

Beijing-Moscow ties 'all-time high' Says Russian PM

AFP, Beijing

Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin hailed his country's relationship with China yesterday, declaring an "all-time high" in bilateral ties during a visit to the Chinese capital, according to readouts from both Moscow and Beijing.

China and Russia have ramped up economic and diplomatic cooperation in recent years, with ties growing closer since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

"Russia-China relations are at an all-time high," Mishustin told his counterpart, Premier Li Qiang, according to Chinese state broadcaster CCTV and the Kremlin. Li told Mishustin that "under the strategic guidance of President Xi Jinping and President Putin, China-Russia relations continue to operate at a high level," said CCTV.

Li added that the two countries would seek to "carry forward the ever-lasting friendship... (injecting) more stability and positive energy into the world", CCTV added.

Mishustin's visit to China yesterday and today comes two months after President Vladimir Putin made a rare trip outside Russia to meet Xi and a month after a senior Chinese general was hosted in Moscow.



People walk past a collapsed building after an earthquake in Dahejia, Jishishan County in northwest China's Gansu province yesterday. Inset, this aerial photo shows damage after the earthquake yesterday. PHOTO: AFP



ICBM TEST Response to US hostility

Says North Korea

REUTERS, Seoul

North Korea said yesterday it had tested the isolated state's newest ICBM on Monday to gauge the war readiness of its nuclear force against mounting US hostility, as Washington and its allies began operating a real-time missile data sharing system.

South Korea and Japan said that based on Monday's flight data, the North had fired an ICBM with the range to hit anywhere in the United States. The launch was condemned by South Korea, Japan and the United States as a flagrant violation of UN Security Council resolutions.

In a joint announcement, South Korea, Japan, and the United States said they had activated a system to detect and assess North Korea's missile launches in real-time and established a multi-year trilateral military exercise plan.

North Korean state media said leader Kim Jong Un watched Monday's launch of the Hwasong-18 intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) at a site east of the capital, Pyongyang. The missile reached an altitude of 6,518 km (4,050 miles), flying 1,002 km and accurately hitting the intended target, an empty patch of sea, state media said.

Kim said the launch sends "a clear signal to the hostile forces, who have fanned up their reckless military confrontation hysteria" against the North, state news agency KCNA reported.

Russia ready to talk on Ukraine Would defend national interest, says Putin; UN decries Moscow's failure to protect Ukraine civilians

REUTERS, Moscow, Geneva

President Vladimir Putin said yesterday that Russia would be prepared to talk to Ukraine, the United States and Europe about the future of Ukraine if they wanted to, but that Moscow would defend its national interests.

Putin, who sent troops into Ukraine in 2022, has repeatedly said he would be prepared to talk about peace, though Western officials say he is waiting for the US presidential election in November before making a genuine effort.

"In Ukraine, those who are aggressive towards Russia, and in Europe and in the United States - do they want to negotiate? Let them. But we will do it based on our national interests," Putin

told a meeting of the defence leadership in Moscow.

"We will not give up what is ours," Putin said, adding that Russia did not intend to fight with Europe.

Putin spoke at a meeting of the defence ministry which was attended by the military top brass, including Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and General Valery Gerasimov, chief of the general staff, as well as Federal Security Service (FSB) Director Alexander Bortnikov.

Meanwhile, United Nations human rights chief Volker Turk said there had been an "extensive failure" by Russia to take adequate measures to protect civilians in Ukraine and that there were indications that Russian forces had committed war crimes.

Turk, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, said his office's monitoring indicated "gross violations of international human rights law, serious violations of international humanitarian law, and war crimes, primarily by the forces of the Russian Federation."

These violations, Turk said at the Human Rights Council in Geneva, included 142 cases of summary execution of civilians since Russia invaded Ukraine in February last year, as well as enforced disappearances, torture and ill treatment of detainees, including through sexual violence.

Russia has vigorously denied committing atrocities or targeting civilians in Ukraine.

Myanmar stands on HUMANITARIAN 'PRECIPICE' UN warns

AFP, United Nations

One-third of the population of Myanmar, or more than 18 million people, now require humanitarian aid, the United Nations warned Monday, seeking a billion dollars in donations next year to combat the need.

The humanitarian situation in the Southeast Asian country has worsened since the coup there nearly three years ago, the global body said.

