

State must
move away
from excessive
surveillance
Says TIB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has turned into a surveillance-based society, said Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman yesterday.

Citing a United Nations report on surveillance, he said such practices violate fundamental human rights if not aligned with international standards.

He also said the state must move away from excessive surveillance, while speaking at a press conference organised by Human Rights Forum Bangladesh (HRFB) at the MIDAS Convention Centre in Dhanmondi.

The UN report calls for the dissolution of two institutions -- Rab and NTMC -- and recommends restricting the activities of DGFI, which, he emphasised, should function solely as a security

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As raindrops suddenly start to fall, a father quickly lifts a shopping bag over his daughter's head, shielding her from the drizzle. The duo was on their way home after finishing shopping, when they were caught off-guard by the sudden shower. The photo was taken in the Hatirpool area yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

CONSENSUS COMMISSION
LDP backs majority
of reform proposals
Jamaat submits feedback

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the first ever individual dialogue with political parties on state reform proposals, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) agreed to 120 out of 166 proposals sent to political parties by the National Consensus Commission (NCC).

LDP President Col (Retd) Oli Ahmed shared this at a dialogue with the commission at the LD Hall of the National Parliament complex yesterday.

Of the 166 proposals, the LDP agreed with 120, disagreed with 42, partially agreed with two, and found two "unclear."

Among 70 constitutional reform proposals, the party supported 51, disagreed with 16, partially agreed with one, and found two unclear.

For judicial reforms, the LDP endorsed 22 out of 23 proposals and partially agreed with one. Meanwhile, it backed all 20 anti-corruption proposals.

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ACC to probe graft
allegations against
GM Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has found preliminary evidence against Jatiyo Party Chairman GM Quader for money laundering under various names, bribery in the nomination process of the reserved women's parliamentary seats, and "position trading" within the party.

ACC Director General Akhtar Hossain said as sufficient evidence has been found in a covert investigation, ACC has decided to initiate an open inquiry and take legal action.

He disclosed this information at a press briefing held at the ACC headquarters yesterday.

Akhtar Hossain said after the 2018 national elections, Tk 18.10 crore was taken as bribes for MP nominations from JP in reserved women's seats, and allegedly, the primary beneficiary was then acting chairman GM Quader.

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Reforms facing internal,
external resistance

Prof Ali Riaz tells roundtable discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Both internal and external forces are attempting to obstruct the reform process, National Consensus Commission (NCC) Vice-President Prof Ali Riaz said yesterday.

He described the reform process as the first major opportunity since the 1971 Liberation War to transform the state into an accountable institution.

Speaking at a roundtable discussion titled "Political Consensus and Citizens' Thinking in State Reform" at the capital's CIRDAP auditorium yesterday, he emphasised the need for public participation in the process. The event was organised by Shujan—Citizens for Good Governance.

"Moving forward is impossible without the participation, pressure, and inclusion of citizens," he said. "While political parties represent a large segment of people, they do not represent everyone. Citizens' opinions will be incorporated in parallel with discussions with parties."

Prof Riaz said that Bangladesh's institutions had been severely weakened over the past 16 years due to one-person-centric rule.

"The judiciary has been practically destroyed, and other institutions have been deliberately dismantled. Without establishing an accountable state system, including electoral reforms, the situation will remain unchanged," he said.

He warned that the current structural system would be unable to prevent future autocratic rule.

Addressing queries about constitutional amendments, he defended the proposal to replace secularism with pluralism while retaining the term "state religion".

"Secularism has become the principle of a single political party, which the people have already rejected," he said. "Pluralism is a broader concept that includes all religions and castes under one umbrella."

He acknowledged that the provision for a state religion clause remained a divisive issue. "Multiple governments have upheld this provision since its inclusion. There is a political reality behind it," he said.

Over 40 percent of 190 countries

While political parties represent a large segment of people, they do not represent everyone. Citizens' opinions will be incorporated in parallel with discussions with parties.

PROF ALI RIAZ
Vice President, National Consensus Commission

globally have similar provisions, he added.

Shujan Secretary and NCC member Badiul Alam Majumdar outlined the interim government's three key responsibilities: preventing the return of autocracy, prosecuting crimes against humanity, and transferring power to elected political parties.

"These tasks can proceed simultaneously. Some reforms must be implemented before elections, while others can follow.

The Election Commission must be independent and accountable, and a neutral government is essential during elections," he said.

Another NCC member Justice Emdadul Haque reiterated that judicial reform was a critical issue, noting that commissions had already submitted reports.

"Reforms are an ongoing process that will be enriched further by citizens' opinions," he said.

Former Jahangirnagar University Professor Dilara Chowdhury stressed that over 90 percent of people support state reforms, and political parties are aligning with this demand.

"Though parties have their flaws, a country cannot function without them. Reforms must begin within the parties themselves, and necessary changes should be implemented before elections," she said.

Journalist Abu Saeed Khan argued against removing secularism while retaining "state religion", calling the proposal illogical.

"Secularism was not just an Awami League concern; it was a collective movement," he said. He also warned that the constitution should be amended, not rewritten, as the 1972 version was created through national consensus.

Dilip Kumar Sarker, central coordinator of Shujan, presented the keynote paper.

"Following the people's uprising, there is hope that authoritarian or fascist rule will not return and that democracy will be institutionalised," he said. "The ultimate goal is a society based on equality, human dignity, and justice. To achieve this, state reform and a change in political culture are essential."

SUSTAINABLE DEV GOALS

61pc of child-
related indicators
lagging: report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's progress on child-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is facing major setbacks, with 61 percent of indicators showing minimal to no progress, according to the National SDG Report (VNR) 2025.

The report reveals that 39 percent of child-related SDG indicators are on track or have met targets, while six out of the 48 crucial indicators still lack essential data.

Additionally, the country has dropped 40 places in the Global Gender Gap Index, now ranking 99th, raising concerns that this decline may continue if no changes are made.

The report was presented at a forum organised by the Citizens' Platform for SDGs at the Bangladesh China Friendship Conference Center in the capital's Agargaon yesterday.

Zafar Sadique, adviser (Investment in Children) at Save the Children Bangladesh, said neonatal and under-five mortality rates have risen in recent years, indicating a troubling trend in health outcomes.

Neonatal mortality increased from 16 per 1,000 live births in 2021 to 20 in 2023, while under-five mortality rose from 28 to 33 in the same period, according to the SVRS survey, he revealed.

Updated data on anaemia and mental health in children remains unavailable, creating critical gaps in understanding these issues, he added.

Birth registration, a key indicator under Goal 17,

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New party 'Jonotar
Dol' unveiled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A new political party named "Jonotar Dol", comprised of ex-military personnel, was unveiled yesterday at a programme in the capital.

Led by Brig Gen (retd) Md Shamim Kamal, the party said its ideology is to prioritise Bangladesh's interests.

"We will look neither left nor right. It is not our aim to serve the interests of any individual or vested groups," said Kamal, the chairperson of the party, in his speech.

"We won't get involved in unresolved issues about history -- we want to look towards the future," he added.

When asked about their stance on Awami League, Kamal said, "We don't want to criticise any person or organisation. We want to criticise the system. Fascism existed in this country before Awami League as well. But we will not support

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Man to die for
rape, murder of
7-year-old girl

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka tribunal yesterday sentenced a man to death for the rape and murder of a seven-year-old girl in the capital's Jatrabari area in 2017.

Judge Roksana Begum Happy of Dhaka's Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal 3 delivered the verdict in the presence of the lone accused, Md Rafiqul Islam.

In the verdict, the judge observed that the convict has no right to live, as he posed a threat to the safety of children and women. Considering the gravity of his crimes, he was given the capital punishment.

Earlier, the prosecution and defence completed their arguments, and the tribunal recorded statements from 12 prosecution witnesses, including the complainant.

According to the case statement, the girl left

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The Palestine Solidarity Committee, Bangladesh rallied in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday. They demanded an immediate stop to the genocide taking place in Gaza, violating the recent ceasefire deal between Israel and Palestine.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Justice
Khizir Hayat
removed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Justice Khizir Hayat has been removed from the office of High Court Division for "misconduct and incapacity" under the recommendation of the chief justice-led Supreme Judicial Council (SJC).

He is one of the 12 HC judges, who were barred from judicial proceedings since October 20 last year, SC sources said.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin removed Justice Khizir Hayat under article 96(6) of the constitution on Tuesday, according to a notification issued by the law ministry on Wednesday. The restriction was imposed after demonstrators, mostly students, demanded the removal of "pro-Awami League fascist judges" on the SC premises on October 16.



We Deeply Mourn

Mr. Khan Mohammed Ameer (Biltu), one of the most successful and prosperous industrialists of independent Bangladesh, and the founding chairman of Padma Group of Companies, passed away at the age of 82 on Sunday 16 March 2025 at 8:02 AM while undergoing treatment at the United Hospital in the capital (Inna lillahi wa Inna Ilaihi rajiun).

On behalf of the family of the deceased and the Padma Group of Companies, we express our gratitude and thanks to all the kind-hearted individuals, banks, insurance companies, business houses and financial institutions who sent condolences on the passing of Mr. Ameer, a patron of artistic painting and renowned photographer, and to those who attended the funeral and expressed their prayers, remembrance and deep condolences to the family.

The Kulkhani will be held today 21 March 2025 at 4:00 PM at the late's residence in Dhaka, House No. 14, Road No. 48, Gulshan 02. We request all the friends, relatives, and well-wishers of the late to attend the event.

The family of the late and all the officers and employees.

Padma Group of Companies