

DELIMITATION HEARING DAY 3
Munshiganj, Manikganj
residents demand four
constituencies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On the third day of the constituency delimitation hearings yesterday, residents and BNP leaders of Munshiganj and Manikganj demanded that each district retain four parliamentary constituencies as before.

The demand was raised during the hearing at the Election Commission headquarters in Dhaka, attended by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) AMM Nasir Uddin, four commissioners, and conducted by EC Senior Secretary Akhter Ahmed.

At the hearing, Manikganj resident Khairul Alam Chowdhury said the district had four constituencies until 2001, which were reduced to three in 2008, decreasing both representation and allocations.

Afroza Khanom Rita, convener of Manikganj BNP, echoed the demand, calling it the will of the people.

From Munshiganj, Roni Mollick of the Citizens' Rights Movement also pressed for four constituencies and raised the issue of voting rights for expatriates.

According to the EC, hearings were held yesterday on 28 constituencies across six districts, with 50 arguments in

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Bangladesh, S Korea
agree to deepen ties

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and South Korea have agreed to deepen their existing political and developmental relationship while also exploring avenues for strategic partnerships.

This development came during the fourth round of Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) held in Seoul yesterday, according to a foreign ministry statement.

Dr Nazrul Islam, secretary (Bilateral-East and West) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, led the Bangladesh delegation, while the Korean delegation was headed by Park Yoonjoo, first vice minister of the South Korean foreign ministry.

South Korea is Bangladesh's fifth largest foreign direct investment (FDI) provider, with \$1.3 billion in FDIs. More than 200 Korean companies, including Samsung, have a significant presence in Bangladesh.

Bilateral trade between the two countries crossed the \$3 billion mark in 2023 and South Korea is an important destination for Bangladeshi workers. Around 20,000 Bangladeshi people live in Korea, most of them expatriate workers and their families.

The delegations discussed political and economic cooperation, trade and investment, human resources development, infrastructure development, relocation of Korean electronics and semiconductor production plants,

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UGC to ink deals for 151 sub-projects

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to ensure accountability and fairness throughout the evaluation process, which he personally monitored at every stage.

He said individual submissions were not allowed. "Sub-project proposals were submitted by faculty members through academic committees and with approval from university vice chancellors," he said.

"UGC does not assess applicants' political ideology; it is beyond our jurisdiction," Prof Faiz added.

He also said neutral reviewers and qualified university faculty were involved in the evaluation,

with national interest given the highest priority.

HEAT Project Director Prof Md Asaduzzaman explained that the sub-projects were selected through a multi-stage process involving screening, expert reviews, and presentations.

The HEAT project, implemented by UGC under the Secondary and Higher Education Division of the Ministry of Education, has been running since July 2023 and will run till June 2028.

Its goals include improving teaching and learning, expanding digital infrastructure, ensuring quality assurance, fostering research and innovation,

and promoting women's leadership in higher education.

At the core of the initiative is the Academic Transformation Fund (ATF). Under component 2.2, universities were invited to compete for grants through an open call. A total of 1,481 proposals were submitted following 46 proposal-writing workshops held across campuses.

Of these, 239 proposals were dropped during initial screening, and 1,242 proceeded to expert review. Evaluation was conducted by committees of experts across seven thematic clusters. Each proposal was scored out of 100 by two reviewers, with a third reviewer added when necessary.

Industry-linked proposals were reviewed by two academics and one industry expert. Shortlisted applicants also gave presentations worth 10 marks.

The ATF has a total allocation of Tk 1,224 crore, with Tk 857 crore earmarked for the first round. From this round, nine pandemic-related projects, 40 focused on teaching-learning infrastructure, and 102

advanced research projects have been approved. Among the research projects, four address climate change, 12 are led by junior faculty, and 86 fall under the general category. Thirteen proposals in arts and social sciences are set to be reassessed.

UGC Member Prof Tanzimuddin Khan addressed the question-and-answer session at the programme. Dr Shamsul Arefin, director of Public Relations and Publications, moderated the event.

UGC members Prof M Anwar Hossen, Prof Masum Habib, and Prof Mohammad Ayub Islam, alongside UGC Secretary Fakhru Islam were present at the briefing.

Md Ruhul Quddus Kazal, another lawyer for BNP, told the court that

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system, introduced in 1996 through bringing thirteenth amendment to the constitution, is not a lawful judgement as it was signed by the judges concerned after 16 months into its announcement, argued Zainul Abedin, principal lawyer for BNP.

He was placing arguments before a seven-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed during hearing of the review petitions challenging the apex court verdict.

Md Ruhul Quddus Kazal, another lawyer for BNP, told the court that

the caretaker government system is not contradictory to the basic structure of the constitution.

Similar statement came from Jamaat's lawyer Mohammad Shishir Manir.

After concluding yesterday's proceedings, the SC bench fixed today for resuming the hearing.

BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, five conscious citizens and a freedom fighter from Naogaon, Mofazzal Islam, lodged separate review petitions with the Appellate Division earlier in last year to turn down its 2011 verdict.

The first review petition was lodged by five citizens including Badiul Alam

Majumdar, secretary of rights organisation Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik, on August 27 last year saying that the caretaker government system had been introduced through political consensus of the people and therefore, it has become a basic structure of the constitution, which cannot be scrapped.

The Appellate Division verdict that had cancelled the 13th amendment of the constitution is self-contradictory as the court in its short verdict said that the next two national elections (10th and 11th parliamentary elections) could be held under the caretaker government system.

Mofazzal Islam filed two separate review petitions in connection with this issue.

government, but this directive was not mentioned in the full judgement, they said in the petitions.

The four other petitioners are Tofail Ahmed, Md Hafizuddin Khan, Md Jobirul Hoque Bhuiyan and Zahrah Rahman.

On October 16 and 23 last year, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and Jamaat-e-Islami's Secretary General Miah Golam Parwar respectively submitted two separate review petitions to the Appellate Division seeking restoration of the caretaker government system.

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Sweet harvest on saline shores

Off-season watermelon cultivation thrives in Khulna's coastal fields



DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

On the saline fringes of Bangladesh's southwest coast, where seawater intrusion and freshwater scarcity have long dictated the fate of crops, a quiet agricultural revolution is ripening.

Including Dacope, Batiaghata, Dumuria, Koyra and Terokhada upazilas in Khulna district -- better known for their fish enclosures (gher) and shrimp farming -- the region has emerged as the most prolific producer of off-season watermelon.

While summer watermelon cultivation in this coastal belt is fraught with challenges, the monsoon season is telling a different story. Farmers are now using the elevated banks of their fish ponds to grow the fruit during the rainy months, free from the irrigation woes and salinity concerns that cripple their summer harvests.

Off-season watermelon offers high yields, lower costs, chemical-free production and sweet profits.

In the summer, farmers in coastal Khulna face the harshest obstacle of all: water. Groundwater and surface water sources are often laden with salt, unsuitable for

irrigating watermelon. Many resort to expensive alternative irrigation systems, pushing production costs for one bigha (about 0.33 acre) up to Tk 30,000-35,000. For some, the returns do not cover expenses, leading to losses.

During the monsoon, the story changes. Rainwater replenishes the gher, diluting salinity and providing abundant, low-cost irrigation. It needs Tk 7,000 to 8,000 for a bigha. The raised pond banks -- typically 3 to 4 feet high -- keep the plants safe from waterlogging even during heavy downpours.

This innovation is not just a small experiment. According to agricultural officials, more than 6,000 farmers across Khulna's nine upazilas are engaged in off-season watermelon farming this year, with expected combined earnings exceeding Tk 150 crore.

One such farmer is Amrito Mondal, a resident of Tiladanga village in Dacope's Tiladanga union and a first-year degree student at Chalna KC College.

Inspired by his father, Asim Mondal, Amrito ventured into off-season watermelon cultivation last year. Using the banks of his fish enclosure, he invested Tk 10,000 to

cultivate the fruit on 1.5 bighas of land. The gamble paid off: he sold his harvest for Tk 60,000.

"This year, I've planted watermelon on the same gher bank," Amrito said. "I have already sold 426kg at Tk 52 per kg and expect to sell another 800-900kg."

Even this year's heavy rains failed to deter him. "The excess rain caused a bit of trouble, but we managed," he said.

In Amrito's village and nearby areas, 35 to 40 other farmers have also embraced the practice. Shyamal Roy is one of them.

"I've been growing off-season watermelon for several years now, and it's definitely profitable," Shyamal said. Last year, his three bighas of gher bank brought him nearly Tk 2 lakh in profit.

"This year, I planted about 1,000 watermelon plants on the same land. Despite some losses from rain, I expect a good profit. In the next few days, I will take 1,200-1,250 kg of watermelon to Dumuria's wholesale market."

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension, in at least 40 villages, over 350 farmers have cultivated off-season watermelon

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Political will key to implementing reforms: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There is strong public demand for reforms, and political parties will face consequences if they ignore it, said Sushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Sujan) Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar yesterday.

Speaking at a citizens' dialogue titled "Proposed July National Charter and Citizen Reflections" organised by Sujan at CIRDAP in Dhaka yesterday, he said the success of the July National Charter will depend on its implementation.

"The government, political parties, and the Election Commission all have roles to play. A party's responsibility does not end with a note of dissent or showing the attitude that the issues which will be agreed upon in the next parliament will be implemented. If reforms are not implemented, they will have to face the consequences," said Badiul, also a member of the National Consensus Commission.

He said ahead of the next general election, the consensus commission proposed a series of reforms, and the Election Commission has already taken steps to consider them. These proposals aim to bring fundamental changes to the electoral system and ensure the EC's accountability, he added.

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25 new HC judges sworn in

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-five newly appointed High Court judges took oath yesterday at the Supreme Court, marking the first appointments under the Supreme Court Judges' Appointment Ordinance, 2025.

Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed administered the oath at a ceremony in the Judges' Lounge, attended by judges from both divisions of the Supreme Court, Attorney General Md Asaduzzaman, Supreme Court Bar Association President AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon, and Secretary Mahfuzur Rahman Milon.

High Court Registrar Mohammad Moazzem Hossain conducted the proceedings.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin approved the appointments on August 25 under Article 98 of the constitution, raising the number of High Court judges to 113. The law ministry issued a gazette notification on the same day.

The judges will serve a two-year term from the date of oath-taking. The appointments include

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BNP and Jamaat lawyers urge SC to reinstate

the caretaker government system is not contradictory to the basic structure of the constitution.

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জয়িতা ফাউন্ডেশন
জয়িতা টাওয়ার, বাসা নং-১০/এ
ধানমন্ডি-২৭, ঢাকা-১২০৯

সংশোধনী
২৪/০৮/২০২৫ তারিখে প্রকাশিত জয়িতা ফাউন্ডেশনের নিম্নলিখিত সংস্কার প্রকল্পের মূল্য ৩৯,৬৯,৩৫০/- (উন্নয়ন্ত্র লক্ষ উন্নস্তর হাজার তিনিশত পঞ্চাশ) টাকার স্থলে ২৭,৭৫,৩৫০/- (সাতাশ লক্ষ পঞ্চাশ হাজার তিনিশত পঞ্চাশ) টাকা হবে।

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