

Putin endorsed by Iran for 'invasion'

Khamenei says Ukraine war was forced on Russia, calls on Moscow to work together to reduce the power of the dollar



AGENCIES

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has endorsed Russian President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine saying if Moscow didn't start the war, the West would have.

Putin arrived in Tehran on Tuesday for talks on the Syrian war at a three-way summit with the Iranian and Turkish presidents that has been overshadowed by fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Khamenei told Putin that although Iran "is not at all happy that ordinary people" are suffering from the Ukraine war, the West was to blame.

"War is a harsh and difficult issue, and Iran is not at all pleased that ordinary people suffer from it, but in the case of Ukraine if you had not taken the initiative, the other side would have caused the war with its own initiative," Said Khamenei calling for strengthening "long-term cooperation" with Russia.

"If the road is open to Nato, it knows no boundaries and if it was not stopped in Ukraine they would start the same war some time later under the pretext of Crimea," he added.

He said Russia and Iran needed to work together gradually to reduce the power of the dollar.

Putin echoed Iran's judgment that he had no choice but to invade, saying: "No one is in favour of war, and the loss of ordinary people's lives is a great tragedy, but the behaviour of the west made us have no choice but to react. Some European countries said 'We were against Ukraine's membership in Nato, but we agreed under American pressure,' which shows their lack of independence."

Prior to Putin's visit, the National Iranian Oil Company and Russia's Gazprom signed a memorandum of understanding "worth about \$40 billion", the Iranian oil ministry's official news agency Shana reported.

Gazprom said the MoU looks to "analyse possibilities of cooperation" in different areas, including development of Iran's gas and oil fields.

Hasina writes to Mamata

FROM PAGE 12 pointed to the commonalities of language and culture and "ideological affinities" between the "two Bengals" and asserted that there was no alternative to working together to consolidate the existing relations.

Hasina's letter to Mamata was primarily in response to a letter from the chief minister who thanked the former for sending her mangoes.

Hasina began her letter by thanking Mamata for her letter and said she has been "overwhelmed by

your [Mamata's] sincerity and kindness." It is in the same spirit the people of Bangladesh and West Bengal "feel oneness", the PM added.

Indian officials have repeatedly made it clear that while federal Indian government has always been ready to ink the Teesta deal, West Bengal needs to be on board.

The Teesta deal has been left hanging for nearly 11 years due to Mamata's steadfast refusal to agree to the deal because it may lead to water scarcity in the northern part of West

Bengal.

Mamata opted out of a tour to Dhaka in September, 2011, at the eleventh hour when the then Indian PM Manmohan Singh had visited Dhaka, and when the stage was ready to sign the Teesta accord.

In her letter, Hasina extended an invitation to Mamata to visit Bangladesh at a time of her convenience.

She also expressed confidence that the Padma Bridge would open a new door of possibilities for India-Bangladesh trade.

'I'll invite the PM to our home!'

FROM PAGE 12 School, told this correspondent.

Earlier, Jannat's father Rabiul Islam, a day labourer, had no other option than to live in a shabby tin-roof house built on government land with his wife and two children.

"My daughter has been so happy since we got our own house. She even cut out a picture of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina from an electoral poster and pasted it on the fence near our house."

"The deputy commissioner later presented her with a framed photo of the premier, which Jannat cleans regularly and keeps beside her pillow."

With her new home, Jannat can now focus on her dreams of becoming a doctor and serving the poor.

At least 60 other families of Kajaldighi have benefited the same way under the ongoing third phase of the project.

Meanwhile, 394 landless families in Tangail have also been given homes.

Karimon, a widow working as domestic help, said, "I am so happy to have gotten my own house and land without having to pay a penny to anyone!"

Ataul Gani, deputy commissioner in Tangail, said apart from clean water and electricity supply, the shelters were also provided with greenery, while sewing machines were distributed among residents to help them make a living.

Houses will also be built for the people who have become homeless and landless due to floods and river erosion, he added.

In the third phase, the

government is to provide 67,800 semi-pucca houses to homeless families in different districts across the country.

Of those, 32, 904 houses have already been gifted, while 26,229 will be handed over on July 21. The remaining 8,462 houses are under construction.

In January 2021, the prime minister handed over 69,904 houses to homeless and landless families under the first phase of the project on the occasion of the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

During the second phase, in June last year, 53,330 houses were handed over.

The government has allocated Tk 4,028 crore for the construction of 1,85,129 houses in the current fiscal year.

Alt News co-founder

FROM PAGE 12 The court also stated that while investigations can continue, there was no justification for keeping Zubair in custody.

Zubair's lawyer had earlier said the case bordered on the absurd, because Zubair, a Muslim, had used satire from a Hindi-language movie in his 2018 tweet and there was no evidence that he had hurt religious sentiments of Hindus.

