HOMEMADE AIRCRAFT CARRIER

India finally unveils INS Vikrant

AFP, *Kochi*

India debuted its first locally made aircraft carrier yesterday, a milestone in government efforts to reduce its dependence on foreign arms and counter China's growing military assertiveness in the region.

The INS Vikrant, one of the world's biggest naval vessels at a length of 262 metres (860 feet), will formally enter service after 17 years of construction and tests.

It inherits the name of a retired carrier famed for enforcing a blockade against Pakistan's naval forces during the 1971 Bangladesh independence war.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was present at the commissioning ceremony in southern Kerala state.

Around 1,600 sailors will crew the Vikrant.

Yesterday's commissioning ceremony also saw the unveiling of a new naval flag without a British colonial symbol left over from India's colonial era. The new ensign replaces a prominent Saint George's Cross, the national flag of England, with the royal seal of the Hindu warrior-king Chhatrapati Shivaji.

'They thrive on chaos'

Biden says 'MAGA Republicans' threaten US; Trump hints at pardoning Capitol rioters

AGENCIES

US President Joe Biden has slammed Donald Trump and his "extremist" supporters, labeling them enemies of American democracy in a prime-time address that sought to fire up voters ahead of key midterm elections.

Speaking in Philadelphia, the cradle of US democracy, the president on Thursday launched an extraordinary assault on those Republicans who embrace Trump's "Make America Great Again" ideology -- and urged his own supporters to fight back.

"Donald Trump and the MAGA Republicans represent an extremism that threatens the very foundations of our republic," thundered Biden, speaking near the spot where the Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution were adopted more than two centuries ago.

"They embrace anger. They thrive on chaos. They live not in the light of truth but in the shadow of lies."

"There is no place for political violence in America. Period. None. Ever," warned the 79-year-old Democrat -- in a reference to last year's assault on the US Capitol by hardline Trump supporters refusing to accept his defeat.

Citing the nationwide assault on abortion rights by hardline conservatives -- and fears for other freedoms ranging from contraception access to same-sex marriage -- the US leader charged that "MAGA forces" were "determined to take this country backwards."

With control of Congress in the balance come November, Biden appealed

directly to mainstream Republicans to join forces with Democrats and repudiate Trump's brand of politics -- which still holds sway over much of his party.

Trump hit back at Biden on his Truth Social site late on Thursday, saying the president is unfit for office.

Separately, Trump told radio host Wendy Bell that he was giving financial help to some supporters involved in the Jan 6, 2021 assault on Congress and would look very favourably on giving pardons if he were again elected to the White House.

ELECTORAL FRAUD

Suu Kyi gets jail with hard labour

AFP, *Yangon*

A Myanmar junta court yesterday sentenced ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi to three years in jail "with hard labour", for electoral fraud in the 2020 polls that her party won in a landslide, a source said.

The latest sentence, handed down by the closed court, takes the total jail time the Nobel laureate and democracy figurehead is facing to two decades.

Separately, a court in Myanmar has jailed a former British ambassador and her spouse for one year for violating immigration laws, sources and media said yesterday.

Vicky Bowman, who runs a group promoting ethical business practices in Myanmar, and her Burmese husband Htein Lin, an artist and former political prisoner, were arrested on Aug 24 for staying at an address different to the one she had registered under.

EU PROPOSAL ON NUKE DEAL

US: Iran response 'not constructive'

AFP, *Washington*

The United States on Thursday said that a new response from Iran on reviving a landmark nuclear deal was "not constructive," a day after European mediators were hopeful at finally crossing the finish line. The European Union put forward on August 8 what it called a final text to restore the 2015 nuclear accord. Iran proposed changes to it -- largely accepted by the Europeans -- to which the United States issued a response through the mediators. Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani said earlier Thursday that Tehran sent another reply in response to the US position. State Department spokesman Vedant Patel said late Thursday that the response was "not constructive."

Gotabaya 'to return home'

AFP, *Colombo*

Bankrupt Sri Lanka's deposed former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa is expected to end his self-imposed exile in Thailand and return home early today, a top defence official told AFP yesterday. The 73-year-old fled the island under military escort in July after crowds stormed his official residence, following months of angry demonstrations blaming him for the nation's economic crisis. He issued his resignation from Singapore before flying onward to Bangkok, where he has been petitioning his successor to facilitate his return.

Pakistan

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It was Hong Kong's lowest T20 international total after their 69 against Nepal in 2014 and also their lowest against Pakistan, who had bowled out West Indies for 60 in 2018.

Pakistan join Afghanistan, India and Sri Lanka in round two of the six-nation tournament that acts as a tune-up to the T20 World Cup in October-November in Australia.

