

Yamal-inspired Spain

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Dani Olmo sent the ball back into the mix which the Saudis failed to clear and Aymeric Laporte nodded down to Oyarzabal who bundled the ball into the net.

Three minutes later, Spain were in again with a beautifully worked goal. Pedro Porro floated a pass into the area and the ball never touched the ground until it found the net.

Marc Cucurella's hooked pass found Olmo who headed into the six-yard box for Oyarzabal to tap-in on the volley, as the striker proved that given the right service, he is Spain's man to deliver.

Spain replaced Yamal and Oyarzabal for the second half, but picked up where they left off when the Saudi goalkeeper blocked Cucurella's volley from a corner and the ball ricocheted off defender Hassan Altambakti and into the net.

The European champions continued to create chances, but understandably took their foot off the gas on a day when even Vozinha, Cape Verde's 40-year-old hero keeper, would have struggled against this version of Spain, who look back to their best.

Spain advance to four points in the standings while Saudi Arabia stay on one after two games each.

'Starmer thinking about quitting'

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timetable for his departure to clear the way for the former Greater Manchester mayor.

A source with knowledge of the matter said Starmer was spending the weekend thinking about and discussing his position with his family but that an expected conversation with Burnham would clarify matters.

"Keir likes to think about things," the source said.

Adding to the pressure on Starmer, US President Donald Trump predicted on his Truth Social platform that "Keir Starmer will resign as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom".

Trump then repeated his view that Starmer had "failed badly" on cutting immigration and boosting North Sea oil output.

Starmer's unpopularity was laid bare by Labour's heavy losses in local elections in May, and polls of party members indicate Burnham would win a formal leadership contest.

Should Burnham take the helm, he would become Britain's seventh prime minister in the past 10 years.

Sky News reported that it understood foreign minister Yvette Cooper had called on Starmer to stand

down in a private conversation over the weekend. Her spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Her apparent appeal, alongside other ministers and dozens of lawmakers, increased the sense that it is now a case of when, rather than if, Starmer would step aside.

Starmer said only a few days ago that he would stand in any formal Labour leadership contest that sought to replace him.

While Starmer's team believes his landslide national election win in 2024 gives him the mandate to stay in post until 2029, business minister Peter Kyle said the prime minister was reflecting on "the political challenges that he faces in this moment".

Kyle said he had spoken to Starmer on Friday and had found a man who was questioning what "the country expected of him". The conversation showed Starmer was in "very difficult circumstances", the business minister said.

"So I'm not going to deny the political challenges that he faces in this moment, but what I'm also not going to do is say there is ever anything inevitable about the days ahead," Kyle told LBC radio.

Entrepreneur, ex-MP

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The Daily Star could not reach her family members.

Ridma Khan, a director on the BWCCI board, said she breathed her last around 6:30pm yesterday.

Selima's body would be brought home tomorrow, said Ashraful Haq Chowdhury, president of the Saudi Arabia-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Chowdhury is a venture partner of Nitol-Niloy Group Chairman Abdul Matlub Ahmad in Star Infrastructure Development Consortium Ltd.

In a condolence message, the BWCCI said her passing is an immeasurable loss to her family, friends, colleagues, and the wider business community.

"She was hailed as a visionary entrepreneur and pioneering advocate for women's economic empowerment in Bangladesh," it said.

"Her leadership and dedication touched countless lives, leaving a legacy of compassion and empowerment that reshaped opportunities for women in business across the country," the BWCCI said.

Selima, also a former lawmaker, founded the BWCCI in 2001.

The trade body was established at a time when women-owned businesses faced significant barriers in accessing finance, training, markets, and institutional support.

Under her leadership, BWCCI grew into a leading platform for women entrepreneurs, working with policymakers, financial institutions, and development partners to address challenges faced by women in business.

She helped promote the development of more than 7,000 women entrepreneurs by planning, designing, and facilitating different programmes, according to the BWCCI website.

Selima developed 600 grassroots women through training and access to information to ensure their active and increased participation in socio-economic and civic life and to broaden opportunities for women's social networks, it said.

Among her notable honours was the Oslo Business for Peace Award in 2014. She is survived by her spouse, two sons, six grandchildren, and numerous relatives.

Diplomatic flurry fuels speculations

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focused on economic and strategic interests.

"This is a pragmatic decision by the BNP government and reflects its 'Bangladesh First' policy," said Amena Mohsin, former professor of international relations at Dhaka University.

Prof Lailufar Yasmin of the same department described the move as a "strategic disruption," noting that Malaysia comes first, then China, not India.

"I would call it prioritising national interest instead of focusing on who invited the prime minister first," she added.

Analysts say Bangladesh's foreign policy debate is often framed through simplistic binaries such as India versus China or the US versus China.

"I think the BNP government is trying to break that binary," Amena Mohsin said.

The geopolitical significance of the China visit became more visible after four diplomats – US Ambassador Brent T Christensen, British High Commissioner Sarah Cooke, Japanese Ambassador Saïda Shinichi and Swedish Ambassador Nicholas Weeks – met Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman on Saturday, a weekly holiday, just before Tarique's departure.

While officials described the meetings as routine, the timing fuelled speculation that Western countries and Japan, a key US ally, were signalling concerns ahead of the China trip.

"It is a complex geopolitical world order," said Amena Mohsin, now an adjunct faculty member at North South University.

"The US, China, India and even Japan all want influence in South

Asia. It is possible they expressed their own concerns and interests ahead of the China visit."

Prof Lailufar added that Bangladesh's strategic importance in the Indo-Pacific has grown significantly. "The diplomats' meetings with the foreign minister reflect that reality."

Analysts noted overlapping issues with China's interests in Bangladesh, including US calls for stronger maritime and security cooperation, while Bangladesh remains reliant on Chinese defence supplies.

Officials also said Dhaka is expected to discuss Chinese funding for the Teesta River Management Project during the visit, an issue long considered sensitive by India.

Given the complex regional environment, analysts argue Bangladesh needs broader political consensus on projects with geopolitical implications.

"In sensitive projects like Teesta, Bangladesh should proceed carefully and build national consensus," Prof Lailufar said.

Amena Mohsin stressed that Bangladesh's ability to navigate external pressures ultimately depends on domestic governance. "You cannot handle external challenges unless you first fix your own home."

The choice of Malaysia and China closely aligns with Bangladesh's immediate economic priorities.

Malaysia remains one of the largest destinations for Bangladeshi migrant workers at a time when overseas employment opportunities are shrinking. Kuala Lumpur suspended intake of foreign workers from June 2024, and opening the market and ensuring migrants' welfare would be priorities in Malaysia.

Trump blames 'terrible vandals' for Washington pool renovation woes

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump said on Saturday "terrible vandals" had sabotaged his renovation project of the Reflecting Pool in Washington, which will have to be revamped again, as it was blighted with algae and peeling paint.

Trump has championed a makeover for the 610-meter-long pool, bringing in contractors to drain it and paint it "American flag blue."

But not long after the job was complete, the paint began to visibly peel, and the gleaming waters promptly refilled with green pond scum.

As workers scrambled to pump out murky water and dumped hydrogen peroxide into the pool, Trump took no responsibility for what many observers chalked up to shoddy workmanship.

BNP MP's son

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instructions from higher authorities, he was taken into custody from his house. He cooperated with us and was brought to the SP office for questioning," said the police official.

After more than an hour of interrogation at the SP office, Sajib was handed over to DMP DB on instructions from higher authorities.

A senior Narayanganj district police official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told The Daily Star that allegations of extortion against Sajib began surfacing after the BNP came to power.

Recently, Sajib allegedly demanded money from the owner of one of the country's largest industrial conglomerates. Following the incident, the business group lodged a complaint with the home ministry, the official said.

Acting on instructions from higher authorities, law enforcers took him into custody and questioned him over specific allegations of extortion.

The official said although no case had been filed against Sajib yet, the process was underway.

Renaming of Kolkata road

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argue the new name honours Gopal Mukherjee, popularly known as Gopal Patha, remembered by Hindu nationalist groups for organising resistance during the 1946 riots. BJP leaders welcomed the move, saying Bengal's history has been presented selectively and figures like Mukherjee deserve recognition.

Critics, however, say replacing the name of a respected academic with that of a politically charged figure reflects a broader effort to reshape public memory along ideological lines. They argue Hassan Suhrawardy's contributions to education and medicine are being erased, echoing a wider national trend of renaming landmarks to reinterpret history.

China, meanwhile, remains Bangladesh's largest trading partner and one of its most important potential sources of investment, infrastructure financing and technology transfer.

With youth employment emerging as a major domestic challenge, Dhaka sees Chinese investment as critical for industrial expansion and job creation.

