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Education deserves a reform commission
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No more concessions for India on border killings or fencing
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'Nahid Rana is pure gold'
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Reform panels aim to ensure power balance

Caretaker govt, bicameral parliament among key recommendations likely to be made tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four reform commissions are set to submit their reports to the government tomorrow and the Constitution Reform Commission and the Electoral Reform Commission are likely to propose a caretaker government system and a bicameral parliament.

The Police Reform Commission may recommend allowing the police to use only non-lethal weapons in crowd control to prevent loss of lives, adhering to the standards set by European countries.

The Anti-Corruption Commission Reform Commission is considering a recommendation to bar bureaucrats from holding secretary- to director-level positions at the ACC.

According to sources in the Constitution Reform Commission, its proposals may include a two-term limit for prime ministers to curb the head of government's absolute power. It may also recommend establishing a balance of

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Two-term limit for PM
- Balance of power between PM, president
- A 21-year-old can run for parliament
- Election winner goes to lower house
- Proportional representation for upper house
- Direct vote for seats reserved for women
- Non-lethal weapons for police to control crowds
- Clipping ACC secretary's powers to transfer investigators

power between the prime minister and the president.

The commission is also likely to recommend bringing the minimum age to 21 from 25 to run for parliament.

Meanwhile, the Electoral Reform Commission is expected to recommend the formation of a high-level parliamentary committee, under the Speaker, with representatives from political parties, that would hold election commissioners accountable for any irregularities during elections.

Additionally, the Electoral Reform Commission is considering a dual voting system. The first past-the-post (FPTP) method, where the candidate with the most votes wins, is suggested for the lower house of parliament. For the proposed upper house, the commission is likely to recommend a proportional representation system, said a member of the reform commission without elaborating further.

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ILLEGAL PLOT ALLOCATION

Hasina, Rehana, her children sued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday filed three separate cases against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, her sister Sheikh Rehana, Rehana's son Radwan Mujib Siddiq Bobby, and her daughters Azmina Siddiq Ruponti, and Tulip Rizwana Siddiq, also a British lawmaker.

The accused have been charged with abuse of power to influence high-ranking officials at the Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) to secure plots in the diplomatic zone of Sector 27, Road 203, in the Purbachal New Town Project. The allocation includes three 10-katha plots.

The cases were filed at the ACC's Integrated District Office in Dhaka, ACC Director General Akhtar Hossain told journalists.

Rehana, Bobby, and Azmina have been named as the prime accused in the cases, while Hasina and Tulip are listed as co-accused. Each case names an additional 12 to 13 individuals, including officials from the Ministry of Housing and Public Works and Rajuk.

Speaking to reporters, ACC DG Akhtar said British lawmaker Tulip Siddiq influenced Sheikh Hasina to secure the Purbachal plots, adding that the ACC has gathered sufficient evidence to support the allegations.

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A large swathe of wetland in Khulna city's Khalishpur has been filled with sand to make way for a housing project. This has not only hampered the biodiversity but also increased the chances of flooding in the area. Such unplanned housing projects are largely behind the shrinking of agriculture lands and wetlands. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

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BNP wants nat'l polls by mid-2025

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The BNP wants the national election by the middle of this year and local government polls afterwards.

The party believes that local government polls before parliamentary election would be a delaying tactic.

"The government should abandon plans for local government elections and instead focus on holding a national election by mid-year, in line with the public aspirations," said a standing committee member wishing anonymity.

The issue was discussed during a standing committee meeting, the highest policymaking body of the BNP, at the party chairperson's Gulshan office last night.

Party's acting chairman Tarique Rahman joined the meeting from London virtually.

Meeting sources said the party leaders were for putting pressure on the interim government through seminars and discussions to have the general election by the middle of this year.

"We have supported the government, and we will continue it. But that does not mean that the government will remain in the office for an indefinite period," said another standing committee member.

The interim government has indicated



- BNP to put govt under pressure to hold polls
- It believes local govt polls will delay nat'l election
- Party leaders slam tax hike

The BNP, however, maintains that reforms are an ongoing process and should continue, but the election should only be conducted after implementing the necessary reforms.

The meeting also discussed in details local government polls. All senior leaders said this attempt will delay the general election as local government polls will take place in different phases and it will take more than one and a half years to complete the process.

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NOAKHALI-FENI

Floodwaters gone months ago but sufferings linger

PINAKI ROY with ANWARUL HAIDER

Nineteen-year-old Sajjad Hossain had no alternative but to start building a new thatched home for his two sisters, mother and himself since their house was swept away by a flood four months ago in Pashchim Aloka village, situated on the banks of Muhuri river in Feni's Parshuram upazila.

Initially, they opted to live in his grandmother's house in Gutuma village, around 12km away from their own, after the devastating flood hit in August.

"Within a few hours of rain, the embankment on the river broke down and the water entered our home. At first, we took shelter in a neighbour's under-construction house. After staying there for a few days, we moved to our grandmother's house."

At that time, some government officials visited the Pashchim Aloka village, while some non-government organisations listed the flood-hit victims, including Sajjad and his family.

"We initially received some food assistance and were given Tk 12,000 collected by eight separate sources... But nothing since then."

After a four-month wait for proper assistance and relief, Sajjad took it upon himself to build a house on the yard of their previously destroyed house. He took help from his neighbour Md Liton Mia -- another victim.

Visiting the yard earlier last month, this correspondent saw Sajjad, a diploma student of electrical engineering, working on the thatched house with Liton.

"We couldn't recover anything from our old house except for some corrugated tin sheets from the rooftop. We've started afresh and bought everything for this new house," he told The Daily Star.

He added that his mother had to borrow money from relatives so that he

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PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Parents waiting with their sick children at the Dhaka Shishu Hospital yesterday. According to doctors, the hospital sees around 60-70 new patients every day, most of them suffering from pneumonia, diarrhoea, and other cold-related illnesses.

HASINA'S VOICE RECORDINGS

ICT orders CID, BTRC to verify evidence

Abu Sayed's brother files complaint against her with tribunal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal yesterday ordered the CID and BTRC to verify the authenticity of key voice recordings and other digital evidence related to Sheikh Hasina and her associates in connection with the 2024 uprising.

The tribunal gave the order after prosecutor Tanvir Hassan Zoha filed a petition requesting its intervention in authenticating the evidence by the Criminal Investigation Department and the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission.

During the hearing on the petition, Zoha informed the court that call records and digital evidence involving ousted prime minister Hasina and others had been collected from various sources. He emphasised that these materials are critical for the trial of crimes against humanity committed during the July-August uprising.

"Once authenticated, the call records and other evidence will be submitted to the court as documentary proof," Zoha told the tribunal. He claimed while technical assistance has been sought from the CID and other relevant authorities, the CID's lack of cooperation caused delays.

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