

## Ask Interpol to issue 'red notice' against Benazir

### Court orders authorities

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered authorities concerned to request an Interpol "red notice" for the arrest of the former inspector general of police, Benazir Ahmed.

Judge Md Zakir Hossain of Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court issued the directive after Anti-Corruption Commission Deputy Director Md Hafijul Islam submitted an application in this regard.

In the application, Hafijul Islam said during the preliminary investigation, the ACC confirmed that Benazir

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Family members of July uprising martyrs and victims, who received financial assistance yesterday, pose for a photo with Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at his Tejgaon office. Before that, the chief adviser inaugurated a programme for providing state help to the families of uprising victims.

PHOTO: PID

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## Govt working to hold polls by Dec

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Shafiqul said the BNP leaders expressed their support for the government's reform initiatives and assured Yunus of standing by him.

Responding to a query at the briefing after the meeting with the chief adviser, Fakhrul reiterated that the BNP would never agree to hold local government polls before the national election.

"We're making it clear, as we did in the past: there will be no election before the national polls."

He said they told Yunus that the government cannot avoid responsibility for recent incidents because those occurred in front of law enforcers. The BNP believes these incidents have jeopardised law and order and given the fascists an opportunity to speak out.

The party also demanded repatriation of laundered money and action against those in the administration who aided fascism and were involved in looting the country's resources.

Additionally, they called for the withdrawal of false cases against political leaders and activists over the last 15-16 years.

Fakhrul said the party expressed concerns over soaring commodity prices. "One of the biggest failures of this government is its inability to

control prices. They have told us that they are working on it."

He said the BNP discussed the ongoing Operation Devil Hunt aimed at maintaining law and order. The party emphasised that no innocent individuals should be harassed during the drive.

CA's Press Secretary Shafiqul said Prof Yunus told the BNP delegation that violation of human rights during the operation would not be tolerated in any way.

"We are seriously monitoring it. We do not want any violation of human rights, and it will not happen."

Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed, Industries Adviser Adilur Rahman Khan and Law Adviser Asif Nazrul accompanied Prof Yunus at the meeting while Fakhrul had BNP Standing Committee members Salahuddin Ahmed and Major (ret'd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed with him.

### LETTER TO CA

At the meeting, the BNP delegation handed a letter with suggestions over to Prof Yunus upon the completion of his government's six months in office. The letter says that the Awami League is attempting to destabilise the country through various programmes, and Sheikh Hasina plans to continue these activities from abroad with the support of a "neighbouring country".

"Therefore, it is imperative to make the Awami League face trial as a political party for genocide and crimes against humanity," the letter reads.

The party in the letter expresses deep concern over provocative remarks by Hasina and her allies regarding the July-August uprising. It further said that their remarks ignited public outrage and led to growing demands for the removal of statues, structures, and nameplates associated with the AL across the country.

The letter also criticises the interim government for its failure to bring the fugitive dictator and her accomplices to justice, saying that this inaction has fuelled public unrest and could tarnish the government's image both at home and abroad.

To restore stability and uphold democratic rights, the party urges the interim government to hold early elections and establish a political government that "truly reflects the aspirations of the people".

In the letter, the party also says that the absence of an elected government has stalled economic growth and investment. Global partners are hesitant to engage in development agreements, which has slowed the country's progress, according to the letter.

It emphasises that the interim government must remain fully neutral and ensure that no group gains political advantage through its actions.

It also expresses concerns about growing public suspicion that "some advisers within the interim government are exploiting their positions to form political parties."

"Various signs of using administrative machinery for political purposes are gradually emerging, which is detrimental to the country and its democratic values," the letter reads. "We welcome the emergence of any political party through a proper democratic process, in line with the people's expectations."

### EC MAKING PREPARATIONS

At an event in Manikganj yesterday, Election Commissioner Md Anwarul Islam Sarker said that the Election Commission is making preparations to hold the national polls by December.

While speaking to reporters after a meeting on voter list update, he said the EC had already reviewed the necessary steps for holding a good election and "erasing the shame of the past".

"We will make decisions based on the reform report and work accordingly," he added.

also be able to get medical services at domestic and foreign hospitals on the recommendation of their medical boards.

In "Category B", the July joddhas would be given a one-time aid of Tk 3 lakh. Of the amount, Tk 1 lakh would be given in cheque in fiscal 2024-2025 and the remaining Tk 2 lakh in fiscal 2025-2026.

They would receive a monthly allowance of Tk 15,000.

July joddhas would also get priority in government and semi-government jobs.

So far, the government has published a list of 834 July shaheeds. The list of the injured will be published soon.

At the programme, Adviser Nahid Islam apologised for the delay in recognising the July shaheeds and July joddhas. He said the delay happened despite them being sincere about the issue.

