

Bangladesh presses Pakistan on 1971 war apology during Ishaq Dar’s Dhaka visit

DHAKA, AUG 24

Bangladesh on Sunday raised pending issues, including an apology for the 1971 war, with Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, who is the most senior leader from his country to visit Dhaka since 2012.

Dar, who arrived in Dhaka on Saturday on a two-day visit aimed at rebuilding ties with Bangladesh following the ouster of longtime prime minister Sheikh Hasina, held talks with the interim government’s Foreign Adviser M Touhid Hossain.

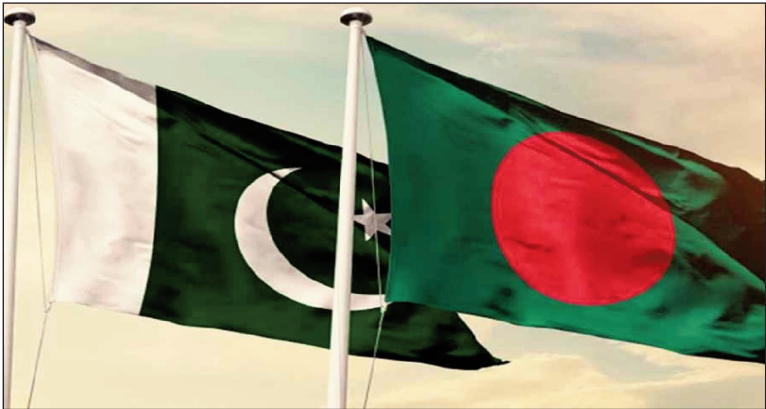
“We have raised unresolved issues such as an apology or expression of regret for 1971, claims over assets, and the matter of stranded Pakistani citizens (with Dar),” Hossain told reporters after talks with Dar.

It would be wrong to expect problems of 54 years to be solved in a single day, he said.

“Both countries have presented their respective positions on these issues,” the foreign adviser said at a press conference.

Dar, who is also the deputy prime minister, said the unsettled issues over 1971 were resolved twice -- first in 1974 in tri-partite talks involving New Delhi in India.

“Later, the then president Pervez Musharraf settled the issues of genocide again during his Dhaka visit when he talked in



public with an open mind,” Dar added.

One agreement and five memorandums of understanding (MoUs) were signed between the two countries, the Bangladeshi foreign adviser said.

Hossain said both countries have agreed that to move bilateral relations forward, historical issues must be resolved through discussion.

This is not the first time that Dhaka has raised the pending 1971 issues with Pakistan. In April, in the first foreign secretary-level talks in 15 years, Bangladesh had asked Pakistan to resolve unsettled historical issues and settle pre-independence asset sharing. Dhaka also demanded a formal apology for the genocide of the 1971 Liberation War.

Bangladesh-Pakistan ties were at their lowest ebb during Hasina’s Awami League regime, particularly when it initiated in 2010 the trial of collaborators of Pakistani troops during the 1971 Liberation War.

A violent student-led street movement toppled Hasina’s government on August 5, 2024, with Yunus taking over as the chief adviser of the interim government three days after she left Bangladesh for India.

The development paved the way for revitalising ties with Islamabad in the past year when relations between Dhaka and New Delhi turned icy, while India was previously seen as Bangladesh’s closest strategic and economic partner under Hasina’s rule.

Hina Rabbani Khar was the last Pakistani foreign minister to visit Dhaka in November 2012 to invite Hasina to a summit in Islamabad.

On Sunday, at a foreign minister-level meeting, Bangladesh and Pakistan reiterated their pledges to further strengthen the existing multidimensional and historical bilateral relations based on mutual respect, understanding and cooperation, state-run news agency Bangladesh Sangbad

Sangstha (BSS) said.

During the meeting, the two sides stressed strengthening trade relations and expanding investment, as yearly turnover between the countries is below USD 1 billion, Hossain told the press conference.

The foreign adviser said Bangladesh sought access to Pakistan markets under the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) in textiles, energy, medicine industry, agriculture, fisheries, livestock and information technology sectors, while Pakistan talked about exporting energy to Bangladesh, the BSS quoted Hossain as saying.

On Saturday, Dar held back-to-back talks with leaders of various political parties of Bangladesh to boost bilateral ties.

Dar met with the leaders of former prime minister Khaleda Zia’s Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the country’s largest Islamist party, the Jamaat-e-Islami, at the Pakistan Embassy in Dhaka. He also met with the leaders of the student-led National Citizen Party (NCP).

Abdullah Muhammad Taher, leader of Jamaat-e-Islami, which was opposed to Bangladesh’s 1971 independence from Pakistan, and Akhtar Hossain, a senior NCP leader, both said they wanted Pakistan to address the pending 1971 issues for enhancement in bilateral ties.

Vietnam plans mass evacuation, China's Sanya shuts as Typhoon Kajiki intensifies

NEW DELHI, AUG 24

Vietnam plans to evacuate more than half a million people and has ordered boats to stay ashore, while the southern Chinese city of Sanya closed businesses and public transport on Sunday as the two countries braced for an intensifying Typhoon Kajiki.

The storm could make landfall along the southern coast of China’s southern island province of Hainan from Sunday afternoon to evening, or skirt the southern coastline before heading toward Vietnam, China’s National Meteorological Center said.

The storm, packing winds of up to 149 kph (93 mph), was about 500 km (300 miles) off Vietnam’s central coast at 0600 GMT, moving west at 20 kph, according to Vietnam’s national weather forecast agency.

It is likely to strengthen with wind speeds as high as 170 kph (110 mph), China’s weather forecaster said.

Authorities in Vietnam plan to evacuate more than 586,000 people from the central provinces of Thanh Hoa, Quang Tri, Hue and Danang, where the typhoon is forecast to



make landfall early on Monday, state media reported. Seven coastal provinces in the Southeast Asian nation banned boats from leaving shore early on Sunday, Tien Phong newspaper reported.

Flag carrier Vietnam Airlines cancelled at least 22 flights to and from central cities on Sunday and Monday. Vietjet Aviation said it was cancelling or delaying flights but did not provide details.

China’s Sanya, renowned for seafront resorts and sandy beaches, closed tourist attractions, shuttered businesses and suspended public transport.

'W O R S T - C A S E SCENARIOS'

China’s weather agency forecast heavy rainfall and strong winds in Hainan and nearby Guangdong province and Guangxi region, with areas in Hainan set to receive as much as 400 mm (1.7

inches) of precipitation. Sanya issued a red typhoon alert on Sunday morning - the highest in China’s colour-coded warning system - and raised its emergency response to the most severe level, according to posts on the local government’s WeChat account.

City officials convened a meeting on Saturday evening, urging preparation for "worst-case scenarios" and stressing the need for heightened vigilance to ensure no fatalities and minimal injuries, the government said.

All classes and construction are suspended, and shopping centres, restaurants and supermarkets are closed from Sunday. Vessels have been ordered to cease operating in Sanya’s waters.

Officials said the lifting of restrictions would depend on the storm’s impact.

Erik and Lyle Menendez denied parole: How Netflix’s ‘The Menendez Brothers’ reexamines the case

UNITED STATE, AUG 24

For more than three decades, Erik and Lyle Menendez have been locked away for the murder of their parents in Beverly Hills. This week, both brothers returned to the headlines because California’s parole board once again told them they won’t be leaving San Diego’s RJ Donovan Correctional Facility anytime soon.

The denial comes months after renewed interest among Americans in the Menendez trials, thanks to the release of Netflix’s documentary The Menendez Brothers that revisits one of America’s most sensational cases for a generation born after the verdict was delivered in the mid-1990s.

The two brothers — Erik, now 54, and Lyle, 57 — never denied pulling the triggers on August 20, 1989. Their father, Jose, was a Hollywood music executive; their mother, Kitty, a homemaker.

Prosecutors built their case on greed, arguing the killings were motivated by the lure of a \$14 million inheritance. The defence insisted otherwise: that years of sexual and emotional abuse left the young men cornered, terrified, and desperate.

The Netflix film begins with Lyle’s frantic call to 911 reporting that his parents had been killed. For months, the brothers played the role of grieving sons. In interviews for the documentary, they admit surprise at not being suspects sooner.

"The gunpowder residue was all over our hands... There were gun shells in my car," Erik recalls. "If they



would have just pressed me, I wouldn’t have been able to withstand any questioning.”

They were arrested seven months later.

“Like so many of the emotions in that time of my life, it doesn’t make a lot of sense,” Lyle says in the film. “But the secret was a huge weight.”

What drew suspicion to the brothers was the spike in their spending. A Porsche, three Rolex watches, a \$50,000-a-year tennis coach — prosecutors cited this as proof of motive.

But the brothers call it a diversion to numb grief. “The idea that I was having a good time is absurd,” Erik says on tape. Lyle, too, insists the playboy act hid endless sobbing and sleepless nights. The most disturbing parts in the documentary are the real-life trial footage. Both brothers break down describing the abuse they endured. Erik explains how spending time alone with his father often led to various sexual acts. Lyle, too, says he was coerced into intimate acts.

The brothers say they remained silent, unwilling to tarnish their father’s reputation. “Telling sick secrets of the family would be like killing my parents again,” Erik says in the docu, adding that one of the things that kept him from suicide was the fear of failing his father.

The brothers are now

housed in the Donovan prison, but live separate lives. Erik paints. Lyle tutors other inmates. Both cling to scraps of evidence they believe vindicate their version of events: a letter Erik wrote to a cousin in 1989 describing his terror of Jose, discovered years later. He also mentions a 2023 affidavit from a former Menudo band member, Roy Rosselló, alleging sexual abuse by Jose Menendez.

But courts have little appetite for reopening the case. As journalist Robert Rand points out in the documentary, “Half the witnesses are dead or they have dementia. And do the taxpayers of LA County really want to spend millions to retry Erik and Lyle Menendez?”

