

Bangladesh, UK strategic dialogue today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and the UK are set to hold the fifth strategic dialogue in Dhaka today. The dialogue will cover political and diplomatic relations as well as issues of global and regional security and the Rohingya.

The UK Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Sir Philip Barton, and Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen will lead their respective countries to the talks.

The other issues that will come under discussion include economy, trade and development partnerships, according to a statement of the UK high commission in Dhaka.

"Building on the UK and Bangladesh's historic links, the Strategic Dialogue reflects the two countries' shared commitment to develop a modern economic, trade and security partnership," the statement said.

The dialogue, the high commission said, will also provide an opportunity to boost economic and trade cooperation between the two countries, cooperation on COP28 and joint work on climate financing, adaptation and resilience to climate impacts, and showcase the UK's substantial economic development investment offer.

Philip, who arrived in Dhaka yesterday, will also meet politicians, civil society members, business leaders and youth representatives.

This is Philip's first visit to Bangladesh as the UK permanent under-secretary. He had been in Bangladesh in 2008 as director (South Asia) of the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

N Korea's Kim to visit Russia, meet Putin

AFP, Seoul

North Korea said yesterday that leader Kim Jong Un would visit Russia and meet President Vladimir Putin, with the reclusive leader's armoured train reportedly on its way to the border.

Experts suggest that Putin is seeking artillery shells and antitank missiles from North Korea for Moscow's war in Ukraine, while Kim is reportedly in search of advanced technology for satellites and nuclear-powered submarines, as well as food aid for his impoverished nation.

Kim "will soon visit the Russian Federation at the invitation of ... Putin," the North's official Korean Central News Agency said.

Dhaka commits to buy 10 planes

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short-haul De Havilland Canada Dash 8 400s.

The initial order would be for two Airbus planes, the Reuters report quoted State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mahbub Ali as saying.

"We have asked for 10 aircraft in phases. The technical committee is now evaluating. These aircraft will be used on new and old routes. Each country has Airbus and Boeing in its fleet. But we only have Boeing, not a single Airbus."

After attending the G20 summit in New Delhi, Macron arrived in Dhaka on Sunday evening at the invitation of Hasina, who had visited Paris in November 2021. He attended the official banquet hosted by the Bangladeshi premier at Hotel InterContinental.

Yesterday morning, Macron visited the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in Dhanmondi to pay homage to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Later, he attended the meeting with Hasina and left Dhaka at 2:45pm, ending his 19-hour trip.

Macron and Hasina recalled the Letter of Intent on Cooperation and Exchanges in the Field of Defence signed between the two governments during Hasina's visit to France in November 2021, according to a joint statement issued after the meeting between Hasina and Macron.

They also stated their willingness to step up defence cooperation, with a focus on naval, air and terrestrial capacity, including transfer of technology, in support of Bangladesh's strategic autonomy, reads the statement.

Both countries condemned the unconstitutional change of government and unlawful military takeover in any country, and called for urgent and unimpeded humanitarian assistance for those displaced due to conflicts, violence and atrocious crimes.

"Bangladesh and France regard

Back in the late 1700s, when Chinese traders and labourers, who worked for the British Raj in India opened restaurants selling Chinese food, they adapted their culinary styles to suit Indian tastes. This is the most popular origin story of this fusion food we lovingly call deshi Chinese.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

AUTHENTIC ISN'T EVERYTHING

Nothing hits the spot like Deshi Chinese food!

RBR

Eating out in the late 70s usually meant going to Chinese restaurants, typically run by Chinese couples. Those dimly lit restaurants, flaunting red velvet upholstery, welcomed you to another world of unique gastronomic delight. A child's mind is impressionable, and small details of the cuisine like the ramekins of soy sauce, green chilli dipped in white vinegar, and ketchup on the table remain forever etched in our nostalgia.

The food we ordered was always a bowl of chicken corn soup and fried wontons as appetisers, followed by mixed chowmein, fried rice, sweet and sour prawn balls, mandarin fish, fried chicken, and beef or vegetable gravy. Gravy was always needed for our Bangladeshi palate. These items were the staple order, along with sizzling chicken and everyone's all-time favourite Chinese chop suey. Thus began our love for deshi or Dhaka Chinese food. However, if we are being pedantic, it is actually Indo-Chinese food that we refer to when we mean

Dhaka Chinese.

Deshi Chinese was the start of fusion food, where we adapted typical Chinese seasoning and cooking techniques to suit our tastes. Authentic Chinese dishes are much milder; you can taste the flavour of the meat or vegetable, or so I am told. But deshi Chinese dishes are made like stews, or the bowl is full of gravy in Manchurian style, as I have tried in Dhaka. Authentic Chinese dishes usually forgo gravy.

