

## UK PM grilled in House over Tulip issue

AGENCIES

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer yesterday faced a grilling from Conservative Party chief and Leader of the Opposition Kemi Badenoch over former UK treasury minister Tulip Siddiq's resignation and the economy as the two leaders clashed at Prime Minister's Questions.

Tulip, whose ministerial role included tackling corruption in UK financial markets, quit as a Treasury minister on Tuesday after repeated questions about her financial links to the ousted Bangladeshi government run by her aunt Sheikh Hasina.

Tulip has come under intense scrutiny over her use of properties in London linked to her aunt's allies.

Starmer said he accepted the Hampstead and Highgate MP's resignation "with sadness" and that he wanted "to be clear that the

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## 2 die from 'wrong treatment'

### Probe body formed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Two patients have died due to wrong treatment at Shaheed Syed Nazrul Islam Medical College Hospital in Kishoreganj, their families alleged yesterday.

Admitting the incident, the hospital's Director (acting) Helish Ranjan Sarkar said the nurse responsible for the incident was removed from duty.

"A committee was formed to investigate the incident. After the investigation, I will recommend maximum punishment for the nurse to higher authorities," he added.

According to the victims' families and hospital sources, Moniruzzaman Mallik, 32, a teacher at a kindergarten school at Katiadi upazila, was admitted to the hospital on January 7 for hernia treatment.

Another patient Zahirul Islam, 22, of Nikli upazila, was admitted on January 12 due to abdominal pain.

Both patients were scheduled to undergo surgery yesterday morning.

Before their operation, Nadira Begum, a senior staff nurse, injected the two patients with anaesthesia while they were still in the ward around 7:30am, they said.

A relative named Mozaffar said the anaesthesia injection "Nor Q" was supposed to be pushed in the operation theatre, but the nurse pushed it on the ward seat mistakenly.

The two men died soon after they were injected, he added.

Relatives of the deceased protested the deaths and demanded exemplary punishment for the person responsible for the incident. When the situation deteriorated, army and police personnel rushed and brought the situation under control.

## TIPU MURDER 'It was revenge killing'

### Say police on death of ex-Khulna councillor; 3 more arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Sheikh Shahriar Islam Pappu, 27, allegedly shot and killed former Khulna City Corporation councillor and a Swetchhchasebak League leader Golam Rabbani Tipu in Cox's Bazar to avenge his uncle's murder. A woman named Ritu, 24, was reportedly used as bait in the planned killing.

Police disclosed these details after arresting three individuals -- including Pappu and Ritu -- from Moulvibazar on Tuesday. The other arrestee is Golam Rasul, 25.

Tipu was gunned down near Cox's Bazar Seagull Point on January 9.

Superintendent of Police Rahmat Ullah at a press conference in Cox's Bazar yesterday said the incident stemmed from the 2013 murder of Huji Shahidul, a leader of the extremist group Purba Banglar Communist Party in Khulna. Tipu was allegedly involved in that murder.

Pappu, a nephew of Shahidul, reportedly killed Tipu to avenge his uncle's murder, said the SP, adding that issues of local dominance and influence

played a role in the murder.

According to police, the three arrested individuals were in Cox's Bazar at the time of the incident. The woman, Ritu, tracked Tipu's movements and informed Pappu. Pappu and Golam Rasul stayed at a resort in Cox's Bazar. After the murder, they hid the weapon in a room's attic in

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the resort before fleeing. The police later recovered the weapon. The police are investigating the source of the weapon and other potential connections, he said.

They are also examining why Sheikh Hasan Iftikhar Chalu, another former Khulna councillor currently in jail, traveled to Cox's Bazar.

## Dhaka to urge Beijing to lower interest rates

### Says Touhid ahead of 4-day China tour

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka will ask Beijing to lower the interest rates on Chinese loans and extend the loan repayment period to up to 30 years to ease the pressure on the economy during the upcoming visit of Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain.

Bangladesh will also seek quota and duty-free access to China for at least three years after graduation from the least-developed country bracket in 2026, he said in a media briefing yesterday at the foreign ministry ahead of his tour on January 20-24.

"Commerce and economy will be the main focus of my visit. As we have problems, we will discuss those and see how they can help. We will also talk about project loans. We will see how we can benefit the most."

He said he would seek the lowering of interest rates, the easing of loan conditions and the full withdrawal of the commitment fee, which China charges for keeping a line of credit available.

Officially, China is Bangladesh's largest trade partner. Annual trade between the two countries is \$25 billion, with Bangladesh exporting less than \$1 billion.

"We heavily import from China but that is also very important because much of the materials we import is used for our exports," he said, adding that Bangladesh will try to increase its export to China.

During his four-day tour of China, Hossain will hold a bilateral meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, deliver speeches at two research organisations in Beijing and Shanghai, and visit

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## Cars of 31 ousted MPs set to be auctioned

UNB, Ctg

Chattogram Customs House has set January 21 to auction more than 100 vehicles, including 31 high-end cars imported by former members of parliament (MPs) from the ousted Awami League government.

The cars were brought with duty-free privileges that the MPs enjoy.

"These vehicles will be put up for auction on January 21 due to delays in having them released from the port," Md Sakib Hossain, assistant commissioner at Chattogram Customs House, said yesterday.

He said over 900 imported cars are currently being held at various locations, including the Chattogram Port car shed, and will be auctioned because of delays in clearance.

"Legal complications had prevented earlier auctions, resulting in congestion at port facilities," he added.



Locals catching fish in Gowahari Beel, a water body, in Sylhet's Bishwanath upazila on the occasion of Polo Bawa Utshab, a traditional fishing festival held on the first day of the Bangla month of Magh. They started gathering there from morning and then went into the knee-deep water with polos (bamboo-made fish traps).

PHOTO: STAR

## Sweeping changes in constitution

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The commission also recommends an interim government to conduct elections, a bicameral parliament, two-term limits for the president and prime minister, lowering age limit of MPs to 21 from 25 and a national constitutional council to oversee appointments of constitutional bodies like the Election Commission as well as the chief adviser of the interim government.

The commission said in its recommendations that the five core principles reflect the ideals of the Liberation War of 1971 as well as the aspirations that emerged from the mass uprising of 2024. The commission recommended deletion of articles 8, 9, 10, and 12, which expanded on the key principles.

Led by Prof Ali Riaz, the commission also proposed to strike out articles 7A and 7B that barred constitutional amendments, which now have to be carried with two-thirds majority in both houses followed by a referendum.

The commission recommends calling the nation "Bangladeshi" instead of the previous "Bengalees" and further proposes recognition of mother tongues of all Bangladeshis as common or traditional languages. Bangla will remain the state language as before.

The commission advocates expanding the scope of fundamental rights and ensuring their constitutional protection through a comprehensive charter merging the second and third sections of the constitution to form a new charter on "fundamental rights and liberty". Thus, the right to food, education, healthcare or the right to vote will become enforceable in a court of law.

The commission recommends a bicameral legislature with a 400-seat lower house, or the National Assembly, and a 105-seat upper house or the Senate. The tenure of both houses are set at four years. Of the 400 assembly members elected directly, 100 will be reserved for women.

Political parties will be required to nominate at least 10 percent candidates in the lower house from among the youth. The minimum age to run in the

elections will be reduced to 21 years from the existing 25.

There will be two deputy speakers with one coming from the opposition.

The recommendations stipulate that a member of parliament can only hold the post of prime minister or the leader of the house or the party chief at the same time.

Modifying, the much discussed article 70, the commission recommends that parliamentarians be allowed to vote against party line except finance bills.

To strengthen parliamentary watchdogs, the commission proposes that the standing committees be always led by members of the opposition.

The Senate will consist of 105 members, of whom 100 will be determined by the proportion of votes in the national election.

Political parties will nominate up to 100 Senate candidates of whom at least 5 will have to include representatives of marginalised communities.

The remaining 5 seats will be filled by presidential nominees who are not members of either house or affiliated with any political party.

A political party must secure at least 1 percent of the total votes in the national election to be eligible for representation in the Senate.

The Senate speaker will be elected by a simple majority from among its members.

There will be one deputy speaker elected from the opposition.

The commission recommends a National Constitutional Council (NCC) to ensure transparency and accountability in state functions and establish balance among the branches and institutions of the state.

This council will include representatives from all the three branches of the state. Council members will be the president, the prime minister, the leader of the opposition, the speakers of both houses, the chief justice, one deputy speaker of the National Assembly from the opposition, and the Senate deputy speaker, and one member elected by members of both houses, who do not belong to either the ruling party or the main opposition.

This council will remain in office even after dissolution of the parliament until the chief adviser of the interim government (charged to conduct national election) takes the oath. During the absence of the legislature, the NCC will consist of the following members: the president, the chief adviser, the chief justice, and two members of the advisory council nominated by the chief adviser.

The commission recommends the appointment of an interim government to conduct elections and remain in office until the next elected government takes oath.

The interim government's head, the chief adviser, will have to be appointed either 15 days before the expiry of the assembly or within 15 days of dissolution of the assembly.

The reform proposals lay down elaborate provisions for the appointment of a chief adviser for the interim government.

There are seven options for the appointment that the constitutional council will prioritise sequentially as laid out. The first option, requiring seven of the commission's nine votes, is to appoint any individual who is not in the commission. If that is not possible, the commission may resort to the second option, requiring six votes out of nine, to appoint any former chief justice or any former judge of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court. If that is not possible then, the commission may, with unanimous agreement, appoint the president as the chief adviser. Failing that, the commission may then appoint the last retired chief justice as the head of interim government.

However, if the former top judge who retired last, declines, then the commission will have to approach the one who retired immediately before and work backwards. If none of the former chief justices are available or if all of them decline the appointment, then the commission will consider the last retired Appellate Division judge and failing that work backwards till they find one willing to shoulder the responsibility.

