

Focus on public issues, not just reforms
Tarique urges political parties

UNB, Dhaka



B N P
Acting
Chairman
Tarique
Rahman
yesterday
urged political parties to present proposals to the nation to address public issues, rather than focusing only on reforms to the state structure and institutions.

"Instead of merely discussing the caretaker government system, the constitutional framework, and the voting and electoral system, there should be more emphasis on how the problems of people will be resolved," he said.

He made the remarks while virtually joining an iftar party organised by the Nationalist Democratic Movement in the capital.

Tarique said just as there should be discussions

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

CHILDREN IN ROHINGYA CAMPS

Malnutrition reaches alarming levels: Unicef

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Severe acute malnutrition in the Rohingya refugee camps has surged by 27 percent in February this year compared to the same period last year, pushing more children into life-threatening hunger, Unicef said in a statement yesterday.

More than a million Rohingyas, including 5,00,000 children, live in the Cox's Bazar camps, where families now face emergency levels of malnutrition.

Meanwhile, the World Food Programme (WFP) is preparing to cut monthly food rations from US \$12.5 to US \$6 per person starting April 1, following fund cuts from USAID under the Trump administration's new policy.

On March 6, WFP made an urgent appeal for \$15 million for April and \$81 million to sustain aid for the Rohingya refugees until the end of the year.

Unicef said over 15 percent of children in the camps are now malnourished – the highest level recorded since the 2017 mass displacement of Rohingya refugees.

Last year, Unicef treated nearly 12,000 children under five suffering from severe acute malnutrition, a condition that leaves them dangerously thin, weak, and highly vulnerable to disease.

Of those treated, 92 percent recovered. However, without urgent intervention, this condition can be fatal, said Unicef.

"In 2025, cases of severe acute malnutrition increased by 25 percent in January compared to the same month last year (rising from 819 to 1,021 cases). February saw an even steeper increase of 27 percent (from 836 to 1,062 cases), indicating a dangerous upward trend," it added.

Unicef attributed this surge to multiple factors, including prolonged monsoon rains in 2024, which

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

China supports growth of Bangladesh

Says Chinese ambassador

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

China wants to see stability, unity, and democracy flourish in Bangladesh under Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus' leadership, said Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Yao Wen yesterday.

Yao Wen also emphasised that China stands with Bangladesh and its people, not any particular government.

"Regardless of changes in the international or domestic landscape, China remains Bangladesh's partner. Our cooperation benefits both nations," he said.

He was speaking at a seminar titled "National Image of China in Bangladesh" organised by the Center for Alternatives (CA) at a hotel in the capital.

Regarding the chief adviser's visit to China from March 26-29, Wen said China invites all heads of government but could not comment on visit priorities.

At the programme, CA Executive Director Prof Imtiaz Ahmed presented a

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

SAUDI ARABIA

Complex attestation rule reduces worker deployment: BAIRA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies have claimed that complications in attesting demand letters for recruitment are causing a decline in the deployment of workers to Saudi Arabia.

To address the issue, BAIRA representatives met yesterday with Prof Asif Nazrul, adviser to the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment.

Following the meeting, they told journalists that the adviser would hold discussions today with all relevant stakeholders to determine necessary actions. However, no ministry officials spoke to the media.

Demand letters for worker recruitment from Saudi Arabia are verified and attested by the Bangladesh Embassy in Riyadh.

BAIRA leader Khandaker Abu Ashfaq said that if a demand letter is for a single worker, embassy attestation is not required.

"However, if there is more than one worker in a demand letter, attestation is mandatory. This has led to delays, preventing the timely deployment of workers. Previously, attestation was not required for up to 24 demand letters. However, on December 22 last year, the government introduced a new rule requiring attestation in all cases. Business owners are now demanding a return to the previous rule," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Students from various colleges in the capital gathered at Shahbagh yesterday to protest the recent surge in rape and violence against women. They demanded immediate action from the interim government and swift justice for the perpetrators. Similar protests have been spreading across the country over the past week.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

JS, constituent assembly polls can be held together

Says NCP Convener Nahid Islam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The next national election could be held simultaneously as both legislative and constituent assembly polls, said National Citizen Party (NCP) Convener Nahid Islam yesterday.

Speaking at an iftar event organised by the NCP, he said that the election could pave the way for drafting a new constitution, facilitating a transition towards democracy.

The event, held at the InterContinental Hotel in the capital, was attended by anti-fascist politicians, students, labourers, scholars, activists, professionals, and eminent citizens.

Nahid said the NCP believes the election process can be completed within the timeline set by the government.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus has previously said that the elections could take place by December this year or in the first half of next year. However, Nahid emphasised the need to improve law and order before holding the polls.

"For free and fair elections, the army, police, bureaucracy, and media must remain neutral, and their institutional impartiality must be ensured," he added.

He also called for effective government measures to ensure women's safety, combat corruption and extortion, and tackle violence against women.

"Recently, we have observed attempts to portray

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

EC weighs three voting methods for expatriates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) is considering three alternative voting methods, including a proxy voting system, to ensure Bangladeshi expatriates can exercise their franchise in the national election.

A workshop with experts is scheduled for early April, followed by consultations with political parties and stakeholders. The final decision will depend on stakeholder consensus.

The proposed methods include a postal ballot system with a specified timeframe, an online voting system, and a proxy voting system, according to the EC.

If all processes are completed, proxy voting could be implemented on a broader scale, while postal and online voting may be introduced on a trial basis in the upcoming 13th national parliamentary election.

Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) Abul Fazl Md Sanauullah shared the information with reporters at the EC building yesterday.

"Among the three proposed methods – postal, online, and proxy voting – the commission will first seek expert opinions on proxy voting. If agreed upon and technically feasible, it may be introduced on a limited scale," he said.

"Proxy voting allows a designated voter in Bangladesh to cast a vote on behalf of an expatriate," he explained, adding that identity verification, security, and reliability are key concerns here.

The EC's committee on expatriate voting rights has suggested a roadmap, which the commission approved yesterday, said the commissioner.

The committee recommended trial runs for postal and online voting to assess feasibility, he added.

Sanauullah pointed out that proxy voting is used in the UK and Australia, while India permits it only for armed forces personnel.