

Turkey FM in Dhaka on two-day visit

UNB, Dhaka



Hakan Fidan

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye Hakan Fidan will meet his Bangladesh counterpart Dr Khalilur Rahman in Dhaka today as the two countries look to expand strategic engagement alongside trade and investment ties.

The Turkish foreign minister is on a two-day visit to Bangladesh at the invitation of the Khalilur, a senior official told the news agency, adding that bilateral issues, including trade, security and regional developments, would be discussed.

Fidan, who arrived in Dhaka last night, will also meet Prime Minister Tarique Rahman and visit the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar.

The visit marks Fidan's first trip to Bangladesh.

He is scheduled to inspect humanitarian assistance projects carried out by the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority, the Turkish Red Crescent, the Turkish Diyanet Foundation and Türkiye's Health Ministry. He will also visit the Turkish Field Hospital operating in the camps.



Failing to notice an unmarked speed breaker in Dhanmondi yesterday, a scooter driver hits it at speed. Unmarked speed breakers pose a serious hazard, as many motorists fail to spot them in time, raising accident risks.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

INDUS WATER TREATY India weaponising water thru two projects: Pakistan

Threatens response if they move ahead

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan said yesterday two river projects by arch-rival India would “weaponise” water and violate a major treaty between the neighbouring nations, threatening a response if they move ahead.

India, which has announced the two initiatives separately this year, insists it is within its rights to press ahead with projects on the waters it controls, even though rivers flowing though both countries would be impacted.

Pakistan's foreign ministry spokesperson Tahir Andrabi told journalists that New Delhi had not consulted Islamabad on the two Chenab River projects that he said would undermine the Indus Water Treaty.

“These projects confirm that India seems to weaponise water,” he said. “This carries dangerous implications not only for Pakistan's economy but also for regional stability and international peace and security.”

India announced last year it was suspending the bilateral Indus Water Treaty that governs the use of waterways relied on by hundreds of millions, in the lead up to armed conflict between the nuclear-armed neighbours. Andrabi, however, said the treaty still binds both governments.

Chain of failures killed the six newborns

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“We will go as far as the law allows us to be strict. This time, no one will be spared,” he said after reading out a summary of the findings of the DGHS probe committee.

Meanwhile, the DGHS yesterday issued a show cause notice to Ad-din Medical College Hospital asking why its licence should not be cancelled over the deaths of the newborns.

The hospital authorities were asked to give reply by 5:00pm of June 7, reads the show cause letter.

Speaking to The Daily Star after the briefing, acting director general of the DGHS Prof Pravat Chandra Biswas said the authorities served the a show-cause to the hospital under the Medical Practice and Private Clinics and Laboratories (Regulation) Ordinance, 1982. Under the law, the authorities have the power to suspend or cancel the hospital's licence, which could result in its operations being suspended.

Contacted, Tariqul Islam Mukul, director of HR and company affairs at Ad-din Foundation, which runs the hospital, said, “We will not make any comment for now.”

Six newborns, aged between one and four days, died between 5:00am and 9:00am on May 27, triggering widespread public outrage and prompting health authorities to shut down the post-operative room and form two investigation committees.

The Health Ministry formed one committee, led by its Joint Secretary Md Mohsin, which submitted its report on Wednesday. Meanwhile, the DGHS formed a three-member committee, led by its Director (Disease Control) Prof Halimur Rashid, as the hospital falls under its direct purview.

A member of the ministry-formed committee said the findings of both reports were largely similar, as two members of the ministry committee also served on the DGHS committee.

The 700-bed medical facility is one of eight hospitals and four medical colleges run by the Ad-din Foundation. The foundation's Executive Director, Sheikh Mohiuddin, who is also the executive director of Ad-din Women Medical College, is the incumbent president of the Bangladesh Private Medical College Association.

WHAT THE FINDINGS SAY

The DGHS probe committee investigated six specific issues to determine the possible causes behind the unnatural deaths of six newborns.

It examined whether the post-operative ward was suitable for post-surgical patients and newborns; whether caesarean-born infants were transferred to special care units or incubators after birth and whether attending physicians had provided any

specific medical advice; and whether any doctor or specialist was on duty in the ward at the time of the incident.

The investigation also looked into the physical condition of the newborns at the time of admission, the roles and actions of doctors, nurses, and other staff in the period leading up to the infants' sudden deterioration, and broader issues related to the hospital's environment and registration status.

According to the probe report, the post-operative room was enclosed on all sides and had no access to natural light or ventilation.

The room could only be accessed through two other rooms. The environment inside was found to be stuffy, while the air-conditioning unit was old and inadequate for the size of the room.

The post-operative ward measured approximately 900 square feet and was equipped with a single five-ton air conditioner.

Due to inadequate light and ventilation in the ward, and because the air conditioner remained switched off from 2:00am to 6:00am, the normal respiratory functions of the newborns may have been disrupted, creating a risk of death, the report states.

“Due to the air conditioner remaining switched off for a prolonged period and the absence of proper ventilation in the room, there was an inadequate oxygen supply, while carbon dioxide levels were higher than normal.”

