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Curb absolute authority of PM

Speakers say at Nagorik Coalition event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a civil society event yesterday called for curbing the absolute powers of the prime minister and carrying out fundamental constitutional reforms, among other steps to build a more balanced and democratic state.

They made the observations during a discussion titled "Seven Proposals of the Nagorik Jote for Constitutional Reform" organised by the civic platform "Nagorik Coalition" at the auditorium of the International Mother Language Institute in Dhaka.

Addressing the event, Law Adviser Asif Nazrul said, "There is a growing call for limiting the prime minister's tenure to two terms. But this isn't enough. Curbing the prime minister's absolute powers is most important."

Referring to proposals for a constituent assembly to draft a new charter, he said it may take two to three years. "In neighbouring countries, the drafting of a new constitution has taken as long as eight to nine years."

Asif Nazrul proposed that the next parliament could function as the constitutional authority until a new constitution is enacted and make necessary amendments to the 1972 constitution as needed.

Also speaking at the event, BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed argued that rather than drafting an entirely new constitution, the existing one could be amended through national consensus.

"In that case, forming a Constituent Assembly may not be necessary."

Welcoming the amendment to the International



Buddhist devotees offering prayers at the Shakyamuni Buddhist Monastery in the capital's Mirpur-13 on the occasion of Buddha Purnima, the biggest religious festival of the Buddhist community, yesterday. PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Lightning strikes kill eight

STAR REPORT

At least eight people died after being struck by lightning in Brahmanbaria and Kishoreganj yesterday.

In Brahmanbaria, five people, including an eight-year-old girl, died during a thunderstorm in Nasirnagar and Akhaura upazilas that lasted for around 45 minutes in the afternoon.

Khairul Alam, officer-in-charge of Nasirnagar Police Station, and Md Sami Uddin, OC of Akhaura Police Station, confirmed the deaths.

In Nasirnagar's Sadar union, a farm labourer, Abdur Razzak, 35, died after being struck by lightning while harvesting paddy in Tekanagar village.

He was from Chanpur village in Kalikaccha union of neighbouring Sarail upazila of the district.

Around the same time, Mohammad Shamsul Huda, a farmer from Gokarna village in Nasirnagar upazila, also died similarly.

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Civil surgeons to seek limited magistracy powers

Their first-ever conference begins today

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

As the first-ever Civil Surgeon Conference begins today, the doctors are expected to seek limited powers of magistracy to take prompt action against illegal healthcare facilities.

They will also demand more workplace safety, an increase in the number of top posts in the health service cadres, solutions to the ongoing manpower and accommodation problems as well as timely promotions.

They are likely to seek guidance on how the recommendations of the Health Sector Reform Commission, which submitted its report last week, will be implemented, and what their roles will be in the process.

The Daily Star came to know about their demands after talking to five civil surgeons of Dhaka, Chattogram, Rajshahi, Sylhet, and Khagrachhari ahead of the two-day conference in Dhaka.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus will inaugurate the conference at his office at 10:30am. Next sessions will be held at the Shaheed Abu Sayed International Convention Centre of Bangladesh Medical University.

Several advisers and secretaries of different ministries and divisions concerned are expected to join the sessions, said a Health Services Division official.

The Civil Surgeon Conference, designed like the annual DC conference, aims to facilitate direct dialogue between central authorities and top district-level health officials, as well as to strengthen coordination among various government agencies.

The conference is going to be held days after the Health Sector Reform Commission has identified multifaceted

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HAMID'S DEPARTURE Govt forms probe body with three advisers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday formed a high-level committee, consisting of three advisers, to investigate how former president Abdul Hamid left the country through Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport and whether there was any negligence involved in the process.

Education Adviser Prof CR Abrar will lead the committee. The other members are Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan, and Shipping Adviser Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakhawat Hossain.

Hamid, who left for Thailand on Wednesday night, served two consecutive terms as president during the tenure of the Awami League government.

His departure has sparked widespread reaction.

Following the incident, Superintendent of Kishoreganj police

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Indo-Pak fragile ceasefire holds

Trump pledges increased trade with both countries, Kashmir solution

AGENCIES

A fragile ceasefire was holding between India and Pakistan yesterday, after hours of overnight fighting between the nuclear-armed neighbours, as US President Donald Trump said he will work to provide a solution regarding Kashmir.

The arch rivals were involved in intense firing for four days, the worst in nearly three decades, with missiles and drones being fired at each other's military installations and dozens of people killed.

A ceasefire agreement was reached after diplomacy and pressure from the United States, but within hours, artillery fire was witnessed in Indian Kashmir, the centre of much of the fighting.

Blasts from air-defence systems boomed in cities near the border under blackout, similar to the previous two evenings, according to authorities, residents and Reuters witnesses.

By dawn, the fighting and explosions reported overnight had died down on both sides of the border, according to Reuters witnesses.

Power was restored in most areas along India's border towns after a blackout the previous night.

Trump praised leaders of both countries for agreeing to halt the aggression. "While not even discussed, I am going to increase trade, substantially, with both of these great

- Pakistan lost '35 to 40 military personnel': India military
- Indian army chief grants 'full authority' to commanders for counteraction if ceasefire violated
- Pakistan seeks lasting settlement of Kashmir dispute

nations. Additionally, I will work with you both to see if... a solution can be arrived at concerning Kashmir," Trump said in a post on Truth Social.

Pakistan lauded the willingness of the

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Washington hails 'progress' after trade talks with China

AFP, Geneva

Washington expressed optimism after trade talks with China aimed to de-escalate trade tensions sparked by President Donald Trump's aggressive tariff rollout.

"I'm happy to report that we've made substantial progress between the United States and China in the very important trade talks," US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told reporters in Geneva.

"The talks were productive," he said, taking no questions from the media, but promising a "complete briefing" on the outcome of the talks today.

Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, who also took part in the two days of closed-door talks with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng, said that the differences between the sides were "not so large as maybe thought".

After the first day of negotiations, Trump had posted on Truth Social that the discussions had been "very good", describing them as "a total reset negotiated in a friendly, but constructive, manner".

Beijing had yet to comment yesterday, but on Saturday Chinese state news agency Xinhua described the talks as "an important step in promoting the resolution of the issue".

The meetings marked the first time senior officials from the world's two largest

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260 individuals pushed in by India so far

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

India has pushed at least 260 individuals, including Rohingyas, into Bangladesh since last Wednesday through borders in Satkhira, Moulvibazar, Kurigram, and Khagrachhari.

These individuals are in custody, and officials are verifying their identities, said officers of police, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), and the Bangladesh Coast Guard.

The BGB had called for flag meetings and sent a strong protest note to the Indian Border Security Force (BSF).

The BSF had yet to respond to any of the calls for flag meetings, said a top BGB officer, requesting anonymity.

The BGB has also beefed up security along the border.

BGB Director General Maj Gen Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Siddiqui

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The 19th edition of the traditional sampan race in Chattogram concluded yesterday, marking the final day of the four-day event. Held annually alongside the Chatgaiya Cultural Fair, the race aims to raise awareness about protecting the Karnaphuli river. PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Taliban govt suspends chess in Afghanistan

AFP, Kabul

Taliban authorities have barred chess across Afghanistan until further notice over concerns it is a source of gambling, which is illegal under the government's morality law, a sports official said yesterday.

The Taliban government has steadily imposed laws and regulations that reflect its austere vision of Islamic law since seizing power in 2021.

"Chess in sharia (Islamic law) is considered a means of gambling," which is prohibited according to the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice law announced last year, sports directorate spokesperson Atal Mashwani told AFP.

"There are religious considerations regarding the sport of chess," he said.

"Until these considerations are addressed, the sport of chess is suspended in Afghanistan," he added.

Mashwani said the national chess federation had not held any official events for around two years and "had some issues on the leadership level".

Azizullah Gulzada owns a cafe in Kabul that has hosted informal chess competitions in recent years, but denied any gambling took place and noted chess was played in other Muslim-majority countries.