Zubair and his colleagues accused the federal government of using the police to silence the voice of journalists and

other critics. Earlier this year, Zubair had drawn attention to an incendiary remark about Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) made on TV by a spokesperson for Modi's ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Zubair's lawyer said the government was using the 2018 case to punish him after this year's tweet went viral.

The BJP suspended the spokesperson for anti-Islam remarks and expelled another official to defuse domestic and international diplomatic outrage. India is ranked 150th

on the 180-country World Press Freedom Index, compiled annually by Reporters Without Borders.

Cut your wifi to save power France urges holidaymakers

AFP, Paris

The French government yesterday urged citizens to make the effort to save energy in the face of record high oil and gas prices, including by cutting wifi routers when heading off on holiday.

RANIL WICKREMESINGHE More cunning than the 'old fox'

AFP, Colombo

New Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe's election yesterday is the fulfilment of a lifetime's ambition for a veteran political operator who is the nephew of one of his predecessors.

Wickremesinghe, a six-time former prime minister, was backed by the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) party of ousted leader Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who fled abroad and then resigned last week after protesters overran his palace.

The pro-Western Wickremesinghe has sought the top position for decades.

A few families have long played outsized political roles in the Indian Ocean island nation, and Wickremesinghe's uncle Junius Jayewardene was one of its longest-serving leaders — in power for 12 years until stepping down in 1989.

Dubbed the "old fox", Jayewardene was renowned for his cunning, but his nephew is regarded as an even shrewder navigator of the country's internecine power networks.

It was Jayewardene who brought him into politics by making him a deputy foreign affairs minister in 1977. Commentators joked the initials of their United National Party (UNP) actually stood for Uncle and Nephew.

Family members say that Jayewardene, who died in 1996, had wanted to ensure that Wickremesinghe becomes president "even for one day".

Gotabaya appointed Wickremesinghe, 73, as prime minister in May, after the leader's elder brother Mahinda resigned in the face of widespread protests against the rule of the Rajapaksas, who have dominated Sri Lankan politics for much of the last two decades.

Wickremesinghe ran for the presidency

twice before — in 1999 and 2005 — losing both elections, and the UNP was annihilated in a parliamentary election in 2020, leaving the silver-haired veteran as its only MP.

Wickremesinghe is married to Maithree, an English lecturer. They do not have children and have bequeathed their assets to his old school and their universities.

Born into a wealthy and politically connected family rooted in publishing and plantations, Wickremesinghe started work as a rookie reporter at one of the family newspapers.

His first appointment as prime minister was as a result of the May 1993 assassination of president Ranasinghe Premadasa by a suicide bomber.

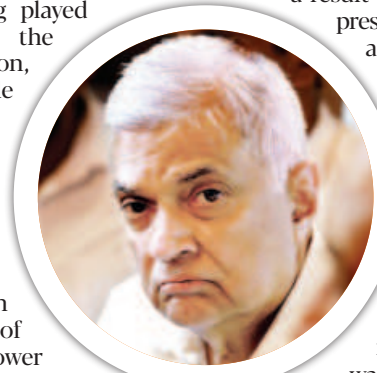
The then-premier Dingiri Banda Wijetunga was elevated to the presidency, and picked Wickremesinghe — then Industry, Science and Technology minister — to replace him.

A similar attack arguably denied him the presidency six years later: his main election rival Chandrika Kumaratunga was wounded by a suicide bomber just three days before the polls.

She brought the nation to tears in a television appearance with a patch over the right eye she had lost and received a significant sympathy vote, with Wickremesinghe losing an election many thought he would win.

Wickremesinghe has been accused of protecting members of the Rajapaksa clan who have been accused of graft, kickbacks, siphoning off public finances and murder.

His status as a pro-Western, free-market reformist could smooth bailout negotiations with the International Monetary Fund and foreign creditors, but he has already warned there will be no quick fix to the nation's unprecedented economic woes.



TORY LEADERSHIP RACE It's Rishi Sunak vs Liz Truss



REUTERS, London

Former finance minister Rishi Sunak and foreign secretary Liz Truss made the final two candidates yesterday to become Britain's next prime minister, kicking off the last stage of the contest to replace Boris Johnson.

Sunak has led in all rounds of the voting among Conservative lawmakers, but it is Truss, who seems to have gained the advantage so far among the around 200,000 members of the governing party who will ultimately choose the winner.

Whoever triumphs when the result is announced on Sept. 5 will inherit some of the most difficult conditions in Britain in decades. Inflation is on course to hit 11 percent annually, growth is stalling, industrial action is on the rise and the pound is near historic lows against the dollar.

Eleven candidates originally put their names forward, but in a fifth and final ballot of Conservative lawmakers, the junior trade minister Penny Mordaunt was eliminated. Sunak won 137 out of 357 votes, versus Truss's 113 and Mordaunt's 105.

Polls show Truss would beat Sunak in the party members' contest, but all could change as the two finalists start weeks of hustings up and down the country before the party's membership.

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Shutting diesel-run

FROM PAGE 12 population will suffer."

He said the energy secretary's talk about ensuring balance through load shedding was nothing but idealistic talk.

"As there is a raw material crisis, it is expected that less electricity will be produced and subsequently, the consumers will also receive less. But those with lower incomes will suffer the inconveniences attached with this crisis more, and they will have to pay a higher price, too. This is unjust, and that is why I do not believe the decisions taken by the government will be able to bring any positive outcome," added Alam.

He mentioned that it was not possible to preserve energy by keeping petrol pumps closed one day a week — another step under the government's consideration.

"In order to achieve real results, the system needs to change. Strict restrictions need to be enforced for the usage of personal vehicles. Implementing that is not

a very difficult task for the state. The government officials will use public transport instead of government vehicles.

"If the energy adviser, along with other ministers and secretaries, call a press conference and announce that they will start using public transport, that will instantly save half the total energy expenditure. But no, they will keep enjoying every kind of perk. They won't let load shedding affect them. We cannot possibly hope that whatever they say and implement will solve all our problems.

"If, today, the energy adviser or any of the top officials of the government said their houses too would experience load shedding for two hours a day, the general population would have rallied behind the cause wholeheartedly and enthusiastically. However, they haven't done that. That kind of love for the motherland, compassion towards the general population has never been expressed by them," added M Shamsul Alam.

Narco trade

FROM PAGE 12 Myanmar has historically been known as a producer of opium.

"When poppy production decreased during the pandemic-induced lockdown, drug lords and syndicates shifted their focus on the synthetic drug trade."

Quoting a Reuters report, he said in 2022 alone authorities in Laos, Thailand and Myanmar seized 90 million methamphetamine pills, and 4.4 tonnes of crystal meth.

"It implies that due to increased instability since the military coup in Myanmar, the trade has gained more traction in this region," Imtiaz said.

The yaba is transported from Maungdaw in Rakhine to the Tombru border, from where it seeps into the Rohingya camps situated just beside the zero-line border along Bangladesh, he said.

At least 70 lakh yaba pills, at the cost of Tk 210 crore, are consumed by Bangladeshis every day.

There were 56 drug-related deaths in 2017. It went up to 396 in 2018 and was 256 in 2019, he said.

International relations analysts said Bangladesh has already been burdened with more than a million refugees since 2017, and now the drug trafficking — which is enough to destabilise the entire region — is adding to that.

Delwar Hossain, another Dhaka University professor of international relations, said Myanmar's regime is complicit in and a beneficiary of illegal drug trade, which is no less than narco-terrorism.

"We need to identify the criminals and bring them to book to keep the trade in check."

They called for sanctions against Myanmar in this regard.

Masud Bin Momen, foreign secretary; Brig Gen (Retd) M Shakhawat Hussain, security analyst; Jahangirnagar University's Professor Shahab Enam Khan; British High Commissioner Robert Chatterton Dickson; Saudi Ambassador Issa bin Youssef Al-Dahilan; Malaysian High Commissioner Haznah Md Hashim and Brunei High Commissioner Haji Haris bin Haji Othman also spoke at the seminar.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Biden to announce executive actions

REUTERS, Washington

US President Joe Biden was set to announce a set of executive actions yesterday aimed at addressing climate change in a visit to the site of a former coal-fired plant in Massachusetts that is playing a role in supporting the state's offshore wind industry.

Scientists discover

FROM PAGE 12

said in a statement. "It would have been downright perilous for ancient humans to head down to the river for a drink," Dr Brochu added. The new species had big, conical teeth and short, deep snouts, the study noted.

Instead of opening straight upward like contemporary crocodiles, researchers analysing the fossils of these reptiles say their noses opened somewhat up and to the front.

Scientists say the

crocodiles likely waited for prey in the forest for the majority of the time instead of being in the water.

"They had what looked like this big grin that made them look really happy, but they would bite your face off if you gave them the chance," Dr Brochu said.

The crocodiles lived during the early to middle Miocene period 18 million and 15 million years ago in the East Africa Rift Valley, in parts of present-day Kenya at a time when the region was largely blanketed by forests.

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Memo No. 35.RHD.0000.BRT(MD).14.003.2013-595 Date: 19 July, 2022
Sub: Amendment for submission of Preliminary Expression of Interest (PEOI) for Procurement of Design, Supply, Installation and Commissioning of Intelligent Transport System (ITS) for BRT Operation and Traffic Management under Greater Dhaka Sustainable Urban Transport Project (GDSUTP)

Amendment No. 1
This amendment is being issued pursuant to request of participants

Sl.	Subject	Current requirement (existing contents)	Amendment (contents to be read as)
1.	PEOI submission date	19 July 2022, 16.00pm	02 August 2022, 16.00pm

Note:
• All other terms and conditions shall remain unchanged.
• The original PEOI notice is available in the company website (www.dhakabrt.com)

SD/-
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