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JCC MEET IN DELHI Dhaka to focus on duty waiver, water sharing

PORIMOL PALMA

Dhaka will be focusing on water sharing, waiver of anti-dumping duty on jute and energy security during the foreign minister-level Joint Consultative Commission meeting scheduled in Delhi tomorrow.

The 7th JCC will also discuss regional cooperation, especially the connectivity projects linking different parts of India via Bangladesh, as well as connect South Asia to Southeast Asian region, said officials concerned.

The meeting that will be led by Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen from Bangladeshi side and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar from Indian side will also discuss the schedule of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India later this year. Momen today leaves for Delhi.

The JCC meeting was scheduled for May 30 in Guwahati, Assam, just after the River Conclave, but was rescheduled. "In the last months, secretary-level meetings of ministries of water, home, commerce and railways were held, and the JCC will discuss all the bilateral issues, see the progress and decide the next course of action," said an official at the Bangladesh High Commission in Delhi.

WATER SHARING

Transboundary river management is a crucial issue for Bangladesh as the two countries share 54 common rivers. The Teesta water-sharing deal could not be signed despite all preparations in 2011 due to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's opposition.

The two countries then were discussing an agreement

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



This aerial view shows the destroyed Community Art Center following a strike in the city of Lysychansk, in the eastern Ukrainian region of Donbas, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

A gesture of friendship

Hasina sends a tonne of mangoes to Indian president, PM as gift

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

As a gesture of friendly relations, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has sent one tonne of Amrapali mangoes to Indian President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a gift.

The fruit was sent to the residences of India's president and prime minister through diplomatic channel yesterday, Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi said in a statement.

Last year, Hasina sent Haribhanga mango, mostly grown in Rangpur, as a gift to Modi and the chief ministers of West Bengal, Tripura and Assam.

The relationship between Bangladesh and India has rendered a new height and the "Mango & Hilsa diplomacy" is making the ties more gratifying, said the statement.

This is the prime season of various fruits in Bangladesh that grows

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Sanctions on Rab won't damage US-Bangladesh ties

Says Peter Haas

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Peter Haas has said the sanctions on Rab will not damage the bilateral relationship and that the two countries, which have deep ties, will move on and work together based on shared values of democracy and human rights.

"...A lot of people ask me if I think this will damage our bilateral relations. And I just say, I don't think it has to," he said in a talk show titled AmTalk. Video of the event was uploaded to the embassy's Facebook page last evening.

The envoy said there are frictions in the relationship. "And that's okay when you have a relationship as broad and deep as ours. But what I want to see us do both on Rab and every other aspect is to sit down and to talk about... what do we need to do to resolve this issue."

Last year, Washington imposed sanctions on Rab and some of its current and former officials.

Haas said his country heard a lot of times how Bangladesh was surprised when the US imposed sanctions.

"And maybe we're almost surprised they're surprised. Because already in 2018, we stopped providing training to the Rab, because of our concerns on human rights. For several years, we've published in our human rights

SEE PAGE 6 COL 7



EU backs Ukraine's 'European dream'

Zelensky welcomes the bloc's 'historic decision'; Russia responds with scorn, cuts back gas supplies to West

AGENCIES

Europe sent a powerful symbol of solidarity with Ukraine yesterday, when Brussels backed Kyiv's bid for EU candidate status, even as Russia shelled frontline Ukrainian cities and cut back gas supplies to the West.

With the European Commission's backing, Ukraine could now be added to the list of countries vying for EU membership as early as next week, when member state leaders meet at their Brussels summit.

All 27 EU leaders will have to agree to the candidacy, but the heads of the European Union's biggest members -- France, Germany and Italy -- already gave their full-throated support to the idea on Thursday, on a trip to a war-torn suburb of Kyiv.

Then yesterday, the European Commission gave the executive's

formal backing to the bid, and EU chief Ursula von der Leyen made her position clear by donning a striking jacket in Ukraine's national colours.

"We all know that Ukrainians are ready to die for the European perspective. We want them to live with us for the European dream," she said.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky immediately welcomed the decision as a "first step on the EU membership path that'll certainly bring our victory closer".

He thanked von der Leyen for the commission's "historic decision" and said he expected that EU leaders would give Ukraine a "positive result" at the June 23 to 24 summit.

Russia responded to Brussels' decision with scorn, accusing the West of "manipulating" Ukraine with promises of integration.

Foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Ukraine "is not getting a bright future, for some reason, despite the promises becoming more and more sweet and alluring".

President Putin told the St Petersburg International Economic Forum that the real interest of people in Europe are being sidelined after Ukraine moved a step closer to EU membership.

He denounced the EU and the US, adding that Russia's economy will withstand their sanctions.

Once Ukraine joins the EU candidates' list -- alongside several countries in the western Balkans -- it could still take years to meet all the formal membership requirements, even if Kyiv prevails in the war.

"Yes, Ukraine should be welcomed as a candidate

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Astronomers find new planetary system near Earth

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK



Astronomers have found a new multiplanetary system just 33 light-years from our own planet.

The system, now the closest known one to Earth, has two terrestrial planets orbiting a cool M-dwarf star, named HD 260655.

The inner planet, HD 260655b, orbits the star every 2.8 days and is about 1.2 times as big as the Earth but is slightly denser, while the outer planet, HD 260655c, orbits every 5.7 days and is 1.5 times as big as the Earth, but is less dense.

These planets are, unfortunately, not habitable; the planets orbit their star at too close a range, exposing them to temperatures too high to maintain liquid water on their surfaces. Based on their short orbits, it is estimated that the surface of the inner planet is 436 degrees Celsius, while the outer planet is around 286 degrees Celsius.

"We consider that range outside the habitable zone, too hot for liquid water to exist on the surface," Michelle Kunimoto, a postdoc in MIT's Kavli Institute for Astrophysics and Space Research and one of the discovery's lead scientists, says.

TECHNICAL GLITCH Biman plane makes emergency landing

Probe opens over Boeing 787's collision with boarding bridge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka-bound domestic flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines yesterday made an emergency landing at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport due to technical glitch in its main landing gear.

Passengers of the flight of the Dash-8 aircraft were unhurt, said airport sources.

Meanwhile, the Biman authorities yesterday formed a two-member investigation committee following a Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner's collision with the boarding bridge at the airport on Thursday.

DASH-8

Sharmin Sultana, a resident of the capital's Uttara who was on the Dash-8 aircraft, told The Daily Star that the flight was scheduled to leave Barisal Airport at 12:15pm yesterday, but it left for Dhaka at 1:30pm due to torrential rain.

She added that the aircraft hovered in the Dhaka sky for over half an hour before making an emergency landing at HSI around 2:30pm.

Sharmin added that after landing the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Lightning kills nine in two districts

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Mymensingh

Nine people, including three children, died in two districts after being struck by lightning yesterday.

In Mymensingh's Nandail upazila, Abu Sayeed, 12, Swadhin Mia, 10, and Sawon Mia, 8, were hit by lightning around 1:00pm, said police.

All three of them were students of a Baroigram Hafezia Madrasa at Pongkarhati village.

They were playing football at a playground when the lightning hit them, said Mizanur Rahman Akanda, officer-in-charge of Nandail Police Station.

Locals rushed them to Nandail Upazila Health Complex where the doctors declared them dead, said the OC.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5



A tangle of electrical cables next to a shed in the capital's Korail slum. Hundreds of these wires snake through the slum, posing fire risks as most of the connections are illegal and therefore not installed following the proper procedures. The photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN