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## Dhaka, Delhi plan series of meetings to improve ties

PORIMOL PALMA, from New Delhi

Bangladesh and India are preparing a series of meetings in the coming weeks as they re-engage after relations soured during the interim government that followed the fall of the Awami League.

"We are getting down to reactivating all tools of bilateral relations. Contacts are being made at the ministerial level," Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said during an interaction with a Bangladeshi media delegation at the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi on Monday.

The two countries have over 40 bilateral mechanisms covering different issues, including water, trade, border management, and consular services. Most remained dormant during the interim period, when India also drastically reduced visas for Bangladeshis.

Following the BNP's victory in the February polls, both sides began easing restrictions.

Bangladesh resumed issuing all categories of visas for Indians. India,

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A sudden downpour catches commuters off guard, leaving many stranded in mounting traffic congestion in the capital's Karwan Bazar area last evening.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Govt mulls law against sexual harassment at workplaces

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is considering the enactment of a law to prevent sexual harassment at workplaces.

This issue was discussed during the session related to the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs on the fourth day of the Deputy Commissioners' (DC) Conference yesterday, according to Cabinet Division sources.

The four-day conference began on Sunday at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium in Dhaka.

Yesterday, discussions were held across eight sessions covering 12 ministries and divisions, including the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, the Ministry of Social Welfare, and the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

An official who attended the meeting noted that although the issue of workplace sexual harassment has been highlighted multiple times, no specific laws have been enacted.

Due to the absence of a strong legal framework, many victims remain silent. Consequently, field administrators

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## Govt procuring vaccines on large scale: minister 1.5 million doses of measles-rubella vaccine arrive

The decision to procure vaccines through open tender had been cancelled, and instead the government opted for direct procurement through Unicef, which is being implemented swiftly.



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Husain yesterday said the government is procuring vaccines on a large scale to strengthen the country's immunisation programme.

He made the comment while receiving 1.5 million doses of tetanus and diphtheria (TD) vaccine, supplied through Unicef, at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka.

The vaccines arrived on a regular Qatar Airways flight, said a health ministry press release.

Briefing journalists there, the minister said although the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) had been affected by certain decisions of the previous government, the current administration was giving it the highest priority.

He also said the decision to procure vaccines through open tender had been cancelled, and instead the government opted for direct procurement through Unicef, which is being implemented swiftly.

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IRAQI FIELD IN DHAKA

## A playground in name, market in reality

Makeshift stalls spread across the field, with little room left for kids to play

DIPAN NANDY

The historic Iraqi Field, adjacent to Azimpur New Paltan Lane in Dhaka, which had once been a spacious playground, is now overrun by makeshift markets, depriving children and residents of a vital breathing space in the densely packed city.

At nearly four acres, Iraqi Field is a privately owned land and is not included in the development plans of the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC).

According to locals, the ground once belonged to members of an Iraqi community who lived in the area long ago. As their descendants no longer reside there, the field remains without formal caretakers. Part of it serves as a graveyard,



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON, PALASH KHAN

where members of the Iraqi community were buried in the past. Dhaka's shortage of playgrounds has long been a pressing issue. Experts estimate that the number of usable fields in the capital is only about 5 percent of what is necessary.

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## Form sexual harassment committees in all madrasas Demands MJF

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) yesterday expressed deep outrage and grave concern over the rising incidents of sexual violence against children in madrasas, demanding immediate formation of sexual harassment committees in the institutions.

The rights body's demand follows a harrowing incident in Netrokona's Madan upazila, where an 11-year-old student was allegedly raped and impregnated by her madrasa teacher.

In a statement, MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam said, "Madrasas are educational institutions. There is no reason for these to stay outside the ambit of the High Court ruling."

According to data from Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, 1,028 women and girls were subjected to various forms of violence, including sexual violence, in the first four months of this year. Of them, 479 were girls.

In the Netrokona case, the First Information

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## Bureaucratic delays hinder investment Says Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

LGRD Minister Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said Bangladesh's political situation has improved compared to the past and expressed hope that sustained stability would pave the way for stronger economic growth, increased investment, and job creation.

He was addressing a seminar titled "Cooperation on Markets, Policy, Alignment, Security, and Sovereignty", organised by the Institute of Strategy and Tactics Research at a Dhaka hotel.

Fakhrul, also BNP secretary general, said government initiatives such as family cards, farmer cards and canal excavation programmes have created hope among the people.

However, he identified slow bureaucratic processes

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EID-UL-AZHA

## Advance train tickets go on sale on May 13

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Railway will begin selling advance train tickets on May 13 for passengers travelling home ahead of Eid-ul-Azha, following a decision taken at a high-level meeting at Rail Bhaban on April 30.

Tickets for journeys on May 23 will be available on May 13; tickets for May 24, 25, 26, and 27 will be sold on May 14, 15, 16, and 17, respectively.

Railway officials said ticket sales will start at 8:00am each day.

Each passenger will be permitted to purchase a maximum of four tickets for a single journey.

Passengers will also be allowed to buy tickets only once during the Eid period.

Bangladesh Railway further stated that advance and return tickets issued for the Eid rush will not be refundable. Standing tickets will be sold from station counters on the day of departure.

Officials said the number of standing tickets will be capped at 25 percent of total seat capacity.

Return tickets will be sold under a separate schedule, which will be announced later, officials added.



MEALS FOR GOOD DEEDS... Rickshaws line the street as drivers queue for lunch at "Bhalo Kajer Hotel," which offers low-income people a free meal in exchange for a daily good deed. Launched in December 2019 under Youth for Bangladesh, the initiative continues across several Dhaka neighbourhoods, promoting kindness while supporting livelihoods. The photo was taken at Agargaon yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN