

It’s all about co-op, not confrontation

Says EU special envoy on Indo-Pacific strategy

UNB, Dhaka

European Union Special Envoy for the Indo-Pacific Gabriele Visentin has said their strategy is all about “cooperation, not confrontation”.

“So, this strategy is also about scaling up and diversifying our political and economic partnership across the Indo-Pacific. We want to uphold international law and multilateralism,” he told diplomatic correspondents during an interactive session at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

Diplomatic Correspondents Association, Bangladesh (DCAB) organised the

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TIPU MURDER

Another suspect held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police has arrested another suspect in the murders of Awami League leader Jahidul Islam Tipu and college student Samia Afran Jamal Prity.

The suspect -- Abul Hossain Mohammad Arfan Ullah Imam Khan alias Damal -- was arrested in the capital's Dakkhin Kamalapur area around 8:30pm on Thursday, said police.

A foreign-made revolver and two bullets were seized from him, added the law enforcers.

Police filed a case against him under the Arms Act with Motijheel Police Station and placed him before a court with a 10-day remand plea. The court granted one-day remand for interrogation yesterday.

Contacted, DB (Motijheel division) Deputy Commissioner Rifat Rahman Shamim said

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This video grab taken from a handout footage released by the Russian Emergencies Ministry yesterday shows a Rosneft fuel depot on fire in the town of Belgorod, some 40 kilometres from Russia's border with Ukraine. Ukrainian helicopters have carried out a strike on the fuel storage facility in Belgorod, the local governor said.

PHOTO: AFP

Ukraine strikes inside Russian territory

Talks resume; US warns of ‘longer conflict’ as Moscow eyes Donbas; Russia lets gas flow to Europe after Putin deadline

AGENCIES

Ukrainian attack helicopters executed a low-flying pre-dawn raid on Russian territory yesterday, a Russian official said, eluding air defenses to strike a fuel depot and signalling Kyiv's ability to broaden the field of the war.

Peace talks between Ukrainian and Russian officials resumed via video, but Moscow warned that the helicopter attack on the fuel depot in the town of Belgorod would hamper negotiations.

After over a month of a military campaign that has reduced parts of Ukraine to rubble, Moscow said in peace talks earlier this week it would scale back attacks on the capital Kyiv and the city of Chernigiv.

But Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said Russia was consolidating and preparing "powerful strikes" in the country's east and south, joining a chorus of Western assessments that Moscow troops were regrouping.

"This is part of their tactics," said Zelensky in a late-night address.

"In Donbas and Mariupol, in the

Kharkiv direction, the Russian army is accumulating the potential for attacks, powerful attacks," he said.

Washington echoed that assessment, with a senior US defence official saying Russia's focus on Donbas could herald a "longer, more prolonged conflict".

Fears grew that the theatre of war may yet grow, as Russia for the first time yesterday accused Ukraine of an air strike with helicopters hitting Rosneft's fuel storage facility in the western town of Belgorod, around 40 kilometres from the border with Ukraine.

"There was a fire at the petrol depot because of an air strike carried out by two Ukrainian army helicopters, which entered Russian territory at a low altitude," Belgorod region governor Vyacheslav Gladkov wrote on messaging app Telegram.

The consequence of the accusation was swiftly made clear by the Kremlin.

"Of course, this is not something that can be perceived as creating comfortable conditions for the continuation of negotiations," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, referring to ongoing

peace talks.

In the southern city of Mariupol, civilians were still desperately waiting for help after weeks under heavy shelling with little water, food and electricity, reports AFP.

The international Red Cross said it remained "hopeful ... but it's not yet clear that (the evacuation) will happen today[Friday]."

Meanwhile, Russia allowed gas to keep flowing to Europe yesterday despite a deadline for buyers to pay in roubles or be cut off.

An order by Putin cutting off gas buyers unless they pay in roubles from yesterday had caused alarm in Europe, where it was seen as Moscow's strongest card to play to retaliate for Western financial sanctions.

Germany, the biggest buyer, rejected the demand as "blackmail".

But pipelines were pumping as normal yesterday. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said the decree would not affect shipments which were already paid for, only becoming an issue when new payments were due in the second half of the month.

3 cops injured in drug peddlers’ attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Three police members, including a sub inspector, were injured as drug peddlers attacked them in Habiganj's Chunarughat on Thursday night.

They were undergoing treatment at different hospitals.

Locals said a team from Chunarughat Police Station went to Deundi tea garden to nab drug peddlers, who attacked the police personnel.

Champak Dham, OC (investigation) of the police station, said six people were arrested for their alleged involvement in the incident.

99 gold bars seized in Jhenidah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A BGB team seized 99 gold bars, weighing around 12.5kg, from a man in the district's Moheshpur upazila yesterday morning.

Lt Col Shahin Azad, commanding officer of 58 BGB Battalion in Moheshpur, said a team of Matila BOP seized the bars from the possession of Ibrahim Hossain, 28, in Battala area on his way to Jhenidah town on a motorcycle.

The bars were smuggled through Matila border, he said.

A case was filed with Moheshpur Police Station.

Girl rescued 2 months after abduction

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Police rescued a schoolgirl from Narayanganj who was abducted from Patuakhali's Rangabali around two months ago.

Russell Mridha, 22, the key accused, was arrested. He was sent to jail through a court yesterday.

Jaglut Haider, officer-in-charge of Rangabali Police Station, said the girl was rescued from Narayanganj's Fatulla on Thursday morning and Russell was arrested at that time. They were trying to arrest two other accused, he said.

On February 3, the victim's mother filed an abduction case with Rangabali Police Station.

The mother said Russell along with others kidnapped her daughter, a class-X student, around 7:30am on February 2 when she was going to her tutor.

Missing man found dead in Chuadanga

UNB, Chuadanga

Police recovered the body of a man from Chuadanga's Alamdanga yesterday, four days after he went missing.

Locals found the hanging body of Sajjadul Alam Chapal, 35, at their abandoned house in Gobindpur village around 2:30pm.

Chapal used to live with his family at his father-in-law's house in Meherpur. No one lives in his father's house in Alamdanga.

Police suspect it as a case of suicide.

Only three on the track

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before June 2021.

The original deadlines of the five others were either December 2021 or June 2022.

One of the five projects was taken to expand a road from Masterpara to Chagalnaiya in Feni. Its initial deadline was December 2021, which was later extended by a year.

"The project will not end in this fiscal year. It might have been added to the list by mistake," an RHD official in Feni told The Daily Star recently.

Another project was to expand a road from Pinguria to Hemra Launch Terminal in Bagerhat. Although the work was supposed to be complete by December last year, the project authorities now hope to end it within June this year.

It means, only three projects are set to be over within their original deadline, said officials.

SOME DELAYED PROJECTS

Building a 700-meter bridge over the Kushiara river in Sunamganj is one of the projects which have been delayed by a long time.

Initiated in June 2014, the project was supposed to end within three years, but the foundation stone was laid in January 2017.

The project was revised twice and the costs rose to Tk 141.38 crore from Tk 127 crore.

The original deadline of the Dhaka-Mawa Bhanga Expressway Project also expired long ago.

To ensure smooth traffic movement across the Padma bridge, the

government in May 2016 took up the project to widen the road involving Tk 6,252 crore.

The project's deadline was April 2019. The authorities then approved a special revision adding Tk 640 crore, mainly for land acquisition.

But, in a rare move, in 2018, a separate Development Project Proposal (DPP) was approved with a cost of Tk 4,111.85 crore for including more elements in the project. June 2019 was fixed as the new deadline.

The total cost rose to Tk 11,003 crore.

A DIFFERENT CASE

The RHD in 2013 had taken up a project to build three new bridges in Kanchpur, Meghna and Gumti areas on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway and rehabilitate the existing bridges on the highway.

Funded by Japan, the work was completed within the deadline of December 2019. Tk 1,388 crore was saved as well.

The RHD later completed some additional work with that money.

The work would be over within this fiscal year, said officials.

Contacted, RHD Chief Engineer AKM Manir Hossain Pathan said, "The progress in projects has been hampered for more than two years due to Covid-19 pandemic.

"All five 'M's -- money, manpower, materials, machinery and methods -- of project management were affected by Covid, which caused the delays," he told The Daily Star on

Thursday.

Asked about cost escalations and delays in many projects even before the pandemic, he said officials start work on the basis of feasibility studies.

"But when they go to the field for the implementation, changes need to be made considering the reality, which leads to project revisions."

Asked whether they had enough capacity to complete projects on time, he said they were working to increase their manpower.

"Once we have enough manpower, 90 percent of our problems will be solved."

He also said delays in land acquisition and utility shifting are also responsible for the failure to complete physical work on time.

More woes

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Mia said there is no shortage of supply of Hilsa. But the prices rose because people are buying more.

The price of each kg of Hilsa rose by Tk 100-150 and Rui by Tk 10-20.

Contacted, SM Nazer Hossain, vice-president of Consumer Association of Bangladesh, said demands for certain products rise ahead of festivals in many countries. "But people do not suffer. It is different in our country. Businessmen take advantage of special occasions and increase prices."

There is no government control over businesses, he said, urging the government to take effective measures to monitor the markets.

Slain Rohingya

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population density," the foreign minister said.

After the killing of Mohibullah on September 29 last year, authorities took his family members to a safe shelter as they were afraid of living in the camp. Since then, they had been requesting for a third country relocation.

The UN Refugee Agency and the International Organization for Migration helped the family members complete the relocation process.

Mohibullah, who was the chairman of Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Rights, played

a vital role in the Rohingya repatriation efforts, police said.

In the previous years, a small number of Rohingyas were relocated to third countries, including Canada. Authorities, however, discouraged third country relocation, arguing that such an initiative would encourage Rohingyas to flee to Bangladesh.

