



WE RECOMMEND



Son of founder of modern Singapore says he is now a...



Ex-Malaysian PM Mahathir hospitalized with...



Zelenskyy says North Koreans fighting with...



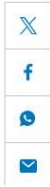
China vows 'countermeasures' after...

Recommended by @Outbrain

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

EU delays talks with Bangladesh on pact after Dhaka's response to protests

Dhaka says negotiations on trade and economic deal moved to November after U.N. assembly



Protesters clash with authorities outside the state-owned Bangladesh Television in Dhaka on July 19 as violence erupts nationwide after anti-quota protests by students. © Reuters

July 31, 2024 22:10 JST

NEW DELHI/DHAKA (Reuters) -- The European Union said on Wednesday it postponed negotiations with Bangladesh on a new cooperation agreement after criticism of Dhaka's response to contain deadly protests that killed at least 150 people in July.

The cooperation pact seeks to enhance trade, economic and developmental relations between Bangladesh and the EU, which is the main trading partner for the South Asian country, accounting for 20.7% of Bangladesh's trade in 2023.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell last week criticized a reported "shoot on sight policy" in Bangladesh, killings "perpetrated by the authorities" as well as killings of law enforcement officers, mass arrests and damage to property.

Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government has denied any live rounds were fired, but hospital sources said the injured as well as dead bore wounds from bullets and shotgun pellets.

"In light of the prevailing situation, the first round of negotiations on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement envisaged for September has been postponed with no later date fixed as yet," Nabila Massrali, the EU's foreign affairs spokesperson, said in an email to Reuters.

Bangladesh, however, said the talks had been delayed to November as they clashed with the United Nations General Assembly session that begins on Sept. 10. The EU did not immediately comment on Bangladesh's response.

"This delay was due to the U.N. General Assembly and was decided well before the recent violence," said Uttam Kumar Karmaker, an additional secretary at the Economic Relations Division of Bangladesh's Finance Ministry.

A delay in talks could affect EU support for Bangladesh at a time when it is grappling with economic struggles, soaring inflation, high youth unemployment and dipping foreign exchange reserves.

The high cost of living sparked deadly demonstrations ahead of January's national elections, in which Hasina won a fourth straight term in a vote boycotted by the main opposition party.

The recent protests led by students were against controversial quotas in government jobs and quickly spiraled into violence, killing 150 people, injuring thousands and shutting the country for days as a curfew was imposed, the army called out and telecoms disrupted.

The restrictions were eased last week as students stonned the protests after the Supreme

ASIA WEBINAR SERIES UNDERCURRENT From the Fab to the Future NOVEMBER 12, 2024 REGISTER Organized by NIKKEI JAPAN GOV.