

US plan to take over Greenland 'serious': Putin

AFP, Murmansk

Russia considers US plans to annex Greenland "serious" and worries the West could use the Arctic as a springboard for future conflicts, Russian President Vladimir Putin said Thursday.

US President Donald Trump has pushed to take control of the autonomous Danish island since taking office in January, saying Washington needs to have it for "international security".

"It is a deep mistake to think that this is some extravagant talk from the new American administration. It is nothing of the sort," Putin told an Arctic forum in the city of Murmansk.

"We are talking about serious plans on the American side with regard to Greenland. These plans have long-standing historical roots," he added.

He said that while Russia was not directly involved in the question of Greenland's ownership, Moscow was concerned that "Nato countries, in general, are increasingly designating the far north as a springboard for possible conflicts".

Modi to kick off construction of India-Sri Lanka solar plant

AFP, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch the construction of a long-delayed solar power project during his upcoming visit to Sri Lanka, an official said yesterday.

Vikram Misri, the secretary of India's foreign ministry, said Modi and Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake will witness a virtual groundbreaking ceremony for their joint venture solar power project in the island's northeast on April 5.

The proposed 120-megawatt venture in the coastal district of Trincomalee has stalled for years, but New Delhi backed it as a joint project between the neighbouring nations.

"This, in many senses, is going to be a milestone in the bilateral partnership," Misri told reporters.

'We're up against time to find stolen billions'

FROM PAGE 12

Mansur said the UK is his starting point. He is now in talks with the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office and London law firms in a bid to trace and seize approximately \$25 billion laundered from Bangladesh.

"Many of these families have their assets... in London in particular, so we think we will find a lot of assets here," Mansur said.

"Our whole purpose is at least [to] create awareness that the UK is a favourite destination of stolen assets all over the world, and Bangladesh is one of those countries," he said.

A person of interest for Bangladesh is its former land minister Saifuzzaman Chowdhury Javed. Earlier, the Al Jazeera's Investigative Unit (I-Unit) unravelled that he owns more than \$500 million of real estate -- primarily in London and Dubai.

Last year, in an undercover operation the I-Unit revealed that Javed's family had purchased over 360 luxury apartments in the UK,



Pro-monarchist protesters run for cover as riot police fire tear gas shells to disperse the crowd during a demonstration in Kathmandu, Nepal, yesterday. The protesters were demanding the restoration of Nepal's monarchy, which was abolished in 2008, arguing that successive governments have failed to bring about significant changes. At least two people were killed in the violence, police said.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Israeli actions in Gaza resemble 'atrocities crimes'

Warns UN aid agency; Palestinian sources claim Hamas, mediators in new talks to revive truce

AGENCIES

Israeli actions in Gaza, including strikes on populated areas in which civilians have been killed, "bear the hallmarks" of atrocities, the United Nations' aid agency warned yesterday.

"There is a callous disregard for human life and dignity. The acts of war that we see bear the hallmarks of atrocity crimes," Jens Laerke, spokesperson for the OCHA aid agency, said in Geneva.

He also noted the resumption of rocket fire from Palestinian factions in Gaza, reports Reuters.

In more than a week of resumed Israeli strikes in Gaza, 855 people have been killed, according to the territory's health ministry.

Meanwhile, Palestinian sources close to Hamas told AFP that talks were underway

between the Palestinian group and mediators from Egypt and Qatar Thursday to revive a ceasefire and hostage release deal for Gaza.

"A meeting began this evening between the Egyptian delegation responsible for negotiations in Doha and a Hamas

Talks are focusing on possibility of implementing a truce during Eid al-Fitr

delegation in an effort to solidify a ceasefire," said a source who requested anonymity because he was not authorised to speak publicly on the issue.

Mediators from Qatar were also involved in the discussions, the source added.

Talks are focusing on the possibility of implementing a truce during the Eid al-Fitr and Jewish Passover holidays, as well as ensuring the entry of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip, the source said.

"Mediators are engaging in intensive discussions with all parties to cement the ceasefire and move toward the second phase of the agreement," he added.

He said Hamas had expressed a willingness to respond "positively" to any proposal that halts the fighting.

Another Palestinian source close to Hamas said that despite the discussions, "no breakthrough" had been achieved so far. "A prisoner exchange and ceasefire agreement are possible, but their success depends on (Israel's) approval and its willingness not to obstruct the process," the source said.

Election is your duty, not reforms

FROM PAGE 12

Khasru said the struggle to restore democracy is not over yet. It will only be fulfilled when ownership is returned to the people.

He emphasised that the only way to restore this ownership is by forming a government elected by the people.

He warned that people will not accept any conspiracies to manipulate the electoral process.

He said, "I see signs of Hasina's rhetoric in statements like 'we are

most of which were in London.

The Anti-Corruption Commission in Bangladesh froze nearly 40 of his bank accounts and the court placed him under a travel ban, but the BB is seeking to freeze his overseas properties as soon as possible, in case they are sold off.

Javed claimed that he was the victim of a politically motivated "witch hunt" against people associated with the previous regime and said that "his wealth was earned legitimately".

While the central bank is focused on freezing assets, Mansur also wants the authorities in the UK and elsewhere to investigate the lawyers, bankers and estate agents who helped move billions of dollars for the "oligarch families", said the report.

Estimating that it may take up to five years to regain control of the funds, Mansur said the progress has been slow as authorities grapple with the scale and complexity of the task.

However, he said that the UK

government is helping.

He is considering to offer plea bargains to those who helped move money offshore in return for evidence against the kingpins, or even some form of amnesty scheme to bring the missing money back to Bangladesh, said the report.

Another key issue is that the complex task of tracking billions of dollars across multiple jurisdictions has been made harder following the change of government in the US.

A team of investigators from the US, who were due to start work in Bangladesh this year, was called off after President Donald Trump froze funding to the US Agency for International Development (USAID) in the early days of his new term.

"They were supposed to be in Dhaka in full force, but it had to be cancelled... a number of our experts... had been funded by USAID, but it was stopped," Mansur says.

"That's unfortunate for us, but that's the way it is."

again, suggesting that we are doing this and that; if we leave, politicians will not carry out these tasks, and they must be completed fully..."

"Sorry, this is not your responsibility. It will be the responsibility of those whom the people of Bangladesh elect. Don't forget that your duty is to hold a fair election," he said.

The BNP leader said, "Restore democracy. Restore voting rights. Announce the dates for elections quickly."

"It seems that narrative is emerging

that as for a particular project, I am unsure if this is a new initiative.

I will provide an update later. In any case, this is not the subject of today's briefing, and I would prefer not to comment on the internal affairs of another country," Misri.

Lebanese President Joseph

Aoun, in Paris to meet his French

counterpart Emmanuel Macron, said in a written statement from France that the onus was on the international community to "put an end to these attacks and force Israel to abide by the agreement, just as Lebanon is committed to it."

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