Bangladesh now shelters about one million Rohingyas, including the 750,000 who fled a brutal military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine State in 2017. There is no headway in the Rohingya repatriation despite repeated efforts.

Proteas in driving

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during an unbeaten 44 off 141 deliveries. Batting for 49 overs, Bangladesh reached 98 for four at day's close, trailing by 269 runs. A delivery from Harmer, that kept low, castled opener Shadman Islam after a solid start alongside Joy.

Najmul Hossain strung together a 55-run stand with Joy before Harmer got the better of him after a 87-ball 38. Harmer would go onto account for both skipper Mominul Haque, gone for a duck, and Mushfiqur Rahim, out for nine to a soft dismissal.

Earlier, Tigers' pacer Khaled Ahmed, in for the injured Shoriful Islam, became the first Bangladesh pacer to bag four wickets in a Test match against South Africa in their soil.

The Proteas started positively from their

overnight score of 233 for four but Khaled, handed the second new ball, scalped two wickets in back-to-back deliveries in his second over of the day. The hosts were eventually bowled out for 367 after Skipper Temba Bavuma scored 93, which was followed by Harmer's gritty 38.

Sri Lanka

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when a security vehicle ran over them.

Police said 53 protesters were arrested, but local media organisations said five news photographers were also detained and tortured at a local police station, a charge the government said it will investigate.

Elsewhere, another group of protesters barricaded a main road into Colombo with burning tyres.

She wanted safe road

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7:30am.

Police are trying to identify the vehicle and arrest its driver, the OC added.

Seven more people, including three schoolchildren, were killed in road crashes in different districts yesterday.

Meem, a sixth semester student of NSU's English department, was rushed to Kurmitola General Hospital where doctors declared her dead.

She was the daughter of Nur Mohammad Mamun, founding director of Mouchak Ideal Public School and College in Gazipur. She was the eldest among two siblings. Her family lives in Uttara's Sector-6, said police.

Her cousin Zakir Hossain told reporters that her father bought her the scooter six months ago.

Quoting witnesses, he said a recklessly driven covered van hit her scooter and at that time she had a helmet on her head.

Losing their daughter, father Nur Mohammad and mother Asima Begum were fainting repeatedly at their Gazipur house, he said.

Nakib Ali Kamrul, another cousin of Meem, told The Daily Star that Meem wished to go abroad for higher studies.

"It is the transport owners who are responsible for such road crashes as they employ unskilled drivers to save money," he said.

Talking to reporters, Nur Mohammad lamented, "Why did I buy her the scooter? I have lost my daughter because of the

scooter..."

Meem was buried at her family graveyard in Gazipur last night.

Quoting a Kurmitola General Hospital doctor, Sharmee Hossain, a teacher of NSU's English department, wrote on Facebook that a carpenter took Meem's body to the hospital from the spot. "I could recall the student movement for safe roads in 2018 over the death of a schoolgirl. The name of that girl was also Meem," the teacher wrote.

On August 4, 2018, the NSU student gave a Facebook post, demanding safe roads during the movement.

7 MORE DIE ON ROADS

Seven people, including three schoolchildren, were killed in road accidents in Dhaka, Tangail, Natore, Manikganj, Munshiganj and Gaibandha yesterday.

A road crash claimed the life of 12-year-old Shohag, a class-III student, in the capital's Jatrabari when he was going to play with other children around 6:00am, said Rafikul Islam, sub-inspector of Jatrabari Police Station.

In Natore, eight-year-old Mim Akhter, a class-II student, was killed after a bus hit a rickshaw van in Lalpur upazila around 9:30am, said Lalpur Police Station OC Md Monoaruzzaman.

Madrasa student Atikur Rahman, 12, was killed when a cement-laden truck hit his bicycle in Gaibandha's Fulchari, said Momirul Haque, sub-inspector of Fulchari Police Station.

In Tangail, two people

were killed and six others injured after a pick-up hit a battery-run rickshaw in Tangail's Kalihati.

The victims are auto-rickshaw driver Ramjan Ali, 55, and its passenger Rina Aktar, 30, said Molla Azkir Rahman, OC of Kalihati Police Station.

In Munshiganj, day labourer Nazmul Hossain, 19, died and three were injured when a locally made three-wheeler overturned in Sadar upazila.

In another accident, fish trader Harun Bepari, 55, was killed after a pick-up hit a CNG-run auto-rickshaw on the Dhaka-Aricha highway in Manikganj's Shibaboy, said Inspector Zakir Hossain of Barangail Highway Police Outpost.

[Our correspondents in Natore, Bogura, Tangail, Munshiganj and Manikganj contributed to this report.]

Recital artiste

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Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, he said.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed deep shock and sorrow at his demise, UNB reports.

She prayed for the eternal salvation of the departed soul and expressed sympathy for the bereaved family.

TV presenter Sharmin Lucky said, "I remember the time I started reciting in 1994. Arif bhai was really welcoming and he always inspired young artistes... He was a great speaker, his voice and charm would leave everyone spellbound."