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It’s very important that we contest this type of thing. I know that the gorilla in the room is launching missiles over Taiwan. If we just allow that to happen, and we don’t contest that, that’ll be the next norm. It’s irresponsible to launch missiles over Taiwan into international waters, where the shipping lanes, where free shipping operates.

US Seventh Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Karl Thomas told reporters in Singapore

# US ‘sowing chaos in the world’

Putin slams Washington’s carefully planned provocations around the globe including Ukraine, Taiwan; blasts rock Crimea again

### AGENCIES

Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday accused Washington of seeking to prolong the conflict in Ukraine and of fuelling conflicts elsewhere in the world, including with the visit of US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan.

Hours after his speech at the opening ceremony of a security conference in Moscow, explosions rocked a Russian military facility on the Kremlin-controlled peninsula of Crimea.

Meanwhile, the first UN-chartered vessel laden with grain meanwhile left Ukraine for Africa following a hallmark deal brokered by Turkey and the UN to relieve a global food crisis.

“The situation in Ukraine shows that the US is trying to prolong this conflict. And they act in exactly the same way, fuelling the potential for conflict in Asia, Africa and Latin America,” Putin said in televised remarks.

“The American adventure in relation to Taiwan is not just a trip of an individual irresponsible politician, but part of a purposeful, conscious US strategy to destabilise and make chaotic the situation in the region and the world,” he added.

“We see this as a carefully planned provocation,” Putin said.

He cited the AUKUS security pact between Australia, Britain and the United States as evidence of Western attempts to build a Nato-style bloc in the Asia-Pacific region.

Lashing out at the United States



for supplying weapons to Kyiv, he said Washington is “using the people of Ukraine as cannon fodder.”

The United States has provided key economic and military backing to Kyiv, in particular supplying Ukraine with long-range, precision artillery that has allowed it to strike Russian supply facilities deep inside Moscow-controlled territory.

According to Russian officials and news agencies, the blasts in Crimea engulfed an ammunition depot at a Russian military base in the north of the peninsula, disrupting

## Schoolgirls bore

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The monitoring and evaluation wing of the DSHE collected information on how many of those students did not partake in the exams.

The report said that out of 66,49,538 students of 11,769 schools, 4,81,055 were absent for the tests. Of them, 47,414 were victims of child marriage and 77,706 became child labourers.

Amir Hossain said, “It isn’t that all the absentees have dropped out of school. Some may have migrated to other places, while many have had to join work to help their families. Many will come back to school.”

In Rajshahi, the highest number of schoolgirls – 10,317 – were married off, followed by 8,064 in Khulna, and 7,425 in Rangpur, the report said.

In Barishal, the number of child marriage victims was 1,514, 2,035 in Chattogram, 4,755 in Cumilla, 5,255 in Dhaka, 5,803 in Mymensing, and 1,228 in Sylhet.

In terms of child labourers, Rajshahi again had the highest number – 12,261 – followed by 11,546 in Mymensing and 10,985 in Dhaka.

Meanwhile, 3,781 students fell victim to child labour in Barishal, 7,472 in Chattogram, 8,479 in Cumilla, 8,367 in Khulna, 9,685 in Rangpur and 5,030 of Sylhet.

According to Amir, the DSHE report, which will be sent to the education ministry soon, recommends that the

government arrange stipends for such students to help them come back to school.

Another study conducted by the Manusher Jono Foundation also found the rate of child marriage and child labour both increased during the pandemic.

It found that between April and October 2020, at least 13,886 girls aged between 10 and 17 were forced to marry, while 8,140 children were sent to work.

In March 2021, Unicef published a report “COVID-19: A Threat to Progress against Child Marriage”, which warned that school closures, economic stress, service disruptions, pregnancy, and parental deaths due to the pandemic are putting the most vulnerable girls at increased risk of child marriage.

Tomoo Hozumi, Unicef representative in Bangladesh at the time, had said, “Despite significant progress in recent years, Bangladesh has the fourth highest prevalence of child marriage in the world.

“Covid-19 compounds the difficulties facing millions of girls. School closures, isolation from friends and support networks, and rising poverty place girls at heightened risk of child marriage.”

