

NEXT NAT'L POLLS Cabinet orders neutrality of government employees

STAR REPORT

The Cabinet Division has issued a strict directive instructing all government employees to carry out their duties in a neutral and lawful manner during the upcoming national parliamentary election and referendum.

The order also says that no obstruction should be created in following the lawful instructions of returning officers.

The directive was sent yesterday to secretaries of all ministries and divisions, the inspector general of police, directors general of the Coast Guard and Ansar, divisional commissioners, deputy commissioners, superintendents of police, and heads of all government offices and agencies.

In the same circular, the Cabinet Division also instructed all ministries

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Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus unveils a commemorative postage stamp at the state guest house Jamuna in Dhaka yesterday, marking Victory Day being celebrated across the country today.

PHOTO: CA'S PRESS WING

Nation celebrates Victory Day today

BSS, Dhaka

The nation is set to celebrate Victory Day today, as the country was liberated from the Pakistani occupation forces on this day 54 years back through a nine-month-long bloodstained War of Liberation.

On December 16, 1971, Bangladesh was born as an independent country at the cost of the supreme sacrifice of three million people.

The government has taken extensive programmes to celebrate the great Victory Day, while the day will begin with a 31-gun salute in the capital this morning.

The president and the chief adviser are expected to pay tributes to the martyrs of the Liberation War by placing wreaths at the Savar National Martyrs' Memorial as the sun rises today.



Then, the Bir Shrestha families, war-wounded freedom fighters and brave freedom fighters, under the leadership of the liberation war affairs adviser, will lay wreaths there.

In addition, foreign diplomats in Bangladesh, political and social organisations and people from all walks of life will pay tribute to the martyrs of the Liberation War.

On the occasion, the national flag will be hoisted in all government, semi-government, autonomous and private buildings and Bangladesh embassies and missions abroad, while important buildings and establishments will be illuminated.

As part of the nationwide celebrations of Victory Day, the country is set to make a world record by parachuting with the highest number of national flags.

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Structural weakness, politics undermine country's anti-graft efforts: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's efforts to curb corruption and ensure transparency will remain ineffective unless accountability reforms address the broader governance system, speakers said at a roundtable discussion yesterday.

They said the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and the Information Commission (IC) continue to face structural weaknesses, political influence, and operational constraints, despite existing laws and institutions.

The discussion, titled "Reimagining Institutions of Accountability in Bangladesh", was organised by the Centre for Peace and Justice (CPJ) of BRAC at the BRAC Centre in the capital. CPJ presented findings and recommendations from its Ideas Papers on the ACC and the IC, identifying institutional gaps and possible reform pathways.

Individuals who have amassed illicit wealth often continue to enjoy public respect and authority. This has become an accepted way of life. Accountability institutions must be effective, transparent, and able to work together to challenge such norms.

IFTEKHARUZZAMAN, executive director, TIB

At the event, Transparency International Bangladesh Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said commissions such as the ACC and the IC do not operate in isolation.

Their effectiveness depends on a broader ecosystem involving parliament, the judiciary, public administration, and non-state actors, including political parties, the media, the private sector, NGOs, and families, he said.

"If we want a governance system that is accountable to the people, the entire ecosystem must support corruption control and the right to information," he said, adding that the current reality often shows the opposite.

He pointed to the social acceptance of corruption, noting that individuals who have amassed illicit wealth often continue to enjoy public respect and authority.

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APPOINTMENT OF NEXT CJ

Absence of specific constitutional provision fuels speculation

Current CJ to retire Dec 27; doubts remain whether Judiciary Reform Commission's suggestion will be followed

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

With Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed set to retire on December 27, the absence of a specific constitutional provision has led to speculation about who will succeed him.

Several Supreme Court lawyers said the principle of seniority should be followed for selecting the next head of the judiciary. They, however, pointed out that there are precedents where SC judges were appointed to the post by superseding their seniors.

In its report in February, the Judiciary Reform Commission recommended the inclusion of a provision in the constitution for appointing the senior-most judge of the Appellate Division as the chief justice. It suggested a constitutional amendment, limiting the president's discretion in the matter.

The government, however, has yet to issue any ordinance to this effect.

Article 95(l) of the Constitution says, "The chief justice shall be appointed by the president, and the other judges shall be appointed by the president after consultation with the chief justice."

The article also mentions that a judge will hold office until he or she turns 68.

Justice Refaat, who will turn 68 on December 28, was appointed as the 25th chief justice on August 11 last year after being elevated to the Appellate Division from the High Court Division.

In its report, the Judiciary Reform Commission recommended appointing the senior-most judge of the Appellate Division as the chief justice and limiting the president's discretion in the matter. The government, however, has yet to issue any ordinance to this effect.

His appointment was made after the then chief justice Obaidul Hassan and five other judges of the Appellate Division stepped down on August 10 last year amid student demonstrations demanding their resignation.

According to SC sources, the next (26th) CJ will be picked from six judges of the Appellate Division.

Of them, Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam will retire on July 14, 2026; Justice Zubayer Rahman Chowdhury on May 17, 2028; Justice Md Rezaul Haque on April 23, 2027; Justice SM Emdadul Hoque on November 6, 2030; Justice AKM Asaduzzaman on February 28, 2026; and Justice Farah Mahbub on May 26, 2033.

Senior SC lawyer Qazi Zahed Iqbal told The Daily Star that Justice Ashfaqul may be appointed as the next CJ if the principle of seniority and the Judiciary Reform Commission's suggestion are maintained.

Justice Ashfaqul was elevated to the Appellate Division from the HC Division on December 8, 2022, during the tenure of the Awami League government.

SC lawyer Shameem Haider Patwari said the principle of seniority should be followed in appointing the CJ unless an exceptional situation arises.

Echoing him, another SC lawyer, Imran Siddique, said, "In my view, the chief justice should be appointed on the basis of seniority unless there are credible allegations of misconduct or lapses of integrity against the senior-most judge."

"This narrow exception is

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'Nothing more than a token gesture'

TIB slams Police Commission Ordinance, 2025

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Police Commission Ordinance, 2025 fails to meet long-standing public demands for an independent police commission and risks entrenching bureaucratic control over law enforcement, said Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) in a statement yesterday.

TIB described the ordinance as "nothing more than a token gesture that undermines the possibility of establishing an independent police commission".

The organisation slammed what it called bureaucratic intrusion into a body meant to ensure police accountability and professionalism, and to function independently of both the government and the police.



All activities and decision-making processes of the commission would inevitably remain under bureaucratic and police influence.

According to the statement, provisions on the commission's composition "clearly pose risks of conflict of interest," particularly the mandatory inclusion of retired bureaucrats and police officials in its leadership, including the appointment of a retired police officer as member secretary.

"All activities and decision-making processes of the commission would inevitably remain under bureaucratic and police influence," said TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman.

TIB warned that the ordinance could turn the commission into "a haven for retired and deputed officials," allowing the culture of impunity within the police to continue.

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Resignation of home adviser sought Chhatra Odhikar Parishad places five-point demand

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh Chhatra Odhikar Parishad yesterday placed a five-point demand before the government, calling for the resignation of senior officials, accountability for killings allegedly involving India's Border Security Force (BSF), and restrictions on political participation ahead of the next parliamentary election.

The demands were announced at a press briefing at Madhur Canteen on the Dhaka University campus.

They demanded the resignation of the home affairs adviser and the chief adviser's special assistant responsible for home ministry matters.

The group warned that if the accused shooters of Hadi, Faisal Karim Masud and Alamgir -- allegedly

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One or two murder incidents occur sometimes: CEC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin yesterday dismissed concerns over a deterioration in law-and-order situation, saying there are no obstacles to holding a free and fair national election.

He described the recent shooting of Sharif Osman Hadi as an isolated incident, saying, "One or two incidents of murder or violence take place sometimes."

Speaking at an event in Dhaka's Gulshan, CEC Nasir said, "Where has law and order deteriorated? From time to time, one or two incidents of murder or violence occur..." he said.

"Similar incidents happened earlier, including the killing of Ahsanullah Master," he said, urging people not to draw broad conclusions based on a single event.

Comparing the current situation with periods of severe unrest in earlier years, CEC Nasir said that at those times, police stations were non-functional, and officers could not operate. "Compared to that situation, law and order have improved significantly," he said.

He called on all quarters to dispel doubts about the upcoming election. "There may be apprehensions in the media and elsewhere, but we have no doubts. The election will be held on time and will be conducted in a free, fair and competitive manner with everyone's participation," he said.

He also said the EC held a meeting yesterday with

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AMM Nasir Uddin



A man cautiously navigates construction materials while crossing a section of Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in Dhaka where drainage repair work is underway. Prolonged reconstruction near Karwan Bazar has encroached on much of the roadway and footpath, forcing pedestrians onto the busy road and exposing them to serious risk. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS