

Yunus leaves for Doha to attend Earthna Summit

BSS, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus left for Doha yesterday evening to attend the Earthna Summit 2025.

"A flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines carrying the chief adviser and his entourage departed Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 7:00pm," Abul Kalam Azad Majumder, chief adviser's deputy press secretary, told BSS.

About the chief adviser's Qatar tour, his Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam said Prof Yunus will pass busy days during the tour on April 22 and April 23.

"The chief adviser will speak at the Earthna Summit 2025 ... he will have a series of engagements during his visit," he told a press briefing at the Foreign Service Academy in the capital yesterday afternoon.

Prof Yunus is paying the four-day official visit at the invitation of Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani.

During the visit, he is likely to have meetings with both Emir of Qatar and Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed apart from other engagements.

Shafiqul said the chief adviser will have meetings with Qatar Charity and Qatar Foundation and will give an interview with Qatar-based Al Jazeera channel.

As Bangladesh has a long-term agreement with Qatar on LNG imports, there will be a discussion on greater energy sector cooperation, he said.

He added that there will be an investment summit on April 23 and Prof Yunus will speak at a conference on the Rohingya issue where global stakeholders will join.

Foreign Adviser Md Touhid Hossain, National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman, Energy Adviser Muhammad Fouzil Kabir Khan, Executive Chairman of Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) Chowdhury Ashik Mahmud Bin Harun and Principal Coordinator on SDG Affairs Lamia Moshed, among others, are accompanying the chief adviser.

UN peacekeeping chief lauds army's professionalism

STAR DESK

UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix yesterday paid a courtesy call on Chief of Army Staff General Waker Uz-Zaman at Army Headquarters.

During the meeting, Lacroix praised the professionalism and competence of the Bangladesh Armed Forces in United Nations peacekeeping missions, according to a statement from the Army Headquarters.

They also discussed matters related to deployment, training, and capacity building for ongoing and future peace operations.

Lacroix further commended the Bangladesh Army's role in Aid to Civil Power operations within the country, highlighting the discipline and dedication of its personnel.

General Waker reaffirmed the Bangladesh Army's steadfast commitment to UN peacekeeping efforts and assured continued cooperation in support of global peace and security initiatives.

DHAKA NUMIS SHOW 2025

Preserving history through collectables

JAWWAD SAMI NEOGI

A three-day collectable exhibition titled "Dhaka Numis Show 2025", organised by Old Dhaka Collectors Society (ODCS) was held at the National Museum from April 18 to 20. The event brought together collectors, currency researchers, and enthusiasts from all over Bangladesh.

Participants displayed rare collections of coins, banknotes, tokens, cheques, prize bonds, and more turning the exhibition gallery into a visual archive of monetary history. With around 100 framed displays, visitors could explore the evolution of money from ancient Kori and Mughal coins to British Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi currencies.



ODCS was formed on 26 March, 2022 and this was their biggest event to date.

Faizur Rahman, the exhibition coordinator, said, "This may be an Old Dhaka-based initiative in name, but our members come from all over the country. Our core team includes students, professionals, and collectors from different walks of life."

What made this exhibition special is its focus on themed collections. Instead of simply showcasing large volumes of collectables, each exhibitor was encouraged to focus on a specific topic they are passionate about or an expert in.

Shamsul Alam, chairperson of ODCS, said, "Collecting is a vast field. The exhibitors you see here each own thousands of items, but what we did for this event was ask each of them to showcase a unique topic -- something

they specialise in."

Alam added, "My area of expertise is bird-themed collectables. I have a collection of over 1,250 banknotes and 20,000 stamps, all featuring birds. So, I created a dedicated showcase on that subject."

Each exhibitor presented a unique theme, making the exhibition rich in variety. Md Afiz Uddin came from Rangpur to showcase a unique theme: portraits on banknotes where the featured person is wearing glasses!

Md Robiul Islam presented his collection of "Error notes" -- banknotes that were misprinted or flawed during production.

"Around 15 years ago, I wanted to collect something unique, and that's when I started focusing on error notes," he said.

When asked why such events are necessary, Shamsul Alam explained, "Exhibitions like this help preserve history. As you can see, we have Bangladeshi items alongside British Indian coins and Mughal era coins. That's how you learn history -- by seeing it, touching it. You become a part of history."

