

GREECE WILDFIRES

Firefighters battle blazes on multiple fronts

Thick black smoke fills sky in Athens

AFP, Athens

Greek firefighters yesterday struggled to contain uncontrolled fires throughout the country for a fifth day, several of them bordering an acrid, smoke-filled Athens.

A fire ripped through foothills of Mount Parnitha, the largest forest adjoining the capital, and was threatening to spread to its national park.

Evacuations were ordered yesterday morning for three more settlements in the suburb Menidi, including three nursing homes.



The blaze has reached the first houses in Menidi, which is also close to a military camp. Fires have already destroyed homes and properties in the nearby suburbs of Hasia and Fyli.

A migrants detention centre in Amygdaleza, north of Athens, was also evacuated. The Greek capital woke up yesterday to the smell of scorched earth and thick black smoke covering the sky.

“Unfortunately, the wind does not help at all,” Stathis Topalidis, deputy mayor of Menidi told state TV ERT.

Another big blaze was still raging at a landfill in the industrial zone of Aspropyrgos, west of Athens.

One neighbourhood was evacuated yesterday morning. Flames continued to spread unchecked for a fifth day in the northeastern region of Evros, close to the Turkish border in Alexandroupolis and the Dadia forest, and home to rare birds of prey.

More evacuations were ordered in the region overnight. Unfounded rumours and allegations have also been spreading rapidly on social media that blame migrants for responsibility for the outbreak of the fires.

Greece’s Supreme Court Prosecutor yesterday ordered the local prosecutor to investigate both the causes of the catastrophic fire and alleged claims of racism towards migrants.



South Korea’s main opposition Democratic Party members hold electric candles and signs reading “Withdraw the dumping of Fukushima contaminated water!” during a rally against Japan’s plan to release treated water from the Fukushima nuclear plant, at the National Assembly in Seoul yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Russia wants to end war ‘unleashed by West’

Putin tells BRICS leaders, praises the grouping as a counterbalance to US global dominance

REUTERS, Moscow

President Vladimir Putin yesterday used a speech to a summit of BRICS leaders to defend Russia’s war in Ukraine and praise the grouping as a counterbalance to US global dominance.

Speaking by video link to leaders of the group, he repeated the Kremlin narrative that his invasion, condemned by Ukraine and the West as an imperialist land grab, was a forced response by Russia to Kyiv’s and Washington’s hostile actions.

“Our actions in Ukraine are dictated by only one thing - to end the war that was unleashed by the West and its satellites against the people who live in the Donbas,” Putin said, referring to the eastern part of Ukraine where Russian proxies have been fighting the Ukrainian army since 2014.

“I want to note that it was the desire to maintain their hegemony in the world, the desire of some countries to maintain this hegemony that led to the severe crisis in Ukraine.”

Putin was speaking to a forum of countries



that have refrained from condemning Russia’s actions in Ukraine. The BRICS - also including Brazil, India, China and South Africa - have taken on added importance for Moscow as it seeks to blunt Western sanctions by boosting trade with Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Russia has repeatedly said it is open to talks to end the 18-month war - but only if they take account of the “new realities” created by its forces who control nearly a fifth of Ukraine. Ukraine demands the restoration of all its territory and the removal of Russian troops.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, who in June presented an African peace plan separately to Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, said in response to the Russian president’s speech that BRICS members would continue to support efforts to bring the conflict to an end.

Strengthening BRICS forms part of Russia’s vision of undermining US dominance and building what Putin, in his speech, called “a multipolar world order”.

CITIZENSHIP

Germany agrees to ease rules

AFP, Berlin

The German cabinet yesterday approved plans to shorten the path to citizenship for immigrants and allow more people to have dual nationality.

Under the proposed new rules, which must still be approved by parliament, naturalisation in Germany would be possible after five years instead of eight as now.

Those who are particularly well-integrated and have very good German language skills will be able to obtain nationality after just three years.

Prospective new citizens will have to show they are not dependent on state support, although the condition will have exceptions.

New Thai PM sworn in

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand’s new prime minister vowed to bring four years of change to the kingdom as he took office yesterday.

He will head a controversial coalition that includes pro-military parties linked to former coup-makers.

The appointment of former property mogul Srettha Thavasin -- of the Pheu Thai party long associated with billionaire ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra -- ends months of political deadlock following May’s general election.

The 61-year-old was confirmed by parliamentary vote on Tuesday, just hours after Thaksin returned to the kingdom from 15 years of exile and was immediately jailed on old graft charges.

Srettha received King Maha Vajiralongkorn’s official written command to form a government in a ceremony at Pheu Thai headquarters at 6:00pm (1100 GMT).

“The good of the country is my highest priority. I am confident the next four years will be years of change,” Srettha said after accepting the royal endorsement, pledging to work “tirelessly”.

Outgoing prime minister Prayut Chan-o-cha -- a former army chief who overthrew the last Pheu Thai government in a coup -- congratulated Srettha and wished him luck.



DATE FOR NEXT VOTE

Pakistan president summons election commission head

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan’s president yesterday summoned the head of its election commission to discuss fixing the date of the next election within the 90-day constitutional deadline ending in early November, a letter from his office said. The opposition party led by jailed former premier Imran Khan has accused outgoing prime minister Shehbaz Sharif’s coalition of dragging its heels in scheduling a new election because Khan’s popularity was growing. Sharif’s government denied this, citing a constitutional requirement to hold elections under the latest census. Khan is under arrest over a conviction on charges stemming from the sale of state gifts, though he denies wrongdoing. Election commission officials have said it will take at least until December to draw up new constituencies based on the latest census.

“The Chief Election Commissioner is invited for a meeting with the President today or tomorrow to fix an appropriate date,” said the letter from President Arif Alvi, which included wording of the constitutional article on the 90-day deadline. Electoral experts have suggested that adjusting constituencies based on the latest census could see the nationwide vote pushed back several months, possibly until February. A caretaker government led by Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar was sworn in last week.

EC to finalise changes to guidelines

FROM PAGE 12

Global Area Network facilities and other equipment with a tax waiver when they come to visit during the upcoming election.

The current guidelines offer no such waiver.

The issue of visa duration for foreign journalists and observers was also discussed at the inter-ministerial meeting yesterday.

According to the existing guidelines, polls observers are granted tourist visa.

The validity of visas for long term observers is two months while for

short term observers, it is three weeks.

“A foreign observation mission said they want to stay for a longer period when they come to observe the polls. We held a discussion on it and if someone wants to stay longer, they can extend their visa validity while they are here,” an official from the meeting said.

The official added they also discussed the past issue regarding the monitoring experience of foreign observers.

“We are also considering adding a provision stating that foreign observers should have prior

monitoring experience.”

The guidelines are being reviewed at a time when foreign diplomats are showing increased interest in the upcoming national election, which is likely to be held in January next year.

Earlier this month, the US said it would send a monitoring team early October to assess the pre-polls situation.

On the other hand, the EU’s Election Exploratory Mission visited Bangladesh from July 9 to 23 and will prepare a report, based on which the EU will decide whether or not to send an observer team.

Criminals rape girl

FROM PAGE 12

we saw her in a devastated condition,” he said.

Quoting the victim, he added, “She was also in deep sleep. She woke up to three masked men tying her up. When she tried to shout, they gagged her with a towel and raped her.

“They then proceeded to loot the house and took cash, gold ornaments and our mobile phones.”

The family later realised the men broke into the girl’s room by cutting the window grilles.

On Tuesday night, the brother filed

a case with Savar Model Police Station against three unnamed persons.

He said the victim is currently under treatment at the One Stop Crisis Centre of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, while their parents are at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital.

In the case statement, he alleged that Habibullah Habib, former member of Bhakurta Union Parishad and also their neighbour, might have been involved in the incident.

However, Habib was not made an accused in the case.

“He [Habib] has already occupied a portion of our land, against which we filed a case. We think he might have done this for revenge.”

Contacted, Habib denied both the allegations of occupying the family’s land and being involved in the rape incident.

“The family is trying to implicate me in the rape case to harass me.”

Dipok Chandra Saha, officer-in-charge of Savar Model Police Station, said, “We are investigating the case and trying to trace the criminals.”

DENV-2 strain likely the culprit

FROM PAGE 12

The Daily Star yesterday, “This indicates that the DENV-2 may be one of the factors contributing to the higher fatalities in the country this year.”

“But there are some other associated causes, such as second-time infection,” she said.

She emphasised the necessity of conducting a study on the clinical characteristics of the patients to have a comprehensive understanding of the ongoing dengue outbreak.

“Unfortunately, we were unable to carry out such a study due to a lack of budgetary support,” she added.

In June, the Institute of

Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) also found DENV-2 as the most prevalent serotype after testing 40 samples.

The IEDCR did not conduct any study on the clinical features of patients either.

Meanwhile, the NILMRC is making preparations to start dengue genome sequencing soon, read the press release.

Studies focusing on serotypes study and genome sequencing are very crucial to controlling the dengue outbreak.

“There should be more studies like this. Because we need adequate data to comprehend and control

the dengue outbreak,” Dr Be-Nazir Ahmed, former director of Disease Control unit at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), told The Daily Star.

Stressing the lack of any well-coordinated action plan at the policy level, he said, “Unfortunately, we have yet to develop any systematic approach to fight dengue, though dengue turns severe every year.”

The total number of dengue patients hospitalised so far rose to 1,06,429, including 2,070 new admissions yesterday. The total number of fatalities in dengue reached 506, the DGHS reported.

JCD leader arrested in capital

FROM PAGE 12

DB personnel arrested him and seized the pistol loaded with two bullets, the case statement read.

Talking to The Daily Star, salon staffer Amzad Hossain, who is made a witness in the case, said a nephew of Abul who is their customer came to the salon prior to the raid and requested to keep a shopping bag and hand it over to Abul who will visit

there in five minutes.

After a few minutes, DB police came to the shop with Abul and recovered three “cocktails” from the bag.

He, however, said he did not see police recover any pistol or ammunition from the bag.

Rajib Al Masud, deputy commissioner (Motijheel division) of DB, said they arrested Abul with the

firearm, ammunition, and explosives.

A Dhaka court placed him on a three-day remand yesterday, the DC added.

On August 20, DB claimed to have arrested six leaders of JCD, pro-BNP student body, with firearms and ammunition. DB made the claim of arrests over 24 hours after they were allegedly picked up by plainclothes men from the capital’s Lalbagh area.

Wagner chief presumed dead

FROM PAGE 12

Shortly after the news of the crash emerged, a White House official commented that Prigozhin’s death would be no surprise.

Which was echoed by US President Joe Biden.

“I don’t know for a fact what happened, but I’m not surprised,” Biden said, adding “there’s not much that happens in Russia that (President) Putin’s not behind. But I don’t know enough to know the answer.”

Putin was meanwhile giving a speech for the 80th anniversary of the Kursk battle in World War II.

He did not mention the crash and hailed “all our soldiers who are fighting bravely and resolutely” in the special military operation in Ukraine.

Ukrainian Presidential aide Mykhaylo Podolyak said on social media that the plane crash was “a signal from Putin to Russia’s elites ahead of the 2024 elections. ‘Beware! Disloyalty equals death’.”

During the offensive in Ukraine, launched on February 24, 2022, Prigozhin came out of the shadows.

He spearheaded the capture of several Ukrainian towns including Bakhmut -- and harshly criticised Russia’s conventional military leadership.

Prigozhin was locked in a bitter months-long power struggle with the defence ministry that he accused of trying to “steal” Wagner’s victories.

Tensions degenerated into a short-lived rebellion on June 23 and 24.

They can take families

FROM PAGE 12

of Umrah visas have been extended from one month to three months.

Bangladeshis can also travel inside the country with this visa, Faridul added.

The state minister also said discussions were held on increasing the Hajj quota and reducing the Hajj costs for Bangladeshis.

Faridul said the Saudi authorities accepted what they have asked for about traveling to and from Saudi Arabia, reducing the cost of Hajj, and overall cooperation.

“Such a discussion had not been held before. We could not have imagined that today we will have such a fruitful discussion,” he added.

India becomes first nation

FROM PAGE 12

Africa. “India’s successful moon mission is not just India’s alone,” he added. “This success belongs to all of humanity.”

The Chandrayaan-3 mission has captivated public attention since launching nearly six weeks ago in front of thousands of cheering spectators.

Politicians staged Hindu prayer rituals to wish for the mission’s

success and schoolchildren followed the final moments of the landing from live broadcasts in classrooms.

Chandrayaan-3 took much longer to reach the Moon than the Apollo missions in the 1960s and 1970s, which arrived in a matter of days.

India used rockets much less powerful than the ones the United States used back then, meaning the probe had to orbit the Earth several

times to gain speed before embarking on its month-long journey.

The lander, Vikram, which means “valour” in Sanskrit, detached from its propulsion module last week and has been sending images of the Moon’s surface since entering lunar orbit on August 5.

Now that Vikram has landed, a solar-powered rover will explore the surface and transmit data to Earth over its two-week lifespan.