

All should work together for peace and stability

Says outgoing Chinese envoy

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

All countries, including China, India, the US and Bangladesh, should work together as friends, instead of forming groups against each other, for peace and stability, said Li Jiming, the outgoing Chinese ambassador.

“That is our sincere wish – that is what China is pursuing,” he said, citing the Russia-Ukraine war that has created a refugee crisis in Europe and has unfurled economic turmoil the world over.

Bangladesh and China have accomplished a lot during his tenure here, especially during the joint fight against Covid-19, he told reporters after a farewell meeting yesterday with Planning Minister MA Mannan at the planning ministry.

Several major projects were completed and many are on the way to completion next year.

He congratulated Bangladesh for being on the fast track of development, which will help the international community, including China.

He said he was happy that China played a positive role as a development partner and uplifted the strategic partnership of cooperation between China and Bangladesh to a higher level.

Asked about the Dhaka BRT accident in Uttara that killed five people on August 15, he said that all parties involved learned a lesson from the episode and any repeat should be averted.

China’s Gezhouba Group Corporation is implementing the project.

It is up to the Bangladesh government, not China, to take action against the company, he added.

“India, China, the US, Bangladesh, Japan – all want the welfare of people and should always stay in touch with

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Police confiscating the rickshaws that were plying the VIP road in the capital’s Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue yesterday. Rickshaws were banned on the road around two years ago to help ease traffic congestion.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Russia renews missile attacks on Ukraine

Two killed in Zaporizhzhia; G7 pressures Moscow with oil price cap

AGENCIES

Ukraine said Russia had destroyed homes in the south and knocked out power in the north in a new round of missile attacks yesterday as the West tried to limit Moscow’s ability to finance its invasion by imposing a price cap on Russian seaborne oil.

Air alerts sounded across Ukraine and officials urged civilians to take shelter from what they said was the latest in waves of Russian missile strikes since its February 24 invasion.

Two people were killed in the Zaporizhzhia region where several houses

were destroyed, the deputy head of the presidential office, Kyrylo Tymoshenko, said in one of the first reports of the damage. Buildings had been hit in the suburbs of the city of Zaporizhzhia and some Russian missiles had been shot down, a city official said.

The governor of the Kyiv region said its air defences were working there, and told residents to remain in shelters. An energy provider said power had been knocked out on the northern region of Sumy in the latest missile strikes.

A \$60 per barrel price cap on Russian seaborne crude oil came into force yesterday, the latest Western measure to

punish Moscow over its invasion. Russia is the world’s second largest oil exporter.

The agreement allows Russian oil to be shipped to third-party countries using G7 and EU tankers, insurance companies and credit institutions, only if the cargo is bought at or below the \$60 per barrel cap.

Moscow has said it will not abide by the measure even if it has to cut production. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said \$60 was too high to stop Russia’s assault.

A Russian oil blend was selling for around \$79 a barrel in Asian markets yesterday – almost a third higher than the price cap, according to Refinitiv data and estimates from industry sources.

Sublime Brazil crush Korea

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Brazil played at times with the joy associated with the Brazilian national team, the players coming together to celebrate each goal by showing off their dance moves and their coach even joining in.

Tite made 10 changes to the Brazil team after rotating his squad for the 1-0 loss to Cameroon which came after qualification for the last 16 had been secured.

Daniilo also returned from injury at left-back, while Eder Militao was the only player to keep his place and shifted across to right-back.

With Alisson Becker back in goal and Thiago Silva and Marquinhos playing too, this was Brazil’s first-choice defence but their forwards quickly put the tie to bed.

The opener came from their first shot on target in the seventh minute as Raphinha burst away from Kim Jin-su on the right and his ball across goal came to the feet of Vinicius who coolly picked his spot.

They then won a penalty as Richarlison was caught by Jung Woo-young and Neymar duly beat Kim Seung-gyu – his last six goals for Brazil have now all come from the spot.

Alisson was then called into action to tip over a vicious long-range effort from Hwang Hee-chan, but Brazil then scored their third in style just before the half-hour mark.

Richarlison juggled the ball on his head three times just outside the area before laying it off to Marquinhos

and then continuing into the box to get on the end of Silva’s pass which he slotted home for his third goal at this World Cup.

Paqueta then got their fourth nine minutes before the break with a first-time finish as he connected with a Vinicius ball held up from the byline.

They could have added more in the second half had they not taken their foot off the pedal, although Raphinha was denied on more than one occasion by the goalkeeper.

