

Tarique-Yunus meeting will be 'historic'  
Says Rizvi

UNB, Dhaka

BNP's Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi has described the upcoming meeting between Chief Adviser Mohammad Yunus and the party's acting chairman Tarique Rahman as a "historic moment".

"It will bring a fresh breeze for democracy in Bangladesh," he said at a press briefing at BNP's Naya Paltan office yesterday.

The meeting is scheduled for June 13 and is being closely watched in political circles.

Rizvi said the event could mark a turning point in the country's democratic journey.

"The entire nation is watching, and we, the leaders and activists of the party, are also watching. A meeting will take place between the head of the government and the acting chairman of BNP. This is very joyful news for us," he said. "We are looking forward to that meeting. I believe this meeting will be a historic one. So that Bangladesh's democracy is no longer attacked by any form of fascism, so that it does not fall prey to any aggressive monster and become completely destroyed -- I believe this will be a historic meeting. It will be a beneficial meeting for the country, the nation, and our unfortunate democracy," Rizvi said.

**UK security adviser calls on Yunus in London**

BSS, London

UK National Security Adviser Jonathan Powell called on Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at a hotel in London yesterday. National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman, Principal Coordinator on SDG affairs Lamiya Morshed, Chief Adviser's Special Envoy Lutley Siddiqi, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam and Bangladesh High Commissioner to UK Abida Islam, among others, were present at the meeting.

**No more night-time voting: AG**

UNB, Dhaka

Attorney General Advocate Asaduzzaman yesterday said daytime votes will never again be held at night in Bangladesh, assuring that the government is committed to ensuring every citizen can safely reach the secret polling booth to cast their vote freely.

Speaking at several meetings and seminars over a week in Shaikupura, the Attorney General strongly criticised former Chief Justices Khairul Haque and Syed Mahmud Hossain, labelling them as "disgraceful" for abolishing the 13th amendment, which he said effectively stripped people's voting rights.

"There will be no mafia in the judiciary, and no syndicate of vested circles," Asaduzzaman asserted.

The Attorney General said he is actively fighting against drugs and corruption and claimed to be achieving success in this ongoing battle.

Urging people to assist in this effort, he called upon them to provide information on drugs and corruption.

"We will build a drug-free Shaikupura. I promise that the identity of informants will be kept confidential, and only the names and identities of those involved in drugs will be revealed," he said.



A bus helper gets off the vehicle to pick up passengers from the opposite side of Babu Bazar Bridge, which is not a designated bus stop. This illegal practice contributes to unnecessary traffic congestion. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

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## NHRC yet to be reconstituted seven months on

Remains leaderless, powerless and ineffective

NILIMA JAHAN

More than seven months after the resignation of its chairperson and members, Bangladesh's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) remains leaderless, powerless, and largely ineffective.

Following the fall of the Awami League government and amid criticism that its leadership was politically appointed, Kamal Uddin Ahmed, a former secretary, stepped down as NHRC chairman on November 7 last year.

Full-time member Md Salim Reza and honorary members Tania Haque, Prof Biswajit Chanda, Kongjari Chowdhury, and Md Aminul Islam also resigned.

Another member, Kawsar Ahmed, resigned earlier.

They had all been appointed in December 2022 for a three year term.

The NHRC, established under the 2009 Act, was aligned with the 1993 Paris Principles to function as an independent rights watchdog.

These principles require such institutions to be autonomous, well-resourced, and capable of investigating all rights violations, including those by state actors.

Since the leadership stepped down, the NHRC, once envisioned as the nation's human rights watchdog, has become little more than a complaints desk.

Between November 8, 2024 and April 29, 2025, at least 250 new complaints were lodged, but none have been resolved.

Despite its 73 member staff continuing to receive complaints, the absence of its three decision-making benches has stopped all activities.

"We are only receiving complaints and carrying out administrative tasks," said NHRC Secretary Sebastin Rema. "There is no information on when the commission will be



### ISSUES

- Lacks chairperson, members since Nov 2024
- 250 complaints, zero case resolutions in 5 months
- Structural limitations
- Political appointments
- Loss of credibility
- Dependence on foreign aid

### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reform selection process
- Empower the NHRC
- Appoint rights defenders
- Secure financial autonomy
- Use constitutional tools
- Rebuild public trust

reconstituted."

