

'Interim govt to decide its term'

Yunus tells Voice of America

STAR REPORT

The interim government will specify the length of its tenure, Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus said in an interview with Voice of America.

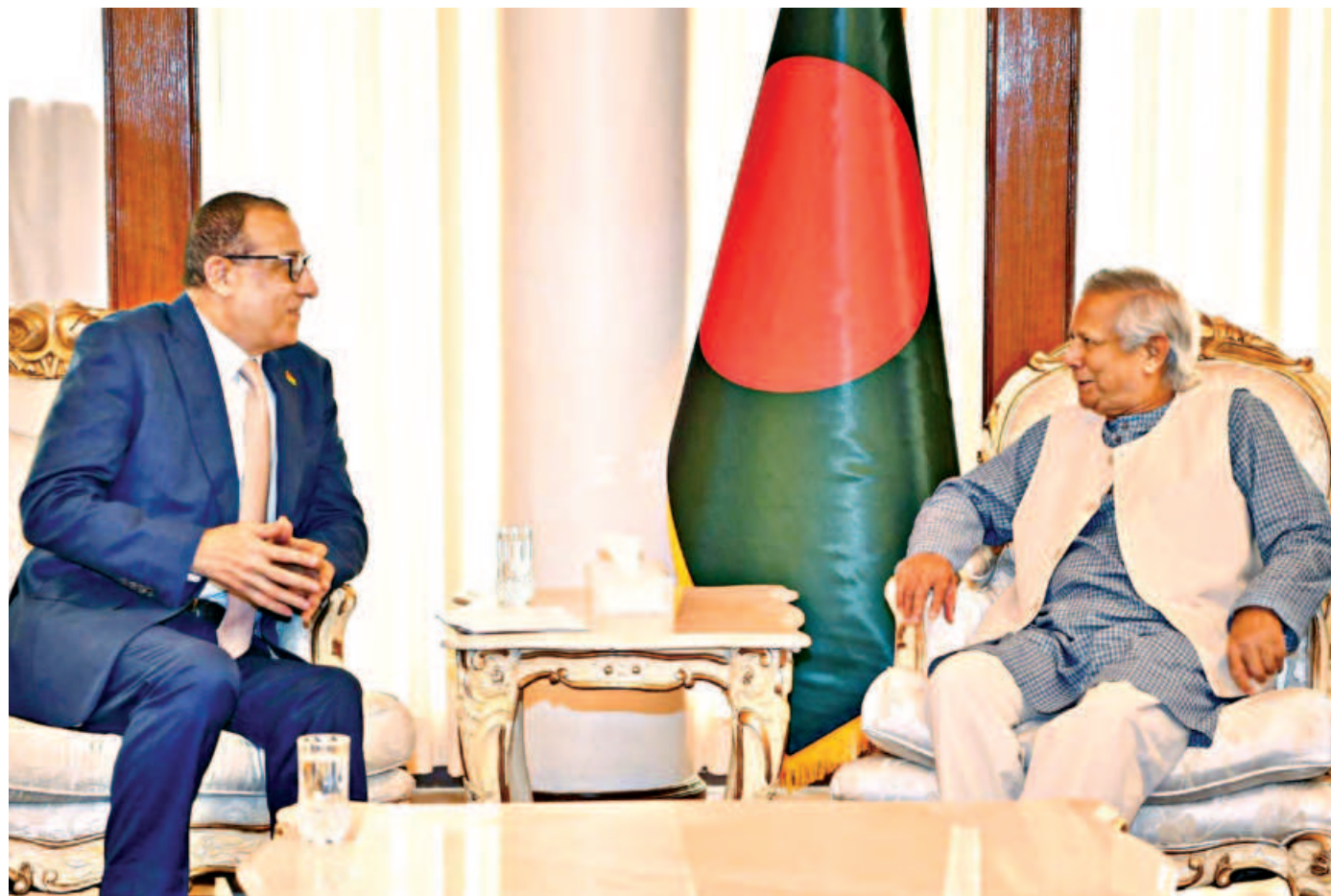
Speaking about the army chief's recent comment that a transition to democracy should be made within 18 months, Prof Yunus said, "If you want, you can suppose that this is the term of the interim government, but that is not the government's opinion. The government will determine how long its term will be. Unless the government says so, it cannot be considered the term of the government."

"When you hear it from us, that will be the actual date. The advisory council has discussed the term, but no decision has been made yet."

Voice of America (VOA) is an international radio broadcasting state media network funded by the United States of America. It produces content in over 48 languages, targeting people outside US borders. The VOA interview with Yunus, conducted in Bangla, took place during his recent visit to the US and was uploaded on the VOABangla.com website on Monday.

Citing the law and order situation of the country, Yunus explained the government gave magistracy power to the army for a limited time of two months, and hoped that the police could return to serving the people within this time.

For the complete interview scan the QR code



Ambassador of the State of Palestine Yousef Ramadan pays a courtesy call on Bangladesh interim government's Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at his office yesterday morning.

PHOTO: PTD

5 AL lawmakers, ex-bank chairman, secy arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five former Awami League lawmakers, ex-chairman of Exim Bank, and a former secretary were arrested yesterday.

Rab and Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police arrested them from Dhaka and Chattogram as they were accused in various cases, including for murders.

The five ex-MPs are Abdus Salam Murshedy for Khulna-4, Ekramul Karim Chowdhury for Noakhali-4, Mabbub Ara Begun Gini for Gaibandha-2, Abdullah Al Islam Jakob for Bhola-4, and Abdur Rouf of Kushtia-4.

Murshedy was held at Bashundhara in Dhaka, Ekramul in Chattogram, and Gini was arrested at Dhanmondi.

A DB team arrested former EXIM Bank chairman Nazrul Islam Mazumder at Gulshan.

"He was accused in several cases. We will decide in which cases he will be shown arrested," said Rezaul Karim Mallick, additional commissioner (DB) of the DMP.

Following the ouster of Awami League government, Bangladesh Bank reconstituted the board of directors of EXIM Bank, bringing

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Tension runs

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to several houses and a temple of Chakma and Marma people at Mahajanpara and Pankhaiyapara. As most residents of the villages fled beforehand, they assaulted several passers-by, locals said.

As of filing this report around 10:00pm, the town was tense and police using loudspeakers were asking people to stay calm. Police, border guards and army personnel patrolled different neighbourhoods.

Abdul Baten Mridha, officer-in-charge of Khagrachhari Police Station, said "I was also beaten while trying to calm the situation."

The incidents happened less than two weeks after a Bangalee man, who was injured after crashing a motorcycle he had allegedly stolen, was beaten to death by locals. Racial violence flared up in the district at the time and it spilled over to Rangamati. The violence left at least four people, including a 17-year-old, from the indigenous communities dead.

Yesterday morning, as the news of the alleged rape spread, the students started protesting. The students, who are from the indigenous communities, confined Rana to the office of the principal, but 10-15 students entered the room and started hitting him, police said.

Later, police rescued him and took him to Khagrachhari Sadar Hospital.

Ripple Bappi Chakma, resident medical officer, said Rana was dead on arrival around 2:10pm.

The hospital was yet to make a list of the injured people, he added.

Officials said Rana previously went to jail on charges of trying to rape a 10th grader student of his. A case was filed against him regarding this on February 25, 2021.

After he was released on bail and returned to work, students marched on September 5 with a banner that read, "Fire rapist teacher Sohel Rana."

Prior to that, Rana was a teacher of Hosenabad Govt Technical School and College in Doulatpur, Kushtia. He was transferred from that school after an investigation found that he molested a student, according to media reports.

Yesterday morning, when Rana was kept confined to a room, UNO Sujjan, an additional superintendent of police and officer-in-charge of the police station tried to bring the situation under control, but to no avail, said Sujjan.

Sujjan said he and a few police officials suffered injuries.

Ukanyu Marma, a witness, said some students saw Rana taking a girl to a room around 9:00am.

"When they [the students] informed us, we went to the college and rescued her from the teacher's room," he said.

"The girl said the teacher had raped her," he said, adding that people were outraged after hearing that.

Cops still afraid to come out of cocoon

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stations out of 664 were attacked, and some establishments were torched.

At least 500 police vehicles were set on fire. As per Police Headquarters data, 5,829 firearms and 6,06,742 bullets were looted.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Mainul Hasan, at a programme on Saturday, said people lost confidence in police due to the unprofessional activities of a handful of its members.

"This is an irreparable loss for the force. I have taken charge at a different time... we are trying to restore people's confidence in the police..."

"I believe that with the joint efforts of all, we will reach a place where police will be a symbol of public confidence," the DMP boss said.

The interim government has formed a commission, led by former home secretary Sarfaraz Chowdhury, to reform the police.

The government has also taken some initiatives

to make the force with around 2.13 lakh members fully operational, including holding special meetings, reshuffles, promotions, and repeated call by seniors to perform their duties properly.

Led by DMP Commissioner Mainul Hasan, senior officials of the unit already held two special welfare meetings — on September 26, and September 28 — with police officials.

At the meetings, the DMP high-ups took stock of force members' demands and urged them to do their duties upholding the directives of senior officers.

Inspector General of Police Mainul Islam also tried to address the problems by holding meetings with different unit chiefs.

But those initiatives, according to many police members, did little.

Many senior police officers, who were at the forefront during the Hasina-led government, are not appearing publicly any more. Some of them have

taken leave.

They are not on the list of 187 officials who have not yet joined work after Hasina fled.

The absentees include one deputy inspector general, seven additional DIGs, two superintendents of police (SP), one additional SP, five assistant SPs, five police inspectors, 14 sub-inspectors, and sergeants, nine assistant sub-inspectors, seven nayeks, and 136 constables.

Home Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury at a programme yesterday said the policemen who have not joined work yet should be treated as criminals.

According to sources, several police officers left the country to avoid arrest, some police officials attached to different units without given any specific charge are also planning to go abroad, and some are seeking leaves or deputation postings.

Around 1,000 cops are also under treatment for their injuries sustained during the uprising.

With all these going on, many police officials, especially junior ones, now do not want to face the people out in the open and on occasions have refused to follow orders fearing public wrath, according to sources.

Some cops, especially those who were in the limelight during the previous regime, now are content with posts that keep them out of public interactions.

"... This post gave me mental relief... this is an indication that I will not be indicted in any cases," an SP ranked officer recently told The Daily Star after being transferred to a post usually not desired by police officials.

A good number of policemen are unhappy as murder cases were being filed against them. So far 184 murder cases have been filed against cops, including three former inspectors general of police.

Of the cases, 99 have been filed accusing DMP members, sources added. "We are being accused of

murder without any reason, as The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, covers our force. By mandate, we are bound to follow the government order, and we do what the government directs us to do. But we are still facing murder charges," a high official of the force requesting anonymity told this newspaper mentioning section 132 of CrPC.

The section says, "No prosecution against any person for any act purporting to be done under this Chapter shall be instituted in any Criminal Court, except with the sanction of the Government."

The official said departmental action can be taken against police officers accused of making mistakes and using excessive force.

On the inactiveness of law enforcers, former IGP Muhammad Nurul Huda told The Daily Star that police suffered a huge blow with the fall of Hasina-led government and that it would take time to recover. But the recovery speed was poor, he said.

Govt may raise

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be increased for several years. Recently, the Bangladesh Administrative Service Association wrote to the cabinet secretary, requesting an increase in both the entry and retirement ages.

However, following a demonstration in front of the Chief Adviser's residence on September 30, the government has begun actively considering the proposal, according to sources.