Pace bowler Naseem Shah struck twice in the third over of the Hong Kong innings including the wicket of skipper Nizakat Khan for eight.

Hong Kong, who made the main draw by winning all their three matches in the qualifiers, could not recover.

Shadab returned figures of 4-8 from his leg spin and Nawaz took three wickets with his left-arm orthodox.

18 killed in suicide

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"The perpetrators of this heinous act will be punished."

No group has so far claimed the attack.

Ansari, who was in his late 30s, was an influential cleric known for his fiery speeches. In July, during a religious gathering in Kabul, he strongly defended Afghanistan's new Taliban rulers.

"Whoever commits the smallest act against our Islamic government should be beheaded," he said. "This (Taliban) flag has not been raised easily, and it will not be lowered easily."

Even before the Taliban returned to power in August 2021, the ultra-conservative cleric had been calling for women to be fully covered in public, and for bans on musical concerts in Herat.

In his speeches, he used to regularly launch tirades against the previous US-backed governments.

Ansari is the second pro-Taliban cleric to be killed in a blast in less than a month, after an August 11 suicide attack targeted Rahimullah Haqqani at his madrassa in Kabul.

Haqqani was known for angry speeches against IS, who later claimed responsibility for his death.

Blender's Choice

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guest. Mirza Salman Ispahani, chairman of Ispahani Tea Limited, and Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, will also be present at the event alongside popular celebrities.

With 31 award categories, the nominees have been selected by an expert jury in two main sections – critics and popular. The winners of the popular categories were chosen by the audience through online voting while the winners in the critics' category were selected by the jury.

The first half of the programme will be hosted by Rafsan Sabab and Sunerah Binte Kamal, while the second half will be hosted by Yash Rohan and Naziba Basher. Shohel Mondol and Shirin Akhtar Shela will perform a dance duet while Safa Kabir will entertain the audience with an energetic dance number.

Many other popular artistes, including noted singer Khayam Sanu Sandhi, stand-up comedians Amin and Ashik, the Baap Ka Beta duo Shuvashish Bhowmik and Rituraj, and rap sensation Jalali Set will perform at the event.

Case lodged but 'plaintiff'

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town after the party men brought out a procession marking the party's 44th founding anniversary.

Sk Farhad, resident medical hospital at Narayanganj General Hospital, where the body was taken following the clash, said there were bullet marks on the body.

Police on Thursday said it could not be known immediately how he died.

His autopsy was completed at Narayanganj General Hospital. Around 12:30am yesterday, Shaon's body was handed over to his family members, said Anisur Rahman Molla, officer-in-charge of Narayanganj Sadar Model Police Station.

Shaon was buried at a graveyard in his village around 1:30am in the presence of police after a namaz-e-janaza at a local school playground, said his elder brother Milon.

Meanwhile, both ruling Awami League and the BNP claimed that Shaon was an activist of their youth wings.

BNP leaders claimed that Shaon was an activist of Jubo Dal, the party's youth wing.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday visited Shaon's house to meet his family members.

Around 8:00pm on Thursday night, a group of AL men led by Fatullah Thana unit AL's office secretary Jahangir Master, brought out a procession in Nobinagar area, claiming that Shaon was an activist of Jubo League, the youth front of the AL.

But Milon told this newspaper that his brother was not involved with any political party.

"I have heard that some people took Shaon to BNP's procession yesterday [Thursday]," he said.

Meanwhile in Manikganj, police on Thursday night filed a case against 33 named and some 2,500 unnamed people in connection with violence in the district's Khalpara area on Thursday morning.

BNP claimed around 100 of their party men were injured in the clash, while police said seven police personnel were injured.

[Our Manikganj correspondent contributed to the report]

Gang steals TSP

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a three-member committee to investigate the incident. The committee collected samples for lab tests.

Members of the committee are Mazharul Islam, manager (admin), Rezaul Karim, manager (production), and Abdul Awal, manager (marketing).

Authorities of TSP Complex Ltd told this correspondent that they found adulterated fertiliser in nine trucks out of 18. Around 126 tonnes of TSP were in the nine trucks.

Shahidul Islam, chief scientific officer at divisional office of the Soil Resource Development Institute in Rajshahi, said chemical elements were not properly mixed with the samples sent from the Bogura buffer warehouse.

For this, it is adulterated TSP as per sub-section (b) of the Fertiliser (Management) Act, 2006, he said, adding that adulteration of government TSP fertiliser was not found before this.

Contacted, Ashfaq Uddin Ahmed, manager of MHR Corporation, said, "We have been doing business for last 25 years. We have a goodwill. We just transport goods. We load fertiliser from the TSP Complex and carry it to different buffer warehouses."

