

## Democratic institutions under attack

### Says Rahul Gandhi on G20 summit eve

REUTERS, New Delhi

India's democratic institutions and minority groups are under a "full-scale assault", opposition leader Rahul Gandhi said yesterday, attacking Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government on the eve of a high-profile G20 summit in New Delhi.

Civil society, opposition parties and some foreign governments have in the past raised concerns over decisions of Modi's government that they say are aimed at throttling dissent, fanning religious discrimination and keeping the ruling nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in power.

The government has denied all such accusations and Modi has said his administration was working for the betterment of all.

"I think there is a sense in India that democratic institutions in our country are under attack and they are under attack from the group of people who are running India," Gandhi, a member of parliament from the Congress party, told reporters at the Brussels Press Club.

"There's a full-scale assault on democratic institutions...of course minorities are under attack, but so are other communities...tribals, lower caste communities," he said.

Gandhi has made similar comments abroad in the past, drawing strong responses from BJP.

Gandhi's Congress is leading an alliance of 28 parties to challenge BJP in a national election due by May 2024.

India, the world's most populous country, holds the rotating presidency of the G20 and aims to showcase its economic potential and pitch itself as a reliable manufacturing and services hub to the visiting leaders of the bloc.

India is also promoting itself as a "voice" of developing nations on the global stage, as a counterweight to China.

Gandhi said he would meet European lawmakers in Brussels during his visit and talk to them about their views on India.

He indicated, however, that India's opposition parties would agree with the largely-neutral position taken by New Delhi on Russia's invasion of Ukraine - avoiding blaming Moscow for the war and seeking a solution through dialogue and diplomacy.



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban yesterday morning. Lavrov's two-day visit to Dhaka was the first by a Russian foreign minister since Bangladesh's independence in 1971. PHOTO: PID

## CENTRAL, EASTERN UKRAINE

# Russia launches new wave of air strikes

4 killed, dozens injured; Kyiv condemns 'fake elections' in Russian-occupied areas

AFP, Kyiv

Ukraine yesterday said four people were killed and dozens injured as Russia launched a new wave of air strikes in the centre and east of the country.

"A Russian aerial bomb killed three civilians in Odradokamyanka -- two women and a man. Four local residents were injured," Interior Minister Igor Klymenko said, calling the strike in the southern region of Kherson a "war crime".

Odradokamyanka is about 60 kilometres upstream of Kherson city and lies on the west bank of the Dnipro river. In the central city of Kryvyi Rig, President Volodymyr Zelensky's hometown, a missile attack on a police building killed a policeman, Klymenko had said earlier.

"Rescuers of the State Emergency Service pulled out three more from under the rubble. They are in serious condition," he said.

Photos he shared from the scene showed smoke spewing from the ruins of the building as rescue workers carried an injured person to an ambulance. Over 40 people were injured in the city, local officials said.

At least three people were injured

after Russia also struck the city of Sumy in northeast Ukraine, officials said, while one man was injured by a rocket attack on Zaporizhzhia in the southeast.

"Over the past 24 hours, 93 enemy attacks on 29 towns and villages of the Zaporizhzhia region have been recorded," said Yuriy Malashko, head of the local administration.

**The first 10 Leopard 1 tanks donated by Denmark, Germany, Netherlands arrive in Ukraine.**

The Ukrainian foreign ministry yesterday criticised a vote organised by Moscow in four regions it claims to have annexed -- Donetsk, Lugansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson -- as well as Crimea.

"By organising fake elections in the Ukrainian regions and Crimea, the Kremlin continues to delegitimise the Russian legal system," the foreign ministry said, calling on partners to "condemn the worthless and arbitrary actions of Russia and not to recognise the legitimacy of any 'administration'."

Meanwhile, the first 10 Leopard 1 tanks donated by Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands have arrived in Ukraine and

more are on their way, Denmark's armed forces said yesterday.

The three countries announced in February that they would donate 100 of the German-made tanks in the "coming months".

"The first 10 tanks have been sent to Ukraine. And more are on the way," the Danish armed forces said in a statement. "A further 10 tanks have been delivered from the factory."

Danish troops in Germany are training Ukrainian forces to use the vehicles, the army added.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday Ukraine was finding it harder and slower to secure sanctions on Russia and weapon supplies to help fend off Moscow's forces.

Speaking at a conference in the Ukrainian capital, he said Ukraine's three-month-old counteroffensive would make faster gains in the south and east if Kyiv's military received more powerful weapons.

"The war is slowing down. This is true, we recognise this. All the processes are becoming harder and slowing down: from sanctions to the delivery of weapons," he said in comments from the conference that were posted on his website.

## Missing siblings found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Two siblings who went missing Thursday were found dead yesterday in a ditch close to the Shitalakkhya river in Bandar upazila of Narayanganj.

Police found their bodies in a ditch that was dug for the ongoing construction of a walkway on the Shitalakkhya riverbank next to central Kheyaghat around 8:00am.

The deceased are -- Samir, 9, and his sister Tisha, 8. Their father, Kamal Hossain, is a rickshaw puller and a resident of the Amin Residential Area.

The children went missing Thursday afternoon after they left home to play outside.

They might have drowned in the ditch while they were playing near it, said Inspector Shahidul Islam, in charge of Narayanganj Sadar River Police Station.

The bodies were handed over to family members without autopsy, Shahidul added.

## Jamaat ameers, secretaries held

UNB, Moulvibazar

Police detained five leaders and activists of the Jamaat-e-Islami while they were allegedly holding a secret meeting in Moulvibazar Sadar upazila.

On Thursday night, police conducted a drive at the house of one Zakir Hossain in Shahbandar area of Kanakpur union of the upazila and detained the five men, said Mohammad Harun-ur-Rashid Chowdhury, officer-in-charge of Moulvibazar Sadar Police Station.

The detainees are Moulvibazar district Jamaat Ameer Shahed Ali, Secretary Yamin Ali, Moulvibazar Sadar upazila unit Ameer Fakhrul Islam, Moulvibazar municipal Jamaat Secretary Morshed Chowdhury, and Moulvibazar district Jamaat member Sheikh Shahabuddin.

The process of filing a case against the detainees is underway, added the OC.

## N Korea unveils nuclear-armed submarine

REUTERS, Seoul

North Korea has launched its first operational "tactical nuclear attack submarine" and assigned it to the fleet that patrols the waters between the Korean peninsula and Japan, state media said yesterday.

Submarine No. 841 - named Hero Kim Kun Ok after a North Korean historical figure - will be one of the main "underwater offensive means of the naval force" of North Korea, leader Kim Jong Un said at the launch ceremony on Wednesday.

Analysts said the vessel appears to be a modified Soviet era Romeo-class submarine, which North Korea acquired from China in the 1970s and began producing domestically.

Its design, with 10 launch tube hatches, showed it was most likely armed with ballistic missiles and cruise missiles, analysts said.

## At US embassy

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personal reasons. Later, he returned home in the evening.

Earlier, Imran informed this newspaper through a text message about his stay at the embassy.

"I am at the US embassy, along with my entire family, for shelter. Police personnel are outside. I was sacked today [yesterday] ... Over the last four-five days, I was getting threats



Sacked DAG Imran with his family at the US embassy in Dhaka. PHOTO: COLLECTED

through Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp. This government repays love with imprisonment. I don't have a US visa; I somehow managed to leave home with just three bags and my three daughters. I'm sitting here. Pray for us," read the text message.

Contacted, US Embassy Spokesperson Bryan Schiller told The Daily Star, "At this time, we have no information to offer."

On September 4, DAG Imran told reporters that he had "refused to sign the statement that the Attorney General's Office was preparing in protest of the recent letter from global figures about the trial proceedings of Nobel laureate Prof Yunus".

The following day, Law Minister Anisul Huq said Imran had breached discipline by making the statement.

On the same day, the Attorney General's Office issued a notification asking all its law officers to get permission from the AG before making any statement to the media.

Earlier yesterday, while answering reporters' questions at Akhaura Junction Railway Station in Brahmanbaria, the law minister said Imran has been dismissed from his post.

## Will work together for regional stability

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Immediately after the bilateral meeting, Modi wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter: "Had productive deliberations with PM Sheikh Hasina. The progress in India Bangladesh relations in the last 9 years has been very gladdening. Our talks covered areas like connectivity, commercial linkage and more."

The Indian Ministry of External Affairs issued a statement after the meeting, saying that the two leaders discussed political and security cooperation, border management, trade, connectivity, water resources, power, energy, development, and cultural and people to people ties.

"Current developments in the region and cooperation in the multilateral fora were also discussed," it read.

At the meeting, Hasina requested Modi to ensure uninterrupted supplies of essential goods to Bangladesh.

In December 2022, Dhaka sought India's assurance of annual supplies of 45 lakh tonnes of wheat, 7 lakh tonnes of onions, 30,000 tonnes of lentils, 20 lakh tonnes of rice, 15 lakh tonnes of sugar, 10,000 tonnes of garlic and 1.25 lakh tonnes of ginger.

Bangladesh-India trade is about \$14 billion, and essential commodities comprise a major portion of it.

Momen said that on multiple occasions, supply shortage sent the prices of certain goods spiralling in Bangladesh.

"We requested the Indian side to inform us of the quantity of commodities they can supply a year. They have accepted this proposal."

