

# Declare Ahmadiyyas non-Muslims

Khatme Nabuwat unveils year-long programme at Suhrawardy Udyan rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sammitito Khatme Nabuwat Parishad yesterday launched a year-long programme at an international conference in Dhaka, demanding that the government declare Ahmadiyyas a non-Muslim minority.

“If the Qadianis [Ahmadiyyas] are not declared non-Muslim, tougher programmes will be announced,” Mohiuddin Rabbani, secretary general of International Majlis-e-Tahaffuz-e-Khatme Nabuwat, Bangladesh, told the conference at Suhrawardy Udyan.

The programme includes mass signature collection from alems, Islamic scholars and supporters until April 30 next year; submission of memorandums to all deputy commissioners in May and June; and divisional Khatme Nabuwat conferences between July and November.

If the demand remains unmet, they will organise a national ulema-mashayekh conference in December 2026 with leading Islamic scholars to determine the course of action.

At least 90 clerics, scholars and politicians from Bangladesh and abroad, including Pakistan, India, Nepal, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, addressed the event. Leaders from the BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, Islami Andolon Bangladesh, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis and Hefajat-e-Islam also took part.

This is the first international conference organised by Khatme Nabuwat in Bangladesh.

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Thousands gathered for a conference of the International Khatme Nubuwwat Grand Council at Suhrawardy Udyan in Dhaka yesterday. The organisation announced a yearlong programme calling on the government to declare members of the Ahmadiyya community non-Muslim.

PHOTO: STAR

# Protect constitutional rights of Ahmadiyyas

Nagorik Coalition urges govt, parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Nagorik Coalition urged the government and political parties to safeguard the constitutional rights of Ahmadiyya citizens following what it described as “communal and threatening” remarks at a public gathering yesterday.

In an emergency statement, the citizens’ rights platform said it was “deeply troubled” by comments made at the International Khatme Nabuwat Conference at Suhrawardy Udyan, where several speakers reportedly issued “hateful and threatening” statements against the Ahmadiyya community.

It expressed particular alarm over major political parties deploying anti-Ahmadiyya rhetoric for political gain ahead of the polls, calling the trend “highly worrying”.

Citing article 41 of the constitution, it stressed that Ahmadiyyas hold the same right as all citizens to practice, observe, and propagate their faith.

The statement said Khatme Nabuwat groups have a long history of provocative rhetoric targeting Ahmadiyyas. It said the organisation’s activities “contributed to instability and violence” in the early 1990s, when Bangladesh was navigating a democratic transition. It added that similar movements in the early 1950s in then-Pakistan had weakened democratic processes, which is a warning for Bangladesh.

The platform said Bangladesh reclaimed freedom of expression and association through struggle and sacrifice. While differences of opinion must be respected, it warned that there can be no tolerance for efforts to stoke communal hatred or target fellow citizens.

It urged the interim government and relevant authorities to remain vigilant against any group seeking to destabilise national life in this sensitive moment, especially those using religion to incite hostility or encourage violence.

# BB moves to tighten grip

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The draft also proposes removing the “willful defaulter” classification, introduced in 2023, which obliges banks to list borrowers deemed deliberately unwilling to repay loans. Bangladesh Bank officials argue the category has created additional workload and allowed room for corruption due to subjective interpretation; instead, banks will maintain a single defaulter list after the amendment.

“There are no specific criteria to define the willful defaulters. And that creates scope for corruption,” Huda said.

Another amendment will allow the central bank to relax the current 10 percent limit on individual shareholdings for “strategic institutional investors”, if deemed beneficial for the sector. That will potentially pave the way for deeper investment by foreign or domestic institutions.

Lending rules for business groups will be tightened. Under the current law, sister firms of a defaulting company may still borrow from banks. The draft amendments will end this practice, meaning a default by one unit of a conglomerate will bar other units from obtaining loans.

# Internet freedom

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against harassment and sexual exploitation online”.

But they also caution that “the CSO retained concerning rules related to content removal, criminal penalties for online speech and surveillance”.

On political repression, the report points out retaliatory actions by the interim government: it says prosecutors obtained a court ruling in December last year that “prohibited the online dissemination of former Prime Minister Hasina’s speeches”.

Then in May, the government “banned all AL party activities under an antiterrorism law”.

Freedom House also questioned the arbitrary arrests.

“Security forces arbitrarily arrested hundreds of people based on their real or perceived support for the AL, including online journalists. Others were detained in connection with their social media activities.”

In the detailed scoring, under Violations of User Rights, the report notes that repealing the CSA improved that subcategory.

The score improved because of the repeal of the CSA, which prescribed severe penalties related to online speech.

However, the CSO “retained an overbroad ‘cyber terrorism’ provision that carried significant criminal penalties”.

Despite the reforms, Freedom House still classifies Bangladesh as “Partly Free” in terms of internet freedom.

After taking office, Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb, the Special Assistant to the chief adviser with executive authority over ministry of posts, telecommunications and Information Technology, introduced a new telecom ordinance, initiated fundamental reforms in the surveillance framework and oversaw the passage of the Personal Data Protection Ordinance and the National Data Management Ordinance, said the ICT Division in a statement.

These measures collectively contributed to the improvement in Bangladesh’s internet freedom score.

A World Bank delegation has already described the Personal Data Protection Ordinance and the National Data Management Ordinance as “world-class”, the statement added.

# Underworld back in play, raising alarm

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money transfers. Political actors are exploiting these networks.

Sources said top gangsters are again fighting turf wars over extortion, land grabs, and drug money, often using teen gangs as foot soldiers.

Following the regime change, several notorious criminals – including Abbas Ali, alias Killer Abbas; Sweden Aslam; Imamul Hasan Helal, alias Pichchi Helal; Sanjidul Islam Emon; Khondaker Nayeem, alias Titon; and Khorshed Alam, alias Freedom Rasu – were released from jail, while others like Molla Masud and Tokai Sagor returned home from abroad.

Upon their return, they reclaimed territories, summoned old followers, and demanded “collections”. Clashes broke out when local cadres resisted.

Shafiqul Islam, chief of Dhaka Metropolitan Police’s Detective Branch, said the rivalry between gangster Sanjidul Islam Emon and top criminal Mamun intensified recently. Mamun was killed over dominance in Dhaka’s underworld, allegedly ordered by Rony, Emon’s associate, who paid two gunmen Tk 2 lakh for the hit after several failed attempts.

Asked about efforts to control underworld crime, DMP Commissioner Sheikh Md Sazzat Ali told The Daily Star, “Crime in Dhaka is very much under control. Compared to previous months, muggings and daylight attacks have dropped significantly. Police have maintained order without using lethal force.”

However, locals and media reports suggest the picture is messy, with groups led by Emon, Pichchi Helal, Molla Masud, and Subrata Bain continuing to carry out extortion and land grabbing.

Subrata and Masud were arrested in Kustia earlier this year, but others have fled abroad.

## THE NETWORKS

Subrata Bain, once influential in Moghbazar, Motijheel, Paltan, and Malibagh, reportedly lost ground after his arrest. The Jisan group now controls Malibagh, Motijheel, Moghbazar, Badda, and Mohakhali, extorting hefty sums from major contracts, land deals, and businesses

Meanwhile, top criminal Emon, operating from abroad, is believed to control large parts of Mohammadpur, Dhanmondi, Jigatola, Hazaribagh, and sections of New Market. His key associates – Rony, Kallu, and Shahidul – collect “protection money” from Baroikhal to Rayerbazar.

A trader at the Sadek Khan Ghat poultry market near Rayerbazar graveyard said “Emon’s associates” used

to forcibly collect extortion money and even take chickens from the wholesale market. “Early this year, we negotiated a monthly payment of Tk 1 lakh to keep the peace, and we have been paying them regularly since,” he added.

In Paikpara, Kalyanpur, Adabor and parts of Mohammadpur, Pichchi Helal’s group extorts money from contractors, local sources say.

In Mirpur-1 and Shah Ali, local businesses, contract work, and waste management are reportedly controlled by associates of top criminal Shahadat, who is currently living abroad.

In Mirpur-10, Mirpur-13, Mirpur-14, Ibrahimpur, Kachukhet, and Bhashantek, individuals linked to Killer Abbas and Ibrahim have been accused by contractors of extorting “protection money”. They also extort money from broadband and cable operators, and construction firms.

In Bhashantek and Mirpur-13, men invoking Ibrahim’s name force contractors to buy building materials at inflated rates. Those who refuse are pressured to pay large sums before work can start.

An officer of a law enforcement intelligence unit said they received reports that associates of Killer Abbas and Ibrahim blocked work at four under-construction buildings in Mirpur-13 to collect extortion money.

According to police and media reports, most top gang leaders now operate from abroad, running large criminal networks that keep them beyond the reach of law enforcement. They fund bail and living expenses for arrested members until they return to the gang.

In Chattogram, fugitive crime boss Sazzad Ali, alias Boro Sazzad, runs the underworld from abroad. His armed gang collects tolls, controls turf, and eliminates rivals on his orders, police sources say.

Sazzad had once ruled through deputies Sarwar Hossain Babla and Akbar Ali, alias Dhakaiya Akbar. A decade ago, both split to form separate gangs.

Sarwar was shot dead on November 5 during an election campaign in the port city’s Panchlaish area. Akbar was killed on May 23 in Patenga. Police said both killings were carried out on Sazzad’s orders.

Sazzad’s followers reportedly don’t hesitate to open fire if extortion demands are unmet. Since August last year, his group has been linked to 10 murders, according to police sources.

Apart from the recent killing of Sarwar, local businessman Abdul Hakim and Jubo Dal activist Mohammad

Alamgir were shot dead last month in Chattogram’s Raozan as rival politicians fight for dominance.

## ILLEGAL ARMS

All these killings involved the use of illegal firearms. Sources report the spread of pistols, revolvers, rifles, and submachine guns in different parts of the country.

The recent intelligence report submitted to the PHQ identified at least 18 border points through which illegal weapons regularly enter the country. The most active points include Teknaf, Benapole, Chapainawabganj, Kustia, Dinajpur, and Meherpur. Smugglers are also using river routes.

Between August 1 and November 9, the Rapid Action Battalion recovered 189 firearms and arrested 98 people linked to illegal arms.

Border Guard Bangladesh said it recovered 1,225 firearms and large quantities of ammunition along the border during the first nine months of this year. Of these, 97 weapons were seized between January and April, and over a thousand from May to September.

Meanwhile, more than 1,300 firearms looted from police stations during the July uprising remain missing, with many reportedly now in the hands of criminals and being used to commit crimes across the country.

Omar Faruk, professor of criminology and police science at Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University, said many top criminals who were released from jail after the August 5 changeover have become active again. “Now, they are aligning with different political parties and engaging in violent criminal activities.”

Although police earlier said they would keep these criminals under surveillance, Faruk questioned how that would be possible.

“With so many chaotic incidents happening every day, police currently lack the capacity to maintain effective surveillance.”

Regarding illegal firearms, he said, while there have been some drives to recover looted arms, no effective operation has been carried out to control the overall flow of illegal weapons, leading to a politically and socially unstable situation.

“At this point, the government and law enforcement agencies must take decisive action to re-arrest the identified criminals. They must also recover illegal firearms through targeted operations.”

“Otherwise, the upcoming election is unlikely to be peaceful, and incidents of killings and violent crimes are expected to rise, pushing the country further into uncertainty,” he warned.

# Arson, crude bomb attacks go on

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according to the fire service control room.

Police also confirmed multiple crude bomb blasts in and outside Dhaka.

Around 11:00pm, an explosion occurred on platform No. 1 at the Airport Railway Station.

Earlier, around 8:30pm, a crude bomb exploded outside the Asian Development Bank (ADB) building in Agargaon.

Another blast was reported around 7:30pm near Mouchak Fortune Market in Ramna, while two more went off near the Mirpur-12 metro station around the same time.

About an hour later, an explosion under the Madhubagh Bridge in Hatirjheel damaged a motorcycle. Around 5:30pm, a crude bomb exploded near the Mirpur BRTA office.

Police said CCTV footage was being analysed to identify and arrest

the perpetrators. No casualties were reported in these incidents.

Police arrested four leaders and activists of the AL and its affiliated bodies yesterday for allegedly attempting sabotage.

Outside Dhaka, a bus caught fire in the Hurricane area of Gazipur on the Dhaka–Mymensingh highway around 8:00pm. No casualties were reported, and the cause remains unclear.