Ataur Rahman, managing director of TSP Complex Ltd, told this newspaper yesterday that they supply TSP to different buffer warehouses following the government order. "Sometimes, they hire transport agencies like MHR Corporation to carry the fertiliser there."

1 killed as smugglers

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Jashore-Satkhira highway. Around 1:00am, they stopped a car.

They found 9.75kg gold in the car, a portion from a storage box of the vehicle and another strapped to detainee Robin's body, police claimed.

Robin and Kashem were detained on the spot.

Later, when police were interrogating them at the checkpoint, a group of men on some 30 motorcycles attacked police and tried to snatch the detainees and the gold bars, claimed the law enforcers.

"They even hurled four to five crude bombs at the law enforcers. In self-defence, police fired rubber bullets," said Jewel Imran, assistant superintendent of Jashore police (Nabharan circle).

Some 200 yards away from the scene, Oli was found lying under a motorcycle with serious injuries. He was rushed to Sharsha Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared him dead, he said.

The police official also said that Oli had no bullet injury. Two policemen were also injured during the clash.

World food prices

FROM PAGE 12

The vegetable oil, sugar, dairy and meat price indices all fell, partly reflecting improved supplies.

In separate cereal supply and demand estimates, FAO lowered its forecast for global cereal production in 2022 to 2.774 billion tonnes from a previous projection of 2.792 billion in early July.

That is 1.4 percent below estimated output for 2021.

The cut to its prediction for 2022 cereal production was due to the weather-reduced corn prospects in the northern hemisphere, with European Union yields notably seen falling 16% below their five-year average, FAO said.

World cereal use in 2022/23 is expected to surpass production at 2.792 million tonnes, leading to a projected 2.1 percent fall in global stocks compared with 2021/22 to 845 million tonnes.

That would represent a stocks-to-use ratio of 29.5 percent, down from 30.9 percent in 2021/22 but still relatively high historically, FAO said.

Focus on energy cooperation

FROM PAGE 1

economic and geopolitical changes. Dhaka will definitely want Delhi to help stabilise the economy, especially the supply of energy and essentials," said former foreign secretary Shahidul Haque, now Bangabandhu Chair at the University of Delhi.

According to the schedule, Hasina will reach New Delhi on September 5 evening. The bilateral meeting between the two prime ministers will be held on September 6. The same day, she will also make a courtesy call on Indian President Droupadi Murmu.

On September 7, Hasina will address a meeting with top business leaders, and visit Ajmer Sharif Dargah in Rajasthan before returning to Dhaka on September 8.

The officials concerned say they are finalising details of the visit when about a dozen MoUs might be signed with energy, trade, economy, energy, connectivity, water sharing, security and defence getting high importance.

PUTTING SUPPLY CHAINS RIGHT

Apart from the long-term agreement on importing fuel oil from India to Bangladesh, Dhaka and Delhi will discuss ways of ensuring an unhampered supply of foodstuff like wheat, onion, pulses and spices to Bangladesh.

Earlier, Bangladesh had considered buying Russian crude oil, but that was not possible as it didn't have the technology to refine the Russian crude oil.

Foreign ministry officials said the top leaders may also discuss using Indian rupees for trade between the two countries as both the countries saw a decline in foreign currency reserves, with Bangladesh approaching the World Bank and IMF for loans.

Shahidul Haque said global and regional politics has changed in the aftermath of Covid pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war. With the rising rivalry between the West and Russia and China, the two blocs are trying to draw countries on their sides.

He said India is already a member of the Quad, a diplomatic network of four countries committed to supporting a free and open Indo-Pacific, and US-led Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF).

Bangladesh is still not a member of Quad or IPEF but it has joined China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

"There is a clear gap between the stances of Bangladesh and India," he said, adding that the leaders would surely try to reduce the gap.

In South Asia, where Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are in trouble, India and Bangladesh want to work together for regional stability, which is also related to regional security, Shahidul Haque added.

TRADE AND CONNECTIVITY

India-Bangladesh bilateral trade was worth over $14 billion last year, with Bangladesh exporting products worth close to $2 billion. Officials and experts say this volume can be increased manifold with the right infrastructure and regulations in place.

Dhaka will call upon New Delhi to withdraw the anti-dumping duty imposed on exports of jute products from Bangladesh to India since 2017. The anti-dumping duty is a protectionist tariff on imports of goods that are priced below fair market value.

New Delhi will also be requested to remove any other non-tariff barriers as part of Dhaka's objective to increase exports.

