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## Paris looks to bolster ties with Dhaka

Hasina likely to visit France later this year

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

France is gearing up its engagement with Bangladesh in the areas of trade, economy, defence, and climate change ahead of a possible visit to France by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina later this year.

French delegations will tour Dhaka to discuss political and economic issues among others as the two countries are preparing several deals, including Climate Adaptation Pact worth 1 billion euro (\$1.1 billion) and the purchase of aircraft and satellite from Airbus during the PM's visit, said French Ambassador Marie Masdupuy at a press briefing at her residence yesterday.

The schedule of Hasina's visit, which is being finalised, comes after the landmark visit by French President Emmanuel Macron in September last year.

"Our leaders are going to have a few meetings, including political consultation,

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Mourners attend a funeral for victims of the helicopter crash that killed Iran's president Ebrahim Raisi, foreign minister Hossein Amirabdollahian and others, in Tehran, Iran yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Khamenei leads Raisi's funeral prayers

REUTERS, Dubai

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei yesterday led prayers in Tehran at the funeral of the late president Ebrahim Raisi, as the clerical establishment hurried to organise an early election that could further erode its legitimacy amid growing public discontent.

The June 28 vote to replace Raisi, killed in a helicopter crash on Sunday, will need to galvanise a population that showed little interest in the 2021 ballot that gave the hardline cleric the presidency, a role that oversees day-to-day government.

Raisi died at a time of worsening strains between the clerical leadership and wider society, aggravated

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

## UN PEACEKEEPERS

### DW docu raises questions about vetting process

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Deutsche Welle documentary has alleged that some members of the Rapid Action Battalion's intelligence wing — which, according to the German broadcaster, has records of human rights abuses — were deployed at UN peacekeeping missions.

The 20-minute-long documentary, headlined "Torturers deployed as UN peacekeepers," also showed how Sri Lanka sent officers accused of war crimes during the country's civil war to peacekeeping missions.

It points to vetting procedures for peacekeepers, stressing that such deployments may undermine the very purpose of peacekeeping missions.

As of March this year, about 6,000

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



## PALESTINIAN STATE

### Ireland, Spain, Norway announce recognition

Israel fumes, recalls envoys for 'consultations'; PLO, Hamas, KSA, Qatar, Jordan praise decision

REUTERS, Dublin

Ireland, Spain and Norway yesterday announced that they would recognise a Palestinian state on May 28, saying they hoped other Western countries would follow suit, prompting Israel to recall its ambassadors.

Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said the move was aimed at accelerating efforts to secure a ceasefire in Israel's offensive in Gaza.

Ireland's Prime Minister Simon Harris announced the decision at a news conference in Dublin. He added that Ireland was unequivocal in recognising Israel's right to exist "securely and in peace with its neighbours", and calling

- Step is to accelerate peace efforts: Spain's PM
- Israeli forces move deeper into Rafah
- Death toll in Gaza rises to 35,647

for all hostages in Gaza to be immediately returned.

In Oslo, Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store said the only possible political solution between Israelis and

Palestinians is "two states living side by side in peace and security".

Norway said the demarcation of the two states should be based on pre-1967 borders, with Jerusalem as capital of both, but added that its border recognition should not prejudice negotiations over ultimate border lines. Ireland also said the borders should be along 1967 lines.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz ordered the immediate return of the Israeli ambassadors from the three countries for consultations, and warned of further "severe consequences".

The decision was welcomed by the Palestinian Authority (PA), which exercises limited self-rule in the Israeli

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

## Rishi Sunak calls surprise polls for July 4

REUTERS, London

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak called a national election yesterday, naming July 4 as the date for a vote his governing Conservatives are widely expected to lose to the opposition Labour Party after 14 years in power.

Ending months of speculation over the timing of a new vote, Sunak, 44, announced outside his 10 Downing Street residence that he was calling the election earlier than some had expected, a risky strategy with his party way behind in the opinion polls.

Sunak heads into the election not only far behind Labour in the polls but also rather isolated from some in his party and increasingly dependent on a small team of advisers to steer him through what is set to be an ugly campaign.

But he seems to have decided that with some economic gains, such as inflation falling and the economy growing at its fastest pace in almost three years, now is the time to take a risk and present his agenda for a new term formally

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6



Buddhists lighting candles at the Basabo Buddha Mandir in the capital yesterday as part of celebration of the Buddha Purnima, the biggest religious festival of the Buddhist community. Buddha Purnima marks the birth, enlightenment, and death of Gautama Buddha.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## ROHINGYAS IN RAKHINE

### Arakan Army 'forcibly displaced thousands'

Say Rohingya organisations abroad

AFP, Bangkok

Rohingya activists accused a Myanmar ethnic armed group on Wednesday of displacing thousands of the Rohingyas in western Rakhine state, after the United States said it was troubled by increasing violence.

Clashes have rocked Rakhine since the Arakan Army (AA) attacked junta forces in November, ending a ceasefire that had largely held since a military coup in 2021.

The AA says it is fighting for more

autonomy for the ethnic Rakhine population in the state, which is also home to around 600,000 members of the persecuted Rohingya minority.

Hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas fled Rakhine to Bangladesh in 2017 during a crackdown by the military that is now the subject of a United Nations genocide court case.

A joint statement released by several Rohingya organisations based abroad said AA fighters

forced Rohingya residents to leave the town of Buthidaung last week and then burned and looted their homes.

It said the Rohingyas were then directed by the fighters into areas controlled by the AA.

The statement called for the AA to end "forced displacement and human rights violations" against the Rohingyas.

The AA said it had seized Buthidaung last week, the latest

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

## Low-pressure area forms in the Bay

May turn into cyclone, says Met office

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A low-pressure area has formed under the influence of cyclonic circulation over Southwest and adjoining West Central Bay and it is likely to intensify further, the Met office said.

The intensifying low pressure may turn into a cyclone, said meteorologists of Bangladesh Meteorological Department and the International Meteorological Organisation (IMO).

Its name would be "Remal" proposed by Oman. "Remal" means sand in Arabic.


Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued an advisory for fishermen, particularly those off the coasts of Odisha and West Bengal, urging them to return by today due to the potential for very heavy rainfall and high winds in the central Bay of Bengal.

The IMD also said the low-pressure area is expected to move northeastwards and intensify into a depression over the central Bay of Bengal by tomorrow morning.

The Bangladesh Meteorological Department yesterday predicted rain or thundershowers, likely accompanied by temporary


SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

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**We Deeply Mourn the demise of  
Mr. Anhar Ahmed Chowdhury**

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