

'A non-serious proposition'

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system and a few helpless NGOs being sent around the country to persuade people to vote 'yes' for reforms," he said.

He said the interim government wants to oblige the July uprising leaders and thus a cosmetic arrangement has been created.

"But the objective reality is that until you have a government in office for the next five years, capable of carrying out reforms, and until you can evaluate the quality and sincerity of their implementation, reforms do not truly take place."

Prof Sobhan said political settlement requires the main players coming to an understanding over the rules of the game, identifying the principal players and also those who can disrupt it and then finding ways to re-accommodate them within the political system.

"Unfortunately, at the moment, you have blackwashed – or whitewashed – one of the players completely out of

the game," Prof Sobhan said, referring to the banning of Awami League's activities.

Mahfuj Alam, leader of the July uprising and former adviser to the interim government, said he was in favour of reconciling with the Awami League and holding accountable the ones responsible for massive crimes.

The core objective of the anti-discrimination movement was transforming the entire state system, Mahfuj said, but added that the vision could not be fully communicated to the audience supporting the uprising, particularly the students.

The major resistance to reforms came from the civil-military bureaucracy, he said, adding that the reform efforts in these areas "failed disastrously".

Mahfuj said building consensus among political parties proved to be a major challenge.

Although there was ideological unity during the uprising, a subsequent

shift toward one side of the political spectrum created a trust deficit among stakeholders, he said, adding that part of the civil society became critical of the government because of violent activities.

Naomi Hossain, a professor of Development Studies at SOAS University of London, said she expected the next government to recognise political violence as a critical problem for Bangladesh.

"That means removing the impunity of incumbent power to commit violence and reducing the incentives for violence to be part of political competition. Until that changes, I don't see how we can truly consolidate democracy or move forward."

In an earlier session, Prof Ali Riaz, special assistant to the chief adviser, said civil society had "completely failed" after the uprising and would "fail another round" when the next opportunity arises.

He said it adopted a self-declared apolitical posture

that ultimately aligned it with partisan interests.

Prof Riaz said the interim government lacked the political command to control the state apparatus, allowing the bureaucracy to regain dominance, while the "ancient regime" remained embedded in state structures.

"You are asking them [the bureaucracy] to support you while telling them their authority will be reduced. Why would they?"

Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, rejected Prof Riaz's characterisation of civil society and said their actions since July were political by nature.

"All the protests, all the statements that we have made so far are all political," Shaheen said, adding that civil society took positions against discrimination because it believed the interim government had a mandate to protect inclusivity.

Mirza M Hasan, a senior research fellow at BIGD, said the post-uprising period should be read as what

Antonio Gramsci called a "time of monsters", when the old order is dying but the new has not yet been born.

Sayed Ferdous, a professor at Jahangirnagar University, said student leaders who initially appeared as "superheroes" or "mavericks" were quickly absorbed into the system.

"In their minds, they too became small autocrats," he said, adding that marginalised groups remained among the worst affected despite promises of ending discrimination.

Prof Samina Luthfa of Dhaka University said the political transition that followed was shaped largely by elite negotiations rather than grassroots control.

She said student leaders who had mobilised people on the streets gradually moved closer to formal power, weakening ties with supporters.

The rapid move to form a political party, she added, left little space for internal debate on ideology, goals and organisation, she added.

981 hurt in polls-related violence since Oct last year

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Khandoker Rafiqul Islam, additional inspector general (crime and operations) at Police Headquarters, told The Daily Star that election-time violence is not new and urged people not to treat it as something unusual.

"It is unfortunate," he said, adding that Bangladesh has often failed to move beyond a culture of confrontation during elections.

Rafiqul said police, other law enforcement agencies and returning officers are trying to bring rival sides to the table and ensure that the electoral code of conduct is followed.

But he said many people do not heed advice and act with "other agendas".

Referring to the Sherpur killing, he said a manifesto-reading programme that should have been orderly

turned into chair throwing, clashes and, eventually, a death.

Rafiqul said police tried to move the groups in different directions, but tensions continued for hours as the sides stayed close to one another.

He said cases have been filed against those responsible.

Tawohidul Haque, an associate professor at Dhaka University's Institute of Social Welfare and Research, however, said the measures taken by law enforcement agencies on the ground were "very weak".

He said the Election Commission is only issuing verbal warnings, with no visible steps on the field.

Tawohidul said political parties also bear responsibility, as public expectations of political leaders and activists after the

July uprising have not been reflected in their conduct.

