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## Protests continue at Secretariat

### Employees warn of escalation if public service ordinance not repealed

BAHARAM KHAN

Protests swept through the government's administrative core yesterday as employees from different ministries and divisions demonstrated for the third consecutive day inside the Secretariat, demanding the withdrawal of the Public Service (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025.

The agitation disrupted administrative operations as employees walked out of their offices and protested for around three and a half hours. The demonstrators urged government staffers across the country to join in.

Against this backdrop, the home ministry has decided to bar visitors from entering the Secretariat today. The decision came in an office order issued by the ministry's Secretariat Security Branch last night.

Also, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police imposed a ban on all rallies, processions,

- DMP bans all kinds of gatherings in and around Secretariat
- Home ministry bars visitors' entry
- Demonstrations slated to resume at 10:00am today

and public gatherings in and around the Secretariat, including adjacent areas and the State Guest House Jamuna – the official residence of the chief adviser.

DMP Deputy Commissioner (Media and Public Relations) Muhammad Talebur Rahman in a press release said

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Employees of various ministries and divisions demonstrating at the Secretariat for the third consecutive day yesterday against the Public Service (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025.

PHOTO: STAR

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### Army, govt are working together, not at odds Say army officials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Army and the government are working hand in hand to safeguard the country's interests and sovereignty, and there is no confrontation or discord between them.

Senior officers of the Army Headquarters made the remarks at a press conference at the Officers' Mess in Dhaka Cantonment yesterday.

Brig Gen Md Nazim-ud-Daula, director of the Military Operations Directorate (MOD), said, "This is our country. Its welfare and sovereignty are deeply connected to all of us. If we want to keep this country safe, we have

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## 2.1m people lost jobs, and 86% of them women

### Finds CPD analysis for first half of FY25

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Progress in women empowerment is plateauing or reversing in key areas, found a recent analysis by the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

While 2022 government figures suggested 41 percent of women were active in the labour force, the actual participation rate is closer to just 19 percent.

This means only 19 out of every 100 women attempt to engage in economic activities – and not all secure employment, said Towfiqul Islam Khan, senior research fellow at CPD, at an event titled "Advancing Gender-Responsive Budgeting and FFD4 Outcome".

The event was jointly organised by Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh and UN Women Bangladesh yesterday.

Official unemployment for women was reported at 3.6 percent, but the real figure is nearly 9.7 percent, Khan said. Among young women, unemployment exceeds 22 percent.

In the first half of the ongoing fiscal year, 2.1 million jobs were lost, with women accounting for 85.7 percent of the sum, the CPD found.

Employment conditions for women remain fragile: 80.8 percent hold vulnerable jobs characterised by low productivity and poor returns.

Only 3 percent receive pensions or retirement

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## Make people alert to polls fraud: Yunus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus has stressed the importance of raising awareness among citizens to prevent ballot box snatching.

"People need to be made election focused. Citizens must be made aware that no one can snatch the ballot box. We must bring discipline, and we, taking the people together, must hold safe elections," he told the consensus commission meeting held last night.

"Bangladesh that we got after such a mass uprising should not remain the same Bangladesh," said Yunus,

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- ### AGREEMENT
- Restoration of caretaker govt
  - Bicameral parliament
  - Deputy speaker from opposition
  - Opposition-led key parliamentary standing committees
  - Separate Supreme Court Secretariat
  - Amendment of Article 116 (judicial independence)
  - Seniority-based appointment of Chief Justice
  - Political allegiance and expression of political opinion by judges to be considered as misconduct
  - Comprehensive EC law
  - EC to conduct local elections
  - RTI Act to apply to registered political parties
  - Independent electoral boundary commission
  - Parliamentary body to investigate EC's breach of oath
  - Regionalised Public Service Commission
  - Restore upazila magistrate courts
  - Permanent Public Administration Reform Commission
  - Conflict-of-interest law
  - Criminalisation of private sector bribery (UNCAC alignment)

- ### DISAGREEMENT
- Term limits for prime minister
  - Appointment process and tenure of chief adviser of the caretaker government
  - Composition and power of the National Constitutional Council
  - Inclusion of "pluralism" as a basic principle of the constitution
  - Number of posts party leaders can hold simultaneously (prime minister, party chief and leader of the house)
  - Method of electing the president
  - Process for amending the constitution
  - Proposal for four provinces
  - Electing mayors through ward commissioners
  - Eliminating upazila vice chairman

## NATIONAL CONSENSUS COMMISSION

# Breakthrough on core reforms

### Prof Ali Riaz optimistic despite gaps on some key issues, hopes 'National Charter' by July

MD ABBAS

Major political parties have reached consensus on a wide range of reforms, yet divisions persist over some key issues, setting the stage for the next round of talks expected to begin within days.

Parties agreed to reinstate the non-partisan caretaker government system, though disputes remain over its formation and tenure, and the mechanism for appointing the chief adviser.

