



# No reforms in foreign ministry amid global shifts

PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladesh's foreign affairs apparatus did not see any major reforms over the past year when the country needed prudent diplomacy to navigate the complexities of rapidly evolving global and regional dynamics.

Foreign policy analysts say Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus' 11 overseas visits helped secure international recognition for both the July mass uprising and the interim government. But the foreign ministry appeared somewhat sidelined.

"I don't understand why the government hasn't taken any initiative to reform the sector... There was political intention to do things differently," said former ambassador M Shameem Ahsan.

This inaction could either mean everything is fine on the foreign affairs front or it was given less importance, he told this correspondent, noting that the government set up 11 commissions to carry out reforms across various sectors but excluded foreign affairs.

"Over the last few months, what has been happening at the borders with India and Myanmar is unwanted. There are security concerns as well," said Shameem, also a former member of the Public Service Commission.

Given the global geopolitical sensitivity, the interim government should have at least formed a national foreign affairs council to help it with decision-making on critical foreign policy matters, he said.

"We, as a nation, cannot do things on an ad hoc basis," he added. Foreign policy analysts further say Bangladesh's importance as a

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A woman dries earthen pots in the sun. For decades, several Hindu families in Munshiganj's Sirajdikhan upazila have been crafting these traditional pots, primarily used for storing curd. The price of each pot ranges from Tk 8 to Tk 10, depending on size. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Yunus to meet Malaysian PM in KL today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim are set to hold official talks in Putrajaya as the two countries are eyeing better relations.

Prof Yunus reached Kuala Lumpur at 7:50pm yesterday on a three-day visit at the invitation of Anwar Ibrahim, who was the first to visit Bangladesh in October last year after the formation of the interim government.

The chief adviser will be accorded an official welcome at the Perdana Putra Complex, Putrajaya, this morning before the private and delegation-level bilateral meetings with the Malaysian premier.

Both leaders will witness the exchange of at least five memoranda of understanding (MoUs) in the fields of defence, energy, strategic, and international studies, capacity building in semiconductors, and trade promotion, as well as the exchange of notes

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# Teenager killed during clash at Geneva Camp

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A teenager was killed during a clash between two groups of alleged drug traders in Mohammadpur's Geneva Camp yesterday. At least 13 people were detained in this connection.

The 16-year-old victim, a resident of the camp, was stabbed to death by rival gang members, said Abul Alim, inspector (operations) of Mohammadpur Police Station.

According to the police official, there has been a longstanding dispute between the two groups -- one led by Mona Sohel and the other by Pichchi Raja, Selim, and Parmanu -- over the drug trade in the camp.

He said the teenager, who allegedly belonged to Mona Sohel's group, was stabbed to death around 3:00pm when the gang led by Pichchi Raja attacked the rival group.

Pichchi Raja, Selim, and Parmanu were among those who took part in the attack, he said, adding that the gangs had been fighting since the morning.

Later in the night, joint forces conducted a raid in the camp and detained at least 13 suspects.

Locally made sharp weapons were recovered at that time, confirmed Lt Col Nazim Ahmed, commanding officer of the 23rd East Bengal Regiment of the Bangladesh Army.



## HUMAN TRAFFICKING CHARGES CID clears ex-minister, secy after KL's request

PORIMOL PALMA and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has cleared the former expatriates' welfare minister, its former secretary, several MPs and a syndicate of 101 recruiting agencies of charges of human trafficking and money laundering.

The move comes three months after Malaysian authorities requested Bangladesh to review or withdraw the charges in relation to the labour recruitment in Malaysia.

In the final report submitted on July 15 to the Anti-Human Trafficking Special Tribunal of Dhaka on human trafficking, Md Rasel, police inspector (heinous crimes) of CID, said the investigation has found no proof of the allegations.

The report recommended actions against the plaintiff Altab Khan.

Khan, meanwhile, submitted a no-confidence petition to the court against the final report, saying that the CID inspector must have been influenced by the accused and hence submitted such a flawed report.

Earlier on April 23, Malaysian Human Resources Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Azman bin Mohd Yusof had written a letter to Expatriates' Welfare Ministry Secretary Neyamti

“These agencies collected varying amounts -- Tk 4 lakh, Tk 4.5 lakh, Tk 5 lakh -- but passengers only signed documents acknowledging Tk 78,900. If they paid more, they themselves must lodge complaints. So far, not a single victim has done so.”

Md Rasel, investigating officer

Ullah Bhuiyan requesting the review or withdrawal of the cases related to the labour recruitment in Malaysia.

"The allegations of human trafficking and money laundering -- largely unsubstantiated -- have impacted the Malaysian reputation," he said in the letter.

He also requested the secretary to prevent the revival of dismissed cases to ensure that Malaysia will preserve and enhance the US Trafficking in Person ranking by demonstrating continued commitment to ethical recruitment.

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## Graft trial starts against Hasina, others

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The trial of three graft cases filed against 23 people, including deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, her son Sajeb Wazed Joy, and daughter Saima Wazed Putul, began at a Dhaka court with depositions of three complainants yesterday.

The complainants are Anti-Corruption Commission Deputy Director Md Salahuddin, assistant directors Afnan Jannat Keya and SM Rasheedul Hasan.

For over one and a half hours, the complainants described alleged corruption by Hasina, Joy, Putul, and 20 others, to acquire plots in violation of Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) rules and provisions, said ACC Public Prosecutor Mir Ahmed Ali Salam.

Judge Mohammad Abdullah Al Mamun of the Special Judge's Court-5 in Dhaka recorded their statements, said Ariful Islam, bench assistant of the court.

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# Plots afoot to obstruct return to democracy Says Tarique Rahman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There is a conspiracy underway to stop the country from returning to a democratic state and to deny the people's right to vote, said BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday.

Efforts are being made to foil the return to democracy, he said while speaking as the chief guest at BNP's biennial conference in Naogaon.

"Many thought there was no opponent on the field, so why would the polls be so tough? I said back then that the next election would be the toughest in Bangladesh's history. One year ago, I said invisible forces were at work. Different kinds of conspiracies were happening and that it would not be so easy. Do you realise that now? It will be tough ahead."

People trust that if the BNP comes to power, it will do constructive work since it has experience in running the country.

"Everyone expects that the BNP will be able to move the country forward and make people's lives a little better. There is a conspiracy to ruin this plan."

To stop the ongoing conspiracy against democracy, voting rights and the BNP, Tarique urged his party members to avoid activities that could damage the public trust.

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## BANGLADESHI JUTE GOODS

# India blocks their entry thru land ports

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India yesterday banned the entry of certain categories of jute products, including sacks and bags, from Bangladesh through land ports with immediate effect.

The products are bleached and unbleached woven fabrics of jute or other bast fibre, twine, cordage and cables of jute besides sacks and bags of jute, said a notification issued by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade under the Indian commerce ministry.

However, the import of these jute products will be allowed only through the Nhava Sheva sea port in Maharashtra, said the notification signed by Ajay Bhadoo, director general of the DGFT.

"Imports from Bangladesh shall not be allowed from any land port on the India-Bangladesh border," the DGFT said, adding that the move "regulates" imports of certain goods with immediate effect.

Last night's move came a little more than two months after India restricted the imports of a range of jute products and woven fabrics from Bangladesh via land ports, allowing them only through Nhava Sheva.

Similar steps were taken in April and May, covering readymade garments, processed foods, flax tow, jute yarn, and other bast fibre products.

On May 17, India imposed port restrictions on certain goods from Bangladesh, while on April 9, it withdrew the transshipment facility that allowed Bangladeshi garment exporters to ship goods to destinations including the Middle East and Europe, except for Nepal and Bhutan.



Makeshift stalls eat up much of the thoroughfare in the capital's North Jatra Bari, leaving little room for traffic, resulting in frequent congestion. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## DUCSU POLLS Nomination submission from today

DU CORRESPONDENT

The submission of nomination papers for the Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU) elections is set to begin today.

According to the election schedule announced by Chief Returning Officer

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