

ISLAMIST ATTACKS IN FRANCE, BELGIUM EU ministers call for tougher immigration policies

REUTERS, Brussels

Ministers from across the European Union said yesterday that member states must screen migrants and asylum seekers better and expel those deemed a security risk more quickly, after Islamist attacks highlighted persistent difficulties.

Interior and justice ministers were meeting yesterday in Luxembourg to discuss what steps to take following deadly attacks in Brussels and France, at a time of heightened security concerns linked to the Israel-Hamas conflict.

"It's important that those individuals that could cause a security threat to our citizens be returned forcefully, immediately," EU migration commissioner Ylva Johansson told reporters ahead of the meeting.

"We need to be more efficient, close the loopholes and be quicker on decisions to carry out returns."

The 45-year-old Tunisian gunman who killed two Swedish football fans in the Belgian capital on Monday was staying there illegally after his asylum request had been denied.

He reached the EU via the Italian island of Lampedusa in 2011 and also lived in Sweden. He was shot dead by Belgian police.

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—EU migration commissioner Ylva Johansson

The 20-year-old, Russian born Islamist Ingush accused of stabbing to death a teacher in northern France on Friday was known before the attack to be a possible security risk but could not have been expelled under current legislation, France said.

"We realise there's still a bit naivety either in the institutions of some countries or in the EU," French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said as he arrived for the EU meeting, calling for the swift implementation of much-discussed EU migration rules, and for faster decisions on asylum requests.

Proponents of this looming overhaul of the EU's migration policies - expected to be finalised this year - say it would improve the situation, including by facilitating quicker repatriations of foreigners with criminal records.

The attack in Brussels underlined persistent failings of the EU's troubled migration and asylum systems, including security gaps and ineffective returns. Only about a fifth of people whose asylum cases fail in Europe are actually sent away.

Yesterday's meeting was also the ministers' first chance to exchange views in person since Israel-Hamas war broke out.

Gaza health officials say bombing has so far killed nearly 3,500 people.

The ministers are not expected to take any specific decisions but will discuss topics including what particular developments could cause Palestinians to flee in large numbers, or trigger violent acts inside the bloc.

There is also a new push for deals with African countries - including Egypt and Morocco - akin to the one the EU has sealed with Tunisia, offering aid in exchange for Tunis bringing down departures for Europe.

Critics of the EU's new migration and asylum policies doubt they would be effective and point to growing risks to human rights while focus is on deterring unauthorised immigration.

The EU, a bloc of 450 million people, has recorded some 250,000 irregular arrivals this year, in large part aided by smugglers.

INDO-PACIFIC REGION

We want cooperation, not confrontation

Says French ambassador Marie Masdupuy
in an interview with Star

PORIMOL PALMA

France does not want confrontation but cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region that is becoming a centre of geopolitical competition, said Marie Masdupuy, the French ambassador to Bangladesh.

Confrontation is unnecessary and counterproductive, she told The Daily Star in an interview recently.

"We are all interdependent - economically, technologically, socially. My country sees itself as a solidary and reliable partner, aiming at keeping an unstable world order as balanced as possible. This is what we call a third way."

Masdupuy's comments come as the US and China are competing to gain an upper hand in the Indo-Pacific region, with the small states under pressure to pick a side.

French President Emmanuel Macron first brought up the subject of "third way" when he visited Dhaka last month. He said: "Based on democratic principles and the rule of law, we want to propose a third way - with no intention to bully our partners or to lead them to an unsustainable scheme in a region facing new imperialism."

France's foreign policy has historically been leaning toward as much independence in decision-making as possible, Masdupuy said.

This includes supporting France's friends in the region, such as Bangladesh, in attaining their strategic autonomy.

Asked about the criticisms lobbed at France's way for placing greater emphasis on business than addressing the allegations of violations of human rights and democracy, she said such criticisms invariably come when her country strikes important commercial deals.

"But, in our view, contrary to what the supporters of isolationism advocate for, the best option is always dialogue, trade and human exchanges."

Macron's visit was an occasion to review all issues including democracy, human rights, rule of law, apart from Bangladesh's commitment to purchase ten aircraft from European manufacturer Airbus and the letter of intent signed for the second Bangabandhu satellite.

France also agreed to set up a

satellite manufacturing unit in Bangladesh.

The first satellite, manufactured by Thales for Bangladesh, was a communications satellite that did not require a local industry base once in orbit, said Masdupuy, whose tenure in Bangladesh began on December 12, 2022.

The second one will be an Earth Observation satellite system and will contribute to economic development by providing useful

with climate-related projects.

