

'Be clear about  
polls date'

Rizvi urges Yunus  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Senior  
Joint  
Secretary  
General  
Ruhul  
Kabir Rizvi  
yesterday  
called on Chief Adviser to the interim government, Professor Muhammad Yunus, to make a clear and genuine commitment regarding the national election.

"You (chief adviser) have mentioned December, March, and June as possible election dates, but the public is not taking it well. You must make a clear and genuine commitment to people about when you will announce elections, and then tell that to the public. After that, political parties can talk," Rizvi said.

He made the remarks in the afternoon while distributing Eid food aid in Uttarkhan, Dhaka.

Rizvi criticised Yunus for what he called inconsistent statements on the election schedule.

"One moment, you say the election will be in December, then in June. The people of this country respect you; you are an accomplished person. This sort of talk would have suited Sheikh Hasina," he added.

While acknowledging Yunus's efforts to curb

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ACC sues  
Hasina's  
former DPS  
Khokon, wife

Files case against  
Nasim's son

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has filed two cases against Ashraful Alam Khokon, former deputy press secretary of then prime minister Sheikh Hasina, and his wife Rezwana Noor for illegally acquiring assets worth Tk 17.03 crore.

ACC Director General Akhtar Hossain confirmed this information at the commission's headquarters in Segunbagicha, Dhaka yesterday.

In each case, Khokon has been named as an accused.

Khokon was accused of acquiring illegal wealth worth Tk 13.34 crore. Additionally, he allegedly conducted suspicious transactions worth Tk 1.34 crore through three bank accounts under his name.

Rezwana was accused

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Australia opens  
new 'Home  
Affairs Office'  
in Dhaka

DIPLOMATIC  
CORRESPONDENT

As part of Australia's growing bilateral relationship with Bangladesh, the Albanese Labor Government has announced the establishment of a new Home Affairs Office in Dhaka.

"The office will support prospective Bangladeshi migrants, as well as a central point of contact for the Bangladesh government to facilitate increased engagement and cooperation on immigration and border related matters," said a press statement of the Australian High Commission in Dhaka yesterday.

Last week, Bangladesh and Australia signed a Standard Operating Procedures for the safe and quick repatriation of Bangladeshis attempting to reach Australia illegally

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## DUG UP, UNFIXED ROADS a nightmare for residents



A man jumps over a dug-up section of the road in Khilgaon Railgate area in Dhaka, which was excavated for gas line installation. Unfinished trenches and piles of debris at construction sites contribute to air pollution and pose serious health risks to the residents. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

SHARIFUL ISLAM and  
HELEMUL ALAM

There are several parts of Dhaka city where, if you travel through the roads and alleys by a rickshaw or an auto-rickshaw, you will experience a jerky ride, as many streets remain unrepainted for months after being dug up by utility service providers.

The dug up roads leave residents struggling with dust clouds and severe congestion. Even a drizzle turns these pathways into mud slicked hazards, making walking a nightmare.

Unfinished trenches and piles of debris at construction sites contribute to air pollution and pose serious health risks to the residents of the city, which frequently tops global charts for the worst air quality.

The problem persists due to a lack of oversight and accountability, as the guidelines outlined in Dhaka's 2019 Road Excavation Policy are routinely flouted by contractors and utility service providers.

The policy states that only small sections should be excavated at a time, with all work to be completed within 15 days. Trenches must then be compacted with sand and reinforced with bricks to make the road suitable for vehicles. Additionally, contractors must clear debris within 24 hours and cannot bring equipment to sites before the designated start time.

Further provisions require that both the excavated road and its surface drains be thoroughly cleaned after completion, restoring the area to its original condition.

In reality, these guidelines are seldom enforced, leaving city dwellers to suffer.

A glaring example is a kilometre-long stretch of Falpatti Road in

West Senpara. Nearly a year ago, trenches were dug at 20-metre intervals to upgrade Wasa's supply line. Once completed, the trenches were left half-filled with debris and unrepainted.

"Often, axles and wheels of loaded rickshaw vans break when they fall into the trenches," said three-wheeler driver Harun Mia.

West Senpara resident Masudur Rahman said many alleys have been in disrepair for years, making rickshaw and auto-rickshaw travel nearly impossible. "A significant part of the road is occupied,



causing severe congestion. With no repairs in sight, many have been forced to move elsewhere."