Deputy Director Farhana Syead said, "People come every day asking about the status of their cases, but we cannot offer them any satisfactory answers."

In 2024, the commission received 751 complaints, but only 373 were resolved. Most involved minor disputes such as wage issues, labour conflicts, family matters, and land disputes.

Of the 100 suo motu (self-initiated) cases opened in 2024, only 20 have been concluded.

Even before the current leadership void, the NHRC was widely criticised as a "toothless body" offering recommendations without enforcement powers.

By law, the commission cannot investigate law enforcement or intervene in cases before courts or the ombudsman, excluding it from many of the country's most serious human rights cases.

Critics argue this design is intentional.

Under Sections 6 and 7 of the NHRC Act, the president appoints the chairperson and members based on recommendations from a selection committee largely made up of ruling party allies.

This structure, rights advocates say, violates the Paris Principles, which stress that reduced political interference strengthens institutional credibility.

Over the past three terms, the NHRC has been led by former government secretaries: Dr Kamal Uddin Ahmed (2022-2024), Nasima Begum NDC (2019-2022), and Kazi Reazul Hoque (2016-2019).

"Sadly, the last NHRC head was a former home secretary, someone we repeatedly contacted about law enforcement abuses and never heard back from," said Dr Mizanur Rahman, NHRC chairman from 2010 to 2016.

"How can we expect someone to act independently when their entire career has been about following government orders?"

"It's not enough to fill the chairs," said rights activist Nur Khan Liton. "We need a commission capable of holding state actors

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## Not April or December, hold polls in February

Suggests Nagorik Coalition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Nagorik Coalition has proposed that the next national election be held in the first week of February.

It urged Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus and BNP Acting Chairperson Tarique Rahman to include this proposal in their June 13 meeting agenda.

In a statement issued yesterday, the newly formed civil society platform said political consensus on the key reforms outlined in the July Charter can be achieved by August 30.

The proposal also includes updating the voter list through a special ordinance so that citizens turning 18 in 2025 can vote in February.

The statement comes amid growing political tension. The interim government has proposed holding elections in April 2026, which the BNP has rejected, demanding polls in December 2025 instead. However, the Nagorik Coalition argues that neither date is practical or inclusive.

It said that reaching a reform consensus, changing laws, and preparing for an election by December would be too difficult. Meanwhile, voting in April would be challenging due to the summer heat, Ramadan, and major public exams.

The coalition also noted that the interim government's proposed budget does not include any allocation for reform. As a result, a government elected in April would not be able to take up new reform projects in the 2026-27 fiscal year.

## FULL TEXT OF VERDICT SC upholds 39-pt judicial code of conduct

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court in the full text of a verdict has upheld its previous judgement that reformed 39-point code of conduct for its judges with a view to avoiding any confusion under article 96 of the constitution.

The apex court, however, said in the full text of verdict that the Supreme Judicial Council, which comprises of the chief justice and two other senior judges of the Appellate Division to deal with the allegations against the SC judges over incapacity or misconduct, will have the authority to revisit the provisions of the code of conduct.

"Considered in this context, the Code of Conduct is to be considered as permitting of growth and mutations by drawing on the inherent power of only the Supreme Judicial Council to revisit existing provisions as and when necessary," Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed observed in the 50 pages' full text of verdict, which was uploaded in the SC website on June 3.

On October 20 last year, a six-member bench of the Appellate Division, led by Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed, has delivered the verdict after disposing of a review petition filed by the previous government against the 2017 SC verdict that scrapped the 16th amendment to the constitution that empowered parliament to deal with the allegations against SC judges.

Senior lawyer Manzill Murshid, who challenged the legality of the 16th amendment, told The Daily Star that the Appellate Division in its review judgement has not scrapped the 39-point code of conduct for SC judges.

Therefore, the code of conduct will remain in force, but the Supreme Judicial Council can revisit those, he added.

According to SC formulated code of conduct, the judges should participate in establishing, maintaining, and enforcing high standards of conduct, and should personally observe those standards so that the integrity and independence

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## SATCHARI NAT'L PARK

# Speeding vehicles turn forest road into death trap

MINTU DESHWARA, from Habiganj

In a tragic incident on May 20, an endangered Capped Langur baby was crushed to death by a speeding microbus on the old Dhaka-Sylhet highway through Satchari National Park.

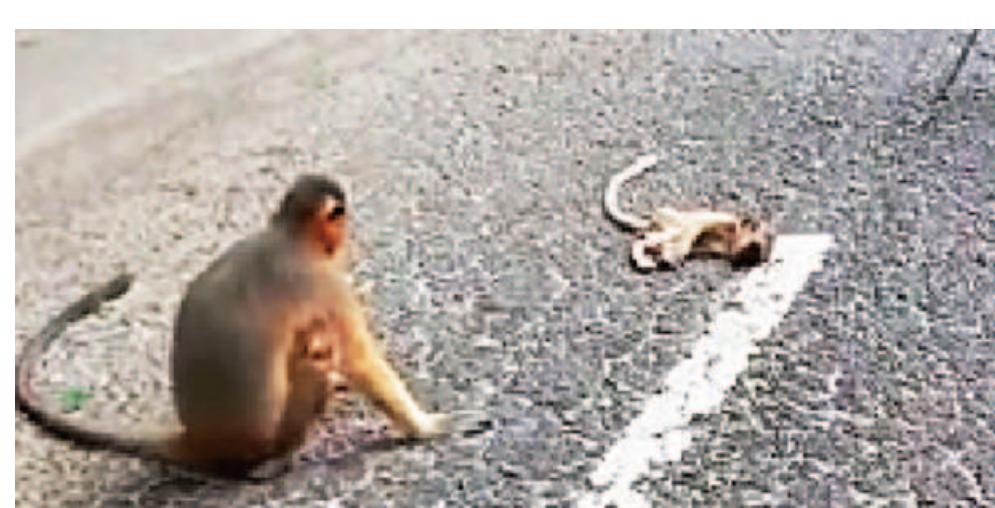
The mother langur was seen sitting beside her dead offspring for hours -- a sight that deeply moved commuters and locals alike.

Forest officials have yet to identify the vehicle responsible.

With the highway passing directly through the forest in Chunarhat upazila of Habiganj, such incidents are common, said Miftaul Islam, a local.

There are regular reports of endangered Capped Langurs, snakes, barking deer, and other animals being killed due to unchecked vehicle movement on the road.

Countless animals are at risk due to vehicular traffic through the 600-acre forest, a biodiversity hotspot and home to 197 species of animals, reptiles and birds, including several endangered species. Primates, in particular, are highly vulnerable as they often roam near the roads.



Conservationists and locals have repeatedly urged authorities to adopt urgent measures, including speed control, better signage, stricter vigilance and enforcement of rules, to prevent further loss of animal lives in this ecologically sensitive area.

Sand- and stone-laden heavy trucks often

pass through the forest at reckless speeds, exceeding the designated 20 kmph limit.

"Some 10-12 wild animals die every month on this road," claimed Mobin Mia, a local.

"All other roads in Satchari are in a sorry state except this one, which connects to the main Dhaka-Sylhet highway via Jagadishpur

Muktijoddha Chittar in Madhabpur upazila of Habiganj. As such, drivers often opt to use this road and drive at high speed," said Saddam Hossain, a car driver.

Tofazzal Sohel, general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon's Habiganj unit, said there are not enough road signs to warn drivers, and few adhere to speed limits.

Shoeb Chowdhury, former president of Habiganj Press Club, called for coordination between the Forest Department and Roads and Highways Department, including forming a joint taskforce to plan and monitor protective steps, as well as public awareness campaigns to build empathy among drivers, and maintaining a database of roadkill incidents to guide policy measures.

Contacted, Dr Jahangir Alam, divisional forest officer in Sylhet, said, "While we don't have an exact figure, it's true that many animals are dying due to speeding vehicles."

"Unfortunately, current laws under the Road Transport Act do not permit construction of speed breakers, thereby making it difficult to mitigate such incidents," he also said.

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