

CONSENSUS TALKS Breakthrough on EC formation

Speaker-led 5-member panel to pick election commissioners; new law to make EC accountable to JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a significant development, political parties have unanimously agreed on a proposal on forming the Election Commission through a five-member search panel, a move described as a "turning point" in the national dialogue.

The committee will be chaired by the Speaker of parliament and include the deputy speaker (from the opposition), the prime minister, the leader of the opposition in parliament, and an Appellate Division judge nominated by the chief justice.

National Consensus Commission Vice-President Prof Ali Riaz said that there will be a separate law to make the Election Commission (EC) accountable to parliament. Under the law, election commissioners will also have a code of conduct.

Although yesterday's talks at the Foreign Service Academy, the 18th meeting in the second phase of the dialogue, were originally set to cover appointments to multiple constitutional and statutory bodies, discussions ultimately focused on the EC.

After the meeting, Prof Riaz said all

"This is a historic step forward in our journey toward national consensus."

PROF ALI RIAZ, vice-president of National Consensus Commission



parties agreed to amend article 118 of the constitution to formalise the appointment process for the chief election commissioner and other commissioners.

Under the proposed changes, the search committee will recommend one candidate for each post. The president will then appoint them for a five-year term.

Candidate eligibility, application procedures, vetting, scrutiny and other details will be defined in the new law to be passed by parliament.

The committee must begin work at least 90 days before the expiry of an Election

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As an office assistant clears away school bags left behind by children after Monday's horrific jet crash, we are reminded that many of them are now fighting for their lives or did not survive. The photo was taken on the Milestone School campus in Uttara's Diabari yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

BUSINESS

Development spending falls to 49-year low

Bangladesh's development spending dropped to a historic low in fiscal year 2024-25, with only 68 percent of the revised annual development programme (ADP) implemented—the poorest performance since 1976-77.

Officials and economists attributed the sharp decline to widespread public unrest, increased scrutiny of politically sensitive projects, and the government's cost-cutting measures aimed at reining in inflation and restoring macroeconomic stability.

STORY ON B1

MILESTONE TRAGEDY 13 fighting for life in ICUs 57 in hospitals; 13 discharged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thirteen people, mostly children, were fighting for their lives in Intensive Care Units (ICUs) of hospitals yesterday, three days after a jet crashed into Milestone School & College in Uttara's Diabari.

According to the health ministry, as of 7:15pm yesterday, 57 people remained admitted to five hospitals in the capital. Most of them are children.

Of the total, 45 were admitted to the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery, with eight in critical condition receiving specialised care in the ICU.

The Combined Military Hospital (CMH) was treating nine patients, four of whom were in the ICU. Kuwait Bangladesh Friendship Government Hospital, Shaheed Monsur Ali Medical College Hospital, and Human Aid Research Lab & Hospital each had one patient admitted. The patient at Human Aid was also in the ICU.

The health ministry said 13 patients were discharged yesterday after their condition improved, while one new patient was admitted.

At the burn institute, in addition to those in the ICU, 13 patients were in "severe" condition,

The Milestone School and College authorities formed a six-member committee to determine the exact number of casualties and prepare a complete list of the dead, injured, and missing.

and the rest were reported to be in an "intermediate" condition, the ministry added.

Earlier, an interdisciplinary board at the burn institute categorised the patients as critical, severe and intermediate based on the extent of their burns. The meeting was attended by a senior consultant from Singapore General Hospital.

Briefing reporters, Prof Nasir Uddin, director of the institute, said Dr Chong Si Jack, a Singaporean burn specialist familiar with the institute, was assisting in assessing patients and adjusting treatment protocols.

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Govt's biggest problem is inexperience
Says Fakhrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government's biggest problem is a lack of experience, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said yesterday.

He added that the government is on the right track on holding the election in February next year, and the only way to solve the current political crisis is to form a political government through elections without delay.

"They lack experience. Most of them are inexperienced. Some people have ego issues. They don't consult us on anything. They don't take advice from us -- perhaps out of ego," Fakhrul told reporters at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office when asked whether the government had shown any negligence in handling the

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NEWS ANALYSIS

Governed by Facebook posts, ruled by confusion

TANIM AHMED and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

It was just about 7:00am on Monday. A mother sat with her daughter at a bus counter in Dinajpur, set for a two-hour commute to Rangpur for the daughter's HSC exam three hours later. There was also another teacher at the same counter who told them that the exams have been cancelled. The local Prothom Alo correspondent happened to be at the scene too and reassured the mother that it was indeed the case.



Still, the parent's confusion and the candidate's disbelief were quite understandable since the higher secondary and equivalent exams have hundreds of thousands of examinees and virtually the gateway to university. Results of the public board exams decide the fate of the candidates. It would not be an overstatement to say that toying with these exams is akin to toying with the fates of hundreds of thousands of the people. But it did not appear from the government's activities that it had completely grasped that.

The government's "announcement" of the postponement came at 2:41am—a little over seven hours before the exam—through a Facebook post by Information

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A towering chimney spews plumes of smoke generated from coal combustion at the Rampal Power Plant in Bagerhat yesterday. Environmentalists warn that this heavy discharge is contaminating the air, harming both the environment and public health.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

JULY UPRISING Extraordinary powers of the ordinary people How thousands joined and aided protesters



TANGILA TASnim, SHAHEEN MOLLAH and NAZIBA BASHER

When bullets tore through a protester's head near a poultry shop in North Badda on July 19, Waliullah rushed to rescue him.

"I was on my way back from Friday prayers," he said. "He was bleeding from the skull. A few of us took him to a local clinic, then to Dhaka Medical."

The protester didn't survive. Waliullah, a garment worker, didn't even know his name.

But within days, police summoned him. "After that, my family never let me step outside again ... But I wasn't the only one who tried to help. Friends, neighbours, strangers -- we were all drawn in."

The protests were loud, defiant,

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