

Yunus writes letter to all

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declaring the decision to join politics and form a political party following your encouragements. I also told you that the probable name for the party would be 'Nagorik Shakti'. This time, in my third letter, I write to you to inform you that I have decided to stand aside my efforts to form a political party. Encouraged by your supports and motivated by the hope of creating a new political stream, I took the decision to join politics. By taking this decision, I was ready to put all my life's works behind me to enter a new life and I enthusiastically started the work to form a political party. As the first step in forming a party, I started the process of building a strong organising team. The plan was to introduce the team to everyone after the ban on indoor politics is withdrawn and move forward with the formation of the party. But, despite my all-out efforts I could not create a team that can boost my confidence. In the light of the experience I have gained from this process, I think, I will not be successful even if I wait for a longer period. So, I have taken the decision to stand aside by accepting the reality that it is correct not to go any further down the path.

A great sense of hope has prevailed in the country following the declaration of the state of emergency and the formation of a new caretaker government. New doors have been opened in the political arena. A new opportunity has been created to bury the hostile, divisive and conflict-centric politics by creating a political stream under the new leadership to take the country's economy forward. Everyone has understood that these opportunities do not come always. Everyone in this country feels that the impossible can be made possible through the innovations if good political will, competent leadership and good governance can be ensured.

I decided to join politics in this perspective. We had a single dream: to create a corruption-free political stream that is unified, consensual, empathetic, peaceful, secular, and committed to radical economic growth; a dream to turn the country into a self-assured nation by freeing the people from conflict, distrust and disappointment. We all know where we have to go. When we know the destination, we can try our best to reach -- I took my initiatives with this belief.

You have responded to my call by sending many letters, faxes, emails, and sms to support my initiative. You have given advices by sending letters to newspapers. You have also given your suggestions in newspaper post-editorials and television discussions. A number of you have informed me after you have formed preparatory teams in your areas. A number of expatriates have informed me after forming their committees. Young people both here and from overseas have voluntarily come forward to give their time and talent. I am grateful to all of you. I am extremely sorry to stand aside politics after giving you the hope. I have taken this decision early so that further disappointment does not

increase.

I dedicated all my strength towards forming a party. As part of the first step, I concentrated on forming an organisational team. I wanted to create it in such a way so that it creates confidence in people and so that it can generate massive political force even though it is a new party.

After I announced that I would form a party, people known or unknown to me, politicians, and people who aren't politicians but are interested in politics contacted me. I urged them to join the party. I also contacted people who did not contact me but whom I thought would strengthen the party with their presence. When I was on foreign trips, I daily contacted several people. The people who were working on my behalf towards forming a party also continued in maintaining contacts with them.

Through this communication process, one thing became clearer that those who were encouraging me will not join politics themselves and will not give public support because of their own problems. And those who are in political parties, will not leave their parties, at least, now. They might join later if the political situation changes. After calculation, I realised that nothing much is being accumulated. So, whom will I form the strong team with?

I went ahead with creating the party by not breaking my pledge not to veer from the components required to build a political party that is transparent, corruption-free and successful. I went forward with the approach that I thought would best establish a new political path. From working on this, it became increasingly clear to me that the people who I needed with me to present a strong and bright alternative to the people, will not be with me. Some of them are involved with political parties, some of them who are not in politics but are enthusiastic about it. They all want a new political path to be established and they are enthusiastic about changing the country's political culture. But, I could not bring them with me. Those who initially showed encouragement, I saw that they are becoming less and less encouraging.

That is when I started to question myself should I keep going or should I stall the process and wait? Or should I completely stop the initiative to form a party? I opposed the formation of a weak party. Instead of trying to create a new political arena with a weak party, let us wait for someone else to make the effort and succeed.

I am trying. Those who were with me from wherever they were are also trying. We are again presenting the need for a new political stream through our efforts. Now someone else has to come forward to fill this void. I hope they become immensely successful.

This country is at the doorstep of great potential. The next five years are a very important period for us. This is the time of change. It is the time to make big political and economic decisions and to implement

those decisions. It is the time to make Bangladesh the hub for regional commerce and communication by taking advantage of our geo-strategic location by linking with regional transport systems and establishing the deep-sea port. Our country is filled with the rich coal and gas reserves in a world thirsty for energy. It is the time to use these vast mineral resources for the country's development. It is the time to make Bangladesh the best country in using Information Technology. It is the time to build up the country's human resources and making it resource for the nation and the world by establishing a global standard of education and training. It is the time to ensure that the remittance from non-resident Bangladeshis are used productively and link their skills and money to the country's development. It is the time to strengthen local government.

