



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN, RASHED SHUMON

Floodwater is yet to recede around Feni General Hospital, where medical services remained suspended for the past four days. While there were still no doctors present, some nurses reported to duty yesterday and provided basic medical care to those in need. **Top right**, Volunteers repair a section of the Dhaka-Chattogram Highway in Feni's Lalpol area yesterday after the floodwaters receded there. The road was damaged after being submerged for four days. **Bottom right**, student volunteers at Dhaka University moved their food-packing operation to the gymnasium yesterday after the space inside the TSC got filled with donated relief supplies for flood victims. More supplies were stored outside the gym and in the gallery.



Timing of polls 'a political decision'

FROM PAGE 1
call of the students and have been carrying out their duties with utmost diligence as a team.

Seeking blessings from the people, he said the government does not want to lose the opportunity to build a new Bangladesh, earned through the blood of the students and the people.

"If we lose this opportunity now, we will be defeated as a nation. We want to remain committed to the martyrs, the injured, and the surviving students so that we do not lose this achievement."

He said local government institutions will be empowered, and decentralisation of power will be ensured to strengthen democracy.

Necessary reforms to the administration, judiciary, Election Commission and the electoral system, and law and order would be made to ensure free flow of information and a free, fair, and participatory election.

"The aim of these [reforms] will be the initiation of an accountable political system against corruption, looting, and genocide," Yunus said.

The chief adviser said after the fascist government leader fled the country in the face of public wrath, they want to build a country where the human rights of every citizen are completely protected.

"We have one goal — an open, democratic, exploitation free, and non-communal Bangladesh. We are one family. We have one goal. We are committed to ensuring that no division can disrupt our dream," said the Nobel Peace Prize winner.

He said Bangladesh was built with the supreme sacrifice of several millions, but it has been destroyed by fascism and tyranny.

The country had been changed so much that even an autocrat's peon can accumulate illegal wealth of Tk 400 crore without any obstruction.

"They have crippled the education sector; looted banks and the stock market; set world records in project expenditures; plundered resources openly; turned law enforcement

agencies into puppets of their party; snatched away freedom of speech; and violated human rights. These are just the tip of the iceberg," he said.

To consolidate power, he said, "The fascist government curbed the people's constitutional power and rights. Their misrule, corruption, injustice, repression, and farce in the name of justice endangered public safety."

Millions of people were deprived of their voting rights for years and the autocrat not only took the nation's ownership, it also handed it over to its families and party people, he said.

Yunus thanked the people for their support for his government's efforts to bring reforms and said, "We realise that you have high expectations of us. We are determined to meet these expectations."

However, the long-standing absence of democracy and 15 years of fascist rule left the interim government with challenges as big as mountains.

"But we are ready to take up the challenge," he said, urging all to have patience.

He called on all not to force the immediate fulfilment of their demands, threaten individuals at work, mount pressure to lodge cases, or attack people at courts.

"These actions will tarnish the glory and potential of the revolution of student and people, and hinder the efforts to build a new Bangladesh," Yunus said.

He said the government had to begin the job of rebuilding the country on a fragile structure, which is contrary to public interest.

The government wants to build Bangladesh in such a way that the people become the source of all power in the true sense. "We must succeed in the task of reforming... There is no alternative to this."

DON'T OBSTRUCT OUR WORK
Regarding agitations and road blocks by different groups for realising their demands, Prof Yunus said rallies have been held daily at the Secretariat,

around his office, and in various places in the city.

"We understand that you have suffered a lot and have grievances pent-up over the past 16 years. If you do not let us work, all paths to reducing the sufferings will remain closed. My earnest request to you that allow us to work," he said.

The chief adviser urged the agitating groups to submit their demands to them in writing and assured everyone of taking measures

- ➔ Education sector to see massive reforms
- ➔ Work to update the curriculum has started
- ➔ Urged to have patience for administrative reforms
- ➔ Measures taken to curb inflation, price hike of essentials
- ➔ Polls after necessary reforms
- ➔ All advisers will reveal their affidavits
- ➔ Ordinance to be made to appoint an ombudsman
- ➔ Remittance through official channels urged
- ➔ Groups urged to make demands in writing, not demonstrate

to solve the issues in line with the law.

MEASURES FOR FLOOD VICTIMS
Prof Yunus said the government took all out measures at government and private levels to ensure that the flood-hit people return to a normal life at the soonest.

"We have initiated discussions so that we can work together with neighbouring countries and domestic

stakeholders to prevent floods in future," he said.

INSTRUCTIONS TO FORCES
Prof Yunus alleged that the army, police, BGB, and Rab have been disgraced as they were used for enforced disappearances and torture.

"They are the pride of the country. We do not want to see the image of an entire force get tarnished due to some overenthusiastic members.

"We want to identify the criminals and punish them so that no member of the patriotic forces, police, or Rab dares to engage in murder, enforced disappearances, or torture at anyone's command," he said.