Additionally, the room was overcrowded with at least 50 people inside, including the six mothers with their newborns, along with other patients and their attendants – far exceeding the room's capacity.

The committee found that all six newborns who died had been delivered through C-section and were physically healthy and normal under doctors' observation after birth.

The report added that there was no duty physician assigned to the patients admitted to the post-operative ward. “Furthermore, from when the babies fell ill till when they reached a critical condition around 6:00am, no doctor was called, nor did any of them come to examine the patients.”

The probe further found that the nurses on duty showed severe negligence and a lack of cooperation, while there was no active emergency medical response despite the sudden deterioration of the newborns' condition. “No responsible action was observed on the part of the hospital authorities, assigned physicians, or nurses.”

The report added that even after repeated calls from guardians, the nurses delayed action without informing any doctor, and no

appropriate or timely medical measures were taken to prevent the deaths.

“The persons in charge of the existing administration were not capable of fulfilling the basic requirements for running a hospital.”

The committee also found a bakery within the hospital premises, which it deemed inappropriate, while the construction of multiple small glass rooms in various parts of the hospital had made the facility appear significantly hazardous. “The hospital's infrastructure was not suitable for operating as a 700-bed hospital.”

When this correspondent asked whether the health authorities bore any responsibility, given their role in identifying such issues and granting or denying the hospital's annual licence renewal, the minister did not give a direct answer.

“The bakery was located on the ninth floor of the building and may have escaped the inspector's notice.”

However, when asked whether an inspector should have identified problems in the post-operative room, a critical section of the hospital, the minister asked how the inspector could have known that the authorities would keep the air conditioner non-functional on that particular day.

The probe committee also recommended that obtaining prior approval from the Department of Environment, following an inspection of the building intended for hospital operations, be made a mandatory condition for issuing new licences to private hospitals.

ACTION BY SUNDAY

At the press briefing, Health Minister Sakhawat said the post-operative room where the incident occurred had already been sealed, but the hospital could not be closed immediately because more than 200 patients were currently admitted there.

“We will review the legal options over the next two days and take a final and stringent decision regarding the hospital by Sunday.”

Responding to a query on whether the incident was being treated as mere professional negligence or a criminal offence, he said, “This is certainly a serious criminal offence, and a case has already been filed in this connection.

“Due to emotional reasons, the families took the bodies of the children without a post-mortem, which the accused may try to use as a legal loophole. However, this is not a hidden incident that happened in the dead of night. We have all the proof. I firmly believe that the honourable court will not grant any leniency to the accused.”

No all-out Iran war unless US troops killed

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yesterday accused the US and Israel of trying to sow “division” among Iranians after suffering a “decisive blow” during the Middle East war.

Khamenei's comment came at a time when Israel and Lebanon agreed to implement a ceasefire to end hostilities, the Trump administration said on Wednesday.

But Israel struck south Lebanon yesterday and threatened new attacks on Beirut. Defence Minister Israel Katz said military operations would continue in south Lebanon.

A United Nations peacekeeper has been killed in Lebanon, the force and Serbian authorities said, after a base was hit in the south. Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said that the agreement was the “last chance” to reach a comprehensive truce.

Hezbollah, however, rejected the ceasefire plan agreed by the Lebanese and Israeli governments in

US-mediated talks, as Israel kept up strikes in southern Lebanon and said it wouldn't be withdrawing from the south.

Meanwhile, the Republican-led US House of Representatives approved a resolution on Wednesday to block President Donald Trump from continuing the war against Iran, reflecting growing concern among members of his party about the three-month-old conflict.

The House voted 215 to 208, as four Republicans voted with Democrats in favour of the war powers resolution, which directs Trump to withdraw US troops from Iran unless Congress declares war or authorizes the use of military force. It was the latest setback for Trump in Congress despite his party's slim majorities in both the House and Senate.

In comments shared by Iran's Tasnim news agency, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Tehran

has made it clear that it “will not remain silent” in the face of an attack on Beirut, according to Al Jazeera.

“Any attack on Beirut will have grave consequences and lead to a full resumption of war,” Araghchi said in an interview with Lebanese news outlet Al Mayadeen.

In a league of their own

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Only six players in history have played in five FIFA World Cups: Lionel Messi (Argentina), Cristiano Ronaldo (Portugal), Lothar Matthaus (Germany), and Mexico's Antonio Carbajal, Rafael Marquez, and Andres Guardado. Messi and Ronaldo will move ahead of the rest and set a new record when they take the field in the upcoming tournament.

Forests long in the grip of grabbers

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Ali told this correspondent that the plot had been in his family's possession for nearly three decades.

When asked if he had any documents, he said he had none.

Tanveer Ahmed, beat officer in Sreepur upazila, said they recently recovered 10 acres out of at least 18 acres of forest illegally occupied by locals in Barmi mouza under the upazila. Around 10,000 saplings of 20 species of plants have already been planted on the recovered land.

Forest department data show that out of about 20,000 acres of forest in the upazila, 4,000 acres remain under illegal occupation.

Grabbing of forest land has been going on in Gazipur for decades. Out of 65,000 acres of forest in the district, 11,900 acres are still illegally occupied by individuals and entities.

