

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Russia, China should 'lead reform': Xi

AFP, Beijing

China and Russia need to "lead the correct direction of global governance reform", according to Chinese President Xi Jinping, who hailed the two countries' partnership at a meeting with a top Russian politician in Beijing yesterday, state media reported.

Beijing and Moscow have ramped up economic cooperation and diplomatic contacts in recent years, with exchanges only growing closer since Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year.

Yesterday, Xi met Valentina Matviyenko, the speaker of the Federation Council — the Russian parliament's upper house — at the Great Hall of the People, state broadcaster CCTV reported.

Xi said the development of relations between the two countries was "a strategic choice made by both countries based on the fundamental interests of their respective countries and peoples".

"Both sides also need to strengthen communication and collaboration within multilateral mechanisms such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the BRICS countries, lead the correct



direction of global governance reform, and safeguard the common interests of emerging market countries and developing countries," the statement continued.

Yesterday, Western leaders gathered in Lithuania's capital ahead of a summit expected to present unity on Ukraine's future membership of the Nato military alliance — a prospect Russia has reacted furiously to.

Beijing says it is a neutral party in the war, but its refusal to condemn the invasion has led many of Kyiv's allies to accuse it of favouring Russia.

Matviyenko yesterday said the strategic partnership between Beijing and Moscow "has reached the highest level in history and continues to develop steadily".

She said a March visit by Xi to Moscow, where he met his counterpart Vladimir Putin, had "injected strong impetus into the further development of Russia-China relations".

Xi said China was "willing to continue to work with Russia to develop a comprehensive strategic partnership of mutual assistance, deep integration, innovation, and inclusive cooperation in the new era".



US President Joe Biden meets with British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak at 10 Downing Street in London, Britain yesterday. Biden and Sunak discussed the United States' decision to send cluster munitions to Ukraine in their talks, Sunak's spokesperson said. PHOTO: REUTERS

Heavy rains, flooding pummel US northeast

One killed in NY

AFP, New York

The northeastern United States was inundated yesterday with heavy rain and flooding across several states a day after storms and flash floods washed out highways and killed one person in New York state.

Parts of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Vermont were under flood warnings as of 6:00 am (1000 GMT) yesterday, with states in the region recording rapid rainfall and "life threatening" flash floods, according to the National Weather Service (NWS).

Heavy rains in New York state on Sunday turned streets into raging waterways, washing out bridges, leaving roads impassable and leading Governor Kathy Hochul to declare states of emergency in two counties.

The Orange County Emergency Management office yesterday confirmed one fatality in Highland Falls, in New York's Hudson Valley, where "historic floods" caused significant damage. Local media said a woman was swept to her death in a flash flood in the valley as she tried to evacuate her damaged house with her dog.

Hochul said Sunday that up to eight inches (200 mm) of rain had created "life threatening conditions due to flash flooding."

DEFENCE EQUIPMENT PURCHASE

US deals not enough to wean India off Russian arms yet

REUTERS, New Delhi/Washington

India's multi-billion-dollar purchases of US arms are less about shifting its reliance on Russian defence equipment and moving towards the West - it's more about developing its own domestic weapons industry, security officials and analysts say.

India is the world's biggest arms importer but almost all of its major weapons purchases now include provisions for joint manufacture or technology transfer, irrespective of which country it is dealing with.

Also, Russia's war in Ukraine has disrupted some military supplies to India, reinforcing New Delhi's long term desire to diversify imports or replace them with home-built hardware, Indian defence officials said.

India bought weapons worth over \$60 billion in the last 20 years, of which 65 percent or nearly \$39 billion were from Russia, according to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute data.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has said that India intends to order weapons from the domestic arms industry worth over \$100 billion over the next decade.

"It is a reality, that we have to reduce dependence on Russia," said a senior Indian defence officer working on future capabilities of the Indian military, who declined to be identified. "But that is part two. The part one is the effort to get out of the import business."

India announced significant purchases of US defence equipment during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to Washington last month, including

an over one billion dollar order for GE GEN engines for fighter jets. A possible \$3 billion deal for MQ-9B SeaGuardian drones is also being discussed.

In line with New Delhi's desire for self-reliance in defence and Modi's flagship "Make in India" policy, the jet engine deal includes joint manufacturing in the future, while the assembly and maintenance of the SeaGuardians will likely be in India.

Eric Garcetti, the US ambassador to India, said Washington had earlier paid "lip service" but was now easing India's access to military technologies. He said the US was "leaning in with technology" sharing more with India than it had with some of its closest allies.

However, the moves so far will not be sufficient to end New Delhi's reliance on Russia while stringent US rules governing the sharing of military technology limit future possibilities for now.

"Nobody gives you everything. They keep you at least a screwdriver away from having it fully," said a second senior official from India's defence ministry.

Arzan Tarapore, an Indian security expert at Stanford University, said the deals announced during Modi's visit "do not in themselves represent an Indian shift away from Russia."

"A big shift away from Russia will take

multiple decades," he said.

India still uses mostly Russian technology for traditional arms. Tarapore said that the biggest potential for US-India collaboration should be on new systems that India doesn't already have. India's main aim is to narrow the technological gap with better-armed arch-rival China, with which it has a tense relationship, and which is also closely allied with Pakistan.

One problem for India is that Russia's war in Ukraine has severely dented Moscow's ability to deliver weapons and equipment.

India's air force recently informed a parliamentary panel that Russia would delay deliveries of spares for Sukhoi Su-30 MKI and MiG-29 jet fighter planes. A big-ticket item, believed to be the remaining two of the five Russian S-400 air defence systems India bought for nearly \$5.5 billion in 2018, has also been delayed, it

said. India has also been expecting to receive two nuclear-powered submarines from Russia over next few years, but these might also be delayed, defence officials said.

Such problems have reinforced India's resolve to become less dependent on Russia, but it does not want to rely on any one nation for its weapons purchases, they said.



EU team talks

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divisions and meet the deputy commissioners and the superintendents of police. They will be provided with updated guidelines for election so that there is no vote rigging.

"We will do that to make sure that a participatory and free election is held. This is from the perspective of human rights. In a democracy, people are the most powerful. Those who are elected will be in power. We will try that it happens rightly."

Ahmed believes the EU mission will send election observers.

The EU mission also discussed the overall human rights situation in Bangladesh and the role of the NHRC plays.

"We always raise the issues of rights violations and take actions against violations including enforced disappearances. We are vocal against violations like pushing someone to death, custodial death etc," he added.

Meanwhile, after meeting the EU mission at the ministry, Aminul Islam, acting secretary of CHT affairs, said the delegation wanted to visit the hill tracts to meet a cross-section of people to assess whether the situation is conducive for the visit of the

EU election observers.

"I advised them to talk to the home ministry for scheduling the visit. I assured them that we would provide logistical support if they visited the hill tracts," he told reporters.

Aminul told the mission that the present situation was much better compared to 2008 when they last visited the area.

Later in the day, the EU delegation held another meeting with the Awami League International Affairs subcommittee at the residence of Charles Whiteley, the EU ambassador to Bangladesh.

The AL subcommittee, which included its chairman Muhammad Zamir and secretary Shammil Ahmed, highlighted the importance of participatory elections in the meeting. The Daily Star has learnt from people informed about the contents of the discussion.

They cited the five city corporation elections recently to further their point.

The next national election will be the same, they said, adding that a free, neutral and fair election is possible under the leadership of PM Hasina.

Rejoinder, our reply

FROM PAGE 1

the infrastructure to install the machine. It took two and half years to complete.

Later, installation of the machine was also disrupted twice thanks to the travel ban during Covid-19 pandemic, he claimed.

About the delay in procuring raw materials for producing Meropenem, an antibiotic injection, the EDCL MD said the company did not have the required facilities to produce the Meropenem injection at the time.

So, the EDCL had to procure this injection by Toll manufacturing method, in which the EDCL had to procure and supply the raw materials to other pharmaceutical companies, he said, claiming that that the EDCL could save Tk 2 crore by floating the retender twice.

About another audit dispute regarding the loss of Tk 18.38 crore because a purchased equipment was left uninstalled in Gopalganj plant, he said that the equipment was installed, and it will be fully functional by December 30 this year. He pinned the delay on the pandemic.

Finally, he protested the report regarding Tk 1.58 crore special allowance for its employees.

"The Board of Director of EDCL was so much satisfied about the performance of our employees fighting covid-19 and approved and provided special allowances," he said.

He stated that the audit report of 2019-20 was waiting to be finalised by the Public Accounts committee meeting, scheduled to be held on 13 of this July 2023.

"Hence, publishing the audit report in a renowned newspaper in Bangladesh is really absurd and disrespectful. We consider the matter as a violation of the law of government's secrecy as the audit report has not been finalised."

Our Reply
Our report was based on the audit reports by the government's supreme audit institution, the Comptroller and Auditor General of Bangladesh, which was submitted to the parliament on June 25. We did not mention any information or comments beyond the report.

We stand by our report.

29 killed in India monsoon floods

AFP, New Delhi

Days of intense monsoon rains across northern India have left at least 29 people dead, rendering many areas inaccessible with bridges smashed and roads blocked, officials said yesterday. Television footage showed flash floods and landslides triggered by torrential rain, washing away vehicles, demolishing buildings and ripping down bridges in the hilly state of Himachal Pradesh. "In the last two days, the death toll due to monsoon rains has risen to 20 in Himachal Pradesh," said an official of the state. Nine more deaths were reported in Rajasthan, UP, Uttarakhand and Kashmir, taking the toll of those killed since Saturday from a previously reported 15 to at least 29.

OCCUPIED WEST BANK

Israeli forces kill Palestinian man

AFP, Ramallah

Israeli forces yesterday shot a gunman who the army said fired on soldiers in the occupied West Bank, with the Palestinian health ministry reporting the alleged assailant was killed. The gunman got out of his vehicle then "hurled a grenade, and fired shots at the soldiers" near Deir Nidham village, northwest of Ramallah, the Israeli military said. "The soldiers responded with live fire and neutralised the assailant," the statement added. The Palestinian health ministry announced the death of Bilal Qadah, 33, "near the village of Deir Nidham", without giving further details. The incident adds to a surge in violence in the West Bank, which has been occupied by Israeli forces since the 1967 Six-Day War.



Residents are rescued following a flood in their street in Tanushimurumachi in the city of Kurume, Fukuoka prefecture, Japan yesterday, after heavy rains hit wide areas of Kyushu island. Two persons were killed and hundreds of thousands were urged to evacuate their homes in southwestern Japan yesterday, as forecasters warned of the "heaviest rain ever" in the region. PHOTO: AFP