Liberation War Affairs Adviser Faruk E Azam and Health Adviser Nurjahan Begum were present on the occasion.

## Salman F Rahman used

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However, after a thorough review, the bank's real asset quality was revealed. Many of the loans extended to companies linked to Salman F Rahman defaulted by the December quarter, pushing the ratio to an estimated 26-27 percent, Husain said.

Asked about the controversial IFIC Amar Bond to fund a real estate project in which Rahman and his son Ahmed Shayan Fazlur Rahman have stakes, Husain said the bank serves as its guarantor.

While the bank is currently able to pay the bond's coupon due to pre-deposited funds, uncertainty remains regarding the principal amount.

"The promoter of the project is a fugitive, with some key individuals either in jail or outside the country. The government is exploring a solution, but the future of Amar Bond remains uncertain. In case of default, IFIC would be liable."

Husain criticised the bank's previous governance structure, stating that the 16-year tenure of the Awami League-led government was not characterised by an effective management culture.

"The absence of proper leadership significantly harmed the bank from an ethical standpoint."

The bank is currently struggling to recover a significant portion of the loans disbursed to politically exposed individuals and AL-aligned conglomerates.

"Many of these borrowers have either fled the country, are in jail or remain untraceable. We are assessing the collateral associated with these

## 5 organisations leak NID data to third parties: EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five organisations using the National Identity (NID) verification service leaked data to third parties, the Election Commission (EC) has found in a preliminary investigation.

The five organisations are the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), UCB Bank's Upay, Chattogram Port Authority, the Department of Women Affairs, and finance ministry's iBAS (Integrated Budget and Accounting System).

The organisations have been served show-cause notices, EC Secretary Akhtar Ahmed told journalists yesterday after a meeting with the organisations using the NID verification service at the EC headquarters in the capital's Agargaon.

A total of 182

## Yunus calls for reconciliation

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think that you will hit them and they will hit back, then there will be no end to this. You have demanded justice and the government will complete the trial," he said, adding that justice cannot be served in hurry.

"The main thing about a trial is that it should be fair... There should be no injustice... The sacrifices were made because we stood against injustice. If we indulge in injustice, where is the difference between them and us?"

"Our country's future depends on our ability to overcome conflict. We must find a way forward together," he said.

At the programme, the chief adviser reassured the families of the victims that all killings and enforced disappearances would be investigated, and the perpetrators would be brought to justice. He also urged them to be aware of any moves to perpetrate violence or cause bloodshed.

He inaugurated a government programme for providing state financial assistance to families of July

uprising martyrs and victims.

Members of three families of martyrs and three protesters of the July uprising spoke at the meeting. They broke down in tears while describing their experiences.

They raised various issues, including receiving state honours, financial assistance, and rehabilitation.

The chief adviser said, "I think that the sacrifices of those, for which I can call my country a new Bangladesh, cannot be measured by any scale."

"You are living history. I am grateful to you... A nation that cannot remember its history, has no future. This recognition is my gratitude to you on behalf of the nation."

At the meeting, the injured and families of the martyred were informed about the government's programme.

"From today, the state has formally taken the responsibility of you," Yunus said.

The martyrs of the July uprising will be called "July shaheed" and the injured will be called "July joddha". Identity cards would be issued for

them.

The family of each July shaheed would receive one-time financial assistance of Tk 30 lakh. Of the amount, Tk 10 lakh would be provided in national savings bonds in fiscal 2024-2025 and the remaining Tk 20 lakh would be given in the bonds in fiscal 2025-2026.

In addition, each July shaheed's family would get a monthly allowance of Tk 20,000. The shaheed's family members would get priority in government and semi-government jobs.

The July joddhas would get medical benefits in two categories.

The seriously injured ones would be given a one-time aid of Tk 5 lakh as per the "Category A".

Of the amount, Tk 2 lakh would be provided in cheque in fiscal 2024-2025 and Tk 3 lakh in fiscal 2025-2026.

In addition, each seriously injured July joddha would get a monthly allowance of Tk 20,000.

They would receive medical treatment at various government hospitals all their lives. They would

## Economy faces headwinds

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reflected in a sharp decline in real GDP growth to just 1.81 percent in the first quarter of FY25, down from 3.91 percent in the final quarter of FY24.

Now, as consumer prices eased for the second month in January, the central bank left the key policy rate at 10 percent and aims to contain inflation to 7-8 percent by June.

"Bangladesh Bank has adopted a pragmatic approach to lowering inflation by approximately 200 to 300 basis points by the fiscal year's end. This objective is challenging but achievable, particularly if supply-side inflation pressures are mitigated," said Zahid Hussain, former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office.

"There are signs that inflation expectations are easing, as evidenced by long-term interest rates dipping below short-term rates. It is certainly refreshing to see an official document that broadly reflects the realities on

the ground."

