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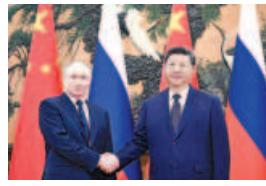
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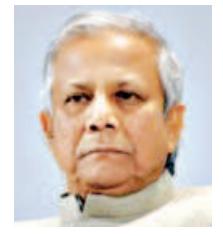
Access to criminal justice and Rohingya refugees

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Stay vigilant as there'll be bid to foil election

Yunus says at meeting with 7 parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday said certain quarters are making every effort to foil the election and expressed his resolve to have the polls held as scheduled in early February.

"Those who do not want the interim government to reach the stage of election will obstruct the process in every possible way," he said during a meeting with the leaders of seven political parties and one platform at his official residence, Jamuna.

"Some signs of these are already visible," the chief adviser said, warning, "more will follow."

"We have to be more vigilant," he told the leaders.

"They will hinder the very process of shaping Bangladesh's sovereign identity. Their utmost effort will be to foil the election and create such a situation that the election cannot be held," CA's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam quoted Yunus after the meeting.

The chief adviser told the leaders that obstacles would be created at every step in arranging the polls.

"They will try to sow discord in everyone's minds. We have to stay on the path, remain calm and united," Yunus said.

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Hasina, Kamal ordered shooting of July protesters

Ex-IGP Mamun tells ICT, apologises for mass killing



SHARIFUL ISLAM and SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

In a dramatic testimony before the International Crimes Tribunal 1 yesterday, former inspector general of police (IGP) Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun said the mass killings during last year's July uprising were carried out on direct orders of then prime minister Sheikh Hasina and home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal.

"I apologise to the victims' families, the injured, the nation, and the tribunal," Mamun said, appearing as an approver in a case filed over crimes against humanity committed during the uprising.

Besides him, Hasina and Asaduzzaman are also accused in the case.

Mamun had earlier pleaded guilty and sought permission to become an approver. The tribunal accepted his plea on the condition that he would make a full and true disclosure of information regarding the charges brought against him.

USE LETHAL FORCE

Mamun testified that on July 18, 2024, Asaduzzaman relayed Hasina's directive to use lethal weapons against protesters. Mamun shared the order with then additional DIG Proloy Kumar Joarder, who then passed it on to then DMP commissioner Habibur Rahman and others nationwide.

"From that day, the use of lethal weapons began. Habibur and DB chief Harun were overenthusiastic about the decision. The home minister's instruction was clear: suppress the protest at any cost."

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NILPHAMARI EPZ

One killed as workers clash with law enforcers

A CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

A worker was killed, and at least seven others were injured in a clash with law enforcers at the Uttara Export Processing Zone (EPZ) in Nilphamari yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Md Habib, 21, an employee of Equ International -- a knitting factory. He was a resident of Sangolsi village in Nilphamari Sadar upazila.

His brother Rashidul Islam claimed that Habib was shot and killed by law enforcers, but police and doctors did not confirm this.

According to EPZ Executive Director Abdul Jabbar, for the last few days, the workers of Evergreen Products Factory (BD) Ltd -- a wig factory -- have been demanding termination benefits after authorities laid off around 50 employees.

Yesterday, factory authorities suddenly announced a two-day holiday.

Enraged by the sudden closure, the workers blocked the nearby Nilphamari-Saidpur highway.

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Palestinians displaced by the Israeli military offensive take shelter in a tent camp in Gaza City yesterday, as Israeli forces intensify operations in and around the area. Story on page 5.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Big stride towards judicial autonomy

HC restores SC's control over lower court, orders govt to form judicial secretariat within 3 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a landmark verdict, the High Court yesterday ruled that the Supreme Court, not the president, will have the authority over the transfer, posting, and discipline of lower court judges.

It also ordered the government to establish a separate judicial secretariat within three months of receiving the judgment.

The bench of Justice Ahmed Sohel and Justice Debasish Roy Chowdhury delivered the judgment on a writ petition filed by several lawyers. It also scrapped article 116 of the constitution, which had vested these powers in the president, as well as provisions of the fourth and 15th amendments that upheld presidential control.

The court ruling restores the original 1972 provision of article 116, which empowers the Supreme Court to oversee the posting, promotion and leave of judges in the lower judiciary.

It also declared the Bangladesh Judicial Service (Disciplinary) Rules, 2017 unconstitutional, ruling that they wrongly placed lower court judges under presidential authority in consultation with the Supreme Court.

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Article 116 says, "The control (including the power of posting, promotion and grant of leave) and discipline of persons employed in the judicial service and magistrates exercising judicial functions shall vest in the President and shall be exercised by him in consultation with the Supreme Court."

The High Court noted that while article 109 of the constitution vests the Supreme Court's High Court Division with authority to supervise subordinate courts, in practice, this power rests with the president.

The president, who formally acts on the advice of the prime minister, appoints both the prime minister and the chief justice. This arrangement, the court said, entrenches executive influence over the judiciary.

The bench said that the president's "consultation" with the Supreme Court in matters concerning lower court judges becomes meaningless if the executive does not cooperate.

The HC judges said that article 22 of the constitution explicitly says that the judiciary must be separated from the executive. Any form of executive

Star ROUNDTABLE 3

Simpler rules key to smooth transition from LDC

Say business leaders, seek action for stable policies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leading entrepreneurs yesterday urged the government to create an environment more conducive to doing business as Bangladesh prepares to graduate from the UN's least developed country (LDC) category next year.

At a roundtable titled "Policy and Regulatory Challenges in the Private Sector", they warned that bureaucratic inefficiencies, regulatory red tape, and inconsistent policymaking could undermine competitiveness after graduation. The event was the third in a series of discussions organised by The Daily Star to examine private sector challenges and chart a roadmap for the economy.

Speakers stressed the need for streamlined procedures, deregulation of excessive compliance requirements, and policy overhaul to align with international standards. Policy consistency, they said, is critical to fostering investor confidence, both local and foreign, and to attracting

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Afghan quake toll over 1,400

Aid group says 3,124 injured; new quake of magnitude 5.5 shakes devastated region

AGENCIES

The death toll from Afghanistan's most severe earthquake in years rose to over 1,400 yesterday, with thousands more injured, according to an aid group.

Rescue efforts were hampered by the rugged terrain and the remoteness of villages in the country's mountainous eastern region.

At least 1,411 people have died, 3,124 have been injured and over 5,400 houses have been destroyed, said the Afghan Red Crescent Society, a humanitarian group working in the region, adding that more people are feared trapped under rubble.

The UN coordinator in Afghanistan said the toll was likely to rise, as rescuers desperately searched for survivors in the rubble of homes. Meanwhile, an earthquake of magnitude 5.5 shook southeastern Afghanistan yesterday, sparking fears of further damage.

Afghanistan is prone to deadly earthquakes, particularly in the Hindu Kush mountain range, where the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates meet.

The earthquake, with a magnitude of 6, struck around midnight local time on Monday, at a shallow depth of 10 km (6 miles), with the eastern provinces of Kunar and Nangarhar being the worst hit.

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