

## Chuadanga records highest temperature of the season at 39.8°C

OUR CORRESPONDENT, BENAPOLE

Chuadanga yesterday recorded a temperature of 39.8°C, the highest in the country this season.

“The heat is being felt more as the humidity of the air is high. A heatwave has been blowing over the district for the past few days,” said Rakibul Hasan, the district’s senior weather observer.

He went on to say that the temperature may rise to 41°C within a week.

Nasir Uddin, a resident, said, “It is becoming difficult to bear this heat. I cannot go out after noon.”

Abdus Samad, a rickshaw puller, said, “If I don’t work, I won’t have enough money to buy food. But it’s very difficult to pull a rickshaw in this heat while fasting.”

Meanwhile, the town’s roads have been relatively empty due to the heat. Most people have not been venturing out unless necessary. However, daily wage workers, labourers, and small traders said they had no option but to work.



A rescue worker tries to extract a mother and her child from a collapsed building in Naypyidaw yesterday. A powerful earthquake rocked central Myanmar yesterday, buckling roads, destroying buildings and forcing people to flee into the streets.

PHOTO: AFP

## ‘Youth will help advance trade’

### Yunus invites Chinese investment in Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus has called on Chinese investors to capitalise on the business prospects that exist in Bangladesh, urging them to invest more in the country.

He made the remark while addressing Chinese business leaders at The Presidential Hotel Beijing yesterday -- the third day of his four-day visit to China, according to the Chief Adviser’s Press Wing.

Prof Yunus noted that Bangladesh is the second-largest manufacturer of readymade garments after China and benefits from a geological location ideal for regional trade and commerce thanks to the Bay of Bengal.

Highlighting that Nepal and Bhutan, being landlocked nations, face similar challenges as India’s seven sister states, he stressed the importance of establishing road connectivity with these regions to enhance trade.

About the talented young men and women in Bangladesh, Yunus said the country has a vast youth population filled with energy, creativity, and ambition and underscored the need to harness this untapped potential.

Regarding the country’s recent transformation, the head of the interim government said, Bangladesh has emerged as an entirely new nation. “A new generation is emerging, which will contribute to the growth of trade and commerce.”

Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) chairman Chowdhury Ashik Mahmud Bin Harun also spoke on the occasion.

## S Korea contains blazes after battling wildfires

REUTERS, Andong

South Korean authorities have contained the main blazes in the country’s largest forest fire on record, a minister said yesterday, as rain and better weather allowed more helicopters to fly and dump water, dousing the flames.

Spread by strong winds in bone-dry conditions, the wildfires have killed at least 28 people and charred more than 45,000 hectares (111,000 acres) in the southeastern region.

The main fires in five regions were under control by 5:00 pm (0800 GMT), said Lim Sang-seop, the minister of the Korea Forest Service.

## A wake-up call for Dhaka

FROM PAGE 1

we anticipate a strong earthquake of up to magnitude 9 could take place there,” said Prof Syed Humayun Akhter, an eminent geologist.

“If it happens, it would be catastrophic for Bangladesh,” he said.

Bangladesh escaped unharmed from yesterday’s tremors, as they originated on the Burma Plate, he added.

MdRubayet Kabir, the acting officer of the Bangladesh Meteorological Department’s

Earthquake Observation and Research Centre, said that in recent years, they have observed many minor and major earthquakes occurring around Bangladesh -- in Nepal, Myanmar, and Tibet.

According to his research, in 2017, 28 earthquakes shook Bangladesh and its surroundings. In 2023, the number was 41, and in 2024, it increased to 54.

A number of tremors have been registered in the first quarter of this year.

“Our capacity to monitor earthquakes has increased in recent years. However, data shows that the frequency of earthquakes has also increased,” he said.

He noted that very mild tremors occur regularly in this region. However, the worrying sign is that 550 earthquakes with a magnitude of four or above have struck within 300 km of Bangladesh in the past decade.

Experts say the pattern of these seismic events could be a warning sign of a major earthquake in a country with active faults like the Dauki fault in the Indo-Burma subduction zone.

Prof Mehedi Ahmed Ansary, a teacher at Buet’s Civil Engineering Department, said the return period for a 7-magnitude earthquake is 125 to 175 years, and the return period for an 8-magnitude earthquake is 250 to 300 years.

The 8.5-magnitude Chittagong earthquake took place in 1762, the 7.5-magnitude Cachar earthquake occurred in 1869, the 7-magnitude Bengal earthquake struck in 1885, the great Indian 8.7 earthquake hit in 1897, the 7.6-magnitude Srimangal earthquake occurred in 1918, the 7.1-magnitude Durgapur earthquake hit in 1923, and the 7.1-magnitude Dhubri earthquake struck in 1930.

“So now we should be ready for a major quake,” he said.

