

## Indo-Bangla ties a ‘model relationship’

### Says Jaishankar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India has said its ties with Bangladesh stand out as a “model relationship” in the Indian subcontinent in terms of benefits of regional cooperation.



“Today our relationship stands out in the Indian subcontinent as a model relationship in terms of benefits of regional cooperation,” said Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, highlighting the progress in bilateral relations in the past decade.

Jaishankar's remarks came in response to a question by Saida Muna Tasneem, Bangladesh's high commissioner to the UK, during a conversation titled ‘How a Billion People See the World’ in London on Wednesday.

Tasneem asked Jaishankar about the importance of Bangladesh in India's foreign policy when it comes to security, regional connectivity, shared prosperity and the Indo-Pacific region.

Jaishankar said they had tried to restructure the neighbourhood.

“Obviously it's not something unilateral by us. For example, with Bangladesh, we have settled our land boundary, which is really a big deal.

There were disputes over the maritime boundary and both the countries opted for arbitration.

“We agreed that whatever the arbitral award would be, we would both follow. We did that when the arbitral award came. A lot of it was not in our favour. It's a good example for the region and countries.”

In the last ten years, there have been rail links between the two countries and a power plant.

India is using Bangladesh's ports for the northeast and Bangladesh is benefiting from more traffic coming through the port, according to Jaishankar.



People skim through winter clothes at a makeshift shop at New Market yesterday. With the cold weather about to set in, many traders in the capital have already changed their range with colourful winter garments.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Biden calls Xi a dictator after planned summit

China ‘strongly opposes’ the remark

REUTERS, Woodside

US President Joe Biden said early yesterday he had not changed his view that Chinese President Xi Jinping was effectively a dictator, a comment likely to land with a thud in Beijing after the two leaders held straightforward summit talks.

Biden held a solo news conference after four hours of talks with Xi on the outskirts of San Francisco. At the end of the news conference, he was asked whether he still held the view that Xi was a dictator, something he said in June.

“Look, he is. He's a dictator in the sense that he's a guy who runs a country that is a communist country that's based on a form of government totally different than

ours,” Biden said.

In response, China's foreign ministry said it “strongly opposes” the remarks, without mentioning Biden by name.

“This statement is extremely wrong and irresponsible political manipulation,” foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told reporters yesterday at a routine briefing.

“It should be pointed out that there will always be some people with ulterior motives who attempt to incite and damage US-China relations, they are doomed to fail.”

Mao refused to specify the identity of “some people” in answer to a follow-up question.

Last March Xi clinched a third term as

president when nearly 3,000 members of China's rubber stamp parliament, the National People's Congress, voted unanimously for him in an election in which there was no other candidate.

Xi is considered the most powerful Chinese leader since Mao Zedong, after a decade of consolidating power in policy-making and the military, and stifling media freedoms.

There was no immediate reaction from the Chinese delegation, which had come to the United States to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in San Francisco. Hundreds of critics of Beijing marched through the city's downtown around noon, chanting “free Tibet” and “free Hong Kong.”

## Plot thickens

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dialogues twice with the BNP [before the election] in 2018. She called [BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia] before the 2014 election. But Khaleda Zia verbally abused the prime minister....

“The president has called them this time; the Election Commission has called them. They did not respond. The election schedule has been announced. There is no time for dialogues now.”

Quader then urged the BNP to participate in the election.

“Come. Take part in the participatory elections. The door of the election is open for everyone. I tell the BNP, change your mind and participate.”

The BNP maintains that the government has not created the environment conducive to dialogues.

Political commentators say the demand for a free and fair election is louder this time, compared to the 2014 and 2018 elections that were marred by violence and ballot box stuffing.

Mujahidul Islam Selim, former president of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, says, “The election schedule is not the issue. The election-time government is. The government must take an initiative to form an election-time government.”

The election will be a farce if the EC moves forward with this schedule, he adds.

## Situation is tricky

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election. Altogether the situation is very tricky, he said.

Even after the announcement of the election schedule, there is a chance of talks as the election schedule can be deferred for the greater interest of the country, Sakawat said.

What is needed is the goodwill of the government and the responsibility largely lies upon the ruling party. There is no other option except dialogue to overcome the crisis, he said.

## Nation can't afford

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manner if the BNP had decided to take part.

“I think this election will be different from the 2014 and 2018 elections. It will be different in terms of quality and integrity.”

Boycotting this election would be suicidal for the BNP. The party should run and seeking people's support in stead of waging a movement. The party should keep in mind that there is no shortcut to power, he said.

## ‘People’s personal info’ leaked from NTMC-linked database

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“We have a seven-layer security system and there is no scope for leakage from our system.”

He also insisted that it was just sample data and incorrect data.

“We have to give data to our vendors so that they can develop their products. We do not give them authentic data. It is some of that data which got leaked,” he said insisting that the leak was inconsequential.

Maj Gen Ahsan claimed that the NTMC system was not linked to any cloud or even the internet, which highly placed sources inside the government's ICT ministry refuted.

Markopoulos and Wired vetted the data to see if it was in fact citizen's personal data and found instances of it being so. They contacted some of the people via the phone numbers listed.

The majority of the data leaked is metadata, reported Wired, which they called “the extremely powerful – “who, what, how, and when” of everyone's communications.

Wired reported that the database has existed online for several months and over the past week, anonymous hackers found it, stole the data, and are holding it hostage for ransom.

Markopoulos had alerted the government's Bangladesh Government's e-Government Computer Incident Response Team (BGD e-GOV CIRT) on November 8 who acknowledged the message.

Maj Gen Ahsan said they were notified of the breach two days ago (from yesterday).

The project director of BGD e-GOV CIRT was called and texted for comments but he is yet to respond.

## BNP goes for 48-hour hartal from Sunday

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At least 11 vehicles were torched in several districts during the blockade yesterday. Also, three carriages of a parked train were damaged in a fire in Tangail Sadar upazila, suspected to be an act of sabotage.

This was the fifth round of blockade enforced by the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami since October 30 demanding resignation of the government and general election under a non-party neutral administration.

The Jamaat and some other opposition parties, including Ganatantra Mancha and Gono Odhikar Parishad, have also called a 48-hour nationwide hartal from 6:00am Sunday protesting the unveiling of the schedule for the general election.

The Left Democratic Alliance (LDA), a platform of left-leaning political parties, has announced that it will take out processions across the country on Sunday demanding cancellation of the polls schedule.

Yesterday, the party enforced a countrywide half-day hartal. At least 20 LDA leaders and activists were injured as police charged batons on their procession in Narayanganj city.

Ganatantra Mancha enforced a countrywide daylong hartal yesterday protesting the declaration of the polls schedule. However, party leaders and activists were hardly seen picketing on the streets in the capital and other parts of the country.

Besides, six Islamist parties – Khelafat Majlish, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish, Muslim League, Bangladesh

Khelafat Andolon, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Bangladesh and Nejam-e-Islami – announced that they will take out processions in the capital today protesting the rolling out of the polls schedule.

The BNP claimed that at least 12,505 party leaders and activists were arrested across the country from October 28 till yesterday afternoon and 281 cases were filed against the party men during the same period. Of them, 490 were held yesterday.

According to Fire Service and Civil Defence, 11 vehicles were torched in 24 hours preceding 6:00pm yesterday. Of them, three trucks and two human hauliers were torched in Bogura, Jhalakathi, Chapainawabganj and Chandpur yesterday.

In Tangail, three carriages of a commuter train, parked at Gharinda Railway Station, were burned in a fire early yesterday.

Noticing smoke coming from the Tangail Commuter Train around 2:50am, staffers of the station went to the scene and found two compartments in flames.

On information, fire engines rushed to the scene and doused the flames around 3:00am, said the railway authorities.

