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EC gets greater powers under amended laws

Commission can appoint its top officials, including secretary, from own ranks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The advisory council yesterday approved amendments to two key laws aimed at strengthening the Election Commission, granting it more authority to recruit all its officials and take disciplinary action against those negligent in polling duties.

The council okayed the drafts of the Election Commission Secretariat (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025 and the Election Officers (Special Provisions) (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025 at a meeting chaired by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus.

Under the new provisions, the EC will be able to establish a separate services commission, to be known as the "Election Commission Service", responsible for recruiting officers and staff for the EC Secretariat and taking disciplinary action against those found negligent in their duties.

Shahjahan Saju, a former EC joint secretary, welcomed the amendment, which he said will allow the EC to appoint its top officials, including the secretary from within its officials.

EC officials have been demanding the changes, he said. "It will restrict the government's scope to interfere in the appointment of top officials of the EC," he said.

Besides the secretary, the EC will also be able to appoint additional secretary, joint secretary and other top officials from within its own cadre.

Currently, the EC secretary, its top administrative post, is an officer recruited from the administration cadre under the Election Commission Secretariat Act 2009.

Several other top or mid-level positions are also filled by officers from the administration and judicial services, EC sources said.

The amendment also reinstates the EC's authority over the preparation and maintenance of the national identity (NID) database.

Briefing reporters at the Foreign Service Academy about the advisory council meeting held at the Chief Adviser's Office, his Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam said the changes would make the EC more dynamic and ensure accountability in election management.

"In particular, the provisions of punishment for negligence of duty during elections will now be clearer," he said.

According to sources in the Cabinet Division and EC, the draft amendment was prepared following recommendations of the Election Commission Reform Commission.

Although the Cabinet Division's Law Review Committee initially expressed reservations, the advisory council's approval has now cleared the way.

EC officials hailed the decision as a "historic shift."

The other amendment, to the election officers' special provisions, strengthens the EC's disciplinary powers.

If any election officer or employee is negligent in their duties, the EC will now have the authority to take direct action.

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Displaced Palestinians, fleeing northern Gaza due to an Israeli military operation, travel in a truck with their belongings as they move southward after Israeli forces ordered residents of Gaza City to evacuate to the south, in the central Gaza Strip, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'God, send a missile to relieve us'

Palestinians flee as Israeli tanks, jets bombard Gaza City; at least 79 more killed

AGENCIES

Israeli tanks and warplanes pounded Gaza City yesterday, prompting long lines of Palestinian civilians to flee as the military intensified its assault on the territory's largest urban hub.

Thick columns of smoke billowed into the sky as AFP journalists and witnesses saw a steady stream of Gazans heading south on foot, in vehicles and on donkey carts -- their meagre belongings piled high.

"There is artillery fire, air strikes, quadcopter and drone gunfire. The bombing never stops," said Aya Ahmed, 32, sheltering with 13 relatives in Gaza City.

"The world doesn't understand what is happening. They (Israel) want us to evacuate south, but where will we live? There are no tents, no transport, no money."

Palestinians say the cost of a ride to the south has soared, in some cases topping \$1,000.

"The situation is indescribable -- crowds everywhere, the sound of explosions, women and men crying and screaming as they walked while carrying their belongings," said Shadi

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» WHO chief says Gaza hospitals on 'brink of collapse'

» Internet, phone lines cut off across Gaza

» Trump says he disagrees with UK's bid to recognise Palestinian state

» Spain says will probe 'rights violations in Gaza'

5 parties mull forging alliance ahead of polls

MD ABBAS

The National Citizen Party, Gono Odhikar Parishad, AB Party, Rastro Songskar Andolan, and Ganosamhati Andolan are exploring the possibility of forming an alliance ahead of the upcoming national election, sources in the five parties said.

The matter gained traction in the political circles after these parties, along with Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Rob), Nagarik Oikya, Biplabi Workers Party, and Bhashani Janashakti Party, held a meeting yesterday to seek common ground on implementing the constitutional provisions outlined in the July Charter.

Several leaders of the five parties, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed that discussions on a possible alliance have been underway.

Hasnat Quaiyum, chief coordinator of Rastro Songskar Andolan, said talks on the possibility of forming an alliance had been ongoing for several days.

Zonayed Saki, chief coordinator of Ganosamhati Andolan, cautioned that nothing was official yet, while acknowledging the potential for political polarisation ahead of the polls.

The meeting was held at the request of the National

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'Disaster if polls not held in line with July Charter'

Say Islamist parties as they hold demos in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of several Islamist parties yesterday claimed the country may face a "national disaster" if the upcoming general election is not held on the basis of the July Charter.

They also demanded a legal basis for the charter and alleged that the government has failed to ensure a level playing field ahead of the election and accused it of bowing to political and external pressure.

Islamist party leaders made the allegations during demonstrations staged in various parts of the capital yesterday.

As a part of its announced programme, Jamaat-e-Islami organised a rally at the south gate of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque around 5:00pm.

Addressing the gathering, Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Parwar said, "We've demanded that the next election be held only after giving legal basis to the July Charter. Now a party is opposing it, saying there is no need for such constitutional reform. This is against public aspirations."

"The July Charter must be given a legal basis through a constitutional order and a referendum before the election. Otherwise, the country may fall into a great disaster. If another election is held under the existing state structure, it will give birth to fascism again."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

'We offered Yunus to lead govt on Aug 4'

Nahid tells media after ICT deposition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the Students Against Discrimination platform offered Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus the responsibility of leading a new government on August 4 last year, a day before the Awami League regime fell, said Nahid Islam, convener of the National Citizen Party, yesterday.

Once the SAD leaders committed to pursuing a one-point demand on August 3 last year, they also began planning for a new government, Nahid told reporters after his deposition with the International Crimes Tribunal-1.

"We initially chose Dr Yunus because we felt his leadership was necessary considering the grave crisis the country was facing."

On the second day of his deposition, Nahid presented his account of the events between July 19 and August 5 last year.

On July 18-19, during the internet blackout, he learnt of the widespread killings from other coordinators.

On July 19, he spoke with Abdul Qader, who announced a nine-point programme, and later with coordinators Hasnat Abdullah and Sarjis Alam, who were then in DGFI custody.

On July 20, after consulting with student leaders, they declared the continuation of their shutdown programme, which no electronic media covered. That night, the government imposed a curfew and issued shoot-on-sight orders.

While staying at a friend's Nandipara house, Nahid was abducted around 2:30am by men identifying as DB police.

Blindfolded, handcuffed and beaten, he was grilled about who organised the protests.

"They tortured me, and I lost consciousness several times. They told me I had been forcibly disappeared and warned I would never leave if I did not stop the movement," he said.

After 24 hours, he was dumped near Purbachal and admitted to Gonoshasthaya hospital.

There, he held a press briefing exposing his disappearance and torture, learning that many other coordinators had also been picked up.

The DGFI abducted Hasnat, Sarjis and Hasib Al-Islam, forced them to sit with three ministers and circulated the photos.

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It always seems impossible until it's done: UN Gaza investigator **P5**



Can justice be dispensed in an unjust manner? **P6**



How to rescue banks without creating more risk **P7**



বাংলাদেশ বিমান বাহিনীতে অফিসার ক্যাডেট হিসেবে যোগ দিন

৯৩ বিএএফএ কোর্স (93 BAFA COURSE)

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