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## Seat-sharing talks change gear as polls schedule nears

MAMUNUR RASHID, SAJJAD HOSSAIN and AHMED DEEPTO

Political parties are accelerating preparations for the coming polls, with aspirants nearly finalised, alliances taking shape, and seat-sharing talks at full throttle.

Across the country, the election mood is unmistakable: posters are all over the streets, rallies are large, and processions vie for public attention.

The spotlight now shifts to the Election Commission, which has completed preparations for the nation's first-ever twin exercises -- the 13th national polls and the referendum on July charter reforms -- slated for February.

The timeline for these polls is likely to be announced either this evening or tomorrow, setting the election process in motion, according to senior EC officials.

Following tradition, the commission will meet President Mohammed Shahabuddin at Bangabhaban today at

- ⦿ BNP insiders say it may keep 15 seats for its allies
- ⦿ Jamaat sources say it is unwilling to give its allies more than 70 seats
- ⦿ NCP to share seats with AB Party, Rastro Songsar Andolan
- ⦿ 2 Jatiya Party factions and 16 other parties form new alliance

noon. It met Chief Justice Syed Refat Ahmed yesterday and held talks with Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus on Sunday.

State-run Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Betar have already been asked to record Chief Election

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

## Human rights report paints a grim picture

### HRSS says mob killings, political clashes, sexual violence dominate 2025

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 156 people were killed and 242 injured in 276 incidents of mob violence till November this year, according to a report by the Human Rights Support Society. That's an average of about 14 deaths per month from mob violence.

The Human Rights Observation Report 2025 was prepared on the state of law and order and human rights between January and November this year from coverage in 15 national dailies along with the organisation's own data and was released yesterday through a press statement.

During this period, at least 31 people were killed in clashes with law enforcement or from torture in custody, while 80 prisoners died in jails across the country.

At least 1,909 women and girls were subjected to sexual violence, of whom 789 were raped. Over half of the victims (455) were under 18.

Since the interim government took office in August last year, the expected improvement in human rights and law and order has not materialised; instead, the situation remained alarming between January and November this year, the report said.

Despite having hopes for overall progress in the new year, the report mentions that previous patterns of rights violations have continued, with

new patterns emerging.

Although incidents of enforced disappearances and crossfire (extrajudicial killings) did not occur, according to the report, political violence, mob killings, sexual violence against women, vandalism at shrines, and attacks on journalists have all increased.

- ⦿ 1,909 women, girls subjected to sexual violence
- ⦿ 293 attacks targeted journalists
- ⦿ 24 attacks on minority communities
- ⦿ More than 50 shrines were attacked

The report further noted interference with freedom of expression, deaths in law enforcement custody due to torture, attacks on workers, child abuse, attacks on minorities, deaths in prison, and obstruction in assemblies.

There have been 852 incidents of political violence, of which 474 stemmed from internal conflicts within the BNP

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

## Civic space 'repressed' despite reform steps

CIVICUS Monitor says Bangladesh a 'bright spot'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Global watchdog CIVICUS Monitor has once again classified Bangladesh's civic space as "repressed", maintaining the same rating as last year.

Bangladesh's status had been upgraded to "repressed" from "closed", the lowest category, in 2023.

Even so, the country was cited as a "bright spot", with CIVICUS noting the resilience of civil society in defending civic freedoms.

"Since its 2024 political transition, when mass protests forced a change of government, Bangladesh has taken notable steps toward accountability and human rights reform," the Johannesburg-based organisation said in its report yesterday.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

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## KHALEDA'S HEALTH

### Medical board finds no fresh deterioration



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's condition remains unchanged and is under the supervision of her medical board at the capital's Evercare Hospital.

Her medical board held a routine review meeting and found that no fresh deterioration was noticed as of yesterday evening.

Doctors advised that until the former prime minister's condition stabilises enough for her to fly for advanced treatment, she will undergo treatment at the healthcare facility.

Around 7:00pm, BNP media cell, quoting Khaleda's personal physician AZM Zahid Hossain, said her condition remains the same.

Zubaida Rahman, wife of BNP acting chairman

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

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Zubaida Rahman, wife of BNP acting chairman

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

## 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

Despite decades of advocacy, women in Bangladesh continue to face entrenched barriers, from weak policy implementation to low political representation and persistent violence. The Women's Affairs Reforms Commission issued 423 recommendations, yet only a fraction have been implemented. On the final day of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, veteran rights activist Shireen Parveen Huq, also head of the commission, spoke to The Daily Star's Nilima Jahan about progress, setbacks, and the urgent reforms still waiting to be realised.

## Star INTERVIEW



TDS: The Women's Affairs Reforms Commission made 423 recommendations. How much has been implemented?

Shireen: Of the 423 recommendations, 71 were prioritised by the women and children affairs ministry. It is currently working on 13; the rest fall under other ministries.

A significant achievement has been Bangladesh's ratification of ILO Convention C190, setting an international standard to prevent workplace violence and sexual harassment. This makes Bangladesh a regional leader, being the first in South Asia to ratify C190 and the first in Asia to ratify all 10 of the

measurable.

Recently, the expatriates' welfare ministry approved a reintegration policy for returning migrant workers.

With the government nearing the end of its term, major new initiatives are unlikely, with the focus on advancing ongoing work.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

No illegal gatherings after polls schedule Warns govt, curbs to continue until election day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government yesterday urged all to refrain from "illegal and unapproved" public gatherings and movements after the announcement of the election schedule, expected today or the day after.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the home ministry yesterday afternoon on the instruction of Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, according to a statement issued by the CA's Press Wing.

"From the announcement of the election schedule until polling day, any illegal and unauthorised public

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus poses for a photo with the winners of this year's Begum Rokeya Padak -- footballer Ritu Porna Chakma, labour leader Kalpona Akter, physician Rubhana Raqib, and human rights activist Nabila Idris -- after distributing the awards at a ceremony at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: PID



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Biggest hurdle for reforms is bureaucracy

Says Iftekharuzzaman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's reform trajectory depends entirely on how far the bureaucracy is willing to let it proceed, said Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh, yesterday.

"The prospects for state reform will only be realised when the nation's political and bureaucratic cultures change."

He made the remark at a discussion titled "Post-Authoritarian Media Environment" organised by TIB at its Dhanmondi office to mark International Anti-Corruption Day and to announce this year's Investigative Journalism Award.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

## BNP will ensure ACC gets back its wings: Tarique

UNB, Dhaka

BNP, if it returns to power, will ensure the independence of Anti-Corruption Commission to effectively control graft in the country, said BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman.

"We must pull the reins on corruption, and we have the track record to do it. BNP has a proven record of controlling corruption," Tarique said while speaking virtually at the closing session of the third day of BNP's "Plan to Build the Country" programme.

During the tenure of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, the ACC was set up so that it could investigate any corruption allegation related to the government without needing permission from anyone.

"It was completely independent. This shows how confident and committed Khaleda Zia was in fighting corruption. She made that commission fully independent. Insha'Allah, we will establish that same system again," he said.

Tarique accused the "autocratic Awami League government" of later changing the law, making government permission necessary before starting any corruption probe involving government officials. "If it is needed and if it is in the interest of the country, we will change that rule again," he said.



A worker stirs unprocessed moong dal for drying at a mill in Baneshwar Bazar of Rajshahi's Puthia upazila yesterday. Once processed, the dal will head to wholesalers. Pulse farmers across the district have reported bumper harvest on the chars of the Padma river this year.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5