The chief adviser will carry out functions through an advisory council not exceeding 15 members.

The president will be elected by a majority vote of the electoral college, comprising each member of both houses, 64 district coordination councils and every city corporation coordination council.

The president's term will also be limited to four years with a two-term limit.

The commission also proposes the same term limit for the prime minister whether they are consecutive or not.

The commission has recommended decentralising the judiciary in an attempt to make justice more accessible. Proposals include a unitary structure of the Supreme Court while establishing permanent High Court benches in all divisional centres.

The commission emphasised the importance of a strong local government system and recommended a Local Government Commission. It also suggested coordination councils in the districts and metropolitan cities.

The commission recommends dedicating sections of the constitution elaborating on five constitutional commissions, namely the Human Rights Commission, Election Commission, Public Service Commission, Local Government Commission, and Anti-Corruption Commission.

The commission further recommends that the structure, appointment, tenure, and removal processes for all these commissions be identical. The tenure of each commission is set at four years.

The constitution commission recommends deletion of the constitutional provision that stipulates inclusion of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's speech of March 7, 1971, his declaration of independence and the proclamation of independence, which are included in the 5th, 6th and 7th schedules respectively.

The recommendations empower the president to declare a state of emergency only upon the decision of the NCC. The commission believes that during a state of emergency, no citizens' rights should be revoked or suspended, and the right to access the courts should not be suspended either.

## A new chapter for the nation begins

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Prof Ali Riaz, chief of the Constitution Reform Commission; Badiul Alam Majumdar, chief of the Electoral Reform Commission, Iftekharuzzaman, chief of the ACC Reform Commission; and Safar Raj Hossain, chief of the Police Reform Commission; and other members of the commissions were present during hand-over of the reports.

After assuming office in August, the interim government formed at least 15 reform commissions to strengthen weak democratic institutions, and establish a state system grounded in public ownership, accountability, and welfare.

The first six commissions -- for reforming the constitution, electoral system, police, judiciary, public administration, and the ACC -- were formed on October 3. They were given 90 days to submit their reports.

Later, the deadline for the judiciary and the public administration reform commissions was extended to January 31, and that for the remaining four was stretched till January 15.

Prof Yunussaid, "A devastated nation has suddenly risen again, standing tall with renewed vigour. History has been created from this resurgence. The question remains whether we can fulfill the commitments with which we have begun our work. We have confidence that we can."

Commenting that the commission reports would create a charter for a mass uprising, he added this will be the charter of a new Bangladesh, built through consensus.

Elections will take place, everything will happen; but this charter will remain a part of history, he observed.

"This is not a partisan commitment. I hope all parties will sign it. This is the manifesto of Bangladesh, and

we will move forward with it. We will implement as much of it as quickly as possible.

"The upcoming election will be based on this charter. A government on consensus will be formed based on this charter. We want continuity and implementation of our dreams. Without consensus, the charter will be lost. It is crucial for us to realise that."

TALKS WITH PARTIES

The government may start formal discussions with the political parties in mid-February for a consensus about the reform initiatives, said Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan.

She was speaking at a press briefing at the Foreign Service Academy after reports of the four commissions were submitted.

In view of the demands and expectations of the people and political parties, Rizwana said the government will be able to declare a roadmap over reforms in one month, reports BSS.

Responding to a question, the adviser said all political parties gave their opinions and the commission reports were prepared considering their opinions.

She added that the chief adviser has made it clear that the next commission would be the "Political Consensus Commission," led by him.

At the press briefing, Law Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul said, "We expect we will be able to accomplish all these tasks [within our tenure]. But it depends mainly on the consensus of the political parties -- how much reforms they want."

He added that the International Crimes Tribunal would be able to complete at least the trial proceedings before the next polls.

## Hamid, Hasina sued over attack on protesters

STAR REPORT

A case was filed against former president Abdul Hamid, former prime minister Sheikh



Hasina, and 122 others for their alleged involvement in an attack on anti-discrimination students during the recent mass uprising in Kishoreganj.

Tohmul Islam Mazharul, 27, of Kishoreganj Sadar filed the case with Kishoreganj Sadar Model Police Station, said Abdullah Al Mamun, officer-in-charge of the police station.

Sheikh Rehana, Sheikh Hasina's son Sajeeb Wazed Joy and daughter Saima Wazed Putul, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader and several AL leaders have also been named as accused.

Since the fall of the AL government on August 5 last year, approximately 50 political cases have been filed in the district, with 11 of these filed with the Kishoreganj Sadar Police Station, the OC said.

Around 4,000 named and more than 10,000 unnamed persons have been made accused in the cases.

This is the first time Hamid has been named in such a case.

The case statement alleged that the accused, both in the country and abroad, planned a mass killing to suppress the uprising sparked by Hasina's regime.

It said the accused in Kishoreganj supplied firearms, local weapons, and funds to suppress the protests and ordered the massacre.

The incident reportedly occurred on August 4 last year at noon when the complainant and several others joined a student-led protest.