

Pahela
Baishakh a
symbol of
our harmony
Says Yunus

UNB, Dhaka

Extending greetings to all on the occasion of Pahela Baishakh, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday said people of all faiths and communities in Bangladesh are members of one family.

“Tomorrow (Monday), the first day of Baishakh, is one of the symbols of this harmony. Everyone will celebrate in their own way, according to their customs, and take part in the festivities,” he said while laying the foundation stone of “Sampri Bhaban” at the Dhaka International Buddhist Monastery.

Yunus said despite differences in beliefs, religions, and customs, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, and other communities living in the mountains and plains of the country are

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Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus laid the foundation stone of the Sampri Bhaban at International Buddhist Monastery in the capital yesterday. Army Chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman was also present on the occasion.

PHOTO: CA PRESS WING

BRICK KILNS

Toxic smoke damages
crops in Chattogram

SIFAYET ULLAH, Ctg

Hundreds of farmers in Chattogram’s Fatikchhari and Hathazari upazilas are facing losses due to toxic smoke from nearby brick kilns, which has been damaging their crops.

This has left many local farmers concerned about their livelihoods.

Md Harun, 55, a farmer from Pindong union in Fatikchhari upazila, said, “Crops grown near brick kilns do not grow as expected, and are often covered in dust from the smoke emitted by the chimneys. As a result, these crops must be washed before being sold.”

Harun, who cultivated tomatoes, brinjals, cucumbers, and sweet pumpkins on 80 decimals of land, said his crops were severely affected by dust from nearby kilns, preventing him from even recovering his production costs.

During a recent visit to several areas in the upazila, this correspondent observed that croplands near brick kilns were covered in dust particles from toxic fumes released by the chimneys.

Abdus Salam, 48, a farmer from Fakira Chan area in Fatikchhari upazila, was seen cleaning tomatoes in his field near the MA brick kiln.

“Since the brick kiln started operating, my crop yields have dropped by more than half. If this continues, we may have no choice but to abandon farming and find



alternative livelihoods,” he said.

Didarul Alam, a farmer from Mirzapur union in Hathazari upazila, who grows mangoes and betel nuts, said, “The trees have been severely affected. Most of the kiln owners are financially and politically influential, so we are afraid to speak out against them, fearing possible retaliation.”

According to data from the Department of Environment (DoE), over 90 brick kilns are operating across the two upazilas. Under the Brick Production and Kiln Installation (Regulation) Act, establishing brick kilns on or

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‘We seek
balance in
ties with
China, India’
Khalilur Rahman
tells seminar

DIPLOMATIC
CORRESPONDENT

National Security Adviser Dr Khalilur Rahman yesterday said Bangladesh does not consider its relationships with China and India as a zero-sum game but aims to maintain meaningful and balanced ties with both.

Speaking at a seminar titled “Reassessing Sino-Bangla Relations: Chief Adviser’s Landmark Visit,” organised by the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG) at North South University (NSU), he said Bangladesh’s foreign policy is now entirely its own, no longer reliant on any external power, according to an NSU press statement.

He described Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus’s recent visit to China as a historic milestone.

Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Yao Wen said the visit was both symbolic and substantive. He reaffirmed China’s commitment to deepening ties beyond politics, including cooperation in education, healthcare and people-to-people contact.

Dr Liu Zongyi, senior

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CONSENSUS COMMISSION
First phase of talks
nears completion



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Consensus Commission (NCC) is aiming to complete the first round of dialogues with political parties by mid-May, with a second round of discussions to follow.

In the initial phase, the commission sent spreadsheets to political parties, seeking their opinions on various reform proposals. Based on the responses, it will identify the proposals that have generated significant disagreement and prioritise them for further dialogue.

“Dialogue may not be necessary on those reform proposals that receive broad consensus. But for those that show divergence, we will engage in discussions with the political parties to address and revise them,” Prof Ali Riaz, vice-chair of the commission, told The Daily Star yesterday.

As of yesterday, the commission had received responses from 34 political parties and held dialogues with eight of them. “We are in contact with the political parties that have yet to submit their opinions on the reform proposals,” said Prof Riaz, adding that the commission remains hopeful of completing the first round of dialogues by mid-May.

“We are requesting all parties to submit their views. However, if they do not, we won’t be able to incorporate their opinions,” he said.

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Talks with BNP
are set for April
17, followed by
meetings with
the National
Citizen Party and
Jamaat-e-Islami.

CAMERA AT MADRASA DORM
MJF concerned
over safety of
female students

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) yesterday expressed outrage and deep concern over the violation of privacy and safety of female students at a madrasa in Jashore.

Sixteen CCTV cameras – some equipped with night vision – were reportedly installed inside the girls’ dormitories at Fatimatuzzohra Qawmi Female Madrasa in Navaron, Sharsha upazila, Jashore.

The discovery came to light after a parent filed a complaint and alerted the authorities.

MJF described the incident as a flagrant act of surveillance, constituting a serious breach of trust, dignity, and human rights – particularly of minors – within an educational institution where families rightfully expect safety and security for their children.

“This is not merely a violation of privacy – it is a criminal breach of their sanctity and safety in a place of learning,” said Shaheen Anam, executive director of MJF.

“That such equipment was installed in dormitories where girls reside and sleep is utterly shocking. We demand an immediate, impartial, and transparent investigation, along with the swift arrest and prosecution of all those responsible,” she added.

MJF also voiced concern that the incident may not



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Ex-JCD leader
Jakir walks
free after
acquittal in
32 cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader Jakir Khan, who had been accused in 33 criminal cases including murder, walked out of jail yesterday morning.

He was released after being acquitted in 32 of the cases, having already served time for the remaining one.

Mohammad Forkan Wahid, superintendent of Narayanganj District Jail, said Jakir was released around 10:15am after all necessary legal procedures were completed.

Supporters gathered outside the district jail early in the morning with floral garlands and a motorcade to welcome Jakir.

Following his release, he led a procession through the city, causing a two-hour traffic jam on the Dhaka-Narayanganj link

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A woman browses pottery items at a stall during a two-day fair organised by the Gulshan Society at Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed Park in Gulshan-2 yesterday, marking the start of Bangla New Year celebrations. The event, titled “Oligholi Halkhata,” aims to bring together residents through cultural festivities to celebrate Pahela Baishakh.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON