

Perform

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“Through this election, the path for the nation’s future century will be determined. The DCs have an extremely important role, and there can be no margin for error.”

Speaking at the Chief Adviser’s Office, Yunus urged the DCs to fully understand the electoral process and ensure the polls are conducted in a peaceful, celebratory manner.

He highlighted the importance of young and female voters, many of whom have been unable to exercise their voting rights over the past 15 years.

“This is a massive campaign, and we must win. As an independent nation, our survival depends on success in this endeavour.”

Warning the DCs, the chief adviser said once the work begins in the districts, each DC will be evaluated based on their performance and given grades – A, B, C, or D. Attention will be given to how each DC performs in the respective district, as it is not enough to simply hold an election somehow. People must feel that the election is free, fair, and credible. Those DCs who are found incapable of conducting the polls to the expected standard will be removed from their responsibilities, he said.

Calling the upcoming election a “tough mission”, Yunus told the DCs, “You will also grade your subordinates. If someone cannot do the job, remove them; keep the ones who can.... there is no chance to win by messing around.”

The DCs still have the chance to mention if they have any problems, Yunus said.

“If any DC feels there is a difficulty, then say it now, tell us to move you somewhere else. Someone may have limitations ... But those who will go to the field from today must take an oath that we will conduct this historic election.”

He said, “Those of you going to the field must clearly understand how the referendum will be organised. If you cannot properly understand it yourselves, how will you explain it to your colleagues? And how will they deliver that information to the ordinary people?”

Sources present at the meeting said the chief adviser also expressed concern that some people may cause trouble during the election by posing as media workers.

“They will try to create problems. You [DCs] must plan in advance how to handle them.

“These troublemakers are not alone. Just like law-enforcement officers have bodycams, they also have bodycams. They will try to create chaos in a planned way and spread it across the world. So, they should not be taken lightly. There are powerful people behind them,” said Yunus.

“The whole world has seen that we carried out a mass uprising. Now they are watching what we do next. We must do justice to the expectations of those who risked their lives to make this uprising successful. Only then will our efforts succeed.”

After the meeting, The Daily Star spoke to at least three divisional commissioners and DCs.

They said they are going to the field with the courage they received from the chief adviser. They also hope to get the government’s support in any situation that may arise in the field.

Cabinet Secretary Sheikh Abdur Rashid chaired the meeting, which was attended by Planning Adviser Wahiduddin Mahmud, Home Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, Public Works Adviser Adilur Rahman Khan, and Law Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul.

Arson, crude bomb

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In Narayanganj’s Fatullah, miscreants set fire to a parked bus around 2:00am. “The driver and his helper were sleeping inside. They woke up from the heat and somehow managed to get out,” said Fatullah Model Police Station Officer-in-Charge Anowar Hossain.

Inside the Dhaka metropolitan area, a mini-truck was torched on Mohammadpur’s Babar Road around 6:00am, said fire service duty officer Rozina Akter.

A parked bus in Merul Badda was also set on fire around 12:00am, confirmed Banani Police Station OC Rasel Sarwar.

He further confirmed two crude bomb explosions near Titumir College and in Mohakhali between 2:00am-2:30am.

Amid the violence, the Detective Branch of police arrested 25 leaders and activists of AL and its affiliated organisations in the capital in 24 hours till yesterday morning, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Talebur Rahman said.

Narayanganj police also arrested 15 other AL activists.

Meanwhile, a group of 100-150 people vandalised the home of the brother of former Dhaka-18 MP Mohammad Habib Hasan, and set a vehicle on fire in Uttara Sector-14 yesterday afternoon.

Protesters try to demolish Mujib’s house

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suspended for hours in the afternoon, while most shops closed their shutters.

Witnesses said over 100 demonstrators from the Dhaka College area began gathering near Dhanmondi-32 around 11:30am with two diggers to dismantle the house’s remains.

Later, army personnel arrived on the spot.

The demonstrators chanted slogans and tried to break through a police barricade around 1:00pm, when police and army jointly charged truncheons and chased them away.

They then regrouped at the Panthapath intersection and threw brick chunks at law enforcers, injuring two. Police responded with truncheons and sound grenades to drive the group away.

After the International Crimes Tribunal delivered its verdict against

deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, the demonstrators celebrated. Around 2:45pm, law enforcers were forced to pull back amid pressure from the demonstrators.

About 20 minutes later, army, police and Rab began using truncheons and sound grenades again, bringing the area back under control.

Some agitators regrouped near Square Hospitals on Panthapath, prompting the law enforcers to fire teargas shells.

Blocking streets, they set fire to debris at several spots.

The repeated chase-and-counter-chase and frequent use of sound grenades near hospitals and on surrounding streets caused panic among locals, patients and their relatives.

By evening, the demonstrators took positions at several points on Mirpur Road, including near Russell

Square and Metro Shopping Mall.

