

Momen seeks US support for Rab's capacity building

BSS, Dhaka

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday sought US support for increasing capacity building of Rab when visiting US State Department Counsellor Derek Chollet acknowledged improvement in performance of the force.

The foreign ministry issued a statement in this regard after Chollet had a meeting with Momen.

Chollet, who serves as a senior policy adviser to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, led a seven-member delegation at the meeting.

The foreign ministry statement said the US side acknowledged Rab's improved performance but emphasised on its sustained reforms while the force is now under a sanction imposed by Washington.

SEE PAGE II COL 4

Underprivileged freedom fighters get homes

PM hands over keys

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday handed over keys of 5,000 houses built under the government's 'Bir Nabish' project for underprivileged freedom fighters.

The liberation war affairs ministry organised the ceremony at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium where the PM joined virtually from the Gono Bhaban.

The houses are being given to the valiant freedom fighters as a gift from the PM as per her announcement on the occasion of Mujib Borsha, the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and the celebration of 50 years of Bangladesh's independence.

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne) approved the Tk 4,122cr project on March 21 last year.

Under the project, 30,000 houses will be built for insolvent freedom fighters, Birangana (women freedom fighters), widows and children of martyred and late freedom fighters.



Counsellor of the US Department of State Derek Chollet pays a courtesy call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: BSS

Russia declares battlefield gains

Ukrainian forces retreated in Luhansk

REUTERS, Kyiv

Russia said yesterday it had broken through two fortified Ukrainian defence lines on the eastern front, as Kyiv described conditions there as difficult and Western allies announced more military aid, including increased supplies of artillery rounds.

The Russian Defence Ministry said the Ukrainians had retreated in the face of Russian attacks in the Luhansk region, although it gave no details.

"During the offensive ... the Ukrainian troops randomly retreated to a distance of up to 3 km (1.9 miles) from the previously occupied lines," the ministry said on the Telegram messaging app.

"Even the more fortified second line of defence of the enemy could not hold the breakthrough of the Russian military."

The ministry did not specify in which part of the Luhansk region the offensive took place. The ministry added that its

"Southern group", backed by artillery, was waging an offensive in the direction of Donetsk.

President Volodymyr Zelensky's office said Ukrainian forces had repelled some Russian attacks in Luhansk but added: "The situation in the region remains difficult."

Luhansk regional governor Serhiy Haidai said Russia was pouring heavy equipment and mobilised troops into Luhansk.

The Kremlin has intensified attacks across a swathe of southern and eastern Ukraine in recent weeks, and a major new offensive has been widely anticipated.

Russia's main effort has been focused on the town of Bakhmut in Donetsk province adjacent to Luhansk.

The Ukrainian military said its units repelled Russian attacks in the areas of more than 20 settlements, including Bakhmut and Vuhledar - a town 150 km southwest of Bakhmut.

Delhi has total support for Hasina

FROM PAGE 1

Hasina said both countries can work on the socio-economic development of their peoples.

Kwatra said New Delhi was trying to make the terms and conditions of Indian Line of Credit (LoC) easier so that Bangladesh could avail the credit and repay it easily.

He said the currencies of the two countries could be used to run bilateral trade and businesses.

Prime Minister's Principal Secretary M Tofazzel Hossain Miah, Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen and Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pranay Verma were present.

Earlier in the day, the Indian foreign secretary held Foreign Office Consultation (FOC) with his Bangladeshi counterpart Masud Bin Momen, reports The Hindu.

The foreign secretaries of the two countries led their respective delegations to the FOC held at the

Foreign Service Academy.

During the meeting, both sides reviewed bilateral partnership, including political, security, trade, investment, defence, connectivity, water, power and sub-regional cooperation, the Indian high commission in Dhaka tweeted.

They also agreed to maintain close engagement in the context of Bangladesh's participation in the 18th G20 Summit as a guest country.

The last FOC was held on January 29, 2021, in New Delhi.

Also yesterday, Kwatra called on Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and held "productive exchange of views on further strengthening the wide-ranging partnership between India and Bangladesh", according to tweets by the Indian high commission.

Speaking to reporters at the Foreign Service Academy, Foreign Secretary Masud said India has assured Bangladesh of extending

its cooperation for importing hydropower from Nepal and Bhutan through its territories, reports UNB.

He said during the FOC they also discussed the "practical problem" in terms of transmission lines inside Bangladesh as there is a need for expanding the transmission network and boosting its capacity.

Masud said India will help Bangladesh if any specific project is taken up for expanding the transmission network and boosting its capacity within Bangladesh to supply electricity smoothly.

Bangladesh will also explore whether Indian LoCs can be used if any specific project is taken up in consultation with the ministry concerned for the expansion of transmission lines inside Bangladesh.

The Indian foreign secretary arrived in Dhaka on Tuesday evening on an official visit to Bangladesh at the invitation of Masud.

3 Bangladeshi students killed

FROM PAGE 1

Local media outlet CP24, citing the Highway Safety Division of Canada's Ontario Provincial Police, reported that the accident took place at 11:30pm (local time) on Monday.

Nibir, who was taken to Intensive Care Unit, was in a critical condition as of yesterday.

He was badly injured, with burns on several parts of his body. He underwent a surgery yesterday and was in need of two more, according to his family members.

After hearing the news, Kumar Bishwajit and his wife Naima Sultana departed for Canada. The singer also asked his fans for their best wishes and prayers for his son.

Death toll climbs above 41,000

FROM PAGE 16

Tourism Minister Nuri Ersoy told a news conference in Malatya, some 160 km from the epicentre of the earthquake.

Across the border, in Syria, relief efforts have been hampered by a civil war that has splintered the country and divided regional and global powers.

Though a single border crossing from Turkey to Syria was open after the quake, the UN did not send aid through for days, citing logistical issues.

"The situation is really tragic," Abdulrahman Mohammad, a displaced Syrian originally from the neighbouring province of Aleppo, said in Idlib, in the country's northwest, where many had found

refuge in the past decade from other war-torn provinces.

Parts of the provinces of Idlib and adjacent Aleppo held by Turkey-backed rebels suffered the bulk of the quake's casualties in Syria: over 4,400 of a death toll of more than 5,800, according to the United Nations and government authorities.

"Anyone who is working as a labourer and renting a house... If you need \$10 a day in expenses and you can barely get that - how are you supposed to rebuild?" Mohammad, originally from Aleppo, said.

Further to the north, in Jandaris, rescuers said they had not found anyone alive under the rubble since February 9 but continued to search. Residents said there were still people trapped.

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