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## Govt working to hold polls by Dec

It assures BNP as party delegation meets chief adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has assured the BNP of working to hold the national election by December this year, the party's Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said yesterday.

The assurance came at a meeting between Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus and a BNP delegation led by Fakhrul at the state guesthouse Jamuna last evening.

Fakhrul said the BNP reiterated the call for holding the election swiftly after implementing minimal reforms based on a consensus.

Yunus and those accompanying him assured the BNP leaders that the election would be held "very soon", Fakhrul said.

"He [Prof Yunus] has also said they were working so that the election could be held by December this year," Fakhrul said, adding that the BNP hopes that the government will soon declare a roadmap for the election as per the people's expectations.

Asked when the roadmap would be announced, Fakhrul said, "Probably, they will say something about it by

February 15."

The National Consensus Commission led by Prof Yunus is supposed to start talks with political parties for unanimity on reforms on that day.

The Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam confirmed the date at another briefing after the meeting with the BNP leaders.

When the BNP leaders sought early national polls, Prof Yunus said the National Consensus Commission would work on it, according to Shafiqul.

He said the chief adviser reiterated the two possible election timeframes -- within December 2025 or June 2026.

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Three-year-old Tahasin raises his hand and turns away as police shoot water from a cannon directly at him and his mother, a female protester from Brahmanbaria, during a sit-in at Shahbagh intersection yesterday afternoon. Police used batons, water cannons, and teargas shells to disperse the protesters demanding their appointment as assistant teachers in government primary schools. Story on page 3. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Yunus calls for reconciliation

Pledges fair trial for those linked to fascist regime, says there will be no injustice



**"The sacrifices were made because we stood against injustice. If we indulge in injustice, where is the difference between them and us?"**

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus



STAR REPORT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday called for reconciliation.

Yunus said the people linked to the ousted fascist government were still here. "They did not go anywhere... They will have to change to merge with us," he said while speaking at a meeting with the family members of July uprising victims at the Chief Adviser's Office.

He said if the elements of the ousted regime continue to demonstrate the same behaviour, it would not be tolerated.

"We will not indulge in injustice. Those who have broken the law will face

the consequences. But to those who have not, we will tell them that 'you have caused me a lot of pain, but I will not do the same to you. This is your country too. The country belongs to all of us. We are all children of this soil,'" he said.

Yunus went on to say, "They need to be brought to the right path. They need to be told that what you have done was wrong. You have to make them understand that their path is wrong and they should apologise for what they have done. This is how our country should move forward. Constant conflict will only hold us back."

"We have to win them over. If you

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### Star INTERVIEW

#### Salman F Rahman used IFIC Bank for personal gains

Says the bank's current chairman

MD MEHEDI HASAN

Salman F Rahman, the former chairman of IFIC Bank and a trusted adviser to ousted PM Sheikh Hasina, used the bank for his personal benefit, said Md. Mehmod Husain, independent director and current chairman of IFIC Bank.

"Despite holding only a 6 percent stake, the conglomerate heavily influenced IFIC and benefited from approximately Tk 10,000 crore in loans -- this posed a major risk for a bank of this scale," he told The Daily Star in an interview recently.

Although Beximco Group -- where Rahman served as vice chairman -- did not directly take loans from the bank due to legal restrictions, investigations found that a significant portion of loans was funnelled to companies, with the sprawling conglomerate as the ultimate beneficiary.

The Bangladesh Bank's restructuring of the IFIC board in September last year helped free the bank from Beximco Group's influence.

Before August last year, IFIC reported a bad loan ratio of less than 5 percent.



Md Mehmod Husain

Mobs will be dealt with a firm hand from now on  
Says Mahfuj Alam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Issuing a strong warning against any sort of mob violence, Mahfuj Alam, adviser to the interim government, said the government would handle such issues with an iron hand from now on.

"If you support the mass uprising, stop engaging in mob actions. If you engage in mob actions, you will also be treated as a devil. After today's incident, no further requests will be made. It is not your job to take the law into your own hands," he wrote on his verified Facebook account today.

From now on, we will firmly confront so-called movements and mob demonstrations. Any attempt to render the state ineffective and prove it

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TCB trucks began distributing Ramadan essentials, including sugar, dates, edible oil, lentils, and chickpeas, yesterday. Although this truck, stationed at the Shantinagar intersection in the capital, had packages for 250 low-income consumers, over 1,000 people turned up.

## Economy faces headwinds

In its monetary policy statement, BB says growth outlook for 2nd half of FY25 doesn't appear optimistic

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh economy is bracing for substantial hurdles in the second half of the 2025 fiscal year, with growth projected to decelerate amid inflationary pressures, financial strain and external headwinds.

GDP growth is expected to remain in the 4-5 percent range in FY25, reflecting continued output losses from floods, labour unrest, and gas supply shortages that have slowed industrial production, Bangladesh Bank said yesterday in a monetary policy statement for the January-June period.

"The growth outlook for the second half of FY25 for Bangladesh does not appear optimistic due to the existing challenges," the central bank said.

Bangladesh's struggles underscore the uneven recovery across South Asia. Bangladesh faces a tougher road to recovery due to inflation, domestic disruptions and external shocks. The next several months will be pivotal as the country works to balance fiscal and monetary reforms, restore confidence in its financial system, and chart a path towards long-term stability and growth.

The trend of elevated inflation predates the interim government, as the post pandemic economic recovery was

### CENTRAL BANK FORECASTS

- GDP growth is likely to slow to 4%-5% in FY25
- Growth may rebound to 6% or over in FY26
- Inflation is expected to ease to 7%-8% by June
- Non-performing loans could exceed 30% of total loans by June

sluggish during Sheikh Hasina's tenure. Real GDP growth slowed to 4.22 percent in FY24, amid sustained high inflation driven by the Russia-Ukraine war, global uncertainty, and weak economic performance by key trading partners and remittance source countries.

Then economic activity faced additional setbacks in the summer of 2024 when a student-led mass uprising, followed by a change in government, created uncertainty among consumers and investors. This uncertainty was

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AMAR EKUSHEY-11

This year marks the 73rd anniversary of the 1952 Language Movement. Drawing on research based on various published books, this 21-part series tells the story of the historic struggle for our mother tongue.

## Protest comes under knife attack

AHMAD ISTIAK

February 21, 1952, Cumilla town. The local student community, like the rest of the country, takes out a procession in support of the Language Movement. As protesters pass through a Bihari (non-Bangalee) colony, several residents attack the procession with knives. At least 15

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