Prof Yunus further said that he instructed the defence forces, police, and all other forces to identify and bring to justice those among them who were directly involved in murder, enforced disappearances, killings, or physical and mental torture.

Lists of those who have been made to disappear or were murdered are being prepared, he said.

He said the government is also at the final stages of establishing a "July Genocide Memorial Foundation", led by him, to preserve the memory of the martyrs of the mass uprising.

CORRUPTION
The chief adviser said a committee has already been formed to prepare a white paper on the corruption, money laundering, anti-public interest agreements, looting in the name of projects, and other crimes committed over the last 15 years.

"The entire country is submerged in a sea of bribery. Please advise us on how we can get out of this. If we can advance on this issue, I believe this government will have left an important contribution to the country," he said.

'WE ARE ALL EQUAL'

Putting emphasis on the need for unity, Prof Yunus said the government's responsibility is to bind all people of the country as a family.

"There will be disagreements in a family. There will be arguments. But we are brothers and sisters; we are

parents. We are not enemies of each other. We will not consider anyone an enemy because of their opinions, religion, or gender.

"We all are equal. No one is above or below anyone else. We would like to establish this concept in all areas of national life," he said.

REFORMS IN SECTORS

The chief adviser talked about reform initiatives in various sectors, including banking, judiciary, police, education, health, and agriculture.

He said the government took initiatives to ensure good governance in the banking sector, which was turned into a den of "plunderers and the corrupt".

Skilled personnel are being recruited in this sector, he said, adding that a banking commission will be formed for long-term reforms in the sector.

He said a roadmap will be prepared and made public soon.

Immediate measures are being taken to address the extreme disorder in the stock market, transportation sector, and other areas. Besides, steps were taken to control the prices of essential commodities and inflation.

He said efforts were being made to free the judiciary from corruption and political influence. Measures were taken through a specific process to ensure the independence and accountability of the judiciary.

"Justice will be ensured for all extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, murders, abductions, and other heinous crimes committed by the fascist government. Everyone involved in these crimes will be brought to justice.

"Steps have been taken, including becoming a party to the international convention on enforced disappearances," he said.

Prof Yunus said a police commission will be formed to make the force people-centric, politically neutral, and accountable.

Necessary reforms will be made under the commission's leadership

in line with the UN investigation and other agencies' reports, he said, adding, "Measures will be taken to ensure that no one can turn Bangladesh into a police state ever again."

Prof Yunus asserted that the free flow of information and freedom of the press will be ensured.

Legal and other barriers to free flow of information will be removed and repressive provisions in laws that obstruct freedom of expression will be amended, he said.

"We are committed to ensuring people's right to information."

He said the previous government unleashed anarchy in the education sector and this government's top priority will be massive reforms to the sector. The curriculum will also be updated promptly.

Yunus said, "All of our advisers will disclose their assets in the shortest possible time. This will be made regular and mandatory for all government officials gradually."

He said an ordinance will be enacted to appoint an Ombudsman in line with the constitution.

The chief adviser mentioned that necessary reforms will be brought to the health sector while farmers' interests will be protected so that they receive fair prices for their produce.

He said, "Development that destroys and pollutes rivers, canals, wetlands, hills, forests, soil, and air is not sustainable in the long term. Our government will give utmost importance to protecting the environment and climate."

Yunus said the government will maintain friendly relations with all countries and the foreign policy will be based on mutual trust, faith, and cooperation.

Through political unity, necessary reforms will ensure that women, children, people with disabilities, religious minorities, indigenous people, and all citizens of this country are entitled to equal protection under the law, he said.

A statement victory for Tigers

FROM PAGE 1

A vintage Shakib then struck twice in the space of six overs, leaving Pakistan tottering at 104-5. Shakib lured both first-innings centurion Saud Shakil and Abdullah Shafique to come down the wicket, with the former missing the ball completely while the latter miscuing an attempted heave at point to Shadman Islam.

Shadman then plucked a stunning low catch at slip off Mehedi to see the back of Salman for a duck, leaving Pakistan in deep trouble at lunch.

Wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Rizwan, who hit a superb 171 not out in Pakistan's first innings total of 448-6 declared, tried to take the fight to the opposition by blending caution with aggression.

But once he was dismissed by Mehedi, Pakistan's second innings folded for 146, leaving Bangladesh with a simple task of scoring 30 runs to win with more than a session in hand.

Shadman and Zakir stroked those runs in 6.3 overs, sparking wild celebrations at the Bangladesh dressing room.

It was Bangladesh's seventh overseas Test victory and the most decorated one after the success against New Zealand in Mount Maunganui in 2022.

This was a Test where Bangladesh,

for a change, demonstrated the hallmark of a quality Test side after languishing as a mediocre one for the most part of their journey since 2000.

The young pace bowling unit, spearheaded by Shoriful Islam, more than matched the Pakistan heavyweights of Shaheen Shah Afridi and Naseem Shah. Shoriful finished with three wickets in the match, however, the figure hardly reflected how well he bowled with the new ball.

Even though the Tigers have developed a tendency of buckling under pressure once their opponents put on a massive total, in Rawalpindi, they were not intimidated after Pakistan amassed 448. Rather, they grafted and then prospered with such conviction, rarely seen before.

Coming into the side after two years, opener Shadman anchored the innings with a solid 93. Mominul Haque also played his part with 50 and Liton Das provided the necessary thrust in the middle. His 56 off 78 balls was a spectators' delight, especially the three boundaries and a massive six that he smote in one over off Naseem.

Mehedi demonstrated his all-round ability with a priceless 77.

But the best came from the best batter of the country — an ageless Mushfiqur Rahim. The little right-

hander was in a league of his own with an imperious 191, laced with 22 fours and a six.

It was his masterclass knock that propelled Bangladesh to 565 in their first essay and that priceless lead. He dominated two century stands — 114 runs for the sixth wicket with Liton and 196 for the seventh wicket with Mehedi.

The pocket-size dynamo, nicknamed Mr. Dependable in the Tigers' ranks, hardly allowed anything to get past his watertight defence and was sublime in his stroke-play during his more than three-session vigil at the wicket.

An epitome of hard work and discipline, Mushfiqur is the only wicketkeeper-batter who has three double hundreds under his belt. He might have missed a fourth, but his latest knock was a special one considering the context and could be a good manual for up-and-coming cricketers.

Champion all-rounder Shakib had to endure a lot due to some disturbing developments back home. He did not contribute with the bat, but struck with the ball when it mattered most.

As a key member of the team, Shakib would desperately need mental peace more than anything else when the second Test starts at the same venue on August 30.

50 injured as Ansars clash with students

FROM PAGE 1

Critically wounded Asif Hawladar, Dhaka University correspondent of Prothom Alo, was undergoing treatment at a city hospital.

The situation turned violent after over a thousand students and others, many of them equipped with sticks, went to the Secretariat, hearing that Ansar members blocked the Secretariat even after getting assurance of fulfilling their demand, said witnesses.

Several conveners of the Anti-discrimination Student Movement asked students to gather at the Raju Memorial Sculpture to march towards the Secretariat. Terming the Ansar members 'agents of autocracy', the students started marching towards the Secretariat around 9:00pm.

When they reached the Secretariat, there were chases and counter-chases between ansar members and students.

At one stage, students and others were able to drive away the ansar members around 9:45pm, witnesses said.

Later, army personnel were seen at the spot. The situation started getting normal after 10:00pm, and Gate 3 of the Secretariat was opened at 10:30pm so that officials who were stuck inside could go home, said witnesses.

After the clash, a group of people were seen beating up dispersed ansar members at different places.

After the incident, Nahid Islam, information and broadcasting adviser, said the demonstration by ansar members is part of a conspiracy as they continued their programme even after getting

assurance of meeting their demand.

"We will take legal action against those involved in the conspiracy," he said while talking to the media in front of the Secretariat.

Maj Gen Abdul Motaleb Sazzad Mahmud, director general of Ansar and VDP, told The Daily Star last night, "Those who continued the demonstration even after getting the assurance are not Ansar members. They are outsiders... they came with an additional set of clothes and their intention was different."

"They did not want any solution. We will take lawful action against those people."

He said they have a separate disciplinary force called battalion Ansar, who did not join the demonstration.

In the evening, Home Affairs Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury told a press briefing at the Secretariat that they assured the demonstrating ansar members of abolishing the "mandatory leave system".

He said this after an hour-long meeting with representatives of the Ansar members.

A seven-member committee was formed with Ansar and VDP DG Maj Gen Abdul Motaleb as convener, and its Director Jahanara Akter as member secretary to find a solution to their demand.

The committee has been asked to submit a report within seven working days, according to a notification issued by the home ministry's Public Security Division.

The report then will be sent to an

inter-ministerial committee that will make necessary decisions based on the recommendations, said the home adviser.

Asked about the "mandatory leave system", the Ansar DG said according to the regulations, a member is sent on a six-month mandatory leave after working for three consecutive years. During the time, they are not paid.

"An initiative has been taken to abolish the system. After this, their jobs will be considered regular."

At the briefing, Nasim Miah, a convener of the Ansar demonstration, said they were temporarily withdrawing their programme. "The Ansar members will return to work. We will look into the decision and then we will announce our next course of action, as our main demand is nationalisation of our job."

But the demonstrating ansar members did not accept the decision and vowed to continue their demonstration. They even stopped the vehicle of the home affairs adviser as it was leaving the Secretariat, a top official of the home ministry told The Daily Star.

"The adviser then called an emergency meeting to address the situation around 8:00pm. But the meeting ended without any decision as students drove away the demonstrators," the official said.

There are three branches of Ansar: General Ansar, Battalion Ansar, and Village Defence Party (VDP).

In another development, Dhaka Metropolitan Police last night banned all rallies, meetings, or demonstrations near the Secretariat and the residence of the chief adviser until further notice.