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WAR IN UKRAINE

Finland moves to join Nato

Russia warns of ‘military’ retaliation measures; Sweden likely to follow Helsinki’s suit

AGENCIES

Finland must apply to join the Nato military alliance “without delay”, its president and prime minister said yesterday, in a historic policy shift triggered by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Moscow said the move was a threat to it and warned it was ready to respond. But Finland’s neighbour Sweden is also close to a decision on asking to join Nato after decades of following a neutral path.

Russia has partly tried to justify its invasion of Ukraine as a means to protect itself from Nato’s eastwards expansion.

However, Finnish President Sauli Niinisto said Russian President Vladimir Putin was responsible for Helsinki’s decision. “You caused this. Look at the mirror,” he said prior to yesterday’s announcement.

“Nato membership would strengthen Finland’s security. As a member of Nato, Finland would strengthen the entire defence alliance,” said a joint statement by Niinisto and Prime Minister Sanna Marin.

After the announcement, Niinisto spoke with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who lauded Finland’s readiness to apply for Nato membership.

The Finnish parliament will debate the announcement on Monday. A majority of lawmakers have already signalled their support for membership.

Nato Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said any accession process would be “smooth and swift” and that

“Nato membership would strengthen Finland’s security. As a member of Nato, Finland would strengthen the entire defence alliance.”

Finland “would be warmly welcomed”.

Neighbouring Sweden, which like Finland has been military non-aligned for decades, is also expected to announce its decision in the coming days, very likely at a meeting on Sunday of Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson’s Social Democratic Party.

Russia, which had repeatedly warned both countries against joining the alliance, said yesterday a Finnish entry into Nato was “definitely” a threat to it.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters: “Nato expansion does not make our continent more stable and secure.”

Everyone wanted to avoid a direct clash between Nato and Russia but Moscow was prepared to make a “decisive response” to any side that tried to hinder Russia’s operation in Ukraine, he said.

Russia’s foreign ministry said Moscow would be “forced to take reciprocal steps, military-technical and other, to address the resulting threats to its national security”.

Poland and the Baltics welcomed Finland’s announcement. Pentagon said it would not be difficult to integrate Finland into Nato, reports Reuters.

Russian forces continued to pound areas in Ukraine’s northern region. Three people were killed and 12 others wounded in the early hours of yesterday in a Russian strike on a school in Chernigiv.

The UN Human Rights Council yesterday passed a resolution to set up an inquiry into the allegations of abuses by Russian troops in Ukraine.

Pressure on Europe to secure alternative gas supplies increased yesterday after Moscow imposed sanctions on European subsidiaries of state-owned Gazprom and Ukraine stopped a gas transit route, pushing prices higher.



Large vessels are tied to the pillars of a bridge at Trimohony, Khilgaon, in the capital. Civil engineers say this practice can damage the bridge because the pillars are not designed to withstand the pull of such vessels.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

ROAD CRASHES DURING EID RUSH

Motorbike accidents drove up death toll

Say two road safety platforms, advise govt to discourage use of bikes, improve public transport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Road crashes and deaths during the Eid rush saw a sharp rise this year compared to last year mainly due to an increase in motorbike accidents, two road safety organisations said yesterday.

Though the Eid journey was relatively smooth this year, the number of deaths in road crashes went up by around 20 percent than that of previous year, they said.

The platforms suggested that the government takes action to discourage use of motorcycles and improve the public transport system to reduce road accidents.

They blamed the use of motorbikes for Eid journeys, faulty vehicles, reckless driving, operation of slow-moving

vehicles on highways and disregard for traffic rules for the rise in road accidents and deaths.

Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity and Road Safety Foundation yesterday published their reports on road crashes during Eid rush. They collected information from media reports.

The two platforms, however, said the actual figures would be much higher as many accidents go unreported.

The journeys to and from home were quite smooth this time as there was not much hassle, except the return trips in the last couple of days. But the sharp rise in road crashes and deaths has dampened the positive development.

According to the Jatri Kalyan Samity, at least 416 people were killed and 844 injured in 372

road accidents in 15 days from April 26, meaning around 28 people died every day.

The organisation said road crashes and deaths were 14.51 percent and 22.35 percent higher respectively compared to the figures of the last year’s Eid-ul-Fitr.

At least 145 people were killed in 164 accidents involving motorbikes, meaning motorcycles were involved in 44.08 percent of the crashes and 34.85 percent of the deaths.

Samity Secretary General Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury made the information public at a press conference at the Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday.

He said Eid journey this time was relatively smooth due to operations of some 25 lakh motorbikes and 40 lakh

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SRI LANKAN CRISIS

A cautionary tale for Bangladesh

Eminent economist Muinul Islam tells Star

GOLAM MORTOZA

Sri Lanka is going through a period of political unrest amid its ongoing economic crisis.

Initiating largescale mega projects based on foreign loans, reduction of remittance through legal channels, the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on tourism and a plethora of other factors contributed to this ill fate.

In terms of economic indicators, Bangladesh is in a much more comfortable position than Sri Lanka.

However, economic experts are asking whether the current state will persist for another four-five years.

In an interview with The Daily Star, Professor Muinul Islam, Ekushey Padak-winning economist and former teacher of Chittagong University, said Bangladesh is in no imminent danger but the country has started a lot of unnecessary projects.

Besides, if the current trend of greater imports against exports continues and if the country

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MILKY WAY’S CENTRE

Astronomers reveal first image of black hole

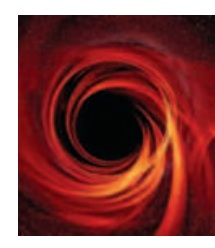
AFP, Paris

An international team of astronomers yesterday unveiled the first image of a supermassive black hole at the centre of our own Milky Way galaxy – a cosmic body known as Sagittarius A*.

The image – produced by a global team of scientists known as the Event Horizon Telescope (EHT) Collaboration – is the first, direct visual confirmation of the presence of this invisible object, and comes three years after the very first image of a black hole from a distant galaxy.

“It’s very exciting to show you today this best-ever image” of Sagittarius A*, EHT project director Huib van Langevelde told a press conference in Garching, Germany.

Black holes are regions of space where the pull of gravity is so intense that nothing can escape, including light.



A capped langur spotted on a tree branch in Anandapara village of Tangail’s Ghatail upazila. Locals said the animal reached the village on a truck carrying bananas. The village is around 30km away from the Madhupur forest. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Cops should be more careful

SC says about protection of human rights

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The Supreme Court in the full text of a verdict has observed that the police personnel should be more cautious about maintaining dignity of their profession and protecting people’s human rights.

“The police personnel should keep in mind that the police force being specially trained as a disciplined force enjoys extra benefits and protection. It is maintained by the government with the people’s tax money for the purpose of serving them. So, the police personnel should be more cautious about maintaining dignity of

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