According to Unicef’s October 2020 factsheet, 51 percent of young women in Bangladesh were married off before their 18th birthday.

## China ship docks in Lanka despite India, US concerns

AFP, Hambantota

A Chinese research vessel bristling with antennas and communication gear docked at Sri Lanka’s Chinese-run port of Hambantota yesterday despite concerns from India and the United States about its alleged spying activities.

The Yuan Wang 5 entered the deep-sea port after securing permission to enter Sri Lankan waters on the condition it would not engage in research, port officials said.

Shipping analytics websites described the Yuan Wang 5 as a research and survey vessel, but according to Indian media it is a dual-use spy ship.

According to Indian reports, the Yuan Wang 5 could be employed for space and satellite tracking and has specific uses in intercontinental ballistic missile launches. Both India and the US have raised security concerns over the ship’s visit to Sri Lanka, with New Delhi lodging a complaint with Colombo.

A day before the arrival of the vessel, India gifted a Dornier 228 surveillance aircraft to Sri Lanka in a bid to bolster the island’s maritime surveillance capabilities.

The Hambantota port has been run by the Chinese since 2017, when they took it on a 99-year lease for \$1.12 billion, less than the \$1.4 billion Sri Lanka paid a Chinese firm to build it.



### PROPOSAL TO REVIVE 2015 NUCLEAR ACCORD

## Iran sends response

Says a deal can be reached if US ‘reacts with realism’; EU says in discussion with other JCPOA participants

AFP, Tehran

The European Union yesterday said it was studying Iran’s response to a “final” draft agreement on reviving a 2015 nuclear accord with major powers it presented at talks in Vienna.

A spokesperson for EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell – who coordinated talks to bring Iran and the US back into the deal – said the Iranian response was received late Monday.

The United States had already said Monday that it was informing Borrell of its response to the text he submitted on August 8.

The possibility of a deal which might lead to the lifting of US sanctions on Iran’s oil output of 2.5 million barrels per day has already helped trigger a fall in prices on world markets, with US oil futures dropping nearly three percent to finish below \$90 a barrel.

“We are studying it and are consulting with the other JCPOA participants and the US on the way ahead,” the spokesperson said, referring to the formal title of the nuclear pact.

Iran’s official IRNA news agency reported earlier yesterday that “an agreement will be concluded if the United States reacts with realism and flexibility” to Iran’s response.

Iran’s ISNA news agency cited an “informed source” as saying that Tehran “expects to receive the response of the other side in the next two days”. IRNA had said Friday that Iran might accept the “final” text drawn up by the European Union to save the deal.

None of the parties have spelt out in details the points of contention that are still blocking a deal.

Iran’s demand for an end to US blacklisting of its ideological army, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, as a “terrorist organisation” has been dropped from the discussions and will instead be handled after the deal, a senior EU official said earlier.

The official said progress had also been made on Tehran’s call for guarantees that there will be no repeat of Washington reneging on the deal as it did under Trump in 2018.

## Academy apologises

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harassment of Littlefeather.

“Regarding the Academy’s apology to me, we Indians are very patient people – it’s only been 50 years!” Littlefeather said in a statement.

“We need to keep our sense of humor about this at all times. It’s our method of survival,” said Littlefeather, describing the upcoming event as “a dream come true.”

“It is profoundly heartening to see how much has changed since I did not accept the Academy Award 50 years ago. I am so proud of each and every person who will appear on stage,” she added.

The Academy has moved to confront accusations of a lack of racial diversity in recent years.

In 2019, “Last of the Mohicans” star Wes Studi became the first Native American actor to receive an Oscar, with an honorary Academy Award recognising his career.

Its museum has also hosted virtual events on women who achieved historic Oscars milestones including a talk with Buffy Sainte-Marie – the first Indigenous person to win an Oscar, for best original song in 1983.

## Dhaka 5th worst

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breathe in this pollutant.

“In Bangladesh, not just the residents in Dhaka but also those in other cities, including Sylhet, Khulna and Rajshahi, are getting exposed to poor air. Data and solutions are available today and those can be used to inform and implement air quality actions to clean up the air.”