What the Netflix film captures a sense that the public conversation has moved. “For the first time I feel like it’s a conversation where people now can understand and believe,” Lyle says in the documentary. The parole board is unmoved. On August 21, Erik Menendez’s plea for release was denied. Commissioners pointed to drug use, contraband phones, and alleged involvement in a prison scam as proof he hadn’t shown rehabilitation. Robert Barton, one of the board members, went further, saying Erik still lacked empathy.

Trump’s redistricting drive may cement Republican dominance in US House for decades

UNITED STATE, AUG 24

President Donald Trump’s push for Republican-led states to redraw their US House of Representatives districts to protect their majority in next year’s midterm elections could set the stage for Republicans to dominate the chamber in decades to come, political analysts and experts said.

Republicans hold a 219-212 House majority and Trump is looking to break the streak of midterm House losses for the sitting president’s party -- as happened to him in 2018 and to Democratic President Joe Biden in 2022 -- by pushing states starting with Texas to aggressively redistrict.

Democratic states, led by California, have threatened to retaliate by redrawing their own districts for partisan gain, a longstanding feature of US politics known as gerrymandering that has grown far more potent thanks to modern data analysis tools.

But Republicans hold the advantage, with control of the state legislatures and governorships of 23 states, compared with 15 for Democrats.

Further, independent analysts say, population shifts could create as many as 11 new congressional seats in Republican Southern and Western states after the 2030 U.S. Census.

Democrats enjoyed 40 years of unbroken House control beginning in 1955 and ending in 1995 as conservative Southern Democrats defected to the Republican Party in earnest.

The current redistricting battle has raised concerns about a new era of gerrymandering, with Republicans and Democrats jockeying for advantage and further dividing an already polarized nation.

"I feel like it's cheating," said Adam Kinzinger, a Trump critic and former Republican congressman who lost his



Illinois seat to redistricting after the 2020 census. "Every time we break a norm in politics now, that norm never comes back. It'll be an avalanche of constant redistricting. I worry about that."

The Republican-controlled Texas state legislature last week passed a new map meant to provide five more Republican seats. The Democratic-led California legislature responded by proposing a map that would give Democrats five more seats, though the state’s voters will have to approve that move in a November special election.

A Reuters/Ipsos poll this month found that most Americans oppose partisan gerrymandering, to the degree that many worry about American democracy itself being in jeopardy.

Few competitive seats

Nonpartisan election analysts currently rate just three dozen of the nation’s 435 House districts as competitive in the 2026 midterm elections, pushing the real contests to party primaries that select more partisan lawmakers less interested in compromise.

"That would be another way of saying that the will of the voters is not being reflected in the outcome of the election," said Thomas Kahn, acting director of the Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies at American University.

"If Republicans build institutional advantages, whether through fundraising ... or through gerrymandering, then essentially they will be creating

a lock on the House. And I don't think that's good for democracy," he added.

Democratic strongholds including New York and California are already losing population to Florida, Texas, Idaho and other Republican-led states, a trend that many Republicans view as an endorsement of their party’s policies. "A lot of the voters who are moving from California - the Bay Area - to Austin or Dallas or Boise, Idaho, are the more conservative-leaning folks who want to live in a red state for a variety of reasons: cost of living, laws and regulations, how the state’s run, business environment, stuff like that," said Will Kiley, spokesman for the National Republican Congressional Committee, the campaign arm of the House Republicans.

The Reuters/Ipsos poll found that 21% of Republicans and 14% of Democrats have considered moving to a different state where taxes are lower.

The U.S. Census data that underlies redistricting expectations shows that nearly all of the population growth in states such as Texas and Florida since 2020 has occurred in minority communities.

In Texas, which is expected to pick up three to four House seats after 2030 according to party redistricting committees, nearly 97% of newcomers are Hispanic, Black or Asian. In Florida, which could add two to four seats, the same groups account for more than three-

quarters of the growth, U.S. Census data shows.

"What we know to be true is that growth is almost completely within communities of color. And those are the very communities that these changes are attempting to curtail," said Kareem Crayton, vice president at New York University’s nonpartisan Brennan Center for Justice.

Minority voters have shifted toward Republicans in recent elections. Trump won the national Hispanic vote 51%-46% last November, a 14 percentage-point improvement from his 2020 performance.

The new congressional map unveiled by Texas Republicans at Trump’s behest appears to cater to Hispanic voters. But Democrats say Republicans have eroded the group’s electoral power in some Hispanic-majority districts by minimizing the number of voting-age Latinos and adding high-turnout white conservative communities.

Partisan rancor in Congress has intensified since Trump began his second term in January, driving out moderate Republicans including Representative Don Bacon, who drew Trump’s ire after disagreeing with the administration over proposed funding cuts and security gaps at the Pentagon. Wisconsin Republican Mike Gallagher, once seen as a rising Republican star, left office in early 2024 after a firestorm of criticism for opposing the impeachment of former Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.

"We have major issues to solve. We're not solving them," said former Representative John Duarte, who was rated the least conservative House Republican by Heritage Action for America before losing his California seat to Democrat Adam Gray last year. "We can do a lot. But right now, everyone's running away from the ball."