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US wants talks for sake of free, fair polls

Zeya calls on PM, home, law ministers,
says her country is for deeper
engagement with Dhaka

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Washington wants dialogue between political parties for a free, fair, and peaceful election, said Uzra Zeya, the visiting under secretary of state for civilian security, democracy, and human rights.

"...You know, we are all for dialogue that we do not have any direct involvement in ...," she said responding to a question on the US stance on the Awami League and BNP being at loggerheads over polls time government and refusing to hold talks.

She said the large political rallies on Wednesday free of serious violence are a good harbinger that Washington would like to see replicated.

Zeya said she heard strong commitment from the prime minister and all the ministers she spoke to supporting free, fair, and peaceful elections.

"The United States as part of our global human rights policy supports free and fair and peaceful elections and we want to do our part as a longtime partner of Bangladesh to help make this possible," she said while speaking at a joint press briefing with Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen at the state guest house Padma after lunch yesterday.

She said the US looks to deepen engagement with Bangladesh over the next 50 years.

Zeya, who was accompanied by US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Donald Lu and other US officials, was on a four-day visit since July 11. She was to leave early today.

She visited the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar on Wednesday and held meetings with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban, Law Minister Anisul Huq and Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan at their ministries yesterday.

She also met civil society members, and Prime Minister's Private Industry and Investment Adviser Salman Fazlur Rahman over dinner yesterday.

Her visit comes when relations between Dhaka and Washington are somewhat strained because of a recent policy that restricts US visas for "individuals and their immediate family members if they are responsible for, or complicit in, undermining the democratic election process in Bangladesh".

In December 2021, Washington imposed sanctions on Rab and some of its officials and did not invite Bangladesh to Biden's Summit for Democracy in 2021 and 2023.

STRONG DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

During her meeting with the PM, both spoke about good governance and building strong democratic institutions.

"The United States looks forward to continued collaboration supportive to an inclusive and democratic Bangladesh, in which all the people of Bangladesh can thrive," she said, according to a US embassy statement.

She emphasised on freedom of journalists to report without fear of retaliation or intimidation and the vital role the civil society plays in democracies -- advancing respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedoms of expression and association.

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Uzra Zeya, US under secretary for civilian security, democracy, and human rights, calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban. The senior American diplomat discussed elections and Rohingya crisis, among other issues, with the premier yesterday.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF US EMBASSY

COUNTERING BNP DEMO

AL to stay alert, march city streets

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

The ruling Awami League will bring out processions on July 18-19 as part of its strategy to counter the BNP's two-day street agitation.

The party yesterday decided to hold what it termed "a march for peace and development".

Besides, leaders and activists of Dhaka north and south AL will be especially vigilant on those days, said sources.

The party's General Secretary Obaidul Quader and Dhaka division AL's Organising Secretary Mirza Azam yesterday held talks with the Dhaka north and south city unit leaders about the programmes.

Since December, the ruling party has been holding programmes to counter the BNP's ongoing movement. It will continue to do so until the national election, slated for January next.

The BNP, at its Wednesday rally, announced marches in all city and district headquarters on July 18-19 to press home its one-point movement for polls under a non-party interim government.

At 3:00pm on July 18, Dhaka south AL leaders and activists will bring out a procession from Institution of Engineers, SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

BNP'S ONE-POINT MOVEMENT

Grassroots wanted it tough, top brass won't rush things

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

After holding a "mammoth" rally on Wednesday, the top BNP leadership is all charged up and ready to take the movement to the next stage to materialise their demand for election under a non-partisan interim administration.

Although there are mixed reactions within the party for chalking out programmes that many have termed "routine", the top leadership believes thousands of party men will continue to show up for the marches as the grassroots have shown their preparedness for tougher programmes in the coming days, said party sources.

"Yesterday's (Wednesday) rally laid a foundation to our movement, which gave a boost to our confidence as we go for tougher programmes in the coming days," Abdul Awal Mintoo, vice chairman of the party, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Despite police attempts to prevent party members from joining the rally, the meeting was peaceful, the gathering huge and the youth participation noticeable. All these went in favour of the party.

The ranks and files of the party were very excited about the announcement of the one-point movement, which was reflected in the huge turnout.