The time has come to shift the nation's economic and political gears. The nation's spirit is ready to graduate to far higher levels. What is needed now is the creation of a new political party and leadership who can properly and skillfully do this.

We should not fail in our duty to change the political and economic situation.

I express my deep and sincere gratitude and thanks to everyone who gave me their love and compassion despite my faults and limitations.

Muhammad Yunus
May 3, 2007

Rejoinder

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relationship or into any type of partnership with Tarique Rahman, senior joint secretary-general of BNP.

Moreover, the allegation of Anis Ahmed being arrested is completely untrue, said the rejoinder signed by Abdul Rahim, executive director and head of legal and corporate affairs of MGH Group.

"With respect to refunding money gained through ill-means appeared shocking given the legitimate businesses of MGH group representing world class brands as well as companies in Bangladesh and abroad thus taking the new spirit of Bangladesh to the global market," the rejoinder added.

OUR REPLY

The rejoinder did not categorically refute the allegation of refunding money to the government exchequer by MGH Group. The Daily Star report was mainly about retrieving illegally earned money by the government from seven businessmen and Anis Ahmed was one of these.

These businessmen were involved in a shady deal -- sale of a foreign tea company. The deal was made abroad early last year in secret, but the payment was made from Bangladesh through illegal channels. Law enforcement agencies recently forced the businessmen to pay the amount to the exchequer through several pay orders.

EC to hold talks

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respond to this question now."

CEC ATM Shamsul Huda at a meeting with the law adviser on April 4 asked the government to withdraw the ban on indoor politics so that EC can hold dialogue with political parties first.

But the ban continues, and in this situation the EC opened its planned series of talks by holding a discussion with eminent personalities on April 26.

Sources in the caretaker government said possibility of withdrawing the embargo soon is slim.

Meanwhile, the EC at an inter-ministerial meeting at its secretariat yesterday discussed ways to implement its mega project for simultaneously preparing voter list with photographs and national identity cards.

The EC secretary however said the meeting was held to collect some information from the ministries and departments concerned.

Secretaries to the ministries of home affairs, planning and LG&RD, and director generals of the bureau of statistics, and passport directorate were present at the meeting chaired by the CEC.

"Assistance from the home ministry is required if national identity cards are to be prepared along with voter list as the ministry has a project for such identity cards," the EC secretary said.

The LG&RD ministry can provide information about registration of births and deaths to prevent duplication in preparing voter list, he pointed out.

Replying to a query, Humayun said the electoral roll ordinance and rules will be amended before starting the task of preparing voter list with photographs.

A pilot project for studying feasibility of the voter list project in a rural and an urban area is expected to start towards the end of this month, he said.

The EC is now working for amending the service rules for its secretariat staff, he said. "Discriminatory provisions in the service rules will be amended."

Examination of the 320 controversial upazila election officers will be held on May 18, he said.

Competent judges

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Chief Justice Mohammad Ruhul Amin on Sunday said "the damage done to the judiciary in the recent years will take more than 20 years to remedy".

Different quarters including the lawyers and civil society members welcomed the statement but were unanimous in calling for immediate actions to cleanse the court system of politicisation and the judges lacking qualifications.

The interim government too has dropped hints that it is weighing up options for restoring the image of the higher judiciary. Law Adviser Mainul Hossain Wednesday said the judges in question must go and as a last resort the government might opt for the Supreme Judicial Council.

Referring to the chief justice's statement, Mostafa Kamal said the issue has long been seeping through various channels and he [chief justice] has made a bold statement by making it public.

"I have strong feelings that the chief justice who is a man of principle and is credited with being a no-nonsense man must be having some programmes up his sleeve to remedy the problem that he has so boldly highlighted."

On possible approaches to dealing with the judiciary, Justice Kamal said the Supreme Judicial Council is applicable in a situation where a judge ceases to be capable of properly performing the functions of his office by reason of physical and mental incapacity, or if a judge becomes guilty of gross misconduct.

He added, "I would respectfully say that if a judge cannot understand law, cannot appreciate facts, cannot read or dictate judgment in the open court, it is not too difficult to prove that by reason of physical or mental incapacity he has ceased to be capable of properly performing the functions of his office."

"Painful though it may be I see no other way but to invoke the Supreme Judicial Council if such cases of incorrigible judges exist."

He said that there may be a second group of judges who are technically above board and may not have committed any mischief attached to the provisions of Supreme Judicial Council but because of their behaviour in and out of the courts, or general appearance and movement they do not appear worthy to be judges of the highest court.