"Myanmar stands at the precipice in 2024 with a deepening humanitarian crisis that has spiraled since the military takeover in February 2021 with the civilian population that is now living in fear," said a report by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) published Monday.

The 18.6 million people who are currently in need of humanitarian assistance is one million

more than a year ago and 19 times as many as in 2020, before the coup.

"Children are bearing the brunt of the crisis with 6 million children in need as a result of displacement, interrupted health care and education, food insecurity and malnutrition, and protection risks including forced recruitment and mental distress," warned Marcoluigi Corsi, the UN's interim humanitarian coordinator for Myanmar.

The report highlighted the particular concern of mass displacement, with nearly 2.6 million people pushed out of their homes as of December 11 - an increase of 1.1 million since the same time last year - including more than 660,000 people who have been displaced since late October amid the escalating conflict between the military and ethnic minority fighters in the country's north.

Iraq holds first local elections in a decade

REUTERS, Baghdad

Around 41 percent of eligible voters cast ballots in Iraq's first local elections in a decade on Monday, state media said, in a vote where the ruling Shi'ite Muslim alliance is expected to extend its hold on power amid a boycott by their main political rival.

The election is seen as an indicator of the balance of power in a country where groups close to Iran have steadily gained influence, as well as being a test of Iraq's young democracy installed by the US after the toppling of Saddam Hussein in 2003. It comes ahead of a 2025 general election.

Around 6.6 million voters cast ballots out of more than 16.1 million who were eligible, state media reported Monday evening, ahead of the announcement of preliminary results on Tuesday.

Voter turnout closely matched that of the 2021 parliamentary vote, also 41 percent.

Apathy has increased among a young population that feels it has not seen the benefits of Iraq's massive oil wealth, much of which is misdirected or stolen in a country ranked among the world's most corrupt.

Senior politicians had called for a high turnout after casting their votes at a plush centre in one of Baghdad's finest hotels.

Preparing a cup of sweet tea by his kiosk near a polling centre in central Baghdad, Ali Aswad, 39, said voting was a waste of time.

"I won't vote any more. They have been telling us democracy will help improve our lives but nothing happened," he said.

"Elections are a competition of words without actions and democracy is a big lie."

Some voters, however, retain faith in the system. "I have never missed a chance to vote since 2005 because I believe in change," said Aqeel al-Assadi, a 58-year-old high school headmaster.

PARLIAMENT SESSION 141 Indian opposition MPs barred

AFP, New Delhi

More than half of all opposition lawmakers have been barred from the ongoing session of India's parliament for demanding a debate into a protest last week in which a smoke canister was released in the legislature. The suspended 141 lawmakers belong to an opposition grouping of 26 parties dubbed INDIA - the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance - formed to fight general elections slated for early next year. On December 13, a man stunned lawmakers when he jumped from an overhead visitor's gallery onto the floor of the lower house of parliament and released yellow smoke from a canister. The following day, 14 MPs were barred from the chamber for protesting the security breach and, on Monday, 78 more opposition lawmakers were suspended from the rest of the session, which ends Friday. A further 49 were barred yesterday after they shouted slogans inside parliament, demanding that powerful interior minister Amit Shah resign. "The opposition is being completely decimated so that dangerous bills can be passed without any meaningful debate," suspended MP and opposition Congress party leader Jairam Ramesh said on X, formerly Twitter. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a rare interview with the Dainik Jagran newspaper, called the incident "very serious" and ordered a detailed investigation, but said there was "no need" for a debate.

Malaysia OKs 'Merry Christmas' on halal cakes

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Halal-certified bakeries in largely Muslim Malaysia can now put Christmas greetings on cakes for their customers, religious authorities said, reversing a three-year-old ban following public uproar. The Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, known as Jakim, said Monday that the new directive replaces a previous order which barred the businesses from writing Merry Christmas on their products. The new ruling came after an internal memo from popular bakery chain Berry's telling staff not to write Christmas greetings on their cakes was shared widely online since last weekend. "To be informed for this coming Christmas Festival Celebration we are strictly not allowed to write the words of Merry Christmas or X'Mas on any cakes even (if) requested by the customer," according to the memo, which cited halal regulations from Jakim. Staff were advised to use a "Season's greetings" topper instead. Jakim said its "previous statements in 2020 are not applicable" anymore.

