



CONSENSUS COMMISSION Talks stall over women's seats, upper house

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Consensus Commission has proposed establishing an upper house comprising elected representatives from each district and city corporation, and suggested abolishing the current system of reserved seats for women in parliament.

The proposals were presented on the 13th day of the second phase of dialogues with political parties at the Foreign Service Academy in Dhaka yesterday.

Earlier, the commission had proposed forming the 100 member chamber through a proportional representation (PR) system based on votes in the lower house election.

In its newly proposed model, the upper house would consist of 76 members: one representative from each of the 64 administrative districts and one from each of the 12 city corporations.

Elections to both the lower house and the proposed upper house would be held simultaneously.



A drone show illuminates the night sky with an image of students demanding justice for those killed in last year's July uprising. The event was held at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday commemorating the first anniversary of the uprising.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



THE JULY THAT ROCKED BANGLADESH

JULY 15, 2024

Chhatra League attacks quota protesters

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

Brutal violence descended on July 15, 2024, as activists of the Bangladesh Chhatra League launched coordinated attacks on students protesting for reforms in the public service quota system.

The most harrowing scenes unfolded on the Dhaka University campus, where pitched battles between helmet-clad BCL activists and unarmed demonstrators raged for nearly five hours, leaving over 300 people injured, mostly protesters, including women, but also several BCL activists.

Armed with sticks and iron rods, hundreds of BCL activists, many reportedly brought in from outside the university, swept across campus, beating demonstrators wherever they found them. Even female students were not spared, as attackers were seen hitting them with sticks in full view of onlookers. Many injured students, bleeding and terrified, ran for their lives through the streets littered with brick chunks from the clashes.

At one point, the protesters retaliated, throwing bricks and beating back some BCL activists. But the violence was far from

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"BNP backs raising the reserved seats for women from 50 to 100 but believes those should be filled through the existing mechanism, not through direct election."



SALAHUDDIN AHMED
BNP standing committee member

Under the PR system, parties receive seats proportionate to their vote share. For instance, a party winning 30 percent of the vote would get 30 percent of the seats.

The commission tabled this fresh proposal as parties remained divided over how to form the upper house, even by the sixth day of discussions on the issue yesterday.

While BNP supported forming the house based on the number of seats won in the lower house, Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, National Citizen Party, and some other parties favoured the PR-based method.

Meanwhile, instead of the current system of reserved seats for women, the commission recommended that parties contesting at least 25 constituencies nominate women for one-third of their candidacies under the first-past-the-post system, where the highest vote-getter wins. Parties were also divided on this issue, which has been

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Dhaka gears up for 3rd round of talks to avert US tariff shock

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will launch the third round of negotiations with the United States Trade Representative (USTR) next week, aiming to secure a more "rational" tariff structure before the August 1 deadline, said Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin yesterday.

Speaking at a press conference at the Commerce Ministry in Dhaka, the adviser said that a "rational tariff" would mean zero-duty access for Bangladeshi goods in US markets, a condition the government hopes will be met ahead of August 1. He was accompanied by Commerce Secretary Mahbubur Rahman.

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Govt at it again, plans to promote retirees

At least 400 non-admin cadres now being scrutinised

BAHARAM KHAN

The government is set to implement another round of retrospective promotions, this time to several hundred retired officials from non-administration cadres who will receive additional financial benefits at the taxpayers' expense without serving even for a day.

In December last year, 764 retired officials, including 119 secretaries, from the administration cadre were given retrospective promotions -- a decision that drew criticism from many former bureaucrats and public admin experts. The government has now initiated

a similar process for retired officials from non-administration cadres. To facilitate the move, it has extended the tenure of a committee headed by former finance secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan until July 30.

The committee, formed on September 16 last year, has been tasked with reviewing applications from retired officials of non-administration cadres (Grade-III and above), who were allegedly deprived of promotions over the last 15 years.

A list of around 400 retired officials is currently under review though it remains unclear how many of them will

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Even light rain causes significant waterlogging on this road in the Hussaini Dalan area of Old Dhaka, thanks to the absence of an effective drainage system. The photo was taken last week.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

WATERLOGGING IN DHAKA SOUTH

Another year, another spell of suffering

DIPAN NANDY

With the monsoon setting in, southern part of Dhaka city braces for a fresh spell of waterlogging, as the city corporation has yet to take effective measures to mitigate the perennial problem despite identifying 30

strategy.

The waterlogging-prone areas include Paltan, Shantinagar, Bailey Road, Kakrail, Gopibagh, Kamalapur, Tikatuli, Agha Sadeq Road, Agamasi Lane, Abdul Hadi Lane, Eskaton Road, a part of Bangabandhu Avenue, the Secretariat, New Market, Bata Signal, Dhanmondi Eidgah Road, Jigatola, Green Road, Nazimuddin Road, Nawabganj Park, Azimpur, RK Mission Road, Abhoy Das Lane, and several parts of Old Dhaka.

In late May, consecutive days of rain inundated several areas in the city's south, including Paltan, Fakirapool, Bangshal, Malibagh, and Shantinagar. In some locations, water remained stagnant for up to 20 hours. DSCC deployed pumps to drain the water, but the effort did little to ease the residents' suffering.

With the Met office forecasting a rise in precipitation this month, experts warn that several parts in the city's south may again face severe waterlogging if it rains heavily for several days in a row.

Dhaka city has a drainage network spanning

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Under former mayor Taposh, Tk 360 crore spent on drainage system cleaning

Waterbody coverage dropped to 2.9% by 2023 from 20.57% in 1995

highly vulnerable areas nearly two years ago. Since the detection of these spots in September 2023, Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) has relied on temporary solutions such as using water pumps instead of adopting a sustainable, long-term drainage

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