



UN, US express solidarity after earthquake jolts country

BSS, Dhaka

The United Nations and the United States yesterday expressed deep sympathy and solidarity with those affected by yesterday's earthquake in Dhaka, as authorities continued assessing the tremor's impact.

In a statement shared on social media, the UN in Bangladesh said it was closely monitoring the situation and extended its solidarity and deepest condolences to all who have been affected. The US Embassy in Dhaka, in a separate message, expressed its deepest sympathy to all those affected by the earthquake.

At least 10 people were killed and many injured as a 5.7-magnitude earthquake rattled Dhaka and several adjoining districts yesterday morning.

The Bangladesh Meteorological Department said the tremor struck at 10:38am, with its epicentre located at Madhabdi in Narsingdi, about 13 kilometres east of the BMD Seismic Centre in Agargaon, Dhaka.

The United States Geological Survey later reported the epicentre to be 14 kilometres west-southwest of Narsingdi at a depth of 10 kilometres.

Intensify efforts to safeguard migrant workers

UN rights experts urge Bangladesh, Malaysia

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

UN human rights experts yesterday voiced renewed alarm over the exploitation and debt bondage of Bangladeshi migrant workers in Malaysia.

"Fraudulent recruitment and exploitation remain widespread and systematic," they said in a statement from Geneva. The experts include Tomoya Obokata, Gehad Madi, Pichamon Yeophantong, Damilola Olawuyi, Fernanda Hopenhaym, Lyra Jakulevičienė and Robert McCorquodale.

They are independent rights experts appointed by the UN.

They noted that some 800,000 Bangladeshis work in Malaysia, of whom nearly 500,000 migrated between 2022 and 2024 under a syndicate of 101 agencies, with many left jobless after Malaysia halted recruitment in May 2024.

They cite reports of exorbitant fees of \$4,500-\$6,000, passport confiscation, false job promises, and contract discrepancies.

The experts urged Bangladesh to strengthen oversight of recruitment agencies and Malaysia to enforce safeguards against exploitation. Both governments were called to investigate abuses, provide remedies, and ensure accountability.

Israel hits central, south Gaza

Five killed; two teenagers shot dead in East Jerusalem

AGENCIES

Israel's military yesterday carried out a wave of attacks across central and southern Gaza, including in eastern Khan Younis, central Gaza's Bureij and Maghazi camps and the southern city of Rafah.

Israeli forces waged artillery attacks near Bureij camp, while firing from aircraft and tanks near Khan Younis, where they also demolished residential buildings.

In Rafah, Israeli military carried out an air strike that killed five fighters who exited a tunnel in an area controlled by Israeli forces.

Israeli forces also killed two Palestinian teenagers in the occupied East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Kafr Aqab, according to the Wafa news agency.

The troops had stormed Kafr Aqab, deployed their foot patrols in its streets, and their snipers climbed onto the roofs of several buildings and opened fire on the young men in the town, which led to the killings.

In the occupied West Bank, Israeli settlers carried out several attacks on Palestinians and their property on Thursday night and yesterday morning.

The surge in settler violence has been widely condemned, with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights calling recent settler acts "abhorrent" and reflective of "a wider pattern of increased violence against Palestinians".

A government document has revealed that Israel wants

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Bangladesh pacer Abdul Gaffar Saqlain is pumped as his teammates run in to join in celebration following the dismissal of India's star opener Vaibhav Suryavanshi during the first semifinal of the Asia Cup Rising Stars at the West End Park International Cricket Stadium in Doha yesterday. The topsy-turvy match went right down to the wire as the 20-overs affair was tied before Bangladesh clinched a thrilling victory in the Super Over to book their berth in the final.

PHOTO: ACC

REFERENDUM ON JULY CHARTER

BNP in dilemma as Jamaat pushes for 'yes' vote

MAMUNUR RASHID and SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The BNP has yet to decide whether it will campaign for a "yes" or "no" vote in the July charter referendum. The party says it is observing the situation and will make its decision later.

On the other hand, the Jamaat-e-Islami and seven like-minded parties say they will urge the public to vote "yes" to give the charter a legal basis.

