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## ‘We want this political transition to be successful’

Says EU Ambassador Michael Miller in an interview with *Star*

PORIMOL PALMA

The European Union sees a sea of change in post-August 5 Bangladesh and aims to support the political transition, broadening and deepening its ties with the country amid global geopolitical shifts.

European Investment Bank (EIB) Vice President Nicola Beer will visit Dhaka in January to explore EU support for Bangladesh's development.

Bangladesh is undertaking reforms in various sectors following the July uprising.

“We are looking at all the possibilities... to support the reform ambitions of the interim government,” said EU Ambassador to Bangladesh Michael Miller in an exclusive interview with *The Daily Star*.

“You have the potential to serve as a symbol of stability, hope, and fundamental rights. We want to collaborate with you to ensure this becomes a remarkable success story,” he said.

He expressed optimism about the progress in fundamental rights, democratisation, and rule of law in Bangladesh, aligning with EU values.

At least 19 EU diplomats met Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus in Dhaka on December 9.

Miller said the EU is committed to making the political transition successful, emphasising the need for a democratic election.

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### ECONOMIC TRANSITION

Under the Everything but Arms (EBA) scheme that provides duty benefits to the LDCs, Bangladesh's exports to the EU grew from €2.4 billion to €24 billion per year in the past two decades and some €2-3 billion in duties were saved annually.

With Bangladesh graduating out of LDC status by 2027, these benefits will end. The EU has another scheme called GSP Plus, which, however, is subject to stringent conditions of human rights, democracy, labour rights and environment.

The EU and Bangladesh are transitioning from their 2001 trade agreement to a Comprehensive Cooperation Partnership Agreement (CCPA), with negotiations starting in November.

Under the Global Gateway Initiative (GGI), the EIB has committed €400 million to renewable energy projects in Bangladesh. The January visit of EIB's Vice President is seen as a significant step to boost infrastructure, connectivity, and digitisation.

Now, with the political changeover in Bangladesh, the EU is doubling its efforts to work with Bangladesh.

“On the first hand, we have politically huge sympathy, huge interest... we want this political transition to be successful and we want it to end in a democratic election,” Michael Miller said.

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President Mohammed Shahabuddin exchanges greetings with the members of the Christian community at Bangabhaban on the occasion of Christmas. The president and his wife Rebeka Sultana hosted the programme.

PHOTO: PID

## Strengthen bond of communal harmony

Says president

UNB, Dhaka

President Mohammed Shahabuddin yesterday urged all to further strengthen the bond of communal harmony to make Bangladesh discrimination and corruption-free and build it a justice-based country.

He made this call at a greeting exchange programme with prominent Christian community people at Bangabhaban on the occasion of Christmas.

Shahabuddin said Bangladesh is a country of communal harmony, and called upon all to work together for the welfare of the country and its people.

The president and his wife Dr Rebeka Sultana hosted the event.

Earlier, the president cut a cake to mark the occasion and exchanged greetings with guests.

## Early action key to dengue control

Experts emphasise year-round strategy to curb the menace

HELEMUL ALAM

As Bangladesh braces for another year with the threat of dengue looming, experts have urged the government to adopt comprehensive and year-round strategies to curb the spread of the mosquito-borne disease.

The stakes are high, with 2024 already seeing 565 deaths and 100,558 cases from the mosquito-borne disease, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

Experts emphasised the need to be proactive and said waiting until the monsoon season to combat dengue is no longer viable. Entomologists like Manzur A Chowdhury stress initiating anti-mosquito drives as early as January to eliminate Aedes mosquito populations before they proliferate.

“Authorities must identify dengue hotspots and implement targeted interventions such as

### PROPOSED MEASURES

- Initiate anti-mosquito drives starting in Jan
- Implement larviciding, adulticiding, awareness campaigns
- Integrate surveillance for other Aedes-transmitted diseases

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Deploy dedicated ward-level personnel for fever detection, blood testing
- Declare dengue a reportable disease starting in Jan
- Strengthen mosquito control departments with modern equipment
- Prioritise hospitals in mosquito control campaigns
- Expand efforts to rural areas alongside urban centres

larviciding, adulticiding, and public awareness campaigns,” said Manzur.

Besides, Manzur said surveillance for other aedes-transmitted viruses, like chikungunya and zika, should be integrated into broader mosquito control efforts to prevent overlapping outbreaks.

Entomologist Kabirul Bashar of Jahangirnagar University highlighted the urgent need to address issues like inadequate protection for hospitalised patients and the increasing number of cases outside Dhaka.

“The government must strengthen mosquito control efforts in districts like Barishal, Chandpur, Manikganj, and Gazipur, which are likely to see a rise in cases next year,” he warned.

**LESSONS FROM KOLKATA**  
Bangladesh could look to Kolkata for a robust dengue management model, said experts.

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## PK Halder walks out of Kolkata jail after over 2 years

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

More than two and a half years after his arrest by India's Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case, Bangladeshi businessman Prashanta Kumar Halder, known as PK Halder, walked out of jail after a special court in Kolkata granted him bail.

Apart from PK Halder, two of his associates, Swapan Mistry and Uttam Mistry, were also granted bail by the special judge, Prashanta Mukherjee, on Friday.

While PK Halder was required to submit a bail bond of Rs 1 million, Swapan and Uttam were ordered to provide a Rs 5 lakh bond each, according to the court order, a copy of which is with *The Daily Star*.

The bail bond was submitted by the petitioners on Monday evening, and PK Halder walked out of Presidency Jail on Tuesday.

In his order, the judge said that since the three petitioners had already undergone detention for a period extending up to one-third of the maximum sentence for the offence of money laundering, “this court is one of the considered view that in the absence of any admissible document or information with respect to first offence or judgment of conviction, the benefit of doubt should invariably go in favour of them.”

Consequently, the petitioners were entitled to

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## India should stop border killings

Says Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

Border killings should never be accepted under any circumstances, said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday.

Fakhrul made the remark after arriving in Sylhet on a personal visit.

Speaking to the media at Sylhet Osmani International Airport, he said, “India should stop border killings. BNP has always demanded this, and we stand firm that border killings should never be accepted.”

He also said it is the collective responsibility of the people to build a country free from fascism. “BNP is committed to restoring democracy in Bangladesh,” he added.

Later in the day, the BNP secretary general visited the shrines of Hazrat Shahjalal (RA) and Shah Paran (RA) and offered prayers.

Among others, BNP standing committee member Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, Sylhet district BNP president Abdul Qayum Chowdhury, Sylhet metropolitan BNP acting president Rezaul Hasan Qays Lodi, Sylhet district BNP general secretary Emran Ahmed Chowdhury, and Sylhet metropolitan BNP general secretary Emdad Hossain Chowdhury were also present.



On a bright winter morning, children run freely with geese in the field. Their laughter and the gentle honking of the geese create a harmonious symphony of nature and innocence. The photo was taken in Barishal Sadar upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS