

## Japan to provide \$1.8m aid to Rohingyas

UNB, Dhaka

The government of Japan has signed an agreement with the World Food Programme to provide \$1.8 million in life-saving food assistance to Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char, according to a press release from the Embassy of Japan yesterday.

The aid will support over 191,000 refugees through malnutrition prevention programmes, income-generating activities, and rehabilitation of e-voucher outlets. The Rohingya community, living without livelihood opportunities, remains entirely dependent on humanitarian assistance for survival.

WFP Country Director Dom Scalpelli emphasised the need for continued support as the crisis enters

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The leaders of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement brought out a rally on the Dhaka University campus last night, demanding the immediate arrest of those who attacked their members at Khulna University of Engineering and Technology earlier in the day. The attack incident also sparked protests across several other university campuses.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## India can

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communities, dismissing allegations of widespread violence as sensationalised by Indian media.

"I would invite you to go through the findings of the UN, which has been published two days ago, and say that [the interim government was not involved in the violence]. They came at our request as we wanted an absolutely neutral survey of the situation," he said.

Regarding the Adani power project, Touhid mentioned that the interim government in Bangladesh is currently in talks with the Indian conglomerate.

He indicated that while the initial power agreements had faced criticism due to high tariffs, the government is now negotiating for a more reasonable deal.

"We will look at it with the Adani Group and try to make it [the deal] more rational," he said, adding that the restoration of power supply is a priority for Bangladesh's ongoing infrastructure projects.

After holding talks with his Indian counterpart, S Jaishankar, at the Omani capital, Touhid said he hoped that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus may finally meet on the sidelines of the BIMSTEC Summit in April. He told the Hindu that he had mentioned it to the Indian foreign minister but nothing concrete has emerged yet, as these things are planned just days ahead once the full programme is finalised.

## Apologise if you are to join polls

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"If someone [AL members] wants to contest elections, there will be no obstruction. They can contest polls. However, if any person is accused of mass killing, they will not be allowed to participate in the elections under any circumstances," he added.

Asif Mahmud made the remarks while speaking to journalists after the sixth session of the third and final day of the Deputy Commissioners' Conference 2025 at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in Dhaka.

He also said no final decision has been made regarding local government elections before the national election, but a decision regarding the matter will be taken soon.

"Officials currently performing additional responsibilities as [administrators] in various local government institutions, frequently urging us to appoint [full time] administrators or conduct elections," he said.

Asif also said that not having elected representatives in local government institutions for so long has become a grave issue.

He pointed out that divisional commissioners are performing additional responsibilities to run some city corporations, and district commissioners have to fulfil the duties of the district councils.

"When an officer has to perform two or three duties, it becomes difficult for one person to handle all the responsibilities together," Asif said.

He said the government will decide whether to hold elections or appoint administrators to run the local government agencies.

It would be good to hold local government elections before the national election. Local government institutions can play an important role in organising a good national election.

"But my personal opinion does not determine the decision. The final decision will come from the government after discussions with other political parties," the adviser said.

## Kuet tensions spill onto other campuses

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the Ershad regime in the 1990s, and attempting to derail democracy in 1996.

"Now, they are disguising themselves as general students to run a campaign against Chhatra Dal," he warned.

The JCD attempted to march towards Raju Bhashkorjor around 8:15pm, but due to the presence of anti discrimination students, they held a brief rally near Rokeya Hall.

On the other hand, Hasnat Abdullah, leader of the anti discrimination students, told a rally at Dhaka University last night, "Whoever wants to emerge as the Chhatra League and take a position against students will face the same consequences the banned student organisation had faced."

They will today exhibit at Dhaka University the photos and videos of the oppression during July uprising and what they said were Chhatra Dal and local BNP men's attack on students at Kuet.

The exhibition will be streamed and projected on large screens at other universities.

At Jahangirnagar University, Touhid Mohammad Siam, a leader of the anti discrimination students, said at a demonstration, "If they resort to such violence without being in power, one can only imagine how reckless they will become if they are in power. It took 36 days to depose a dictator like Hasina. It won't take more than 36 minutes to oust the BNP and its student wing if they continue their terrorist activities."

### WHAT HAPPENED AT KUET

On Monday, pro-BNP Chhatra Dal activists distributed handbills that said students should be able to engage in politics, according to sources.

In response, the anti discrimination activists marched on

campus in the afternoon yesterday, chanting slogans denouncing student politics.

