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Dhaka-Beijing ties ready for next stage

Prof Yunus tells Xinhua

STAR DESK

Dhaka sees Beijing as a "good friend", and it wants to take the bilateral relationship to the next stage, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus said in an interview with the Chinese state news agency Xinhua yesterday.

"Bangladeshis are inspired by China's achievements, and they hope to learn from China's experience in developing the country," he said.

"Our relationship has been very strong over the years. Our business is very strong, and we benefit from our collaboration with China," the chief adviser told Xinhua.

"We can take it to the next stage where our collaboration is not limited to the economy only. It will be cultural too," he added.

Prof Yunus, who shared the 2008 Nobel Peace Prize with the Grameen Bank for pioneering microfinance, hailed China for its achievement in poverty reduction.

Most countries focus on GDP growth rather than addressing the needs of ordinary people, but China focused on the low-income group, he said. "That's why the Chinese are very successful in reducing poverty very quickly."

Xinhua reported that China had been Bangladesh's largest trading partner for 15 consecutive years. At present, there are nearly 1,000 Chinese enterprises operating in Bangladesh, which have created more than 550,000 jobs in total.

Yunus hopes more Chinese investors will come to Bangladesh and open up a broader market together with

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Workers of garment factories owned by TNZ Group staging a demonstration with cooking pots in front of Sromo Bhaban in the capital yesterday, demanding payment of their overdue wages and Eid bonuses. Story on Page 3.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

YUNUS-MODI MEET

India weighs options at BIMSTEC

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India yesterday announced that it is exploring the possibility of Prime Minister Narendra Modi meeting foreign leaders during his visit to Bangkok for the BIMSTEC Summit, scheduled for April 3-4.

"Meetings with other leaders in Bangkok are being considered. We will provide updates as we move forward," Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said at a special press briefing in New Delhi when asked about a possible bilateral meeting between Modi and Bangladesh Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus.

Modi is expected to arrive in Bangkok on April 3 and travel to Colombo on the evening of April 4 for an official visit to Sri Lanka, Jaideep Mazumdar, secretary (East) of India's Ministry of External Affairs, said during the briefing.

Earlier, the MEA issued a readout of Modi's visits to Thailand and Sri Lanka but did not mention a bilateral meeting with Yunus.

According to the readout, the only confirmed bilateral meeting during Modi's stay in Bangkok is with Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra on April 3.

A few days ago, SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Election is your duty, not reforms

Says Khasru

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Standing Committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday said there is an attempt to avoid elections, just like Sheikh Hasina did, in the name of reforms.

He said this while speaking at an iftar with journalists at Chittagong Club in the port city.

He called on everyone to come forward in fulfilling the aspirations and expectations of a "New Bangladesh".

He said a significant shift has occurred in the mindset of the people after Hasina's ouster, and politicians must act accordingly, understanding this.

He hoped that journalists would play their role in realising the aspirations and expectations of people in the post-Hasina era.

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DHAKA-SYLHET HIGHWAY

Tk 17,000cr project falls short on road safety

Warns audit report; recommends additional Tk 3,500cr investment

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Road safety and speed will remain compromised on the Dhaka-Sylhet highway even after the completion of its ongoing Tk 17,000 crore expansion, a recent audit report warns.

Inadequate overpasses, underpasses, and pedestrian facilities will hinder road safety, preventing the mega project from achieving its intended purpose, according to the report.

It recommended constructing 57 additional underpasses and overpasses, 78 pedestrian underpasses, and 74 footbridges with ramps, among other infrastructure.

This will raise the project cost by Tk 3,500 crore.

The findings came four years after the approval of the project to upgrade the highway into a four-lane one with service lanes on both sides. Under the existing plan, only 13 overpasses or underpasses will be built on the 209 km-long national highway.

Although the project's current deadline is December 2026, it has

achieved only 13 percent progress, mainly due to land unavailability, making a timely completion highly unlikely.

If the recommended infrastructure is added, the

achieved only 13 percent progress, mainly due to land unavailability, making a timely completion highly unlikely.

With only 13 underpasses and overpasses for 209 km highway, existing plan compromises safety and speed, audit finds

It recommends 57 additional underpasses and overpasses, 78 pedestrian underpasses, 74 footbridges

implementation period may also increase along with the cost.

The Road Transport and Highways Division held a meeting with stakeholders earlier this month after project consultants presented recommendations to enhance road safety measures.

Chaired by Mohammed Ziaul Haque, an additional secretary at the division, the meeting recommended implementing the proposed measures to ensure that road safety is not compromised, according to the meeting minutes.

When contacted, AKM Fazlul Karim, project director of the SASEC Dhaka-Sylhet Corridor Road Investment Project, said the project authorities would present the stakeholders' recommendations to the Project Steering Committee at a meeting expected after Eid. If the committee agrees, they will submit a revised development project proposal.

The Dhaka-Sylhet highway is one of the most accident-prone roads in the country. According to police reports, more than 400 people have been killed in 358 road crashes on the highway over the past five years.

SAFETY, SPEED

Consultants hired by the Roads and Highways Department in 2014-15 carried out a feasibility study and developed the detailed design for the project. This was reviewed in 2020 following a recommendation

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'We're up against time to find stolen billions'

BB governor tells Al Jazeera

STAR DESK

Bangladesh Bank Governor Ahsan H Mansur has expressed worry that much of the money laundered abroad by political and business elites over the last one and a half decades could disappear if it was not found quickly enough.

"We know that time is of the essence. Erosion of the asset base is a possibility," the former IMF economist told Al Jazeera.

Days after the collapse of the Awami League government in August 2024 following the July uprising and the ouster of prime minister Sheikh Hasina, the newly-appointed central bank chief began a hunt for billions smuggled abroad by its political and business elites.

Bangladesh Bank has set up 11 specialist teams to trace the assets of 11 powerful families who are accused of laundering billions of dollars to the UK, UAE, US, Malaysia, and Singapore over the past decade.

The amount of money in question is staggering. Just one of the 11 families being investigated is suspected of moving \$15 billion out of Bangladesh and in one case withdrawing nearly 90 percent of a single bank's deposits, leaving it on the brink of collapse, said the Al Jazeera report.

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PRAYER TIMING

MARCH 29

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:37	12:45	4:45	6:14	7:45
JAMAAT 4:47	1:15	5:00	6:29	8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN	MARCH	SEHRI	IFTAR
28	29		6:14
29	30	4:35	6:14
30	31	4:34	6:15



Smoke billows over Beirut's southern suburbs following an Israeli strike, which was preceded by an evacuation warning for the area, as seen from Baabda, Lebanon, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Israel hits building in Beirut's south suburbs

REUTERS, Beirut

Israel's air force conducted a large strike on a building in the southern suburbs of the Lebanese capital yesterday, a Reuters reporter said, the first heavy bombardment there since a truce deal in November ended a war between Israel and Hezbollah.

Israel's military said it hit a drone storage facility in the area belonging to Iran-backed armed group Hezbollah.

The strike, which was heard across Beirut

and produced a large column of black smoke, followed an evacuation order by the Israeli military for the neighbourhood and three smaller targeted drone strikes on the building intended as warning shots, security sources told Reuters.

The evacuation order sent residents of the area into a panic, rushing to escape on foot as traffic clogged the streets out of the area, Reuters reporters in the area said.

Beirut's southern suburbs, a Hezbollah

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

এভিয়ান ইনফুয়েঞ্জা সংক্রমণ প্রতিরোধে করণীয়

- এভিয়ান ইনফুয়েঞ্জা সংক্রমণ রোধ করা সম্ভব-জীতি নয়।
- আপনার পারিবারিক ও বাণিজ্যিক খামারে উত্তম ব্যবস্থাপনা ও বায়োসিকিউরিটি জোরদার করুন।
- হাঁস-মুরগি ধরার পর ভালো করে সাবান-পানি দিয়ে দুই হাত পরিষ্কার করে ধুয়ে ফেলুন।
- কোথাও হাঁস-মুরগি বা অন্যান্য পাখি অস্বাভাবিক হারে মারা গেলে সঙ্গে সঙ্গে উপজেলা প্রাণিসম্পদ দপ্তরে যোগাযোগ করুন।
- হাঁস-মুরগির মাংস ভালোভাবে রান্না করে খাবেন। মাংস, ডিম বা মাংসের তৈরি খাবার নিরাপদ।
- মুরগির খামারে সময়মত এভিয়ান ইনফুয়েঞ্জা টিকা প্রদান করুন।
- এভিয়ান ইনফুয়েঞ্জা সম্পর্কে জানার জন্য নিকটস্থ উপজেলা প্রাণিসম্পদ দপ্তর ও ভেটেরিনারি হাসপাতালে যোগাযোগ করুন। প্রয়োজনে প্রাণিসম্পদ অধিদপ্তরের হট লাইন নম্বর ১৬৩৫৮ এ যোগাযোগ করুন।

প্রাণিসম্পদ অধিদপ্তর
মৎস্য ও প্রাণিসম্পদ মন্ত্রণালয়

GD-814