



EC TALKS

BNP wants ROs from commission, not the admin

Jamaat questions reshuffles in police, admin; NCP says candidates must not use alliance partner's symbols

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and AHMED DEEPTO

Major political parties yesterday urged the Election Commission to assert its constitutional authority, remain free of government influence, and clarify the electoral code of conduct.

The appeal came during the EC's ongoing dialogue with political parties at its Agargaon office ahead of the national election planned for early February.

The BNP pressed for greater institutional neutrality, proposing that returning and assistant returning officers be appointed from within the EC rather than the civil administration.

Jamaat-e-Islami questioned recent transfers in the local administration and police, while the newly registered National Citizen Party (NCP) reiterated its demand that candidates use only their own party symbols, even when contesting under alliance banners. Some other parties urged the EC to scrap this provision.

Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin said many recommendations from the Electoral Reform Commission had already been incorporated into the code of conduct and the Representation of the People Order.

"Preparing the code of conduct is not the main challenge; compliance is what matters. We hope the parties will play their expected role in



A child works at a metal workshop in the port city's Kapasgola area, his hands operating heavy machinery amid aluminium dust that poses serious respiratory and skin health risks. As the world observes Children's Day today, such scenes underline how far we are from ensuring every child's right to safety and education. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN



CA seeks the armed forces' support for festive polls

BSS, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus yesterday sought the support of the armed forces and all law enforcement agencies to ensure that the upcoming national election is held peacefully and in a festive spirit.

"Now is the time for the election. We are looking forward to it, and we have announced the date for the polls in the first half of February," Yunus said, urging everyone's support to hold a free and fair election.

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WORLD CHILDREN'S DAY

Child marriage still a bleak shadow on Bangladesh

It may take over 200yrs to end the scourge: UNFPA

2019-2025

Currently married adolescent girls (15-19)

32.9% → 38.9%

Adolescent birth rate per 1,000

83 → 92

Contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR)

62.7% → 58.2%

(DATA: MICS-2025)

NILIMA JAHAN and TANGILA TASNIM

It could take Bangladesh more than 200 years to eliminate child marriage at the current pace of decline, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has warned.

The concern comes ahead of World Children's Day, whose theme this year, "My Day, My Rights", underscores how millions of girls are still denied their basic rights to safety, education, and autonomy.

Progress on ending child marriage remains alarmingly slow, particularly among adolescent girls aged 15-19, according to preliminary findings of the Multiple Indicator Cluster

Survey (MICS) 2025, released by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics with UNICEF's technical support on Sunday.

While the proportion of women aged 20-24 who were married before 18 has fallen from 51.4 percent in 2019 to 47.2 percent this year, the rate of currently married girls aged 15-19 has risen sharply from 32.9 percent to 38.9 percent.

The contrast shows that although fewer women today report being married as children, child marriage among today's adolescents is increasing — signalling deep-rooted social norms that continue to endanger girls' health, rights, and futures.

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9% children doing hazardous work

MICS survey reveals steep climb in child labour over 6 years

NILIMA JAHAN

Bangladesh is witnessing a troubling rise in child labour, with the latest government survey showing that about 9.2 percent of children aged 5-17 are engaged in work, up from 6.8 percent in 2019.

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2025, launched on Sunday, highlights stark disparities in child labour across gender, age, education, and region.

The survey shows hazardous work also remains widespread, with 9 percent of children exposed to dangerous conditions such as extreme heat, harmful dust, chemicals, heavy loads, or unsafe tools and machinery.

Boys remain more involved in economic work, while girls shoulder a heavier share of unpaid domestic labour.

Meanwhile, children not attending school are around 2.6 times more likely to be in labour, with an 18 percent prevalence compared to 7 percent among those attending school, said the survey.

Experts say this underscores that keeping children in school remains the most effective protection against exploitation.

Poverty and location also play a decisive role. Children from the poorest households (14 percent) are nearly five times more likely to be in labour than their wealthier peers (3 percent), while rural children (10 percent) face higher risks than urban ones (7 percent).

Regionally, the northern divisions of Rajshahi (12.4 percent) and Rangpur (11.8 percent) remain the hardest hit.

In contrast, Dhaka (7.3 percent), Chattogram (7.9

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Owners and workers of several brick kilns, which had been shut down in government raids over pollution, blocked the Dhaka-Aricha highway in the Boliarpur Bhanga Bridge area of Savar yesterday, demanding permission to reopen. The two-hour blockade caused immense suffering to passengers, many of whom were forced to walk to their destinations. The photo was taken around noon.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Khalil, Doval meet in Delhi ahead of CSC

Discuss 'key bilateral issues'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Bangladesh National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman held delegation-level talks with his Indian counterpart Ajit Doval in New Delhi yesterday, discussing "key bilateral issues" in the first high-level



meeting between the two countries in months amid strained ties following the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led government last year.

The meeting came less than 48 hours after the International Crimes Tribunal in Bangladesh handed down the death penalty to deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina for crimes against humanity during the July uprising.

Hasina has been staying at an undisclosed location

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