

DHAKA CENTRAL UNIVERSITY Govt backtracks from merger plan

Draft ordinance shifts to affiliation model, 7 colleges to function independently

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The government has finalised the draft ordinance to establish Dhaka Central University, which will primarily function as an affiliating and regulatory body for seven affiliated colleges.

Contrary to last year's draft, the Dhaka Central University Ordinance, 2026 proposes preserving the colleges' existing infrastructure, names and properties. Each institution will continue its regular academic activities, including Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) education, though the colleges will no longer have separate governing bodies, according to the

draft prepared by the Ministry of Education.

Ministry sources said the draft will soon be placed before the Council of Advisers for approval.

The 2025 draft had proposed converting the colleges into full campuses of Dhaka Central University, effectively dissolving their separate administrative identities. Under that plan, Dhaka College, Eden Mohila College, Government Titumir College, Government Bangla College, Begum Badrunessa Government Girls' College, Government Shaheed Suhrawardy College and Kabi Nazrul Government College were to be renamed as campuses of the new university, with academic

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PHOTO: BNP MEDIA CELL

BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman addressing a milad and doa mahfil organised by residents of Korail for late BNP chairperson and former prime minister Khaleda Zia at the T&T Colony ground in Mohakhali yesterday.

Will repair state, improve lives

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"Today, the challenges are multi-faceted – the BNP has already worked hard to prepare policies, which will enable the shattered economy to grow as a stable one, which will pave the way for sustainable development, which will empower the lower income people to rise and initiate a new era of hopes and aspirations," said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir.

If voted to power, the party will overcome the financial and political challenges.

"We have challenges. But this has to be overcome with the strength and power of the people. We know the economy is in a critical situation. Political issues are not settled yet. We shall overcome all challenges as we have done in the past."

Since 2009, the Awami League regime devastated the economy, turned it into a mafia economy and encouraged oligarchy.

"It turned into a haven for looters, plunderers – the banks were looted, money was taken away from banks to foreign countries where they became owners of huge assets and wealth. It was a country with no significant employment, no investment, an economy of despair."

The 15 years of Awami rule were marked by lawlessness, lack of accountability and unbridled corruption, all of which led the country to a 'state of fascism', Fakhru said.

The July Uprising, which compelled Sheikh Hasina to flee the country, brought new hope and created new opportunities.

The BNP has always been a forward-looking party, Fakhru said, adding that his party initiated political as

well as economic reforms since its inception.

"With the spirit of liberation war and the spirit of the July movement, the BNP is determined to create a better Bangladesh with new ideas, new technology, new opportunities in this changed world," Fakhru added.

EIGHT SECTORS

Under its Family Card programme, the BNP plans to provide Tk 2,000-2,500 monthly assistance or essential food items to 50 lakh women.



The card will be issued in the name of the household's matriarch. By reducing household food expenditure, the Family Card enables women to save regularly.

The proposed Farmers Card would ensure fair prices for fertilisers, seeds and pesticides, along with incentives, easy-term loans and insurance.

The card will also enable easier access to affordable financing, seasonal credit and crop and livestock insurance to protect farmers from climate shocks, pests and market

volatility.

The BNP's health sector plan promises one lakh new health workers – 80 percent of them being women – for door-to-door screening of common diseases.

The party's health reform agenda places preventive and promotive healthcare at the forefront both in rural and urban areas.

It pledges round-the-clock free medicine through primary health centres, affordable treatment for

With the view to establishing sports as a profession, the party has planned mandatory sports education from class IV, scholarships for talented students aged 12-14 through 'Notun Kuri Sports', construction of Sports Villages with indoor facilities in all 64 districts, appointment of Upazila Sports Officers, BKSP branches in all divisions, playground expansion and establishment of a sports equipment industry.

In the environment sector, excavation or re-excavation of 20,000 km of rivers and canals, development of Teesta and Padma Barrage projects, planting 250 million trees over five years, nationwide integrated waste management and production of fuel and organic fertilisers from waste are in the cards.

For welfare religious leaders, the party has proposed monthly honorarium, festival allowances, skill development training, expansion of mosque-based education programs, strengthening Imam-Muazzin Welfare Trust and similar benefits for heads of places of worship of other religions.

In his keynote speech, Ziauddin Hyder, a member of the BNP Chairperson's Advisory Council, said: "Bangladesh cannot afford politics that only wins elections – Bangladesh needs politics that repairs the state and improves lives. Let the promise of the next election be this: not noise, not fear, not division, but a clear plan, a repaired state, and a future where every family can live with dignity."

Humaiun Kobir, BNP's joint secretary general (international relations), and Saïmum Parvez, special assistant to the BNP chairperson's foreign affairs advisory committee, also spoke.

In response, Dewan AH Alamgir, the session's keynote speaker, said: "Women's participation in politics needs to be increased further. Depending on education, access to opportunities and their preferences, women's participation in the economy and politics can be expanded."

Responding to another question on why the party had not nominated any women candidates in the upcoming national election, Jamaat's Naye-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher said: "Jamaat has no objection to direct representation of women. At the Consensus Commission, a proposal has been placed to field women candidates directly in five percent of the seats. Jamaat agrees with this. The party will implement it gradually."

In the same session, Debapriya Bhattacharya, distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, asked how Jamaat planned to finance and meet the costs of the promises it was making.

In reply, Alamgir, a development consultant and member of Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation's general body, said the matter would be discussed in detail in the next session.

Alongside Jamaat's top leaders, others in attendance included human rights activist Nur Khan Liton; senior Supreme Court lawyer Shahdeen Malik; former MP Akhtaruzzaman; Ibn Sina Trust member (Administration) AKM Sadrul Islam; The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam; Prothom Alo Executive Editor Sajjad Sharif; veteran editor Abul Asad; Naya Diganta Editor Salahuddin Muhammad Babar; The New Nation Editor Mokarram Hossain; and Manabkhantha Editor Mohammad Shahidul Islam, among others.

Diplomats of the US, the UK, China, India, Pakistan, Kosovo, Turkey, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Brunei, Australia, Italy, Denmark, Singapore, the Philippines, Indonesia, the Maldives, Iran, Canada, Palestine, Afghanistan, Libya, Algeria, the EU, France, Germany, Japan, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, South Korea, Bhutan, Thailand, Switzerland, Spain, Brazil, the UN, UNDP and IRI were present.

BNP's rebel woes just won't go away

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remained active across more than 45 constituencies.

Speaking to this newspaper yesterday evening, Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair said 215 Jamaat men will contest under the 10-party alliance banner.

Alliance partner National Citizen Party (NCP) will field candidates in 30 seats; Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis 23; Khelafat Majlis 12; Liberal Democratic Party seven; Bangladesh Nezam-e-Islam Party three; Amar Bangladesh Party (AB Party) three; and Bangladesh Development Party will field two candidates, according to Zubair.

The remaining seats, he said, would remain open.

"We are hoping that everything in these seats can be fixed any time before the polls. Once a decision is made, someone will step aside," he added.

Even if a candidate steps aside, his or her symbol will be on the ballot paper and voters will be able to vote for them.

Gazi Ataur Rahman, joint secretary general of Islami Andolan Bangladesh (IAB), said his party is contesting 268 seats.

BNP contesting 286 seats under own symbol

215 Jamaat men contesting under alliance banner

305 candidates withdraw from the race

1,967 candidates running for 300 seats

IAB was previously part of the Jamaat-led alliance but withdrew a few days ago, citing inadequate importance given to it and fewer seats offered than expected.

The Jatiya Party faction led by GM Quader is contesting 196 seats.

Bazlur Rashid Feroz, general secretary of Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BaSaD), said 149 candidates will contest under the nine-party Ganatantrik Jukto Front.

Of them, the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) is fielding 63 candidates, BaSaD 37, BaSaD (Marxist) 34, and Bangladesh JaSad 15.

Meanwhile, the Gono Odhikar Parishad has candidates for 91 seats.

BNP REBELS
Several BNP leaders defied party instruction to withdraw from the race in the capital.

In Dhaka-12, expelled BNP leader Saiful Alam Nirob is contesting as a rebel. The BNP allocated the nomination to Biplobi Workers Party General Secretary Saiful Haque.

BNP rebel Syed Abu Bakkar Siddique is contesting in Dhaka-14.

Of the 14 seats shared with BNP allies, four have no rebel candidates.

In Sylhet-5, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Bangladesh candidate Md Ubaidullah Faruq is facing BNP rebel Mamunur Rashid, vice-president of the Sylhet district BNP.

In Narayanganj-4, expelled BNP leaders Shah Alam and Giasuddin are contesting. The BNP has kept the seat vacant for Jamiat's Mufti Monir Hossain Kasemi.

In Brahmanbaria-2, Jamiat leader Junayed Al Habib is contesting alongside expelled BNP leader Rumeen Farhana.

In Patuakhali-3, although the BNP allocated the nomination to Gono Odhikar Parishad President Nurul Haq, BNP leader Hasan Mamun remains in the race.

In Jhenaidah-4, BNP rebel Saiful Islam Firoz is contesting despite the party allocating the nomination to Rashed Khan, who resigned as Gono

BNP, Jamaat clash over campaigning in Mirpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Activists of the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami clashed in the capital's Mirpur area yesterday over election campaigning, leaving several people injured.

Witnesses said the clash began around 4:00pm in the South Pierbagh area when a group of Jamaat activists were campaigning near the Mubarak Mosque.

When the Jamaat activists attempted to enter a 10-storey building named "Heaven Tower", a group of BNP activists confronted them.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Abdul Alim, a security guard at the building, said the BNP men obstructed the Jamaat activists, arguing that electioneering is prohibited before January 22.

Ildris Ali, former general secretary of the building's flat owners' association, alleged that Jamaat workers had been going door-to-door to canvass for the party.

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Insaf, dignity, shared prosperity

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Shafiqur also stressed partnerships between the state and citizens, the public and private sectors, and Bangladesh and the international community.

Under its fiscal proposals, Jamaat said it would gradually reduce tax and value added tax (VAT) from current rates, with a long-term target of lowering tax to 19 percent and VAT to 10 percent.

The party also announced plans to introduce a 'Smart Social Security Card', integrating National Identity (NID), Taxpayer's Identification Number (TIN), health services and social welfare benefits into a single platform.

For industries, gas, electricity and water charges would not be increased over the next three years. It also pledged to reopen closed factories through public-private partnership arrangements, with 10 percent ownership allocated to workers.

For the agricultural sector, the party proposed interest-free loan facilities for farmers.

Under a Qard-e-Hasana scheme, five lakh graduates would receive interest-free loans of up to Tk 10,000 per month for a maximum period of two years after graduation or until they secure employment.

The party announced interest-free education loans of Tk 10,000 per month for one lakh students based on merit and financial need.

It also said 100 students each year would be provided interest-free loans to study at leading global universities, including Harvard, MIT, Oxford and Cambridge, with the aim of supporting meritorious students from low-income families.

The party further announced plans to merge Eden College and Begum Badrunessa College to establish what it described as the world's largest women's university.

On healthcare, the party pledged free medical services for citizens aged over 60 and children under five, alongside plans to establish specialised hospitals in all 64 districts.

In its proposed "First Thousand Days Programme", Jamaat said it

would ensure primary healthcare and nutrition security for mothers and children from pregnancy until a child reaches the age of two. This initiative would be brought under the social security framework.

Tracing Bangladesh's political journey since 1947 and 1971, the Jamaat chief said the promise of independence – political freedom, economic justice and human dignity – remained unfulfilled even after more than five decades.

"Democratic institutions have weakened, accountability has eroded and citizens have too often been denied their rightful voice," he said, while blaming governance failures and authoritarian practices over the past 17 years for hollowing out institutions and shrinking democratic space.

Referring to the July uprising, he said young people once again rose to



reclaim their rights and future.

"After a dark period of authoritarian rule, we now stand in a phase of democratic transition," said Shafiqur, who is contesting in the election from Dhaka-15.

Turning to the economy, he said Bangladesh's challenge today was "not survival, but stability".

"Growth alone is no longer sufficient.

Economic success must be measured by whether people can plan their lives with confidence, provide for their families with dignity and participate meaningfully in society."

He pointed to unemployment, inflation and the dominance of

insecure informal work, saying young graduates struggled to convert education into opportunities and women continued to face barriers.

He underscored women's role in nation-building, saying expanding women's participation was "not only a matter of justice; it is an economic necessity".

At the same time, Bangladesh possessed "enormous potential", he said, citing the country's young and industrious workforce, migrant workers, global diaspora and strategic geographic position.

On governance, the Jamaat chief said good governance was central to transformation and pledged "zero tolerance against corruption".

To flesh out its plan, the party organised in-depth discussions across six separate sessions: Strategy for Bangladesh: Governance Framework;



Promoting Prosperity: Economy, Business and Investment; Youth Employment: Unleashing the Power of Gen Z and Alpha; Delivering on Equity: Women and Inclusion in Action; Education for the Future: Policy for Change; and Health Matters: Policy for Transformation. Each session also featured a question-and-answer segment.

In the first session of the summit, Dilara Choudhury, a former professor and chair of Jahangirnagar University's department of government and politics, asked how women's participation in the highest policymaking forum could be ensured.