And, as the central bank expects political situation to improve, growth is expected to bounce back to 6 percent or above in the 2026 fiscal year.

Bangladesh's economic pain is mirrored in the broader global outlook, as emerging markets and developing economies are also expected to experience a slowdown. Growth in those economies is projected to decline from 4.4 percent in 2023 to 4.2 percent in 2024 and 2025. This slowdown is tied to ongoing weaknesses in China's real estate sector, low consumer confidence, and the fading of pandemic-era pent-up demand in India. In South Asia, only India is predicted to sustain robust GDP growth, exceeding 6 percent by 2025.

Despite challenges, the Bangladesh economy is expected to find some relief in higher remittance inflows,

strong growth in garment exports, and increased private demand during two upcoming religious festivals, according to the central bank. These factors are anticipated to cushion the slowdown and provide a foundation for recovery.

### BANKS FACE RISING BAD LOANS

One of the major shocks to the economy originates from the financial sector, where several banks in Bangladesh are facing a severe liquidity crisis. This has been exacerbated by rising non-performing loans (NPLs), sluggish deposit growth, and weak loan recovery. To stabilise their liquidity positions, the central bank has permitted struggling banks to access the interbank market under guarantees provided by the central bank.

The central bank has also provided temporary liquidity support to some banks, while simultaneously issuing BB bills to absorb excess liquidity

and prevent long-term financial imbalances.

The surge in NPLs is raising serious concerns for the banking industry, with a projection suggesting the NPL rate could exceed 30 percent of total outstanding loans.

"Systemic weaknesses, regulatory gaps, and exploitative practices such as money laundering and illicit capital flight have been identified as contributing factors," the central bank said.

In response, BB has introduced new guidelines aligned with the best international practices for loan classification, provisioning and recovery.

"Strengthening regulatory oversight and effectively implementing these reforms will be crucial for restoring stability, resilience, and public trust in the country's banking sector," the central bank said.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

A photo of the Shaheed Minar on Victoria College campus in Cumilla from 1953.

In response, when Chief Minister Khwaja Nazimuddin announced Urdu as the state language, Cumilla, like other parts of the country, erupted in protest.

The 1948 Language Movement saw active participation from student leaders like Fariduddin, Anwarul Haque, Naresh Chakraborty, Subhash Kar, and Mostafizur Rahman.

Side by side, the Tamaddun Majlish, a prominent student organisation, played a crucial role in mobilising student support.

On March 1, students staged a demonstration in front of the District Magistrate's building and the Additional District Magistrate's Court, demanding recognition for their mother tongue Bangla, writes Mamun Siddiqui in his book "Cumilla E Bhasha Andolon".

On March 11, a day of national action, there was a complete shutdown (hartal) in Cumilla. Students and the general public organised a massive protest rally at the Town Hall, Mamun's book adds.

### THE '52 MOVEMENT

The declaration of Urdu as the sole state language by then Prime Minister Khwaja

Nazimuddin on January 27, 1952, ignited a wave of protests across the country, and Cumilla was no exception.

According to Ahmed Rafiq's book "Bhasha Andolon: Teknaf to Tetulia", February 4 saw a general strike in Cumilla, culminating in a protest rally held at the Town Hall premises.

The All-Party State Language Action Committee, formed in Cumilla with Advocate Abdur Rahman Khan, the general secretary of the Awami League's district unit, as the convener, played a crucial role in organising and mobilising public support.

The College State Language Sangram Parishad, led by Sirajul Islam, the general secretary of the Victoria College Students' Union, also actively participated in the movement.

The days leading up to February 21, the main day of action, saw a concerted effort to mobilise public support. Leaflets were distributed, and tin trumpets were blown to raise awareness and rally support for the cause.

On February 21, Cumilla enforced another complete shutdown. A massive procession, comprising students and the general public, marched through the city, demanding the recognition of Bangla as the state language.

The peaceful protests, however, were met with resistance, leading to clashes between students and non-Bangali residents in several parts of the city, reads the book "Cumilla E Bhasha Andolon".

Later that evening, a large public meeting was held at the Town Hall grounds.

When the tragic news of the police firing on students in Dhaka reached Cumilla, protests erupted spontaneously across the city, with students from Nazrul Avenue, Chawkbazar, Rajgani, Mogaltuli, and Bagichagaon taking to the streets.

Clashes between students and the police ensued in the Rani Bazar area.

On February 23, yet another complete strike paralysed Cumilla. Businesses remained closed, and a sense of mourning prevailed.

The movement spread beyond the city limits, reaching Daudkandi, Kasba, Nabinagar, Burchang, Ramchandrapur, and other areas.

Students, farmers, and working class individuals from all walks of life expressed their solidarity with the Language Movement.

Translated and edited by Subrata Roy.