Dhaka is more vulnerable to earthquakes due to its geological location, as well as its human and economic exposure. According to the earthquake disaster risk index, the capital tops the list of the 20 most vulnerable cities in the world.

## China pledges \$2.1b in loans, investment

FROM PAGE 1

“It is a milestone visit,” Chinese Ambassador to Dhaka Yao Wen said.

Prof Yunus left for China on March 26 at the invitation of the East Asian country. Yesterday was the third day of his four-day visit.

He delivered a speech at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference in Hainan and met Vice-Premier of China Ding Xuexiang and other dignitaries.

Han Zheng, vice-president of China, also met the CA yesterday.

Yunus met Chinese business leaders at three high-level dialogues on trade, investment, and social business.

Prof Yunus addressed officials of more than 100 Chinese firms and urged them to invest in advanced textiles, pharmaceuticals, light engineering, renewables and other sectors in Bangladesh.

“This visit will play a major role in persuading a lot of Chinese companies to invest in Bangladesh. It is just a matter of time,” CA’s Press Wing quoted Ashik as saying.

“China has planned to lend some \$400 million for the Mongla port modernisation project, \$350 million for the development of the China Industrial Economic Zone, and \$150 million as technical assistance. The rest of the amount would come as grants and other forms of loans,” reads the press wing statement.

### WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

At separate meetings with President Xi and Chinese Water Resources Minister Li Guoying, the CA sought a 50-year masterplan from China to manage Bangladesh’s river system.

The CA said China had done wonders in managing some of the intractable water issues.

“We have the same problems you have. So, we will be happy if you share your experiences,” the CA told the water resources minister.

Due to rising population and the demand for development, people encroach upon rivers, Prof Yunus said, adding that siltation was another challenge.

Bangladesh may need help in cleaning the polluted rivers surrounding Dhaka. The Chinese minister then promised technical support.

During his meeting with President Xi, Prof Yunus urged Chinese companies to participate in the Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project.

China earlier conducted a feasibility study on the project after the Awami League government approached it in 2023. China said at the time that it was ready to support the project in phases, but the AL regime did not proceed further.

Asked about the geopolitical implication of the Teesta project, former ambassador to China Munshi Faiz Ahmad said the project was more of a concept than reality.

Dhaka and Beijing also spoke positively

of the signing of the Implementation Plan of the MoU on Exchange of Hydrological Information of the Yarlung Zangbo-Jamuna River.

China has plans for a hydro-electricity project over the Yarlung Zangbo river, which flows through Bangladesh, and is called the Jamuna.

Experts say the project will affect the water flow of the Jamuna.

### YUNUS XI STATEMENT

According to the joint statement released after the bilateral meeting, the two sides agreed to strengthen cooperation in hydrological forecasting, flood prevention, disaster reduction, river dredging, integrated management of water resources, and related technology sharing.

They also agreed to make concerted efforts to tackle climate change, tap the potential for a blue economy, strengthen exchanges on maritime affairs, and hold a new round of Dialogue on Maritime

### AGREEMENTS

➤ Economic and technical cooperation

➤ Cultural exchange and cooperation

➤ MoUs on translation, production of classics

➤ Exchanges in media, sports and health

Cooperation.

Apart from signing a deal, eight MoUs, the two countries also announced the signing of a commercial agreement for modernising and expanding the Mongla port, building a robot physiotherapy and rehabilitation centre, and donating a mobile cardiac surgery unit.

At the bilateral meeting, the Chinese side said it supported the interim government in effectively exercising governance, preserving unity and stability, and leading Bangladesh onto a path of development and prosperity.

The Bangladesh side thanked China for the support and extended support to carry forward the bilateral ties. Both sides reaffirmed equal commitment to nurturing the Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership with utmost importance.

Bangladesh sought to lower the interest rate on Chinese loans from 3 percent to between 1 and 2 percent. It also requested a waiver of the commitment fees on the Chinese-funded projects.

President Xi said China would consider reducing the interest rates, CA’s Press Secretary Shahiul Alam wrote on Facebook.

China announced it would build a specialised hospital in Bangladesh.

Prof Yunus invited Beijing to set up a China cultural centre in Bangladesh.

## Myanmar quake kills over 150

FROM PAGE 1

Hundreds of casualties arrived at a major hospital in Naypyidaw, where the emergency department entrance had collapsed on a car.

Medics treated the wounded outside the hospital, the same one visited by the junta chief. One official described it as a “mass casualty area.”

“I haven’t seen (something) like this before. We are trying to handle the situation. I’m so exhausted now,” a doctor told AFP.

Mandalay, Myanmar’s second largest city, appeared to have been badly hit. AFP photos from the city showed multiple buildings in ruins.

A resident reached by phone told AFP that a hospital and a hotel had been destroyed and said the city was badly lacking in rescue personnel.

The main road bridge linking Mandalay and Sagaing was down, the city’s university and historic palace wall have collapsed, and telecoms have been affected, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said.

Across the border in Thailand, a 30-storey skyscraper under construction collapsed into a tangled heap of rubble

and dust in a matter of seconds.

Interior Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said eight dead bodies have been recovered, and with between 90 and 110 people unaccounted for, the toll is expected to rise.

“We see several dead bodies under the rubble. We will take time to bring the bodies out to avoid any further collapses,” he told reporters.

“I heard people calling for help, saying ‘help me,’” Worapat Sukthai, deputy police chief of Bang Sue district, told AFP.

As night fell, around 100 rescue workers assembled at the scene to search for survivors, illuminated by specially erected floodlights.

Visiting the site, Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra said “every building” in Bangkok would need to be inspected for safety, though it was not immediately clear how that would be carried out.

An emergency zone was declared in Bangkok, where some metro and light rail services were suspended.

The streets of the capital were full of commuters attempting to walk home or simply taking refuge in the entrances of malls and office buildings.

The two leaders also discussed the purchase of multiple role combat aircraft and multimodal transport connectivity linking the southern Chinese city of Kunming with Bangladeshi ports.

Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi, Chairman of China’s National Development and Reform Commission Zheng Shanjie, and vice foreign minister Sun Weidong were among senior Chinese officials who were present at the meeting.

From the Bangladesh side, Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain, Energy and Transport Adviser Fouzul Kabir Khan and CA’s High Representative Dr Khalilur Rahman attended the meeting.

### BRI COOPERATION

The two sides agreed to promote high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, strengthen international cooperation on industrial and supply chains, improve infrastructure, and advance industrialisation.

Bangladesh welcomes Chinese companies’ participation in the Mongla Port Facilities Modernization and Expansion Project, and stands ready to work with the Chinese side to develop the Chinese Economic and Industrial Zone in Chattogram.

The two sides underscored the importance to initiate negotiations on the China-Bangladesh Free Trade Agreement and officially start negotiations on optimising the China-Bangladesh Investment Agreement.

They agreed to implement the export of fresh mangoes and other agricultural and aquatic produce from Bangladesh to China. The current bilateral trade stands at \$25 billion, with Bangladesh exporting less than \$1 billion.

China welcomed Bangladesh to make full use of platforms such as the China International Import Expo, China South Asia Expo, and China International Supply Chain Expo to expand cooperation with China, while reaffirming readiness to create a favourable investment environment for Chinese companies.

### POLITICAL COMMITMENT

The two sides agreed to hold fast to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, carry forward their traditional friendship, deepen political mutual trust and synergy between development strategies, while reaffirming mutual support on issues involving each other’s core interests and major concerns.

The joint statement said China consistently adheres to the principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of other countries, respects Bangladesh’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the development path independently chosen by the people of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh reiterated its firm commitment to the One-China principle and its position that China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China, and Taiwan is an inalienable part of China’s territory.

City authorities said parks would stay open overnight for those unable to sleep at home.

Strong quakes are extremely rare in Thailand, and across Bangkok and the northern tourist destination of Chiang Mai, stunned residents hurried outside, unsure of how to respond.

“This is the strongest tremor I’ve experienced in my life,” said Sai, 76, who rushed out of a minimart in Chiang Mai when it started to shake.

The quake was felt across the region, with China, Cambodia, Bangladesh and India all reporting tremors.

India, France and the European Union offered to provide assistance, while the WHO said it was mobilising to prepare trauma injury supplies.

Pope Francis said he was “deeply saddened by the loss of life and widespread devastation” in a telegram published by the Vatican.

Earthquakes are relatively common in Myanmar.

A powerful 6.8-magnitude earthquake in the ancient capital Bagan in central Myanmar killed three people in 2016, also toppling spires and crumbling temple walls at the tourist destination.

## NCP pushes for grassroots support amid Eid holiday

FROM PAGE 1

uprising on Eid day, presenting Eid gifts to them.

Several top NCP leaders have drawn attention for their contrasting campaign approaches.

The grand entry of Chief Organiser (North) Sarjis Alam into Panchagarh last Monday, with a procession of motorcades, has stirred the political waters, drawing both attention and criticism. Given that Panchagarh is his ancestral home, his arrival was not just a return but a statement -- an orchestrated display of influence that many see as a power move in Bangladesh’s politics.

On the second day of his visit, he toured several villages in Alowakhoya Union of Atwari upazila, including Rakhaldob, Bamankumar, Balia, and Laxmithan, speaking with people from various professions at their homes and workplaces. Sarjis intends to contest the election from the Panchagarh-1 constituency.

“Whenever we visited people, they spoke to us spontaneously. We discussed their expectations from the new party and various issues in my area,” Sarjis told The Daily Star.

