

PROF YUNUS' NEW FORMULA

Proposes a coalition govt, peace deal between parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first Bangladeshi Nobel laureate, Dr. Muhammad Yunus, urged the battling political parties to sign a peace accord, agree to participate in the coming elections and pledge themselves to form a coalition government whatever the election results.

Under Yunus' draft proposals the party to lose the election would still get one third of the posts in the cabinet. The tenure of the coalition government would be one year and it would be charged with devising a long-term solution to the political crisis.

Dr. Yunus made the proposal at a civic reception held by Dhaka city Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka in honour of his winning the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize for 2006.

Yunus said free and fair elections with the participation of all major political parties are the only solution to the



PHOTO: STAR

Flower petals are showered on Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus at a civic reception organised in his honour by Dhaka City Corporation at the South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Peace accord between two conflicting alliances
- Interim coalition government for one year
- One-third seats in the cabinet to losing coalition
- Electing new president on the basis of understanding
- Coalition government would reconstitute EC
- New voter lists, introduction of voter identity cards

existing crisis and urged the 14 party alliance to withdraw the upcoming blockade programme, thereby saving the nation from looming economic and social disaster.

"Please do not destroy the future of the nation through closing down economic and educational activities," Yunus said.

In his seven-point draft for the proposed peace accord, both alliances would commit to participate in the next election, forming a consultative committee to give regular advice to the caretaker government on the conduct of the election.

After the election a coalition government would comprise leaders of both alliances. The majority party in parliament would hold the post of prime minister with a new post of deputy prime minister coming from the other alliance.

The other alliance would also get a third of the posts in the cabinet, irrespective of how many seats it won in

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CA'S TAKING OVER, EC HC ruling on writ petitions likely today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court might make its ruling today on the three writ petitions challenging the legality of the president's taking over as the chief adviser (CA), his 'unilateral' decisions and the Election Commission's (EC) move to declare election schedule.

An HC division bench yesterday heard submissions from both the sides and fixed today for passing the order.

It also heard a similar petition filed by Adnan Anwar, a businessman and nephew of late president Ziaur Rahman, on November 20. In his petition, Adnan seeks the court's order asking the president to explain under what authority he is holding the office of CA.

Eleven leaders of the Awami League (AL) led 14-party alliance, Jatiya Party (JP), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Zaker

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Khaleda feels advisers working to stop free polls

Accuses them of breaching oath; resents their talking to media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday accused the advisers to the caretaker government of breaching oath, saying it seems that they have been made advisers to thwart free and fair election.

Khaleda expressed her resentment at the activities of the advisers, especially for their talking to the media. "The way the advisers have been inviting journalists and talking to them...it seems that they are working to stop the free and fair election," said the immediate past prime minister.

"The advisers are oath-bound and they know the constitution better. But, have they maintained their oath?" Khaleda said while

addressing a views-exchange meeting with the leaders and workers of Bangladesh Banks Employees Federation.

She alleged that the advisers have "violated" their oath and said, "Did they take the oath for not holding a free and fair election?"

Referring to the government initiative against the bureaucrats who attended a secret meeting hosted by former energy adviser Mahmudur Rahman, Khaleda wanted to know what would be the fate of the advisers who met Awami League (AL) leaders "secretly".

She also referred to the government officials who joined the Janatar Mancha and held a meeting at the Panda Garden in 2001, and asked why no action was taken

against them. "One of the current advisers was a cabinet secretary at that time but he did not take any step against those officers," she added.

Stressing timely holding of election, the BNP chairperson said, "The election must be held on the date announced by the Election Commission.

"People are ready for the election and they want it. But the 14-party does not want the election because they know they cannot win...They want to foil the election," she said.

Khaleda blasted the AL for terrorism, protecting godfathers and destroying the country's economy. She urged the 14-party

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lajuddin wants to open talks with alliances

Sends Mokhles to Hasina, Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a dramatic move late last night to resolve the current political deadlock, President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed sought to initiate a dialogue with the two major political alliances led by Awami League (AL) and BNP.

Iajuddin sent his Adviser Mokhlesur Rahman to AL President Sheikh Hasina and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia to discuss different burning issues, including possibility of rescheduling the election date.

Mokhles met Sheikh Hasina at her Sudha Sadan residence and conveyed the president's message that he is ready to sit with the chiefs of the two major political parties to reach a consensus over rescheduling the polls.

"I conveyed the president's message to Hasina in light of the Election Commission secretary's remark that change of election schedule is possible if there is a consensus among the political parties," Mokhles told reporters after the meeting.

"On behalf of the president, I asked Sheikh Hasina if she will be willing to sit for a dialogue with him over rescheduling of the election schedule," he said, adding that the AL chief gave a verbal message for the president.

Mokhles, however, declined to elaborate any of the matters discussed in his one-hour meeting with Hasina.

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NICHOLAS BURNS ON BANGLADESH

Key question now is whether politicians can forget differences

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United States has observed that the willingness of Bangladeshi politicians to bury their differences of opinions is the key issue for the country at present.

Speaking at the Asian Society dinner in Washington on Monday, US State Department's Under-Secretary for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns also noted that despite these concerns, Nobel Peace Prize winner Dr Mohammad Yunus has earned an important distinction for Bangladesh.

"Can its (Bangladesh) leadership put aside their differences to

lead the country forward in peace? That is the central question to ask as we approach 2007," Burns said. He also noted that there are reasons to be concerned about the current state of political violence as the country moves toward elections in January.

The under-secretary also urged the political parties to resolve their differences through dialogue, as "The people of Bangladesh deserve free, fair, non-violent and credible elections."

Burns, however, feels that in stark contrast to the political concerns, Dr Yunus provides a positive

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UN concerned about free, fair polls in Bangladesh

Annan's special envoy meets Iajuddin, Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

UN secretary general's special envoy Craig Jenness has said the United Nations is concerned about free, fair and transparent general elections in Bangladesh and urged political leadership to resolve differences in the electoral process through dialogue.

"We're concerned about free, fair and transparent elections in Bangladesh and UN is ready to support the holding of free and fair elections," he told reporters after a meeting with Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin at the foreign ministry yesterday.

Craig Jenness arrived here yesterday morning. Explaining the purpose of his visit to Dhaka, Jenness said Secretary General Kofi Annan has sent him to offer UN support to free and fair elections here and also express concern about some violent incidents that no one desires.

The visiting envoy said he would like to encourage the leaders of political parties to resolve their differences in the political process through dialogue.

In the afternoon, the UN envoy called on President/ Chief Adviser

Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban.

The president told the envoy that all steps have been taken to hold free, fair, neutral and peaceful parliamentary elections and urged the United Nations to send observers to Bangladesh.

Listing the measures taken to remove hurdles to the polls, the president told the envoy that the chief election commissioner had gone on leave and two new election commissioners had been appointed to satisfy political parties' demands to create a congenial atmosphere for free and fair polls. He also told the envoy that the EC had announced the election schedule.

In addition, contract jobs at different levels have been cancelled and necessary reshuffles in the administration done for impartial elections, he said.

"The party who will secure electoral mandate will form the next government," the president told the envoy.

He thanked the UN secretary general for extending cooperation in advancing democratic process in Bangladesh.

In response, the special envoy said the UN does not like to see any political violence in Bangladesh and

noted that all problems can be resolved through the holding of peaceful elections.

The envoy requested the chief adviser to take steps to establish peace in the country.

Jenness informed the president that he would convey the UN secretary general's concern about "political violence" during his meetings with the leaders of the major political parties.

Later, Jenness met Awami League President Sheikh Hasina and offered UN assistance to advance the democratic process in Bangladesh.

"I've come here as special envoy to support a free, fair and democratic election as the people of this country want a peaceful election," he told reporters after an hour-long meeting with the AL chief at Sudha Sadan.

Jenness hoped the issues, whatever they are, should be resolved through dialogue.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, who was present at the meeting, told the reporters that UN wants free, fair and neutral elections and has offered its assistance if required.