The situation became tense when they were marching past a group of Chhatra Dal activists.

Around 1:00pm, the groups began chasing each other and clashed until 6:00pm, said witnesses.

Photos of injured students and men holding large scythes and machetes went viral on Facebook in the afternoon. The warring sides said they were not the ones who brought the sharp weapons.

Mirajul Islam Emon, spokesperson of the anti discrimination students, said Chhatra Dal activists had brought local BNP men to attack the students.

"They stabbed some students and assaulted others," he said.

Police said around 45 people were injured.

Ahmmad Ishtiaq, former convener of Khulna city Chhatra Dal, who was at the scene, said members of Chhatra Shibir, along with a few supporters of Chhatra League, were trying to stop Chhatra Dal's political activities on and around the campus.

"This led to the clashes," he told The Daily Star.

Khulna's Khan Jahan Ali Police Station Officer-in-Charge Kabir Hossain said around 45 people were injured.

Kuet Vice Chancellor Mohammad Mashud refused to comment on the situation.

Around 10:00pm last night, a group of students under the banner of General Students of Khulna University of Engineering and Technology held a press conference.

They demanded a complete ban on student politics, punishment of the attackers, and resignations of the VC, Pro-VC, and Student Welfare Director. Until the demands are met,

all classes and exams will remain suspended at Kuet, they said.

### PROTESTS ON CAMPUSES

At DU, Students Against Discrimination demanded the arrest of those who attacked its members at Kuet within 24 hours.

They marched on campus and held a rally where Arif Sohel, convener of the student body, said,

"The oppression we fought against has returned. The students and people who were martyred in the July uprising did not die so that we can witness such oppression on campuses.

The students and people who were martyred in the July uprising did not die so that we can witness such oppression on campuses. Anyone who tries to engage in criminal activities again will face resistance. We will not compromise with anyone. Some of the defeated fascists from August 5 are trying to rehabilitate themselves."

Hasnat Abdullah said an exhibition of the photos of the uprising and yesterday's attack will commence at 3:00pm at DU.

Chittagong University campus was tense as student groups came face-to-face.

A section of university students, mostly from Inqilab Manch, and JCD marched on campus.

Md Abu Hena Mostafa Kamal, inspector of the Chittagong University police outpost, said, "To prevent any untoward incidents, police are on high alert."

At Jahangirnagar University, protesters marched around 8:00pm and held a brief rally.

At Rajshahi University, anti discrimination students demonstrated until 9:30pm.

Coordinator Salahuddin Ammar said, "We don't want student politics. It destroys the campus environment."

There were protests at Jagannath University too.

[Our Chatogram staff, and RU, JU, and JnU correspondents contributed to this report]

## Prepare for nat'l election

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serve as returning officers during national elections, that there would be no pressure from higher authorities.

Speaking to reporters after the session, he said, "In the past, there was pressure from high-ups.... I've assured them that there will be no unlawful pressure exerted on them this time. We won't impose any unjust pressure, and if there is any, we'll remove it."

He added that the DCs should not wait until election day or just a few days before it to be involved in the electoral process.

"Consider yourselves already actively involved in the process from now. Wherever you speak, whether at meetings or gatherings, a portion of your speech should focus on election."

He said awareness needs to be raised among people regarding the election as many of them have lost faith in the country's electoral system.

"So when you [DCs] speak to the people, make an effort to educate them about their voting rights."

Referring to DCs as "companions of the EC during polls," he stressed that they must proactively enforce the law and perform their duties impartially.

"We've instructed them [DCs]

## 'It came as a surprise to me'

Rafiqun Nabi on being barred from taking stage at DU art exhibition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Eminent artist Professor Rafiqun Nabi (Ranabi), creator of the iconic "Tokai" character, said that it was unexpected that university authorities asked him not to take the stage at the annual art exhibition of the drawing and painting department at Dhaka University's Fine Arts faculty on Monday morning.

Rafiqun Nabi told this newspaper that despite being a special guest and emeritus professor, he was informed that Pro-VC Prof Mamun Ahmed would not attend the event if he took the stage. The reason for this objection was not made clear to him.

"Although this came as a surprise to me, I decided to leave to avoid disrupting the event."

Moinul Abedin, son of legendary artist Zainul Abedin, who was with him, also left quietly.

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## ICT extends probe deadline by two months

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Although the probe is nearly complete, he stressed the importance of including the details referenced in the UN report, along with new evidence still emerging, to ensure accuracy and credibility.

A three-member bench, led by ICT Chairman Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozunder, approved the extension, stating that additional time is permissible to ensure the investigation is thorough and credible.

The probe reports in both cases were due yesterday after the first extension.

The tribunal also ordered the prison authorities to produce Solaiman Selim, former AL lawmaker and son of Haji Selim, before the court on April 20 over his alleged involvement in atrocities in Old Dhaka during the uprising.

Earlier yesterday, 16 accused were brought to the tribunal around 10:00am and held in the lock-up. They were produced before the court minutes before the proceedings began at 11:30am.

The 16 individuals include former ministers Anisul Huq, Amir Hossain Amu, Qamrul Islam, Lt Col (Retd) Faruk Khan, Shahjahan Khan, Abdur Razzaque, Dipu Moni, Rashed Khan Menon, Hasanul Haq Inu, Kamal Ahmed Majumder, Golam Dastagir Gazi, and former state minister Zunaid Ahmed Palak.

Others presented before the court included former prime minister's advisers Salman F Rahman and Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, former justice Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik, and former home secretary Jahangir Alam.

Among them, Amu, Faruk Khan, Palak, and Kamal Ahmed Majumder appeared visibly pale.

As they were being escorted out of the court and into a prison van around 1:30pm, journalists heard Palak shouting, "Bangabandhu said we must fight to survive!"

During the proceedings, Tajul Islam said public hearings at various universities had yielded new information about crimes committed during the uprising. "Students captured many footages on their mobile phones."

He added that reports had surfaced regarding the rape of women protesters during the uprising, but declined to provide further details.

Tajul remarked that the accused had recorded phone conversations of individuals.

"But the traps they set to kill people may now turn into traps for them... They gave orders to eliminate students and the people. They instructed the shutdown of television channels. The conversations they exchanged were secretly recorded... We've obtained such evidence. In these cases, digital evidence will play a crucial role."

Asked if the prosecution had communicated with the UN for evidence, he said discussions were ongoing.

On February 12, Rory Mungoven, chief of the Asia Pacific region at the UN rights office, stated at a press conference that the UN would not share evidence from its investigation with Bangladesh unless the trials met international standards.

He added, "The issue of the death penalty is a problem for us -- as per UN policy, we are constrained from cooperating with trials that may lead to the death penalty."

Just after the release of the UN report, Tajul had said necessary reforms in ICT laws had already been made.

Regarding the UN's concerns, he said, "Since our judges have the power to decide the type of punishment, this matter will be addressed later."

On October 17, the ICT issued an arrest warrant for Sheikh Hasina, who fled to India following the July uprising. It also directed that probe reports for both cases be submitted within a month.

On November 18, the prosecution sought a two-month extension from the tribunal, with the new submission deadline set for yesterday.

### PANNA SEEKS PROTECTION

Senior Supreme Court lawyer ZI Khan Panna, the defence counsel for several of the accused, was present at yesterday's court proceedings in a wheelchair.

Before the proceedings began, he turned to the accused in the dock, raised his hands, and said, "Guru salaam, guru salaam [greetings guru, greetings guru]." Amu and Inu reciprocated by raising their hands as well.

Addressing the court, Panna said, "My Lord, I'm unwell. I've come directly from the hospital with a two-hour leave. My life is now at risk. This morning, there were even rumours on social media that I had passed away. By the grace of Allah, I'm still alive."

Claiming that he had been receiving death threats, he sought protection from the tribunal. "I wish to inform the court that I fear for my life... My death should come naturally, not through any external causes."

When the tribunal chairman asked why he was receiving threats, Panna did not provide a direct answer.

Standing next to him, Tajul remarked with a smile, "He was supposed to sit on the right side [where the prosecutor sits], but he mistakenly took the seat on the other side."

"We need a strong bond with China," he added.

Bangladesh should fix its foreign policy based on fixing the enemy states and trade interests, said Asaduzzaman Fuaad, general secretary of AB Party.

Bangladesh should have learned from Pakistan on how it balances its relationship with the US and China, said Bobby Hajaj, chairman of Nationalist Democratic Movement.

"We need a political consensus on the foreign policy too," he said.

Worldwide, foreign policy depends on economic interests, said BNP's Organising Secretary Shama Obaid.

"We also want our economic growth and the interconnectivity of youths across the globe. The ministry of foreign affairs is the same as what the