent to Venus in 2023 and over the next decade.

'I'll do what can be done'

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She said the government would take steps so that expatriates can send money from the Maldives through Probashi Kallyan Bank, set up by her government for the welfare of Bangladeshi expatriates.

"I'll ask the Probashi Kallyan Bank to take proper steps so that the Bangladesh Bank appoints an agent for money exchange," Hasina added.

About air connectivity, the prime minister said Biman Bangladesh Airlines would launch its flights with the Maldives. "We have a goal so that our government airlines - Biman

-- starts its flight operation with the Maldives," she said.

Mentioning that some 1 lakh Bangladeshis are now there in the Maldives, Hasina said the issue of undocumented Bangladeshis was also discussed with the Maldivian authorities so that they could stay there legally.

In this regard, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was also signed with the expatriates' welfare minister so that they [undocumented Bangladeshis] would face no problem staying in the Maldives, she said.

No one arrested yet

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window of the room and contact a hotel guest who unlocked the door.

After she called 999 and Rab-15, Rab officers rescued her around 1:30am yesterday.

Suspect Ashiqul was accused in over a dozen cases, including of murder, robbery, mugging, and extortion, filed previously with Cox's Bazar Sadar Model Police Station, said Officer-in-Charge Sheikh Munir-ul-Gias.

A resident medical officer of Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital Shahin Mohammad Abdur Rahman Chowdhury said they had collected necessary samples from the victim's body.

"We will provide the results to the investigating officer timely. After collecting the samples, we send the victim to the law enforcers," he said.

Lt Col Khairul Islam Sarkar, commanding officer of Rab -15, told The Daily Star that they were continuing the drive to arrest all the suspects at several places.

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Putin hails multiple launch test of hypersonic missile

AFP, Moscow

President Vladimir Putin yesterday said the Russian military successfully fired a simultaneous salvo of its Zircon hypersonic missiles, calling it "a big event" for the country.

As world powers race to develop advanced weaponry, Russia has carried out a number of successful tests of its Zircon hypersonic cruise missile.

This was however the first time that Russian authorities reported a successful simultaneous launch test of several Zircon missiles.

Speaking at a government meeting on Friday, Putin said that the salvo launch of the missile had been conducted overnight.

"The tests were conducted successfully, immaculately," Putin said in televised remarks.

"This is a big event in the life of the country and a considerable step in strengthening Russia's security and improving its defence capability," he added.

A spokesman for the Russian defence ministry could not provide further details when reached by AFP.



A family whose house was damaged, take shelter under a tree covered with iron sheets along a highway in Surigao City, Surigao del Norte province, yesterday, days after super Typhoon Rai devastated the city.

PHOTO: AFP

Intel apologizes over letter addressing US sanctions on Xinjiang

AFP, New York

Intel found itself on the back foot in Washington and Beijing on Thursday after issuing a public apology over a letter to its suppliers referencing US sanctions targeting human rights abuses in China's Xinjiang region.

The conflict follows passage of a US law that bans virtually all imports from Xinjiang in response to concerns over the use of forced labor and other human rights abuses against an ethnic minority.

The semiconductor giant told suppliers earlier this month to avoid any products from the region in order to comply with the restrictions.

But following public outcry in China, the chipmaker on Thursday expressed regret for the comments in a statement posted on Weibo, the

Chinese social media platform.

"Our original intention was to ensure compliance with American laws," Intel said. "We apologize for the trouble caused to our respected Chinese customers, partners and the public."

President Joe Biden signed the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act into law on Thursday, and Intel's apology drew a skeptical response from the White House.

"We believe the private sector and the international community should oppose the PRC's weaponizing of its markets to stifle support for human rights," said White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki.

"We also think that American companies should never feel the need to apologize for standing up for fundamental human rights or posing repression."

A statement from Intel's US staff made clear the company would follow US law.

"On December 23 we issued a statement in China to address concerns raised by our stakeholders there regarding how we communicated certain legal requirements and policies with our global supplier network," Intel said.

"We will continue to ensure that our global sourcing complies with applicable laws and regulations in the US and in other jurisdictions where we operate."

The pressure on Intel comes as US companies grapple with the new sanctions, which ban the import of all goods from the region unless companies offer verifiable proof that production did not involve forced labor.

West condemns 'deployment' of Russian mercenaries in Mali

AFP, Paris

More than a dozen Western powers on Thursday expressed anger that Russian mercenaries working for the controversial Wagner group have started to deploy in Mali, accusing Moscow of providing material backing for the fighters.

The powers involved in the fight against a jihadist insurgency in Mali, including Canada, Germany, France and the UK, said they "firmly condemn the deployment of mercenary troops on Malian territory".

It was one of the first official acknowledgements by Western capitals that the deployment of fighters has begun in Mali after months of warnings to the Bamako government.

But the statement did not say that the presence of the Wagner group in Mali would result in a pullout of foreign forces.

"This deployment can only further deteriorate the security situation in West Africa, lead to an aggravation

of the human rights situation in Mali (and) threaten the agreement for peace and reconciliation in Mali," the 15 powers said.

They said they "deeply regret" the choice of the Malian authorities to use "already scarce public funds" to pay foreign mercenaries instead of supporting the Malian armed forces.

In a message to Moscow, the statement added: "We are aware of the involvement of the Russian Federation government in providing material support to the deployment of the Wagner group in Mali and call on Russia to revert to a responsible and constructive behaviour in the region."

A French government source who asked not to be named said intense activity had been noted as the deployment went ahead.

"We are seeing repeated air rotations with military transport planes belonging to the Russian army and installations at Bamako airport to allow the arrival of a significant number of mercenaries," said the

source.

Also noted had been frequent visits by Wagner executives to Bamako and the activities by Russian geologists known for their association with Wagner, said the source.

Washington was not a signatory of the statement but US Secretary of State Antony Blinken last week warned Mali not to accept Wagner mercenaries, saying a deal would divert needed funds and further destabilise the country.

There has been growing concern over the situation in Mali under transitional leader Colonel Assimi Goita -- who took office in June after the country's second coup in less than a year -- and in particular over fears a commitment to hold elections in February is slipping.

The French source said the deployment of the Wagner troops was a "symptom" of the attitude of the current authorities towards transition and showed that, rather than paving the way for civilian rule, they wanted to "stay in place".

Disparity remains

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This means there is no representation of all classes of the society in the legislative process, Sobhan said.

"It does not match with the idea of democracy."

Now, people are spending crores of money to get elected even at the union level, so they are seeing it as a profitable activity.

"This ultimately makes them corrupt. All of these are causes of our dis-functioning democracy," Sobhan added.

Bangladesh won the liberation war but it is still yet to find emancipation, said Abul Barkat, president of BEA.

"There is still a wholesale culture of injustice."

The constitution has clauses to address all the issues Sobhan touched upon injustice, said Barkat, also a former chairman of the University of Dhaka's economics department.

"If you don't follow these then you are not following the theme of the liberation war," he added.

Country reports

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of the pandemic, 97.74 percent Covid-19 patients recovered among the infected people while 1.77 percent died, the DGHS statistics showed.

The DGHS said among the total 28,055 fatalities, 12,249 occurred in Dhaka division, 5,688 in Chattogram, 2,059 in Rajshahi, 3,618 in Khulna, 949 in Barishal, 1,273 in Sylhet, 1,372 in Rangpur and 847 in Mymensingh divisions.

Goodbye glasses

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type of cutting laser is used to precisely change the shape of the dome-shaped clear tissue at the front of your eye (cornea) to improve vision. During the procedure, you lie on your back in a reclining chair. After numbing drops are placed in your eye, your doctor uses an instrument to hold your eyelids open. Then some laser procedures will be done to make a flap and re-shape your cornea. After the laser procedure, the surgeon lays the flap back into place. The flap usually heals without stitches.

Certain side-effects of LASIK surgery are fairly common like dry eye, glare, halos but a very few people consider them to be a long-term problem.

Under-correction, over-correction or regression may happen after LASIK procedure. But it's rare that surgical complications can result in loss of vision. Rarely, infection or epithelial ingrowth may occur.

Certain health conditions can increase the risks associated with LASIK surgery or make the outcome less predictable.

Doctors may not recommend laser refractive surgery if the patient has certain conditions like autoimmune disorders, weakened immune system caused by immunosuppressive medications or HIV, persistent dry eyes, recent changes in vision due to medications, hormonal changes, pregnancy, breast-feeding, inflammation of the cornea, lid disorders, eye injuries or eye diseases such as uveitis, glaucoma or cataracts.

LASIK surgery is usually not advisable if patients have an eye disease that causes the cornea to thin and bulge, or if they have a family history of it, have fairly good overall vision, have severe nearsightedness, have very large pupils and have age-related eye changes that cause vision to be less clear.



Farmers shout slogans as they block railway tracks during a demonstration demanding compensations and jobs for the families of those who died during protests against the central government's agricultural reforms on the outskirts of Amritsar on December 24, 2021.

PHOTO: AFP