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Pranay Verma appointed new Indian envoy to Bangladesh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Senior diplomat Pranay Kumar Verma has been appointed India's next high commissioner to Bangladesh, replacing Vikram Doraiswami who is tipped to be the new envoy to the UK.



"Shri Pranay Kumar Verma [IFS 1994], presently ambassador of India to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, has been appointed as the next high commissioner of India to the People's Republic of Bangladesh," India's ministry of external affairs confirmed yesterday.

Verma is expected to take up the assignment "shortly," it said in a brief statement.

Verma, an officer of the 1994 batch of the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), is expected to take over the charge in Dhaka some time before Prime

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Boxer Suro Krishna Chakma and weightlifter Mabia Akhter carry the Bangladesh flag in the opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Games at the Alexander Stadium in Birmingham on Thursday night. The Bangladesh contingent are competing in 19 disciplines of the sporting extravaganza where competitors from 72 nations and territories, many of which are former British colonies, will be vying for medals in 19 sports over a jam-packed 11 days.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'Miracle baby' gets new home



STAR REPORT

The miracle baby, who was born right before her mother's death under the wheels of a truck in Mymensingh's Trishal, has found a new home -- a government-run children's home in the capital.

Fatima, a name given by her elder sister Jannatul, was shifted to Chotomoni Nibash at Azimpur around 3:00pm yesterday from Mymensingh Medical College Hospital where she had been undergoing treatment since her birth on July 16.

Kamrul Islam Chowdhury, director (institutions) of the Department of Social Services, and Jubilee Ranu, caretaker of Chotomoni Nibash, received the baby after Jannatul, their grandfather Mostafizur Rahman Bablu and the social service officer of Mymensingh brought her to the shelter home.

Although several people showed interest in

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9 parties skip talks with EC Say they have no trust in it

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Nine opposition political parties, including the BNP, have skipped the ongoing talks with the Election Commission, saying that they have no confidence that the commission would be able to hold a free, fair and participatory national polls.

Party leaders pointed out that it is a reality that every government "influences" the election process during polls and the EC is independent on "paper" only.

They added that they did not participate in the dialogue because attending such events would be "time-wasting, meaningless and unnecessary".

Contacted, BNP leaders said they shunned the talks as it was impossible for the current EC to conduct free and fair polls under the incumbent government.

"Our decision is that we will not take part in any election under the current government. We have not joined the process of forming this Election Commission, not given it recognition and not joined any activities of the commission. We have not changed our stance and that is why we did not participate in the talks," said Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain, BNP standing committee member.

The EC is holding a series of dialogues with 39 registered political parties at its office in the capital to seek recommendations on how to conduct the next national polls in a free and fair manner.

The 12th general election may take place in late December 2023 or early January 2024, said EC officials.

Besides the BNP, eight other political parties that abstained from joining the talks are Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD Rab), Bangladesh Kalyan Party, Bangladesh Muslim League (BML), Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal, Liberal



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SENDING WORKERS TO GREECE

No recruitment even 5 months after deal

4,000 Bangladeshis supposed to get work permits there every year

JAMIL MAHMUD

More than five months have passed since the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Bangladesh and Greece on sending workers to the European country, but the fresh recruitment is yet to begin.

Greece had also agreed to regularise undocumented Bangladeshi migrant workers, but the process in this regard has also not started.

Addressing an event in Dhaka on July 22, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said Greece would regularise some 15,000 undocumented Bangladeshis.

Under the MoU, Bangladesh can also send some 4,000 workers to Greece each year, he added.

According to an estimate of the Bangladesh embassy in Athens, at least 28,000 Bangladeshis currently live in the European country. Of them, at least 15,000 are undocumented.

Asked about the delay, Bishwagith Kumer Paul, first secretary (labour welfare wing) at the Bangladesh embassy, recently said the Greek authorities were waiting to get their parliament's approval for the implementation

of the MoU, signed in Dhaka on February 9.

Greek parliament on July 22 ratified the deal, reads a notice posted on the Bangladesh mission's Facebook page on Thursday.

Implementation of the MoU will ensure safe migration of Bangladeshi workers and reduce the influence of human traffickers, it says.

The Greek authorities, reads the notice, are expected to soon announce the details about regularisation of undocumented Bangladeshi workers.

It said details about new recruitment and migration costs would be finalised later. The decision on whether the hiring would be done under government-to-government or government-private arrangement would also be made later.

