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SECOND EDITION

DHAKA THURSDAY JUNE 12, 2025

REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XXXV No. 139

JAISHTHA 29, 1432 BS

www.thedailystar.net

ZILHAJJ 15, 1446 HIJRI

16 PAGES : Tk 15.00

People ready, time right for the election

Yunus says about April timeline at Chatham House event

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

April 2026 is the right time for holding the general election and people are ready for it, Chief Adviser Dr Muhammad Yunus said in a question-answer session at Chatham House in London yesterday.

Replying to a query from Chatham House Director and Chief Executive Bronwen Maddox about the controversy over the election timeline, Prof Yunus said, "Well, I keep saying that we will have the most beautiful election we ever had in our history. The time is right. People are ready."

On a question from the audience as to whether he would be willing to be part of the next government, the CA said, "No way. No way. No way."

"I believe none of our cabinet members would want to do that. That's not our role. Our job is to manage a smooth transition and ensure the people are happy when we hand over power to the elected government. For us, ensuring a credible election is absolutely critical. If the election process is flawed, the whole issue will never be resolved."

Yunus reached London on Tuesday morning on a four-day visit, and is expected to hold a meeting with BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman tomorrow when they are likely to discuss the next election and other political issues.

Asked whether the interim government was excluding the Awami League and others who disagree with the proposed July Charter, Yunus said, "Yeah, well, there's a debate about that too. Is the Awami League a political party? If they can kill young people in the street, make people disappear, steal money – would you still call that a political party? That's the debate. This is not a judgment."

In the interest of the country's safety – politically and socially – the nation has decided that, for the time being, the activities of the Awami League will be suspended.

Chief Adviser
Prof Muhammad Yunus



He said that after former prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled the country on August 5 last year, people thought that the chapter is closed and that it was the end of such acts by Awami League. "But those who fled – for them, it didn't end. They continued the same activities in absentia, from abroad, inciting people, causing unrest. So for them, it continues."

"We no longer feel safe out there on the streets.... So in the interest of the country's safety – politically and socially – the nation has decided that, for the time being, the activities of the Awami League will be suspended. That's all we've done. We haven't banned the Awami League. We haven't taken any permanent action. We're waiting until the trial is over – just the trial of those individuals involved [in the atrocities]."

An audience member pointed out that the interim government was silent when the house of Bangladesh's first president, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was demolished, and that the incident divided people and supporters of certain individuals or groups felt excluded. The audience member then asked Prof Yunus how he plans to bring about reform and unity in Bangladesh against this backdrop.

The CA replied, "Many issues hit us all at once. We couldn't handle everything immediately. It took time to bring things under control. One of our biggest tasks was restoring order."

He added that the people didn't trust the police when the interim government was formed. "So we had a deadlock. The police were afraid to do their jobs, and the people didn't accept them. It took time. But thankfully, I can report that things have calmed down now. People are beginning to accept the police again."

Commenting on a question regarding referendums on whether people want reforms, he said the interim government would not opt for

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Starmer declines to meet Yunus tracking down missing billions'

Reports Financial Times

STAR REPORT

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer has declined a request to meet Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus, who is visiting London to garner support for efforts to recover billions allegedly laundered abroad by the deposed Sheikh Hasina regime, reports the Financial Times.

Yunus told the British daily that the UK should feel "morally" obliged to help his government track down funds "stolen" by the Awami League led regime, much of it allegedly now in the UK.

However, Yunus said Starmer had not yet agreed to meet him.

"I have no direct conversation with him," Yunus said, adding that he had "no doubt" Starmer would support Bangladesh's efforts.

"This is stolen money," he said of the misappropriated funds.

According to the FT report, UK government officials confirmed that there were no plans for Starmer to meet Yunus and declined to comment further.

The UK government was already

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A BURST OF GREEN AND GOLD ... With the arrival of jackfruit and pineapple season, boats loaded with the seasonal delights crowd the waters of Samata ghat in Rangamati's Banarupa. Growers from across the district flock here, turning the ghat into a floating hub of trade, colour, and community. PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Avoid all forms of public gatherings

DGHS urges people as Covid cases soar, issues 11-point advisory

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The health authorities yesterday issued an 11 point directive for the general public and suspected Covid-19 patients amid a rise in cases both within the country and in neighbouring nations.

The directives include an appeal to avoid all forms of public gatherings.

They also make wearing masks mandatory in crowded places. People have also been advised to wear masks to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses.

Prof Md Abu Jafor, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), announced the directives at a press conference held at the DGHS headquarters in the capital.

"We want to create awareness among people, not spread panic," he said, adding that the health ministry and DGHS are working jointly with relevant ministries and agencies regarding Covid-19 tests, medicine, protective equipment, and related issues.

Replying to a question, he said their directive for people to avoid public gatherings will also be applicable to political activities.

The directives came after the Covid infection rate last month reached a 29-month high, and there was a Covid-19 linked death on June 5

The sick are advised to stay indoors

New variants of Omicron detected in the country

10 tested positive out of 107 samples yesterday

DGHS says guideline meant for political activities too

after a long gap.

In the last 24 hours, 10 people tested positive out of 107 samples collected from Dhaka, according to the DGHS. The number was 13 out of 101 in the previous 24 hours.

Meanwhile, our correspondents in Chattogram and Cox's Bazar, citing local health officials, said two people – one in each district – have been tested positive.

Prof Jafor said the infection rate in the country is still lower than in neighbouring countries.

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The poor to get Tk 37,076cr next fiscal year
Allocation to go to 39 safety net programmes

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and AHSAN HABIB

The interim government proposed a new framework for social safety net programmes, under which 7.68 crore poor people would receive Tk 37,076 crore next fiscal year to help them cushion the blow from high inflation over the last three years.

As many as 39 pro poor programmes were separated from the social safety programmes this fiscal year on the recommendation of the EU, according to the report styled 'Journey Towards an Equitable Society: Social Security Budget Report 2025-26'.

Key examples include major cash transfer allowances for vulnerable populations, food security and price relief programmes and public works and livelihood programmes that employ the poor segment of society.

The objectives for segmenting the 39 programmes are to closely monitor progress and outcomes in poverty reduction and vulnerability mitigation and set short- and long-term goals to reduce extreme poverty, vulnerability, marginalisation and inequality.

High targeting effectiveness means minimising leakage to the non poor and maximising inclusion of those in need, according to the report.

Individuals who earn less than Tk 1.95 lakh per year are considered poor and households whose annual income is

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IMMIGRATION RAIDS US cities brace for more protests LA police make 'mass arrests' in areas under curfew

REUTERS, Los Angeles

Several US cities yesterday braced for protests against President Donald Trump's sweeping immigration raids, as parts of the country's second largest city Los Angeles spent the night under curfew in an effort to quell five days of unrest.

The Governor of Texas, Republican Greg Abbott, said he will deploy the National Guard this week, ahead of planned protests. Protesters and police in Austin clashed on Monday.

Trump's extraordinary measures of sending National Guard and Marines to quell protests in Los Angeles has sparked a national debate on the use of military on US soil and pitted the Republican president against California's Democrat governor.

"This brazen abuse of power by a sitting president inflamed a combustible situation, putting our people, our officers and even our National Guard at risk. That's when the downward spiral began," California Governor Gavin Newsom said in a video address on Tuesday.

"He again chose escalation. He chose more force. He chose theatrics over public safety... Democracy is under assault."

Newsom, widely seen as preparing for a



Law enforcement officers detain a demonstrator during a protest against federal immigration sweeps near the US immigration court at the Jacob K Javits Federal Building in New York City, US, on Tuesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

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