

DHAKA MONDAY NOVEMBER 3, 2025

REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XXXV No. 281

KARTIK 18, 1432 BS

www.thedailystar.net

JAMADIUL AWWAL 11, 1447 HJRI

16 PAGES: TK 15.00

ELECTORAL SYMBOL Plot thickens over move to undo RPO change

Jamaat, NCP, Khelafat say it will
erode trust, favour BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is weighing a step back from its move to amend article 20 of the RPO, a fresh change that will allow parties in an alliance to contest polls with a common symbol, according to highly placed sources.

However, Jamaat-e-Islami, National Citizen Party, and Khelafat Majlis yesterday warned that reversing the amendment decision would compromise electoral neutrality and unfairly advantage a particular political force.

The amendment, approved at an advisory council meeting chaired by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus on October 23, made it mandatory for each party in an alliance to contest polls with its own symbol, not a common one.

It intended to give voters a clearer idea of each candidate's party identity. No gazette on the amendment was issued.

According to the sources, the interim government is preparing to undo the amendment to article 20 of the Representation of the People Order (RPO).

Sources said the reconsideration followed an informal meeting at the state guesthouse Jamuna on Saturday night, where the chief adviser reviewed the political situation and election preparations with several advisers. The decision came at the chief adviser's initiative, the sources added.

The BNP has been opposing the amendment. In a letter to Law Adviser Asif Nazrul on October 25, its Standing Committee Member Salahuddin Ahmed said the change was made without consulting key stakeholders and undermined the democratic rights of alliance partners.

The party demanded the retention of the previous provision that allows alliance partners to run with a common symbol.

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- BNP opposed change, citing lack of consultation, alliance partners' rights
- NCP accuses govt of giving BNP assurances, demands clarity
- Jamaat, Khelafat decry 'secret understandings', warn of unrest

Let's talk and
overcome the
ongoing crisis

Jamaat asks BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami Nayeb-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taheryesterday urged the BNP to sit for talks to resolve the ongoing "political crisis" centring the implementation of the July charter, the proposed referendum, and the upcoming national election.

At a press conference at Al-Falah auditorium in the capital's Moghbazar

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BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday voiced concern about the growing public doubt over the national election being held as scheduled, and said this "uncertainty could make the country's democratic transition more difficult".

"During the rule of the fallen, defeated and fugitive autocrat, people had no interest in national elections. Now, under the interim government, questions are being raised among the public -- will the election be held on time?" he said.

While inaugurating

the BNP's membership collection and renewal drive abroad and online payment gateway activities at a city hotel, Tarique said such a situation was not supposed to arise under the interim government.

Tarique said the Awami League established fascism by destroying the country's electoral system over the past 15 years only to prevent BNP's victory. "It is a matter of concern and surprise that even in a fascism-free Bangladesh, a coordinated campaign and various

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Doubt creeping in over timely polls: Tarique

UNB, Dhaka



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AL REGIME
Most power deals tied to nexus of
companies, govt
high-ups: report

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Most of the power sector deals were signed by a nexus of private entities, government higher-ups and bureaucrats during the Awami League regime, found the national committee formed to review the power sector contracts.

At the top of that nexus was then prime minister Sheikh Hasina, who served as the minister of power, energy and mineral resources. Besides, some officials of the Prime Minister's Office had repeatedly interfered with the power sector deals.

The six-member committee also found procedural flaws in signing the deal with Adani Power to import electricity from India and recommended further digging into the issue by the Anti-Corruption Commission.

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50 years since jail killings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On this day 50 years ago, the walls of Dhaka Central Jail bore witness to one of the darkest chapters in the nation's history, as four national leaders were brutally murdered behind bars.

The slain leaders were Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmad, Captain (retd) M Mansur Ali, and AHM Quamuzzaman -- the core of Bangladesh's wartime leadership that guided the nation in the absence of Bangabandhu

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