"The meeting was different at least on two counts -- participation of the young people and also the common people," said Mintoo, adding that it indicates the common people are joining the BNP's movement.

If the party can keep the momentum going, more people will take to the streets extending their support for the BNP's cause, party

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BB begins forex reporting as per IMF manual

Reserves stand at \$23.65
under new method

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

Bangladesh Bank yesterday began publishing foreign currency reserves as per the International Monetary Fund's BPM6 manual, in a move that will ensure that the country's dollar stockpile is reported accurately.

As per the balance of payments and investment position manual (BPM6), Bangladesh's gross foreign currency reserves stood at \$23.65 billion.

This is enough to meet four months' import bills given the current import trend.

The move to compiling and reporting the country's gross foreign currency reserves as per the BPM6 comes as part of the conditions agreed with the IMF for the \$4.7 billion loan programme.

The government committed to adopting the BPM6, which is followed faithfully by central banks around the world, by June 30.

As per BPM6, gross foreign reserves include gold, cash US dollar, bonds and SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

EU TEAM'S SYLHET VISIT

Law and order, political situation came up for talks

DWOHA CHOWDHURY

A seven-member Election Exploratory Mission of the European Union visited Sylhet yesterday to discuss with senior officials the overall political and law and order situation in the district.

The mission held separate meetings with the deputy commissioner of Sylhet, the chief executive officer of Sylhet City Corporation (SCC), and the superintendent of Sylhet district police.

During the meeting with Mohammad Abdullah Al Mamun, superintendent of Sylhet district police, the EU mission wanted to know whether there is any security threat to a possible EU election observation mission for Bangladesh's general election, said Sheikh Md Saleem, additional SP (crime and operations) of Sylhet district police.

"The SP informed the delegation that the law and order in Sylhet is very good and there is no security risk to the possible EU election observation mission," Saleem added.

Muhammed Badrul Haque, CEO of the city corporation, said the mission enquired about how the Election Commission cooperate with the administration and the police.

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'TORTURE BY COPS' Natore court orders SP to sue five policemen

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Natore

A Natore court yesterday ordered the district superintendent of police to file a case against five policemen for torturing three men in custody.

The five cops are Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) of Baraigram Sharif Al Rajib, Officer-in-Charge Md Ujjal Hossain of Lalpur Police Station, sub-inspectors Md Zahid Hasan and Omar Farooq Shimul, and a constable.

Senior Judicial Magistrate of Lalpur Cognisance Court Md Muslim Uddin also ordered the SP to report to the court tomorrow.

Bench assistant of Lalpur Cognisance Court Abdullah Biswas told The Daily Star that in statements given to the court, Md Sohag Hossain, Md Shamim Molla, and SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Shop owners and their employees block Gulshan-1 intersection yesterday after the Dhaka North City Corporation sealed off the adjacent Gulshan Shopping Centre which was declared risky earlier. The demonstration led to huge tailbacks in Gulshan, Banani, and nearby areas. Story on page 2.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Bus kills student, then crushes boy to death while fleeing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A recklessly driven bus yesterday hit a university student and while fleeing the scene of the accident, it got on to a pavement and killed a boy.

The incident happened near Rampura bridge around 4:30pm.

Physically challenged Mehedi Hasan Parvez, 13, who was with her mother, died on the spot while Jahid Hasan, a student of North China Electric Power University, succumbed to his injuries at Dhaka Medical College Hospital around 5:30pm.

Mizanur Rahman, a sub-inspector of Hatirjheel Police Station, said a bus of Victor Paribahan first hit the youth on the road and ran over the boy on the pavement around 50 yards away.

"Parvez's mother was asking for alms keeping him lying on the pavement," he added.

Imran Hossain, brother of Jahid, said they were heading towards Police Plaza in Gulshan in Hatirjheel when the bus hit his brother.

Jahid had been taking online classes at the university for two years. He was supposed to go to China in August, he said.

Hailing from Munshiganj, Jahid used to live in Staff Quarters area of the capital.

Sub-inspector Sharmin Akter Eva, of Hatirjheel Police Station, said police seized the bus and detained driver Arif Hossain, 31.

The bodies were sent to the DMCH morgue for autopsies.