

## Life term may be reduced for elderly convicts Says home adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is reviewing whether to reduce the tenure of life imprisonment, particularly for elderly inmates, Home Affairs Adviser Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said yesterday.

Speaking to reporters after a meeting of the Core Committee on Law and Order at the Secretariat, the adviser noted that under the Penal Code of 1860, life imprisonment in Bangladesh is equivalent to 30 years.

"We are reviewing whether the duration can be lowered considering age," Jahangir said.

"For women, it could be reduced to 20 years, while for men, it may be a little higher. The provision will depend on the convict's age at the time of sentencing," he added.

The adviser also said the proposal has not yet been finalised and will

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## New round of US-China trade talks kicks off in Madrid

AFP, Madrid

China and the United States kicked off the latest round of trade talks yesterday in Madrid, where they are set to thrash out their TikTok dispute and President Donald Trump's promised hefty tariffs.

The Chinese delegation is in the Spanish capital until Wednesday and senior officials, including Vice Premier He Lifeng, will meet with the US delegation led by Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent.

The Spanish government said yesterday's talks got under way at the Palacio de Santa Cruz, the headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Trade tensions between Beijing and Washington have been on a rollercoaster ride in 2025, with both sides slapping escalating tariffs on each other.

Tit-for-tat US-China tariffs reached triple digits on both sides at one point this year, snarling supply chains.

Washington and Beijing have since reached an agreement to de-escalate tensions, temporarily lowering tariffs to 30 percent on the United States' side and 10 percent on China's part.



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus poses for a photo with political leaders after chairing a meeting at the Foreign Service Academy in Dhaka yesterday as part of the third round of talks of the National Consensus Commission with political parties on how to implement the July Charter.

PHOTO: PID

## NEW EC DELIMITATION Protests intensify in Faridpur, Pabna, Bagerhat

STAR REPORT

Demonstrators yesterday enforced blockades and staged sit ins in Faridpur, Pabna, and Bagerhat, protesting the Election Commission's recent redrawing of constituencies in their areas.

The EC on September 4 issued the gazette notification, redrawing boundaries in 46 constituencies across the country.

As per the new delimitation, Bagerhat lost one parliamentary constituency, reducing the number from four to three, while Faridpur's two unions and Pabna's one upazila were moved from one constituency to another.

In Faridpur, protesters blocked roads and railways for around 12 hours, protesting the transfer of Algi and Hamirdi unions of Bhanga upazila from Faridpur 4 to Faridpur 2 constituency.

The blockade began at 6:00am and continued till around 5:30pm, said Md Rokibuzzaman, officer in charge of Bhanga Highway Police Station.

Due to the blockade, road communication between Dhaka and 21 districts in the southwest got suspended.

Traffic services were also disrupted, with the Nakshikatha commuter and Sundarban express trains stranded at Bhanga and the Madhumati express at Rajbari. Traffic movement on Dhaka-Khulna and Dhaka-Barishal highways, as well as train movement



through Bhanga resumed in the evening.

Former member of Algi union parishad Md Eskandar Miya announced that similar dawn-to-dusk blockades would be enforced today and tomorrow.

In Pabna, a dawn to dusk hartal was observed in Bera upazila, protesting the removal of the upazila from Pabna 1 and including it in Pabna 2 constituency.

Agitators put up barricades, felling trees at different points on Dhaka-Pabna highway, while most of the shops and other establishments remained closed.

Traffic movement on the highway was suspended, causing immense suffering to commuters.

"I travel from Pabna to Sirajganj every day for work. Due to the hartal in Bera, I was forced to take a CNG-run auto-rickshaw, which took

more time and cost me extra," said Pollob Ibne Shayekh, a government employee.

Traffic movement resumed around 6:00pm, said Md Habibul Islam, OC of Bera Police Station.

In Bagerhat, protesters staged sit ins in front of the Deputy Commissioner's office and District Election Office, demanding that the district's four parliamentary constituencies be retained.

Around 11:00am, the protesters gathered at the main gate of the DC office, locked the gate and chanted slogans in favour of their demand. Similar demonstrations were held in front of all the nine upazila election offices, UNO offices, and other government establishments. The sit ins continued till noon.

The protesters announced another dawn-to-dusk hartal in the district today.

## Consensus a must

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"We are open to that. Beyond that, if there are other legal options, let us know -- we are ready to sign the charter," he said.

He added that while no document can stand above the constitution, a Special Constitutional Order after consultations could provide stronger legal safeguards.

"We are ready to compromise, to negotiate further if necessary. This charter must be a national, political, and historical document, free from clerical errors or confusion."

"Issues not discussed in detail should not be inserted at the last moment; otherwise, unnecessary controversies will arise," he said.

JAMAAT FOR PCO OR REFERENDUM

At the meeting, Jamaat-e-Islami Assistant Secretary General Hamidur Rahman Azad said his party believes the upcoming election will only be free, fair, and acceptable if it is held based on the July Charter.

The Jamaat wants the July Charter to be implemented through a Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO) or by referendum to prevent any political party from challenging the charter in court.

"There are precedents for both. If the political parties fail to reach a consensus, the people can deliver their verdict through a referendum," Azad said.

In a set of proposals submitted to the National Consensus Commission, the Jamaat has said all parties and candidates must swear an affidavit or oath of allegiance to the charter as a precondition for participating in elections.

Those refusing to do so, it suggested, should be disqualified.

The party further proposed that any candidate who campaigns against the charter should face not only disqualification but also sedition charges.

Speaking to journalists after the meeting, Azad defended the proposal.

Asked whether requiring an

**Jamaat proposes all parties and candidates must swear an affidavit or oath of allegiance to the July Charter. Any candidate who campaigns against the charter should face not only disqualification but also sedition charges.**

According to the party's proposal, the Provisional Constitutional Order implementing the July Charter shall remain valid and enforceable until a new constitution is passed by parliament with at least a three-fourths majority and subsequently ratified by the citizens of Bangladesh through a referendum.

The Jamaat further recommended that all provisions of the new constitution must remain consistent with the principles of this order.

Once the constitution is adopted, its legality and constitutionality should no longer be open to challenge by any authority, the party said.

It added that all institutions and authorities would be considered created and governed under the framework of the new constitution.

The party argued that this step is necessary to prevent any political party from legally disputing the July Charter in the future, thereby providing a stable foundation for reforms, governance, and upcoming elections.

The Jamaat leader also responded to a question about the party's opposition to the creation of Bangladesh during the Liberation War.

"We have always done politics by following Bangladesh's legal and constitutional process. We have repeatedly said that the Liberation War of Bangladesh is our achievement. Everyone is doing politics by accepting Bangladesh, and so are we. Therefore, there is no scope to bring back old debates. If the Liberation War is not accepted, it is in fact rejecting Bangladesh," he said.

NCP FOR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

Akther Hossen, member secretary of the National Citizen Party, said his party believed only a constituent assembly election could guarantee the sustainable implementation of the reforms.

"A new constitution, written with fresh clauses and articles, is necessary to make the agreed reforms effective," he said, warning that ordinary amendments could be challenged and struck down in court.

He noted that the commission's discussions had identified two types of reforms: those achievable through ordinances or executive orders, and those requiring major structural changes to the constitution.

"Such big changes cannot be made sustainable by ordinary constitutional amendments alone. That is why the political parties must agree on a proper method," he added.

In his opening remarks, the commission's Vice-President Prof Ali Riaz urged political parties to protect their unity and cooperation until the July Charter is fully implemented.

"Fascist forces and their allies are still trying to thwart the state reform process," he warned.

## Israel orders Gazans to evacuate southwards

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the eve of an emergency summit of Arab and Islamic leaders organised by Qatar after Israel carried out an unprecedented air strike on Hamas leaders in Doha on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Palestinian officials said at least 48 people were killed by Israeli fire across the enclave, with at least 28 in Gaza City alone. Hamas said that Israeli forces have destroyed at least 1,600 residential buildings and 13,000 tents since August 11, reports Reuters.

Gaza's health ministry reported two deaths in the enclave due to famine and malnutrition in the past 24 hours, raising the death toll from the hunger crisis to 422, including 145 children.

Israeli settlers stormed Al-Aqsa Mosque under the protection of the Israeli police, Wafa news agency reported. According to eyewitnesses,

The trip is taking place after Trump rebuked Israel over the unprecedented attack against Hamas leaders meeting in Doha on Tuesday.

