

Global activists urge probe into extrajudicial killings over last 15yrs

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Global human rights advocates have called for more investigations into some 3,000 extrajudicial killings carried out over the past 15 years.

They also called for security sector reforms, repeal of the cyber security act, and accountability for the detention centres where the victims of the enforced disappearances were kept during the dictatorship.

The calls came when rights advocates of more than half a dozen top global human rights groups met Muhammad Yunus, the chief adviser to the interim government, at a hotel in New York on Wednesday.

Yunus is attending the UN General Assembly and holding a series of bilateral meetings with global leaders, multilateral lenders and heads of UN agencies.

Kerry Kennedy, president of the Robert F Kennedy Human Rights, led the delegation of nine human rights officials who met Yunus.

The interim government should send “a powerful message demonstrating that

this is a new Bangladesh”, said Agnes Callamard, the Secretary General of Amnesty International.

Yunus said his government is committed to upholding human rights and freedom of speech in the country.

They discussed justice and accountability of the atrocities and human rights abuses committed during the July-August mass uprising and also during Sheikh Hasina’s 15-year-long dictatorship.

The interim government has formed a Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances. Also, a UN fact-finding mission is probing the human rights violations between July 1 and August 15.

Yunus briefly outlined how civil liberties and human rights were denied during the previous autocratic regime and what his government has done to establish human rights in the country since taking charge on August 8.

His government has set up several commissions, including one on police, to carry out vital reforms and institutional changes in Bangladesh.

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Rickshaw vans go against traffic on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway in Narayangani’s Signboard area, putting the lives of road users at risk. The photo was taken on Tuesday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Road crash claims lives of 3 RMG workers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

At least three female garment factory workers were killed and eight others injured in a head-on collision between a bus and a truck on the Dhaka-Aricha highway in Manikganj’s Shibalay upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased are Bithi Akter, 35, Koli Begum, 32, and Sabina Akter, 25, according to Mohammad Ibrahim, officer-in-charge of Barangail Highway Police Station.

The OC said the bus was carrying the workers from the Aricha Ghat area to Tarasima Apparels Limited factory in the Nayadighi area of Satoria upazila when it collided with the truck around 6:15am.

The goods-laden truck veered off the road into a roadside ditch after severely damaging the front and one side of the bus.

Upon receiving the news, local fire service personnel, highway police, and residents rushed to the scene to assist in the rescue efforts, the OC said.

The injured – Parvin, 25, Rehena, 20, Sonali, 25, Lipi, 24, Sathi, 21, Halima, 22, Suman, 32, and Rupa, 30 – were admitted to Manikganj Medical College Hospital with “serious” injuries, the OC said.

The process to file a case over the accident was underway at Shibalay Police Station, he added.

‘Don’t have any plan to run for office’

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“Do I look like someone who would run?”

Turning to the climate issue, he said the Paris Agreement, the global accord for limiting the effects of climate change, won’t work as long as the world sticks to the current economic system, according to The New York Times.

That system, he said, is centred on maximising profits, creating wealth for a tiny group of people and generating massive waste.

“The economic system we have built is key to the destruction of this planet,” said Prof Yunus, adding that humans had created a “self-destructive civilisation.”

No matter what changes were made to the agreement, it would not make a difference until the world’s underlying systems were redesigned, he said.

Developing countries like Bangladesh should not have to bear the burden of the climate damage done by their wealthier counterparts.

“Why should we carry the burden of all the destruction that you put on us? You are the cause; we are the result.”

He added that individuals should also bear the responsibility of producing less waste and shrinking their fossil fuel footprint.

Jane Goodall, a celebrated British scientist; Vicki Hollub, president of Occidental Petroleum; Mohamed Irfaan Ali, president of Guyana; Kevin D Roberts, president of Heritage Foundation; and Ali Zaidi, President Biden’s climate adviser, spoke at the event among others.

Stalled recruitment tests vex jobseekers

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the least importance,” Rabiul told The Daily Star.

The examinations for multiple posts at six institutions were to be held on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, but they have been put over.

“Some jobseekers, including leaders of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, wrote to us to halt the exams as they could not prepare amid the movement. We contacted the higher authority in the government and they advised us to postpone the exams,” a senior official at one institution told The Daily Star.

The official, who requested not to be named, could not say when the tests will be held.

The Daily Star tried to reach Sarjis Alam and Hasnat Abdullah, coordinators of the student movement, for comments on the letter to the institution. None of them responded to our calls or text messages.