Member Secretary Akhter Hossen conducted a large-scale campaign in his parliamentary constituency in Rangpur with over 200 vans on Thursday. The procession started from Mahiganj Satmatha and travelled through Deuti, Kadamtali, Kaliganj, and Pautana in Pirgacha before moving through different roads in Kaunia.

Akhter engaged in mass contact across various areas of Pirgacha and Kaunia upazilas, meeting with locals.

“Instead of grand rallies, we have prioritised door-to-door campaigns. We aim to connect with the grassroots and understand their aspirations for the future of Bangladesh,” Akhter told this newspaper.

## Eid travel mostly smooth so far

FROM PAGE 1

manpower to fully regulate these vehicles.”

Traffic on the Dhaka-Tangail highway increased but remained moving.

Ahsanul Kabir Pavel, executive engineer at the Jamuna Bridge site office, said crossings of small vehicle rose. Between Thursday midnight and Friday midnight, 35,227 vehicles passed, generating Tk 26.53 crore in toll.

To manage the rush, 18 toll booths, including two dedicated to motorcycles, are in operation.

Mizanur Rahman, superintendent of Tangail police, said, “Traffic pressure is high but manageable. We have deployed 728 police personnel to ensure the smooth journey of holidaymakers.”

After visiting the highway, Sharifa Haque, deputy commissioner of Tangail, said officials would stay on duty until all travellers reach their destinations.

In Munshiganj, bikers crowded Padma Bridge toll booths, as home-goers left Dhaka early yesterday. Long queues were also seen at the toll booths on the Dhaka-Mawa expressway but eased later in the day.

Mawa Traffic Inspector Ziaul Islam said vehicles, especially motorcycles, have been steadily going up since dawn. To handle the pressure, tolls were collected at seven booths, with three designated for motorcycles.

Abdul Kader Zilani, in charge of Hasara highway police outpost, said checkpoints have been set up at various points to regulate speed and prevent accidents.

In another development, traffic

NCP Convener Nahid Islam, a resident of the capital’s Banasree area, has been actively engaging with the local community. Party leaders said the NCP has also planned a mass-contact programme in Dhaka ahead of Eid, dividing the capital into four areas -- Mohammapur, Mirpur, Rampura, and Dhanmondi.

Senior Joint Convener Ariful Islam Adib has been organising iftar events and meeting families of the July martyrs in Mirpur, while Joint Member Secretary Akram Hossain has been assigned to Mohammapur.

Chief Coordinator Nasiruddin Patwary will celebrate Eid in his ancestral home in Chandpur. He told this newspaper he would connect with various stakeholders in his area, including teachers, leaders of other political parties, and families of those killed in the July uprising.

Another chief organiser, Hasnat Abdullah, who is preparing to contest from Cumilla-4 (Debidwar), has been regularly attending meetings and events in the area.

Senior Joint Chief Coordinator Abdul Hannan Masud has been conducting mass contact since last week as he prepares to contest the national polls from Noakhali-6.

Masud and his supporters were allegedly attacked by expelled BNP activists in Hatia upazila of Noakhali during a street rally at Jahajmara Bazaar.

Joint Convener Sarwar Tushar will celebrate Eid in his ancestral home in Narsingdi, where he will spend the day with families of injured protesters.

Mir Arshadul Haque, Joint Member Secretary of NCP and a potential candidate for Chattogram-16 (Banshkhali) constituency, will celebrate Eid at his home in Banshkhali before resuming mass contact in the area after Eid.

on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway slowed down significantly in Munshiganj’s Gazaria area from Thursday midnight to Friday afternoon due to the growing number of vehicles and multiple accidents.

Anwar Alam Azad, officer-in-charge of Gazaria Police Station, said crashes at Baluakandi, Anarpura, and Basua disrupted the vehicular movement.

Traffic flow was normal at Amin Bazar, Hemayetpur, and Savar Bazar bus stands areas on the Dhaka-Aricha highway, and at Nabinagar, Baipail, and Balibhadra on the Nabinagar-Chandra highway.

Savar Highway Police OC Saugatul Alam said, “The road situation is normal. But traffic flow may rise tomorrow [Saturday].”

North-bound people mostly experienced hassle-free travels this time compared to previous years.

“I left Dhaka at 8:00am and reached Pabna by 1:30pm, which is unimaginable during the Eid rush,” said Ruqunul Hasan, a government employee.

Ahsanul, executive engineer at the Jamuna Bridge site office, credited this to the expansion of northern highways. “Despite ongoing construction, a 190km stretch from Elenka to Rangpur now has four lanes. Several new bridges and flyovers have also been opened, helping the smooth flow of traffic.”

Authorities have beefed up efforts to ensure smooth travel. Around 700 police personnel have been deployed on the key highways in Sirajganj. Over 100 army personnel are also assisting in managing the traffic.

[Our correspondents in Tangail, Munshiganj, Savar, and Pabna also contributed to this report.]