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NEW ECONOMIC GROUPING

Washington wants Dhaka in

STAR REPORT

The US wants Bangladesh to join the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), a new regional trade initiative launched by Joe Biden in Japan yesterday.

Apart from the US, the initial partners of the IPEF are Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, according to a White House Statement.

US Embassy Spokesperson in Dhaka, Bryan Schiller, in a message to the media said Bangladesh is an important regional partner of the US, which has been in contact with the government here about the IPEF since the partnership dialogue in March and at regular intervals in Dhaka and Washington.

“We look forward to continuing to exchange views on IPEF and the 21st century economic challenges it seeks to address, including the digital economy, clean energy transition, and supply chain resiliency,” he said.

“I believe we’ll win the competition of the 21st century together,” said Joe Biden at the launch of the framework on his second day in Japan, where he also held talks with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida before joining a regional Quad summit.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen has not made any immediate comment on whether Bangladesh would participate in the IPEF.

On various occasions he has said Bangladesh is not interested in any security alliance in the Indo-Pacific but is keen on socio-economic cooperation.

The statement said the IPEF will create a stronger, fairer, more resilient economy for families, workers, and businesses in the United States and in the Indo-Pacific region.



Two boys gather peanuts from a submerged field on Char Gabsara in Tangail's Bhuapur upazila yesterday, trying to salvage whatever has not yet rotted. Many croplands and low-lying areas along the riverside in different upazilas of the district have been inundated due to the untimely swelling of the Jamuna.

PHOTO: STAR

HAJJ FLIGHTS

PMO warns Biman, others against any mess-up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Prime Minister's Office has sternly warned Biman and others concerned about disruptions to hajj flights and asked them to remain extremely vigilant so that there is no fiasco.

During a hajj management review meeting, chaired by Ahmad Kaikaus, principal secretary to the prime minister, on Tuesday, the PMO issued nine directives to ministries and departments concerned.

The matter, however, came to light yesterday.

According to the instructions, hajj flights will only carry pilgrims and no other passengers, and carriers have to ensure that all pilgrims get their immigration procedures done at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

“For this purpose, the required number of booths should be set up in the hajj camp,” a top official of the religious affairs ministry told The Daily Star quoting the instructions.

Two additional booths will be set up at the airport for special cases.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs has to provide necessary information of pilgrims to the immigration authorities in advance.

The health department will take necessary steps in coordination with the religious affairs ministry, for designating a hospital for smooth RT-PCR tests of pilgrims, the instructions read.

All services at the hajj camp will be 24/7.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Diseases lurk as floodwater recedes

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

As the Surma has been flowing below the danger level at some points in Sylhet city and Sunamganj town for two consecutive days yesterday, floodwaters are receding fast in many areas.

Against this backdrop, doctors warn of the risk of locals contracting waterborne diseases considering that all sources of drinking water will remain contaminated for at least a few weeks.

Visiting some areas in Sylhet city, this correspondent saw that water has been stagnant in the drains, canals and low-lying spaces, and is beginning to emit bad odour.

Santu Das, a resident of the city's Jamtola area, said, “While the water is receding, all the garbage carried by the flood still remains and has been stinking up all the areas. Every previously flooded area is in need of quick cleaning and bleaching.”

Meanwhile, Md Zahidul Islam, chief health officer of Sylhet City

Corporation, said, “By drinking contaminated water from tube wells or even the regular water supply, many people might contract waterborne diseases and this is a high-priority issue now.

“We will be running awareness campaigns in this regard twice a week in all wards,

“All medical teams have been distributing water purifying tablets and providing necessary awareness information to the people.” — Sylhet's Civil Surgeon SM Shahreer.

while water purification tablet distribution continues. We are also planning to clean the city.”

In Sylhet district, 140 medical teams are working in 103 flooded unions of all 13 upazilas and the city, according to Sylhet civil surgeon office.

It said 43 people in the district have had diarrhoea till

yesterday, while two people have been suffering from respiratory issues, three from skin diseases, and five others from other waterborne diseases.

Meanwhile, six people have so far died either by drowning or falling under landslides during the floods.

SM Shahreer, the civil surgeon in Sylhet, said, “All medical teams have been distributing water purifying tablets and providing necessary awareness information to the people. But local representatives need to play a more vital role in ensuring that the services reach the remote parts of the affected areas.”

The situation in Sunamganj is better as not many cases of waterborne diseases have been recorded yet, said Ahmmad Hossain, civil surgeon of Sunamganj.

“As water purification tablets are being distributed among all flood-affected people, we are hoping not to see an outbreak of disease.”

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

FLOODS IN NORTH

1.5m children are at risk

Says Unicef

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Over 1.5 million children are at increased risk of waterborne diseases, drowning and malnutrition due to extensive flooding in north-eastern Bangladesh, said Unicef Bangladesh in a statement yesterday.

Over four million people in five districts of north-eastern Bangladesh -- Sylhet, Sunamganj, Habiganj, Netrokona and Moulvibazar -- have been affected by extensive flooding.

Sylhet and Sunamganj are the worst hit, with water flowing above dangerous levels. Agricultural land and critical infrastructure, including power stations and schools, have been submerged.

Cases of diarrhoea, respiratory infection, and skin diseases have already been reported. At least three children have died after being struck by lightning, the statement said.

Hundreds of schools have been closed, further jeopardising children's education after 18 months of school closures in the last two years due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

“The damage to lives, homes and schools is heartbreaking. In this disaster, as in most others, children are the most vulnerable,” said Sheldon Yett, Unicef representative to Bangladesh.

“Unicef is on the ground to protect children and to meet their urgent needs, supporting the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



BNP activists take part in a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday. The party's Dhaka south and north city units organised the rally to protest what they said were “indecent comments” made by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina regarding their party chief Khaleda Zia.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Khaleda sick again, needs to go abroad

Says Fakhrul, wants PM to apologise for ‘indecent remark’

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has once again fallen ill, the party said yesterday.

“Khaleda Zia is very sick. If she is not given better treatment, her life will be threatened,” said Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, secretary general of the party.

At a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club, he said, “We asked you [the government] repeatedly to release her [Khaleda]. I am calling on you again to allow her to go abroad for better treatment. There is still time.”

The 76-year-old former premier is a patient of liver cirrhosis and needs immediate advance

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

You can't extract sand from Meghna

HC tells AL leader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday refused to allow Awami League leader Md Salim Khan to extract sand from the Meghna in Chandpur and sell it.

The court summarily rejected a writ petition filed by Salim seeking its permission for extraction and sale of 28.4 lakh cubic feet of sand or earth from the river bed in Chandpur Sadar upazila's Shakhua, Ichuli and Mirzapur mouzas and Haimchar upazila's Monipur and Charkrishnapur mouzas.

The HC bench of Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Justice Khizir Hayat passed the order after hearing arguments on the petition.

Lawyer Jafar Alam Khan appeared for the petitioner while Deputy Attorney General Kazi Mynul Hassan represented the state.

Jafar said his client would move an appeal before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court challenging the HC order.

The HC rejected the petition as the Appellate Division had earlier stayed two HC orders that had allowed Salim to extract sand from other areas of the Meghna in Chandpur, he told The Daily Star.

Salim has deposited royalty to the Chandpur

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4