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We need accurate info for taking prompt action

Says Yunus about attack on minorities while meeting religious leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday sought religious leaders' assistance in getting information about attacks on minorities so that the government could take prompt action.

There are discrepancies between the facts and what the foreign media are reporting, he said.

"We want accurate information and want to establish a process of getting the information," he said in his opening remarks at a dialogue with religious leaders at the Foreign Service Academy.

"We are talking about communal harmony. We all agree that we have harmony... Along with harmony, we have fear in our minds too."

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus



In case of an attack on minorities, information must be collected immediately to catch the perpetrators, he said.

"We are talking about communal harmony. We all agree that we have harmony... Along with harmony, we have fear in our minds too," he said.

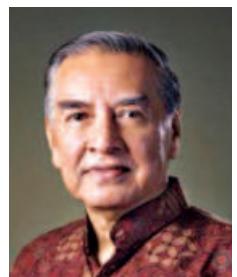
Leaders of Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian and several other religions joined the dialogue. They said they would remain united against any propaganda, and pledged their support for the government and religious harmony.

Amid demonstrations in the capital and different districts over the attack on the Bangladesh Assistant High Commission in Agartala, Prof Yunus on Tuesday began a series of dialogues.

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What is Indian media's gain in branding us as a Hindu-hating country?

THE THIRD VIEW



MAHFUZ ANAM

The only conclusion that can be drawn from much of the Indian media's recent coverage of Bangladesh is that it is a Hindu-hating country. The venom that is being spewed, the language that is being used, the hatred that is being spread, and the demeaning stereotype that is being portrayed about us seem geared towards generating a hatred for Bangladeshis among the Indian people. The long-term impact of this, along with its backlash here, will be very difficult to neutralise.

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Inflation hits 4-month high despite govt steps

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Inflation hit a four-month high of 11.38 percent in November, despite the tightening monetary policy and easing of import tax on essential items.

Food inflation soared to 13.80 percent from 12.66 percent in October, according to data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. It stood at 14.63 percent in urban areas and 13.41 percent in rural areas.

Non-food prices edged up to 9.39 percent in November from 9.34 percent a month earlier.

The stubbornly high inflation comes despite hawkish monetary policy under the new central bank governor Ahsan H Mansur, who took charge in August, and the National Board of Revenue reducing or exempting the tariffs in recent months on many essential commodities including sugar, potato, onion, dates, eggs etc.

The Bangladesh Bank raised the key policy rate thrice to 10 percent since Mansur took charge. As a result, the interest rate of loans has also soared.

During a meeting with the BB on Tuesday, the visiting mission of the International Monetary Fund said the policy rate could be increased further if inflation does not come under control.

Economists, however, said inflation would not ease through only tightening the policy rate if the central bank printed the high-powered money.

"Only monetary policy cannot tame the elevated inflation – it has become a structural problem," said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office.

Providing liquidity support to distressed banks to protect their depositors is causing money creation. If it cannot be sterilised, the contractionary stance will be diluted.

Food inflation (in %) SOURCE: BBS

	14.01
Jul	14.01
Aug	11.36
Sep	10.40
Oct	12.66
Nov	13.80

The BB has recently given Tk 22,500 crore in new money as liquidity support to six crisis-hit banks.

However, abandoning the contractionary monetary policy would not be wise either, Hussain said.

"If the fire brigade is unable to extinguish the fire, you don't let it burn, remove the brigade and pour more oil into the fire. The sensible thing to do is to complement the firefighters with all other fire extinguishing tools."

In the context of food inflation, those other tools are different approaches to market management: policing extortion in supply chains, ensuring competition and preventing collusion in wholesale markets, Hussain added.

Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling, echoed the same.

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No arrests sans proper probe Says IGP; apologises for the deaths during uprising

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Inspector General of Police Baharul Alam has said arrests will not be made indiscriminately or without proper investigations into cases filed over killings during the July uprising.

"The law does not permit arbitrary arrests, and neither do we," the IGP said at a press conference at the Police Headquarters yesterday.

He was responding to a question regarding the cases filed against a large number of people over the killings during the uprising.

The IGP said efforts are underway to identify and arrest some senior police officials over their involvement in ordering fatal shootings during the uprising.

"Those officials, who were in command, cannot evade their responsibilities."

Paying tributes to the students, children, ordinary citizens and police personnel who lost their lives during the uprising, Baharul said every killing is condemnable.

He apologised to the families of all the victims and expressed regret.

Emphasising the need for a depoliticised police force, Baharul said all the force members wish to carry out duties free from political influence.

"Police must be depoliticised. This is my demand as well that of every member of the force."



Baharul Alam

REGIONAL RESISTANCE

During the 1971 Liberation War, dozens of regional forces emerged across Bangladesh. Just as the freedom fighters trained under the sub-sectors and the Bengal Regiment fought valiantly, these regional forces also put up tough resistance against the Pakistan army. In the month of victory, we bring you the stories of some of these heroic forces.

Baten Bahini of Tangail

AHMAD ISTIAK

During the Liberation War, two powerful regional forces challenged the Pakistani army in Tangail.

One was the renowned Kaderia Bahini, led by Bangabir Abdul Kader Siddique, and the other was the lesser-known but formidable Baten Bahini.

The latter was led by Khandaker Abdul Baten, then vice president of the Student Union's Tangail Saadat College unit.

Originating in Konra village of Tangail's Nagarpur upazila, the Baten Bahini eventually grew to over 3,500 members and went on to spread across the surrounding districts of Manikganj, Sirajganj, and Pabna.

In February this year, The Daily Star spoke to about 40 freedom fighters of Baten Bahini during a visit to Tangail, Sirajganj, and Manikganj.

From the book "Mohan Swadhinota Juddho - 1971 Baten Bahini" by Mir Shamsul Alam Shahzada and interviews with Baten Bahini members, it was learnt that a 10-member resistance committee was formed in Konra village on April 2 under the leadership of Mir Shamsul Alam Shahzada following the March 25 massacre. The next day, Abdul Baten arrived in Konra and began mobilising

residents of Konra and nearby villages for war.

FORMATION

Mir Shamsul, also a Baten Bahini member, told this newspaper that two rifles and 45 rounds of ammo handed over to the force by the then Lauhati union chairman, who got them from two soldiers of the East Pakistan Rifles, were the first weapons acquired by the force.

A week later, freedom fighters discovered eight rifles dumped in a ditch in Tarutia village. These weapons were used to start training.

On April 20, a locally organised group of fighters led by Siddique Hossain joined Baten Bahini, significantly strengthening the force's ranks.

Siddique told this newspaper, "Immediately after Bangabandhu's speech, we started mobilising the local people of Shahjani village in Bharra union under Nagarpur upazila.

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Return to Dhaka for consultation Govt asks Agartala, Kolkata mission chiefs

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka has asked chiefs of two of its missions in India to return home for consultation after violent protests in Kolkata and Agartala against alleged attacks on minorities in Bangladesh.

Acting Deputy High Commissioner in Kolkata Shikder Mohammad Ashrafur Rahman has already returned to Dhaka, a foreign ministry official said yesterday.

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SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

Assistant High Commissioner Arif Mohammad in Agartala was also scheduled to return, the official said.

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ILLIYEEN

7 NEW LOCATIONS COMING SOON

Jamuna Future Park Menswear Flagship Store Jamuna Future Park Womenswear Flagship Store

Gulshan Avenue Multi-Brand Store

Sylhet, Kumarpara Flagship Store

Bailey Road Multi-Brand Store

Chattogram, Halishahar Flagship Store

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