



Govt gears up for polls

Chief adviser asks officials to complete key tasks by Nov 15

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday directed authorities to complete key preparations for the national polls by November 15, as the Election Commission plans to announce the election schedule by the first week of December.

At a high-level meeting at the State Guesthouse Jamuna, Yunus also instructed everyone to remain vigilant against “any kind of sudden and powerful attack centring the polls”.

Chaired by Yunus, the meeting was attended by several advisers, top bureaucrats, EC officials, and representatives from law enforcement agencies.

Among those present were Home Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman, Cultural Adviser Mostofa Sarwar Farooki, Special Assistant to the Chief Adviser on Defence and National Solidarity Lt Gen (retd) Abdul Hafiz, and Special Assistant on ICT Affairs Fayez Ahmed Taiyeb.

The discussions mainly focused on four issues: the posting of field-level administrative officials, the law and order situation, the training of election-related personnel, and strategies to counter false information on social media.

During a media briefing at the Foreign Service Academy afterwards, CA's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam said the chief adviser cautioned that the upcoming election would face significant challenges.

“Hope for the best, prepare for the worst.... There will be forces, both internal and external, trying to disrupt the election – powerful ones, not minor actors. Sudden attacks may occur. No matter how strong the storm, we must overcome it,” the CA was quoted as saying.

Shafiqul clarified that the term “attack” does not only refer to physical assaults but also includes cyberattacks and the spread of disinformation online.

He said those who supported the fallen autocrat do not want a free and fair election. “Everyone has been urged to remain vigilant.”

Quoting Yunus, he added, “There will be disinformation on social media. Both from within and outside the country, there will be well-coordinated attempts to derail the election. AI-generated photos and videos will be released. We must deal with these swiftly. As soon as a false narrative starts, it must be stopped before it spreads.”

Although the date for the 13th national polls is yet to be fixed, the EC and the government are preparing to hold it in the first half of February.

In a televised address on August 5, Yunus said he would request the EC to hold the election before Ramadan in February. The following day, his office sent a formal directive to the commission to complete all necessary preparations by that time.

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PROF MUHAMMAD YUNUS



Lighter vessels anchored near Chattogram port in the Bay of Bengal wait their turn to unload goods from mother vessels at the outer anchorage. Every day, around 400 lighter ships ferry cargo from mother vessels, feeding much-needed consumer goods and industrial raw materials into the economy, while another 400 wait in queue under a system managed by the Water Transport Cell, a platform of shipowners. The photo was taken near Akmal Ali Road recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Political rift over July charter widens

Parties diverge sharply over consensus commission's recommendations on implementation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP accused the National Consensus Commission of deception, while the Jamaat-e-Islami demanded that the referendum on constitutional reforms in the July charter be held before the national polls, even if that means a delay in the election.

The National Citizen Party, meanwhile, said there can be no election unless the charter is implemented, as it placed forward its own set of demands, including reconstitution of the Election Commission.

The reactions came yesterday after the commission submitted its recommendations on implementing the July National Charter 2025 to the government on Tuesday, laying bare the deepening divisions among political stakeholders over the reform process.

At a Standing Committee meeting last night, the BNP decided to send a delegation to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus and express the party's concerns over the exclusion of its notes of dissent from the proposed implementation process, among other issues.

The party also decided to share its opinion on the recommendations

formally at a press conference at noon today.

At the two-hour meeting, BNP leaders alleged that the recommendations reflected the political demands and interests of the Jamaat and NCP.

“If this [omission of notes of dissent] was their plan all along, what was the point of 11 months of dialogue?”

Salahuddin Ahmed, BNP Standing Committee member



They also alleged that the recommendations were part of efforts to obstruct the next national election.

At another Standing Committee meeting on Tuesday night, the BNP accused Yunus of breaking his promise to remain neutral. Acting chairman Tarique Rahman chaired the meeting virtually from London.

Senior BNP leaders said the exclusion

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NEWS ANALYSIS

A binary vote for a complex charter

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Although the exact timing of the referendum is yet to be decided, it is almost certain that there will be one on the July National Charter in one form or the other.

In its outline submitted to the interim government, the National Consensus Commission has proposed two alternative formulations for the referendum question.

The first alternative suggests that the referendum question will ask voters: “Do you approve the July National Charter (Constitutional Reform) Implementation Order, 2025, and the proposals for constitutional reforms included in the first schedule of this order?”

The second alternative envisions the government preparing a Constitutional Reform Draft Bill based on the charter's proposals. In that case, the referendum question would be: “Do you approve the July National Charter (Constitutional Reform) Implementation Order, 2025, and the draft bill on constitutional reform included in the first schedule of this order?”

The difference between the two is that one mentions the set of proposals while the other mentions a bill. The one with the bill has further significance. If the Constitution Reform Council—the next parliament is set to be designated as such besides performing its regular function—fails to complete its work within 270 days of its first sitting, the bill will automatically take effect and be incorporated into the constitution.

Both proposed questions are complex especially when compared to the questions posed in the country's previous three referendums.

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Hasina refuses to apologise

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina has refused to apologise for the deaths of at least 1,400 people during the July Uprising in 2024, and said Bangladesh's interim government would be disenfranchising millions without an inclusive election.

In written responses to Reuters, AFP, and the UK-based Independent – all of them published yesterday – the 78-year-old former leader remained defiant in her exile in New Delhi, rejecting charges of crimes against humanity and describing her ongoing trial as “politically motivated”.

Prosecutors have sought the death penalty for Hasina, accusing her of ordering lethal force

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Israeli airstrikes kill 104 in Gaza

Trump, mediator Qatar confident that shaky truce will hold

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Israel said it struck an arms stockpile in Gaza yesterday, hours after the deadliest night of bombing since the start of a US-brokered truce, which killed at least 104 people across the Palestinian territory, warning it would continue to operate to take out perceived threats.

The military announced it had carried out a precision strike on a site in the Beit Lahia area of northern Gaza where it said weapons were being stockpiled for “an imminent terror attack”.

Israeli troops, it said, would remain deployed in “accordance with the ceasefire agreement and will continue to operate to remove any immediate threat”.

Hamas-run Gaza's civil defence agency told AFP that one Palestinian was killed in the latest strike – and that 104 – including 46 children and 24 women – had died in the previous night's bombardment.

The Israeli military launched a wave of bombing after one of



Mourners gather around the bodies of members of the Abu Dalal family, killed in an overnight Israeli strike on their home in Nuseirat, central Gaza Strip, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

its soldiers was killed in Gaza on Tuesday. By mid-morning yesterday it said it had begun “renewed enforcement of the ceasefire”.

Both US President Donald Trump and regional mediator Qatar said they expected the ceasefire to hold, but inside Gaza displaced families were losing

hope.

“We had just started to breathe again, trying to rebuild our lives, when the bombardment came back,” said 31-year-old Khadija al-Husni, a displaced mother living with her children under canvas at a school in Al-Shati refugee camp.

United Nations rights chief

Volker Turk said the report of so many dead was appalling and urged all sides not to let peace “slip from our grasp”, echoing calls from Britain, Germany and the European Union for the parties to recommit to the ceasefire.

The Israeli military said that its strikes had targeted 30 senior militants, with Defence Minister Israel Katz maintaining “dozens of Hamas commanders were neutralised”.

Israel said it launched the wave of strikes after reservist Master Sergeant Yona Efraim Feldbaum, 37, was killed in Rafah when his engineering vehicle was hit by enemy fire.

Hamas said its fighters had “no connection to the shooting incident in Rafah” and reaffirmed its commitment to the US-backed ceasefire.

Before the truce, Israel's two-year-long assault on Gaza killed at least 68,643 people, according to figures from the Hamas-run territory's health ministry, which the UN considers reliable.

Bangladesh makes strides in beating food insecurity

A lot more is to be done, says major study

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Despite improvement, at least 16 million people in Bangladesh are still facing severe levels of acute food insecurity, according to a new report prepared by the government and development partners.

The report, presented at a workshop convened by the Ministry of Food with FAO, UNICEF, World Food Programme, Action Against Hunger, and Save the Children, also found that 1.6 million children are acutely malnourished.

In 2024, the number of people facing high food insecurity was 23.5 million, highlighting progress from a coordinated effort by government ministries, humanitarian actors, and development partners.

However, these efforts must not only continue but also be strengthened to ensure lasting change, the report added.

The report was prepared based on a study conducted in April 2025, using the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), a globally recognised tool that helps governments and humanitarian actors understand the severity and geographic spread of food insecurity and malnutrition.

According to the report, between May and December 2025, an estimated 16 million people across 36 districts of Bangladesh and in the Rohingya camps

are facing the crisis.

“Among them, 361,000 people are expected to be in emergency conditions, requiring urgent humanitarian assistance to meet their basic food needs,” the WFP said in a statement.

16m still food insecure, down from 23.5m last year

Crisis most acute in Cox's Bazar, especially in Rohingya camps

1.6m children and 117,000 mothers malnourished

The highest incidence of acute food insecurity was observed in Cox's Bazar, where both Rohingya refugees and the surrounding local populations – particularly in Ukha and Teknaf – are facing severe food insecurity.

Several other districts across Bangladesh are also at high risk, including Sunamganj, Barguna, Bandarban, Noakhali, and Satkhira, where around 25 percent of people are experiencing a high

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