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Call for Papers
BIGM Journal of Policy Analysis

Bangladesh Institute of Governance and Management (BIGM), a premier knowledge hub in Dhaka conducts academic, research, training and intellectual capacity building activities on broad areas of governance and public policy discourse, is inviting scholarly papers for its journal named 'BIGM Journal of Policy Analysis'. Manuscripts must be original and preferably, be of quantitative nature following interdisciplinary perspectives and approaches in areas of public policy, development, economics and adjacent fields. Papers that describe experimentation are earnestly encouraged.

All submitted papers will be considered based on the outcome of a double-blind peer review process. Aside from peer review, submitted manuscripts may undergo procedural review within the reviewer referee/ expert network of the Journal.

BIGM Journal of Policy Analysis follows the APA referencing style. The desired style of formatting is: Times New Roman font in 12 font sizes and 1.5 line-spacing in A4 size paper. Only a soft copy of the article, both in word and pdf format, should be submitted by email at journal@bigm.edu.bd on or before **March 31, 2024**. Every submission must be accompanied by a cover letter and should include contact details, institutional affiliation of author/authors and other relevant information, such as, non-submission of the article in other journals, funding information (if any), and authors' contribution in case of multiple authors.

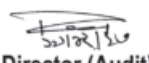

Dr. Mohammad Tareque
and
Director, BIGM and Editor-in-Chief
BIGM Journal of Policy Analysis

GD-1986

Bangladesh Land Port Authority
F-19/A, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar
Agargaon, Dhaka-1207
www.bsbk.gov.bd

Request for Expression of Interest (EOI)

1. Ministry	Ministry of Shipping
2. Agency	Bangladesh Land Port Authority (BLPA)
3. Procuring entity name	Bangladesh Land Port Authority represented by Director (Audit), BLPA.
4. Procuring entity district	Dhaka.
5. Expression of Interest for selection of	Audit firms for conducting audit of the Accounts of BLPA (Including Pension & GPF Fund) for the Financial year 2023-2024 & 2024-2025
6. EOI Ref. No & date	18.15.0000.019.04.018.23-89 dated: 19-12-2023
KEY INFORMATION	
7. Procurement method	Least Cost Based Selection (LCBS)
FUNDING INFORMATION	
8. Budget and source of fund	Revenue Budget of BLPA
PARTICULAR INFORMATION	
9. EOI closing date & time	10/01/2024 before 5.00pm
10. Name and address of the office(s) Receiving of EOI	Office of the Director (Audit), Bangladesh Land Port Authority F-19/A, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207
INFORMATION FOR APPLICANT	
11. Brief description of assignment	Preparation, examination and audit (পরীক্ষা ও নিরীক্ষা) of the accounts of BLPA (Head Office, Benapole, Bhomra, Burimari, Akhaura, Tamabil, Sonahat, Gobrakora-Koroitoli, Belonia, Shewla, Dhanua-Kamalpur & Nakugaon Land ports as well as GPF & Pension Fund) for the financial year 2023-2024 & 2024-2025 & Preparation of Management and Audit Report.
12. Experience, resources, delivery capacity required	i) Firms should be registered with ICAB. ii) Adequate manpower, logistics and financial capability. iii) Principal and/or partners should have professional qualifications. iv) Auditors and staff should have appropriate professional qualifications & experience. v) Firms should have up-to-date income tax return certificate. vi) Audit experience of minimum two financial years of any statutory public authority.
13. Other details	Interested firms are invited to provide the following information, document & evidence: (a) Background with brochure and areas of expertise; (b) Description of similar assignment with documents; (c) Experience in similar activities; (d) Manpower, logistic and financial capability; (e) Successful bidder will be selected in accordance with Public Procurement Rules' 2008. Interested applicants may obtain further information by applying to the address below during office hour.
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS	
14. Name of official inviting EOI	Director (Audit)
15. Designation official inviting EOI	Director (Audit)
16. Address of official inviting EOI	Bangladesh Land Port Authority, F-19/A, Shere-e-Bangla Nagar, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207.
17. Contact	02-41025308
SPECIAL INSTRUCTION	
18.	i) Request for Expression of Interest for abovementioned assignment to be clearly marked on the top of envelope. ii) The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all or any EOI.


Director (Audit)

GD-1982