

We want ASEAN-Bangladesh-China summit on Rohingyas

ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights tells Yunus

UNB, Dhaka

ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR), a platform of former and current lawmakers of Southeast Asian countries, yesterday proposed an international conference involving Bangladesh, China and ASEAN countries to resolve the Rohingya issue.

The APHR made the proposal when a delegation from the advocacy group called on Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus at the Jamuna, his Deputy Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad Majumder said.

“Two things should be done on a priority basis. One is an ASEAN-led effort to raise funds for Rohingyas. The other is a high-level ASEAN-Bangladesh-China political summit to resolve the Rohingya issues,” said Charles Santiago, a former member of the House of Representatives, Malaysia, and co-chairperson of APHR.

Seeking ASEAN co-operation to resolve the Rohingya crisis, the chief adviser reiterated his call for Bangladesh to be included as a member of the regional body.

“We want to be a sectoral dialogue partner of ASEAN. This is one thing we keep repeating. Since we are not part of ASEAN, we cannot bring the issue to ASEAN. It is important for us because the issue needs to be addressed,” said the chief adviser.

The chief adviser also urged APHR to form a new ASEAN parliamentary group and allow Bangladesh to join it as an invitee.

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Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus presents the book “Art of Triumph” to Transparency International Chairperson François Valérien at the state guesthouse Jamuna yesterday.

PHOTO: PTD

VIOLENCE AT CU

Imtiaz clinging on to life in ICU

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

Imtiaz Ahmed, a master's student of the International Relations Department at Chittagong University, has been fighting for his life at the ICU of Parkview Hospital in the port city since Sunday.

He was critically injured during a clash between CU students and villagers on Sunday and was placed under life support after undergoing surgery on his head that night.

Imtiaz's mother, Shahnaj Ameer, shared that she had spoken to him via video call twice on Sunday afternoon during the clash. She called him at 1:38pm and again at 1:56pm, urging him to stay away from the clash. Imtiaz had assured her he was at the university health complex, caring for injured friends. He also spoke to his father at 2:02pm, but after that, his phone became unreachable. About an hour later, a CU teacher, also Imtiaz's cousin, called to inform the family that Imtiaz had been injured and taken to the hospital.

Upon hearing the news, Imtiaz's family rushed to Chattogram that same day and has been outside the ICU clinging to hope that he would recover.

The recovery of another injured student, Mamun Mia, gave some hope to the family.

Mamun, a final-year student of the Sociology Department at CU, was also admitted to the ICU on Sunday and underwent surgery on the head. As his condition improved, doctors decided to move him to a cabin.

Imtiaz's father, Ameer Hossain, expressed helplessness. He said they did not understand treatment matters and hoped the hospital and CU authorities would do their best for his son's recovery.



Global laws

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from countries in the Global South to offshore safe havens and many developed countries where stolen assets are welcomed and legalised by enablers, CA's Press Wing said in a statement.

“Sixteen billion dollars were annually siphoned off from Bangladesh during the autocratic regime,” he noted.

Yunus sharply criticised international banking and financial rules that “make it easy” for looted money to be parked in places like the offshore islands and many rich countries.

Valerian commended the interim government's efforts to recover stolen assets but stressed the need for more effective “international cooperation” and stronger financial regulations to stop money laundering.

“We need stronger international regulations and better enforcement,” Valerian said.

The chief adviser also condemned the “double standards” of some financial institutions for knowingly holding illicit funds.

Yunus urged TI to amplify its voice and help convene an international forum to enact binding international laws to stop stolen billions from finding safe havens.

Iftekharuzzaman, head of TI Bangladesh, said joint advocacy by the Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) and UK chapter of TI had contributed to freezing properties acquired by associates of ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

Lamiya Morshed, senior secretary and coordinator of SDG affairs, was also present at the meeting.

Editors’ Council

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photo, we clearly mention it.”

Referring to the August 28 event at the DRU auditorium, the statement said a group of people suddenly entered and attempted to create a mob-like situation. The DRU later issued a statement condemning the incident, a position the Editors' Council supported.

The council further noted that steps have been taken to implement the Journalist Protection Act. The initiative was originally introduced during the Awami League government. It has been learnt that the interim government has moved to implement the law while keeping many of its provisions unchanged, it said.

The information ministry has sought opinions on the draft from the Editors' Council as well as other organisations.

According to the statement, such moves reflect the mindset of the previous government. “This repetition reminds us of earlier government's interference in independent journalism and unilateral initiatives,” it said.

Seven dead after migrant boat stranded in Med

AFP, Rome

Seven people were lost at sea and 41 others were brought to Italy's Lampedusa island after a migrant boat got into difficulty in the Mediterranean, German NGO Sea-Watch said yesterday.

The survivors, the majority of them Sudanese, had been at sea for six days before landing on Lampedusa late Tuesday. They were rescued by Sea-Watch's ship Aurora after refusing help from the Tunisian authorities, the NGO said.

Fugitives can't run in national elections

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the Anti-Corruption Commission accepts the charges.

The Election Commission had opposed the proposal earlier, arguing that such a provision could be misused and that political consensus was necessary.

At present, anyone convicted of a crime involving moral turpitude and sentenced to at least two years' imprisonment is barred from contesting elections unless five years have passed since their release. Individuals convicted under the Bangladesh Collaborators (Special Tribunals) Order, 1972, are also deemed ineligible.

Regarding the participation of leaders from banned political parties in the upcoming national election, Sanaullah said, “If a political party is prohibited from conducting activities, its leaders will not be able to contest the election under that party's name. As for independent candidates, time will tell how they will participate.”

However, the proposal has drawn mixed reactions from politicians and experts.

Justice MA Matin, a retired judge of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, said a fugitive must first surrender to the court to seek legal protection. Therefore, disqualifying fugitives from contesting elections would not be inconsistent with the law.

Communist Party of Bangladesh General Secretary Ruhin Hossain Prince said it is the right of a citizen to contest polls until proven guilty. “I believe it is entirely unethical to enact laws considering specific individuals or groups. However, those who are convicted should not be allowed to take part in polls.”

Revolutionary Workers Party of Bangladesh General Secretary Saiful Huq said, “It seems to me that this decision has been made based on political considerations. It will not be sustainable and is certainly to be challenged in court.”

Prince and Saiful said that the “No Vote” option should be on the ballot in all constituencies.

PROPOSED CHANGES
“The commission will be able to take action against candidates who submit false information in their affidavits,” Sanaullah told reporters.

“The Election Commission will be able to take action following the investigation. Even if the candidate is elected, the individual concerned may be recalled from office at any time during their five-year term,” he added.

EC officials said the reintroduction of the “No Vote” option will ensure that nobody is elected uncontested. The option was last available in the 2008 polls, when about 3,82,000 voters chose it.

During the one-sided 2014 election, 153 of 300 lawmakers were elected unopposed, as most of the opposition, including the BNP, boycotted the election.

Earlier, 49 candidates nominated by the then-ruling BNP were elected uncontested in the February 15, 1996, election, which was boycotted by the Awami League, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami, and other parties.

In the event of a tie between two candidates, a re-election will be held. The previous provision of deciding tied results was by lottery.

The amendment also recognised the army, navy, air force, and coast guard as law enforcement agencies during elections. Officials said that once armed forces members are defined as law enforcers, the EC will not need any additional order

to deploy them for election duties. Members of the forces will also have the power to arrest offenders.

Provisions have been included in the proposal to take action against candidates, political parties, and organisations if they use artificial intelligence or similar technologies to spread misinformation or defame someone.

The EC also proposed that the president and members of the managing committee of any educational institution located in the relevant constituency be disqualified from running in national elections.

Candidates will be required to submit details of their sources of income, at home and abroad, along with a statement of assets and liabilities for themselves and their dependents.

It has also proposed making it mandatory to submit a copy of the income tax return along with the nomination paper.

The commission proposed raising the nomination deposit to Tk 50,000, up from the current Tk 20,000.

Moreover, candidates will be allowed to spend up to Tk 10 per voter, with a maximum ceiling of Tk 25 lakh for electioneering.

According to the new proposal, political parties receiving donations above Tk 5,000 will be required to inform the commission and the information would be upload to the EC websites.

Other key proposals include: candidates contesting under an alliance must use the symbol of their own party; nomination papers cannot be submitted online and must be filed in person; and polling agents of a candidate must be residents of the same constituency.

Mohammadpur, Adabor

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still called “teen gangs”, as most started young.

Over the past years, they have grown from petty extortionists into extensions of Dhaka's underworld, intelligence sources said.

Leaders change frequently, but the pattern remains the same – every arrest opens the way for a new leader, often more violent than the last, they added.

Locals alleged the gangs also switch political patrons whenever necessary, seeking shelter from whoever is in power.

Khalidul Haq Hawlader, commanding officer of Rab-2, said since August 5, 2024, they arrested 884 suspects in Mohammadpur and Adabor, most linked to teen gangs.

“We identified at least 20 groups, with Kobji Kata Anwar's and Tunda Babu's outfits being the most powerful. Some gangs have 20-30 members, others as many as 60. Many have been arrested multiple times, only to return on bail and resume extortion with even more aggression,” he told The Daily Star.

“We see the same faces arrested two or three times. Once freed, they return stronger. We are trying our best to track and detain them,” Khalidul added.