As the duty-free regime under the South Asian Free Trade Agreement will expire once Bangladesh graduates out of LDC status by 2026, the two countries have already conducted a joint study on the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

Hasina and Modi may give a go-ahead to start the negotiation on CEPA, the future framework of trade and investment.

Bangladesh has provided India with transit and transhipment facilities for transporting Indian goods to the northeast. New Delhi may stress the need for speeding up the rail, road and waterway connectivity projects and lowering the cost of trade by improving logistics and transportation.

At a recent event, Indian High Commissioner Vikram Doraiswami said major trade between the two countries is done through one land port, which creates a monopoly and raises the cost of trade.

Also, there is no direct shipping between India and Bangladesh, and the goods that have to go by sea are shipped via Port Klang of Malaysia, Singapore or Colombo, which increases transport cost and time.

Bangladesh is also keen on regional connectivity through the implementation of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicle Agreement and regional hydroelectricity grid with India's northeast, Nepal and Bhutan.

Shahidul Haque said Dhaka and Delhi should expedite the implementation of both bilateral and sub-regional connectivity projects.

India has a massive plan for implementing its Look East Policy and Bangladesh is a big part of it because of its geographical position.

Bangladesh can also be heavily benefited by increasing its export to the northeast of India and charging fees for the vehicles that carry Indian goods through Bangladesh's land or waters, he said.

WATER SHARING

The Joint Rivers Commission meeting held on August 25, after a gap of 12 years, has raised new hope of progress in the water issues between the countries. In the meeting, Dhaka and Delhi finalised the text of the MoU on Interim Water Sharing of Kushiyara river. It may be signed during the visit.

The Teesta water-sharing deal has been pending since 2011 when it could not be signed due to last-minute opposition from West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Apart from the Muhuri, Dharla, Khowai, Monu, Dudhkumar, and Gumti rivers, eight others have been included by India for water sharing.

Dhaka will request New Delhi to expedite the process as millions of people in the northern region of Bangladesh suffer due to a shortage of irrigation water in the dry season, and are affected due to floods in the monsoon, foreign ministry officials said.

PROGRESS IN DEFENCE COOPERATION

Traditionally, Bangladesh buys most of its military equipment from China. India, which wants Bangladesh to buy defence equipment from them, signed an agreement of $500 Indian Line of Credit (LoC) for this in 2017, but Bangladesh has yet to utilise it.

According to diplomatic sources, Bangladesh's Armed Forces Division (AFD) prepared a list of equipment, which it wants to import from India, following the defence dialogue held in New Delhi on August 11.

A delegation of defence experts will visit India soon to finalise the list.

The procurement of defence equipment is being considered significant progress in defence cooperation between India and Bangladesh, the sources said.

BORDER MANAGEMENT

Border management has always been a critical issue, especially with Dhaka repeatedly requesting New Delhi to stop border killings.

The number of such killings has decreased in recent times, but New Delhi has stressed the need for comprehensive management of the border and checking criminal activities. Hasina and Modi may provide further direction towards this end.

Diplomatic sources said Dhaka was unhappy about India's National Register of Citizens and Citizens' Amendment Act. New Delhi maintains that these have no implications in Bangladesh.

Dhaka also was unhappy about anti-Muslim rhetoric by some top BJP leaders. On the other hand, New Delhi is unhappy about violence against the Hindu community, especially during the last Durga Puja.

Shahidul Haque said during the PM-level meeting, Dhaka and Delhi would share their concerns like religious radicalisation as these have wider implications across the borders, and call for stopping nationalistic and populist remarks.

According to Indian High Commissioner Vikram Doraiswami, the bilateral relations between Bangladesh and India have reached such a level that all issues are on the table for discussion and can be amicably resolved.

Aman planting

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the farmers go for supplementary irrigation to get an expected yield, which will ultimately push up the production costs, they said, adding that the increased prices of fertilisers also aggravated the situation.

Meanwhile, the government is trying to make all-out efforts to ensure a good Aman harvest by ensuring uninterrupted power supply to farmers for irrigation and providing seeds to any possible flood-affected area.

"Due to poor rainfall in many areas, farmers need fertilisers and supplementary irrigation. This will increase their production costs slightly. Planting of seedlings is also delayed in many areas," said DAE Director General Md Benazir Alam.

He said the production of late varieties is always less than the regular verities.

Benazir, however, expressed optimism that the overall Aman production would not be hampered.

China grows rice

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Rice is one of the most popular foods on the International Space Station (ISS) and has been a staple for astonauts since the Apollo missions.

Nasa astronauts Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins and Buzz Aldrin ate meals of freeze-dried chicken and rice during the Apollo 11 mission, which saw Aldrin and Armstrong become the first people to walk on the Moon.