



The chiefs of three services (left) and advisers to the interim government (right) attend the July charter signing ceremony held yesterday at the South Plaza of Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.



PHOTO: CA PRESS WING



“A new chapter began in Bangladesh’s political history through the signing of the July charter.”

Mirza Fakhrul Islam
Alamgir
BNP Secretary General



“If the national charter we signed today is implemented, it will bring a qualitative change in our politics.”

Syed Abdullah Mohammad
Taher, Nayeb-e-Ameer
Jamaat-e-Islami



“I’m very happy. I would have felt even better if the NCP student leaders, those who led the July movement, had been present.”

Dr Asif Nazrul
Law Adviser



“At this historic moment, not signing this charter would be showing disrespect to the uprising.”

Nurul Haque Nur
President
Gono Odhikar Parishad



“If the implementation framework is finalised and the fundamental reforms are safeguarded, NCP will sign.”

Khaled Saifullah
Joint Convener
National Citizen Party



United, we’ll move towards February polls: Yunus

UNB, Dhaka

Urging political leaders to hold talks for a fair and festive election, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday said the signing of the “July National Charter 2025” symbolises unity, which will guide the nation towards the upcoming national election.

He expressed optimism that a fair and festive election would be held in February next year while maintaining the existing unity among political parties.

“We are talking about the elections. The tune we played together today is a tune of unity. We will move forward to the election with this same spirit. The election will be held in February, and it is essential that we maintain this unity,” Yunus said soon after signing the charter.

He urged political leaders to come together – through a commission or committee, whichever they prefer – to discuss and determine practical ways to ensure a fair and celebratory election. “We can make this happen,” he added.

The chief adviser said the next national election must be held in such a way that nobody can raise any questions about it.

Yunus urged everyone to work together so that the election could be held fairly and in a festive manner. “We can do that. Fix your mind,” he said.

He described the signing of the July National Charter 2025 as a “great day” and called it the beginning of a “New Bangladesh”.

The charter was officially signed at the South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

July charter signed, NCP stays away

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the document in a symbolic gesture to applause from several hundred guests – many of whom struggled to find dry seating in the open-air event.

“This was a combined effort for state reform. A document alone will not guarantee success. We still have a long way to go,” said Ali Riaz.

“This national charter is not merely an accord among political parties. It is a social contract between citizens, the political parties and the State,” he added.

SIGNATORIES

From the BNP, Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and Standing Committee Member Salahuddin Ahmed signed the charter while the Jamaat-e-Islami sent its Nayeb-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Muhammad Taher and Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar for the signing.

The other parties included the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Khelafat Majlish, Rastro Songskar Andolon, Amar Bangladesh Party (AB Party), Nagorik Oikya, Nationalist Democratic Movement (NDM), Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish, Ganosamhati Andolon, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), Gono Odhikar Parishad (GOP), Biplobi Workers Party, Jatiyatabadi Sammanna Jote, 12 Party Alliance, Islami Andolon Bangladesh, Zaker Party, Jatiya Gonofront, Bangladesh Nezam-e-Islami Party, Bangladesh Labour Party, Bhashani Jonoshokti Party, Jamiat Ulamaye Islam Bangladesh, Islami

Oikya Jote and Amjonotar Dal.

Although Gono Forum attended the event, it did not sign the charter.

Its General Secretary Mizanur Rahman said the party would have signed the charter if the Proclamation of Independence had been retained in the constitution.

“We were assured amendments would be made, but at the event, we were given only the page for the signature, not the final copy of the charter. That’s why we refrained from signing it.”

THOSE WHO STAYED AWAY

Besides the National Citizen Party (NCP), Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (Basod), Bangladesh JSD, and Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (Marxist) stayed away from the ceremony.

In a statement on Facebook, NCP Senior Joint Convener Ariful Islam Adeb said, “Since this signing ceremony will not achieve any legal basis, this is only a formality. We have spoken about this legal basis many times. Before such a basis is established, this will turn into another one-sided document like the ‘July Declaration’.”

He added that the party would participate in the next process of the consensus commission as its tenure has been extended.

“If our demands are met, we will sign the charter later.”

The four leftist parties said they cannot sign any charter, even with a note of dissent, that commits

to changing the constitution’s four fundamental principles: democracy, socialism, secularism and nationalism.

They also objected to any move preventing legal challenges to the charter in future.

The event was attended by family members of the July martyrs, including Mir Mostafizur Rahman, father of Shaheed Mir Mahfuzur Rahman Mugdho, and Shamsi Ara Begum, mother of Shaheed Tahir Zaman Priyo.

Advisers, senior civil and military officials, diplomats, editors, journalists, eminent citizens, and members of various reform commissions were also present.

The fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League regime through the July uprising last year generated huge public aspirations about long-cherished state reforms.

After taking charge, the Yunus-led interim government formed a number of commissions last year to make proposals on the changes.

The consensus commission was formed in mid-February this year with Yunus at the helm to build consensus among political parties on key changes proposed by six major reform commissions on the constitution, judiciary, electoral system, Anti-Corruption Commission, and public administration.

It drafted 84 proposals after two rounds of talks. Half of these issues were constitutional reforms.

BNP and its allies submitted notes

of dissent on at least nine issues.

The final draft of the charter was sent to parties on September 10, and a third round of talks on its implementation began the next day.

During these discussions, parties agreed that non-constitutional reforms would be enacted through ordinances and executive orders, while constitutional changes would go to referendum.

Although parties accepted the idea of a referendum, they failed to agree on its timing, procedures and framework.

After closing the third round of talks, on October 14, the commission sent the final version of the charter to the parties, seeking their firm commitment to its full implementation.

The charter also calls for assurances that parties will not challenge its legality or necessity in court, and that they will uphold legal and constitutional safeguards throughout every stage of its execution.

Besides the reform issues, the charter seeks pledges from the parties to enshrine the document in the constitution, either as a schedule or in another appropriate place.

Yesterday, the commission made last-minute changes to the charter to ensure legal indemnity, protection of fundamental rights, and security for the families of July martyrs and the injured, amid protests by the group called July Warriors.

affairs.

Among the elected candidates are Abu Sayeed Muhammad Noon, Zayed Hasan Joha, Md Rakibul Islam, Saiyida Hafsa, Samia Jahan, BM Najmus Sakib, Sifat Abu Saleh, Md Mujahidul Islam, Asadullah, Mujahidul Islam Saim, Imran Laskar, Md Nayon Hossain, Abdullah Al Masud, and Masuma Israt Mumu.

All four executive member posts were also won by the Shibir-backed panel – Md Dip Mahbub, Md Imjailul Haque Kamali, Sujon Chandra, and ABM Khaled.

At the hall level, the panel swept all VP, GS, and AGS posts in six women’s halls and 11 men’s halls.

In the senate polls, the Shibir-backed panel won three of the five student representative seats. Mostakur Rahman Jahid, Fazle Rabbi Md Fahim Reza, and SM Salman Sabbir were elected, while Salahuddin Ammar and independent candidate Akil Bin Taleb claimed the remaining two seats.

Chief Election Commissioner Prof Nazrul Islam said the election was held peacefully and without major incidents, with a voter turnout of 69.83 percent. There were 28,901 registered students – 17,596 male and 11,305 female.

According to the Election Commission, 247 candidates contested for 23 Rucsu posts under 10 panels, while 597 vied for 15 hall union positions in 17 halls, and 58 ran for five student representative posts in the university senate.

East Senpara

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Locals said landowners in this residential zone have been selling plots and buildings to industrial entrepreneurs, who then build three- to six-storey structures on two- to five-katha plots and use them for garment production and chemical storage.

‘CHEMICAL COLONY’

Just across from the fire department near the Mirpur-10 intersection is East Senpara, which is locally known as the “chemical colony”.

After Old Dhaka’s Nimtoli, Chawkbazar, and Mitford, this area has become one of the city’s most concentrated chemical trading hubs.

For more than a decade, nearly a hundred businesses – many operating illegally, disguised as entities that are officially registered and licensed – have been dealing in chemicals here.

A recent visit revealed that almost every ground floor in the colony houses chemical shops or warehouses, while people live upstairs despite the constant risk.

According to the Bangladesh Garments Printing Chemicals Traders’ Association, there are over 90 registered chemical shops in the colony.

Abu Sufian, general secretary of the association, said, “On top of the registered shops, there are others that are unauthorised. There are stores that sell dyeing chemicals, though they claim to maintain adequate safety measures. The traders moved to this location in 2010 after relocating from Old Dhaka.”

