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Neutrality debate takes centre stage

With the national election four months away, major political parties are locked in a debate over the neutrality of the government and the Election Commission. They are accusing one another of manipulating the interim government to gain advantage in the run-up to the polls. The BNP alleges that individuals aligned with Jamaat-e-Islami have been given preference in reshuffles and appointments within the administration, while Jamaat claims some advisers are working in favour of a particular group. The NCP, formed out of the July uprising, meanwhile accuses the BNP and Jamaat of sharing key administrative and police posts. Against this backdrop, the parties met the chief adviser over the past two days and registered their concerns.

Reshuffle EC, admin, police before polls

Jamaat urges CA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday expressed serious reservations about the neutrality of the Election Commission, public administration, and the police, demanding necessary reshuffles in these institutions ahead of the polls.

A four-member delegation of the party raised the demands at a meeting with Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus.

A four member delegation, led by NCP Convener Nahid Islam and including Chief Organiser (northern region) Sarjis Alam, Senior Joint Convener Samanta

Reconstitute
EC to ensure
free, fair polls

NCP tells CA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Citizen Party yesterday expressed serious concerns over what it described as the Election Commission's partial and non-transparent activities and urged the government to restructure it to ensure a free and fair election.

The call came during a meeting with Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus.

A four member delegation, led by NCP Convener Nahid Islam and including Chief Organiser (northern region) Sarjis Alam, Senior Joint Convener Samanta



Police remove a person with a disability from the street as he tries to stage a sit-in near Shahbagh Police Station yesterday. Members of the Chakri Pratashi Protibondhi Graduate Parishad, a platform of persons with disabilities, are pressing a five-point demand, including employment. Their march towards Jamuna, the chief adviser's residence, was also blocked.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

ICT sends 15 army officers to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

For the first time in Bangladesh's history, 15 army officers were taken to a civil court yesterday to face trial for their alleged role in enforced disappearances under the Awami League regime and killings during the July uprising.

The three-member International Crimes Tribunal-1, headed by Justice Golam Mortuza Mozumder, showed them arrested in three cases and ordered the authorities to send them to jail.

Two of the cases involve enforced disappearances and the other is over the July uprising killings. The tribunal issued arrest warrants against 32 accused, including the 15 officers, on October 8 after taking cognisance of formal charges against them. The Bangladesh Army on October 11 announced that the 15 serving officers had been taken into custody.

According to the prosecution, one case over enforced disappearance involves the Task Force for Interrogation (TFI) Cell, run by the Rapid Action Battalion. According to the charges, 14 detainees were confined and tortured in the cell between 2016



and 2024.

Of the 17 accused in the case, 10 former Rab officers, who had been from the army, appeared before the tribunal.

They are Brig Gen Md Qamrul Hasan, Brig Gen Tofayel Mostafa Sarwar, Brig Gen Md Mahbub Alam, Brig Gen Md Jahangir Alam, Col AKM Azad, Col Abdullah Al Momen, Col Md Sarwar Bin Kashem, Col Anowar Latif Khan, Lt Col Md Moshirul Rahman Jewel, and Lt Col Md Saiful Islam Sumon.

The second case centres on

the Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC), run by the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), where 24 victims were allegedly detained and tortured from 2016 to August 2024.

Three former DGFI officers – Maj Gen Sheikh Md Sarwar Hossen and Brig Gens Md Mahbub Rahman Siddique and Ahmed Tanvir Majahar Siddique – were produced before the tribunal in this case.

The court fixed November 20 for the next hearing in both disappearance cases. Deposed

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Dhaka ratifies
3 more ILO
conventions

Chief adviser hails
'memorable day' for
working people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday signed three International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions guaranteeing workers' rights, safety, and freedom from violence and harassment in the workplace.

Two of the conventions – No. 155 and No. 187 – relate to occupational safety, health, and the working environment, while Convention No. 190 recognises the right to a workplace free from violence and harassment, says a statement of chief adviser's press wing.

The move comes amid growing calls from trade unions, labour rights bodies, and Western countries, including those in Europe and the United States, for Bangladesh to improve working conditions following

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said we have confidence in him, but some of his advisers are working in favour of a particular party. We said he needs to be alert and aware of them," Jamaat's Nayeb-e Ameer Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher told reporters after the meeting.

He said Jamaat is not demanding their removal but simply drew the chief adviser's attention to the matter.

"In the Election Commission, the Secretariat, and the police administration, around 70 to 80 percent of the officers today are loyal to a political party."

"When we talk to them, they say they are under tremendous pressure. Now, where is that pressure coming from? It's coming from a particular party."

He alleged that a significant number of public prosecutors belong to that party.

The Jamaat leaders urged the chief adviser to ensure a level playing field for

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"You can remain confident about our neutrality. We have already taken several measures to hold a free, fair and credible election, and you will soon see many more initiatives."

Chief Adviser PROF MUHAMMAD YUNUS

Sharmin, and Joint Convener Khalid Saifullah, met Yunus in the evening.

At a press conference afterwards, the NCP leaders raised issues related to the commission's neutrality, the stalled July uprising trials and the implementation of the July charter.

The commission was not functioning as mandated by the constitution and appeared biased towards certain parties, Nahid said.

He cited examples such as the registration of the newly-formed "Jatiyo League", disputes over the "shapla" symbol and the commission's stance on the case involving Ishraque Hossain.

"If we are not allotted our symbol, it will not be possible for us to take part in the election. If we are denied our symbol without any valid explanation, it will

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Competitors in a dinghy boat race row with all their might to reach the finish line. The event, featuring specially crafted wooden dinghies, was held in Khulna's Dhaiga village yesterday to mark the occasion of Kali Puja.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

JS may get
270 days for
dual functions

MD ABBAS

The National Consensus Commission is expected to propose that the next elected parliament be given 270 days to serve both as a legislative body and a Constitution Reform Assembly.

The period would be fixed to ensure the July charter is implemented within that timeframe, after which the parliament would resume normal legislative functions, the commission's Vice-President Ali Riaz told The Daily Star yesterday.

At the same time, the commission is preparing an "Implementation [Constitution] Order" for the charter based on issues agreed upon during the last three rounds of its talks with political parties.

However, the specific clauses and sub-clauses to be included in the order have not yet been finalised.

Despite an over three-hour-long meeting between the commission and constitutional experts,

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OFFICIALS FOR POLLS DUTY
BNP to oppose
hiring from
select entities

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The BNP is set to submit several proposals to the Election Commission today, including a demand that employees of some organisations known to be close to a right wing party should not be appointed for polling duties in the upcoming national election.

The party will place about three dozen proposals to Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin, which are scheduled to be formally handed over this morning.

The proposals were finalised at the party's standing committee meeting on Monday. The Daily Star has learnt from people with direct knowledge of the discussions.

"Officials or employees of institutions widely known to all as party-affiliated must not be appointed as polling personnel, including presiding, assistant presiding, and polling officers," reads the document seen by The Daily Star.

The three-page document outlining the party's proposals for ensuring a level playing field ahead of the national polls will be presented by Standing Committee Member Abdul Moyeen Khan, Chairperson's Adviser Ismail Zabihullah and former secretary Mohammad Zakaria.

The document also called for the withdrawal of all cases filed against political leaders who took part in the July uprising, democratic movements and those charged during the "fascist government".

Local observers should not be assigned duties in their own districts and organisations promoting any political

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