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Referendum, polls on same day, PR for upper house

Says Yunus in address to nation, July charter order issued

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The government yesterday unveiled a set of key decisions, including holding the national election and the July charter referendum on the same day, and introducing an upper house to be formed through proportional representation.

In a televised address to the nation amid heightened political tension over issues related to July charter reforms, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus said the referendum would ask a single question on implementing constitutional reforms.

The question, however, will encompass four constitutional reform areas.

Soon after the chief adviser's address, President Mohammed Shahabuddin issued the July National Charter (Constitution Reform) Implementation Order,



2025.

The order dropped a proposed clause that would have automatically incorporated the changes into the constitution

if the next parliament, while acting as a Constitution Reform Council, failed to complete the reforms within a set timeframe.

It also shortened the council's deadline from 270 to 180 working days from its first session.

"I hope the political parties will accept this decision in the greater interest of the nation," Yunus said. "The nation will move towards a festive election. Through this, we will enter a new Bangladesh. We have arrived at the threshold of building a new Bangladesh."

The announcement drew mixed reactions from leaders of major political parties. Immediately after the chief

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KEY POINTS

Implementation order excludes the proposed clause for automatic incorporation of the July charter into the constitution

Constitutional Reform Council's deadline reduced to 180 working days from 270

Upper house will be created within 30 working days from completion of July charter's implementation process

It will be based on proportional representation of total votes received by political parties; its term will end on the same day as the lower house



REFERENDUM YES OR NO



THE QUESTION ON THE BALLOT

Do you consent to the July National Charter (Constitution Reform) Implementation Order, 2025, and the following proposals related to constitutional reforms mentioned in the July National Charter? (Yes/No)

a) The election-time caretaker government, the Election Commission, and other constitutional institutions will be formed in the light of the process set forth in the July charter.

b) The next parliament will be bicameral. An upper house with 100 members will be formed in proportion to the votes received by the parties in the national parliamentary election. The approval of a majority of the upper house members will be required to amend the constitution.

c) The parties that will win the next parliamentary election will be bound to implement the 30 proposals on different issues that include increasing women's representation in parliament, electing the deputy speaker and chairpersons of several parliamentary committees from the opposition, limiting the prime minister's term, enhancing the president's powers, fundamental rights, independence of the judiciary and local government, which were agreed upon by the political parties in the July National Charter.

d) Other reforms mentioned in the July National Charter will be implemented as per the commitments of the political parties.

WHAT THE PARTIES SAY

BNP thanks Yunus for decisions the on charter and referendum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday thanked Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus for confirming the February 2026 election plan and announcing that the July charter referendum will be held on the same day.

In a statement issued last night, the party said its Standing Committee, in a meeting chaired virtually by acting chairman Tarique Rahman from London, welcomed the announcement.

It also urged the government and the Election Commission to hold both the referendum and the parliamentary polls as soon as possible.

Speaking to reporters at the party chairperson's Gulshan office after the meeting, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir renewed the party's plea to avoid any delay in the polls.

At the meeting, member Salahuddin Ahmed briefed leaders on the differences between the July Charter signed by the BNP and the implementation order issued by the government.

However, several leaders expressed concern that taking the matter to court might be perceived as obstructing the national polls.

They shared their observations on the July

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Referendum must be before polls to make charter effective: Jamaat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami Naye-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher yesterday said Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus has created confusion by announcing that the national election and referendum would be held on the same day.

Condemning the announcement, Taher urged the chief adviser to withdraw it.

He said, "For the charter to be effective, the referendum must be held before the national election.

"But he has again created confusion by saying that the referendum and the election will be held together. We condemn this and call upon him to withdraw the statement."

Taher made the remarks at a press briefing on behalf of the eight-party alliance around 10:00pm last night, following a meeting at Jamaat's central office in Moghbazar.

Earlier in the evening, he held a meeting with the party's executive council members to review the chief adviser's address to the nation, and later joined another meeting at the same venue with leaders of the seven parties participating in the simultaneous movement based on five common demands.

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Charter's legal basis in doubt as order signed by 'fascist': NCP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Citizen Party, founded by student leaders who spearheaded last year's July mass uprising, has criticised President Mohammad Shahabuddin issuing the July National Charter (Constitution Reform) Implementation Order, 2025.