China has maintained active engagement with Bangladesh's major political forces since the Hasina regime was ousted, while bilateral trade between the two countries now exceeds \$24 billion annually.

Beijing also remains a major source of infrastructure financing and military hardware for Bangladesh, although Dhaka has diversified defence procurement in recent years.

At the same time, analysts caution against interpreting the China visit as a diplomatic shift away from India, even though the relations between Dhaka and New Delhi became strained after the fall of the Awami League government.

Despite the political tensions, India remains one of Bangladesh's most important economic partners, with annual bilateral trade standing at around \$12 billion and the largest destination for Bangladeshis seeking medical treatment.

Prime Minister's Foreign Affairs Adviser Humaiun Kobir said the government wants good relations with all countries and that a visit to India would take place "when the time is conducive".

"We are a government elected with the people's mandate. Our priority is national interest. We will decide where to visit based on our own priorities, not at the dictate of others," he told reporters at the foreign ministry on Saturday.



Health workers wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) carry the coffin of a person who is suspected to have died from Ebola for burial at the Kigonze displaced persons camp, one month after an Ebola outbreak was declared, in Bunia, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Ziaul Ahsan orchestrated killings

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Tongi and stopped near a level crossing surrounded by trees and bushes. "When I put my hand in to remove the sack, I noticed that it was not a sack but a body, and it was cold," Imrul testified.

Shaken, he said they carried the body beside the railway track, after which Ziaul and others placed it directly on the line. A train soon passed over it.

"I was not myself for five to seven days ... I could not eat properly."

Imrul is the fifth prosecution witness in the case against Ziaul, who stands accused of orchestrating the enforced disappearance and murder of 104 people between 2010 and 2013.

While Imrul was giving his deposition, Ziaul, who was in the dock, smiled at times. He stood up once and told the tribunal that the chief prosecutor was encouraging the witness and requested that the witness be allowed to give his natural statement, otherwise it would be an injustice to him. The tribunal asked him to speak through his lawyer.

Imrul said he served as the former Rab Intelligence Wing chief's bodyguard for about one year and four months between 2010 and 2012.

He said he accompanied Ziaul to numerous locations, including military and intelligence offices, government establishments, and the residences of influential individuals.

He claimed Ziaul maintained close ties with then prime minister Sheikh Hasina's security adviser Maj Gen (retired) Tarique Ahmed Siddique and frequented the residences of senior Awami League leaders.

Imrul also referred to events surrounding the disappearance of BNP leader Ilias Ali in April 2012.

He testified that on April 13 that year, he travelled in a microbus with Ziaul, Major Naushad and Squadron Leader Saif near Mohakhali Flyover while waiting for a "target" whose arrival they were monitoring via phone calls.

The operation was eventually called off and Imrul went on leave the next

day.

While on leave, he learned through media reports that Ilias Ali had disappeared from the Mohakhali area. Upon returning to duty on April 23, he noticed what he described as a tense atmosphere at Rab headquarters.

According to his testimony, fellow personnel told him that Ziaul had destroyed armoury records and CCTV footage.

ICT Chief Prosecutor Aminul Islam later clarified to the media that Ziaul did so to erase evidence as Ilias Ali was taken inside the Rab headquarters and later taken out of there.

Imrul further claimed that during a phone conversation he overheard, Ziaul told Tarique Siddique, "Sir, as per your instructions, I have done 'golf' with Ilias."

The chief prosecutor later said that "golf" meant dumping Ilias Ali.

The witness said he did not know the full context of the conversation but heard Ziaul complain about his situation and suggest that he would rather be transferred to a remote place.

While describing another incident, the witness said he went on to the Sundarbans with Ziaul several times. He said in one such visit with Ziaul and Rab-8, he heard gunfire after their boat stopped.

"Ziaul sir, then Rab ADG Ops Mujib sir, Commander Sohail sir, and members of media were present. We proceeded further into the forest and saw two-three bodies lying there with gunshot wounds. This operation appeared to me to be a staged operation," he added.

Imrul went on to describe another alleged killing involving two detainees taken from a Rab-4 safe house.

After travelling for about half an hour, the vehicles stopped at a location he identified as "Tin Matha Mor".

There, he said, one of the detainees was taken out of a vehicle. The man's hands and eyes were tied with a towel.

According to Imrul, Ziaul pointed a pistol at the detainee's head and shot him dead.