The former chief of the apex court then spoke of a practice where the ones of the type mentioned above might be disciplined by a group of retired chief justices who operate gratis at the request of the chief

justice to oversee the functioning of everyone holding constitutional posts.

He added, "Our country may try this informal and effective in-house procedure for disciplining the errant judges."

He then lamented that parliament has not yet enacted any law prescribing other qualifications for appointment as a judge of the Supreme Court.

Recollecting his days as a lawyer, he said only five to six High Court judges could comfortably and successfully discharge the duties for the East Pakistan judiciary.

Over the years, the number of judges, lawyers, and cases have risen but the backlog of cases has yet to come down, he said adding that the current situation in the higher courts warrants a regime looking after load management, case flow, and matters relating to inventory.

He also emphasized the need for a court administration equipped with modern technologies and adequate technical staff to overcome the problems confronting the judiciary.

CA calls

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rising above all differences to establish a happy, prosperous and self-reliant Bangladesh.

Referring to his recent address to the nation, the CA said his government is committed to keep the nation free from any religious and social division.

He said the government is committed to ensure equal rights for the people of all religions and faiths, which is constitutionally recognised.

"Whatever are the achievements and successes, the country belongs to all. Here, all irrespective of caste, creed and religion are the citizens of the country."

He said Bangladesh is a bright example of communal harmony in the world. People of different religious communities have set up a great tradition in Bangladesh by living peacefully for decades after decades.

Greeting the members of the Buddhist community on the occasion of Buddha Purnima, the chief adviser said they belong to a big religious community of the world and they have a big responsibility to establish peace and harmony in this region as well as in the world.

Religious Affairs Adviser Maj Gen (ret'd) Dr ASM Matur Rahman, Sangharaj Dharmasen Mohathero, Sanghanayak S Dharmapala and Parbatya Bouddha Sangha President Praganando Mohathero also spoke on the occasion.

Ex-minister Mosharraf

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Mosharraf's accomplices took Tk 7 lakh from her husband Sujat Mondol for sending him to Italy. Although they failed to send her husband to the country, they further demanded Tk 2 lakh from her husband.

Following the case, Metropolitan Magistrate Mizanur Rahman directed the officer in charge (OC) of Jatrabari Police Station to register the complaint as an FIR (first information report) upon investigation into the matter.

EXTORTION CASES AGAINST MILON

Two extortion cases were filed yesterday against ex-state minister for education ANM Ehsanul Haque Milon with a cognisance court in Chandpur, reports our correspondent.

Mostafa Kamal from Koroish village in Kochua upazila and Mohammad Shohag from Kochua sadar filed the cases.

In the both the cases, it was alleged that on November 22 last year, Milon's accomplices demanded toll from Mostafa Kamal.

On March 25, 2005, as Kamal refused to comply with their demand, Milon's goons assaulted Kamal at Koroish in Kochua. They also assaulted Shohag at Monpura area of Kochua.

Following the cases, the magistrate ordered the OC of Kochua Police Station to investigate into the cases.

CASE AGAINST ALAMGIR

ACC deputy directors (DD) Sharmin Ferdousi and Jibon Krishna Roy, also the IOs of the case, submitted the charge sheet of the case filed against former state minister for planning Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir with Tejgaon Police Station on March 6.

The IOs in the charge sheet said Alamgir committed a crime for not disclosing accurate financial information to both National Board of Revenue (NBR) and the ACC since he did not mention about his savings balance of Tk 1.17 crore in six fixed deposit accounts with IFIC Bank at Karwan Bazar branch to both NBR and the ACC.

CASE AGAINST NASIR

ACC DDs Sharmin Ferdousi and Abdullah Al Zahid, also the IOs of the case, submitted the charge sheet of the case filed against former state minister for civil aviation and tourism Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin and his son Helal with Gulshan Police Station on March 6.

In their charge sheet, the IOs mentioned that the two accused had accumulated assets worth over Tk 24.39 crore through illegal means.

Moreover, Nasir's son Helal transferred Tk 2.83 crore from their

different bank accounts after joint forces arrested Nasir, the IOs said.

CASE AGAINST AMAN

ACC DDs Abdullah Al Zahid and Jibon Krishna Roy, the IOs of the case, submitted the charge sheet of the case filed against former state minister for labour and employment Amanullah Aman and his wife Sabera with Kafrul Police Station.

In the charge sheet, the IOs said Aman and his wife acquired properties including house and vehicles valued over Tk 10 crore, even though the FIR (first information report) of the case mentioned Tk 8.28 crore.

It said there is an ample discrepancy between income and expenditure of the former BNP lawmaker from Keraniganj. He had made enormous wealth through abuse of power and bribery.

Besides, the DDs accused Aman's wife Sabera Aman of giving false information in her statement to the anti-graft body.

ISTIAQ SADIQ'S BAIL

The same court yesterday granted bail to owner of Sky Auto Istiaq Sadiq, arrested along with two others on March 7 under section 16(2) of the Emergency Power Ordinance 2007.

This is the first time the Sessions Court passed a bail order.

Two others are managing director of private satellite TV channel ntv Enayetur Rahman and former BNP MP Harunur Rashid from Chapainawabganj 3 constituency. They were arrested for tax evasion during import of a luxurious automobile by abusing duty-free car import privilege for members of parliament (MP).

Harunur Rashid MP purchased the luxury vehicle, a Hummer, on April 25, 2005 using his duty free privilege and sold it to Istiaq violating his bond made to the parliament that he would use it for at least three years before handing it over to anyone else, the police said in the forwarding report, adding that Istiaq later sold it to Enayet.

Defamation Case dismissed

Another Dhaka court yesterday dismissed the defamation case against Kazi Tajul Islam Faruq, who had filed a criminal case against Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina for extorting Tk 3 crore.

Metropolitan Magistrate AJM Abdullah Baqui passed the order saying that the person who filed the case is not a victim of losing his reputation, name and fame.

An AL activist Munshi Raich Uddin of Badda in the capital filed the case with the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate.

Mujahid

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Mainuddin demanded Tk 25 lakh from him on June 25, 2006 for development of Kandola Nayabazar owned by him with government assistance with the help of the other accused.

He gave Tk 5 lakh to Mainuddin in two phases, says the case statement.

"The accused gave me death threat when I asked them to return the money, as they didn't implement the development work at the bazar", the plaintiff said.

The court ordered the officer-in-charge (OC) of the local police station to investigate the matter.

UK offers

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requirement of Bangladesh.

Asked if she thinks Bangladesh is still at risk of militants' threat after execution of six JMB militants, Leslie said every country is at risk of militants' threat.

"What we need to do is not getting into business of pointing finger at each other and what's important is to work together," she said.

Leslie described Bangladesh as a natural friend of Britain having human contact, business contact and political contact between the two countries.

William Nye of the British Home Office accompanied Ms Leslie during the meeting.

British High Commissioner Anwar Chowdhury, who was also present at the meeting, said UK has specific proposals to increase cooperation in countering terrorism.

He said both Bangladesh and Britain are willing to work together against the global threat of terrorism.

On May 1 bomb blasts in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet, the British envoy would not like to comment since the matter is under investigation.

He appreciated the government's quick response to the incident and determination to catch those involved.

Foreign Adviser Iftakhar Ahmed Chowdhury mentioned his meeting with British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett in London last month when they agreed to increase development, economic and political cooperation.

The adviser said the UK defence director's visit is a follow-up to further deepen the existing relations and cooperation in different fields.

Another petition

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after their cantonment residence.

Earlier, a habeas corpus petition was filed with the High Court challenging the reported restrictions on the movements of Khaleeda Zia, which the government in a press note refused.

BB seeks

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are yet to be confirmed.

Meanwhile on April 30, National Board of Revenue (NBR) asked all commercial banks for the banking information of 45 people and companies, including Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad. The rest include politicians, their relatives and some real estate companies, NBR sources said.

The NBR asked for the information of these people and companies to resolve tax cases against them as it thinks that they have different sources of income, but did not show their sources in their tax returns, the sources added.

Chandrika

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accorded to her," a court official said.

Three lawyers petitioned the court last year, arguing that the fundamental rights of the 20 million people in Sri Lanka were violated as a result of the extravagant spending on Kumaratunga.

The former president retained a staff of 198 and used 36 vehicles after she stepped down. The constitution allows a former president to use two cars and a staff of about 25.

Last year, Kumaratunga said she had returned the gift of a prime property located near parliament and was moving to a state bungalow at Colombo's fashionable Independence Square area.

Goalpara power

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overhauling work from today or tomorrow after they identify the faults in the plant.

Currently, one 60-MW and two 28-MW barge-mounted units of the station are also out of order. Sources in the WZPDCL said all efforts to improve the nagging power crisis went in vain, as age-old units of the station have already lost their ability to produce at full capacity.

The 21 districts of Khulna and Barisal divisions and greater Faridpur under WZPDCL were supplied with 310 MW of electricity on Wednesday against their daily demand of 600 MW, a WZPDCL source said. Khulna city received only 53 MW against its daily demand of 112 MW.