Law enforcers kept barricades in front of the house to prevent anyone from entering the site.

Around 7:00pm, a police pickup and a microbus came under attack as the demonstrators hurled brick chunks at the vehicles.

Around 8:45pm, a fresh chase-and-counter-chase occurred between the law enforcers and the demonstrators. Tension ran high, and traffic on both sides of the road was brought to a halt.

The situation eventually returned to normal and around 10:30pm, traffic moved smoothly, though many law enforcers remained there.

Around 11:00pm, the authorities closed the Dhanmondi-32 road. A large number of Rab and BGB members were also deployed.

In February, a group of agitators gathered in front of the house and knocked down parts of it using diggers.

any foreign company,” it said.

“We strongly reject any attempt to transfer the country’s strategic assets through secret discussions or agreements without the knowledge of the people.”

Meanwhile, under the separate agreement for Pangoan, Medlog SA, a subsidiary of Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC), will expand the terminal to support growing regional trade.

CPA Chairman Rear Admiral SM Moniruzzaman and MEDLOG Bangladesh Managing Director ATM Anisul Millat signed the agreement.

Millat said the project, leveraging MEDLOG’s operational expertise and technology, would stimulate trade, strengthen supply chain resilience, and elevate Bangladesh’s logistics sector to a globally competitive level.

The terminal’s annual handling capacity is expected to increase by 160,000 TEUs. To strengthen multimodal transport, MEDLOG will charter inland barges from PICT to connect Pangoan with other river terminals and seaports, officials said.

up control of the Awami League, the party is unlikely to be allowed back into the political arena.”

A spate of recent bombings and the Awami League’s call for a “lockdown” have put the country on edge as it nears much-anticipated national elections scheduled for February 2026, he said.

“The Awami League should desist from acts of violence, and the interim government must avoid heavy-handed crackdowns against party supporters.”

Kean also said the trial process has not been without critics. “In absentia trials are often a source of contention, and in this case the speed with which the hearings were conducted and the apparent lack of resources for the defence also raise questions of fairness.”

These criticisms reflect longstanding challenges within Bangladesh’s criminal justice system, which the country’s interim government has not done enough to address since it came to office in August 2024, he said.

“But they should not be used to downplay or deflect from Sheikh Hasina’s actions, or indeed those of the Awami League leadership or parts of the security forces.”

said the ministry would formally send a follow-up letter to New Delhi seeking the extradition of Hasina and Kamal.

In December last year, the ministry sent a letter to India in this regard.

“We will officially communicate our position to India. Whether the letter goes tonight or tomorrow, it will certainly go,” he told reporters at the foreign ministry.

Asked what has changed after the verdict, the adviser said, “Now the situation is different ... the judicial process has been completed and they have been convicted.”

Touhid said the request will be made under the existing extradition treaty with India.

Asked whether New Delhi is legally bound to send back the convicts under the treaty, he said the matter falls under legal interpretation. “What I understand is that we need to bring her back as the court has delivered its verdict,” he said.

On what Dhaka would do if India refuses to hand over the former PM, he said, “We will address that situation when it arises.”

Meanwhile, India’s Ministry of External Affairs said it had “noted” the verdict against Hasina.

“As a close neighbour, India remains committed to the best interests of the people of Bangladesh, including in peace, democracy, inclusion and stability in that country,” read the statement.

Evidence strong

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Al Mamun. On the basis of this evidence alone, a conviction appears reasonable.

However, the in-absentia nature of the trial of both Sheikh Hasina and former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal was problematic.

With Hasina and Kamal deemed fugitives, the court appointed a defence lawyer, one with no experience in international criminal law, a field requiring highly specialised expertise.

He was also tasked with representing both accused simultaneously, an impossible burden even for the most capable lawyer. The interests of the two defendants could easily diverge, making dual representation inherently conflicted. Operating in a hostile political environment, the defence counsel ultimately carried out only the bare minimum expected of him.

The trial began just five weeks after he received the prosecution’s evidence – a time insufficient to prepare an adequate defence for two clients facing five charges of crimes against humanity. Any competent lawyer would have sought an adjournment; yet no such request was made.

His cross-examination of witnesses was perfunctory and unprepared. His task was further complicated by the prosecution’s insistence, accepted by the judge, that a previous Appellate Division decision relating to earlier International Crimes Tribunal cases prevented him from questioning witnesses about discrepancies between their courtroom testimony and prior statements given to investigators.

The defence lawyer claimed that the intercepted telephone conversations attributed to Hasina were “AI generated”. If he genuinely believed this, and Hasina herself publicly denied ever giving an order to use lethal force, he should have arranged independent forensic analysis.

Rather than making an unsubstantiated assertion that the calls were fabricated, he should have rigorously challenged the prosecution’s interpretation of them.

For example, in an intercepted call with Dhaka University Vice Chancellor ASM Maksud Kamal on July 14, Hasina is heard saying, “They want to become Razakars, all of them [are happily chanting that they] are Razakars. What a strange country we

live in. [...] I’ve hanged Razakars; now I’ll do the same to them. I won’t spare a single one, I’m telling you”.

The prosecution characterised this as an order to execute protesters. A competent defence would have questioned both the context and the meaning of these remarks, arguing that these were not operational commands, but rather her angrily venting to a political ally.

Moreover, at no point in the conversation did she state that an order had been given to “hang” the protesters, contrary to the prosecution’s suggestion. The only order she mentioned was about expelling students from the university.

The defence failed to make even these basic arguments.

While stronger evidence exists of a lethal-force order on July 18, any responsible defence lawyer would have argued that no such order existed prior to that date.

Although much of the former IGP’s testimony supported the prosecution, it is notable that he did not claim to have heard any order for lethal force directly from Hasina; rather, he heard of it indirectly from the former home minister. Yet, the defence failed to cross-examine him on this critical point.

The defence called no witnesses, not even to contest the broad historical and political allegations made by the chief prosecutor concerning the Awami League’s period in power between 1972–75 and 2008–2024.

A weak defence meant that it was up to the judges to provide independent scrutiny. Instead, the adopted the prosecution’s case wholesale.

While the conviction of Hasina and Kamal can be justified based on evidence, the trial process itself was flawed, no better than the in-absentia trial of Abul Kamal Azad in 2013 for crimes committed during the 1971 Liberation War.

Some observers had previously advised this government that if it intended to conduct in-absentia trials, it needed to strengthen the law to ensure defendants received more robust rights and a competent defence. Although the government introduced other improvements to the ICT Act-2006, it left the provisions on in-absentia prosecutions unchanged.

(The author is an investigative journalist who has worked for Bangladeshi and British newspapers.)

Jubo Dal leader shot dead in Pallabi shop

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Kibria was declared dead after being taken to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital.

Maksedur Rahman, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police’s Mirpur division, told The Daily Star that a suspect was detained and an investigation was underway.

He said they were analysing the CCTV footage to identify the killers, adding that the motive behind the murder could not be determined immediately. The attackers also shot rickshaw-puller Md Arif while fleeing.

Piarul Islam, a pedestrian who took the victim to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said Arif was on the street between Section-C and Section-A in Pallabi when two men approached and asked him to take them on his rickshaw.

The attackers asked the rickshaw-puller to speed up. When he hesitated, one of them fired a shot and fled.

Arif was taken to the hospital around 9:15pm with a gunshot wound to his back, said Md Faruk, in-charge of the hospital’s police outpost.

Upon hearing the news of Kibria, leaders and activists of BNP and its affiliated bodies gathered at the Suhrawardy hospital.

Kibria’s wife Sabiha Dina, who rushed to the hospital with their two daughters, told this newspaper

that she did not know whether her husband had any enmity with anyone.

Jalal, an assistant to Kibria, said the Bikrampur Sanitary shop is owned by Kibria’s friend Masud, and that Kibria often visited the shop. He added that Kibria was active in politics. Sharifuddin Jewel, convener of Jubo Dal’s north unit, said they were unaware of any enmity with Kibria and questioned why the killing occurred on the day of the ICT verdict.

Witnesses said six men on three motorcycles arrived at the scene, and three of them, wearing helmets, entered the shop.

CCTV footage shows that within two or three seconds of Kibria entering the shop, the three attackers followed him inside and began shooting. One of them was wearing a panjabi, while the other two wore shirts. All three had helmets on and masks covering their faces.

There were nine people in the shop at the time. As the attackers opened fire on Kibria, the others fled in fear.

Sources at Suhrawardy hospital morgue said Kibria’s body had 15 bullet wounds.

The killing took place just days after listed criminal Tariq Saif Mamun was shot dead in broad daylight, only yards from Dhaka’s busiest court area.

Ethiopia reports three Marburg virus deaths

AFP, Addis Ababa
Three people have died from the Marburg virus in Ethiopia, the Ministry of Health said yesterday, less than a week after an outbreak was declared.

The Marburg virus is one of the deadliest known pathogens. Like Ebola, it causes severe bleeding, fever, vomiting, and diarrhoea and has a 21-day incubation period.

Also like Ebola, it is transmitted via contact with bodily fluids and has a fatality rate of between 25 and 80 percent.

The outbreak – the first ever recorded in Ethiopia – was confirmed

in the city of Jinka, about 430 kilometres (211 miles) southwest of capital Addis Ababa, and a few hundred kilometres from South Sudan and Kenya’s borders.

The ministry said on Facebook that “17 suspected cases have been tested, and 3 deaths have been confirmed as caused by the virus.”

Three other individuals who exhibited symptoms but whose cases were not laboratory confirmed also died, the ministry said.

Health authorities in Africa’s second most populous nation said “129 people who had contact with the patients are currently in self-isolation and under close monitoring.”