

Moscow wants banking relations with Dhaka

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Russia has emphasised the need for establishing banking relations with Bangladesh and prompt creation of a safe and reliable system for trade following sanctions imposed by the West.

The issues were discussed during the fourth session of the Russia-Bangladesh Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation (IGC) held virtually on March 13-15, according to a statement issued by the Russian embassy in Dhaka yesterday.

The Russian side was led by the head of the Federal Agency for Fisheries of the Russian Federation Ilya Shestakov and Bangladesh side was headed by Secretary of Economic Relations Division Sharifa Khan.

Both sides stated that there is a significant potential for trade and economic cooperation, despite the logistical and financial difficulties due to the unstable geopolitical situation, but noted with satisfaction the consistent implementation of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant project and activity of Gazprom EP

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Rawhide being processed to make sandpaper beside Bheribadh Road in the capital's Hazaribagh. Most of the tanneries have moved to the Savar tannery estate but some factories are still in Hazaribagh polluting the environment. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

REMOVING EVM EC sues Jubo League leader

AL leader released after quizzing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police yesterday released a local Awami League leader in Chattogram's Boalkhali upazila, who was detained over a missing ballot unit of an Electronic Voting Machine from a polling centre during the by-polls to the upazila chairman post.

Ratan Chowdhury, president of AL's Jayshtapura union unit, detained Thursday afternoon, was released hours later after quizzing, said Abdur Razzak, officer-in-charge of Boalkhali Police Station.

"Ratan retrieved the machine and was going to return it. Law enforcers detained him on his way to the polling centre. He was released after quizzing," said the OC.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission yesterday filed a case against local Jubo League leader Nirmalendu Dey Sumon over the incident.

Sajal Das, presiding officer of the Jayshtapura Ramani Mohan High School polling centre, filed the case with the Boalkhali Police Station around 1:00am.

Nirmalendu, is the joint convener of Jubo League's Sreepur union unit, said Rafiqul Islam,

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

TEESTA WATER

West Bengal to go ahead with canal plan

A minister of the state goes on record, claims it to be an old project

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

A West Bengal state minister yesterday said two additional canals will be dug to divert water from the Teesta and irrigate farms in the northern parts of the state.

Sabina Yeasmin, West Bengal minister of state for irrigation and waterways, said this in her first official comment on the issue.

"This is an old project which was stuck due to some land acquisition-related problems and lack of funds from the central government. We have solved the land-related problems and sent a report to the centre," Yeasmin told PTI in Kolkata.

"These canals are being dug to help local agriculture. If we receive any complaint from the centre, we will share the scientific reasoning for the project with Delhi. But we must remember that the water sharing treaty is a matter between two countries [India and Bangladesh] and we have nothing to do with it."

Also yesterday, Bangladesh foreign ministry spokesperson Seheli Sabrin told reporters in Dhaka that the government was "cautiously observing the situation and verifying media reports. The water resources ministry and Joint River Commission are readying a paper, and we will seek to know the facts. Then we will take necessary measures."

Movement, not polls

BNP grassroots leaders want clear strategy for street agitation

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The BNP's grassroots leaders have suggested the top leadership that the party should not take part in any polls under the incumbent government.

They have also recommended finalising the movement strategy to force the government to hold the next general election under a non-party interim government.

They said that the BNP should focus more on strengthening its organisational capacity by quelling all internal feuds before making a final push for its 10-point demand.

The grassroots leaders also stressed the need for programmes based on public interest to involve the people in the anti-government movement.

A total of 2,367 former and incumbent union parishad chairmen made these suggestions in 10 closed-door meetings with senior BNP leaders at the party chairperson's Gulshan office in the capital from February 23 to March 16.

"We tried to encourage our grassroots leaders to get involved in the movement more closely. We feel encouraged after listening to them as all participants suggested not to join any election under the incumbent government," Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain, BNP standing committee member, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said that the union-level leaders suggested gradually gathering momentum for the movement.

Joining the meetings from London virtually, BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman talked with the grassroots leaders. The party's standing committee members were also present.

"We tried to encourage our grassroots leaders to get involved in the movement more closely. We feel encouraged after listening to them as all participants suggested not to join any election under the incumbent government."

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BNP standing committee member

Grassroots leaders opined that the party should identify the betrayers within so that the anti-government movement does not lose steam. They pledged to play an active role in future.

The union-level leaders recommended intensifying the movement in Dhaka and finalising the movement strategy considering the capital as the epicentre.

Sources said that although the grassroots leaders agreed on waging the movement, most of them could not say what exactly could be the strategy for it.

Many leaders talked about intra-party feud and expressed their grievances.

"Through this process [series of meetings], the former and current elected public representatives were being involved in the movement. They pledged to be on the streets. The party will stage protests even during Ramadan," said Emran Saleh Prince, acting office secretary of the BNP.

Sources said the initiative was taken keeping in mind that the former and present UP chairmen have influence in their respective areas, and that they have good ties with the grassroots people.

"If they lead the anti-government movement at the union level, it will have an impact on the ordinary people and ultimately encourage them to join the movement," said a senior BNP leader.

The party held meetings with the union-level leaders with an aim to engage them in the final phase of the movement to press home their 10-point demand, including national election under a non-party interim government and resignation of the incumbent government, he added.

Among the meeting participants were former UP

SEE PAGE 6 COL 7

'Cosmic concrete' developed to build houses on Mars

INDEPENDENT ONLINE



Scientists have invented a new type of "cosmic concrete" made with extra-terrestrial dust that they say can be used to build habitats on the Moon and Mars.

Dubbed StarCrete, the material is twice the strength of ordinary concrete and bypasses the need to transport costly construction materials to off-world locations.

The team behind the discovery, based at the University of Manchester, had previously developed a concrete material that used the blood and urine of astronauts as a binding agent for the Martian soil, however this was seen as impractical for large-scale projects.

The new StarCrete instead uses potato starch and a pinch of salt - both of which are commonly found on space missions - in order to bind the simulated Martian dust.

"Since we will be producing starch as food for astronauts, it made sense to look at that as a binding agent rather than human blood. Also, current building technologies still need many years of development and require considerable energy and additional heavy processing equipment which all adds cost and complexity to a mission," said Dr Aled Roberts, Research Fellow at the Future Biomanufacturing Research Hub, and lead researcher for this project.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 8

50 hurt in AL infighting

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

At least 50 people were injured in a clash between two factions of the ruling Awami League during the celebration of the 103rd birth anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and National Children's Day in Patuakhali's Bauphal upazila yesterday.

While, the injured were admitted to local hospitals, Abdul Motaleb Hawlader, the Bauphal upazila unit AL general secretary, was sent to Sher-E-Bangla Medical College Hospital with serious injuries.

On the occasion of Bangabandhu's birthday, local AL lawmaker ASM Feroz and Abdul Motaleb Hawlader, also the upazila chairman, announced separate programmes at the same place and time.

Motaleb and his followers brought out a celebratory procession around 11:00am.

Police obstructed the procession in front of the upazila parishad gate when it was marching towards the party office.

Suddenly, several hundred supporters of Faisal Ahmed Monir, nephew of the lawmaker and upazila unit AL President Feroz, attacked Motaleb and his men with sharp weapons when an altercation broke out between police and him.

Law enforcers fired at least 20 rounds

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Ukrainian soldiers of the Paratroopers' of 80th brigade fire a mortar shell at a frontline position near Bakhmut, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Donetsk region on Thursday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Tigers set for new challenge

SPORTS REPORTER from Sylhet

Overcast conditions welcomed the Bangladesh ODI side at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday as they put in the final touches in practice ahead of the first ODI against Ireland, which will begin at 2:00PM today.

Bangladesh's unbeaten home record in ODIs ended with a 2-1 series defeat to England, but under coach Chandika Hathurusingha in his second reign, Bangladesh will be expected to return to winning ways. There were chances of light showers in the morning but sunny conditions may give way, according to weather forecast.

There were some clouds hovering over Bangladesh team management as well, with Mehedi Hasan Miraz having suffered an injury yesterday while the team played football during the warm-up as a ball hit him above the eye.

Captain Tamim Iqbal was also suffering from fever on Thursday, but batted and fielded during the session. "There's a little bit concern with his [Tamim's] health. Not fitness. I think he has some kind of viral infection. He will bat and field today. We will make the call afterwards," Hathurusingha said.

Miraz had a blood clot in his eye and will remain under observation till the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4