Although the BNP objects to the referendum question, it is keeping a soft stance for now, as its demand to hold the referendum alongside the national polls has been met. Senior leaders said confrontation now could distract attention from the polls and benefit opponents.

The Jamaat and its partners are taking a completely different approach, launching street programmes to demand that a "proper referendum" be held.

To press home their demand, they have announced rallies in seven divisions, starting on 30 November.

Asked about the party's demands, Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Hamidur Rahman Azad told The Daily Star that holding the referendum properly means they are demanding it must be held before the national polls.

Leaders of the parties said their programmes aim to put pressure on



the government and the BNP over the referendum issue, while also keeping their leaders and activists energised on the ground.

On November 13, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus announced in an address to the nation that a referendum on the implementation of the July charter will be held on the same day as the upcoming election in February.

The referendum ballot will present a single, comprehensive question to voters, who must cast a "yes" or "no" vote to express their opinion on four collective constitutional reform

proposals derived from the charter.

The BNP welcomed the decision, while Jamaat accused the chief adviser of creating confusion by this declaration that both the votes will be held on the same day.

Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, BNP Standing Committee member and former health minister, said, "BNP has not yet decided whether it will support the 'yes' or 'no' vote in the referendum. We will take more time to make this decision. Right now, we are trying to understand the direction of public opinion."

However, Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar said his party and seven other like-minded ones have agreed to take a collective stance in favour of the "yes" vote and work in persuading the nation.

BNP'S STANCE
BNP leaders say they stick to the objections to the proposed four-part referendum question and are not in a hurry to decide.

Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said the referendum should be held on the signed charter alone, as voters have no option to cast their votes on the four questions separately.

"It is a complicated and impractical process," he said, adding that the party prefers a simple yes-or-no question on whether people agree with the July charter.

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COP30 CLIMATE SUMMIT

Draft text omits fossil fuel transition plan

AGENCIES

COP30 summit president Brazil released a draft text for a proposed deal for this year's UN climate summit early yesterday, dropping a proposal to develop a global plan to shift away from fossil fuels that had been included in an earlier version.

The issue has been one of the most contentious at the two-week conference of nearly 200 governments in Brazil's Amazon city of Belem.

For days, nations have wrangled over the future of fossil fuels, whose burning emits greenhouse gases that are by far the largest contributor to global warming.

On Thursday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told negotiators "the world is watching" and urged them to reach an "ambitious compromise."

A first version of the draft deal earlier this week had contained a set of options for language on the subject.

Dozens of nations including Germany, Kenya and low-lying island states have been pushing hard for a "roadmap" laying out how countries should follow through with a promise made at COP28 two years ago to transition away from fossil fuels.

Saudi Arabia and other oil-producing nations were opposing this, negotiators at COP30 told Reuters. In the text released before dawn yesterday, all mentions of fossil fuels had been dropped.

The text, which is still subject to further negotiation, would need approval by consensus in order to be adopted.

Brazil's COP30 presidency held consultations with key negotiating blocs on Thursday, after a fire at the summit venue forced an evacuation that disrupted talks for hours.

The conference was scheduled to finish later yesterday, though talks could run overtime into the weekend as is common at the world's annual climate negotiations.

The draft also called for global efforts to triple the financing available to help nations adapt to climate change by 2030, from 2025 levels.

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PHOTO: REUTERS

A Palestinian man inspects cars burned in an attack by Israeli settlers in Huwara, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, yesterday.

Miss Mexico new Miss Universe

AFP, Nonthaburi

Miss Mexico was crowned Miss Universe in Thailand yesterday, strutting to victory after several dramatic missteps before the final round, including staging a walkout when an organiser of the beauty pageant chastised her.

Contestants from Ivory Coast, the Philippines, Thailand and Venezuela also made it to the final stage, selected from more than 120 women vying for the title in a contest considered one of the "big four" of global beauty pageants.

However, chaos reigned before Miss Mexico Fatima Bosch was crowned, from allegations of an insult to her intelligence to judges quitting and participants falling on and off the stage.

Bosch staged a dramatic walkout this month from a meeting where she was lambasted by Miss Universe Thailand director Nawat Itsaragrisil.

