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5G goes live, but
few phones to connect

B1



Mondera set
to show off her
dance chops

P8



21,000 children
disabled in
Gaza war: UN
committee

P5



Half the venue,
athletes too
many

P11

Fugitives can't run in national elections

Proposes EC, seeks 46 amendments to RPO

MOHUDDIN ALAMGIR and AHMED DEEPTO

The Election Commission has proposed stricter amendments to the election law, including a provision barring fugitives from contesting national polls.

The EC sent 46 proposed amendments to the Representation of the People Order (RPO), 1972, to the law ministry for vetting on Tuesday. The RPO is the law under which the commission regulates national elections.

Under the new proposal, the EC has outlined several major changes, including recognising the armed forces as law enforcers and granting itself the authority to cancel a constituency's election if significant irregularities are found. The proposal also reintroduces the "No Vote" option in constituencies with only one contestant. If approved, it will allow the EC to hold a fresh election if "No Vote" gets the majority votes.

Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) Abul Fazal Md Sanaullah briefed reporters on the proposed changes to the RPO yesterday.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO RPO

- Armed forces to be recognised as law enforcers
- EC empowered to cancel entire constituency's vote
- Candidates must declare foreign assets
- Security deposit raised to Tk 50K from Tk 20K
- Campaign spending capped at Tk 25 lakh
- Fresh election if 'No Vote' option receives a majority of votes
- Alliance candidates must use own party symbol

When asked why the EC is now taking steps to disqualify fugitives, Sanaullah said: "The Election Commission has held discussions with the National Consensus Commission. The Election Commission is now satisfied and feels that including such a provision will be beneficial.

"In case of misuse, the provision could be amended again if necessary."

In February, the Electoral Reform Commission recommended preventing individuals accused of serious human rights violations from participating in elections if the International Crimes Tribunal accepts the charges.

The commission identified extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, inhumane torture, and attacks on journalists or human rights activists as severe human rights violations. It also recommended making individuals involved in money laundering ineligible to contest polls if

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Editors' Council voices concern over 3 issues

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Editors' Council yesterday expressed concern over three developments: denial of a genuine protest photograph as AI-generated, attempts to create a mob at the Dhaka Reporters Unity, and the government's move to implement a law first drafted during the ousted Awami League government's tenure.

In a statement, the council said that during the recent engineering students' protest, a police officer was photographed pressing his hand over a student's face.

After the photo appeared in several media outlets, police claimed that it had been generated using artificial intelligence (AI). Multiple media organisations later confirmed the photo was authentic.

On this issue, the council said, "We are aware of AI technologies, and if we ever publish an AI-generated

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Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and heads of foreign delegations arrive for a military parade marking the 80th anniversary of the end of World War Two, in Beijing, China yesterday. Story on page 5.

PHOTO: AFP

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Mohammadpur, Adabor grapple with teen gangs

Extortion, violence continue despite police drives

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and
MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Around 2:30pm Tuesday, a 40-year-old man stood silently at Adabor's Road 10 Balur Math, staring at some shanties.

He said he had built four rooms there five years ago on rented land. One was for his family, while the other three were sublet for Tk 9,000 a month.

It was the main source of income for Jalil, a day labourer.

But the sense of certainty and calm started to fade when a local gang of mostly teenagers extorted Tk 10,000 from him after last year's uprising, as law and order deteriorated rapidly.

"About a month ago, followers of Monir and Gujha Monir demanded Tk 5,000 every month. When I refused, they beat me mercilessly and warned of another attack if I didn't pay within 15 days," he said.

Fearing for his family's safety, he moved to a rented room in Dhaka Udyan Housing. On Tuesday, he returned only to check on tenants after massive joint drives in Adabor following an attack on police.



AI-GENERATED IMAGE

For speaking to this newspaper, the man gave a pseudonym -- Abdul Jalil -- out of fear of repercussions.

Such stories are now common in the area.

Residents said they are constantly forced to pay extortion or face assaults and live in terror. At night, people don't dare to step out. Gang members abduct people, demand ransom, rob valuables, and openly trade drugs.

"No one dares to protest," said one resident, requesting anonymity.

Locals said gangs often justify

extortion, claiming money is needed to cover bail expenses.

Jalil himself was told that because several members were recently freed, he had to contribute.

Many like Jalil rent parts of Balur Math -- a large stretch of land -- and build tin houses and rent them out.

Police and locals said the area is dominated by Anwar -- known as "Kobji Kata Anwar" -- who controls multiple gangs.

Though members are now aged between 15 and 30 years, they are

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Construction materials have been left piled up for over two years around the Bosila Puratan Government Primary School, disrupting students' regular activities. The Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority has been conducting development work along the river boundary in Mohammadpur's Bosila area for more than four years. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

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Global laws must tighten to stop stolen wealth flow

Yunus urges TI to raise its voice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus has called for stricter international legal frameworks to prevent the laundering of billions of dollars in stolen wealth to offshore tax havens and developed nations.

"Most of the time we know where this stolen money is coming from. Yet, we accept it as a genuine transfer with no initiative to taking any action," he said during a meeting with Transparency International Chair François Valerian at the state guesthouse Jamuna.

The chief adviser said the existing global financial system has failed to prevent the transfer of tens of billions of dollars

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NEWS ANALYSIS

LDC graduation: an economic cliff?

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

As Bangladesh approaches its scheduled graduation from the least developed country (LDC) category in November 2026, a sense of unpreparedness hangs over both the government and the private sector. The milestone represents a recognition of progress on three key United Nations criteria: per capita income, human assets, and economic vulnerability. To qualify for graduation, a country must meet at least two of these three thresholds in two consecutive triennial reviews. Bangladesh has distinguished itself as the first country to achieve all three criteria in both the 2018 and 2021 reviews.

On the income front, Bangladesh's per capita gross national income has reached an estimated \$2,684, well above the 2024 graduation threshold of \$1,306. Its Human Assets Index, which measures outcomes in health and education, scored 77.5 against a required threshold of 66, reflecting progress in literacy rates and reductions in under-five mortality. The Economic Vulnerability Index, which assesses resilience to shocks, stood at 21.9, comfortably below the threshold of 32. Taken together, these figures underscore the resilience and growth that have made graduation possible. Yet many economists and industry leaders warn that inadequate preparation and the slow pace of reforms could turn this milestone into an economic shock, weakening the country's competitiveness in global value chains.

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Revisions done, July Charter set to be sent to parties

MD ABBAS

The finalised July Charter is likely to be sent to political parties in a day or two following revisions to three contentious commitments that several parties had raised objections to.

However, the National Consensus Commission has decided not to include the implementation process in the July Charter.

A member of the commission, preferring anonymity, said that once the charter is sent to the political parties, any objections they may have will not be addressed.

Earlier on August 16, the commission sought pledges on eight broad commitments, prioritising the ideals of the July uprising.

Among these, three points drew concerns from some political parties, including the BNP: a provision stating that if the charter conflicted with existing laws or the constitution, the charter would take precedence; another that vested the authority to interpret any provision or recommendation of the charter in the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court; and a clause that barred challenges to the charter's legitimacy in court.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, the commission's Vice President Prof Ali Riaz said the three commitments had been revised in response to the concerns.

"We are consulting legal experts and revising the commitments with provisions that will be both legally sound and politically acceptable."

He added that the final charter will be structured in two volumes. The first will contain the consensus points that can be implemented immediately through government orders and ordinances, and the second will include issues that would require more time for implementation.

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