Between August 2024 and February 2025, a total of 90 acres of forest were grabbed, and the forest department recovered 35 acres during the tenure of the interim government.

Gazipur has also become a deforestation hotspot, with 60 percent of forests cleared over the past two decades.

This was revealed in a recent study titled “Environmental Condition of Gazipur District: Consequences and Trajectory”.

In 2000, tree coverage in Gazipur

was 98,701 acres, which declined to 39,966 acres by 2023, said the study conducted by the River and Delta Research Center, in collaboration with Bangladesh River Foundation, Prakriti O Jibon Foundation, and Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association.

Not only the forests in Gazipur, but also those across the country are under serious threat.

According to the forest department, Bangladesh has more than 63 lakh acres of forest, covering 15.58 percent of the country's land area. Of this, 2.37 lakh acres are still illegally occupied by individuals and public and private entities despite the recovery of 38,142 acres from grabbers till April 2026.

Amir Hossain Chowdhury, chief conservator of forest (CCF), said the forest department intensified efforts to recover encroached forest lands over the last few years, but the main responsibility lies with deputy commissioners.

“Since 2021, we have sent 17,381 documents to the district administrations concerned to recover 2.37 lakh acres of forest. But we have managed to recover 38,142 acres so far and have taken up afforestation programmes for those areas.”

He further said the process of recovering forest lands gets delayed if grabbers file cases against the department's move. “Then we have to wait till cases are disposed of.”

Ramisa murder verdict Sunday, after 19 days

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proceedings in five hearings, bench assistant Pankoj Peter Gomes told The Daily Star.

Yesterday, the tribunal heard arguments from both the prosecution and the defence.

During the arguments, Special Public Prosecutor Azizur Rahman Dulu told the court that the charges against prime accused Sohel Rana, 31, and his wife and co-accused Swapna Khatun, 26, had been proved beyond reasonable doubt through the testimonies and cross-examination of 16 witnesses. Therefore, both accused deserve the death penalty, he argued.

However, state defence counsel Musa Kalimullah sought a light sentence for the accused.

He said, “The charge sheet was submitted based on the confessional statement. The knife allegedly used in the killing was not subjected to a forensic test. A conviction cannot be handed down solely on that basis.

“The accused, Sohel, gave a confession implicating himself. He was under the influence of drugs at the time of the incident. Taking that

into consideration, we seek a sentence of life imprisonment for him.”

The lawyer further said, “As for Swapna, the testimonies of the 16 witnesses contain nothing against her except the allegation of concealing the body. She should be punished under Section 201 of the Penal Code.”

Section 201 of the Penal Code criminalises concealing or destroying evidence, or providing false information to shield an offender, with penalties of up to seven years' imprisonment and fines, depending on the severity of the underlying crime.

Earlier in the day, the proceedings began at around 11:45am, when the judge took the bench, slightly later than the scheduled 11:30am start after police informed the court that Swapna had fallen ill.

Ramisa, a second-grade student of Popular Model High School, was found beheaded on May 19 in the house of her neighbour, Sohel.

The following day, Ramisa's father, Abdul Hannan Mollah, filed a case with Pallabi Police Station, accusing the couple and an unidentified person.

Higher US tariffs unlikely to improve

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industrial raw materials from places where forced labour is used.

The proposal was announced on Tuesday by the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) following Section 301 investigations launched earlier this year into forced labour enforcement among major US trading partners.

“We examined the issue from the American perspective to understand how they view Bangladesh's labour practices.”

Their assessments have repeatedly highlighted specific concerns over the years, including forced labour in brick kilns, the lack of adequate support and shelter for victims, and weaknesses in labour rights protection, he said.

While geopolitical and political considerations may influence trade decisions, Bangladesh also needs to acknowledge and address genuine labour rights concerns that continue to appear in US government assessments.

“If we had demonstrated stronger

progress on these issues, it would have been easier to argue that the matter was driven solely by political considerations.”

He urged the government to focus on areas within its control, including implementing recommendations on labour rights reforms and fulfilling commitments outlined in its policy agenda.

Although no final decision has been made, visible progress on labour rights would strengthen Bangladesh's position in negotiations.

He called for further discussions with the US to identify practical solutions and explore areas where Washington could support improvements in labour rights.

On the proposed new pay scale for government employees, Mustafizur said there were valid arguments for a revision given that the last pay scale was introduced in 2015 and inflation had eroded public servants' purchasing power.

At the same time, higher salaries should be accompanied by stronger

accountability, improved service delivery and greater institutional efficiency, he said.

Responding to a question on investment, Rahman said political uncertainty had eased following the formation of an elected government, but investors have yet to regain full confidence.

“Businesses appear to be waiting for clearer signals, particularly from the upcoming budget and the government's reform agenda.”

Indicators such as sluggish credit growth and weak imports of capital machinery suggest that private investment remains subdued, he said.

“The government has taken some positive steps, including refinancing initiatives, but private sector confidence remains weak. Restoring that confidence is crucial for growth, jobs and easing inflation.”

Investors would be closely watching the upcoming budget for policy direction and reform commitments before making major investment decisions.