Dhaka Electric Supply Company Ltd (Desco) dug a trench along Begum Rokeya Sarani's western lane from Kazipara to Mirpur 10 months ago for cable installation but left it half-filled.

Loose sand piles near Kazipara Metro Station create dust hazards for locals.

"They left without compacting the sand. Every passing vehicle stirs up dust, harming our health," said Md Yusuf, a shop employee.

Documents show that in

November last year, Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) approved road-cutting permits for 19 individuals and nine service-providing organisations in 44 areas under its jurisdiction. Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) also granted road excavation permissions for around 10 locations in February.

These correspondents visited Mohammadpur, Indira Road, Malibagh to Khilgaon Railgate, Khilgaon Taltala, Khilgaon Tilpapara, Gandaria's Dinanath Sen Road, Satish Sarkar Road,

Mohammad Jalal, a fruit trader at Khilgaon Cumilla Hotel Crossing, said, "My income has dropped by three-quarters over the past few weeks due to the road excavation for DPDC line installation."

A similar situation persists at Honda Gali on Indira Road, where DNCC has been digging for stormwater drainage.

Holy Cross School student Ashna Fabiyana said excavation, ongoing since before Ramadan, has forced her to walk or take alternative routes.

Contractors failed to install project signboards or caution tape as required by guidelines, she added.

Kazipara to Monipur Road remains nearly unusable despite recent brick reinforcement after last year's sewerage work.

Shop owners Md Ripon and Mohammad Jalal report heavy losses, with Ripon losing Tk 7 lakh in a year due to inaccessible roads.

Officials from the utility service providers responsible for the excavations said road repairs are the responsibility of the city corporations, as they are required to pay advance funds before obtaining permission to dig.

AKM Shahid Uddin, deputy managing director of Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority, and Md Monjurul Hoque, executive director (engineering) of Desco, said they inform the city corporations after completing their work, and it then becomes the corporations' duty to repair the roads.

DNCC Chief Engineer Brig Gen Md Moinuddin said due to the absence of an administrator and a chief executive officer for a period, necessary actions could not be taken.

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Compromisers  
don't view uprising  
as independence  
Says Nahid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Those who engaged in opposition politics through compromises over the past 15 to 16 years may not view the July uprising as a form of independence, said National Citizen Party Convener Nahid Islam yesterday.

"Yesterday, I saw the debate about first and second independence. But for those of us who have suffered various forms of oppression for the past 16 years, this is undoubtedly independence. On August 5, we were truly liberated once again," Nahid said at a discussion and prayer gathering held at the Nagorik Committee's office in Banglamotor, Dhaka.

The NCP organised the event to demand state recognition and a list of those killed during the 2021 anti-aggression movement against Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh.

The party leaders argued that those who maintained financial stability and engaged in opposition politics through compromise might not feel the impact of the uprising.

"For them, neither the first nor the second independence holds significance. What matters to them is the freedom to loot," Nahid stated.

He alleged that the former Awami League government primarily served India's interests, accusing it of rigging three consecutive elections and suppressing opposition parties with India's backing.

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## INDEPENDENCE DAY Controversies mar celebrations in three districts



The covered mural at the Liberation War Memorial in Lalmonirhat.

PHOTO: STAR

STAR REPORT

At least three incidents disrupted this year's Independence Day celebrations across different districts, drawing widespread criticism from civil society groups and war veterans.

In Lalmonirhat, a mural at the Liberation War Memorial was found covered, prompting condemnation from Transparency International Bangladesh and the Conscious Citizens Committee (CCC).

The mural, depicting key moments from the 1952 Language Movement to the 1971 Liberation War, was concealed when TIB representatives arrived to pay their respects.

Moshed Alam, TIB's area coordinator, said: "We were shocked to see the mural covered. Instead of offering floral wreaths there, we went to the Railway Martyrs' Memorial on Station Road."

TIB alleged that the district administration was responsible for the act, as it had also covered the mural on Victory Day last year.

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People browse through various traditional clothing items at a shop yesterday. With Eid just days away, many are busy with some last minute shopping for the festival. The photo was taken at a shopping mall in the capital.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS