

DMP reshuffles 50 OCs, 14 DCs ahead of polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ahead of the upcoming national election, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police has reshuffled the officers in charge of all 50 police stations under its jurisdiction.

In a separate move, 14 deputy commissioners of the DMP were reassigned to its different divisions.

In this regard, three circulars signed by DMP Commissioner Sheikh Md Sazzat Ali were issued yesterday.

According to the circulars, the police officers have been transferred or reassigned in public interest, and the orders will remain in force until further instructions.

On December 2, the government appointed or transferred 527 police officials as OCs across the country through a lottery system, a major reshuffle aimed at ensuring stability during the national election.

The Police Headquarters had sought "honest and impartial" inspectors and prepared a list, from which the new OCs were selected. The list also included the existing OCs.

According to police sources,

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Dust blankets the Tirkabandh area on Khulna-Satkhira highway. With sand, gravel, and other repair materials left exposed, the movement of vehicles kicks dust into the air. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

EC plans to unveil polls schedule

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and 14.

Officials explained that voting days are usually chosen with weekends in mind -- either Sunday (the first working day) or Thursday (the last). February 13 and 14 fall on a weekend, while Ramadan is expected to begin on February 17 or 18.

Polls are generally not held during the holy month, and campaign periods are scheduled to avoid overlapping with it. The last three national elections were all held on Sundays.

A senior government official said holidays or weekends around the polls would make voting easier, especially for city dwellers. "With holidays before and after the election, voters could travel to their hometowns, cast ballots, and return to work without difficulty."

"In the past, many urban residents were reluctant to go back to their villages to vote when no holidays were provided. However, the final decision rests with the Election Commission."

The announcement of the election schedule will mark the official start of the electoral process. Under the Representation of the People Order, 1972, the EC will issue the election timetable through a gazette notification.

According to the Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Candidates in Parliamentary Elections, campaigns may begin only three weeks (21 days) before polling.

The schedule typically reserves this period for campaigning, while the preceding days are allocated to finalising candidacies: nomination paper collections and submission, scrutiny, withdrawal, EC's disposal of appeals against scrapped nominations, and allocation of symbols.

ELECTION PREPARATIONS

Since the interim government came to power on August 8, 2024, after deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled to India following a mass uprising, Chief Adviser Yunus has repeatedly emphasised that reforms, trials of those behind the July killings,

and the election are the government's top priorities.

BNP and its allies initially demanded that the election be held by December. On June 6, Yunus announced in a televised address that the polls would be held in the first half of April 2026.

Amid criticism, on June 13 he said polls could be held the week before Ramadan in 2026 if preparations were complete. He made the statement after BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman, during a meeting in London, suggested holding the election before Ramadan.

In mid-October, in a show of unity, 25 parties -- except five, including the National Citizen Party -- signed the July National Charter following three rounds of negotiations among 30 parties and the National Consensus Commission.

On October 28, the consensus commission submitted recommendations for implementing the charter, offering two alternatives -- both involving a referendum and an implementation order. The timing of the referendum was left to the government.

Divisions soon deepened over several issues, including the referendum timing. On November 3, the government asked parties to reach a consensus within a week or it would "act as necessary".

After the deadline expired, the government on November 13 announced that the national election and referendum would be held on the same day, and that an upper house would be introduced through proportional representation.

Meanwhile, the EC and the government are proceeding with preparations for the February polls.

The commission has published the final voter list, confirmed the registration of two new political parties with two more awaiting approval, and launched a mobile app to help expatriate Bangladeshis register as voters.

The government has amended the Representation of the People

Order, 1972, in line with the EC's recommendations. The commission also made changes to the electoral code of conduct.

On September 4, the EC finalised the delimitation of 300 constituencies, redrawing boundaries of 46 seats across 16 districts.

It has also held meetings with parties and other stakeholders.

ADMINISTRATIVE RESTRUCTURING

The government has also almost completed major reshuffles in the field administration and police.

It has changed 50 deputy commissioners and police superintendents in all 64 districts as well as officers in charge of 577 of 639 police stations.

In national elections, deputy commissioners of districts and the divisional commissioners of Dhaka and Chattogram usually serve as returning officers, while police remain responsible for maintaining law and order.

BNP'S NEW PROPOSAL

In another development, a BNP delegation, led by Standing Committee member Nazrul Islam, met with Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin yesterday and proposed increasing the number of polling booths, marking places and ballot seals, since the polls and referendum will take place on the same day.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting at the EC office, Nazrul said his party is not in favour of deferring the national election.

Asked about BNP's earlier request to delay the announcement of the schedule due to Chairperson Khaleda Zia's health condition, he said, "Today we've announced some more candidates, which shows that we are engaged in the electoral process. We don't want to step outside this process unless, God forbid, unavoidable circumstances arise."

He added that the election should be held as planned and therefore the schedule should be declared accordingly.

omitted.

Several police officials expressed dissatisfaction over the omissions, saying the agency will again be controlled by the government.

Contacted by The Daily Star, M Akbar Ali, president of the Retired Police Officers' Welfare Association, said, "What we are asking for is a reflection of public aspirations, for the police to be a people friendly force. But now, the control of the commission will come from the government and political parties. The influence will continue."

If the members of the commission set the policies but the government does not follow them, then what's the point? The government will do whatever it wants, and that is what will happen, right?"

He added, "Recommendations mean nothing if the government chooses to ignore them. We will never know what was recommended or whether it was implemented."

The police will remain under colonial style control, used as an instrument of oppression against the people. The trend of using the police to suppress the public will continue. We are making this point clear."

The provision has now been

Khaleda may fly

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The doctors from Bangladesh are AZM Zahid Hossain, Fakhruddin Mohammad Siddiqui, Shahabuddin Talukder, Nooruddin Ahmed, Md Zafrul Iqbal, and Md Al Mamun.

Two additional doctors from the UK are also expected to join the team.

Meanwhile, the interim government yesterday urged all mosques across the country to arrange prayers for Khaleda Zia after Juma prayers today.

The BNP also announced prayers in all places of worship for today.

Party leaders and activists continued to gather outside the hospital yesterday.

Members of the SSF, police, and BGB were stationed inside the hospital. The road in front of the hospital's main gate has been cordoned off to keep out crowd of visitors.

Tk 35,000cr more

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He said this massive amount cannot be mobilised overnight. "We are considering allocations over multiple fiscal years. It will have to be a phased recovery, not a one-time fix."

The central bank is prioritising the protection of depositors, Mansur said, adding, "The defaulters will face the law, but innocent depositors must not suffer."

Mansur also acknowledged that the non-performing loan (NPL) situation is more serious than previously disclosed. The reported NPL figure had been hovering around 9 percent in the past. It is 36 percent now.

"We are not going to manipulate the data. The public deserves transparency."

The governor said the central bank aims to bring down the NPL rate to 10 percent by March 2026. "It might take 10 years to reduce it to 4-5 percent, but that is the sustainable path."

Viable institutions must not be allowed to collapse, he said. "Institutions are national assets. Closing them would be the easy way out; we could just halt credit lines. But that would destroy jobs and value. Instead, we are choosing the harder path, keeping businesses alive while holding people accountable."

However, he said Bangladesh Bank is taking steps to liquidate nine non-bank financial institutions (NBFI), and four to five more NBFI could face liquidation if they fail to restructure or raise fresh capital.

"Those that can prove viability will be given a chance to survive. We're not promising miracles. But with time, transparency, and the rule of law, we can rebuild trust in the financial system."

Iran Guards warn US vessels during drill in Gulf

AFP, Tehran

Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps yesterday kicked off naval wargames in the Gulf, issuing warnings to US warships in the area, more than five months after the 12-day war with Israel that briefly drew in American forces.

State TV said the drill showcases the "sacrifice and spirit of resistance" of the IRGC's naval forces "to confront any threat" against Iran following the June war.

The strikes, which killed more than a thousand people, including senior IRGC commanders, prompted Iran to retaliate with drone and missile strikes that killed dozens in Israel.

The provision has now been

Overseas votes to be counted with polls-day ballots

Advisory Council approves RPO amendment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two amendments to the Representation of the People Order (RPO) pertaining to postal ballots were approved at the latest meeting of the Advisory Council yesterday.

The amendments comprise clear instructions on which postal ballots will not be accepted and rules for counting postal ballots sent by overseas voters.

The ballots with more than one stamp, no stamp, no signature on the declaration form or those that reach the returning officer after the deadline will not be accepted.

All valid postal ballots will be counted at the same time as in-person votes.

Also at yesterday's meeting, the Forest and Tree Conservation Ordinance 2025 was approved, said Syeda Rizwana Hasan, adviser for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, at a briefing afterwards.

The ordinance introduces responsibilities that were not included in the old 1927 forest law.

The new ordinance defines the duties of the Forest Department, adds rules for restoring damaged forests and protects the cultural and legal rights of indigenous communities traditionally living in forest areas, she said.

BNP finalises candidates for key battles

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now announced candidates for 272 constituencies. The remaining 28 constituencies will be announced "in due time", said Fakhru.

The BNP nominated former Chhatra Dal General Secretary Habibur Rashid for Dhaka-9. NCP Senior Joint Secretary Tasnim Jara collected a nomination form for the same seat.

The BNP nominated SM Jahangir Hossain, joint convener of Dhaka north BNP, for Dhaka-18, for which NCP Chief Coordinator Nasiruddin Patawary also collected a nomination form.

The party announced BNP National Executive Committee Member Sheikh Rabiu Alam as its candidate for Dhaka-10. However, LGDR Adviser Asif Mahmud Sajib Bhuiyan expressed interest in running from there. He has already changed his constituency from Cumilla and become a voter of Dhaka 10.

Rabiu, also the managing director of Pleasant Properties Ltd, has already received a show cause notice from the BNP for his alleged involvement in criminal activities. He was the BNP's candidate for Dhaka-10 in the 2018 national elections.

With the new nominations, BNP has now finalised candidates for 17 out of 20 Dhaka constituencies. The remaining constituencies are Dhaka 13, 17, and 20.

Reza Kibria has been nominated as BNP's candidate for Habiganj-1. In the 2018 elections, he contested from the same seat using the "Sheaf of Paddy" symbol as a candidate of the Gono Forum, an ally of the Jatiya Oikya Front led by eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain.

For Dhaka-7, BNP nominated Hamidur Rahman, a member of the party's central executive committee, where Mamunul Haque, a member of the Cox's Bazar-2.

Keep power, energy infrastructure out of war

Turkey warns Moscow, Kyiv

AFP, Istanbul

Turkey warned Russia and Ukraine against targeting energy infrastructure following several Black Sea drone attacks claimed by Kyiv on Russia-linked tankers, Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar said.

Speaking to a small group of journalists in Istanbul on Wednesday, Bayraktar said any disruption would hit global markets and people's pocketbooks, noting that energy facilities had already been struck in both countries.

"We tell all the parties, in Russia and Ukraine: keep the energy infrastructures out of this war, because this is very much linked to people's daily lives," he said.

Last Friday, two empty oil tankers were hit by explosions off Turkey's Black Sea coast, at least one of which was on its way to a Russian port. A Ukrainian security source told AFP its forces had used naval drones to hit the vessels which were "covertly transporting Russian oil".

A third tanker was struck on Tuesday en route from Russia to Georgia, with Russia saying it had also been hit by the drone -- but this time, Ukraine denied any involvement.

Bayraktar said energy facilities had been repeatedly targeted throughout

the conflict.

"We also know that Ukraine's energy infrastructure was a main target, and vice versa with Ukraine attacking some energy facilities in Russia," he said.

Turkey wants energy infrastructure to remain "out of this conflict," he said, adding: "We need to keep energy flows uninterrupted in the Black Sea, in our straits, as well as through the pipelines."

Ankara was implementing measures "against war-related maritime threats", a Turkish defence ministry source said yesterday.

"However, even if we minimise maritime threats and security chaos in the Black Sea through these measures, lasting peace is essential for a stable and secure maritime environment," the source added.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday denounced the Ukrainian drone attacks as "piracy".

He warned Moscow would "expand the range of its strikes on Ukrainian ports and the ships that enter them", and if the attacks continued, it would "consider the possibility of retaliatory measures against ships of those countries that are helping Ukraine carry out these pirate operations."

"The most radical way would be to cut Ukraine off from the sea."