

Two Russian navy ships in Ctg on 4-day goodwill visit

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Two Russian navy ships are on a four-day goodwill visit to Bangladesh aimed at strengthening bilateral relations and creating new avenues for training and exchange of experience, said a statement by the Russian embassy in Dhaka yesterday.

The two corvettes, Sovershennyay and Rezky of Russia's Pacific Fleet, arrived at Chittagong port on Tuesday, where Russian naval personnel were received by Bangladesh Navy representatives and Russian embassy staff.

Over the next few days, the crews of the Russian ships will participate in a number of events together with the Bangladesh Navy servicemen.

The agenda also includes meetings with the Commander of Chattogram Naval Area, senior military officials, and members of the Chittagong Port Authority.

As part of the tour, visiting officials and sailors will also pay respects at the tomb of Soviet sailor Yuri Redkin at the Bangladesh Naval Academy. SEE PAGE 8 COL 6



Theatre group Prachyanat School of Acting and Design yesterday brought out its "Lalajatra" procession after a street show at Soparjito Swadhinota Chattar at TSC, Dhaka University, and marched to Smriti Chirantan Chattar to commemorate the victims of the genocide carried out by the Pakistan army on unarmed Bangalees on the night of March 25, 1971. PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Meta, YouTube found liable in social media addiction case

REUTERS

Alphabet's Google and Meta were found liable on Wednesday for designing platforms that are dangerous for teens, in a landmark verdict that could force tech firms to rethink how they defend themselves against safety claims.

The verdict could mark a turning point in the global backlash against their platforms' perceived mental health harms to kids and teens, more than two decades after the emergence of social media.

Punitive damages for the companies will be decided next. The jury may consider whether Google or Meta's products caused the plaintiff physical harm or whether the companies disregarded the health of other users, Judge Carolyn Kuhl said in court.

The case involves a 20-year-old woman, a minor when the case began who is known in court by her first name Kaley. She said she became addicted to Google's YouTube and Meta's Instagram at a young age because of their attention-grabbing design. The jury found Google and Meta were negligent in the design of both apps and failed to warn about their dangers.

"Today's verdict is a referendum — from a jury, to an entire industry — that accountability has arrived," the plaintiff's lead counsel said in a statement.

Shares of Meta were up nearly 1% and Alphabet shares were slightly lower, little changed after the verdict.

Fuel queues eating into earning hours

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tank refuelling out of the 12 filling stations this newspaper visited in the capital yesterday.

Maj Abul Ala Muhammad Tauhid (ret), assistant director of Trust Energy, reported a reduced supply compared to normal allocation. "Whatever amount we receive, we immediately distribute it among customers."

He said the pump was able to sell fuel until around 9:30am yesterday, after which it remained closed for some time before resuming around 2:30pm.

"We may have to keep the station closed at night, as the current supply is not sufficient to operate 24 hours."

In Mirpur, most pumps had their gates shut or supply halved. At five filling stations visited in the area, petrol and octane were unavailable.

A staff member at a pump on Begum Rokeya Sarani said their daily supply had been cut in half — from around 9,000 litres to 4,500 litres — while demand remained unchanged.

"When fuel arrives, we sell it. Once it runs out, we shut down," he said.

At two filling stations in Paribag, long queues of motorcycles and cars were seen in the evening.

Mahfuzur Rahman was one of those waiting in line despite heavy rainfall. He had come from Mirpur to Meghna Model Service Centre.

He had visited four pumps in Tejgaon with no luck before joining the queue.

Just minutes after speaking with him, the Meghna pump also shut down for the day around 7:00pm.

Customers then rushed to a nearby station, Purbachal Traders, which had remained closed throughout the day but resumed operations immediately after the Meghna station shut down.

Both the pumps were selling fuel up to five litres per motorcycle.

Ashrafuzzaman Dulal, counter chief at the station, told The Daily Star that it had been out of operation since Monday midnight.

"We are rationing so that more customers can be served," he said.

The country's fuel supply chain is under pressure as a sharp post-Eid surge in demand coincides with import uncertainties linked to global geopolitical tensions.

As of yesterday, the country's diesel stocks stand at around 1.7 lakh tonnes, sufficient for roughly 13 days, while octane supplies of 9,800 tonnes may last about eight days, and petrol reserves are estimated at 15,000 tonnes, enough for around 10 days.

Despite assurances from authorities that the stock is adequate, the reality at filling stations around the country tells a different story.

Faruk Miah was travelling from Mymensingh's Nandail to Dhaka with his wife and two children on a motorbike yesterday noon.



Motorists flock to Maria Filling Station on Khulna Bypass Road for fuel amid a supply crunch yesterday. PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

"When I started, I bought Tk 200 worth of fuel and hoped to refill the tank on the way. But I've been finding all the pumps shut," he said in the afternoon while waiting for fuel at Molla Filling Station on the Dhaka-Kishoreganj highway in Gazipur's Kapasia.

