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## Justice, fair trial must be ensured for Prof Yunus Says TIB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh yesterday emphasised the need for ensuring fair trial and justice for the country's sole Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus and said the case against him should be treated with utmost importance.

In a statement, the anti-graft watchdog said integrity and freedom of the justice system are facing an "acid test", as the case against Prof Yunus has already sparked "deep controversy" at home and abroad.

There is no alternative to ensuring the utmost integrity and independence of the justice system, it added.

TIB Executive Director Ittekkharuzzaman said the right of every citizen to get justice is recognised by the constitution.

Apart from people within the country expressing concern and apprehension, renowned world figures have termed the case against Prof Yunus "a form of harassment" since the beginning, he said. He said the global media's portrayal

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## AN AVIAN SYMPHONY

Two egrets, out to get their own haul of goodies, circling over the net cast by fishermen in Rangamati's Kaptai lake early in the morning. The lake provides a habitat for various fish species, including chapila, kachki, niletika, kal baus, mrigel, and carp. When birds gather alongside fishermen to catch some fish, the harmony between the natural world and humans comes alive.

PHOTO: MONJUR MORSHED

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## Be objective in evaluation of polls outcome EC urges foreign diplomats

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission has urged the foreign diplomats to objectively assess the outcome of the upcoming national election and form "correct views and opinions".

"I earnestly request your excellencies high commissioners and ambassadors to objectively assess the outcome of the parliamentary election and form correct views and opinions," Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal said at a briefing in the city's Sonargaon Hotel yesterday.

He said the EC will take all-out efforts to make the polls free, fair, peaceful and participatory and that the election process will be made as transparent as possible. "We hope the election and results will be credible to all."

The briefing comes ahead of the polls on Sunday, which will be closely watched by the international community as they considered the last two national polls lacked credibility.

The BNP and some other parties are boycotting the polls.

The foreign ambassadors frequently met the election commissioners, political parties and stressed on free, fair, participatory and peaceful elections. The US also announced a visa policy, saying

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## Israel focuses assault on southern Gaza

Death toll in the enclave now 22,438

AGENCIES

Israeli shelling killed 14 Palestinians yesterday in Khan Younis in a southern coastal area of the Gaza Strip packed with people who had fled attacks in other parts of the enclave, Gaza health ministry officials said.

The dead included nine children, an official told Reuters.

Gaza residents also said Israeli planes and tanks bombarded three refugee camps in the centre of the shattered enclave in heavier attacks than in previous days.

The latest action took place as Israel's offensive in the enclave neared the three-month mark amid international concern that the conflict was spreading beyond Gaza, drawing in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, Hezbollah forces on the Lebanon-Israel border, and Red Sea shipping lanes.

Fears were heightened after a drone strike on Tuesday killed Hamas deputy leader Saleh al-Arouri in the Lebanese capital Beirut. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah vowed on Wednesday that his powerful Iran-backed Shia militia "cannot be silent" following the killing.

Nasrallah said his forces would fight to the finish if Israel chose to extend the war to Lebanon, but he made no concrete threats to act against Israel in support of its ally Hamas.

Israeli military spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari declined to comment when asked what Israel was doing to prepare for a potential Hezbollah response, saying only: "We are focused on the fight against Hamas."

Israel unleashed a ground and air blitz of Gaza on October 7, and the total recorded Palestinian death toll had reached 22,438 by yesterday - almost 1 percent of its 2.3 million population, according to the Gaza health ministry. Some 125 Palestinians were killed and 318 wounded in the past 24 hours, the ministry added.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was heading for the Middle East, including a stop in Israel, to continue "diplomatic consultations" on the conflict, a US official said.

During yesterday morning's reported strike in Al-Mawasi on the western side of Khan Younis, health ministry officials said nine children were among the 14 dead. Israeli shells

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## IS claims Iran twin blasts

AFP, Tehran

The Islamic State jihadist group yesterday said that it carried out the twin bombings which killed at least 84 people at a memorial ceremony in Iran.

The claim from IS came as Iran observed a day of national mourning for those killed in Wednesday's blasts. The blast also wounded 284 people.

In a statement on Telegram, IS said two of its members "activated their explosives vests" among the crowds who had come to honour slain Revolutionary Guards general Qasem Soleimani on the anniversary of his death.

Soleimani died in a targeted US drone strike in Baghdad four years ago.

Soleimani, who headed the Guards' foreign operations arm the Quds Force, was a staunch enemy of IS, a Sunni extremist group which has carried out previous attacks in majority-Shia Iran.

Iran has suffered deadly attacks in the past from jihadists and other militants as well as targeted killings of officials and

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## Criminals being hired to carry out polls violence

Says Rab after arrests of nine gang members in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Followers of some MP aspirants are trying to hire known criminals to commit violence during the upcoming polls, Rab said yesterday.

"We've intelligence that some over-enthusiastic followers of a number of candidates are trying to hire known criminals. They may appoint the criminals to engage in violence," Commander Khandaker Al Moin, director of the Rab's legal and media wing, told reporters at its media centre in Dhaka's Karwan Bazar.

He was briefing them on the arrests of nine members from two criminal gangs in the capital's Mohammadpur on Wednesday.

The nine were held for "planning chaos and violence during election".

The Rab official said some isolated incidents of violence took place across the country recently.

"We've seen some makeshift campaign offices of candidates being attacked by supporters of rival aspirants and known criminals. These criminals commit crimes again after coming out of jail on bail," he said, while responding to a reporter's question.

He said the Rapid Action Battalion picked up around 50 people, including some public representatives, across the country in 72 hours preceding yesterday noon over specific complaints.

Moin added that returning officers informed them about the arrestees' involvement in violence after receiving written complaints. "We have managed to bring

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## BUSINESS

### Banks' liquidity crisis deepens

A majority of banks in Bangladesh are depending on the call money market and central bank to fund their activities due to an intensifying liquidity crisis in the banking sector.

Even hikes in the interest rate associated with Bangladesh Bank's repo and liquidity support facilities have not deterred the banks from increasing their borrowing, industry people said.

On Wednesday, 32 banks and three non-bank financial institutions took Tk 20,984 crore under a seven-day tenure repo facility, 14-day Islamic bank liquidity facility and one-day liquidity support facility.

STORY ON B1



Two teenage boys mourn over the bodies of their family members killed by an Israeli strike at the morgue of the Nasser medical centre in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Mysterious medieval cemetery unearthed in Wales



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Archaeologists have discovered a medieval graveyard dating back to the 6th or 7th Century in Wales, Britain.

The cemetery is located near the end of the runway at Cardiff Airport in a field on the grounds of Fonmon Castle.

Some unusual artefacts have been unearthed from the site including 18 graves - out of an estimated 70 - and well preserved skeletons.

Archaeologists say they have been left confused by the discovery, which is raising more questions than answers.

Over the last two summers researchers from the University of Reading and Cardiff University carefully removed a thin layer of topsoil to expose the graves that was buried centuries ago.

Summer Courts, an osteoarchaeologist from the University of Reading, said the skeletons are well preserved despite being more than 1,500 years old.