Sarjis, however, said in a Facebook post on September 17, “All recruitment tests, including those of the PSC, have to be held at the soonest. A job means a dream of a family and its future.”

The Public Service Commission (PSC) deferred the 46th BCS written tests for compulsory and post-related subjects on August 25, three days before the beginning of the exams, citing “unavoidable circumstances.”

A total of 10,638 candidates were supposed to sit for the written exams against 3,140 posts.

The PSC also delayed the viva voce of the 44th BCS, which was scheduled to commence on September 1. A total of 11,732 candidates passed the 44th BCS written examinations and they are vying for 1,710 posts.

In addition, the PSC held back

the 1st half-yearly departmental examination of BCS cadre and non-cadre officers and the practical examination for the post of personal officers of the Parliament Secretariat on September 15 to a later time.

When asked about the postponement of the exams, two PSC officials told The Daily Star on the condition of anonymity that there is a “kind of unstable situation going on”.

“The PSC is waiting for direction or go-ahead from the government. The activities of the PSC will be normal once we get the go-ahead from the government,” said a PSC member.

Sirajul Islam Moon, an alumnus of Jahangirnagar University, said he qualified for the 44th BCS viva voce after three previous attempts.

“Now I’m frustrated over the postponement several times. My family is also disappointed. It is unbearable to be in such uncertainty at this stage.”

The written exams for recruitment to nine posts of state oil-gas corporation Petrobangla subsidiaries scheduled for September 20 and 27 were the latest to be deferred last Tuesday. Petrobangla also cited “unavoidable reasons” for delaying the exams in a press release.

Talking to The Daily Star, Zanendra Nath Sarker, the chairman of Petrobangla, said they took the decision upon request from candidates due to the recent flood situation in various regions.

Petrobangla is planning to resume the tests by mid-October, Zanendra said.

The recruitment test for the director post (Grade-9) of Sadharan Bima Corporation and the MCQ exams for the assistant manager’s post, both scheduled for September 6, were deferred under special

circumstances. A new exam schedule will be sent to the candidates through a notification and SMS.

The written exams for the posts of cashier cum computer operator and computer operator at the Medical Education and Family Welfare Division have been delayed.

Rahela Rahmat Ullah, senior assistant secretary to the division, told this newspaper that new dates for the postponed exams have not been fixed yet.

Police’s Special Branch deferred the written exams for the recruitment of computer operators, stenographer cum computer operators and clerical posts to be held on Friday. New dates for these exams will be announced later, according to a notification.

Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation has also put off the written exams for posts of six categories from the 9th to the 13th grade. About 18,000 candidates have applied for the 35 posts.

Contacted, General Manager (DFO) of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation Mohammad Shawkat Osman told this newspaper that a new date for the exams has not been fixed yet.

Also, the oral examination for the post of assistant general manager at Palli Bidyut Samity under the Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board was postponed on Thursday.

“No job circular has been issued since the fall of the Hasina government. Meanwhile, all the recruitment tests have been delayed instead. Now I have to leave the dormitory with an empty pocket and no tuition,” said Khokan Sarker, a Dhaka University student who recently completed his master’s in mass communication and journalism.

He hoped for some assurance that he will not be harassed after returning to Bangladesh and will be allowed to leave the country when he wants. These facets fall outside of cricket, but are realities that Shakib is now facing.

Already suffering from an eye issue and perhaps some injury to his bowling finger, Shakib is trying to keep his focus on cricket under such duress.

Like an inborn fighter, whenever he finds himself with his back to the wall surrounded by controversy, Shakib somehow finds the strength within to conjure up some surreal performance.

This time Shakib, inarguably Bangladesh’s greatest-ever cricketer and most certainly contender for greatest sportsman to have come from the country, feels the need to move on and wishes to finish his Test career at home. The BCB, however, cannot ensure that.

So, will Shakib’s end in Tests come in Kanpur, is the eventual question making rounds. But in yesterday’s bombshell press conference, Shakib remained tall even in these testing times and conquered one and all with his charm.

Jamaat eyes

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stance on certain Islamic principles, which the party has been repeatedly asked to clarify.

Jamaat’s initiatives for the greater Islamist alliance are stalled due to these two questions, according to sources.

Although insiders all but rule out the possibility of an ideological alliance, they concede a strong possibility for a grand Islamist electoral alliance.

Not to be outdone, the smaller parties are also seeking out likely allies or partners, while split parties are working to mend their differences and resurface stronger to pose as a significant factor in the electoral political dynamics that would increase their chances of negotiating for constituencies.

As the BNP is considering a “go alone” policy for participating the election, Jamaat is trying to emerge as a big political force with the help of likeminded and other Islamists parties to counter its former ally, the BNP, sources said.

On August 18, Jamaat invited all Islamist parties at the city’s Al-Falah auditorium in Moghbazar where Jamaat ameer Shafiqur Rahman called upon chiefs of the parties to participate in the election from one platform, meeting sources said.

Top leaders of Khelafat Andolon, Jomiat-e-Ulamaye Islam, Islami Oikya Jote, Islami Andolon Bangladesh, Nejam-e-Islami, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish were present at the meeting.

Abul Kashem Kashemi, nayebe-ameer of Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon, told The Daily Star that the Jamaat ameer said the parties should have one vote bank.

However, Hamidur Rahman Azad, assistant secretary general of Jamaat, told The Daily Star that it was too early to talk about forming an electoral alliance as polls were a long way down the road.

“When the election comes, we will consider formation of a greater unity with like-minded Islamist parties. But we have communication with all political parties for the greater interest of the country.”

On September 21, another meeting was held at the Jatrabari Madrasa organised by Mahmudul Hasan, chairman of the largest Qawmi madrasa education board in Bangladesh, Befaq.

“In the meeting, leaders of different Islamist parties discussed

how to be on one platform ahead of the national election,” Kashemi told The Daily Star.

“The process has started so that the Islamist parties can unite on one platform to participate in the election,” he added. He, however, said the method of unification was yet to be finalised.

According to sources, Islami Andolan Bangladesh, which appeared as a large Islamist party after getting over 1 percent of the total votes cast in 2008 and 2018 polls, has reservations over cozying up with Jamaat.

Party leaders think Jamaat’s role in 1971 and the party’s differences in some basic Islamic values are barriers to an ideological alliance.

They, however, said there might be an electoral alliance after the polls schedule is announced.

Smaller parties that have no registration with the Election Commission are also trying to lean on parties that are registered.

Gono Odhikar Parishad, a party formed by former Dhaka University Central Students Union (Ducus) VP Nurul Hague Nur, got registration on September 2.

Some smaller parties are in talks with the party leaders for taking part in the election with Gono Odhikar Parishad’s electoral symbol, said Rashed Khan, general secretary of the party.

The party’s other faction, led by Reza Kibria, is also trying to reunite, Rashed added.

Gonoforum that split in two in December 2021 has reunited in August this year under the leadership of Dr Kamal Hossain, said Shubrata Chowdhury, a top leader of the erstwhile Mustafa Mohsin Montu-led faction of the party.

Apart from this, smaller Islamist parties, including Jomiat-e-Ulamaye Islam, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish, Khelafat Majlish and Nejam-e-Islam, has agreed to get on one platform, Khelafat Majlish Joint Secretary General Ataullah Amin told The Daily Star.

“The process is on to bring more Islamist parties, including Islami Oikya Jote, Islami Andolon Bangladesh and Jamaat, on board,” he added.

Mohiuddin Rabbani, joint secretary general of Hefajat-e-Islam said Hefajat will extend its support to the greater coalition of Islamist parties.

US to back interim govt

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Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus and Blinken yesterday discussed the importance of building strong institutions to fight corruption, uphold media freedom, respect internationally recognised labour rights, and protect human rights for all in Bangladesh, including Rohingya refugees and members of the minority communities, he said.

Secretary Blinken and Prof Yunus met on the sidelines of the United National General Assembly.

According to the chief adviser’s Facebook page, Blinken expressed full support for the interim government as they discussed economic cooperation, the Rohingya crisis, counterterrorism, labour issues, and the recovery of laundered money.

YUNUS AND GUTERRES MEET

UN Secretary-General António Guterres, while meeting with Yunus at the UN headquarters, reiterated

its readiness to support Bangladesh in its ongoing transition and reform process.

An UN statement said the secretary-general expressed appreciation for the close cooperation between the UN and Bangladesh.

The Secretary-General and the Chief Adviser also discussed the Rohingya refugee crisis and climate change.

Earlier on Tuesday, US President Joe Biden offered his country’s full support to Bangladesh’s interim government during his bilateral meeting with Muhammad Yunus.

They met on the sidelines of the UNGA in New York, signalling a new beginning of the relationship between the two countries.

President Biden welcomed further engagement between the two governments while Prof Yunus said his government must succeed in rebuilding the country and would need US cooperation.