Shahriar Ahmed Tusher, additional Director at Bangladesh Bank, visited the event to buy stamps for his daughter, an eighth grader and a passionate stamp collector.

"I couldn't bring her along because of her exams, but I know I would have had to bring her along if the exams weren't ongoing," he said.

Ahsan Al Amin, a stamp seller, said, "Collectors are gradually increasing. While the growth is not huge, we now see buyers from all backgrounds, including those from elite circles."

Announce nat'l minimum wage

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consensus commission about the recommendations, so that the latter can discuss those with political parties, Chief Adviser's Deputy Press Secretary Azad Majumder told reporters at the same venue.

On November 18, the interim government formed the Labour Reform Commission to recommend necessary reforms to ensure workers' rights and welfare. The 10-member commission is headed by Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed, executive director of Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies, a think-tank.

At a separate briefing in Dhaka, Sultan said that the commission believes reforms in the labour sector are essential for building a discrimination-free society.

"A fair transformation of the standard of living of 8 crore working people will be achieved only through the implementation of the outline presented in this report," he added.

According to the commission, up to 85 percent of the workers in the country lack legal protection.

"All workers in Bangladesh -- regardless of industry, sector, specialised labour region, type of work, institutional or non-institutional employment, or whether they work for profit or non-profit organisations -- will be equally covered under the protection of labour laws. To achieve this goal, significant reforms to existing labour laws or the enactment of one or more new and integrated labour laws will be necessary," said the report.

The commission also recommended that the government ensure the universal applicability of labour laws and the recognition of workers, specifically for those in specialised zones such as Export Processing Zones (EPZ) and Special Economic Zones (SEZ).

NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE

The commission recommended that the government announce a national minimum wage for all workers in formal and informal sectors, government and private jobs, foreign organisations, as well as individuals who are self-employed.



The exhibition also featured 14 booths where visitors could buy, sell, or trade items including banknotes, coins, stamps, and first day cover. Both experienced collectors and newcomers had the chance to explore the wide variety of items.

The universal national minimum wage will be based on the concept of a living wage and will be reviewed and reassessed every three years, based on inflation and living standards.

Based on the national minimum wage, separate minimum wages will be set for specific sectors and professions, considering the nature of work, sector-specific demands and regional differences. These sector-specific and professional minimum wages will not be lower than the national minimum wage; instead, they will be equal to or higher than it, the report reads.

While determining the minimum wage, the consideration will be based on a single breadwinner in the family, ensuring that the worker can meet the needs of their family. The total wage will include basic salary along with allowances for housing, medical care, and communication.

However, allowances for food, transport, education, and ration will be kept outside this structure, said the report.

TRADE UNION

The commission also wants a simpler registration process for trade unions, and recommended formation of a tripartite committee to immediately determine the required minimum number of workers for establishing trade unions and to review relevant experiences and models from neighbouring countries.

Currently, at least 30 percent workers of a factory are required to form a trade union. The commission proposed that the requirement be reduced to only 50 workers.

The Department of Labour must decide on the application for registration within 55 days from its filing and be held accountable for delays in timely decisions. If there are any deficiencies, the department must provide written objections within 12 days.

The commission also wants safe working environment for all workers, and a re-evaluation of compensation criteria and amount for workers killed or injured due to accidents or negligence.

It also called for the creation of a

Tk 2.26 lakh crore lost to tax evasion

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host of structural issues fuelling tax evasion, including high tax rates, weak enforcement, and a labyrinthine legal framework that complicates compliance.

"From a tax justice perspective, high levels of tax evasion undermine compliance by discouraging honest taxpayers and increasing the burden on those who follow the law," the CPD said in the report.

Speaking to The Daily Star following the event, Moazzem pointed to the NBR's regulatory failure and flawed financial reporting as key challenges in paying taxes.

The study said 82 percent of the firms that took part in the survey believed the current tax rates imposed on them were unfair. They identified it as one of their major challenges in paying taxes.

A lack of accountability among tax officials, widespread corruption, and the absence of a fully digital tax submission system were flagged as other key concerns.

For example, 79 percent of the surveyed firms said there was a lack of accountability among tax officials. And 72 percent blamed widespread corruption in the tax administration. In addition, 65 percent of the businesses reported persistent disputes with tax officials over the calculation of their payable tax amounts.

Such practices create an intangible burden that often outweighs the tax itself, making the overall tax environment unfair, Tamim said, citing businesses.

He added that there is also a prevailing sense of distrust among the surveyed businesses regarding whether the taxes they pay will be utilised in ways that benefit them.

INCENTIVE, EXPENDITURE

At the briefing, Moazzem criticised the existing tax expenditure and incentives policies.

Investment should never be driven by blanket tax incentives, which are meant for targeted support -- not for subsidising profit-making businesses or politically linked firms, he said.

"Bangladesh's tax incentive structure is deeply entangled with political interests. It's time to break away from this and introduce merit-based, time-bound incentives."

"Each year, over Tk 71,000 crore is spent on tax expenditures in the corporate sector. But where's the accountability? Who benefits, and at

ICT's probe agency

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committed during the uprising -- to the office of the Chief Prosecutor.

Habibur Rahman and several other accused were allegedly involved under the principle of command responsibility, while other police personnel directly participated in the killings of six protesters that took place in the city's Chankharpool on August 5.

Disclosing the information at a press briefing at his office yesterday, ICT Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam said that they would now scrutinise the report and supporting evidence and file formal charges against the accused to the tribunal in a few days.

"Once the formal charges are submitted to the court, the official trial process will begin," he added.

The other accused are Sudip Kumar Chakraborty, the then DMP joint commissioner; Sha Alam Mohammad Akhterul Islam, former additional deputy commissioner; Mohammad Imrul, former assistant commissioner of Ramma Zone of DMP; Arshad Hossain, former police inspector (operation) at Shahbagh Police Station; and constables Sujon, Imaz Hossain, and Nasirul Islam.

Arshad Hossain, Sujon, Imaz Hossain, and Nasirul Islam are in jail, while the others are on the run.

Tajul Islam said, "Former DMP Commissioner Habibur Rahman, acting on the prime minister's directive to use deadly force against the protesters, had instructed the entire police force via wireless message to kill the July revolutionaries."

"That audio recording has also been examined and submitted as evidence," Tajul said.

The investigation report mentions the involvement of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, the former home minister, and the then IGP. However, they are not included in this probe report, as separate investigations are ongoing. A separate investigation report will be filed for them, and formal charges will be filed accordingly, said the chief prosecutor.

Mentioning the widespread and systematic crime against humanity committed during the July uprising, Tajul said different state forces directly took part in the atrocities. Firearms, deadly weapons, drones, helicopters and armoured personnel carriers (APCs) were used to suppress unarmed student protesters demanding democratic reform and to cling to power.

The victims named in this case are Shahriar Khan Anas; Sheikh Mahdi Hasan Junayed; Mohammad Yakub; Rakib Hawlader; Ismailul Haque and Manik Mia.

Beyond the killings of these six individuals, Tajul noted that other incidents of crimes against humanity also took place in the same area at different times. Apart from law enforcers, the Awami League, its youth wing, the Juba League, was also involved. Probes into those events remain ongoing, with further reports expected to be submitted against the alleged perpetrators in due course.

what cost to our health, education, and social protection sectors?" he asked.

Bangladesh cannot afford to graduate from the LDC status with such a weak tax base, Moazzem said. "The post-graduation reality will demand much more than we are currently prepared to deliver."

LOW TAX GDP RATIO

To strengthen fiscal capacity and ensure economic resilience after its graduation from the LDC bracket, Bangladesh should target a tax-to-GDP ratio of at least 15 percent, the CPD recommended.

It noted that all countries that transitioned out of LDC status, except for Equatorial Guinea, maintained considerably higher tax-to-GDP ratios -- ranging from 15 to 23 percent -- far above Bangladesh's current level, which remains below 10 percent.

To close this gap, the NBR must significantly expand its corporate tax net, the CPD said, urging it to raise the proportion of tax-paying firms to at least 59 percent of registered companies -- up from the current estimate of just 9 percent.

Tap into youth potential

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commenced at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok, Thailand.

The session brings together 53 member states and nine associate members.

The Bangladesh delegation is led by Anisuzzaman Chowdhury, the special assistant to the chief adviser.

The ESCAP session provides Bangladesh with a strategic platform to share its experiences, deepen cooperation, and reaffirm its resolve to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through inclusive and transformative urban solutions.

The delegation is expected to contribute meaningful insights and forge valuable partnerships during the week-long event.