There is also alignment on forming a bicameral legislature with a 100-strong upper house and granting the Deputy Speaker role to the opposition, regardless of the structure of the parliament.

The method of electing upper house members, such as via proportional representation or regional votes, remains unresolved, while some parties still prefer the current unicameral system.

Prof Ali Riaz, co-chair of the consensus commission, said that while full consensus is unlikely, discussions will continue to bridge the remaining gaps.

He was speaking at a briefing at the LD Hall of the National Parliament Building yesterday. Riaz expressed optimism that a "National Charter" summarising areas of agreement can be finalised by July after the second round of talks, beginning by the end of May or the first week of June.

The commission also plans to engage the National Bureau of Statistics to conduct a survey in order to gather public feedback on some of the key proposals.

After 45 meetings of the commission with 33 political parties, at the centre of the discord lies a proposal to limit the powers of the prime minister, specifically, barring any individual from simultaneously holding the posts of prime minister, party chief, and Leader of the House.

Political parties are also sharply divided over the proposed formation of a "National Constitutional Council" to oversee key appointments and legal standards. Parties disagreed on the constitutional council's composition and powers.

While parties broadly agree on elevating "equality, human dignity, social justice, and democracy" as state principles, the term "pluralism" as a fundamental principle of the constitution failed to gain consensus.

Beyond the proposal to limit the prime minister's authority, parties are split over imposing term limits on the prime minister, restricting how many posts the prime minister can hold, and the method for electing the president.

Judicial independence has garnered strong support. All parties back the creation of a separate Supreme Court Secretariat, amending article 116 of the constitution to transfer the powers for appointment, posting, promotion, and disciplinary control of judges from the executive to the Supreme Court.

Proposals to form a permanent attorney service under government employment and appoint the chief justice from the senior mist

judges of the Appellate Division were also broadly endorsed.

There is also full agreement on introducing accountability mechanisms to discipline judges exhibiting political bias and to establish post-retirement conduct codes for them.

Additional proposals, such as strengthening the Appellate Division, regulating presidential clemency powers through a Clemency Board, and bringing transparency to judicial appointments, were also widely supported.

## PARTIAL AGREEMENT

- 100 reserved seats for women (disagreement on allocation method)
- Bicameral legislature (disagreement on method of upper house election)
- Amendment of Article 70 (disagreement on exceptions to voting against the party line for finance bills, no confidence motion and constitutional amendment)
- Transparency of electoral expenditure and political party finances
- Establishing a permanent public attorney service
- Barring individuals accused of war crimes from national election
- Formation of Anti-Corruption Ombudsman (majority supports, some have reservations)
- Depoliticisation of Bar Council elections (mixed views, demand for legal community input)
- Expansion of civil rights (debate over legal enforceability and extent)

The proposal to depoliticise bar council elections by denying official status to politically affiliated lawyer panels drew mixed responses. While some parties backed the idea, others insisted that the legal community must be consulted before moving forward.

The recommendation to bar individuals accused of war crimes from running in parliamentary elections received partial support, with many parties seeking a deeper legal review before any legislative changes.

Reform of article 70, currently prohibiting MPs from voting against party lines, saw support with a limit on its scope to confidence votes, constitutional amendments, and money bills.

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## Crime wave sparks fear in city dwellers

MUNTAKIM SAAD

A series of killings and muggings in the capital over the past few weeks has raised fresh concerns over Dhaka's law and order situation, with several incidents caught on camera and widely shared on social media, stoking fear and insecurity among city dwellers.

The latest in the string of violent crimes took place on Sunday night, when two masked assailants shot dead Kamrul Ahsan Shadhon, 52, joint convener of BNP's Gulshan Thana unit, in Badda's Gudaraghat area. CCTV footage capturing the incident went viral.

The attack comes just two weeks after the murder of Shahriar Alam Shammo, a 25-year-old Dhaka University student and leader of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, BNP's student front. He was stabbed to death near Suhrawardy Udyan on May 13, sparking outrage on campus and beyond.

The recent wave of violence also includes the killings of two young men – Nurul Islam, 26, a freelance photographer, and Samiur Rahman, 23, a student of Dr

Maleka University College – in separate incidents in the capital's Shankar and Jigatala areas on May 16.

Apart from these killings, several recent mugging incidents, some taking place in broad daylight, have also rattled residents. In several cases, attackers were seen using machetes, hinting at a pattern.

According to Police Headquarters data, violent crime has seen a significant surge in Dhaka between January and April compared to the same period last year.

Between January and April this year, 175 robbery cases were recorded – almost double from last year's 94. Dacoity cases jumped over threefold from seven to 24 in the same period this year compared to last year. Most alarmingly, murder cases nearly tripled – from 47 last year to 136 this year.

Omar Faruk, a professor at the department of criminology and police science at Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University, said that when a society goes through instability, criminals often take advantage of the situation.

"Even after 10 months under the interim

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According to Police Headquarters data, violent crime has seen a significant surge in Dhaka between January and April compared to the same period last year.