"They are behaving violently as before," he said.

An analysis of reported incidents since January 22 shows that most clashes have taken place between the BNP-led alliance and the Jamaat-led alliance.

In recent days, election-related clashes were reported in at least seven places, including Dhaka, Faridpur, Cumilla, Shariatpur, Sherpur, Pabna, Chattogram and Bhola.

HRSS said several women activists faced attacks, beatings and humiliation while campaigning in different districts, as political vendettas spilt onto the streets.

Such acts undermine women's political participation and interfere with civic and voting rights,

personal freedom and freedom of expression, it said.

A high official at Police Headquarters told The Daily Star that their analysis of recent violence found clashes were fuelled by rumours, offensive posts and provocative information on Facebook, alongside local disputes.

"We reviewed such information and took necessary measures," the official said.

Meanwhile, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam yesterday said, "We hope the coming days will be much better. With the gradual deployment of security forces, the situation will further improve."

Responding to a question while briefing journalists at the Foreign Service Academy, Shafiqul said political parties

have so far shown restraint and tolerance while carrying out election campaigns.

Noting that according to police data, four people have been killed so far since the formal election campaign began on January 22, he said, "If you compare this with previous elections, though it is tough to reach a conclusion as two weeks are still left to the polls, you will see that 115 people were killed before the elections on January 5, 2014."

"In that reality, we believe there is still a sufficient level of tolerance among the political parties. They are campaigning in a good manner, and they are abiding by electoral laws and following the code of conduct," the press secretary said.

He, however, acknowledged that "a few isolated incidents" have taken place.

Two ordinances to protect women, kids in all spaces

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It strictly prohibits any form of retaliatory action for filing a complaint and includes provisions to address such behaviour, said the press release.

At the same time, the ordinance incorporates specific safeguards to ensure fairness in cases of false complaints, so that genuine victims are not discouraged from coming forward.

If forming an ICC is not feasible, the ordinance provides for the establishment of local complaint committees through deputy commissioners and upazila

nirbahi officers, ensuring that citizens still have an effective channel to lodge complaints.

To ensure effective implementation, monitoring committees will be established at both district and upazila levels. In addition, a special fund will be created to support victims with financial assistance, rehabilitation, counselling, legal aid and awareness-building initiatives.

The draft ordinance has four chapters and 20 sections, said Suchismita Tithi, assistant press secretary, at a press briefing

yesterday. "One important aspect is that the draft includes physical, verbal, mental, suggestive and digital-space behaviour as sexual harassment."

A women-led committee will be able to receive complaints verbally, in writing or online and the investigation must be completed within 90 days of receiving the complaint.

The ordinance considers providing security and mental support to the complainant and includes special provisions separately for children and persons with disabilities,

she added.

Also at yesterday's advisory council meeting chaired by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus, the draft Domestic Violence Prevention Ordinance, 2026 and nine other ordinances, proposals and policies were approved.

The draft Domestic Violence Prevention Ordinance 2026, which will replace the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2010, aims to protect women and children, prevent domestic abuse, ensure speedy trials and establish survivor-centric

remedies. It introduces a more comprehensive and timely legal framework, broadens the definition of domestic violence to include physical and psychological abuse, sexual conduct or abuse and economic abuse within its scope.

The ordinance seeks to uphold families as safe and secure spaces while ensuring swift protection for women and children who faced such abuse, their safe shelter, medical care, legal aid and rehabilitation, according to the press release from the CA's Press Wing.

No legal bar on NCT deal with DP World

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for awarding the contract for operation and maintenance of NCT was in accordance with the 2017 Procurement Policy, which allows for direct selection or appointment when implementing projects.

The law, which vests the relevant authority with the power, was not challenged in this case, the HC bench said.

The writ petition is premature as no work order has been issued, it added.

Following the SC chamber judge's order, there is no legal bar for the government to initiate the process of awarding the contract to DP World for

container handling at NCT, Aneek R Haque, additional attorney general, told The Daily Star.

The government and Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) are close to finalising the procedures of signing a concession agreement with UAE-based DP World for the operation and maintenance of NCT under a public-private partnership (PPP).

The matter is still sub judice, so the government cannot go ahead with the deal, Md Anwar Hossen, a lawyer for the writ petitioner, told The Daily Star.

The apex chamber judge has asked the Bangladesh

Jubo Arthanitibid Forum to file a leave to appeal petition with the SC against the HC verdict after receiving the certified copy, he said.

Details of the HC verdict will be known once its full text is released.

The CPA in coordination with the PPP Authority and shipping ministry is close to finalising the deal procedures, The Daily Star has learnt from people involved with the proceedings.

The government recently revised the timeline targeting the first week of February for completing the deal signing, they said.

On January 20, the CPA formed a 10-member

sub-committee to assist the seven-member tender evaluation committee regarding the appointment of a private operator for NCT.

Senior CPA officials including the project director and the evaluation committee members are working in Dhaka for the last few days to complete the technical and financial evaluation of the bid submitted by DP World.

Meanwhile, leaders and activists of Chattogram Bandar Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal and former Chattogram Port CBA yesterday announced an eight-hour work abstention on Saturday and Sunday

demanding the cancellation of the proposed deal.

They threatened tougher movement like collapsing the port operations from Monday unless the government changes its decision.

They also brought out a protest procession in front of the Bandar Bhaban (administrative building of Chattogram port) around 12:00pm. A section of port employees joined the procession that paraded through the premises.

At one stage, they entered the administrative building and staged a demonstration chanting slogans like 'Go Back DP World'.

Set up one commission for media, not two

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the government was sincere in drafting the two ordinances, adding that a legal framework is essential for independent journalism.

"For this, we want to complete these media-related ordinances even though we have a limited time left," she said.

Kamal Ahmed, head of the Media Reform Commission, argued that there should be only one commission for the media. He said the government

could enact a separate law for broadcasting, but the oversight body should remain unified.

"The way the commission is proposed in the current draft, it will just become another department under the information ministry, rather than an independent commission," he said.

Matiur Rahman Chowdhury, chief editor of Daily Manab Zamin, said, "I feel afraid whenever I hear about laws because I don't believe in control."

He said the law should not be rushed and that more time is needed, adding that there is no guarantee a future political government would accept it.

Obaidur Rahman Shahin, president of the Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ), pointed out that many key stakeholders were absent from the meeting. He said the laws should be drafted only after consultations with all stakeholders, instead of being rushed.

After the meeting, Rizwana told reporters that there was a general consensus on formulating an ordinance.

Responding to concerns that the process was being hurried, she said, "This hasn't happened in 54 years. We believe it is better late than never. This will improve the quality of journalism."

Regarding the absence of key stakeholders, she said many might have missed the meeting as it

was called with only one day's notice. "We will talk to them later," she added.

The meeting was attended by Fayeze Ahmad Taiyeb, special assistant to the chief adviser; Mahbuba Farjana, secretary of the information and broadcasting ministry; Prof Gitara Nasreen of Dhaka University; Shahidul Islam, president of the Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ); and representatives of various online media organisations.

Hasina, Kamal, 6 others charged

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earlier that month.

Police officials later claimed that "nine militants" were killed in a joint counter-terrorism operation, codenamed Storm 26, after hours of gunfire and grenade explosions.

Law enforcers said they recovered a large cache of explosives, firearms and knives, along with black flags and clothing bearing symbols commonly associated with the Islamic State. They also claimed the group was likely affiliated with the banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh.

According to officials, an injured suspect detained hours earlier provided crucial intelligence that enabled the operation. The militants were described as young and educated, with possible links to earlier high-profile attacks, including the Holey Artisan Bakery siege.

Placing the formal charge yesterday, prosecutor Gazi Monwar Hossain Tami told the tribunal that the operation was staged and that the victims – madrasa students and religious youths – had

been illegally detained, forcibly disappeared and later killed.

Eight of the victims were identified as Motaleb alias Abdullah; Raihan alias Raihanul Kabir alias Tarek; Matiur Rahman; Md Jubayer Hossain; Sejad Rauf alias Orko; Taj Ul Haque alias Rashik; Abu Hakim alias Naim; and Akifuzzaman Khan. The other remains unidentified.

According to the prosecution, the youths were picked up from different parts of the country, held at secret detention facilities run by DMP's Detective Branch, CTTC and other units, and later confined at the Jahaj Building under the guise of a "block raid".

Tamim alleged that members of CTTC's SWAT team opened fire on the detainees shortly after midnight on July 26, killing nine of them and critically injuring Md Rakibul Hasan alias Rigen.

A false case was later filed to legitimise the operation, while a fabricated seizure list was prepared on the instruction of Monirul Islam, the prosecutor said. He further alleged that

the crimes were committed with the instruction, consent and knowledge of the accused, including Hasina, Kamal, Shahidul Hoque and Asaduzzaman Mia. Other accused senior officers were present at the scene and supervised.

At a press briefing on July 26, 2016, Asaduzzaman Mia had presented the deceased as militants.

The charges also note that Hasina and Kamal allegedly awarded officers involved in the operation with the Bangladesh Police Medal and President's Police Medal.

Tamim said the allegations disclose prima facie offences of murder, abduction, enforced disappearance, confinement, torture, conspiracy, abetment and other inhumane acts under the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973.

After hearing the charges, the three-member tribunal ordered the authorities concerned to produce the accused already in custody before it and to arrest and produce the remaining accused in the next hearing fixed for February 8.

They walk out of jail without bail

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case filed with Tarakanada Police Station.

The release occurred after a "production warrant" was mistakenly treated as a bail order.

Meanwhile, Zakaria Intiaz, a deputy jailer of Mymensingh Central

Jail, has been suspended in connection with the incident, he said.

"Zakaria Intiaz told us that the accused were mistakenly released due to a lack of caution," Touhidul said.

A three-member probe committee was formed

today to investigate the matter and will submit its report within three working days, the DIG prison said.

The committee will determine the exact cause, and legal action will be taken against those responsible, he added.

Tiny shoes that'll never be worn

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"When I reached inside the hole, he held my hand for a while," Mim says in a trembling voice.

"I kept shouting for help. But I couldn't save my brother."

Mim, a class three student, says Misbah often wanted to go to school with her.

"He was too small, so I couldn't take him," she says softly. "I thought I would take him next year."

This correspondent saw that the uncovered pit was just 20 to 25 feet from the house and five feet away from a tubewell used by the family and neighbours.

Overgrown weeds had concealed the pit for years. After clearing the bushes only recently, it became exposed, turning into a

deadly trap for unsuspecting playful children.

Firefighters recovered Misbah after a four-hour rescue operation around 8:30pm.

Inside the small home, allotted under the Ashrayan project, silence hangs heavy. The father, Saiful Alam, a day labourer, is in tears in one room. In the other room, neighbours try to console Misbah's mother.

The family of four used to sleep in the same room. "I thought having a daughter and a son was enough. No matter how poor we are, I wanted to educate them both."

Neighbour Ismail Hossain says the incident should not be dismissed as an accident. "These houses and tube wells were

built under a government project. Leaving an abandoned pit open like this is criminal negligence. Those responsible must be identified and held accountable."

Raozan Upazila Nirbahi Officer SM Rahatul Islam told The Daily Star that a three-member investigation committee, headed by Upazila Engineer Abul Kalam, has been formed to determine responsibility.

The committee has been asked to submit its report within seven working days. "If negligence is found, action will be taken," he said.

Back at the house, Mim clutches the bucket with her brother's clothes. Gone is the simple dream of walking to school together.

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১. প্রকল্প পরিচালকের কার্যালয়, "অর্থনৈতিক জীবনচক্র হারানো রাবার গাছ কর্তন, পুনঃবাপান সূজন ও রাবার প্রক্রিয়াকরণ আধুনিকায়ন" শীর্ষক প্রকল্প, বিএফআইডিসি, সদর দপ্তর, "বনশিল্প ভবন", ৭৩, মতিঝিল বা/এ, ঢাকা।
২. মহাব্যবস্থাপকের কার্যালয়, বিএফআইডিসি, রাবার বিভাগ, সিলেট জোন, ত্রিশাকলা।

দরপত্র দাখিলের স্থান

১. প্রকল্প পরিচালকের কার্যালয়, "অর্থনৈতিক জীবনচক্র হারানো রাবার গাছ কর্তন, পুনঃবাপান সূজন ও রাবার প্রক্রিয়াকরণ আধুনিকায়ন" শীর্ষক প্রকল্প, বিএফআইডিসি, সদর দপ্তর, "বনশিল্প ভবন", ৭৩, মতিঝিল বা/এ, ঢাকা।
২. ব্যবস্থাপকের কার্যালয়, বিএফআইডিসি, ইটালি উড ওয়ার্কস, জেজিএস শিল্প এলাকা, ঢাকা।
৩. ব্যবস্থাপকের কার্যালয়, বিএফআইডিসি, সিএমপি মিরপুর, ঢাকা।

(ড. মোহাম্মদ মাসুদুর রহমান হুইয়া)
প্রকল্প পরিচালক (যুগ্মাধিকারী)
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