Yumus Sheikh, a motorcyclist in Bagerhat's Kachua upazila, said, "First I visited two pumps with no luck. Later, I travelled around 11

kilometres and got fuel worth Tk 200 after waiting around one hour."

In Chattogram, motorbikes and cars were seen moving from one pump to another in search of fuel.

"I had to lobby with an influential person to get fuel," said motorcyclist Md Reza while waiting at Kalam & Brothers Filling Station next to the Dhaka-Chattogram highway in North Salimpur, under Sitakunda upazila. Rice trader Shahidar Rahman, 56, from the Chourasta area of Lalmonirhat's Patgram, said, "It's not possible for me to wait in a long queue. So, I've left my motorcycle at home, and I'm now using a battery-run auto-rickshaw."

Ranjan Krishna Pandit, a motorbike rider from Tangail's Kalihati, said,

"The war has also drawn in Lebanon, with Israeli forces aiming to take control of ground up to the Litani River, around 30 kilometres from the border, stepping up their campaign against Iran-backed Hezbollah."

Israeli warplanes pounded Beirut's southern suburbs, a Hezbollah stronghold, again overnight. Israel also said it had struck targets in Tehran as well as a submarine development facility in the central city of Isfahan.

Meanwhile, a new strike in western Iraq killed seven security personnel, the defence ministry said yesterday, a day after a deadly attack on the same base targeted the former paramilitary Hashed al-Shaabi, killing 15 pro-Iranian fighters.

As the fighting showed little sign of respite, Trump claimed that negotiations are ongoing to bring the conflict to an end.

The US president, whose daily statements on the war have swung wildly from threatening to conciliatory, said Washington was "in negotiations right now" with Tehran.

He told reporters in the Oval Office that Iran had given him "a very big present worth a tremendous amount of money", which he said

"Most of the pumps are running out of fuel. If someone is lucky, they can get only Tk 200 worth of fuel after waiting in a very long queue."

In Khulna, many filling stations had little or no fuel. Some put up "No Fuel Available" signs, while others restricted entry.

[Our correspondents from Gazipur, Chattogram, Bagerhat, Lalmonirhat, Tangail and Khulna contributed to this report.]

At least 18 killed as bus plunges into Padma

FROM PAGE 1

Goalanda Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Maruf Hasan said three survivors, including a doctor, received treatment at the facility.

It was unclear until the filing of the report at 2:00am today if any other victim remained missing. Rescue operations were ongoing.

Earlier, quoting a passenger, the fire service said they learned that the bus, from Kushtia's Kumarkhali upazila, was carrying at least 40 passengers, but they could not confirm how many were inside during the accident.

Accounts of how the bus fell into the river were also sketchy, with some eyewitnesses claiming that it started moving after a wheel chock dislodged.

A widely circulated video clip shows the bus rolled over the guard rails of Pontoon-3 and falling into the river.

Survivor Abdul Aziz said the bus was stationary but started rolling all on a sudden. It fell into the river within seconds.

Md Monir Hossain, transport supervisor at the ferry terminal, said the bus arrived at the pontoon shortly after 5:00pm.

At that time, a ferry carrying vehicles departed for Paturia in Manikganj. Unable to board, the bus waited for the next ferry.

"Right before our eyes, the bus fell into the river, but we could do nothing," Monir said, adding that the accident happened around 5:15pm.

How or why the bus fell into the river remained unclear.

Locals rescued some of the survivors while the Fire Service and Civil Defence, army, police, Naval Police, and other agencies joined the efforts later. The fire service said divers from Paturia and Aricha terminals were called in.

Hundreds of onlookers, along with

Survivor Alif, an eight-year-old boy, was on the bus with his mother Josna Begum, 35, as she was returning to her workplace, a garment factory in Savar's Baipail area.

"When the bus was getting onto the ferry, it suddenly started to fall into the Padma. I was sitting on my mother's lap. As the bus was sinking into the water, my mother pushed me

upazila after hearing the news.

"I helped my Josna get on the bus. After I reached home, I was talking to her on the phone. At that time, Josna told me that the bus was falling into the Padma. After that, I couldn't hear anything else," a tearful Saheda said.

Survivor Aziz was travelling with his pregnant wife Nazmira, 32, son Abdur Rahman, 6, and Nazmira's aunt

Nasrin.

Aziz escaped through a window, but the fate of the others could not be known as of midnight.

"I've lost everything. Why have I survived?" Aziz cried.



PHOTO: SUZIT KUMAR DAS

When the bus was getting onto the ferry, it suddenly started to fall into the Padma. I was sitting on my mother's lap. As the bus was sinking into the water, my mother pushed me out through the window. Then I swam up to the river bank. But I still can't find my mother.

Survivor Alif, an eight-year-old boy

relatives of the victims, gathered at the terminal. The family members said most of the victims were returning to Dhaka after spending Eid-ul-Fitr holidays back home.

out through the window. Then I swam up to the river bank. But I still can't find my mother," said the boy.

Josna's mother Saheda Begum, 56, rushed to the spot from her home at Machoghata under Rajbari Sadar

upazila after hearing the news.

"I helped my Josna get on the bus. After I reached home, I was talking to her on the phone. At that time, Josna told me that the bus was falling into the Padma. After that, I couldn't hear anything else," a tearful Saheda said.

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"I've lost everything. Why have I survived?" Aziz cried.

demonstrated that "we're dealing with the right people".

Trump did not elaborate further but said it related to the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran has largely blocked in retaliation for US and Israeli strikes, sending global energy prices soaring.

Several media reported Trump had sent a 15-point plan to Iran via Pakistan, which has offered to mediate a possible end to the war. A senior Iranian source, on condition of anonymity, told Reuters that Pakistan has delivered a US proposal to Iran. The source did not disclose details of the proposal.

Israel's Channel 12 said that, according to the plan, the US and Iran would declare a month-long ceasefire during which they would negotiate on the basis of the proposal.

The plan calls for the end of any uranium enrichment on Iranian soil and the handing over of enriched material, which Israel and the US say could be developed into a nuclear bomb, Channel 12 said.

It said that Iran would also allow unimpeded access through the Strait of Hormuz. Iran in turn would see an end to all sanctions, the Israeli report said.

Iran would also receive assistance in developing civil nuclear energy at Bushehr, a key site that Tehran on Tuesday accused Israel of striking.

The Guardian yesterday reported that the 15-point plan is more or less the same plan the US sent to Iran a year ago, which was rejected by Tehran. That original 15-point plan was the basis for negotiations in late May 2025, shortly before the talks collapsed due to Israeli airstrikes on Iran's nuclear programme.

Since then, sources in Tehran say Iran's negotiating posture has hardened sharply.

In any talks with the US, Iran would not only demand an end to the war but also concessions that are likely red lines for Trump — guarantees against future military action, compensation for wartime losses and formal control of the Strait of Hormuz, the

sources said. Iran would also refuse to negotiate any limitations to its ballistic missile programme, they said.

Amid the US leader's stated hopes for a deal, The Wall Street Journal reported that Washington is planning to send a further 3,000 soldiers to the Middle East.

Reuters also reported that the Pentagon was expected to send thousands of soldiers from the US Army's elite 82nd Airborne Division to the Middle East.

Citing sources, who opted to be anonymous, the report said the Pentagon was set to send between 3,000 and 4,000 soldiers. The US already has about 50,000 troops in the region.

Sources had previously said the US military was looking at options in the Iran war, including securing the Strait of Hormuz, potentially by deploying US forces to Iran's shoreline. The Trump administration has also discussed options to send ground forces to Iran's Kharg Island, the hub for 90 percent of Iran's oil exports.

While Trump recently cited "productive" talks with Iran, public support for the campaign remains low, with a Reuters/Ipsos poll showing 61% of Americans opposing US strikes.

Iran's ambassador to Pakistan, Reza Amiri Moghadam, said that "contrary to Trump's claims — so far no negotiations, direct or indirect, have taken place between the two countries."

As the warring parties traded strikes and war of words, focus remained on the strategic Strait of Hormuz, the key route through which one-fifth of the world's crude oil flows.

Tehran, in a message circulated by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), assured safe passage through the strait to "non-hostile vessels".

However, the IMO cited a statement from Iran's foreign ministry as saying no passage would be granted to vessels belonging to "the aggressor parties — namely the United States and the Israeli regime".

AFP, Washington

The United States has not yet decided how it will resume nuclear testing, a senior official said Tuesday, after President Donald Trump ordered an end to a decades-old moratorium.

Thomas DiNanno, the under secretary of state for arms control and international security, repeated that it would not be an atmospheric test of the sort seen at the start of the nuclear era.

"We are still assessing," DiNanno told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

"We have made no decision specifically on how or what any testing program would look like."

Trump said in October that the United States would resume nuclear testing for the first time since 1992.

Trump later allowed the expiration of New START, the last remaining treaty with Russia that limited deployment of nuclear warheads, as he called for a new agreement that also includes China, whose arsenal is much smaller than those of the other

two powers but quickly growing.

Another senior official, Christopher Yeaw, said last month that renewed US tests would be low-yield to match what the United States alleges China and Russia have secretly carried out.

Asked if the United States could instead carry out a larger detonation, DiNanno said, "I've heard no discussion of any atmospheric testing whatsoever."

China has denied the allegations of secret testing, accusing the United States of creating an excuse to pressure it into a new nuclear agreement.

The US talk of new nuclear testing comes as the United States and Israel attack Iran in part over allegations that the cleric-run state was building a nuclear weapon, a prospect denied by Tehran and which most experts said was not imminent.

The United States is the only country to have used nuclear weapons in war, destroying the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, and Israel has a widely discussed but never officially acknowledged nuclear programme.