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Move to send peace mission to Myanmar

Malaysian PM Anwar Ibrahim reveals plan in joint press briefing with Prof Yunus

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh, Malaysia, and several other Southeast Asian countries will send a joint peace mission to Myanmar in the coming weeks to advocate for peace and humanitarian aid for the Rohingya population and other communities in the country.

To ensure that peace is achieved and the end to atrocities against some ethnic minorities and the people of Myanmar, Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan will coordinate with the team comprised of members from Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Bangladesh to visit Myanmar in the next few weeks.

"Malaysia is concerned with the burden placed on Bangladesh of having to cater to enormous numbers of Rohingya refugees," said Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim at a joint press conference after a bilateral meeting with Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus in Putrajaya yesterday.

"Therefore, to secure peace in Myanmar is, of course, a great priority, along with immediate

humanitarian assistance for the suffering first, the refugees, and also the victims of earthquakes," he said.

A civil war has been raging in Myanmar since a military coup in 2021.

Bangladesh hosts around 1.2 million Rohingya refugees, most of whom fled a military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine state in 2017. Now rebel group Arakan Army controls about 90 percent of Rakhine State.

Since 2023, an additional 2,00,000 have fled to Bangladesh. No repatriation has taken place over the years despite various attempts. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) could do little to address the issue.

To bring global focus back to the Rohingya crisis, the UN, at the request of Bangladesh, is going to organise a high-level conference on the Rohingya crisis on September 30 in New York.

A preparatory conference will be held in Cox's Bazar on August 25, the eighth anniversary of the Rohingya influx into Bangladesh.

Malaysia also shelters more than 1,00,000

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Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus and Malaysian Prime Minister Dato' Seri Anwar bin Ibrahim during a luncheon hosted by the latter at the Seri Perdana Complex in Putrajaya yesterday.

PHOTO : CA PRESS WING

5 MOUs SIGNED

On defence cooperation between Bangladesh and Malaysia

On LNG supply, infrastructure development, and petroleum products

Between Institute of Strategic & International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia and Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS)

Between MIMOS Services Sdn Bhd and the Bangladesh-Malaysia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BMCCI)

Between National Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia (NCCIM) and Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI)

STAR ROUNDTABLE 1

Businesses for deferment of LDC graduation by 6yrs

Without adequate preparation, industries may struggle to maintain their global foothold, exporters and economists warn

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's leading business figures have urged the government to seek a six-year deferral of the country's graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) status, warning that the economy is unprepared for the loss of vital trade preferences.

Citing a confluence of domestic and international pressures, including a nearly 40 percent currency devaluation, high interest rates, and a fraught investment climate, they are petitioning for the transition to be pushed back from its scheduled date of November 2026 to 2032.

The primary concern is the impending loss of preferential market access, particularly the duty-free, quota-free access to the European Union. Business leaders estimate this could slash annual exports by up to 14 percent, equivalent to \$7 billion, crippling key sectors like ready-made garments and footwear, which together constitute almost 90 percent of the nation's exports.

The Daily Star yesterday launched a series of roundtables on private sector challenges tied to the LDC graduation, aiming to make a roadmap for the future of the economy.

During the first of these roundtables, the business leaders suggested engaging in intensive negotiations with the United Nations and the two other graduating countries, Nepal and Laos, to secure the deferment. Two economists also spoke at the online discussion titled "LDC Graduation: How to Energise the Private Sector Objective".

Syed Nasim Manzur, president of Leathergoods and Footwear

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13TH GENERAL ELECTION 45,000 polling centres, 2.8 lakh booths likely

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission will train 9,31,131 polling officials ahead of the upcoming national election, which could have more than 45,000 polling centres and 2.8 lakh booths.

The training programme is likely to begin in September as part of the preparations for conducting the polls.

The polls will be held in the first half of February next year, with the EC planning to declare the schedule in the first half of December.

In preparation, the EC has already updated the voter list, is redrawing parliamentary constituencies, and making arrangements for expatriate voting.

Once the proposed amendments to the Representation of the People Order (RPO) and the Election Conduct Rules are forwarded to the law ministry for swift approval, the printing of manuals and guidelines will begin. The materials will serve as key resources for training election officials.

The EC also aims to complete tasks like voter registration, training of officials, and procurement of election materials by September.

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Grounded planes put Biman's schedule in disarray

Experts question carrier's safety, maintenance regimes

RASHIDUL HASAN

A series of technical issues in Biman planes has raised questions about the national flag carrier's quality of maintenance and safety.

There has been at least 10 incidents in which Biman's Boeing and DHC Dash-8 aircraft suffered technical issues before or after take-off over the last month.

Now at least four of its 10 widebody planes remain grounded, three Boeing 787s and one Boeing 777.

"Biman's flight schedules have been seriously disrupted, affecting multiple onward services and increasing operational and passenger-handling costs," a top official of Biman told The Daily Star.

"Biman's flight schedule has almost collapsed, and we are anticipating major service disruptions. We cannot prepare a proper schedule as the availability of aircraft remains uncertain," said a senior Biman pilot, requesting anonymity.

Biman's present fleet comprises six Boeing 787s, four Boeing 777-300ERs, four Boeing 737s, and five Dash-8Q400s.

Due to the aircraft shortage, Biman was forced to delay flights on the Dhaka-Kuwait and Dhaka-Chattogram-Dubai routes by 24 hours yesterday, Biman spokesperson ABM Raoshan Kabir said.

According to Biman, the carrier is now operating flights to 21 international and seven domestic destinations.

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CHANKHARPOOL KILLINGS

Father tells tribunal how son was killed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sheikh Mehedi Hasan Junaid's father told the International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday that his son was only 14 and too young to understand what was going on.

"What was his fault?" he asked while testifying.

Junaid, also called Mostakim by his family, and five others were shot dead allegedly by police in the capital's Chankharpool on August 5 last year.

His father, Sheikh Jamal Hasan, who testified in the crimes against humanity case filed over the killings, said, "Mostakim was our only son, a 10-year memoriser of the holy Quran. My wife and I now live like the walking dead. They destroyed my life. I want the killers to be hanged."

Another prosecution witness, Anjuara Yasmin, a teacher at Shaikh Burhanuddin Post Graduate College, told the tribunal that she saw police fire on protesters from her rooftop during a curfew, injuring many, including her students.

She demanded justice, holding ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, then home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, ex-IGP Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun,

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Women jostle and stretch out their arms as a TCB outlet employee writes queue numbers on their palms for subsidised essentials. With limited stock, many leave empty-handed. The photo was taken yesterday in the capital's Mohammadpur Town Hall area.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

BNP's politics ahead is about employment

Says Tarique Rahman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP's acting chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday urged people from all walks of life to vote for the party in the upcoming national election.

"Vote for the sheaf of paddy [BNP's election symbol] -- take the chance to build the country," he said at a discussion organised by Jubo Dal, Swechchhasebak Dal and Chhatra Dal at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in Agargaon to mark the International Youth Day.

To implement the BNP's plans for improving people's standard of living, public support is necessary.

"To establish the power of the people, the BNP needs your cooperation and support in the upcoming national election," he said, while calling on the young generation to present the party's people-oriented programmes to the public.

The BNP's politics in the coming days is about creating employment.

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