In 2010, a tragic fire in Nimtoli, Old Dhaka, killed over a hundred people when a chemical warehouse ignited in a densely populated residential area.

In East Senpara, while most claim to sell garment-related dyes and finishing chemicals, several also stock and sell flammable materials.

A businessman, who has been operating in the colony for 12 years, said, “Almost every shop deals

with some amount of flammable materials. We have trade licences, and the fire service visits occasionally to inspect out fire safety protocols. We conduct business upon approval of the fire service.”

Fire official Nazmuzzaman said, “We often conduct mobile court drives along with a magistrate, and we inform the city corporation whenever we find that anyone is found operating a chemical business with only a trade licence.”

Dhaka North City Corporation Revenue Officer Monowar Hossain said, “When we issue a trade licence, it is clearly mentioned that any kind of business involving chemicals or flammable substances is not allowed.” Another DNCC official, wishing anonymity, said, “If we receive a complaint, we take necessary action, including cancellation of the trade licence.”

LACK OF CLARITY

Inspector Asadul Islam of the Department of Explosives said, “No licences have been issued for chemical warehouses in the Mirpur area. Due to the high demand created by the presence of garments, dyeing, and washing plants, many warehouses have been set up illegally under the guise of licensed entities.”

Several officials at the department, however, said that though they were supposed to conduct drives regularly, they couldn’t because of a lack of manpower.

Atiqur Rahman, deputy inspector general of DIFE’s Dhaka region, said, “In Dhaka, it’s very difficult to determine which areas are residential and which are industrial.”

“Whenever we conduct drives or attempt to evict chemical warehouses from residential buildings, we face this very challenge,” he added.

Atiqur added that without clear zoning and stronger coordination among agencies, identifying and removing hazardous chemical businesses from densely populated neighbourhoods will remain nearly impossible.

Proclamation of independence

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Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban in the capital, Ali Riaz said the amendment to the fifth clause in the commitment section of the charter reflected their demands, according to a press release issued yesterday.

He read out the amended fifth clause: “It will ensure justice for those who were victims of enforced disappearance, killing, and torture during the 16-year democratic struggle against Awami fascism in pre-mass uprising Bangladesh, as well as for all killings committed during the July–August 2024 mass uprising by members of the fascist Awami League and its allied law enforcement agencies.”

It also states: “State honours will be conferred on the martyrs, and recognition will be given to their families, alongside the injured of the July [uprising], who will be declared state heroes. Appropriate assistance will be provided to the injured July Warriors, including monthly allowances, proper medical treatment,

and rehabilitation. It will also ensure legal indemnity, protection of fundamental rights, and security for the families of martyrs and the injured July Warriors.”

He added that there was no difference of opinion between the political parties and the commission on this issue.

Clause 5 of the July National Charter 2025, sent to political parties on October 14, had no provision for legal indemnity.

The fifth, sixth, and seventh schedules were added through the 15th amendment in 2011. The fifth schedule includes Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s historic March 7, 1971 speech, the sixth contains his Declaration of Independence made on March 26, and the seventh includes the Proclamation of Independence issued by the Mujibnagar government on April 10, 1971.

The commission finalised the charter after nearly eight months of consultations with political parties.

Some parties

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“There is no discussion about reforming institutions that are directly connected to people’s lives. The consensus commission has been formed solely around six election-centric reform commissions,” Nahid said, adding, “There too, we could not see good intentions from everyone towards democracy.”

Calling for broader reforms, he said, “We believe that along with the struggle for democratic transformation, we must also continue the struggle for economic transformation. We must break free from the development narrative of the past and place human dignity above all in Bangladesh.

“We seek a democratic transformation from Bangladesh’s deeply corrupt and looted system. The mafias from the fascist era remain unpunished, their businesses still protected by the government. Those who exploited workers for years continue to get protection from the government and political parties. We want the change of the system.”

About workers’ rights, Nahid said his party will do politics for their rights. “Jatiya Sramik Shakti will stand by those who keep the country’s economy running.”

He added that they would be committed to establishing their new settlement, promoting a politics of justice and fairness, and upholding human dignity. “This is our commitment to the people of Bangladesh, to the martyrs of the July uprising, and to the injured.”