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NATIONAL ELECTION BNP yet to firm up candidates, Jamaat done

SAJJAD HOSSAIN and RASHIDUL HASAN

Jamaat-e-Islami has pulled a significant lead in selecting candidates for the upcoming polls while its now rival and former ally, the BNP, seemed to be bogged down with issues related to seat sharing with allies and July charter reforms.

With the Election Commission expected to announce the poll schedule within a month, the BNP has yet to finalise its candidates, causing frustration among grassroots leaders and activists, party insiders said.



The longer the party delays the announcement, the more misunderstandings will grow, and complications will be created. At some point, this may lead to disorder among party members.

SA Jinnah Kabir, ex-general secretary of Manikganj district BNP

Jamaat, by contrast, has already completed its nomination process, launched constituency-level preparations, and fielded numerous first-time candidates, gaining what many within the party call a strategic edge.

Once members of the same coalition government, the BNP and Jamaat are now mired in a deepening rift over the timing of a referendum on reforms.

Jamaat insists the referendum be held this month, while the BNP says it must be held on the same day as the election, slated for February.

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Dispute over July charter escalates

BNP says it won't endorse parts it did not agree to; Jamaat blames BNP for creating 'unexpected situation'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP would take responsibility only for the sections of the July charter it signed and would not endorse any provision it did not agree to.

Jamaat-e-Islami, meanwhile, has accused the BNP of creating "an unexpected situation" around the charter's implementation.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said, "We agreed that we would sign the proposals on which all parties reached a consensus. The rest would be listed as notes of dissent."

"But we later found that the notes of dissent were completely omitted. Our words were disregarded, and new elements were added," he said at an event organised by Jatiyatabadi Muktiyoddha Dal at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

"We want a solution to this through discussions. We won't take responsibility for the parts we have not signed."

BNP Standing Committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury said the July charter was signed based on consensus, and any attempt to revise or reinterpret it now would undermine that agreement.

"Consensus was reached and agreements were signed. But now new demands are being raised. [Consensus] commission members may have personal views, but they were not appointed to impose them. They should return to their duties and let the people decide," the BNP leader said while speaking at a divisional business conference in Rajshahi, organised by the Rajshahi Divisional Business Forum yesterday.

Jamaat Naye-e-Ameer Abdullah Muhammad Taher said such a political uncertainty ahead of the February election could obstruct the electoral process.

He said, "We believe the chief adviser will not bow to conspiracy or to any vested quarter and retreat from legalising the July charter. Reform was his initiative; it is like his own child. The nation will not believe he would abandon it. But if he does, it will be seen as a betrayal of his promises."

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MV Bay One, the tourist vessel from Chattogram to Saint Martin's Island, lies anchored along with other ships in Chattogram's Patenga area despite the island reopening to tourists yesterday after a nine-month ban. Visitor turnout has remained low as ship operators temporarily suspended services following government directives that prohibit overnight stays on the island in November. Business owners hope that tourist numbers will rise once night stays are permitted in December and January.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Potato farmers drown in debt as price plummets

SUKANTA HALDER, S DILIP ROY and TANJIL HASAN

Encouraged by the high potato prices during last November's planting season, Khairul Islam, a farmer from Nabdigonj in Rangpur, invested Tk 10.92 lakh in potato cultivation by borrowing.



- Potato production, storage cost Tk 26-28 per kg
- Cold storage prices dropped to Tk 8-9 per kg
- Farmers earn only 52-68 paisa per kg after costs
- Bangladesh's potato production hits 1.15 crore tonnes

Like him, farmers expanded potato cultivation at an unprecedented rate, leading to record harvests and a market glut of the tuber.

Bangladesh produced a record 1.15 crore tonnes of potatoes last season, far exceeding the annual domestic demand of around 90 lakh tonnes, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

So much that farmers like Khairul are counting losses.

"The current price of potatoes is shocking -- at this rate, farmers can't even recover their production costs," said Mohammad Delwar Hossain, a wholesale trader at Karwan Bazar in the capital.

Yesterday, potatoes were selling at Tk 9 to Tk 12 per kilogram in the wholesale market. Over the past two weeks, the wholesale price has dropped by Tk 2 to Tk 3 per kilogram.

"This will likely discourage farmers from cultivating potatoes in the upcoming season," he said.

One such farmer is Lokman Hossain from Lalmonirhat, who has sworn off cultivating potatoes on a large scale.

He cultivated potatoes on three acres of land this season. His production cost came to about Tk 18 per kg and he expected to sell the crop for around Tk 25 per kg.

But during the harvest, he was forced to sell half of his produce at only Tk 15 per kg. He stashed half of his produce in cold storage, hoping to get a better price later.

"But now I'm selling them for Tk 12 to Tk 15 per kg, which doesn't even cover my costs -- potatoes have become a crop of despair," he added.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Free police from political grip, form independent body

Reforms otherwise incomplete, experts tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Reforms in the police force will remain incomplete unless political and bureaucratic control is eliminated and a truly independent commission is established to ensure accountability and professionalism, speakers said yesterday.

At a roundtable titled "Bangladesh Police Reform: Challenges and Actions", organised by Prothom Alo at the Pragati Insurance building in the capital, they said ensuring the police's functional independence is crucial to restoring professionalism, accountability, and public confidence in the force.

Polymakers, senior police officers, human rights advocates, academics, political leaders, and members of the National Consensus Commission were present.

Inspector General of Police Baharul Alam said he took charge last November amid an atmosphere of deep mistrust. "I often hear the question -- 'is he our man?'... But we must move beyond that. Functional independence in investigation and arrest is essential for public trust."

"Our aim is a service-oriented, professional force that ensures accountability and earns public confidence."

Law Adviser Asif Nazrul said the police had long been used as an instrument of political power. "Some acted under orders, some out of personal interest, and some to prove loyalty. As a result, police became a tool of oppression rather than protection."

He said the government had amended sections of the Code of Criminal Procedure to strengthen accountability in arrest and remand procedures. "Now, a detainee's family must be informed within 12 hours, and magistrate

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CJ calls all SC judges for meeting on Tuesday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed has called a full court meeting of all judges of both the Appellate and High Court divisions of the Supreme Court.

The meeting will be held at 3:00pm on Tuesday at the SCs conference room, according to a notification signed by Additional Registrar (Administration and Justice) Md Asif Iqbal issued yesterday.

Sources at the SC said the full court meeting is expected to discuss and decide on several key issues, including the transfer and promotion of judges in the subordinate judiciary, as well as the issuance of the SC calendar for 2026, among other administrative matters.

The full court meeting serves as an exclusive forum for the judges of the SC to deliberate and make policy decisions related to the judiciary.



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