



Pace of reforms will determine time for polls

Says Prof Yunus in interview with AFP

AFP, Baku

Bangladesh's interim leader Muhammad Yunus yesterday told AFP that reforms are needed before his country can elect a government following the ouster of autocratic former ruler Sheikh Hasina.

The speed of reforms "will decide how quick the election will be," the Nobel Peace Prize winner and micro-finance pioneer said in an interview on the sidelines of the COP29 climate talks in Baku.

But he insisted that he would steer the country towards a democratic vote.

"That's a promise that we made, that as soon as we are ready, we'll have the elections, and the elected people can take over, run the country," he said.

He said the country needed to quickly agree on possible constitutional reforms, as well as the shape of the government, parliament and election rules.

"We are the interim government, so our period should be as short as possible."

Yunus was named to lead the government as "chief adviser" after a student-led uprising toppled Hasina in August.

Tens of thousands demonstrated in protests against job quotas that morphed into a nationwide struggle to end Hasina's 15 years of iron-fisted rule.

More than 700 people were killed, many in a brutal police crackdown, before Hasina fled to India on August 5.

Hasina rule saw widespread human rights abuses, including the mass detention and extrajudicial killings of her political opponents.

"Any government would be concerned about stability. We are also," he said.

"We are hoping that we can sort it out and have a peaceful law and order," he added.

"It's only three months after the revolution."

In the three months since becoming Bangladesh's interim leader following a student-led revolution, Yunus has endured political turmoil, impatient cries for elections, and destructive flooding across the low-lying nation.

Impatience for elections in Bangladesh has gained pace since Hasina's ouster, and the silver-haired technocrat said he shared concerns for peace and security in the nation of 170 million.

Bangladesh is struggling financially and, earlier this month, Indian firm Adani slashed cross-border electricity supply by half due to some \$850 million in unpaid bills.



"We are the interim government, so our period should be as short as possible."
PROF MUHAMMAD YUNUS



A group of protesters, injured during the July uprising, stage a sit-in at the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (NITOR), where they are currently being treated. The protesters, some in wheelchairs or with crutches, demand proper treatment and fast release of the July Smriti Foundation funds. The photo was taken early today. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

JULY UPRISING The injured take to the streets

Demand better treatment, funds; health adviser faces outrage at NITOR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of protesters who were injured during the July mass uprising and are now undergoing treatment, were blocking the road in front of the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (NITOR) till midnight, demanding proper treatment.

They also demanded quick release of funds from the July Smriti Foundation for all the victims.

The protests began after Health Adviser Nurjahan Begum went to the hospital to visit them. She had to leave NITOR in a different vehicle after her car was blocked.

Accompanied by British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Sarah Cooke, she went there around 11:30am.

When the two were leaving the hospital after talking to a few patients, the other injured victims gathered outside and blocked the adviser's car on the hospital premises, witnesses said.

Some lay in front of the vehicle, while others climbed onto it. The protocol officers pushed them away during the protests, they alleged.

In response to the situation, the health adviser left in another vehicle. The UK high commissioner also had to leave the hospital in a different car.

The protesters said they will remain on the street until the advisers come back and talk to them all, and ensure proper treatment and the disbursement of funds.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

STUDENT MOVEMENT Grassroots committees to be formed soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The student movement against discrimination will form grassroots-level committees as soon as possible with students who participated in the July uprising.

Besides, central organising and central executive committees will be formed by next week, its leaders decided at a nearly four-hour-long meeting at their office at the capital's Banglamotor yesterday.

More than 80 of the 158 coordinators joined the meeting.

The appointments of new advisers to the government, the relation between the platform and the administration, the question of whether the president should stay, SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Star INTERVIEW

The Islami Andolan Bangladesh was founded in 1987 by Syed Fazlul Karim, the pir of Charmonai in Barishal, as Islami Shashontantra Andolan. It took its current name in 2008. In light of the recent realignment of political forces, it has become important to understand the stance and vision of key Islamist platforms. This interview of Islami Andolan chief Syed Mohammad Rezaul Karim, done on October 26, is the second in a series of interviews with leaders of Islamist parties.

Reforms first, then polls Says Islami Andolan Bangladesh chief

TANIM AHMED and RASHIDUL HASAN

The Islami Andolan Bangladesh prioritises reforms over elections but also believes the government should announce a timeline of its own accord. Still in talks with other Islamist parties for a grand coalition, Islami Andolan chief Syed Mohammad Rezaul Karim told The Daily Star during an exclusive interview that it favoured proportional representation instead of the prevailing 'first past the post' election system.

The Islamist party's chief stressed he was unwilling to compromise on reforms. "The reforms should be done well and quickly so that we can move on to elections. But the priority must be on reforms."

Ameer of the Islamist party established

in 1987 as the Islami Shashantantra Andolan (which later turned into the Islami Andolan Bangladesh), Rezaul Karim, said he was not willing to wait too long either, as reforms ploughed on. "In terms of a timeline, I would say a year or a year and a half."

"But it would be nice to hear some sort of a timeline from the interim government too," he said regarding the next national elections.

Also the pir of Charmonai, Syed Md Rezaul Karim, said all the Islamist parties were working towards a grand coalition. "We are holding discussions and hope to have a united front for the elections." He indicated that the Islamist parties would try to go to the polls under one umbrella and lend their support in favour of the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

CARBON NEUTRALITY GOAL World must hit target by 2030s Says report as leaders haggle over climate action at COP29

AFP, Baku

Global leaders offered competing visions on how to tackle climate change at UN-led talks yesterday as a new report warned that the world must reach carbon neutrality much sooner than planned.

Planet-warming carbon dioxide emissions from oil, gas and coal rose to record highs this year, according to preliminary research from an international network of scientists at the Global Carbon Project.

The report came as leaders gathered in Azerbaijan for COP29 climate talks aimed at reaching a deal to boost funding for poorer nations so they can adapt to climate shocks and transition to cleaner energy.

The research found that to meet the Paris agreement's ambitious goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the world now needs to reach net-zero CO2 emissions by the late 2030s - instead of 2050.

"This is what the presidency has been promoting since the beginning of this year - the time window is narrowing, shrinking - and we need to act urgently," Yalchin Rafiyev, Azerbaijan's lead negotiator for COP29, told AFP.

"There are still possibilities for keeping 1.5C within reach", and striking a deal on climate finance "will definitely pave the way for us to realise this opportunity".

The warning comes with growing concern about the future of global climate action after the election of Donald Trump, who has vowed to again pull the

Global CO2 emissions to hit record high in 2024
\$1.3 trillion climate finance sought from wealthy nations

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4