Bangladesh and India last month agreed to trade by Taka and Rupee. Towards that end, an MoU was signed between Bangladesh Bank and the National Payments Corporation of India to facilitate digital payment mechanisms in Rupee and Taka.

"This will help us, to some extent, save dollars," Momen said.

Prior to the meeting, Dhaka and Delhi signed two other MoUs -- Cooperation on Agricultural Research and Education and Extension of Cultural Exchange Programme from 2023 to 2025.

Hasina requested Modi to extend cooperation for quick repatriation of Rohingyas from Bangladesh.

Currently, Bangladesh and Myanmar are working on a pilot project for repatriating 3,000 Rohingyas under a trilateral mechanism mediated by China.

Modi expressed appreciation of the burden shouldered by Bangladesh in hosting over a million Rohingyas, and conveyed India's "constructive and positive approach" to support solutions towards safe and sustainable repatriation.

India welcomed Bangladesh's Indo-Pacific Outlook.

The two leaders look forward to beginning negotiations on the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

They also look forward to the joint-inauguration of Agartala-Akhaura Rail Link, Unit-II of the Maitri Power Plant and Khulna-Mongla Rail Link.

Hasina thanked Modi for inviting her to the G20 Summit, where Bangladesh is expected to present the challenges facing the Global South.

Momen said he met his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar separately and discussed bilateral, regional and global issues.

Today, Hasina will address a session titled "One Earth" at the G20 Summit.

She is also scheduled to hold meetings with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz, Argentina President Alberto Angel Fernandez and Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol.

She will also attend the launch of Global Biofuels Alliance.

[Our New Delhi correspondent contributed to this report]

## Find peaceful solution

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The meeting emphasised on finding a way for a long-term agreement between the two countries for importing fertiliser from Russia.

It also discussed an agreement signed between the two countries on importing 3 lakh tonnes of wheat from Russia.

Lavrov assured the PM of extending cooperation in meeting Bangladesh's energy demand.

The Russian minister reached Dhaka on Thursday evening on a two-day visit. The same evening, he held a meeting with his Bangladeshi counterpart AK Abdul Momen.

Earlier yesterday, Lavrov paid homage to the memories of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by placing a wreath at his portrait at the Bangabandhu

Memorial Museum in Dhanmondi.

After visiting the museum, he wrote in the visitor's book, "Glad to visit the memorial museum of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founder of Bangladesh. We remember his key role as a fighter for independence of his nation."

"The Soviet Union provided support to his fight and was one of the first countries to recognise Bangladesh. We cherish our common history and foundation of friendly mutually beneficial relations between our countries established by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman," Lavrov said.

He left for New Delhi in the afternoon to attend the G-20 Summit. Minister for Science and Technology Yeafesh Osman saw him off at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 1:20pm.

## Tigers face Lankans in crucial tie

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as they would need certain results to go their way and then bank on net run-rate to play a pivotal role.

In both of their losses so far in the tournament, Bangladesh have lost the plot with their dismal batting efforts that saw them get bundled out for 164 against Sri Lanka and then self-destruct when facing the Pakistan pacers as they got skittled for 192 on a batting-friendly surface in Lahore.

In their first match against the Lankans, the Tigers faced a difficult time tackling the mystery spin of Maheesh Theekshana, who throughout his spells looked menacing. The off-spinner opened with the new ball to trap debutant Tanzid Tamim lbw, and came back in the last 10 overs to clean up Najmul Hossain Shanto.

The Bangladesh batters have got their work cut out when dealing with the mystery spin factor, but surprisingly enough, Sri Lanka's fast bowlers have been more dominant than their spinners in terms of

wickets taken. The Lankan pacers have scalped 41 wickets at an average of 22.58, while the spinners, who average 30.50, have taken 26 wickets in the last five years.

Pacer Matheesha Pathirana managed to trouble batters with his sly action coupled with express pace; this saw him pick up four of the Bangladesh wickets in the first match and the 20-year-old will be the one to watch yet again today.

In the past five years, the Premadasa has seen an average first innings total of 267 in day-night contests and given the Tiger's recent batting woes, they will be eyeing a score in an around that total and perhaps beyond that challenge to the Sri Lankan batting lineup.

Opener Tanzid Tamim was dropped after his debut match against Sri Lanka as Mehedi Hasan Miraz was promoted up the order in the following two matches but with Miraz failing to create an impression in the Pakistan game, the team management may opt for a different opening pair.

## POLLS INTERFERENCE

# Canada PM to testify in enquiry

AFP, Singapore

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said yesterday he would be willing to testify in an enquiry into allegations of foreign meddling by China, Russia and other countries in

two elections won by his party.

His minority liberal government initially balked at holding a public enquiry, as it faced pressure to explain how it first responded to the claims that Beijing sought to subvert Canada's democratic process.