



"It will take strong political and legal courage to make sure every Russian war criminal faces justice, including Putin."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky

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Govt launches probe into last 3 national polls

Forms investigation committee led by ex-HC judge Justice Shamim Hasnain

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The government has formed a committee to investigate allegations of corruption, irregularities, and criminal activities in the three national elections held in 2014, 2018, and 2024.

A gazette notification issued last night said the committee would also recommend steps to ensure free and fair parliamentary polls in future. It has been asked to submit its report by September 30.

According to Election Commission officials and experts, this is the first time since independence that a government has launched a formal investigation into alleged election irregularities.

All three elections were held when Sheikh Hasina was in power and her party the Awami League won two-thirds majorities.

These elections have been widely criticised at home and abroad, and there are allegations that the then ruling party was elected in these "staged" polls by "undermining" the people's right to vote in various ways, said the gazette.

"There are also serious allegations against the managers of these elections of violating the obligation of running the state through elected representatives as enshrined in the Constitution of Bangladesh.

"It is feared that this has endangered the rule of law, democracy and fundamental human rights in the country," the gazette said.

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PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Farm workers winnow paddy to separate the chaff from the grain in Tanore upazila of Rajshahi. This season's paddy harvesting is nearly complete in the region.

IMF sets new loan conditions

Bangladesh must clear dues, hit steep revenue, reserve targets for next tranche

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The International Monetary Fund has set new performance criteria tied to Bangladesh's \$5.5 billion loan programme, requiring the country to significantly reduce both domestic and external arrears in the power and fertiliser sectors before the next tranche can be released.

Under the revised conditions detailed in the IMF's latest programme report released yesterday, the government must cut external payment arrears in the power and fertiliser sectors from \$870 million in June 2025 to \$562 million by December, and further to \$254 million by June 2026. Simultaneously, domestic arrears in these sectors must be halved from Tk 28,000 crore in June to Tk 14,070 crore by December, and brought down to zero by June 2026.

"External payment arrears have surfaced, notably within the power sector's state-owned enterprises, driven by limited foreign exchange availability and outstanding domestic subsidy arrears owed by the central government to the SOEs," the IMF said in the report.

In a shift with broader implications, the IMF has elevated these arrears clearance targets to the level of quantitative performance criteria, the most binding form of conditionality in IMF programmes. Failure to meet them would require Bangladesh to formally request a waiver from the IMF Executive Board before future disbursements can proceed.

Despite some improvement in the current account during the first

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2024 polls were 'dummy, farcical'

Ex-CEC Awal tells court

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Former chief election commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal yesterday told a Dhaka court that the 2024 national election was "dummy and farcical".

He said this during a remand hearing in a case where he is accused of election irregularities and acting with bias.

A witness highlighted the limitations of the Election Commission, saying it would not be possible to hold fair polls in Bangladesh even in the next 1,000 years unless there are fundamental reforms.

He was escorted to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court with his hands cuffed around 12:50pm amid tight security. He was wearing

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Turmoil deepens at NBR as officials threaten shutdown

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Protesting National Board of Revenue officials have announced an all-out shutdown from Saturday if the tax authority's chairman is not removed by today.

The ultimatum comes after the protesters -- comprising income tax, VAT and customs officials -- under the banner of 'NBR Reform Unity Council' staged a pen-down strike and sit-in for the fourth consecutive day in front of the NBR headquarters in the capital's Agargaon yesterday.

The demonstrations began at 12pm in front of the NBR headquarters in Dhaka.

A large contingent of law enforcement personnel, including members of the army, police, Rapid Action Battalion, Bangladesh Coast Guard and Border Guard Bangladesh, were already deployed at the site.

Protesters said no one was allowed to enter or exit the premises during the demonstration, with several employees sitting at the building's main gates.

Around 1:30pm, Council President Hasan Muhammad Tarek Rikabdar, an additional commissioner, tried to enter the NBR building but was blocked by

law enforcers.

In protest, he sat down in front of the main gate, further escalating the demonstration.

However, Asif Mahmud, assistant commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan



Police's Tejgaon Division, said the protesting officers were themselves preventing others from entering the building and the police were just providing security.

Officials from 25 customs stations including Chattogram and Mongla ports as well as the Kamalapur inland container depot as well as more than

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US had to enter war to save Israel

Says Khamenei, claims Iran 'slapped America in the face'

AGENCIES

Iran's Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei yesterday said the US had to enter the war to save Israel, which almost collapsed amid Iranian strikes.

In a statement and a televised speech carried by state media, he hailed his country's "victory" over Israel and vowed never to surrender to the United States, while claiming that Washington had been dealt a "slap" after striking Iranian nuclear sites.

He also said President Donald Trump "exaggerated" the impact of US strikes on Iranian nuclear sites, in his first appearance since a ceasefire in the war with Israel took hold.

Khamenei's remarks come two days after a ceasefire ended a 12-day war between Iran and Israel, the focus' deadliest

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Law adviser accuses Star of bias, fails to give details

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Adviser Asif Nazrul yesterday accused The Daily Star and Prothom Alo of bias during a seminar in the capital.

Referring to The Daily Star, he cited an incident that he claimed took place 13 to 14 years ago, adding that he could provide all the evidence if asked.

However, when pressed for details later, he did not provide any as of the filing of this report at 1:30am today. He said the incident might have occurred 20 years ago and that he could not recall the specifics.

Talking to our correspondent, he also said maybe it should not have been mentioned in public, and that the matter should be let go.

Earlier, speaking at the event, organised by the Centre for Governance Studies, the law adviser had said, "I would like to talk about the code of conduct in journalism. As

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Three HSC candidates sit together for a final round of preparation before entering the exam hall at Tejgaon College in the capital. This year's HSC and equivalent exams began yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

CASES AGAINST JOURNOS

Law ministry's 'hands are tied'

Can't do anything until trial process starts: Asif Nazrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The law ministry has limited power to prevent cases, including those for murder, from being filed against journalists, because anyone can file a case in Bangladesh, said Law Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul.

The ministry's hands are tied when it comes to intervening in such cases, particularly during the initial stages of investigation, he added.

The adviser made the remarks at a roundtable titled "Media Freedom: A Review of the Legal Framework for Journalist Protection and Grievance Redressal" organised by the Centre for Governance Studies at the Cirdap auditorium in the capital yesterday.

He explained that his ministry can only intervene to withdraw a case after a charge sheet has been submitted and the trial process has formally begun. "If a case is under police investigation, the law ministry can do nothing about it. It falls under the police's jurisdiction."

Nazrul claimed that some cases against journalists were not filed over their reporting but for alleged incitement or abetment of a crime.

He also criticised the media, stating, "You, the journalists, have long been divided into factions. How will you achieve freedom if you are not united?"

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