Prof Abdus Salam of Dhaka University’s chemistry department said old vehicles and traffic congestion are the key sources of nitrogen dioxide, and it can be checked by using clean energy and allowing only fit vehicles on the roads.

“We know the sources of air pollution and also the solutions. What we need is a specific target and specific programmes to achieve it. But it seems that we are walking in the opposite direction when it comes to curbing air pollution,” he added.

## Steps taken

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s commitment to ensuring a peaceful environment in the country. He said police will work under the Election Commission during the polls.

The US also expressed its interest in enhancing capacity building cooperation with Bangladesh alongside providing assistance in the training of the Bangladesh Coastguard and Border Guard Bangladesh personnel.

Talking about IGP Benazir Ahmed’s planned visit to the US, the home minister said a discussion is underway regarding the IGP’s trip.

“There’s an understanding between the UN and the US. It’s [visit] under discussion following that particular process,” he said, mentioning that a decision would be reached once the process is done.

Benazir is scheduled to attend the third UN Chiefs of Police Summit (UNCOPS 2022), which will bring together ministers, chiefs of police and senior representatives of regional and professional policing organisations to the UN Headquarters in New York from August 31 to September 1.

## ‘Bangladesh not in crisis’

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Once the staff level agreement is reached, which usually takes a few months, will the programme be sent for approval to the executive board. The disbursements are made once the executive board approves the programme.

“We have not started any negotiations with the authorities on the design of the programme,” the IMF spokesperson said.

So the government’s recent move of a record fuel price hike to bring parity with the global price has no relation to the IMF support programme sought.

“That is a decision of the government and there is no connection between the action of the authorities and their request for an IMF programme.”

The authorities have not specified an amount in the request letter, the IMF said, adding that the size and the modality of the support will be discussed as part of the programme negotiations.

“Normally, the amount of support depends on the financing needs of the government and the strength of the reform agenda we will be putting together.”

The IMF’s standard practice is to work closely with the authorities to come up with a programme that is most relevant to that country’s economic and social dynamics.

“It is the authority’s programme and our efforts will be focused on

collaborating with them to design a programme which will support them in addressing their long-term structural issues.”

The country has a growing need to mobilise finance for both adaptation and mitigation of climate change.

“Bangladesh is in many ways at the forefront of preparing for climate change. It has been very vocal on several international platforms highlighting the urgent need to develop global policy solutions to respond to climate change. It is one of the few countries in the world to have operationalised the climate fiscal framework, which provides the principles and tools for climate fiscal policymaking.”

While the authorities have started allocating budgetary support for adaptation and have updated their nationally determined contributions, its allocation of about 1 percent of GDP per year remains well below the required 3-4 percent of GDP.

Bangladesh is pre-emptively seeking IMF support to meet its climate financing needs through the newly created Resilience and Sustainability Trust (RST) as well as to cushion the impact of war in Ukraine, bolster its external position and be prepared to deal with any further deterioration in external conditions.

Loans from RST come with a 20-year maturity and a ten-and-a-half years’ grace period. The IMF has come up with a three-tier interest rate structure

as per the country’s income status.

Bangladesh can get up to \$1.5 billion from the RST, which targets specific areas within the mandate of the IMF and not all areas of climate change.

But an IMF programme now will help Bangladesh tide over the current macroeconomic volatility and will further the authorities’ hold to build an inclusive, resilient and green economy, the IMF spokesperson said, adding that the efforts will also help Bangladesh prepare for successful graduation from the least-developed country bracket in 2026.

“Bangladesh is not in a crisis. It is in a vastly different situation from some of the neighbouring countries. Even though the reserves have come down, they are still high enough to cover 4.5 months of prospective imports. The widening current account deficit has put pressure on the currency and the taka has depreciated. The external debt is relatively low and mostly concessional in nature.”

Besides, the most recent Article IV consultation has assessed that Bangladesh’s debt outlook is expected to remain sustainable; the country has a low risk of debt distress: the public sector debt to GDP ratio stands around 6 percent, with the external debt to GDP ratio being 14 percent.

During Article IV consultation, an IMF team of economists visits a country to assess economic and financial developments and discuss

the country’s economic and financial policies with government and central bank officials. The IMF’s most recent Article IV mission came in December last year and handed in the report in March this year.

However, tighter financing conditions and the recent currency depreciation will add pressure and reduce fiscal space, the IMF spokesperson said.

The government’s request for a fund programme will ease the financing constraints and allow for advancing the efforts to manage fiscal, monetary and financial stability risks in light of climate change and recent global developments.

“Bangladesh did well to come out of the pandemic. The recovery was robust and was faster than in many other countries. However, it was dampened by the war in Ukraine.”

The global conditions are very uncertain and Bangladesh is an import-dependent economy. Even though the commodity prices have started to come down, they are expected to remain elevated and volatile, which will have an impact on imports.

Given the uncertainty surrounding global developments, the pressure on the balance of payment is likely to continue.

“That’s why this is an opportune moment that the Bangladesh government has preemptively asked for the IMF’s support.”

## PM slams

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15 to 16.

“He [Bangabandhu] did not take anything with him, rather he gave everything for his people. He gave a country, a nation, identity and self-identity for the people,” she said.

Hasina said the kafon (shroud) of Bangabandhu was made of relief cloth, which was supposed to be given to poor people.

“My father, mother, brothers and sisters did not take anything with them,” she said with an emotion-choked voice, adding, “Even their namaz e-janaza was not performed.”

“I have a question; many leaders are here [at the BICC]. The father of the nation phoned many of them, what did they do?”

She mentioned that everyone remains beside while a person is alive, but no one is found when he is dead. “That is the painful reality... I don’t expect anything...”

The PM also criticised some countries and human rights organisations for not confronting the countries which still are sheltering the self-proclaimed killers of Bangabandhu.

Hasina mentioned that food scarcity has occurred worldwide. There are signs of a famine. Developed countries are facing serious troubles, and Bangladesh has to take measures to face the situation, she added.

## NSU Board of Trustees recast

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members are: Azim Uddin Ahmed, chairman of Mutual Group of Companies; Benajir Ahmed, managing director and CEO of Raymond Group of Industries; Aziz Al Kaiser, vice chairman of Partex Star Group; MA Kashem, chairman of Mutual Group of Industries; Rehana Rahman, managing director of Bengal Tradeways Ltd; Mohammed Shajahan, managing director of Shah Fatehullah Textile Mills Ltd and Jalal Ahmed Spinning Mills Ltd; and Nurul

H Khan, former chairman of National Board of Revenue.

The ACC sued five members of the NSU board of trustees – Azim Uddin Ahmed, Mohammed Shajahan, Benajir Ahmed, MA Kashem and Rehana Rahman – and Ashalaya Housing Managing Director Amin Md Hilaly over laundering about Tk 304 crore. All the five are businessmen.

Shajahan, Benajir, Kashem and Rehana had sought anticipatory bail from the High Court, but the court denied their petitions and sent

them to jail on May 22. They are now behind bars.

Meanwhile, the president kept nine of the previous board members in the new one, including ex-officio member Prof Atiqul Islam, vice chancellor of NSU. The eight others are: MA Kalam, managing director of TK Group of Industries; SM Kamaluddin, chairman and managing director of Concord Engineers and Constructors Ltd; Abul Kashem, managing director of Abul Khair Group; Yasmin Kamal, director of

Minhaz Group of Industries; ASF Rahman, chairman of BEXIMCO Group of Industries; Junaid Kamal Ahmad, senior economist of World Bank, Washington DC, USA; Fawzia Naaz, chairman of United Phosphorus (Bangladesh) Ltd; and Tanveer Harun, vice-chairman of Incontrade Ltd.

The president added three new faces to the board – Javed Munir Ahmed, Faiza Jamil and Sheema Ahmed.

The SHED order said that according to Section 35 (7) of the

Private University Act, 2010, if there is a stalemate in a private university for any reason or if its normal academic activities are disrupted and there is risk of students being harmed, the chancellor, upon recommendations from the UGC and the education ministry, can take any necessary decision in the interest of continuing the normal academic activities of the said university.

And the decision of the chancellor in this regard shall be considered as final.