



“Today, I read the Britain foreign secretary’s statement that they can’t say anything to India as it has an independent foreign policy. So what are we then? ... No country is respected unless it stands on its own two feet.”

Pakistan PM **Imran Khan** on differential treatment of West towards India and Pakistan on Russia issue



Palestinians demonstrating against the expropriation of land by Israel, run away from tear gas fired at them by Israeli security forces in the village of Kfar Qaddum near the Jewish settlement of Kedumim in the occupied West Bank, yesterday. Israeli forces shot dead a Palestinian yesterday during clashes in the flashpoint occupied West Bank city of Hebron. The Palestinian Red Crescent said it also treated 70 people injured in clashes with the Israeli army yesterday in the Nablus area of the northern West Bank.

PHOTO: AFP

‘Hybrid immunity’ gives best Covid protection: studies

AFP, PARIS

People with the “hybrid immunity” of having been both fully vaccinated and previously infected with Covid-19 have the strongest protection against the virus, two new studies said yesterday.

The studies highlighted the importance of getting jabbed for those who have natural immunity after recovering from the disease.

One of the two studies published in The Lancet Infectious Diseases medical journal analysed the health data of more than 200,000 people in 2020 and 2021 in hard-hit Brazil, which has the world’s second-largest Covid death toll.

It found that for people who have already had Covid, Pfizer and AstraZeneca’s vaccines offered 90 percent effectiveness against hospitalisation and death, China’s CoronaVac had 81 percent and Johnson & Johnson’s one-shot jab had 58 percent.

A study using Sweden’s nationwide register up to October 2021 meanwhile found that people who recovered from Covid retained a high level of protection against re-infection for up to 20 months. And people with two-vaccine-dose hybrid immunity had a further 66 percent lower risk of re-infection than those with just natural immunity.

Darfur clashes kill 45

AFP, Khartoum

Heavy clashes between rival groups in Sudan’s Darfur have left some 45 people killed, officials said, as tribal leaders reported that fighting persisted in the latest ethnic violence. Fresh fighting broke out on Tuesday between the ethnic Africa Fallata people and an Arab tribe in villages outside Nyala, the capital of South Darfur state, witnesses said. “Fifteen people were killed in the fighting between the Fallata and Rizeigat tribes on Tuesday and 30 were killed on Wednesday,” the security committee of South Darfur state said in a statement on Thursday. Women and children were among those killed in the fighting, it added.

S’pore fully reopens

AFP, Singapore



Singapore fully reopened its borders to all vaccinated visitors yesterday after a two-year coronavirus closure, with arrivals saying it felt “wonderful” to travel again without restrictions. The

aviation hub, a key gateway for people arriving in Asia, joins other countries in the region that have recently dropped travel curbs as they shift to living with Covid-19. Previously, only travellers from a handful of places could enter Singapore without quarantining but from yesterday all vaccinated arrivals just needed a negative test.

US, Russia woo India

Lavrov praises New Delhi’s stance on Ukraine; US deputy NSA says Russia can’t be trusted, warns India of ‘consequences’ over avoiding Russia sanctions

AGENCIES

Russia’s foreign minister yesterday praised India’s independent foreign policy stance on Ukraine, as he held talks with his Indian counterpart, a day after US deputy NSA warned New Delhi against trusting Moscow amid an ongoing border row with China.

“Russia appreciates that India is looking at the situation in the entirety of effect and not just one-sided way,” Sergei Lavrov said in New Delhi as he met counterpart S Jaishankar, adding “we are interested in having a balanced world order which makes it sustainable.”

India has abstained from United Nations resolutions censuring Moscow and continues to buy oil from Russia, which is its biggest arms supplier.

Lavrov told a select group of reporters that Russia is exploring ways to bypass impediments to bilateral trade with its allies and partners.

He said a Rupee-Rouble payment system for trade with India was put into place in the past and it could be strengthened further.

“More and more transactions will be done using national currencies and bypassing dollar-based system,” he said.

Asked about India’s plan to buy discounted Russian oil, Lavrov said Moscow is ready to provide anything that New Delhi

wants to buy, including defence materials.

According to a Bloomberg report, Russia is willing to sell high-grade oil up to USD 35 per barrel - which could increase to USD 45 per barrel after the latest surge in global prices - and wants India to buy 15 million barrels in the first deal.

Jaishankar “emphasised the importance of cessation of violence and ending hostilities”, the Indian foreign ministry said.

Lavrov arrived in Delhi on Thursday from China, where he had hailed Beijing as part of a new “multipolar, just, democratic world order”.

Moscow, facing massive Western sanctions in response to its invasion of Ukraine in February, has declared a “no-limits partnership” with China, which has also refused to condemn Russia’s actions.

In contrast, Delhi shares Western alarm over Beijing’s assertiveness in the Asia-Pacific region, with 20 Indian and four Chinese troops killed in a brawl on their disputed Himalayan border in 2020.

Visiting US Deputy National Security Adviser Daleep Singh Daleep Singh was quoted by local media as saying that India could not rely on Russia if there was another

clash.

“Russia is going to be the junior partner in this relationship with China. And the more leverage that China gains over Russia, the less favourable that is for India,” Singh said in a parallel visit to Delhi on Thursday.

“I don’t think anyone would believe that if China once again breached the Line of (Actual) Control, that Russia would come running to India’s defence,” he said, referring to the India-China border.

Singh said the US was ready to help India - the world’s third-biggest oil importer and consumer - diversify its energy and defence supplies. But he added that there would be “consequences” for countries seeking to circumvent the sanctions.

“We are very keen for all countries, especially our allies and partners, not to create mechanisms that prop up the ruble and that attempt to undermine the dollar-based financial system,” he said.

Lavrov was due to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi later yesterday, when he said he will pass on Russian President Vladimir Putin’s “best regards”.



Another

FROM PAGE 2

they sent the firearm for a ballistic test.

“After receiving the report, we’ll be able to say if the firearm was used in the murders.”

Damal is the younger brother of Ahkam Ullah, general secretary of Abritti Somonnoy Parishad and acting general secretary of Sammilita Sangskritik Jote.

Ahkam said Damal was detached from his family as he had connection with criminals. He was even sent to Vienna, Austria in 2000 for this.

About the double murder, Ahkam said the police investigation would reveal whether Damal was involved.

On March 24, criminals opened fire targeting Tipu’s microbus that was stuck in a traffic jam in the Shahjahanpur area. Prity, a student who happened to be on a rickshaw next to the microbus, also got shot.

Tipu and Prity were declared dead after they were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Boy, 12, latest death from New York City gun violence

AFP, New York

A 12-year-old boy was shot and killed as he sat in a parked car Thursday night in New York City, police said, shining a light on surging gun violence in the US megacity.

A young woman in the driver’s seat was also shot multiple times, while an eight-year-old girl in the back of the vehicle was uninjured, police added.

Biman not

FROM PAGE 12

Turkish, Qatar and Emirates airlines are now operating flights to Canada with a stopover offering airfares lower than that of Biman.

The Biman MD told this correspondent that calculating different variables on the basis of the “proven flight” of March 26, they have decided not to operate a direct flight on this route as “it would not be commercially viable”.

Biman has formed a committee to identify which destination will be commercially suitable for the national flag carrier for the stopover, he added.

Primarily, the Biman chief said, they were considering stopover in Germany or any other European country or Tashkent.

“We have already set up a Biman office in Canada and a process is also underway to appoint general sales agent. We will fix all those matters before launching of the commercial flight by

June.”

About the March 26 flight, he said it was a successful mission as Biman has been able to fulfil all the requirements of the Greater Toronto Airports Authority, which operates Toronto Pearson International Airport, and Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh.

Asked why there were only six general passengers on the return flight, the Biman MD said, it was one way and in Canada, this was the lean period for travel.

He added that they were trying to get the fifth freedom privilege from Canadian authorities.

In the context of commercial aviation, a fifth freedom flight means an airline from one country flies between two other countries, with the right to transport passengers between them, according to onemileatatime.com.

“If we can avail this, this route will be economically viable,” he said.

he said they see China at the same time as a partner, as a competitor (on economic front) and as a rival.

“We see China’s involvement is necessary on issues of global interest,” said the special envoy, noting that the recently held COP26 is a very positive example of engagement with China. Responding to a question, Visentin said the Rohingya issue is not just a bilateral issue, not even a matter of something among the EU, Bangladesh and Myanmar. “It has to be tackled globally.”

Rejoinder, our reply

FROM PAGE 1

Corrective Action Plan (CAP) of the behind-schedule factories by 4 percent, thus improving the number of initial CAP completed factories by 8 percent.

Our reply: The statement refers to the number of factories found by Accord as “behind schedule”, which according to their website, accessed on January 29, 2022 was 1,041. The RSC was emailed for the current number - the number provided was 1,039, and that was mentioned in the story.

The rejoinder contradicted a statement in the story that said in one and a half years since Accord left Bangladesh, the number of factories left to become fully safe hasn’t changed much. The RSC said they managed to reduce the number of factories yet to complete the “structural remediation” based on an engineering assessment to 12 percent in 21 months.”

Our reply: The RSC is referring to engineering remediation. The story is referring to overall safety.

Referring to a quote from RSC Managing Director Iqbal M Hussain which stated that 1,039 factories were still in the process of becoming “fully safe”, the rejoinder claimed that The Daily Star correspondent did not clearly mention the subject and the argument presented in the story. “We only received few specific questions from the author via email on 29 January, 2022 and responded to those on 31 January, 2022.

It would have been brilliant and ethical journalism if an interview with the RSC managing director and acting chief safety officer was organised,” it said.

Our reply: Prior to the email, Hussain was contacted and interviewed over phone, on-record, fully clarifying the intention of writing a story, following which Hussain requested an email. Hussain and the correspondent exchanged a total of six emails over two days, and this additional information from RSC could have been provided at any time during that period, and later. Similarly, clarifications from the correspondent too could have been requested during that period and at any time before publication.

The report pointed out that the pandemic slowed the remediation process. In its rejoinder, the RSC said it must be noted that they could not conduct any inspection due to government restrictions.

Our reply: RSC’s statement does not contradict the story.

The rejoinder countered a fact mentioned in the story about the RSC not being legally binding, saying, “The RSC is working on its own compliance accountability mechanism to ensure a binding agreement by all constituents of the RSC’s ‘Tripartite’ have a compliance mechanism to ensure and enforce remediation.”

Our reply: RSC’s argument does not contradict the statement - RSC is not legally binding.

The rejoinder countered a statement saying that after Accord left, over 70 factories have still not implemented even 50 percent of the remediation measures recommended by Accord. In its rejoinder, RSC said this depends on the updates received from the factories as well as inspection outcomes.

Our reply: RSC’s statement does not contradict the story.

The RSC contradicted a statement in the story, saying that a handful of the factories are barely getting started with their preliminary inspection, by pointing out that they have increased the capacity to conduct 20-24 factory inspections per month. “As of mid-December 2021, no factory was waiting for an initial inspection.” they said.

Our reply: RSC’s argument does not contradict the statement - the statement does not say, factories are waiting for a preliminary inspection.

The rejoinder denied that Iqbal M Hussain said 373 of the listed factories are “yet to complete the structural remediation based on an engineering assessment” and 1,241 are yet to have their fire alarm systems verified. It claimed that the figures are true, but that Hussain “never received such a question from the author of the story, so quoting him was not an example of ethical reporting.”

Our reply: RSC’s claim is not true. The Daily Star has in its possession an email from Hussain outlining

precisely these figures, dated January 31, 2022, sent at 8:28am.

The rejoinder contradicted a figure in the story that states that “At the time of Accord’s departure, nearly two-thirds of the listed unremediated factories had implemented over 90 percent of the remediation measures recommended - but even the minor work left can cause major accidents”. The rejoinder said that since it began operation, the remediation has gone up from 90 to 93 percent, and has corrected the initial findings at 441 factories, “which is an increase of 166 since the RSC took over”.

Our reply: RSC is not countering the statement made in the story.

The rejoinder responded to a section in the story where Zaheen Knitwear’s remediation progress was analysed, by saying, “Their Fire Alarm & Detection System was initially identified on 2 June, 2014. Our report says their action was not approved. Additionally, the factory was in the process of installing the standpipe system and importing the alarm systems and fire doors but as of January 2022, it was yet to be completed”.

Our reply: RSC has simply repeated what is stated in the story and is not contradicting it.

The rejoinder protested the headline of the story by saying “The story mentions about RSC’s observation on the Zaheen Knitwear. However, with such a

headline of the story, the reader might get confused”.

Our reply: The headline refers to the overall situation of all the factories, not just Zaheen Knitwear.

The rejoinder countered a figure from the RSC’s annual report saying that during the reporting period, out of the targeted 100 boiler safety inspections, only 10 were completed. “This is an excerpt from our Annual Report. However, the RSC completed follow-up on all the factories under the Boiler Pilot Programme since the completion of external boiler visual inspections at 377 factories,” said the body.

Our reply: We thank RSC for this additional information, but our story clearly mentions the reporting period of the Annual Report.

The rejoinder did not contradict any part of our report. We stand by our report.

Pakistan

FROM PAGE 12

Pakistan’s foreign office, meanwhile, has summoned the acting US charge d’affaires to lodge a strong protest over alleged Washington’s meddling in the internal affairs of the country.

A Pakistani foreign office official confirmed that a “demarche” was handed over to the acting US envoy in Islamabad, adding that Washington was told that the use of such undiplomatic language was unacceptable.