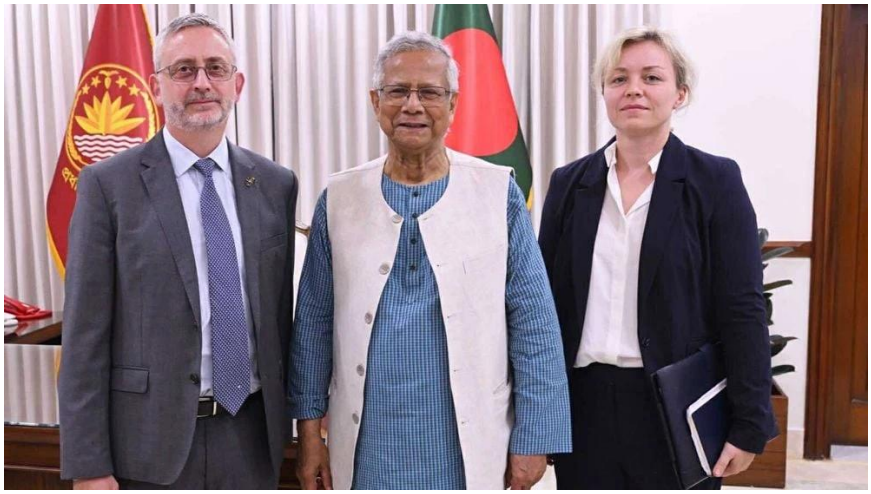
EU to Send Large Observer Team for Free, Fair Voting



Collected picture

After a gap of 16 years, the European Union (EU) is preparing to deploy a full-fledged election observation mission to Bangladesh. If all goes according to plan, this will be the EU's first comprehensive observation mission in the country since 2008.

EU Ambassador to Dhaka, Michael Miller, shared this information during a meeting with Chief Advisor Professor Muhammad Yunus on Tuesday (28 October).

Ambassador Miller stated that the EU observer mission is still awaiting final approval. Once approved, a team of 150 to 200 members will operate in Bangladesh. Some observers will arrive in Dhaka six weeks before the start of the election, while the main team will join about a week prior to voting. The EU will also assist in appointing local observers.

During the meeting with the Chief Advisor, discussions covered Bangladesh's political situation, election preparations, governance and judicial reforms, labor policies, and trade and investment relations with the European Union.

Ambassador Miller referred to the National Charter announced in July as a "key document" in Bangladesh's democratic reform journey. He also commended recent initiatives to amend labor laws and strengthen judicial independence.

He said, "These measures will help institutionalize democracy in Bangladesh. The EU hopes that the national election scheduled for February will be free, fair, and credible. Accordingly, the EU will continue to provide full support to the Election Commission."

The meeting also addressed bilateral trade and investment expansion, the prospects of an economic partnership agreement, new cooperation in aviation and maritime transport, and joint initiatives to prevent human trafficking and illegal migration.

The Chief Advisor noted that a major investment agreement with the world-renowned Danish company A.P. Moller–Maersk for the development and operation of Chattogram's Laldia Terminal is in its final stage. Ambassador Miller mentioned that the company has expressed interest in investing approximately $800 million, which, if realized, could make Laldia one of the most modern terminals in South Asia.

At the conclusion of the meeting, both sides reached a consensus on maintaining transparency in the electoral environment, verifying candidate qualifications, and ensuring human rights.