The MoU, first of its kind between Bangladesh and a European Union country, opens a new horizon for Bangladeshi workers' regular and orderly migration to Europe.

European countries, especially EU member states, are sought-after destinations for many Bangladeshi youths mainly because of their strong economic conditions.

To fulfil their dream, many

Bangladeshis take risky illegal migration routes, including the Mediterranean Sea, after paying hefty amounts to human traffickers.

Both Greece and Bangladesh see the signing of the MoU as an important step towards cutting illegal migration and trafficking of Bangladeshis.

After the signing of the deal, Bangladesh expatriates' welfare ministry in a press release said Bangladeshi workers will be hired in the "seasonal" category for the agriculture sector. The number of sectors will be increased later based on demand and following discussions between the two countries.

The workers will have to return home upon expiry of their work permits. They will be able to remigrate for employment.

While applying for a job, Bangladeshi job seekers will have to submit valid travel documents, work contracts, and pay necessary fees.

Labour welfare official Bishwagith said Greece, like other EU countries, has recently beefed up border security to reduce illegal entry.

During the signing of the MoU

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Gorgosaurus sells for \$6.1m at New York auction

AFP, New York



The first skeleton of a Gorgosaurus dinosaur to go under the hammer sold for \$6.1 million at auction in New York Thursday, Sotheby's said.

The specimen is 10 feet tall (three metres) and 22 feet long, and had been expected to fetch between \$5 million and \$8 million.

"The result places the Gorgosaurus among the most valuable dinosaurs ever sold at auction, and establishes a new benchmark for a Gorgosaurus skeleton," Sotheby's said in a statement.

The Gorgosaurus roamed the earth approximately 77 million years ago.

A typical adult weighed about two tonnes, slightly smaller than its more famous relative, the Tyrannosaurus rex.

Paleontologists say it was fiercer and faster than the T-Rex, with a stronger bite of around 42,000 newtons compared to 35,000.

The skeleton was discovered in the Judith River Formation near Havre, in the US state of Montana in 2018.

The sale marked the first time that Sotheby's had auctioned a full dinosaur skeleton since it sold Sue the T-Rex in 1997 for \$8.36 million.

"Today's Gorgosaurus came to auction without a name, providing the buyer the exclusive opportunity to name the dinosaur," Sotheby's said.

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CRISIS-HIT SRI LANKA

WB refuses new funding

Says deep structural reforms needed

AFP, Colombo

The World Bank said yesterday it would not offer new funding to Sri Lanka unless the bankrupt island nation carried out "deep structural reforms" to stabilise its crashing economy.

Sri Lanka has suffered an unprecedented downturn with its 22 million people enduring months of food and fuel shortages, rolling blackouts and rampant inflation.

The South Asian nation defaulted on its \$51-billion foreign debt in April and huge protests earlier this month forced then president Gotabaya Rajapaksa to flee the country and resign.

The World Bank said it was concerned about the impact of the crisis on Sri Lanka's people but was not ready to give funds until the government had bedded down necessary reforms.

"Until an adequate macroeconomic policy framework is in place, the World Bank does not plan to offer new financing to Sri Lanka," the lender said in a statement.

"This requires deep structural reforms that focus on economic stabilisation, and also on addressing the root structural causes that created this crisis."

The World Bank said it had already diverted \$160 million from existing loans to finance urgently needed medicines, cooking gas and school meals.

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Dhaka city (north) unit of the BNP holding a protest programme over the recent hike in fuel and gas prices, and load shedding. The photo was taken in front of the National Press Club around 10:30am yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

XI-BIDEN CALL

Russia backs China on Taiwan

AFP, Moscow

The Kremlin yesterday expressed "solidarity" with China's stance on Taiwan after Chinese President Xi Jinping warned US leader Joe Biden not to "play with fire" over the self-ruled island.

"Certainly we are in solidarity," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"We respect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and believe that no country in the world should have the right to question this or take any inflammatory or other steps," he added.

"We are convinced that such behaviour on the international arena can only cause additional tension."

"Those who play with fire will perish by it," China's foreign ministry quoted Xi as telling Biden in their fifth call as leaders. "It is hoped that the US will be clear-eyed about this."

Xi said Washington should abide by the "one-China principle" and stressed that China firmly opposes Taiwanese independence and outside interference.

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