Out of 20, nine gangs are largely active in Mohammadpur and Adabor. Besides Anwar's “Kobji Kata Group”, the gangs include “Killer Arman Group”, “Tunda Babu Group”, “Boma Group”, “Gittha Group”, “Kosai Group”, “Pataly Group”, “Bunia Sohel Group”, and “Arshad aka Ayesha Group”.

Md Shamsuddoha Sumon, additional public prosecutor of Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrates' Court, observed that the teen gang members often get bail because of a lack of specific complaints in the first information reports.

“Besides, victims of the incidents related to teen gangs are hard to reach in many cases, and police also fail to produce strong evidence,” added Sumon.

SM Jakaria, officer in charge of Adabor Police Station, however, dismissed the allegation, saying, “We properly produce the accused with substantiated evidence. We do not know how the teen gang members get bail.”

In the latest instance of teen gang brutality, a police team came under attack on Monday night. A constable is undergoing treatment at the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases after being hacked that night.

The attackers also vandalised a police vehicle.

Locals said Roni and Jony, the siblings who now lead the “Kobji Kata Group” in Anwar's absence, masterminded the attack. The pair, along with their

associate Tushar, have been in charge since Anwar – also known as “Shooter Anwar” – was arrested by the Rab in February.

Police said the incident took place after a 999 call reported a young man and a woman being held hostage inside a garage in Adabor's Sunibir Housing. When police reached the spot, Roni, Jony and their followers attacked them with sharp weapons.

Following the incident, police launched a drive in the area and detained 102 suspects and recovered weapons and motorcycles.

Last night, DMP said main suspects Jony, 24, and Roni, 27, were arrested along with seven other members of the gang from Keraniganj and Savar early in the morning over the attack on police. Two sharp weapons were also recovered.

“They are involved in criminal activities like attacks on police, extortion, mugging, clashes, drug abuse, eve-teasing, abduction, demanding ransom and forceful occupation of properties,” the statement said.

Sources said the gang also attacked Nabinagar Housing in Mohammadpur and stormed two rickshaw garages the same night it assaulted police.

Rashed, the owner of one of the garages, said the attackers looted two rickshaws, hacked the garage manager and took away Tk 3,000 for refusing to pay extortion.

Kazi Rafique, OC of Mohammadpur Police Station, said they were not aware of the incident. Garage owner Rashed said he did not inform the police because he was out of Dhaka.

Beyond petty extortion and ransom, gang influence now extends into big land and property dealings.

A businessman from Mohammadpur said he bought a plot for Tk 3 crore three years ago. At the time, he paid Tk 10 lakh to a gang. Recently, the same men switched allegiance to another group and demanded another Tk 10 lakh.

“This is what terrifies us. No matter what happens, the threats remain. I already paid once, now they are demanding again,” he said, requesting anonymity.

Several other property owners and businessmen from Mohammadpur and nearby areas shared similar stories of repeated extortion under shifting gang-political alliances.

Ibne Mizan, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Tejgaon Division, said, “Our operations often lead to the arrest of gang leaders. But we often hear new names from arrestees.”

“These teen gang members are mainly floating and have no permanent address, which is why it becomes difficult to trace them. But rest assured, we will bring them all to justice.”

Revisions done

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The earlier drafts of the charter were not split into two volumes.

Prof Riaz confirmed that the implementation process will not be included in the charter itself. “After getting feedback from political parties on how they want to implement the charter, and after consulting legal experts, we will submit our recommendations on the implementation process to the government.” He added that the commission will not extend its tenure beyond September 15 – its set deadline.

In a related development, Prof Riaz met with law adviser Asif Nazrul to discuss the finalisation of the charter yesterday.

A source within the commission said Prof Riaz briefed the adviser about the recommendations made by political parties regarding the charter's implementation. Some parties suggested mechanisms such as public assembly, referendum, constitutional reform session, presidential decree, or ordinances as ways to implement the charter.

The commission also held its own meeting yesterday to review the recommendations received so far and

finalise the charter.

About the delay in finalisation, a commission member, wishing anonymity, said not all political parties had submitted feedback yet, though some are expected to do so today.

The commission is set to meet around 3:00pm today, after which the final charter is expected to be sent to the political parties.

Prof Riaz said a public programme will be organised where the parties will sign the charter. To finalise the July Charter, the commission held informal meetings with 28 political parties and sought their opinions on the methods and procedures of implementation. So far, 26 have responded.

Following the fall of the Awami League-led government in August last year, the interim government initially formed six commissions to recommend basic reforms.

Later, Chief Adviser Prof Yunus constituted the Consensus Commission, comprising the heads of those reform commissions, with the task of preparing the July Charter through dialogue and consensus among political parties, to serve as a blueprint for future governance.