The 110-MW unit of Goalpara Power Station tripped 17 times in the last four months. Each time it tripped it needed Tk 8 lakh for repairs of the boiler tubes and resume production. Yet, it failed to continue power generation for even three days at a stretch.

Sources of Goalpara Power Station said a full overhauling of the 110-MW plant would cost over Tk 150 crore.

US opens talks

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Sean McCormack.

Iraq and the United States hope Thursday and Friday's conference of nearly 50 nations at this Egyptian Red Sea resort will rally international support particularly from Arab nations for an ambitious plan to stabilize Iraq.

Iraq is pressing for forgiveness of debt and for Arabs to take greater action to prevent foreign fighters from joining the Iraqi insurgency. Arab countries, in turn, demand his government ensure greater participation by Sunni Arabs in Iraq's political process, echoing the United States.

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki opened the conference by urging all countries to forgive his country's enormous foreign debts estimated at about \$50 billion. Another \$100 billion has already been written off by the Paris Club of lenders.

But Saudi Arabia's foreign minister, Saud al-Faisal, told the conference only that his country "has expressed its readiness to alleviate some of the debts on Iraq" and was currently in discussions with Iraqi officials to deal with the issue "in line with the regulations and bases of the Paris Club."

Iraqi and U.S. officials had said Saudi Arabia privately had already committed to forgiving 80 percent of Iraq's \$17 billion debt.

Al-Faisal, addressing the conference, renewed a Saudi offer of \$1 billion in loans to Iraq, on the condition that the money be distributed equally among "Iraq's geographical sectors."

Al-Maliki pledged to institute reforms to boost Sunni participation but said forgiving Iraq's debts was the only way the country could rebuild.

Rice's meeting with Moallem marked the first such high-level talks since the February 2005 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. Syria denies it had anything to do with the killing, but U.S. and European officials have since shunned the Damascus government.

Iraq and many Arab countries have been particularly eager, even desperate, for such talks between the United States and its Mideast opponents saying they are only the way to stabilize Iraq and lessen Iran's growing influence in the region.

Rice has also said she was willing to meet Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, after years of accusations and name-calling between the nations. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had also expressed interest in such a meeting.

During Thursday's session, the two sat on far ends of the large conference hall where the ministers and top diplomats from nearly 50 nations gathered. They both attended a lunch along with the other foreign ministers.

"All of us here today are bound to the future of Iraq. What happens in Iraq has profound consequences which will affect each and every one of us," Rice said in a speech to the conference.

In his speech, Mottaki blamed Iraq's turmoil on "the flawed policies of the occupying powers" referring to the U.S.

Iraq has offered to mediate between Iran and the U.S., an aide to al-Maliki told the Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the discussions.

Al-Maliki told Rice on Wednesday that "a rapprochement must take place between you and the nations of the region to solve the issue of Iraq, particularly Syria and Iran," according to Iraqi Planning Minister Ali Baban, a Sunni.

The U.S. accuses Iran of fueling Iraq's violence by arming and backing militants there, a charge Iran denies.

The two-day conference in this Red Sea resort town brings together officials from Iraq, the U.S., Iran, Russia, China, Europe and Arab nations.

TOP REBEL LEADER KILLED

AFP reports from Baghdad: US and Iraqi forces have killed the most senior insurgent leader in Iraq, Deputy Interior Minister Hussein Ali Kamal said yesterday, in a major victory for the allies' security plan.

Kamal said the militant chieftain known as Omar al-Baghdadi, the head of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq, was killed on

Wednesday in an armed clash in northwest Baghdad.

"His body is under the control of the interior ministry," the junior minister told AFP. "His body has been identified."

The Islamic State of Iraq is an umbrella group of Sunni insurgents dominated by Al-Qaeda in Iraq.

It has been blamed for attacks on Shiite civilians and has claimed responsibility for some of the bloodiest assaults on Iraqi security forces.

Separately, US military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Chris Garver said the military would hold a news conference later yesterday to announce a "recent success against a senior leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq."

According to an Iraqi security official in the northern city of Tikrit, Baghdadi's mourning family had already begun receiving well-wishers in his hometown of Dhuliyah, around 75 kilometres (40 miles) north of Baghdad.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Baghdadi is a 37-year-old law graduate whose real name was Mohib and was well known in the region, itself known for its Al-Qaeda sympathies.

Kamal said Baghdadi was killed in a clash in the Ghazaliyah neighbourhood of northwest Baghdad, a flashpoint on one of the city's many sectarian fault lines and a focus of recent security operations.

His death would be the first major success of a 10-week-old joint US