

No doubt elections will be fair: Khasru

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming the fall of the Sheikh-Hasina-led government a "second independence", BNP's Standing Committee Member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday said that there is no doubt that the next election will be free and fair.



"We've achieved independence for the second time with strong support from the people and the international community, especially the United Nations," Khasru told reporters after a meeting with UN Resident Coordinator Gwyn Lewis at the BNP Chairperson's office in the capital's Gulshan.

After the meeting, Gwyn Lewis told reporters, "The United Nations will continue to assist in the development of Bangladesh under this new interim government until the next election."

She also emphasised investigating all incidents in the last few weeks to understand what happened.

Army deployed in 58 dists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Army has been deployed in 58 districts and set up 206 camps across the country to provide overall security to lives, properties, and important government installations.

Two teams of law enforcement agencies, led by the army, intercepted escaped prisoners from Jamalpur Central Jail and Chatogram Central Jail on Thursday and yesterday and recovered looted arms and ammunition kept in the jails, said a press release issued by Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) yesterday.

In addition to preventing multiple incidents of vandalism and looting in different areas of the country, the army thwarted an attack by miscreants on a temple in the Noakhali district to ensure the safety of minorities, the release said.

Additionally, army personnel have been deployed to provide security in the camps of forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals located in Cox's Bazar and are conducting joint patrols with other law enforcement agencies, the release added.

The army has already been deployed in 417 police stations across the country, including 29 police stations in the capital, which will expedite the operation to recover the lost arms of the police, it stated.

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PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Hundreds of demonstrators gathered in front of the National Press Club yesterday to protest the recent spate of attacks targeting Hindu properties across the country. They urged all conscious citizens to come together to end the violence against Hindu community and help build a nation united in peace and communal harmony.

22 killed as Israel launches fresh assault into Khan Younis

AGENCIES

Israeli troops yesterday launched a new assault into the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis, as American, Qatari and Egyptian mediators renewed their push for Israel and Hamas to reach a ceasefire deal.

IDF attacked some 30 sites after issuing new evacuation orders for exhausted residents who have already been displaced multiple times.

Thousands of Palestinians have begun fleeing areas in Khan Younis since Thursday, carrying essentials like small gas cylinders, mattresses,

tents, backpacks and blankets.

Officials from Israel and the United States have said they believe Yahya Sinwar, Hamas' newly named top leader, could be hiding in tunnels under Khan Younis.

The military said yesterday its warplanes struck 30 Hamas targets in the city, including fighters and weapons storage sites. It said troops were searching for Hamas tunnels and other infrastructure while engaging in combat "above and below ground."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office confirmed later

on Thursday that it would send negotiators to talks that mediators have called for on August 15, to be held in either Qatar's capital of Doha or Egypt's capital of Cairo.

There was no immediate response from Hamas, which announced Tuesday that Sinwar, the group's leader in Gaza, would replace Haniyeh as the group's top leader.

More than 39,700 people have been killed and 91,722 wounded in Israel's offensive in Gaza. The toll includes 22 deaths in the past 48 hours, according to the Gaza health ministry figures.

Three newspapers halt publication following attacks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Publication of three daily newspapers and a news portal, owned by Nayeemul Islam Khan, press secretary to former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, have been suspended for an indefinite period following vandalism at the offices on August 5.

The broadsheets and the portal are daily Amader Notun Shomoy, daily Amader Orthoneeti, daily Our Time and amadershomoy.com. Nayeemul is their emeritus editor.

Saleh Biplob, executive editor of Amader Notun Shomoy and coordinator of the three other organisations, yesterday announced the temporary closure. "It is uncertain as to when these will reopen," he said.

The offices located at a building in Tejgaon were attacked and ransacked on August 5, hours after the resignation and departure of Sheikh Hasina.

Biplob said it was not possible to keep the organisations running because of the damage done to the equipment and financial constraints.

Nayeemul was appointed as the press secretary to Hasina on June 6.