The party also demanded an explanation as to why Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus could not issue the order.

The president issued the implementation order at a time when Jamaat-e-Islami and NCP were demanding an order to give the charter legal recognition.

NCP specifically demanded that the chief adviser issue it.

Contacted by The Daily Star following an emergency meeting of the party last night, NCP Senior Joint Convener Samanta Sharmeen said, "We have no objections to the timing or process of the referendum and the election. But when the July charter was signed by a fascist, how can it serve as a legitimate legal basis? Any action taken on this July charter will create complications in the future.

"The chief adviser abstained from signing the order implementing the charter, as it goes against the spirit of the July uprising. So we first want

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ICT-1 sets Nov 17 for verdict in case against Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday announced that it will deliver its verdict in the case against deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her two top aides on November 17.

The three-member tribunal, led by Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder, fixed the date amid tight security and a packed courtroom. After announcing the date within five minutes of the proceedings, the tribunal went into a 10-minute recess.

In the case, Hasina, former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, and former inspector general of police Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun are accused of crimes against humanity during last year's July uprising.

Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun later turned approver in the case. The tribunal completed hearing arguments and concluded trial proceedings on October 23 before setting yesterday as the day to announce the date for judgement.

Security was beefed up around the tribunal since early morning. Members of the Bangladesh Army, Border Guard Bangladesh, Rapid Action Battalion, Armed Police Battalion and police were deployed, with armoured personnel carriers from both army and police stationed nearby.

The move came amid heightened tension, with the Awami League declaring a "lockdown" programme for the day, and incidents of crude bomb explosions and arson attacks on vehicles reported in the days leading up to yesterday.

After the trial proceedings, Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam told reporters, "We hope the court will exercise its wisdom and prudence and do justice to the nation's long-awaited quest for justice."

He added that the prosecution had sought the highest punishment for the accused. "Through a rightful judgment, the tribunal will bring an end to the crimes against humanity committed in Bangladesh and set a precedent for the future."

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EDITORS' COUNCIL

Nurul Kabir new president, Dewan Hanif general secy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Editors' Council has elected its new executive committee for the next two years, with New Age Editor Nurul Kabir as president and Bonik Barta Editor Dewan Hanif Mahmud as general secretary.

The election took place at the annual general meeting at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

Ittefaq Editor Tasmima Hossain was elected vice president, while Suprobhat Bangladesh Editor Rusho Mahmud became assistant general secretary.

Five editors were chosen as executive members: The Daily Star's Mahfuz Anam, Manab Zamin's Matuor Rahman Chowdhury, Prothom Alo's Matuor Rahman, Karatoa's Md Mozammel Haque and Inqilab's AMM Bahauddin.

The AGM was presided over by outgoing president

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Policemen stopping a car for inspection at a checkpoint set up at Dhaka's Gabtoli yesterday morning. Law enforcement agencies have stepped up security measures across the capital in response to a recent spate of crude bomb and arson attacks in the city.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Arson, blockades in some districts

No major incidents in Dhaka

STAR REPORT

The Awami League's daylong "lockdown" programme ended yesterday without any major untoward incident in Dhaka, though arson attacks and road blockades were reported in several districts.

Traffic in the capital was thinner than usual following arson and crude bomb attacks over the past few days. Police, army, and BGB personnel were heavily deployed across Dhaka.

The AL, whose activities are now banned, announced the programme to protest ICT-1's decision to set the date for delivering the verdict in a case against deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina on charges of crimes against humanity.

The tribunal fixed November 17 for pronouncing the verdict.

Leaders and activists of the AL and its associate bodies were not seen on the streets in Dhaka. In some districts, crude bombs went off and vehicles were set ablaze.

On the other hand, leaders and activists of the BNP and Jamaat-Shibir took to the streets, vowing to resist the AL. Many carried sticks and plastic pipes, while a group of anti-AL activists set fire to the party's central office in Gulistan.

A number of AL leaders and activists were arrested across the country, including 43 in Dhaka, 27 in Narayanganj, and 33 in Kurigram.

In at least eight districts, buses, trucks, and pickup vans were torched, and a July Memorial was set on fire. AL men blocked roads by felling trees and burning tyres, causing sufferings to commuters.

In Faridpur, the party's activists blocked the Dhaka-Khulna highway for about five hours, disrupting traffic on

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