

With a packed 3-day schedule, Chief Adviser Yunus to deliver speech at UNGA on Sept 27

UNB- Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus is set to leave Dhaka on September 23 to attend the 79th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York which is seen as a big opportunity for him to share his government's priorities following the student-led mass uprising, and economic plans including which areas specifically the international community can be helpful in strengthening and stabilizing Bangladesh's economy. The first day of the high-level General Debate will be held on Tuesday, September 24.

"The Chief Adviser will stay three days in New York and he will leave New York on September 27," Foreign Adviser Md Touhid Hossain told reporters on Saturday at a media briefing at Foreign Service Academy. He said the Chief Adviser will go to New York on a commercial flight.

The Chief Adviser will deliver his speech on September 27, said the Foreign Adviser.

Hossain said a major political changeover has taken place in Bangladesh and they want to let people know so that no confusion remains regarding what happened in Bangladesh. He said Prof Yunus is highly respected globally and all countries will take his remarks seriously.

Hossain said he will go to New York by a separate commercial flight two days prior to Chief Adviser's arrival in New York.

Asked about any possibility to have a meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Foreign Adviser said it seems there is no possibility as Modi is going there a bit

early while Chief Adviser Yunus is going there a bit late.

The Chief Adviser will have meetings—bilateral and call on—with prime ministers of the Netherlands, Pakistan, Nepal and the President of the European Union, US Secretary of State, UN Secretary-General, UN Human Rights chief, the World Bank President, and USAID Administrator, said the Foreign Adviser.

The Foreign Adviser, however, said he will have a bilateral meeting with Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on the sidelines.

Hossain said reforms and human rights will be highlighted and the government will continue to make commitments to take steps on human rights issues.

“I can’t justify why there were large delegations in the past. But the current government wants to avoid unnecessary expenses,” he said.

The Foreign Adviser said, this time the delegation will have 57 members, and a big number of them are security personnel. On previous occasions, the Bangladesh delegation was varied between 300 and 100 plus.

Hossain said only those with direct responsibilities at the UNGA will accompany the Chief Adviser.

Bangladesh will host a high-level reception on September 24 marking 50 years of Bangladesh’s UN membership.

The theme of the General Debate is “Leaving no one behind: Acting together for the advancement of peace, sustainable development and human dignity for present and future generations.”

South Asian affairs expert Michael Kugelman previously said Prof Yunus’ participation at the 79th UN General Assembly

(UNGA) will be a big opportunity for him to share his government's economic plans, including which areas specifically the international community can be helpful in strengthening and stabilizing Bangladesh's economy.

"He would be speaking in New York on the biggest global platform since he took over the role of adviser leading the interim government," said Kugelman, Director of the South Asia Institute at Wilson Center in Washington, D.C.

Kugelman said there are several things that Prof Yunus could do, several things that he could say.

"I think that above all he should lay out a vision for governance, the goals of the interim government, his plans for reforms and his efforts to push for the restoration of democracy."

Kugelman said he thinks that Prof Yunus' platform at the UNGA would give him an opportunity to weigh in on what is arguably Bangladesh's biggest humanitarian challenge, the Rohingya refugee issue.

"I think that it would be useful for him to make a pitch for international assistance or more international assistance for Rohingya refugees, which would be an especially important pitch for two reasons," he said.

The 79th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA 79) opened on September 10.

Meanwhile, the heads of states and governments will gather at UN Headquarters in New York on September 22-23 to address the critical challenges and gaps in global governance exposed by recent global shocks.

The Summit of the Future, the first of its kind, will bring together leaders, advocates, and activists of all ages to determine how our international system can better meet the

needs of current and future generations.

Countries must use a once-in-a-generation UN summit to address current and emerging global challenges and reform outdated international institutions, Secretary-General António Guterres said in New York.

Guterres was speaking as negotiations for the Summit of the Future, which opens at UN Headquarters on Sunday, enter the final stretch.

“I have one overriding message today: an appeal to Member States for a spirit of compromise. Show the world what we can do, when we work together,” he said.

‘An essential first step’

The two-day Summit of the Future is “an essential first step towards making global institutions more legitimate, effective, and fit for the world of today and tomorrow,” Guterres told journalists.

He said work already done in the lead-up reveals “potential breakthroughs on a number of important fronts”.

This includes “the strongest language on Security Council reform in a generation—and the most concrete step towards Council enlargement since 1963,” the first-ever governance measures for Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other technologies, and advancements in reforming the international financial architecture.

Other items cover financing for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and commitment to advance an SDG Stimulus to boost financial support to developing countries.

“It would be tragic if all of these would be lost,” he warned.

Challenges, crises and conflict

Guterres said the Summit is “so critical” because “international challenges are moving faster than our ability to solve them.”

He pointed to “out-of-control geo-political divisions and runaway conflicts – not least in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan and beyond,” in addition to “runaway” climate change, inequalities and debt, and the development of AI and other technologies that lack guidance or guardrails.

“Crises are interacting and feeding off each other – for example, as digital technologies spread climate disinformation that deepens distrust and fuels polarization,” he said.

Reform multilateral institutions

Meanwhile, multilateral institutions “born in a bygone era for a bygone world” simply cannot keep up.

Guterres said so many of the challenges the world is facing today were not on the radar 80 years ago when these institutions were created.

“Our founders understood that times would change,” he said.

“They understood that the values that underpin our global institutions are timeless – but the institutions themselves cannot be frozen in time.”

An ever-changing world

He said the peacebuilders back then could not have predicted the changes that have occurred over the past eight decades.

They include the independence movements, the economic and geopolitical rise of many developing countries, catastrophic climate consequences, space exploration, and the development of the Internet, smartphones and social media, which are boosted by AI.

“Like our founders, we cannot know precisely what the future

holds,” he acknowledged.

“But we don’t need a crystal ball to see that 21st century challenges require problem-solving mechanisms that are more effective, networked and inclusive; that serious power imbalances in global institutions must be adjusted and updated; and that our institutions must draw on the expertise and representation of all of humanity.”

Although change will not happen overnight, “it can start today,” he insisted.

Finish the job

Member States attending the Summit are expected to adopt a Pact for the Future, with a Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations annexed to it.

Guterres expressed hope that they will “do everything possible” to get these documents “over the finish line”.

“We can’t create a future fit for our grandchildren with systems built for our grandparents,” he said, stressing that the Summit “cannot fail”.

World leaders

More than 130 Heads of State and Government are scheduled to attend the Summit of the Future, which is taking place from 22-23 September – just ahead of the annual debate in the UN General Assembly.

The Summit will be preceded by two “action days” where non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academics and private sector representatives will engage on the main themes.