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Interim govt to get necessary time for polls

BNP, Jamaat, 5 other parties tell Yunus

SAJJAD HOSSAIN and RASHIDUL HASAN

Seven political parties, including the BNP and Jamaat, yesterday said Prof Muhammad Yunus-led interim government can take the time necessary for creating an atmosphere conducive to holding a free and fair election.

Along with the BNP and Jamaat, Amar Bangladesh Party, two factions of Gono Adhikar Parishad, Bangladesh Jatiya Party, and National Democratic Movement told Prof Yunus this at separate meetings in the state guest house Jamuna.

During the meetings, in which advisers Asif Nazrul, Adilur Rahman, Farida Akhter, Nahid Islam, and Asif Mahmud were present, the parties were asked if the National Day of Mourning should be observed and whether August 15 should remain a public holiday.

Sources who were present at the meetings said all the parties opined that August 15 should not be observed as a day of mourning, and the public holiday is not needed.

However, no decision was made in this regard, they said.

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Emerging from the meeting, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, who led an eight-member delegation to the meeting, told journalists, "We have given this interim government the time required to create a proper environment for holding an election."

He said they did not discuss the election and that the BNP did not mention any specific time frame for holding the next election.

Fakhru said his party was extending its full support to all the activities of the interim government.

Sources in the BNP said the party urged the chief adviser to have all the cases against its leaders, including those against party chairperson Khaleida Zia and acting chairman Tarique Rahman, withdrawn.

Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman, who led an 11-member delegation to the meeting, told the media that his party's discussions with the interim government focused on national issues, not party specifics.

"We are hopeful that the interim government will solve various problems within a reasonable time," he said.

Andaleeb Rahman Partho, chairman of the Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP), said, "The fall of the Awami League [government] occurred through a revolution, and it will take some time for the situation to stabilise.

"For the last 15 years, everything the Awami League government did was illegal. Now, it's time to repair the state. We don't want to rush to an election. Whatever good this government does, we will support."

Chairman Bobby Hajjaj of National Democratic Movement (NDM) said, "We urged the advisers to remove the representatives in local governments and appoint administrators.

"We suggested changing the deputy commissioners

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Policemen, along with student volunteers, controlling traffic in the capital's Dhanmondi-3. Police officials yesterday returned to the streets and their stations yesterday after abstaining from their duties since August 4 in fear of attacks on them following the violence centring the anti-discrimination protests.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

RECENT VIOLENCE

Firearms looted from at least 22 DMP stations

Says commissioner

STAR REPORT

Firearms were looted from at least 22 police stations in the capital, and the number may increase after the end of the ongoing assessment, said DMP officials.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Mainul Hasan said those stations were completely damaged by vandals and arsonists.

"Many of the looted arms and ammunition were surrendered to the army, Rab, and Ansar officials. We're now assessing how many are still missing," he told The Daily Star last night.

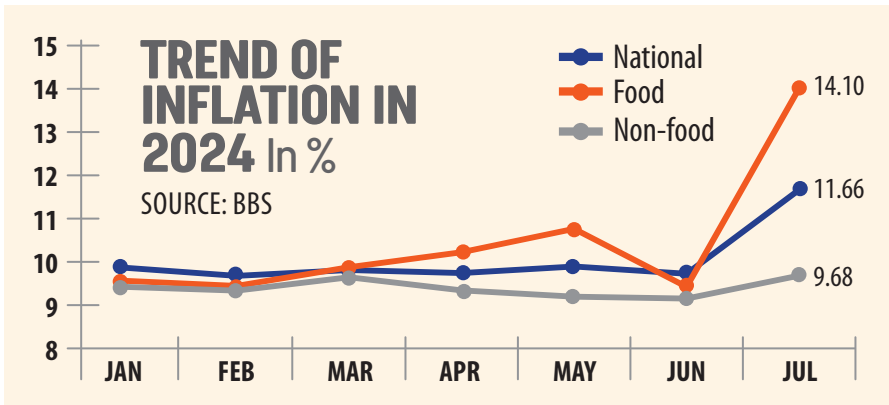
A high official of the DMP, requesting anonymity, said there were instances where arms were taken away from police officials who were attacked while they were trying to return to duty or workplaces.

The DMP yesterday urged those in possession of illegal arms and ammunition to surrender to the nearest police station, adding that possession of those is a punishable offence.

Another 30 police stations had their gates either burned down or damaged in similar attacks.

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Food inflation tops 14pc for first time in 13yrs



REJAU KARIM BYRON and MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

Bangladesh's worsening economic crisis has spun off a price shock with food inflation crossing 14 percent in July for the first time in 13 years.

Part of the reason was a nationwide supply chain disruption caused by weeks of deadly protests that led to the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led government.

The consumer price index that includes food and non-food inflation rose 1.94 basis points to 11.66 percent in July from the previous month, according to data released by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics yesterday.

Moderate inflation is a fact of life, but

higher inflation hurts fixed-income people badly. Consumers lose purchasing power faster at a higher rate of inflation. People are forced to chip away at precious savings.

"July was a month of turbulence and economic disruption. Supply chains broke down because of shutdowns, curfew, and internet blockage. These adversely affected the supply of goods in various markets," said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office.

The statistical agency published inflation data after Bangladesh formed an interim government following the end of Hasina's 15-year regime. Hasina fled the country in the

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BUSINESS

Several banks are clinically dead: CPD

Several banks in Bangladesh are clinically dead but are being kept alive through bailouts, said Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

Banks on the verge of collapse should be allowed to shut down, she said while presenting a paper at a media briefing yesterday.

Some third and fourth-generation banks that were awarded licences during Awami League-led government's 15 years in power are now ailing, Fahmida said.

"Additionally, several previously good banks have experienced an unfortunate decline in their performance after hostile takeovers by cronies and capitalists," she added.

STORY ON B1

'Let's begin anew from the ruins'

CJ urges colleagues to work without fear

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newly appointed Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed yesterday called for a fresh start from the ruins.

At a reception in the Supreme Court, he described the historic victory of the student movement as a golden opportunity for the judiciary to stand by the oppressed.

He urged his colleagues to work without fear and warned them against deviation, injustice or breach of etiquette.

"You are all aware of the reasons behind the student movement against discriminations that resulted in the mass uprising. At this moment, we are standing on a pile of rubble. Our sense and values of justice has been destroyed and distorted in the judicial process over the years.

"Dishonesty instead of integrity,

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Syed Refaat Ahmed



Top BNP leaders including Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir leaving State Guesthouse Jamuna in the capital yesterday after a meeting with Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Engage young people in all tiers of govt

Chief adviser asks top bureaucrats

BAHARAM KHAN and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday directed top bureaucrats to find out ways to utilise the power of the young people at different tiers of the government.

During a meeting with the senior secretaries and secretaries of 25 ministries and divisions, he also asked them to ensure that no official travels abroad "without special urgent needs", said meeting sources.

"All should work realising the young people's expectations regarding the changes they brought," a secretary quoted Yunus as saying.

The chief adviser holds the portfolios of the 25 ministries and divisions.

The meeting which lasted for one and a half hours began at 11:00am at the state guesthouse Jamuna.

A secretary who was at the meeting said the chief adviser ordered all government offices to start working in full swing.

He also asked the officials concerned to maintain

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