I can confidently say that every person in Dhaka craves deshi Chinese at least once every two months. While there are some (Gen Z and Alpha) who vehemently deny deshi Chinese and instead, seek out authentic Chinese cuisine, most who are millennials or older would love nothing more than our good old deshi style.

Dhaka boasts deshi-style Chinese places like Sung Garden in Eskaton, New Cathay in Banani, among a few. And they all host some of our all-time greats, such as Hakka noodles, or plain old chowmein smeared in soy sauce, oyster sauce, and deshi chilli garlic sauce, sprinkled with ground black pepper and a touch of brown sugar. The chowmein is stirred in a wok with hot toasted sesame oil and mixed with chicken, vegetables, and eggs. The nutty aroma and flavour of the toasted sesame oil give you that addictive taste and smell of deshi chowmein. A bowl of chicken corn soup with wontons or

batterless fried chicken, crispy chop suey with Sichuan gravy or American toppings -- all these are practically food for the soul.

The mere aroma of it all takes me back to those long-ago comforting dinners at old Chinese restaurants with my parents. I believe we crave deshi Chinese for those cherished memories. It is a time capsule ride to happier, carefree days.

If you absolutely must have the real thing, then Dhaka also boasts many authentic Chinese dining places, serving Cantonese, Hunan, Sichuan cuisines. Places like Cheong Shing, Yum Cha District, Chows, are just some of the hot favourites in town. Apparently, the latest craze in Dhaka is dining at Huaxing Chinese Food restaurant in Uttara, Sector 3. It serves mind-blowing original Chinese food, cooked by a Chinese chef from the Xinjiang Province. The chef's authentic recipes make their mild tofu soup so filling, and the black fungus or rabbit's ear salad tossed in soy sauce and mixed with onions so addictive. Their Jinan noodles and Kung Pao chicken are simply delicious, with that genuine style of Chinese cooking. The preparation, the use of sauces, and cooking techniques set the authentic cuisine apart from deshi Chinese, which uses spicy soy-based sauce with classic local spices like garlic, ginger, and green chillies.

Abducted girl found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A four-year-old girl was found dead yesterday, two days after she was abducted, in Jamalpur's Dewanganj upazila.

The deceased, Habiba Akter, was the daughter of Ashraful Islam of Bepari Para village of Dangdhara union.

Police detained a man from the area in connection with the abduction last night around 7:00pm.

The detainee is Rubel Mia, 25, of Nemaimari village of Dangdhara union.

Police recovered Habiba's from a bamboo grove near her house in the afternoon.

Sanandbari Police Investigation Centre in-charge Abdur Rahim said, "Habiba with her cousin went to nearby shop to buy some snacks on Saturday morning."

Later her little cousin returned home alone but Habiba didn't.

"As Habiba was late to return home, her mother Hira Begum went out to search for her and found her shoes on the road."

After a while, someone made a phone call to his father's phone, demanding Tk 1.5 lakh, said the police official quoting the family.

5 killed in road crashes

UNB/BS

At least five people died in road accidents in four districts yesterday.

In Magura, two people were killed as a speeding bus crashed into a motorbike on the Dhaka-Khulna Highway in front of Magura Sadar Hospital. The deceased were Anwar Hossain, 50, and Rokeya Begum, 60.

In Dinajpur, a girl was run over by a speeding tractor after she fell off her uncle's bike as it crashed into an electric pole at Dangapara Bazar in Hakimpur upazila. Jannatul Nayeema, 8, daughter of Mozammel Miah of Birampur upazila, was a fourth grader at Pausghara Fazil Madrasa.

In Gopalganj, a man was killed when a microbus hit him as he was walking along the Dhaka-Khulna Highway near Daserhat Shiva temple area under Muksdpur upazila. Bidyut Kumar Bhowmik, 46, of Daserhat village, was a grocer in Gerakhola Bazar in the area.

In Bhola, a construction worker was killed and five others were injured when the three-wheeler carrying them overturned on the Bhola-Charfashion regional highway in Banglabazar area. The deceased is Al Amin, 35, of Shibpur union of Sadar upazila.

Rohingya man shot dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A Rohingya man was shot dead by a group of masked criminals at Kutupalong refugee camp in Ukhiya upazila, Cox's Bazar last evening.

Md Salam, 37, was a resident of Camp 2, said Additional Deputy Commissioner Syed Harun-ur-Rashid, commander of the 14 APBn.

The incident occurred around 6:00pm at Block C of the camp.

A group of 8-10 masked criminals shot Salam and fled the scene.

Locals rushed him to a nearby hospital, where doctors pronounced him dead.

"We have yet to determine the motives behind this murder, but we are conducting operations to arrest the killers," the commander added.

Biman heading for a mixed fleet

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and they on the condition of anonymity said the committees had a few meetings but were nowhere near the state to be able to produce any report.

The Biman board did not insist that the planes had to be from Airbus and left it as an option. Biman currently has a fleet of 21 aircraft, 16 of them from US maker Boeing.

"Up to eight Rolls-Royce powered A350-900/1000 aircraft (the "A350 Pax Aircraft") or any other suitable aircraft (wider or narrow) as per Biman's requirement, with an option to purchase additional aircraft after carrying out techno-financial evaluation based on the market demand, Biman's route plan, and necessary approval from Biman's management," state the meeting minutes of the 288th board meeting.

The Daily Star has a copy of the minutes.

It proposed that two narrow-body freighters can be inducted into the fleet based on the above-mentioned conditions, but did not specify the name of the airframe maker or any company. The Boeing 737 and Airbus A320 family planes are considered narrow-body aircraft.

A joint communique on aviation trade was signed in London on May 5, two days after the board meeting, between United Kingdom's Minister of State in the Department for Business and Trade Lord Dominic Johnson and Private Industry and Investment Adviser to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Salman F Rahman.

However, the joint communique, which The Daily Star has a copy of, states "Sale by Airbus and the purchase by Biman Bangladesh Airlines of up to 8 Rolls Royce powered A350-900/1000 aircraft (the "A350 Pax Aircraft") and two Airbus freighter aircraft (subject to further discussions)."

Rolls Royce aircraft engines are made in the UK.

The joint communique signed despite the decisions made by the Biman board was pointed out in a letter Biman's Managing Director Shafiul Azim sent to the secretary of the civil aviation ministry on July 4 and again on July 12.

This newspaper has copies of the letters which detail how the joint communique fails to mention anything about purchases being made after a techno-financial evaluation.

In his July 12 letter, Azim said the Biman board had made those recommendations after seeing a draft of the joint communique before it was signed. However, there were "partial

differences" between the decisions made by the board and the final agreement signed.

However, Azim last night told The Daily Star, "What the French president said is in view of the joint communique. Airbus gave us two business proposals in July and we have formed a technical and a financial committee to work on evaluating the proposals. This is how it is done. We can customize according to our preferences."

When pointed out that the board's decision conflicts with the joint communique, he said the latter is written in diplomatic language.

The techno-financial evaluation that Biman is currently doing consists of figuring out the route plans, expected fuel burn on those routes, maintenance costs, how much revenue could be earned from those routes, and whether the revenue would be enough to cover the instalments for the new planes.

The Biman committees will also have to decide if the existing planes are overworked and if the predicted growing number of passengers can be served with the current fleet.

Currently, planes of the Biman fleet have a rather low average estimated utilisation of five hours a day, said highly placed Biman sources.

Tk 4,282cr project for developing Mongla Port

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government. The project deadline is June 2027.

The objectives of the project are to enhance the port's container-handling capacity with modern facilities and build container terminal (jetty), container delivery yard, and container yard (near the jetty).

Once the project is completed, it will be possible to provide the port users with modern services, according to an assessment of the Planning Commission.

Besides, the project will play an important role in ensuring proper and safe handling of containers and cargoes at the port.

The Tk 2,762.43 crore project for developing power infrastructure in the southern part of Chattogram and Bangabandhu Hi-tech City is expected to be done by June 2028.

AIIB will provide Tk 1,696.46 crore in loan for the project. The rest will be financed by Bangladesh.

Besides, the project is also aimed at smooth power supply to different under-construction economic zones in the Chattogram region and the under-construction Bangabandhu Hi-tech City in Gazipur's Kaliakoir.

According to the Planning Commission, uninterrupted power supply to different establishments of the project area will be possible once the project is implemented.

The government will also implement the 148.4 crore Strengthening Women's Ability for the Productive New Opportunity

(SWAPNO) (Phase-II) project in 283 unions and 32 upazilas of 12 districts.

For the project, the UNDP, the Swedish embassy and Marico Ltd will provide Tk 76.79 crore while the remaining Tk 71.61 crore will be given by Bangladesh.

Under the project, 10,188 female beneficiaries will get mobile phones, their skills will be improved and new employment opportunities will be created.

The government is to take up the project aiming to alleviate poverty of the rural women.