Korea though deserve credit for keeping going and they were rewarded inside the final quarter-hour as substitute Paik brought down a headed clearance and sent in a ferocious shot from 25 metres that brushed off Silva to beat Alisson.

BB launches cash support

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bank. Traditional banks have to keep 13 percent of their deposits as SLR but for shariah-based banks, it is 5.5 percent.

A BB official said traditional banks have to invest the SLR in treasury bills and bonds against which they earn interest.

Since Shariah-based banks cannot collect interest income, their smaller SLR is kept with the central bank largely in cash. So, they enjoyed a liquidity surplus.

Hit by scams, liquidity in Shariah-based banks has now dropped.

BB is now probing into Islami Bank

for disbursing Tk 7,246 crore in loans to nine companies this year violating banking rules.

Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said the central bank has introduced the new system to rescue the scam-hit Shariah-based banks.

BB should take measures immediately to restore corporate governance so that depositors get their confidence back.

Big borrowers who have taken out loans violating rules must be brought to book, she said.

Under the “Islamic Bank Liquidity Facility”, banks have to pay the central

bank a profit equivalent to the profit rate the bank gives to its depositors. The banks will also need to keep securities against the short-term loans.

Shariah-based banks have recently invested in Sukuk bonds, which can be used as collateral.

The government mobilised Tk 18,000 crore issuing Sukuk bonds since last year.

Md Mezbaul Haque, spokesperson for the central bank, said some Shariah-based banks invested heavily in Sukuk bonds, which has tied up their funds. The new facility would help them manage their funds smoothly, he said.

“So, the association leaders will be held responsible if any irregularities are uncovered.”

On November 24, 12 farmers of Varoimari village were arrested on loan default charges while the rest 25 went into hiding. The arrests sparked widespread criticism.

Three days later, the 12 were released on bail.

The bank authorities later formed a probe body to investigate the incident. The committee yesterday visited the village and talked to some borrowers.

“A total of 40 farmers took loans, but only three of them repaid with interest. So, the case has been filed

against 37,” he said.

Asked about the alleged fraudulence, Ahsanul said the bank authorities issued separate cheques against each of the 40 farmers. The association leaders received the cheques and handed the money to farmers, he added.

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Dec 10 rally venue not fixed yet

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The BNP held talks with the Dhaka Metropolitan Police over options for the venue but could not reach any consensus.

Shahiduddin Chowdhury Annie, the party’s publicity affairs secretary, has talked to police officials several times in this regard.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, Khandker Golam Faruq, commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said, “We will only grant permission for rallies if they are staged in open spaces or big fields like the International Trade Fare ground in Purbachal or the Bishwa Jtema ground.

“We did not receive any proposal for an alternative venue from the party yet. They [the BNP] came for a discussion and we asked them to choose a big venue and an open ground like the Suhrawardy Udyan, and then we will think about it.”

Contacted, Annie said, “Suhrawardy Udyan is not an open field ... It is a park. As police did not agree to Arambagh, we discussed the Eidgah ground.”

Sources said if the DMP verbally agrees, the BNP will send a formal letter to it for permission to hold the rally there.

Mirza Abbas, the party’s standing committee member, said, “The rally is not meant to oust the government. Then why is the government fearing it? We have proposed alternative venues, but it is not responding.”

Meanwhile, BNP sources said the party has instructed its leaders from Dhaka and adjacent areas to gather in the capital to ensure the success of the rally, and to stay at their relatives’ or friends’ homes to avoid arrests.

Dhaka division BNP leaders last night held a meeting with Tarique Rahman, the party’s acting chairman, where he instructed the party men to gather in the capital.

Speaking at a meeting, organised by Bangladesh Sammalita Peshajibi Parishad at party chairperson Khaleda Zia’s Gulshan office, earlier in the day, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir said the party will hold its December 10 rally in the capital at any cost.

“The entire world will be keeping

an eye on our rally ... We must make it successful.”

He also said the party leaders are working tirelessly and inviting people to the rally amid serious obstacles, including arrests.

“We must hold a peaceful and successful rally on December 10, if we want to protect the nation, the country’s independence and sovereignty, and get democracy back.”

Also, speaking at a press briefing in the BNP Nayapaltan office, Mirza Abbas said, “None of our Dhaka city leaders can stay home as the government has created such a terrible situation here by resorting to terror activities. But our activists are not afraid.

“We urge the government not to create any obstacle during our peaceful rally.”

He said the BNP will not respond to any kind of provocation by the government as its main goal is to hold the programme without chaos.

“We will just hold the rally from noon to 4:00pm and then our partymen will return to their homes.”

30th BCL council today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 30th national council of Bangladesh Chhatra League is going to be held today at the capital’s Suhrawardy Udyan.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, also the Awami League president, is expected to inaugurate the council at 10:30am.

Speaking to The Daily Star, BCL President Al-Nahean Khan Joy yesterday said, “We have completed all preparations for the council. We have already collected applications from candidates hoping for posts in the new committee. The committee will be formed as per the decision to be taken by the prime minister.”

The last BCL national council was held in May 2018.

Man abducts, kills boy

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

An 8-year-old boy has been strangled to death after being abducted by his neighbour in Dinaipur’s Khansama upazila.

The victim, Arifuzzaman, was a class-1 madrasa student from Kayempur village in the same upazila.

Police detained Shariful Islam, 24, an Alim student of a madrasa, from his home in Daktarpara area on Sunday night in connection with the abduction and murder.

Yesterday afternoon, a Dinaipur court sent the arrestee to jail after police produced him before it in a case filed by the victim’s father earlier in the day.

Speaking at a briefing at his office yesterday afternoon, Shah Ittekhaz Ahmed, superintendent of police in Dinaipur, said Shariful took Arifuzzaman for ride on a bicycle from near the latter’s home on Friday afternoon.

In the evening, Shariful called the victim’s father to inform him that he abducted his son and demanded a ransom of Tk 1 lakh. The father soon informed police about the incident and filed a general diary with Khansama Police Station that night.

Angered by this, the abductor killed Arifuzzaman after raping him at his home. He later buried the victim inside a room of the house on Friday night, said the SP quoting arrestee’s confession to police.

Police late on Sunday night recovered the body from the abductor’s house and sent it to M Abdur Rahim Medical College for an autopsy.

Quake jolts Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 5.2 magnitude earthquake jolted Dhaka and several other parts of the country yesterday morning, according to the US Geological Survey (USGS).

The epicentre of the earthquake, which was felt at 9:02am, was at a depth of 10km in the Bay of Bengal, it said.

No casualties were reported until the filing of this report.

We got less than what we borrowed

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and took the money. I didn’t sign any document,” said Rojob Ali, 40, an accused.

This correspondent saw a document containing signatures of the 40 farmers acknowledging that each of them received Tk 40,000.

Asked, Rojob said, “Someone might have forged my signature.”

The borrower said he received Tk 30,000 loan from the bank in 2016 and repaid the amount the following year with an interest of Tk 3,767. He claimed that he has documents of repayment.

Md Abdus Samad, another accused farmer, said he received Tk 30,000 but repaid the loan with an interest of Tk 17,000 in four installments. “Despite that, I have been accused in the case.”

COUNTRYWIDE DRIVE CONTINUES

A total of 1,319 people were arrested on various charges across the country in 24 hours till 6:00pm yesterday, the fifth day of a 15-day special drive.

Police during the 24-hour period conducted 2,226 operations, according to the database of the Police Headquarters.

A total of 405 cases were filed against the arrestees, Md Monzur Rahman, assistant inspector general of PHQ, told The Daily Star.

Police have so far also recovered two firearms, 25,207 yaba tablets, around 200-kgs marijuana, and 481 bottles of Phensedyl during the countrywide special drive, added AIG Monzur.

Earlier on Sunday, police picked up 1,356 people conducting 2,321 drives. Some 358 cases were filed against them, said the PHQ official.

On November 29, the PHQ directed the field-level officials to carry out a 15-day special drive across the country to ward off any untoward incident ahead of the Victory Day.

Meanwhile, Rab Director (Legal and Media Wing) Khandaker Al Moin said the force was ready to tackle

any situation that might arise from the BNP’s December 10 rally in the capital, reports UNB.

The Rab’s bomb disposal unit, special force, dog squad and helicopter unit were on alert centering the rally.

Besides, members of Rab intelligence team will be deployed and check posts will be set up in different areas to prevent any untoward incident, he said at a press briefing at the force’s Karwan Bazar media office.

Probe S Alam

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As per banking rules, S Alam Group and its affiliate companies can take a maximum of Tk 215 crore from the bank.

As of September, the total outstanding loans of Islami Bank, Bangladesh’s largest private sector bank, stood at Tk 145,897 crore, according to data from the Bangladesh Bank.

In response, the High Court on Sunday directed the S Alam Group’s chairman to explain its alleged excessive borrowing from banks and furnish documents by April 5.