DEPUTY SECYS FACE ACTION

Seventeen deputy secretaries — two of them women — are facing disciplinary action for scuffling at the public administration ministry, confirmed two high-ranking officials and an intelligence source.

The commotion occurred on September 10 at the room of a joint secretary during the appointment process of deputy commissioners. The joint secretary transferred outside Dhaka later.

A committee was formed to determine the culpability of the deputy secretaries involved. Led

by senior secretary of the health services division, M A Akmal Hossain Azad, the committee recommended severe punishment for eight individuals, lighter penalties for four, and reprimands for five.

The officials facing major penalties are Nurjahan Khanam, Nurul Karim Bhuiyan, Jasim Uddin, Rebeka Khan, Saiful Hasan, Mohammad Zainul Abedin, Nurul Hafiz, and Motakabbir Ahmed.

Those recommended for lighter penalties are Hasan Habib, A Kuddus, Abdul Malek and Nazrul Islam.

The five others are Sagor Hossain, Muniruzzaman, S M Jahangir Hossain, Hemayet Uddin, and Tofayel Hossain.

None of the high officials were willing to comment publicly on the matter. However, a senior official from the Cabinet Division noted, "If the government wants to assert control over the administration, it must ensure these officials are punished. If not, future incidents could severely damage the administration."

Iran fires 180 missiles at Israel

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Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan, which lie between Iran and Israel, closed their airspace too.

As the missiles made their way to Israel from the east, blasts were heard over the Jordanian capital Amman, as Israel's allies moved to intercept them, an AFP correspondent said.

Jordan said its air defences responded to missiles and drones.

US President Joe Biden ordered the military to "aid Israel's defence" and shoot down Iranian missiles, the White House said.

While Iran-backed groups across the region had already been drawn into the Gaza war, sparked by Palestinian group Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel, Tehran had largely refrained from direct attacks on its regional foe.

"Direct conflict" - Israeli military spokesman Daniel Hagari said the latest Iranian "attack will have consequences. We have plans,

and we will operate at the place and time we decide".

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said that "if the Zionist regime reacts to Iranian operations, it will face crushing attacks", according to a statement carried by the Fars news agency.

French Prime Minister Michel Barnier said he was concerned about "a direct conflict that seems to be underway between Iran and Israel".

Germany's Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said on social media platform X that the attack was "leading the region further towards the abyss".

Iran-backed group Hamas praised the Iranian attack, saying it was "in revenge for the blood of our heroic martyrs".

And Tehran-aligned armed factions in Iraq threatened to target "all US forces in the country if Iran comes under attack".

The escalation came after the Israeli military early Tuesday said troops had

started "targeted ground raids" in south Lebanon, across Israel's northern border.

The Israeli ground offensive came despite growing calls for de-escalation after a week of air strikes that killed hundreds in Lebanon, including Hassan Nasrallah, the powerful leader of Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah.

Iran has said Nasrallah's killing will bring about Israel's "destruction", though the foreign ministry said Monday that Tehran would not deploy any troops to confront Israel.

The Pentagon said the United States was boosting its forces in the Middle East by a "few thousand" troops.

"Greater suffering" - In Lebanon, the UN peacekeeping mission said the Israeli offensive did not amount to a "ground incursion" and Hezbollah denied any troops had crossed the border.

There was no way to immediately verify the claims, which came as Israel struck south Beirut, Damascus and

Gaza, despite international calls for restraint to avoid a regional conflagration.

"We fear a large-scale ground invasion by Israel into Lebanon would only result in greater suffering," said UN human rights office spokeswoman Liz Throssell.

Israel's defence minister warned the fight was far from over, even after a massive strike on Beirut killed Nasrallah on Friday.

Israel seeks to dismantle Hezbollah's military capabilities and restore security to the north, where tens of thousands have been displaced by nearly a year of cross-border fire.

The Iran-backed group, which suffered heavy losses in a spate of attacks last month, said it targeted Israeli army bases on Tuesday.

Separately, a suspected shooting attack in Tel Aviv on Tuesday evening killed at least four people, police said.

Lebanon's Health Minister Firass Abiad said more than 1,000 people have been killed

since September 17.

Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati and the UN humanitarian agency appealed for more than \$400 million in aid for the displaced, estimating there could be as many as one million.

Gaza strikes

Hezbollah began low intensity strikes on Israeli troops a day after its Palestinian ally Hamas staged its unprecedented attack on Israel on October 7, which triggered Israel's devastating assault on Gaza.

In central Beirut, Youssef Amir, displaced from southern Lebanon, said: "I have lost my home and relatives in this war, but all of that is a sacrifice for Lebanon, for Hezbollah".

Beirut resident Elie Jabour, 27, told AFP that despite opposing Hezbollah "politically... I support them defending the border".

Later, as Iran launched missiles, celebratory gunfire erupted from Hezbollah's bastion in Beirut's southern suburbs.

demonstrated blocking the Nabinagar-Chandra highway in Baipail area yesterday demanding arrears and reopening of the factory.

This caused congestion on the Dhaka-Aricha highway and it spread from Nabinagar to Zirani and from Nabinagar to BPATC areas, said Hossain Shahid Chowdhury, inspector (admin) of Dhaka North Traffic.

Abu Bakar, OC of Ashulia Police Station, said army personnel were in contact with the factory owners to resolve the issue.

Khairul Mamun Mintu, legal affairs secretary of the Bangladesh Garments and Sweater Workers Trade Union Centre, said Birds Group was supposed to pay the workers three-month arrears on Monday, but it failed.

BGMEA acting president Abdullah Hil Rakib yesterday said the Birds Group owners could not pay the arrears on Monday.

The factory owner, Anwar, was undergoing treatment at a hospital, and the BGMEA could not reach his family over the phone to discuss the payment of arrears, he told The Daily Star.

Birds Group shut its factory on August 28 citing financial constraints and a lack of work orders.

The BGMEA in a statement yesterday thanked the joint forces for playing a significant role in maintaining law and order in the sector.

The trade body held a meeting with the members of joint forces on Monday. [Our Savar correspondent contributed to this report.]

36 arrested over attacks

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A group of Jahangirnagar University students also blocked the Dhaka-Aricha highway in front of the university's main entrance around 1:15pm yesterday protesting the killing of the garment worker.

They staged the protest for about 45 minutes, which led to gridlock in the area.

According to data from Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), 19 factories in Ashulia area were closed yesterday.

WHAT THE CASE STATEMENT SAYS

The statement of the police case said some workers of the Mondol Knitwear factory started demonstrating in front of the factory in Tongabari area on Monday following rumours that two workers went missing and

two others were raped. Law enforcers were trying to resolve the worker-owner dispute.

Workers from nearby Natural Denims and Natural Indigo Limited walked out of their factories to join the protest.

At one stage, some unruly workers from Mango Tex Limited and a number of outsiders gathered in front of the Mondol Knitwear factory. The demonstrators threw brick chunks at the law enforcers, forcing them to use batons on the protesters, said the case statement.

The incident left some 10-12 law enforcers, including SP Sarwar Alam of Industrial Police-1 and Rab 4 Additional Police Superintendent Aktaruzzaman, and 30 workers injured. The protesters also vandalised

eight army, two Rab and one industrial police vehicles, it added.

However, the case statement did not mention the death of Kawsar.

Amirul Haque Amin, president of National Workers Federation, yesterday said the government should go tough against the troublemakers in the garment sector rather than being tough on the workers.

He also said that the factory owners should be more responsible in fulfilling the workers' 18-point demand.

Nazma Akter, president of Sammilito Garment Sramik Federation, said normally is returning to the Ashulia industrial belt gradually as no major labour unrest was reported yesterday. **HIGHWAY BLOCKED** Workers of Birds Group