Jubo Dal leader hacked to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Jubo Dal leader was hacked to death in the capital's Demra area last night. Abu Saeed, 32, was the convener of ward-67 unit of Jubo Dal.

The duty doctors declared him dead around 11:00pm after Saeed's relatives brought him to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Apel Mahmud, uncle of the deceased, said Saeed was a businessman by profession and used to live in Bahirtengra Amtala area in Demra with his wife and one and a half year old son.

"While returning home after a procession in the area this [yesterday] evening, some miscreants attacked Saeed in front of Saruliya Oriental School. They hacked him with sharp weapons," he said, quoting witnesses.

DMCH police outpost Inspector Md Bachchu Mia said there were several stab wounds in Saeed's body. The body was kept at the morgue for autopsy.

Minorities faced

FROM PAGE 1

Yunus, who was sworn in as the chief adviser of the interim government on Thursday.

The letter was unveiled at the Nasrul Hamid Auditorium of Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU).

Nirmal Rosario, one of the three presidents of the unity council, said, the situation was deteriorating and urged the interim government's chief to resolve the crisis by giving it top priority and putting an end to the violence.

"We seek protection because our lives are in a disastrous state. We are staying up at night, guarding our homes and temples. I have never seen anything like this in my life. We demand that the government restore communal harmony in the country."

The open letter welcomed Yunus as the leader of a new era born from the unprecedented student- and public-led mass uprising aimed at establishing an equitable society and reform.

The organisations also offered condolences for the deaths and injuries that occurred during the uprising and demanded that the interim government ensure that the families of the victims receive the necessary support.

"When people's victory is advancing towards its destination, we, with sorrow and heavy hearts, observe that a vested quarter is hatching a conspiracy to tarnish this achievement by carrying out unprecedented violence against minority communities," the letter said.

The ongoing communal violence that started on August 5 has caused widespread fear, anxiety, and uncertainty among minorities in Bangladesh. This unrest has also resulted in international condemnation, the letter added.

"We demand an immediate end to this situation."

The letter said the organisations have tried to inform the president, army chief, protesting student leaders, and political party leaders about the situation, who have also called for an end to such violence.

"But it's a sad truth that the situation has deteriorated further in the last three days."

The letter was signed by Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council General Secretary Rana Dasgupta and Bangladesh Pujya Uddhayan Parishad President Basudev Dhar.

Kajal Devnath, a presidium member of the unity council, said, "One does not leave their home, temple, or Tulsi tree unless compelled. Many Hindu community members are now taking refuge in

others' homes.

"I, too, am forced to stay at a friend's house," he said.

"Those involved in attacking minorities must be brought to justice. If a minority individual is attacked for political reasons, it is still unacceptable. Anyone who commits a crime should be judged, but burning homes and looting will not lead to justice," he added.

Replying to a question, Kajal said the exclusion of readings from other religious texts at the swearing in ceremony of the interim government's advisory council members contradicts the spirit of the constitution, the Liberation War, and anti-discrimination values.

"We hope that in future state functions, readings from all major religious texts will be included," he added.

Another presidium member, Subrata Choudhury, said, "We've heard about ending attacks on minorities many times before, but we have not seen any effective measures.

"Our national heritage and assets are being destroyed, which is unacceptable."

The event was also attended by another president of the unity council, Professor Neem Chandra Bhowmik, and presidium member Ranjan Karmakar, among other members of the Pujya Uddhayan Parishad.

Meanwhile, hundreds of people staged demonstrations in the capital yesterday, demanding that all attacks on minority communities be stopped and the perpetrators be held accountable.

They also demanded that a ministry be formed to establish a minority protection commission and that 10 percent of parliamentary seats be reserved for minorities.

One of the demonstrations was held under the banner of "Conscious Sanatani Citizens of Bangladesh" in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the morning.

Later in the afternoon, several thousand people from another group of minority communities gathered at the Shahbagh intersection to demonstrate.

STUDENTS MEET HINDU LEADERS
A team from the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement visited Dhakeshwari Temple in the capital yesterday and met some leaders of minority groups.

"We spoke with the leaders of the Hindu community and heard their demands," Sarjis Alam, a coordinator of the student movement, said in a statement.

"It is our responsibility now to convey their demands to the interim government."

Cabinet Division unveils portfolios of advisers

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PROF MUHAMMAD YUNUS
Cabinet Division, defence ministry, armed forces division, education ministry, road transport and bridges ministry, food ministry, housing and public works ministry, land ministry, textiles and jute ministry, agriculture ministry, science and technology ministry, railways ministry, public administration ministry, power, energy and mineral resources ministry, shipping ministry, water resources ministry, women and children affairs ministry, disaster management and relief ministry, information and broadcasting ministry, expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry, commerce ministry, labour and employment ministry, cultural affairs ministry, civil aviation and tourism ministry, liberation war affairs ministry, Chittagong hill tracts affairs ministry, and primary and mass education ministry

SALEHUDDIN AHMED
Finance ministry and planning ministry

ASIF NAZRUL
Law, justice and parliamentary affairs ministry

ADILUR RAHMAN KHAN
Industries ministry

AF HASSAN ARIFF
LGRD and co-operatives ministry

TOUHID HOSSAIN
Foreign affairs ministry

SYEDA RIZWANA HASAN
Environment, forest and climate change ministry

SHARMEEN MURSHID
Social welfare ministry

BRIG GEN (RETD) M SAKHAWAT HUSSAIN
Home ministry

AFM KHALID HOSSAIN
Religious affairs ministry

FARIDA AKHTER
Fisheries and livestock ministry

NURJAHAN BEGUM
Health ministry

NAHID ISLAM
Posts, telecommunications and information technology ministry

ASIF MAHMUD
Youth and sports ministry

Students' reps to work with ministries

FROM PAGE 1

in the fall of an autocratic regime -- something the political parties failed to do.

At yesterday's meeting of the advisers, it was decided that cases filed against the student protesters and the politically motivated cases would be reviewed.

They also discussed holding trials in a transparent manner for the killings during the movement so that no such incident would recur in the future, Rizwana said.

"There was a long discussion on how to quickly improve the law and order situation. Everything may not be fixed overnight, but maximum effort is being made to this end," Rizwana said.

The home affairs adviser has been working to normalise the situation in consultation with the inspector general of police

and other officials, she added.

Minority communities are still being attacked in some places. Religious groups and locals are being engaged to stop this.

"We all should stand by the police. A force cannot function with a broken morale. Our student representatives, advisers, and police will meet soon."

The chief adviser will bring the family members of the victims of violence during the mass uprising to Dhaka and talk to them.

"The government will assist the families bear the expenses for treatment of the injured," she said, requesting information on such victims.

Prof Yunus, Nahid and Asif will go to Rangpur's Pirganj upazila today to visit the family of Abu Sayed, who was killed in police firing during the quota reform protests on July 16.

Police back to stations partially

FROM PAGE 1

Police personnel did not show up for work since August 6 as the chain of command in the force broke down after cops were attacked by protesters and mobs during clashes.

Meanwhile, a meeting between senior police officials and the cops staging demonstrations to press home their 11-point demand ended abruptly at the capital's Rajarbagh Police Lines yesterday afternoon after a ruckus broke out.

During the meeting, police personnel expressed their anger and frustration as they put forward their demands, said sources.

The ruckus broke out when newly appointed Inspector General of Police Md Mainul Islam started speaking. At one stage, the IGP and senior officials left the meeting venue.

The protesting policemen said they would not resume work until their safety was ensured. They also called for reforms to the police force, including changing its name and uniform, and demanded the police high-ups apologise to the people for the previous mistakes.

Rab Director General AKM Shahidur Rahman and DMP Commissioner Mainul Hasan, among others, joined the meeting.

Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakhawat Hussain, home affairs adviser to the interim government, was supposed to be present at the meeting. However, he could not join.

More than 400 people, including police personnel, were killed in violence centring the Anti-discrimination Student Movement. Videos showed that law enforcers shot unarmed people dead at close range.

The newly appointed inspector general of police on Wednesday asked all police personnel to return to their posts within 24 hours. This call was repeated by the armed forces on Thursday afternoon.

Yesterday morning, 29 out of the 50 police stations in the Dhaka metropolitan area resumed operations.

Visiting Kafir Police Station around 3:00pm, this correspondent found army personnel were guarding the entrance. The officer-in-charge and several other policemen were present.

"We have started working on a limited scale. We will resume full operations soon. Many of our colleagues, who reside in nearby areas, will join work soon," said an officer.

Three GDs were filed at Tejgaon Police Station until 1:00pm after it resumed work yesterday morning in the presence of army personnel.

Tejgaon Police Station OC Mohammad Mohsin said, "We should remember that many of our colleagues are no longer with us. Now my heart is heavy. I have been serving the police department for 23 years. Just a few days ago, we were working together at this police station. But now they are no more."

He said the entire police family is traumatised.

"We work to meet the people's needs. However, on many occasions we cannot explain our failure to the people. We have rejoined work today to meet the needs of the people."

Mohsin urged the people to have faith in police. "We will not deny that the current situation is a result of our mistakes and failures. My colleagues and I will try to continue providing services so we can overcome this

She promised necessary measures to resume activities of the judiciary as soon as possible in consultation with senior judges and lawyers.

"This interim government will take as much time as it needs to prepare for the beginning of a democratic journey."

Talking about the challenges facing the government, Nahid said the students and the general public need to be united in order to rebuild and reshape Bangladesh.

"The system has largely collapsed. It can be rebuilt if the general people work alongside the administration. These challenges can be overcome quickly."

Earlier in the day, Prof Yunus and other advisers placed wreaths at the National Memorial in Savar and the Central Shaheed Minar.

Resuming the HSC exams will be considered after the reopening.

The meeting also discussed resuming financial activities, bringing changes to the top positions in the sector, and making sure businesses can function in full swing.

Asked about the interim government's tenure, she

said they would first need to identify the kind of reforms to be made.

"While returning home after a procession in the area this [yesterday] evening, some miscreants attacked Saeed in front of Saruliya Oriental School. They hacked him with sharp weapons," he said, quoting witnesses.

DMCH police outpost Inspector Md Bachchu Mia said there were several stab wounds in Saeed's body. The body was kept at the morgue for autopsy.

Chattoogram Metropolitan Police resumed yesterday on a limited scale.

Five police stations in the CMP area were vandalised and set on fire by mobs on August 5.

Services of all police stations and the offices of the deputy commissioners under Rangpur Metropolitan Police resumed yesterday, reports our district correspondent.

In Dinajpur, 12 police stations resumed partial operations yesterday, said Dinajpur SP Shah Iftakher Ahmed. He said they were



Policemen are gradually rejoining their workplaces. The photo was taken at Hatirjheel Police Station in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Services Public Relation (ISPR) Directorate in a statement said army personnel have already been deployed to 417 police stations across the country, including 29 in the capital. This will expedite the operations for the recovery of the police's lost arms.

Operations of 21 police stations in the border areas under Rangpur and Khulna ranges resumed yesterday under the supervision of the Border Guard Bangladesh, according to a BGB press release.

Services in 14 of the 16 police stations under

hopeful of starting the activities at full capacity in a couple of days.

Police stations in Bogura, Natore, Satkhira, Gaibandha, Sirajganj, Pabna, Gazipur, Nilphamari, and Kushtia have also resumed partial operations.

In Bandarban and Kushtia, a section of police personnel boycotted work to press home their 11-point demand, including not using police to implement political agenda, ensuring the security of cops and punishment for those who killed and wounded cops.