



The reform process and its discontents

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Local polls too should be held under caretaker

Recommends local govt reform commission, submits report to CA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Local Government Reform Commission has proposed holding all local government elections under a single schedule before the next national election.

The voter list being prepared for the national election can be utilised in the local government polls, according to the full report of the commission submitted to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday.

Elections to all local government bodies, including those in the hill tracts, could be held this year, reads the report.

To do this, an ordinance can be issued to enact two laws regarding the five local government bodies -- union parishad, upazila parishad, municipality, zila parishad, and city corporation.

The two laws would consolidate five existing laws and regulations to ensure a free and robust local government system, says the report.

The commission recommended forming a permanent local government commission which may get these tasks done by this June.

In future, local government elections should be held during the tenure of caretaker governments, reads the report.

Prof Tofail Ahmed, head of the reform commission, said the decision regarding local government polls can be made collectively by the government and political parties.

"However, we strongly advocate for holding local government elections immediately, as there is currently a leadership vacuum at the union, upazila, and zila levels across the country," he said while addressing a press conference at the Foreign Service Academy after submitting the report.

Upon receiving the report, the chief adviser expressed his strong commitment to transparency and public engagement with the reform process, according to the Chief Adviser's Press Wing. "Let us not delay. These reforms must move from paper to practice as soon as possible," he said.

Tofail said, "We are recommending that the Consensus Commission review and reflect on the report."

The commission's report also identifies critical challenges facing urban local bodies, particularly the Dhaka city corporations.

"Departmental inefficiencies and rampant bribery remain persistent," Tofail said. "From large infrastructure projects to everyday services, corruption flows through multiple layers -- project-level, service-level, and inter-departmental. Unless we address these, effective governance will remain a dream."

The interim government formed the eight-member Local Government Reform Commission led by local governance expert Prof Tofail Ahmed in November last year. It submitted a preliminary report on February 19.

The commission also made around 180 other recommendations

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PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Dhaka South City Corporation is expanding the 5km Rayerbazar Sluice Gate to Kamrangirchar Lohar Bridge road into an 8-lane inner ring road. However, the project is exacerbating the already dire encroachment situation on the banks of the old channel of the Buriganga river. The photo taken on April 12 in Lalbagh area shows that piling is being conducted within the boundaries of the channel along an 870-metre stretch by removing the concrete embankment protection. This work is going on while dredging of the channel remains incomplete, and parts of the channel remain affected by encroachment from influential locals.

TALKS WITH CONSENSUS COMMISSION

BNP stands against floor crossing

Objects to 2-term limit for PM, changes to judges' appointment system

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP has rejected the Constitution Reform Commission's proposal that would bar any individual from serving more than two terms as prime minister, calling it "undemocratic and unjustified".

"If the people want someone to return as prime minister after a break following two terms, that opportunity should remain. There is no logical reason to restrict it," said BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed.

He was speaking to reporters yesterday after discussions with the National Consensus Commission at the LD Hall of

BNP says a more neutral and credible process to appoint the caretaker government chief is necessary to restore public trust in electoral oversight.

the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

The meeting, held behind closed doors, marked the second day of talks aimed at reaching a consensus on proposals submitted by five reform commissions.

The BNP also reiterated its opposition to the formation of a National Constitutional

Council, which it said would undermine the authority of the prime minister.

The party raised concerns over the proposed establishment of a Supreme Court Secretariat and a new mechanism to appoint judges, asserting that such reforms cannot be implemented without amending articles 95 and 116 of the constitution. These articles deal with the appointment of judges and the control and discipline of subordinate courts.

Salahuddin maintained the party's support for judicial independence, but warned that any move to introduce judicial reforms outside the

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NCP for polls only after electoral reforms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Citizen Party has urged the Election Commission to hold the next general election only after the final recommendations made by the National Consensus Commission on electoral reforms are implemented.

NCP Chief Coordinator Nasiruddin Patwari believes it is possible to implement the reforms and hold elections within the timeframe set by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus.

He made the remarks while briefing the media after meeting Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) AMM Nasir Uddin at the Election Commission (EC) headquarters in the capital's Agargaon yesterday.

A five-member delegation met with the CEC to discuss a range of issues. Over the two-hour meeting, NCP representatives engaged in discussions on party demands, registration deadlines, and other election-related matters.

Referring to a letter sent to the EC on Thursday, in which NCP sought an extension of the deadline for new political party registration, Nasiruddin said the party demanded that the Election Commission hold the election following reforms in line with the public demand.

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ROOPPUR PAYMENT Govt to seek US sanction waiver

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and ASIFUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh will be seeking permission from the US treasury to repay Russia for the Rooppur nuclear power plant project, whose dues have piled up in the Bangladesh Bank's escrow account after sanctions were levied on Russia following its invasion of Ukraine.

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Keep an eye out for an op-ed written by distinguished scholar Prof Rehman Sobhan which The Daily Star will publish in two instalments on April 23 and April 24. It is an exceptional read.



Demonstrators hold up signs during a 'Day of Action' protest against US President Donald Trump's policies and executive actions in downtown Chicago, Illinois, US, on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

MAGURA RAPE

Court accepts charge sheet

Victim's sister's father-in-law charged with rape; 3 others with intimidation, destroying evidence

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenaidah

A local court yesterday accepted the charge sheet filed by police a month after the death of the eight-year-old girl, who was brutally raped while visiting her sister's in-laws in Magura.

Magura Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal Judge M Zahid Hasan later fixed Wednesday for framing the charges.

Monirul Islam Mukul, the public prosecutor of the tribunal, said, "After that, the trial process will be expedited by taking the testimonies of witnesses as soon as possible."

On April 13, police submitted the charge sheet against four accused.

In the charge sheet, the father-in-law of the child's sister has been charged with rape resulting in death.

The husband and brother-in-law of the child's sister have been charged with intimidation, and the sister's mother-in-law with destroying evidence of the crime.

According to the charges, the rape took place in the early hours of March 6.

On March 1, the child had gone to visit her elder sister's in-laws' house.

On March 6, around 11:30am, the child was taken to the 250-bed Magura Hospital in an unconscious state.

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