The military also destroyed the al-Kawthar residential tower in the southern Al-Rimal neighbourhood of Gaza City with several missiles, less than two hours after residents were warned to leave.

In a post on Telegram, the Israeli army, without providing any evidence, blamed Hamas for using the tower as an information gathering base.

Israeli troops also carried out a ground operation in the southeastern Deraa province, Syria's state news agency reported.

They also carried out searches in the Sajoun and Jamlah towns, which are adjacent to the 1974 ceasefire line that was meant to separate Israeli and Syrian troops.

allegations brought against their clients were "unfounded".

Meanwhile, following a prosecution application, the tribunal extended the date for submission of probe reports in six cases over crimes against humanity committed during the uprising.

Besides, the tribunal allowed the ICT investigation agency to interrogate Major Gen (forced retired) Ziaul Ahsan in connection with the enforced disappearance of BNP leader Ilias Ali.

**5.9 magnitude earthquake jolts six countries**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 5.9 earthquake shook Dhaka and some parts of Bangladesh yesterday afternoon, according to USGS.

The epicentre of the quake was Assam in India.

The tremor was felt in Dhaka at 5:15pm.

The earthquake also jolted Myanmar, Nepal, Bhutan, and China.

## SAGAR-RUNI MURDER Court unhappy over delay in probe completion

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday expressed dissatisfaction over the delay in completing the probe into the case filed over murders of journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi in 2012.

In response to the summon issued by Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Minhzur Rahman, Investigation Officer Md Azizul Haque, also an additional superintendent of police at the PBI, appeared before the court and said he was trying his best to complete the probe as early as possible, said a sub-inspector working at the court.

The court also extended the time until November 30 for submission of the probe report.

This marks the 122nd extension of the deadline, according to case records.

The magistrate also asked the IO to complete the probe as soon as possible.

On August 11, the metropolitan magistrate summoned the IO to appear in person before it yesterday and submit the progress report on investigation. Investigators have so far spoken to over 70 people, said a PBI official.

Earlier on November 11, 2019, the High Court expressed disappointment as there is no significant progress into the investigation.

Sagar, news editor at Mastranga TV, and Runi, senior reporter at ATN Bangla, were killed on February 11, 2012, at their rented apartment in Dhaka's West Rajabazar.

## SADA PATHOR LOOTING Suspended BNP leader held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, SYLHET

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab 9) on Saturday night arrested suspended BNP leader Shahab Uddin, prime suspect in the case filed over the looting of large-scale white stone from Sada Pathor area in Sylhet's Companiganj upazila.

Shahab Uddin, former president of Companiganj unit of BNP, was arrested in Sylhet city's Kumarpara area around 11:15pm, Rab said in a press release yesterday.

The release described him as "one of the masterminds" behind the looting of stones.

He was later handed over to police in connection with the case filed by Bureau of Mineral Development with Companiganj Police Station on August 15, in which 1,000,1,500 unidentified people were also made accused.

According to Rab, Shahab is also an accused in seven other cases with Companiganj and Kotwali police stations.

Over the past year, huge quantities of stones were illegally extracted from Companiganj and Gowainghat upazilas, sparking national outrage after media reports exposed the scale of the looting.

The government has since formed an inter-ministerial probe body to investigate the stone looting, which is awaiting submission of its report to the Cabinet Division.

Later, constables Sujan (with Ajay's

defence counsels for Arshad, Sujan, Nasirul and Imaz opened fire

on protesters using Chinese rifles. "I

stood there and witnessed the firing. Many were hit," Abdur Rahman told the court.

Both witnesses identified the four

accused -- inspector Arshad and constables Sujan, Nasirul and Imaz -- who were in the dock.

Another prosecution witness Jagannath University student Saurav Ahmed described to the court how his fellow protester Shahriar Khan Anas was shot in the chest. He had

rushed Anas to Mitford Hospital, where doctors declared him dead. Anas's parents and grandfather later

identified the body.

"I demand the trial of Sheikh

Hasina, the police officers who gave

the orders to fire, and also those who

pulled the triggers."

Defence counsels for Arshad, Sujan, Nasirul, Imaz and the state-

defence counsel representing

four absconding accused -- ex-

DMP commissioner Habibur, joint

commissioner Sudip, former ADC

Akhttarul and ex-AC Imrul -- cross-

examined the two policemen who

testified.

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