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spending falls
to 8-year low

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ELECTION ROADMAP

BNP unhappy as Yunus gives no specific timeline

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The election must be held by December, as any delay could cause the situation to spiral out of control, the BNP said after a meeting with the chief adviser yesterday.

The BNP said it was dissatisfied with the meeting outcome as no specific time was set for the national polls.

"The honourable chief adviser did not give us a specific deadline for the election. He said he wanted the election to be held between [this] December and June [2026]," BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir told reporters after the meeting.

Fakhrul and six standing committee members of the party attended the nearly two-hour long meeting at Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus's residence on Hare Road in the afternoon.

The standing committee members are Jamir Uddin Sircar, Mirza Abbas, Nazrul Islam Khan, Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, Salahuddin Ahmed, and Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku.

The CA was accompanied by advisers Salehuddin Ahmed, Wahiduddin

"We are not satisfied at all. We clearly said that unless there is an election by December, the political, economic, and social conditions of the country will worsen further."



BNP Secretary General
Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir

"They seemed content to me. When our meeting ended, I thought they had received answers to many of the questions on their minds. That's how I felt. Fakhrul Bhai might have felt differently."

Law Adviser Asif Nazrul

Mahmud, Adilur Rahman Khan, and Prof Asif Nazrul.

Soon after Fakhrul spoke to reporters in front of state guest house Jamuna, Prof Asif told reporters that the election "as early as possible between December and June" and that there was no way to go beyond June 2026.

Fakhrul said he and others conveyed their concerns to the chief adviser with the main one being the need for a clear election roadmap.

"We stated that given the current political situation and the state of the country, we believe that the solution must come through a fair election."

Asked about the BNP's next steps, Fakhrul said that the party would decide its next steps after discussions with its like-minded parties.

In response to whether the government was trying to extend its stay in power by delaying the election timeline, the party secretary general said that the chief adviser had indicated a timeframe between December and June for holding the election.

"He didn't rule out December; he left the window open until June. However, we have made it clear that December is our cut-off time," he said.

Fakhrul further said, "We are fully cooperating with the ongoing reform initiatives taken by the government. A few days ago, we provided our opinions on the reforms, and tomorrow [today] we have a meeting

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TIME'S LIST
Yunus among
100 most
influential
people

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus has been named among TIME magazine's 100 Most Influential People of 2025.

This recognition follows his pivotal role in steering Bangladesh toward democracy following last year's student-led uprising.

The TIME100 list, published yesterday, celebrates global figures for their influence and leadership. This year's honourees include US President Donald Trump, Elon Musk, UK PM Keir Starmer, Mexico's President

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After harvesting Boro paddy, farmers busy threshing it on a field in Paschim Bilpabla of Khulna's Dumria upazila. They are happy with the good yield of the crop this year. Each maund (40kg) of paddy is sold between Tk 1,300 and Tk 1,400.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN



Students at different polytechnic institutes blocked a street in Tejgaon's Satrasta area in the capital around noon yesterday, halting traffic movement and causing citywide gridlocks. They demonstrated as part of their countrywide programme to realise their demands, including cancellation of a High Court verdict on the promotion of craft instructors to junior instructors. They called a railway blockade for today. Story on page 3.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Polls timing tops parties' talks with US officials

BNP wants it by Dec, Jamaat before Ramadan, NCP after structural reforms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP has told a visiting US delegation that it wants the national election to be held by December as it believes issues related to reforms can be settled within the next one month.

The newly-formed National Citizen Party (NCP) said it wants the polls only after fundamental structural reforms to the state.

The NCP also alleged the local authorities are working in favour of the BNP in many areas while NCP leaders are facing attacks. Therefore, holding an election under such an administration is not possible.

The Jamaat-e-Islami conveyed its position that the election should be held before Ramadan next year, arguing that polls after that period could be uncertain because of the rainy season.

The three political parties shared their views in three separate meetings with the US delegation led by Nicole Chulick, deputy assistant secretary of state at the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, at the residence of the US deputy head of mission in the capital yesterday.

Chulick arrived in Dhaka on Tuesday, while Andrew R Herrup, deputy assistant secretary at the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs,

arrived yesterday. US Chargé d'Affaires to Myanmar Susan Stevenson will accompany Herrup during his visit to Bangladesh.

Today, the US delegation is scheduled to meet Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, National Security Adviser Dr Khalilur Rahman and Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain.

This is the first official-level visit by the US after President Donald Trump assumed office.

This is the first official-level visit by the US after President Donald Trump assumed office in January.

Talking to reporters after the meeting with Chulick, BNP Standing Committee Member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury said it is possible to hold the polls even before December.

Speaking to reporters after meeting with Chulick, BNP Standing Committee Member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury said the national election could be held even before December.

Citing the chief adviser's remarks, he noted

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PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Roadmap for election by July

EC says it is working with election in Dec in mind

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) is likely to announce its roadmap for the 13th national election by July in line with the timeline announced by the interim government.

Discussions on the next election with the registered political parties will take place in August–September or earlier, if possible, said Election Commissioner Anwarul Islam Sarkar yesterday at a media briefing.

Since taking office, the current EC has been working according to its own action plan, he said, adding that, as part of this plan, they have been updating the voter list.

The EC hopes to complete the delimitation of parliamentary constituencies within three months provided the government decides regarding amendments to the relevant law.

Preliminary preparatory work will be mostly completed within the next three months, he said.

Asked whether preparations are being made assuming the polls will be held in December, Sarkar said that they are proceeding according to the government-declared timeline, which is December.

"We are moving forward based on the repeatedly announced timeline by the government," he said.

Regarding new party registration, Sarkar said three parties have applied for registration so far and many others have sought an extension of the deadline.

The current application deadline is April 20.

When asked whether there would be changes to the law regarding the registration of political parties, he said they

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Novoair may be grounded from May

RASHIDUL HASAN

Novoair is likely to shut down its operation for around three months from May as the private airline has started the process of selling its five ATR aircraft in its fleet.

The process is likely to be completed this month, said Md Mofizur Rahman, managing director of Novoair.

Novoair is hopeful of getting a new investor on board soon, he said, adding that discussions are at the final stage.

"If we get the new investor, we will not sell our aircraft to foreign buyers. In that case, our flights will not shut down. Otherwise, we will have to discontinue the flight operations for three months."

The airline's staff and officials will get their salaries as normal in those three months.

Since its inception on January 9, 2013, Novoair has invested more than \$50 million in aircraft acquisition and an additional \$10 million in infrastructure and support equipment.

Except for its 2018-19 financial year, the airline has incurred losses every year.

The pandemic caused significant losses to the airline and the ongoing price escalations due to the Ukraine war have continued to affect profitability, Rahman said.

Additionally, the shrinking domestic market and reduced demand have compounded the challenges.

Despite plans to expand its fleet and international network, Novoair has been unable to do so due to a global shortage of aircraft available for lease and due to competition from larger airlines.

NOVOAIR

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