In Pirojpur, miscreants set fire to the July Memorial on the premises of the Central Shaheed Minar early yesterday, damaging part of the structure. Two on-duty police personnel were withdrawn to the police lines for negligence. A case is being filed over the incident.

In Narayanganj, a parked bus caught fire on the Dhaka–Chattogram highway at Shimrail in Siddhirganj around 6:00am. Firefighters extinguished the blaze soon after.

# BNP will focus on Teesta

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“India helped us during the 1971 Liberation War. They need to help Bangladesh even more. But unfortunately, we have seen the opposite. The Modi government has put us under pressure. They have taken everything, but given us nothing,” he said.

Bangladesh has long been demanding a fair share of water of common rivers. The Teesta water-sharing deal could not be signed despite all preparations in 2011 while the Farakka Barrage in West Bengal has been a cause of concern due to lack of navigability and siltation in the Padma in Rajshahi.

“The relations must be on the basis of equal footing. Our national interests must come first,” Fakhrul said.

At another event in Rajshahi, Fakhrul urged their party leaders and activists to stay alert, saying that a certain quarter is trying to create divisions within the party for political gain, reports UNB.

Speaking at a gathering after offering prayers at the grave of late BNP leader and former minister Aminul Haque in Godagari municipality,

he said party members must avoid internal conflicts at this critical time in the country’s politics.

“Another group is also trying to come to power. But our experience says they cannot bring any good change or restore discipline in the country,” he said.

He introduced Maj Gen (ret’d) Sharif Uddin as BNP’s primary nominee for Rajshahi-1 (Godagari-Tanore) constituency and urged all party activists to work for him.

Several BNP leaders had sought nomination in different constituencies in Rajshahi. The supporters of those who failed to secure the party’s ticket have recently launched demonstrations and attempted to block roads by burning tyres.

Fakhrul said late leader Aminul worked for the people in this area as an MP and minister and that his family had long contributed to local development.

He was accompanied by BNP chairperson’s adviser Mizanur Rahman Minu, former Rajshahi City Corporation mayor Mosaddék Hossain Bulbul, and BNP Research and Monitoring Cell chief Rehan Asad Ratul.

# NCP readies its grassroots

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committee, said the party’s top priority is its grassroots structure, though the NCP has already formed 401 coordination committees – 50 district-level, 340 upazila-level, six in metropolitans, and five in municipalities.

The party has also recently formed 10 convener committees – nine at the district level and one for the Rajshahi metropolitan area.

“Our coordination committees were formed in a rush to fulfill registration obligations. Now we’re bringing in experienced politicians and respected professionals, mostly over 40, to form convener committees, which will replace the local coordination committees,” Sadia said.

When a convener committee is formed in a district or metropolitan area, the previous coordination committee in that area is disbanded.

Regarding the upazila- and municipal-level committees, she said, “While we have active convener or coordination committees at the divisional and district levels, the plan is to cover every upazila and union parishad before the election.”

## CANDIDATE SELECTION

Meanwhile, the party is advancing its candidate selection process.

At a press briefing on Friday, NCP Chief Coordinator Nasiruddin Patwary announced that the party has already sold over 1,200 nomination applications. “Our target is to sell 3,000 applications by November 20, which will

be the deadline to collect the forms.”

Patwary, also president of the NCP central election committee, added that the party has formed 10 regional boards to select “capable and honest” candidates through viva voces for each constituency.

Party insiders said these boards are also responsible for conducting background checks on each applicant. “They’re looking to see if the applicant has any previous criminal charges of extortion or terrorism against them, and whether they had any affiliation with Awami League or Jatiya Party,” a party insider said, preferring anonymity.

## ALLIANCE POSSIBILITIES

Insiders said the party remains split over a possible election alliance. While one faction believes the NCP should contest its “seminal election” alone to build a “unique” identity for future politics, others think forming an alliance beforehand would be a more pragmatic decision.

NCP Joint Convener Monira Sharmin said, “In the run-up to the election, the party is working to consolidate its organisational strength at the grassroots. For now, we are preparing to contest the polls independently.”

However, she added that in the broader interest of the party, options such as alliances or seat-sharing remain open, and any such decision will be taken in consultation with party high-ups.