

## BNP to meet today to finalise candidate list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP Standing Committee is set to meet today, aiming to review and finalise the list of candidates for the upcoming national election.

The meeting will take place at the Gulshan Chairperson's office at noon. BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman will join it virtually, said party sources.

If the list is approved, the nomination list will be officially announced soon, according to party insiders.

They said candidate list is close to being finalised after conducting multiple surveys with BNP leaders and activists across the country, as well as holding discussions with nearly 1,000 nomination seekers.

A Standing Committee member, speaking on condition of anonymity, said, "We've received invitations for the meeting, and the agenda is open. Two key issues may be discussed: one regarding the finalisation of the nominations and another concerning the chief adviser, who may announce something significant. There may also be discussions on how to respond to the chief adviser's actions."

He, however, didn't say what the chief adviser may announce. Last night, the Chief Adviser's Press Wing announced that the interim government will hold a press conference at the Chief Adviser's Office in Tejgaon today around noon.

While the press wing did not disclose the specific agenda of the briefing, several sources close to the government indicated that an Advisory Council meeting focusing on the implementation process of the July charter will precede it.

According to party sources, a team led by Tarique has been working since last September to finalise the party's nomination seekers for the upcoming February election.

In the first phase, a survey was conducted by Tarique's own team to assess potential candidates. In the second phase, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, along with Standing Committee members, held discussions with nomination seekers across the country. In the third phase, detailed information, including passport-sized photos and national identity card copies, was collected from shortlisted candidates.

According to party insiders, candidates in 200 constituencies have almost been finalised. However, BNP is struggling to finalise candidates for 60 to 70 seats due to internal conflicts and multiple strong contenders. There are also complications in seat-sharing arrangements with alliance partners in some constituencies.



Women wait for a TCB truck to buy essentials at subsidised rates in Rajshahi city's Shiroil area yesterday. Many of the low-income group flock to TCB distribution points across the city early in the morning, fearing they may miss out on the limited supply. The photo was taken around 7:00am, though distribution was scheduled to begin at 10:00am.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

## Hezbollah 'playing with fire'

Israel warns Lebanon, calls for disarmament

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel warned yesterday that its military would step up its attacks against Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, a day after the Lebanese health ministry reported four people killed in an Israeli air strike.

Despite a November 2024 ceasefire with the Lebanese group, Israel maintains troops in five areas in southern Lebanon and has kept up regular strikes.

"Hezbollah is playing with fire, and the president of Lebanon is dragging his feet," Defence Minister Israel Katz said in a statement.

"The Lebanese government's commitment to disarm Hezbollah and remove it from southern Lebanon must be implemented. Maximum enforcement will continue and even intensify -- we will not allow any threat to the residents of the north."

- Israeli strike killed 4 in south Lebanon on Saturday
- President of Lebanon dragging his feet: Katz
- US has increased pressure on Lebanon to disarm Hezbollah

Thousands of Israelis living near the northern border with Lebanon were forced to evacuate their homes for months after Hezbollah began firing rockets into Israel following the outbreak of the offensive in Gaza in October 2023.

That set off a more than year-long conflict that culminated in two months of open war before last year's ceasefire was agreed.

The Iran-backed group, which opposes Israel, has been badly weakened by the war but remains armed and financially resilient.

In September 2024, Israel killed the group's longtime chief, Hassan Nasrallah, along with many other senior leaders over the course of the war.

Since the ceasefire, the United States has increased pressure on Lebanese authorities to disarm the group, a plan opposed by Hezbollah and its allies.

Israel never stopped carrying out air strikes on Lebanon in spite of the truce -- usually saying it is targeting Hezbollah positions -- and has stepped up the attacks in recent days.

On Thursday, Israeli ground troops carried out a deadly raid into southern Lebanon, prompting Lebanese President Joseph Aoun to order the army to confront such incursions.

## Plot thickens over move to undo RPO change

FROM PAGE 1

The debate comes amid deepening tensions over the timing of the referendum on July charter reforms and the methods to implement them.

Following an advisory council meeting on October 29, Adviser Asif Nazrul told reporters the government was struggling to find a way forward amid firm and conflicting positions of political parties.

'NEUTRALITY AT STAKE'

In a letter to Asif Nazrul yesterday, the NCP alleged the law adviser had assured the BNP of reversing the amendment, saying such an act would compromise the government's neutrality.

"We want to remind you that you are a neutral law adviser of the state, not a representative of any political party," read the letter signed by NCP Member Secretary Akhter Hossen.

The party argued that when a registered party contests under another's symbol, it bypasses its own registration obligations, weakens the Election Commission's authority, and obscures a candidate's identity.

It warned that rolling back the amendment would foster "proxy candidacies," artificially inflate multiparty representation, echo dominant voices in parliament, and undermine genuine pluralism.

Akhter urged the adviser to clarify the government's official position on the issue.

The adviser did not publicly react to the allegation that he had secretly assured the BNP of meeting its demand. The Daily Star tried to reach him for comments, but he did not respond to phone calls or reply to WhatsApp messages.

'UNDEMOCRATIC'

Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar said scrapping the amendment would disrupt the level playing field and reflect a secret understanding between the government and a political party.

He suggested the move stemmed from a "gentleman's agreement" between a BNP leader and an adviser. He called it undemocratic.

Undoing the change months before the election would raise questions about fairness, he said.

"If a responsible political leader and a government adviser collude to disrupt the level playing field, a neutral election will become impossible," he said.

In a joint statement, Khelafat Majlish Ameer Maulana Muhammad Mamunul Haque and Secretary General Maulana Jalaluddin Ahmad said revising the RPO to favour a party would be politically unethical, it would

destroy fair competition, and push the state towards uncertainty.

They warned such "secret understandings" could fuel public unrest.

The people, they said, want competition and the right to vote, not an election staged to benefit one party.

Meanwhile, Amar Bangladesh Party Chairman Mojibur Rahman Monju said altering an amendment just after approving it would mean the interim government lacked a principled stance.

At a discussion in Dhaka yesterday, he said, "It [government] runs to the right under BNP's pressure, to the left under Jamaat's, and sometimes upward under NCP's."

"Leave the politics of trying to please a few parties. If you don't, you will be permanently accountable to the people of Bangladesh for wasting the opportunity you've been given," Monju added.

Referring to disagreements following the National Consensus Commission's recommendations on implementing the July charter, Monju said the state now faces a deepening crisis over three questions: whether to hold the referendum on the same day as the national election or earlier, how to treat notes of dissent, and the nature of the upcoming polls.

He urged all BNP leaders, workers, and supporters to accept this reality in the greater interest of the country, the people, and democracy.

"Please consider the party's decision as final. I want to remind you of the words of the proclaimer of independence, Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman: 'The party is greater than the individual, and the country is greater than the party,'" Tarique said.

He said the names of BNP-nominated candidates will soon be announced in phases. "Whoever receives the nomination, please work unitedly to ensure their victory. Remember, a hidden dictatorship with secret ambitions is lurking around you. So do not let petty resentments, quarrels or disputes among yourselves reach a level where the opponent can take advantage of your differences."

Tarique also reminded those seeking nominations that they are all followers of Shaheed Ziaur Rahman and soldiers of Begum Khaleda Zia. "Remember, if the BNP's symbol 'Sheaf of Paddy' wins, you win, democracy wins, and the country wins."

## Most power deals tied to nexus of companies

FROM PAGE 1

"We have found massive corruption, collusion, frauds, irregularities and illegalities in the process of execution of power purchase agreements (PPAs) with independent power producers," Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury, the head of the committee, told journalists after submitting the "interim report" to Power Adviser Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan at his office.

Neither the committee, nor the government have disclosed the report titled "Bangladesh's Power Generation: Trapped in Costly Contracts and Massive Governance Failures in a Rent-Rich Sector", calling it a "confidential" document.

The report would be disclosed after reviewing its sensitivity, Khan said.

The committee has recommended making the report public, as well as all the present and future PPAs and implementation agreements, said power division officials.

The Daily Star has talked with multiple committee members, who said they have identified the deals as "zero risk" for the businesses.

No business in the globe is risk-free, but the terms of capacity payments for power plants were being set in a way that protects the high profits of the investors, said a committee member on condition of anonymity.

"It was a nexus between the

government higher-ups and bureaucrats -- just think why the power division was under the prime minister herself. There were a couple of officials in the PMO who were former officials of the power division. They had influences over the deals," said another committee member.

The report at least mentioned the names of Ahmad Kaikaus and Abul Kalam Azad, two former secretaries of power division who were later promoted to the post of principal secretary to the prime minister.

He said they have recommended the government for an "oversight mechanism" to sign the future deals and re-negotiate the deals that took excessive profits.

"We have already signed the deals and are trapped in it. We have no other option but to re-negotiate the deals," he added.

The committee has submitted another supplementary report on the "anomalies of the procedures of power purchase agreement with Adani Power (Jharkhand) Limited", which also found the "procedural flaws" in the signing of the deal.

A committee member told The Daily Star that they have found the draft of the deal was prepared by Adani Power itself and the officials of the Bangladesh Power Development Board were instructed to sign it by the

government high-ups.

Asked whether the Adani deal would be cancelled, Khan said there are procedures for cancelling a deal, which is also mentioned in the report.

"If we go for a without cause cancellation, we would have to pay huge amounts of liquidity damages to the companies. So, we need to cancel a deal with a cause and that might be corruption. Most of the deals have clauses of representation and warranties which declare themselves as corruption-free... if we find corruption in the deals, we will not hesitate [to cancel it]," he said.

After submitting a writ petition to the High Court, the Anti-Corruption Commission and the power division are working to get proof of the anomalies, he added.

The committee, which was formed in September 2024, took around 14 months to submit its primary report and expressed hope to conclude their activities by January next year.

"As a technical issue, the committee had to go through huge documents of most of the power deals signed under "Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provisions) Act 2010" (now repealed), the procedural documents, payments and generational data, which took up much of the time," said the committee chief Chowdhury, a former justice of the Supreme Court.

reinstating fascism.

Taher further said, "No one forced BNP to sign the July charter. They read it, understood it, and signed it willingly. They even celebrated the signing like Eid. Now they are making absurd remarks."

Rejecting BNP's call to hold the national election and referendum on the same day, he said, "They claim that holding the referendum and election on the same day would save Tk 3,000 crore. But without the legality of the July charter, the country will continue to lose direction."

"Sheikh Hasina shed tears not for the martyrs or the wounded but for the damage done to the metro rail. Likewise, Tk 3,000 crore is more valuable for the BNP than the blood of 2,000 martyrs and over 50,000 injured."

He urged the BNP to honour the sacrifice of the martyrs and cooperate with the government in holding the referendum this month, saying Jamaat will accept whatever verdict the people deliver through it.

Addressing CA Yunus, he said, "To keep your promise, hold the referendum in November and the national election in February to implement the July Charter. Without reform, Dr Yunus will be a zero; with reform, he will be a hero."

## One killed, three injured in B'baria gang violence

MASUK HRIDOY, Brahmanbaria

A person was shot dead, and three others were injured in a series of attacks and counterattacks between two rival gangs reportedly fighting to establish dominance in Nabinagar upazila of Brahmanbaria.

The deceased, identified as Shipon Miya, 30, was the son of Monnaf Miya, known locally as "Monek Dakat". Both were accused in multiple criminal cases, said Shahinur Islam, officer-in-charge of Nabinagar Police Station.

Quoting locals, the OC said the first attack took place around 9:00pm on Saturday at a roadside eatery near Gani Shah Mazar in Barikandi union.

Shipon was chatting with others when a group of armed men stormed in, opened fire and fled the scene immediately.

Shipon and two restaurant employees, Yasin Miya, 20, and Nur Alam, 18, were shot. They were taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), where Shipon died.

According to locals, there has been a long-standing dispute between two gangs over control of the area's criminal activities.

One of the groups is reportedly led by Monnaf and his son Shipon, while the other is allegedly led by Emran Hossain, 38, a teacher at Shyamgram Mohini Kishore High School, and his cousin Arafat, son of "Mister Ali" from Thollakandi village.

The attack on Shipon was reportedly carried out by Arafat and his men. As word of the shooting spread, Shipon's father, Monnaf, and his supporters reportedly stormed Emran's office close by and shot him there.

Critically injured, Emran was also rushed to the DMCH, the OC said. Monnaf and his supporters then attacked Thollakandi village, vandalising several houses, according to the police official.

Upon receiving the news, a large police contingent led by Piyas Basak, additional superintendent of police (Nabinagar circle), and OC Shahinur rushed to the scene and reinforced security across the crime scenes.

The situation is under control now, ASP Basak told reporters, declining to comment further on the motive behind the shootings.

Tension, however, remained high in Gourikandi and Thollakandi, where residents said all shops have remained closed since yesterday morning amid fear of renewed violence.

Till the filing of this report last night at 9:30pm, no case was filed over the violence.

Speaking on the matter, Obaidur Rahman, additional superintendent of police (admin and finance), Brahmanbaria, said, "Shipon and Arafat once used to be close associates. They were both accused in multiple cases of theft, extortion and robbery."

"Police even issued a warrant against Arafat, and he was arrested and sent to jail. Only a few days ago, he got out on bail. We have learnt from sources that he was under the impression that Shipon was somehow behind his arrest and was looking to take revenge."