The witness claimed that the victim's hair caught fire after the

gunshot and that those present laughed. He said they were later instructed to remove the towel.

A week or two later, he said, he was ordered to board another microbus carrying two detainees. The vehicle travelled through Tongi before stopping on the Kanchpur Bridge.

Imrul testified that he watched Ziaul take one detainee from the vehicle and shoot him twice in the head before dumping the body into the river below.

He also alleged that Major Naushad carried out the killing of the second detainee in the same manner.

The witness also described several trips to Barishal with Ziaul and members of Rab-8.

According to his testimony, detainees were taken by boat from the Char Duani Bazar area of Patharghata into the Baleshwar river near its estuary.

"There were times when two people were killed, sometimes three, sometimes four," Imrul said.

He alleged that the victims were shot, cement sacks were tied to their bodies, and they were thrown into the river. Before the bodies were disposed of, he claimed, their stomachs were cut open with a commando knife.

Imrul further testified that detainees brought from Rab-1's TFI cell were killed using various methods, including gunshots and injections.

Referring to the nationwide "Operation Rebel Hunt" launched after the 2009 BDR mutiny, he alleged that Ziaul told him eight to 10 fugitive BDR members had been killed because they had murdered army officers. According to the witness, some victims were allegedly killed by injection, while others were shot in the head and dumped into rivers.

Apart from the incidents he described in detail, he alleged that another 10 to 12 people were killed through injections administered either inside the TFI cell or inside vehicles.

At the end of his testimony, the serving warrant officer appealed for his protection.

War of words as talks

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The talks to end the months-long conflict are taking place against the backdrop of Iran closing the strategic Strait of Hormuz again in response to recent Israeli attacks on Lebanon.

"It is not possible to enter the negotiation phase for a final agreement" unless there is an end to the war in Lebanon, foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei wrote on X.

Washington and Tehran's memorandum of understanding signed this week included a provision to end fighting in Lebanon between Israel and Hezbollah.

But there have been repeated clashes in Lebanon since, which prompted Iran to say it would again shutter the crucial oil and gas trade route, having opened it as part of the deal.

By yesterday evening, however, there had been no reports of Israeli

strikes or continued fighting, with some residents of southern Lebanon cautiously trickling back to their homes.

Lebanon aside, there has been no indication that Iran's support for armed groups across the region, which has long drawn the ire of the US and Israel, will be addressed in the negotiations. Speaking yesterday, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said Tehran would not relinquish its right to enrich uranium, though he repeated Iran's denial that it wants nuclear weapons.

"We can also state in writing that we have no intention of building a bomb," he said on the presidential website.

Baghaei, meanwhile, said the unfreezing of Iranian assets and "issuing the necessary licences for the sale of Iranian oil will also be on the agenda".

Short-term floods feared in Sylhet, north

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222mm in Cooch Behar and 143mm in Jalpaiguri, while Pisaghat in Arunachal Pradesh recorded 117mm.

In Bangladesh, Teknal recorded 121mm of rainfall, followed by Laurergarh in Sunamganj with 87mm, Jallong with 75mm, Panchagarh with 58mm, Dalia in Nilphamari with 50mm, and Sunamganj town with 42mm.

The FFWC said water levels in the Surma and Kushiyara rose over the last 24 hours and may continue to rise over the next three days. The rivers may flow above danger levels in Sylhet and Sunamganj, inundating adjacent low-lying areas.

In the north, water levels in the Teesta, Dharla and Dudhkumar rivers have also risen and are likely to continue increasing over the next three days. The rivers may cross danger levels in Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram and Rangpur, causing short-term flooding in nearby low-lying areas.

Although the country's major rivers are currently flowing below danger levels, several have reached or are approaching warning levels.

These include the Surma at Kanaighat in Sylhet and at Kshatak and Sunamganj Sadar, the Kshiyara at Fenchuganj in Sylhet, the Someshwari at Kalmakanda in

Netrokona, and the Teesta at Dalia.

FFWC Executive Engineer Sardar Uday Raihan told The Daily Star that runoff from the heavy rainfall in Meghalaya was flowing into Bangladesh through Sylhet and Sunamganj.

"Water has already started entering the haor areas," he said.

He said heavy to extremely heavy rainfall is likely in the Rangpur region over the next three days. This could push the Teesta, Dharla and Dudhkumar above danger levels and cause short-term flooding in low-lying areas, he said.

[Our correspondents in Sylhet and Bogura contributed to this report.]