Shah Sufi Noor, divisional manager (Pakshi) of Bangladesh Railway, told reporters that they suspected it to be an act of sabotage.

He also said a three-member probe committee was formed to investigate the incident.

Abdur Rahman, general secretary

## Aussies edge Proteas to set up India final

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South Africa did not let big partnerships bloom but Australia eventually reached the target with 16 balls to spare with Steve Smith (30) and Jos Inglis (28) providing useful cameo.

Earlier, Temba Bavuma's decision to bat under an overcast sky backfired and South Africa slumped to 24-4 inside 12 overs before light rain held up play.

Miller and Heinrich Klaasen (47) arrested the slide after play resumed with a 95-run partnership but Head's double strike put Australia back in charge.

Miller smashed Cummins for a six to bring up his hundred but fell in the same over trying to clear the rope again.

India beat New Zealand in the first semi-final on Wednesday to book their place in the final in Ahmedabad.

of Noakhali District BNP, at a press conference alleged that 22 houses and businesses of party leaders and activists were vandalised by Awami League men in the district town and different upazilas on Wednesday night after the declaration of the polls schedule.

The number of vehicles on the streets in the capital was quite low yesterday amid the political programmes. A few long-haul buses left the capital on the day.

A total of 229 platoons of Border Guard Bangladesh were deployed across the country to help law enforcers maintain law and order.

The Rab yesterday arrested 18 people on charges of vandalism and torching vehicles from different places across the country, according to a press release. With this, the force picked up 474 people from October 28 till yesterday.

The Rab is also providing escorts to long-haul buses and oil tankers at different places.

## Very little chance

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Still there is a slimmer of hope as the chief election commissioner in his address to the nation urged political parties to find a solution, and Western countries and the Jatiya Party also spoke in favour of dialogues, he said.

“Anything can happen at the very last moment but as of now the uncertainty is huge and we have to wait a few more days to see how things unfold.”

## Railway official demoted over graft charges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Railways ministry has demoted a mid-level official of Bangladesh Railway on charges of corruption.

AMM Shahnewaz, the then chief commercial manager of BR west zone, was demoted to 5th grade from 4th, according to an order signed by Railways Secretary Humayun Kabir.

A copy of the order, issued on November 13, is now available on the ministry's website.

The ministry in December 2020 suspended three BR officials, including Shahnewaz, for their involvement in irregularities and corruption, while purchasing materials.

The order was issued following the recommendation of a probe committee, formed on September 20, 2020, following a news report published in a Bangla daily on rampant corruption in purchases in the BR west zone during the 2018-19 fiscal year.

The two other officials are Belal Hossain Sarker, then controller of stores of BR west zone, and Zahid Kawsar, the then assistant controller of stores.

Divisional cases have been filed against them also but cases against the two have not been disposed of so far, a ministry official said seeking anonymity.

The Daily Star could not reach Shahnewaz or the Railways secretary over the phone for comments.

## DSA CASE AGAINST PROTHOM ALO EDITOR, REPORTER

## Cop asked to submit probe report by Dec 27

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday asked the investigation officer to submit by December 27 the probe report of a case filed against Prothom Alo Editor and Publisher Matiur Rahman and its staff reporter Samsuzzaman Shams under the Digital Security Act.

Matiur Rahman and Shams, now on bail, were present at the court during the hearing, said general recording officer SI Nizamuddin Fakir.

Dhaka Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Md Sultan Sohag Uddin passed the order after police failed to submit any probe report by yesterday.

Lawyer Abdul Malek Mashiur Malek, 61, filed the case against Matiur Rahman, Shams, an unnamed assistant cameraman, and unnamed others on March 29 with Ramna Police Station, accusing them of using print, online, and electronic media to tarnish the image and reputation of the state, according to the FIR.

The FIR also mentioned that the accused spread falsehood on purpose to deteriorate law and order. Shams was arrested and released later on bail.

## Kohli show to go on

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In Mumbai, Kohli bowed down as he surpassed the India legend's 49 ODI hundreds.

The record 50th ODI ton from Kohli ensured the continuation of India's marauding run – powering them to the highest ever total recorded in a World Cup knockout game, resulting in a convincing win to see the 1983 and 2011 champions to their fourth World Cup final.

Even long before Wednesday's milestone – which is one of many from the perennial record breaker Kohli – the right-handed batter had been crowned the best in the business in the modern era. And rightly so, as Kohli remains only one of the few in modern cricket who will be the first pick for any eleven – regardless of formats.

His 117 on Wednesday was not the smoothest. In fact, his World Cup 2023 aggregate of 711 at a staggering 101.57 average – the highest ever by any batter in one edition of the showpiece event – has seen more than a fair share of wobbles as Kohli was dropped a number of times throughout the tournament.

It is only logical that when you are that good, your every move is scrutinised to the tiniest detail. With not many to be compared to, you are measured against the standards that you have set.

But despite having millions of eyes set on you, many of which are intrigued to question the slightest of inaccuracies, it is the ability to shrug off those periods of shakiness to emerge as a hero, almost on every occasion, that acts as the true mark of a champion.

And none better than Kohli owns the trait of a champion. He celebrates every century as his first. The pump of the fist after completing the doubles or the enthusiastic cheer after every wicket that his team takes only demonstrates the hunger that the 35-year-old still has even after a decade of dominance on the 22 yards.

And for everything he does on the field, the aura that he exudes remains spellbinding. So much so that even his opposition turns into an admirer.

“I mean he's the best, isn't he? And he seems to be getting better, which is a worry for the opposition all around the world,” said losing New Zealand captain Kane Williamson after the game.

The warning that Williamson gave will probably hold true. Perhaps the world is yet to see the best version of Kohli as his dedication on the field is only matched by his resolve and astuteness off it.

“Honestly, it is going to mean nothing in 15-20 years,” he had said after equalling Don Bradman's record of 29 Test centuries in a game against the West Indies in July this year.

Maybe that's where Kohli is wrong because the astounding part of his 50th ODI ton remains the pace at

which he had gotten there. As opposed to Tendulkar getting to his 49th ODI ton in his 451st innings, Kohli did one better and reached the milestone only in his 277th innings.

If his pace of breaking records and setting new ones is cumulated with his hunger and determination, the milestones Kohli probably is going to set will not only be remembered for the next 15-20 years but cherished, admired, and aspired to for centuries.

## Candidate

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election, they will need to apply within three days of the announcement of the schedule, according to a separate instruction of the EC.

The EC on Wednesday announced the schedule of the 12th parliamentary election, which would be held on January 7.

No one will be able to begin their election campaigns before December 18 as the EC will allocate the electoral symbol on that day, said EC Secretary Jahangir Alam.

According to the electoral rules, the election campaign will start for all parties 21 days before the election date and wrap up on January 5, he said.

Asked about people already seeking votes for Boat, the electoral symbol of the ruling Awami League, in violation of the code of conduct for election, Alam said: “Nobody complained to us yet about this.”

The electoral code of conduct takes effect with the announcement of the poll schedule.

Ministers and lawmakers would not be able to use government vehicles or enjoy other facilities while carrying out campaign-related work. They are also not allowed to make any donation to any institution from public funds.

The government would not be allowed to approve or inaugurate any development project to woo voters.

After the allocation of the electoral symbols, the ballots will be readied and then will be sent to the districts three or four days before the polls, Alam said.

But it will be decided later when the ballots will be sent to the voting centres.

About the transfer of the government officials, Alam said: “We don't know if such transfers happened after the announcement of the election schedule. From now on, if any such decision is needed, the ministry concerned will send the proposal to the EC and then we will give their opinion.”

If any local government representative like the upazila chairman or the union parishad chairman wants to take part in the upcoming parliamentary election, he or she will need to resign first.

The EC has invited applications from local observers. The deadline for applying is November 25.