



Ankara eager to boost ties with Dhaka

Erdogan exchanges greetings with PM in phone conversation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Turkey's president-elect Recep Tayyip Erdogan pledged to work with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to take the bilateral relations to a new height.

Erdogan, who won a third term as president in a runoff election on May 28, exchanged greetings with Hasina over the phone on Wednesday night, according to the prime minister's press wing.

"We requested President-elect's office for a time as our Prime Minister wanted to greet him on his election. Going beyond protocol, the Turkish president called our prime minister," a Bangladesh embassy official in Ankara told this correspondent yesterday.

On May 29, Hasina also wrote a congratulatory message to Erdogan where she wrote that Bangladesh seeks to elevate its relations with Turkey.

Prime Minister's Press Wing said

SEE PAGE 13 COL 1



With Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina walking beside him, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal heads towards the parliament chamber to deliver his budget speech.

PHOTO: PID

Bangladesh, Qatar sign new LNG deal

Dhaka to get up to 1.8 MTPA more liquefied gas for 15yrs from 2026

AGENCIES

Bangladesh today signed a 15-year agreement with Qatar to get an additional up to 1.8 million metric tonnes of liquefied natural gas (LNG) per annum.

The new LNG Sale and Purchase Agreement (SPA) with Bangladesh Oil, Gas, and Mineral Corporation (Petrobangla) and QatarEnergy's LNG trading arm, QatarEnergy Trading, was signed at QatarEnergy headquarters in Doha.

Executive Vice President of QatarEnergy Abdulla Ahmad Al-Hussaini and Chairman of Petrobangla Zanendra Nath Sarker signed the deal on behalf of their respective sides, reports BSS.

State Minister for Power, Energy, and Mineral Resources of Bangladesh Nasrul Hamid and Qatari Minister of State for Energy Affairs, and also the president and CEO of QatarEnergy, Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi witnessed the agreement signing.

Under the new deal, Qatar will supply the additional LNG from 2026 to 2040. Of this, Bangladesh will get 12 LNG cargoes in 2026 and 24 cargoes in 2027, reports UNB.

Currently, Bangladesh has been importing 1.82-2.5 million MTPA (metric tonnes per annum) of LNG since

SEE PAGE 13 COL 6

One killed in Shyamoli high rise fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man was killed in a fire that broke out at a commercial building in the capital's Shyamoli last night.

The identity of the deceased, aged around 45, could not be confirmed immediately. His body was recovered from the 17th floor of the 20-storey Rupayan Shefford building, said Abdul Mannan, senior station officer of Mohammadpur Fire Station.

The fire, which began around 11:30pm, was brought under control around 2:00am today after 14 fire engines fought the blaze, said Rafi Al Faruk, duty officer of Fire Service and Civil Defence control room.

According to Fire Service and Civil Defence, 23 people, including women and children, were rescued from the building.

Multiple hospitals and diagnostic centres are housed on the first few floors.

Witnesses said patients were brought out of the building soon after the fire broke out.

The cause of the fire could not be ascertained till the filing of the report around 2:30am today.

POWER, ENERGY BUDGET Revenue comes before plight of the people

ASIFUR RAHMAN

The budget almost halved the allocation for the energy sector and proposed a flat import duty of Tk 13.75 for each litre of 11 imported refined petroleum products instead of the current 15 percent VAT and 5 percent advance tax on import.

For crude oil the flat rate of import duty will be Tk 7.02 for every litre and for furnace oil Tk 9.10.

"The decision was made to keep the petroleum prices stable in the domestic market. The prices of petroleum and its by-products fluctuate in the international market," Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said in his budget speech yesterday.

However, experts believe the decision will ensure revenue for the government but there is nothing in it for the people.

"It will not ensure the consumers get fuel at an affordable price," said Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

The system will only guarantee the government a steady revenue irrespective of the rise and fall of prices in the international market. The consumer will not benefit if international market prices fall, he said, adding that the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) might use the new system as an excuse to not reduce fuel prices in the local market at a time when prices are gradually falling in the international market.

BPC officials said that they were not sure whether the new import duty would reduce the existing VAT and taxes that reach a total of 37 percent. "Besides the VAT and advance tax [that are exempted in the proposed budget], we also pay 15 percent VAT on sales and 2 percent in Advance Income Tax. If we have to pay these as well, the fixed duty of Tk 13.75 will be a burden," said a top BPC official.

SEE PAGE 13 COL 2

Frequent power cuts pile misery on city residents

Amid scorching heat, parts of capital saw outage for up to four hours yesterday

MD ABBAS

With life in the capital limping in the searing heat, city dwellers are suffering due to frequent power cuts.

Yesterday, most of the power cuts in the capital lasted for at least an hour, prompting many people to lodge complaints with the power distribution companies.

Meanwhile, load shedding of up to several hours were reported in different parts of Chattogram, Mymensingh, Khulna, Rajshahi, and a number of other districts.

Residents of Dhaka's neighbouring districts have also been experiencing five to six hours of power cuts for the last two days.

Mir Rasel, a resident of the capital's New Eskaton, said there was a power outage sometime on Wednesday night after he went to bed around 11:45pm.

"I woke at 3:30am and found my bedsheet sweat drenched. There was

another power outage around 5:45am. I then got up and took a shower."

"There were two more power cuts at 8:25am and 10:30am today [yesterday]," he added.

Rasel now feels like he's stuck between a rock and a hard place because of the frequent power cuts and the heatwave. "I can neither stay at home nor go out."

Souvagga Barua, a resident of Basabo, said he experienced five power cuts from Wednesday night till yesterday evening, each lasting an hour.

Rubina Akhter Urmi, a resident of Azimpur, said she could not study for a recruitment test due to several power cuts last night. She is supposed to sit the exam today.

Residents of the capital's Mirpur, Uttara, Mohammadpur, Badda, Jatrabari, Old Dhaka, and some other parts of the city vented their frustration on social media yesterday

SEE PAGE 13 COL 6

Webb spots large water plume on Saturn's moon

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A vast plume has been seen coming out of Enceladus, one of Saturn's moons.

The satellite is one of the best hopes for finding life outside our own planet. It has salty water and other conditions that leave scientists to believe that it could support alien life.

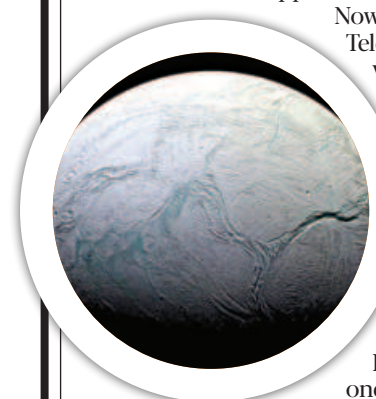
Now the James Webb Space Telescope has watched a vast plume being ejected out of the planet. It found that the water shooting out of the planet is more than 20 times the size of the moon itself.

Researchers already knew that jets of water were spurting out of Enceladus. But the vast size of the one found by Webb led researchers to wonder whether they had made a mistake.

"When I was looking at the data, at first, I was thinking I had to be wrong. It was just so shocking to detect a water plume more than 20 times the size of the moon," said lead author Geronimo Villanueva of Nasa's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland.

"The water plume extends far beyond its release region at the southern pole."

It wasn't only the scale of the plume that was shocking in the data, however. Researchers also found that the amount of water gushing out is surprisingly large: some 79 gallons spurt out each second, enough to fill an olympic swimming pool in a couple of hours.



Send observers in nat'l polls

CEC tells Japanese ambassador

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal yesterday requested Japan, one of the biggest lenders to Bangladesh, to send observers to see the next general election.

The CEC made the request when Iwama Kiminori, Japanese ambassador to Bangladesh, met him at his office, said Election Commission Secretary Jahangir Alam.

"The CEC said if they [Japan] send an observer team, we will welcome it," Jahangir said while talking to reporters after the meeting.

The ambassador wanted to know about the election process, implementation status of the EC's roadmap for the next general election, demarcation of boundaries, registration of political parties and many other issues, the EC secretary said.

The CEC said everything is progressing as per the work plan, he added.

Awal said demarcation will be needed in few areas and the changes are at the final stage. He also informed the ambassador about the election procedure in Bangladesh, according to an EC statement.



THE RHESUS' RECESS ... A mother rhesus macaque and her infant taking a quick drink at a watering hole in Habiganj's Satchhari National Park. The most widely distributed primates in the world, rhesus macaques prefer living in spaces with trees, as they are arboreal and mostly herbivorous. But these highly intelligent animals have become so accustomed to living with humans that they can be seen frequently in "concrete jungles" as well. They move in large troops comprising 20-200 primates, and the mothers spend most of their time rearing their young and preparing them for independence. Due to their wide availability, and anatomical and physiological similarities to humans, these monkeys have been used extensively in medical and biological research, and have also facilitated many scientific breakthroughs. Their survival remains crucial for humans and the environment, and the protection of forests and waterbodies is imperative for them to thrive.

PHOTO: TIMU HOSSAIN

SEE PAGE 13 COL 1

POWER SALE TO DHAKA Nepal can now use transmission line in India

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Nepal yesterday got New Delhi's green signal for selling power to Bangladesh using the Indian transmission line, giving a boost to sub-regional cooperation in power trading.

The agreement was reached during talks between visiting Nepalese Prime Minister Pushpa Kumar Dahal and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi in New Delhi, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

"Our objective is to send 40 megawatts of power from Nepal to Bangladesh transiting through the Indian grid," Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra told the media.

"There is an excellent opportunity to use power and power trade as a very important instrument of strengthening regional connectivity. This is the first effort in that direction," he added.

Nepal and Bangladesh have been pressing India to allow the power trade in recent years and were waiting