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BNP wants probe into all incidents of bureaucrats' political links

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A four-member BNP team led by former education minister M Osman Farruk yesterday met with the cabinet secretary and the establishment secretary and expressed the party's support for the caretaker government's move to probe all incidents of bureaucrats' involvement in political activities.

"Not only the 'Uttara incident', the similar previous incidents like 'Janatar Mancha in 1996' and 'Panda Garden meeting in 2001' should also be investigated,"

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BNP, AL TEAMS MEET ADVISERS

BNP wants timely polls, AL seeks EC reforms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A BNP delegation met Finance Adviser Akbar Ali Khan and Energy Adviser Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury yesterday to assure them of BNP-led four-party alliance's all out support for holding the upcoming general election timely in a free and neutral manner.

Akbar Ali Khan said the delegation informed them that BNP is eager to defuse the prevailing political crisis and it wants all political parties to participate in the election.

Former education minister M

Osman Farruk led the delegation which included former secretaries Mofazzal Karim, Shafiqul Islam, and Sayed Shujauddin.

An Awami League (AL) delegation comprising HT Imam and M Mokammel Haque also met the advisers earlier to discuss their party's demand for electoral reforms.

Osman Farruk said BNP wantsto provide all necessary political support to the caretaker government for holding the next general election timely and neutrally.

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Why actions will not be taken for arrear phone bills

Court asks 2 ex-BNP lawmakers

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday asked two former BNP lawmakers to explain by December 14 why actions should not be taken against them to realise telephone bills totalling Tk 57,000 and applicable fines from them.

A magistrate of the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court passed the order after filing of two cases by an accounts officer (West) of Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB).

The lawmakers being sued are

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PHOTO: STAR

Roads around Bangladesh Secretariat in the capital remain empty yesterday as police closed them to prevent Jubo Sangram Parishad's secretariat besiege programme.

14-party youth wing besieges Secretariat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jubo Sangram Parishad, youth wing of 14-party alliance and like-minded parties, yesterday demanded revision of the election schedule and firing of those government officials who were involved in 'Uttara Conspiracy'.

At a rally during the sit-in programme in front of the Secretariat in the city, they also urged the advisers to depoliticise the administration to ensure an environment for free and fair election.

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Traffic suffers as cops blockade roads

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police blockades on the roads in about a two-kilometre radius of the Secretariat yesterday led to a severe traffic jam, causing untold sufferings to the commuters in the city yesterday.

To deal with the sit-in of the Jubo Sangram Parishad, the youth unit of the Awami League-led 14-party combine, the police kept the roads in Matsya Bhaban, High

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President 'happy' with EC job for polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election Commission (EC) Secretary Abdur Rashid Sarkar yesterday said President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed is satisfied with the EC activities for conducting the next parliamentary elections scheduled for January 21.

"We briefed the president on our overall preparatory work, including announcement of the schedule for holding the next election, and he expressed his satisfaction," Sarkar told reporters after meeting Iajuddin at Bangabhaban yesterday afternoon.

Asked about the president's reaction to the prevailing situation centring the announcement of polls schedule, he said, "The president would have told me had there been any reason for his dissatisfaction."

Earlier, the EC secretary met the president late Sunday night and next morning the EC announced the polls schedule. The surreptitious move of the EC poses threats to pitch the country into further political turmoil as the political arena had already been divided over the schedule.

The Awami League-led 14-party alliance, Liberal Democratic Party-

led Jatiya Oikya Front, and a few other political parties outright rejected the schedule, demanding rescheduling.

Along with their street agitations, these political parties even initiated legal battle on Sunday, filing writ petitions with the High Court to challenge the validity of the president's assumption of the post of chief adviser, his manner of exercising executive power, and the EC move to declare election schedule before finalising voter list.

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14-party sit-in today around Bangabhaban

Demand for EC reconstitution, CA's resignation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

For the second time this week, the 14-party alliance and some other political parties will stage a sit-in around the Bangabhaban today to press home their demands for cancellation of the polls schedule, correction of the updated voter list, 'meaningful' reconstitution of the Election Commission (EC) and resignation of the chief adviser.

The Awami League (AL)-led coalition, Liberal Democratic Party

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