France also identified a new project to restore the mangrove forests of the Sundarbans. Besides, France has important projects in the pipeline related to water treatment in Dhaka and Chattogram, improving air quality and urban infrastructure and services in 86 middle-sized cities of Bangladesh.

"We are continuing to work with public financial institutions to increase the mobilisation of private investments in climate-related projects. We are partnering with major multilateral development banks as well as other bilateral stakeholders, such as Denmark, Germany etc."

France is also preparing a research partnership with the International Centre for Climate Change and Development.

"Our country has tremendous experience in terms of adaptation to climate change. We would like to streamline it so that other countries can benefit from it."

France is eager to support the energy transition, which is not easy for countries like Bangladesh that heavily rely on coal and gas. There is also an issue of land availability when it comes to building large-scale facilities, be it solar or nuclear.

However, small modular reactors are now being developed by the French state-owned EDF and those will require only 20 to 30 acres.

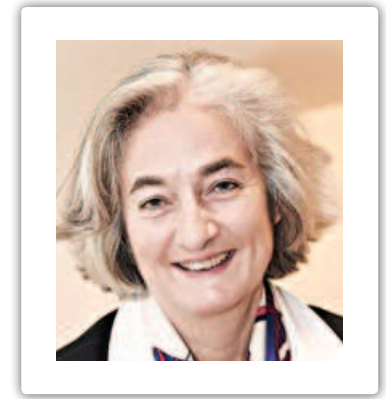
Besides, some French companies are working on multiple renewable energy projects like solar and wind which should soon bear fruits.

France is also very keen to collaborate on biogas and waste-to-energy, Masdupuy said.

The bilateral trade between the two countries amounts to about 5 billion euros, with the majority of French imports being garments.

France would like to diversify the range of products within both baskets: French companies can offer food and gastronomy products, agro-processing techniques, and various infrastructures including high-speed trains, renewable energy devices and ICT services.

"Your companies can also be interested in our market. We all heard about your litchis gaining ground back in France, why not other fruits like katha [jackfruit] and mangoes?"



data in various fields such as agriculture, land mapping, urban planning, climate change and so on.

The programme includes building up skilled human capital, a local manufacturing capability and geo-information applications.

As a result, Bangladesh will become a sovereign space nation and will be able to master all the related technologies and make the best use of the geo-data by itself.

In a few years, Bangladesh will avail its own home-made observation satellites, said Masdupuy, whose foreign service career began in 1991 with a posting in the Soviet Union.

"France wants to see itself as a start-up nation. Why can't Bangladesh become the start-up nation of the region in the mid-term future? The partnerships we would like to build with various sectors of your economy and society are truly meant as partnerships between friends."

Asked if France would increase funding in Bangladesh, she said the French Development Agency's commitments could increase after Macron's visit from the average annual commitment of 300 million euros, most of which are tied up

No security threat during Durga Puja

Says DMP chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Habibur Rahman yesterday said there is no specific threat centring the Durga Puja.

Yet, the DMP is prepared to deal with any situation, he said after inspecting the security arrangement at Dhakeshwari Temple in Dhaka.

"We have also taken up security plans, keeping in mind the upcoming election," he said replying to a query.

The city police chief said everyone has to strive so that the immersion of idols can be completed within a certain time, without any hindrance.

Members of River Police have been put on alert too, he added.

Member of new militant outfit arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Police yesterday arrested an alleged member of a new militant outfit called "Imam Mahmud's Kafela" in Gazipur.

Mahtab Islam, 35, of Kajjuri Sreepur village in Pabna, was arrested in front of the main gate of Kashimpur Jail around 11:30am, said Konabari Police Station Officer-in-Charge KM Ashraf Uddin.

The arrested admitted that he was a member of a new militant organisation called "Imam Mahmud's Kafela", the OC claimed.

ACC to file cases against owners of Apan Jewellers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti Corruption Commission yesterday decided to file two separate cases against the owners of Apan Jewellers for allegedly concealing information, including gaining wealth illegally.

Dildar Hossain Selim and Azad Hossain Selim will be sued under Section 27(1) of the ACC Act 2004, said ACC Secretary Mahbub Hossain during a press conference at the ACC head office in the capital.

The ACC has found that Azad has Tk 16.18 crore from beyond his known income, while Dildar concealed wealth information of Tk 64.64 lakh and earned Tk 59.75 crore from undisclosed sources.

JONNY'S CUSTODIAL DEATH HC dismisses appeal of convict

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday upheld a trial court verdict that sentenced a police informant to seven years imprisonment in a case filed for the custodial death of Ishtiaque Hossain Jonny, a garment-waste trader from Mirpur, in 2014.

The death of Jonny in police custody after torture sparked outrage and led to the country's sole case filed under the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013.

The HC bench of Justice SM Kuddus Zaman and Justice Shahed Nuruddin dismissed an appeal filed by the police informant Suman challenging the lower court verdict on the ground that he did not deposit the fine and compensation to the state treasury as per the court order.

One lakh imams Next tranche of \$681m expected in Dec

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initiatives for the welfare of the imams will also be made from the conference," said the official.

The imams will have an opportunity to put forward their demands to the prime minister. The demands include better financial support for imams and government recognition of their contribution.

The religious affairs ministry secretary, however, said that there is no link between their activities and the upcoming 12th parliamentary polls.

"We are working to assemble over 1 lakh imams tentatively on October 30. We are doing our duties as per the directives of the government," Zamadder told this newspaper.

Ministry sources said imams who have received training at the Imam Training Academy of the Islamic Foundation will be invited to the conference.

Around 1,15,000 imams have received training over the last five years. Among them are teachers who are teaching under mosque-based education programmes. The number of such teachers is around 76,000.

"Efforts are underway to bring those teachers to the conference also. Besides, pro-government Islamic scholars will also be called in," said an official of the religious affairs ministry, wishing not to be named.

Abdul Rahman Al Sudais, one of the main imams of the Grand Mosque, Masjid al-Haram in Makkah, has been invited to attend the event. He may join a programme at the Baitul Mukarram national mosque too, said sources.

From the conference, 50 model mosques, which have been built at different parts of the country, will be inaugurated.

So far, the government has constructed 250 model mosques in five phases. It plans to construct a total of 575 such mosques. Around 1,000 imams will be awarded at the conference under different categories such as Quran recitation, delivery of Juma prayer sermons, and social work.

Contacted, State Minister for Religious Affairs Faridul Haque Khan said, "We are working to arrange the conference. We will soon inform the media about the event officially."

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At the end of the first half of 2024, the NIR must be at least \$19.5 billion.

At present, the NIR, which is not published by BB, is less than \$18 billion, according to calculations of Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office.

The mission, however, tightened the purse strings for the government. The budget deficit for fiscal 2023-24 cannot be more than 4.6 percent of GDP and not the 5.2 percent set out in the budget.

Although the budget has set out to collect Tk 450,000 crore in tax, the IMF has given a lower target.

The government also agreed to adopt the IMF-prescribed crawling peg method to manage the exchange rate.

The crawling peg is a system of exchange rate adjustments in which a currency with a fixed exchange rate is allowed to fluctuate within a band of rates.

The method is currently used by the Reserve Bank of India.

Tigers no match for India

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but the right hander did not hesitate to hit top gear after India came out to chase a modest 257-run target.

Although 'the hitman' was eventually dismissed by Hasan Mahmud after hitting a flurry of sixes and fours en route to a 40-ball 48, India achieved a flying start as Rohit and Shubman Gill added 88 runs inside 13 overs.

The capacity crowd of over 33 thousand Indian supporters Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium witnessed some brutal batting display, leaving the Bangladeshi bowlers helpless.

Mehedi Hasan Miraz eventually sent Gill (53) and Shreyas Iyer (19) packing but Virat Kohli exhibited a batting masterclass and went on to finish the game off in style with 8.3 overs to spare and, in the process,

For the implementation of the crawling peg system, BB will incorporate RBI's experience along with IMF's technical assistance.

"Continued global financial tightening, coupled with existing vulnerabilities, is making macroeconomic management challenging, putting pressures on the taka and foreign exchange reserves," said the IMF press release.

Near-term policy priorities should focus on containing inflation, softening the impact of these economic disruptions on the vulnerable, and building external resilience, it said.

"Modernising monetary and exchange rate policy frameworks and improving FX [foreign exchange] management remain important to bolster external resilience."

Addressing banking sector vulnerabilities - by way of lower defaulted loans of state banks, enhanced supervision, strengthened governance and improved regulatory frameworks - and developing

had also brought up his 48th ODI ton - with a six off Nasum Ahmed's delivery.

Earlier, Bangladesh's quest to bounce back from their losing streak suffered a setback before the match since they had to take the field without skipper Shakib Al Hasan, who could not recover from his thigh injury despite all the suspense that preceded.

However, opener Liton Das and young Tanzid Hasan Tamim provided the finest start of the tournament for Bangladesh.

Following a string of failures in the tournament, young Tanzid finally showed glimpses of his talent while notching up his maiden fifty in the format.

Once Kuldeep Yadav dismissed Tanzid (51 off 40), Bangladesh lost their way in the middle, losing four wickets in the span of 44 runs.

domestic capital markets will help mobilise financing to support growth objectives, it said.

Of the \$681 million that is expected in the second tranche, \$462 million (which is equivalent to Special Drawing Rights of 352.35 million) will come under the Extended Credit Facility and Extended Fund Facility.

The second tranche will also contain about \$219 million (equivalent to SDR166.67 million) from the IMF's climate-focused Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF) fund. In the first instalment of \$447.8 million disbursed in February, there was no amount from the RSF fund.

The actual amount that would be disbursed in the second instalment would depend on the prevailing conversion rate of SDR, an international reserve asset defined and maintained by the IMF. Its value is based on a basket of five currencies: the US dollar, the euro, the Chinese renminbi, the Japanese yen and the British pound sterling.

Stand-in skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto (8) at number three departed cheaply, soon followed by in-form Miraz (3). The onus, thus, fell on Liton to compensate for the mini collapse but the elegant batter, who registered his second fifty in the ongoing tournament, fell to a soft dismissal at the bowling of Ravindra Jadeja after scoring team-high, 66 off 82 balls, laced with seven boundaries.

Experienced Mushfiqur Rahim later perished untimely after scoring 38 off 46. Mushfiqur's removal was largely down to Jadeja's brilliant diving catch at point.

Afterwards, it was Mahmudullah Riyad's lone battle that helped his side post a respectable total of 256 for nine. The experienced cricketer was dismissed in the final over after striking three fours and as many sixes for his 36-ball 46.

EU to send 4-member

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observation mission for the upcoming national polls.

"Based on the recommendations of the exploratory mission and taking into consideration the budget for EU Election Observation Missions for 2023/2024 - High Representative Josep Borrell has decided not to deploy a full-fledged EU Election Observation Mission," reads the letter by the EU Ambassador to Bangladesh Charles Whiteley.

"The High Representative's decision reflects the fact that, at the present time, it is not sufficiently clear whether the necessary conditions will be met at the point in time when the elections take place."

Durga Puja begins today

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Shashthi puja will start with Kalparambho early in the morning followed by Adhibash, Amantran (invitation) and Bodhon (incarnation).

Throughout the day, recitation of verses from the Holy Chandī, blowing of shankha (conch shells) and beating of dhak dhol (drums) will be heard in temples and mandaps.

Saptami puja will be held tomorrow, Ashtami, Kumari and Sandhi puja on Sunday, Nabami on Monday and Bijoya Dashami on Tuesday.

The five-day annual festival will come to an end with the immersion of idols of Durga in rivers and other water bodies across the country.

According to Hindu religious text, Goddess Durga on this day descends on Earth with her four children - Ganesh, Kartikeya, Lakshmi, and Saraswati.

It is believed that every year, Goddess Durga arrives on different "vahanas" (modes of transport) that signify the fate of mankind. This year, Durga will arrive and depart on a horse, which is considered an omen of war, dispute and inclement weather.

Durga Puja will be celebrated at 32,408 mandaps across the country, including 245 in the capital, according to Bangladesh Puja Uddhayan Parishad.

In the capital, the main puja mandaps are at Dhakeshwari National Temple, Ramkrishna Mission and Math, Khamar Bari of Farmgate area, Banani, Shakbari Bazar, Jagannath Hall of Dhaka

The exploratory mission visited Bangladesh from July 6-22 to assess the advisability, usefulness, and feasibility of a full-fledged mission.

Whiteley, in the letter, also said the EU was exploring "other options to accompany the electoral process should these be welcome on the part of the Election Commission and Government of Bangladesh."

"I will be in touch with you as soon as possible in this regard," he added.

For the 2018 polls in Bangladesh, the EU did not send a full mission, citing budgetary constraints.

The last time it sent a full mission to Bangladesh was in 2008, when at least 150 EU observers monitored the polls.

CPD suggests

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to maintain it and requested them to stop printing money for the government."

The CPD suggested the central bank leave the exchange rate completely in the hands of the market.

Currently, the rates are being set by the Association of Bankers, Bangladesh, and the Bangladesh Foreign Exchange Dealer's Association and the rates are still regulated, she said.

Responding, the central bankers cited their limitations under the current circumstances and said they would pursue it in phases, she said.

"They are more focused on soft landing. They said that they are not going for any major policy changes in the next three months."

Fahmida said the CPD pointed out the lack of governance in the banking sector.

"We have suggested bringing discipline in the banking sector and pursue reforms."