



Dhaka, Delhi sign first defence deal under \$500m LoC

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh and India have signed the first contract under \$500 Line of Credit (LoC), which India finds an “important first step” in strengthening defence cooperation between the two countries.

“I think the first contract under the defence Line of Credit was signed earlier this week. I’m sure you have been following this closely. It was a modest amount but it was an important first step,” said Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra in New Delhi on Tuesday night.

The Indian foreign secretary said it may be a defence LoC but it is also a part of the development partnership framework.

“Our effort is that this will open up a path for further engagement between the two countries in the field of defence and security and take our cooperation further,” he added.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, now visiting India, and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi expressed satisfaction at the “intensification” of bilateral defence ties.

They also agreed on early finalisation of projects under the Line of Credit for defence, which would be beneficial for both countries, according to the joint statement issued after the bilateral talks between the two leaders.

India welcomed the finalisation of “initial procurement plans” for vehicles for the Bangladesh Armed Forces in this regard and looked forward to enhancing bilateral defence ties.

The Indian side reiterated its request for implementing the 2019 MoU for providing a coastal radar system for

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Pakistan's Naseem Shah (R) runs in joy after hitting a match-winning six against Fazalhaq Farooqi of Afghanistan during their Asia Cup Super Four fixture at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium on Wednesday. The win set up a final clash between Pakistan and Sri Lanka on September 11.

PHOTO: AFP

Thrilling finish sets up Pak-SL final

AFP, Sharjah

Tailender Naseem Shah hit two last-over sixes as Pakistan pulled off a thrilling one-wicket win over Afghanistan on Wednesday to set up an Asia Cup final against Sri Lanka, knocking out rivals India in the process.

Chasing 130 for victory, Pakistan were in deep trouble at 118-9 when number 10 Naseem muscled two hits over the fence off Fazalhaq Farooqi to win with four balls to spare in Sharjah and end India and Afghanistan's hopes of making the final.

The Afghans appeared set for victory when Farooqi, who had figures of 3-19 from his first three overs, saw two full tosses at the start of the final over dispatched over long-off.

Tempers flew when Faeed Ahmad struck twice in the 19th over, including dismissing the big hitting Asif Ali who then angrily waved his bat at the bowler as the umpire cooled him down.

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BR again seeks locomotives from India

India to provide 20 as grant

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

With 67 percent of the locomotives of Bangladesh Railway (BR) past their economic life, the state-run agency has turned to India for the second time in less than four years to mitigate its engine crisis.

Recently, BR sought 20 broad gauge (BG) locomotives from the neighbouring country.

And India agreed to provide the rail engines as grant, according to the India-Bangladesh joint statement issued yesterday following Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during her four-day official tour.

The 20 locomotives would be deployed on different routes, including cross-border train service, Sardar Shahadat Ali, additional director general (operations) of BR, told The Daily Star.

It is not known yet whether the locomotives would be brand new or used.

“We sought 20 locomotives -- be it little been used or new. It will help us very much,” said a BR official asking not to be named as he is not authorised to speak with the media.

The neighbouring country had sent in 10 “little bit used” locomotives in July 2020 following a proposal from BR to “hire” or “get as courtesy” 20 railway engines.

“But they were working very well as

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INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY

Govt now targets 100pc literacy by 2030

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Around 24.40 percent of people aged 15 and older are still illiterate even though the ruling Awami League in its 2008 election manifesto promised to eradicate illiteracy by 2014. The National Education Policy 2010, framed by the AL-led government in 2009, also set a target of ensuring 100 percent literacy by 2014.

In 2008, at least 48.8 percent of the people aged 15 and above were illiterate, according to the BBS Literacy Assessment Survey 2008.

Quoting Bangladesh Sample Vital Statistics 2020 released by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Zakir Hossen, state minister for primary and mass education, yesterday said literacy rate for people aged 15 and above stands at 75.6 percent.

“We will not be able to make the desired development if we cannot make the 24.4 percent illiterate people literate,” he told a press conference marking the International Literacy Day today.

Literacy is attained in two ways -- formal education and adult literacy programmes -- and the country's focus has always been on formal education, with adult literacy programmes getting less priority.

Talking to The Daily Star, several Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE) officials said the AL government pledged to eradicate illiteracy, but it could not take up any project under the bureau until 2014.

Assuming power in 2009, the AL-led government planned to take up two Tk

3,000-crore projects and sought assistance from donors. But it had to shelve the projects as none of the donors came forward, said the officials.

Campaigners blamed the absence of proper planning, lack of will and financing as well as incapacity of BNFE for the failure.

“There was political commitment but eradicating illiteracy did not get the due importance in terms of planning and financing,” said KM Enamul Hoque, deputy director of Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE).

He pointed out that since 2009, BNFE completed only one project -- Basic Literacy Project.

Under the project undertaken in 2014 and completed in June this year, BNFE provided literacy skills to 44.60 lakh people aged 15 and above.

The government is now implementing another project to provide non-formal education to nine lakh children aged 8-14 years who have either dropped out of or never went to school.

The project will be completed by June next year.

“These initiatives were not enough for making the country free from illiteracy. We needed a continuous and comprehensive project for the eradication of illiteracy. Project-based initiatives mean all activities end when the project time expires,” Enamul said.

Aminul Islam Khan, senior secretary of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, said

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British envoy concerned over political violence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

British High Commission in Dhaka yesterday raised concerns over the recent violence between political parties and law enforcement agencies after two BNP men were killed in Bhola and Narayanganj.

The High Commission urged all the parties to choosing dialogue over violence.

“Engagement with political parties is a key part of our diplomatic presence in Bangladesh... The UK is gravely concerned about recent violence between political parties and law enforcement agencies, particularly after the deaths of BNP activists in Bhola and Narayanganj,” the British High Commission said in its Facebook page post.

It also said, “We call on all parties to exercise calm and restraint, choosing dialogue over violence.”

A four-member delegation of the BNP, led by Secretary General Mirza Fakhruul Islam

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ACC can seek wealth info multiple times

Appellate Division says, overturning Sinha-led bench's order

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The Appellate Division in the full text of a verdict has overturned an order delivered by a Supreme Court bench, led by former chief justice SK Sinha, that had directed the ACC to take action against its officials for frequently asking for wealth statements of suspects.

A four-member bench of the Appellate Division, led by Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique, cleared the Anti-Corruption Commission's way for exercising its powers and issuing multiple notices seeking wealth statements of suspects.

It said six years ago the previous bench had failed to take into consideration the relevant laws and rules, resulting in an “erroneous decision”.

Findings and observations made in that order are hereby expunged, the bench said in the 11-page full text of the verdict released yesterday.

The other three judges of the bench are Justice Borhanuddin, Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Krishna Debnath.

On June 30, the SC bench delivered a short judgement on this issue following the review petition filed by the ACC. The short verdict just said the petition had been disposed of.

On November 24, 2016, the SC bench led by Justice SK Sinha ordered the ACC chairman to take legal action against its officials if they harassed people by frequently asking for their

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Ballot voting possible if there is consensus

Says CEC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal yesterday said he does not believe that political crisis will deepen if electronic voting machines are used in the next general elections.

Talking to reporters at his office, he also said elections using only ballot papers can be held if there is an unanimous political consensus.

The CEC made the comments in reaction to a joint statement of 39 eminent citizens on Tuesday urging the Election Commission not to use EVMs in the next national elections.

In the statement, they said the use of EVMs may trigger political debates and further reduce people's confidence in the

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Ignoring the ban, two-stroke three-wheelers, known as baby-taxis, ply Postogola bridge in Old Dhaka. This type of vehicles are responsible for polluting the environment. Operation of such rundown vehicles may cause accidents, but law enforcers turn a blind eye. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

New Omicron sub variant detected in the country

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Scientists at Jashore University of Science and Technology's Genome Center have detected a sub-type of Omicron variant, named BA 2.75, for the first time in the country, which, they believe, can cause a fresh rise in transmission.

They detected the sub-variant on three Covid-19 patients after sequencing their samples recently.

The announcement came at a time when the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) has been reporting higher positivity rates in a row since Sunday.

Yesterday, the positivity rate was 6.94 percent -- up from 6.71 percent the previous day. On Sunday, the positivity rate was 4.93 percent while 6.68 percent on Monday.

All the Covid-19 patients infected with the new sub-variant of Omicron were male. One was aged 55 years while two other 82, according to a press release from the university.

One of the patients has been undergoing treatment at a hospital while two others at home.

All of them had Covid-19 symptoms including fever, sore throat, cold and cough.

“This subvariant can escape the human immune system. So, there is no alternative to maintaining health rules including wearing masks,” said Prof Anwar Hossain, vice chancellor of the university who also heads the Genome Center.

First detected in India in July this year, the World Health Organization has already warned that the sub-variant has higher transmissibility.

“Being close to the Indian border, we had also detected

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