

Refusing constitution assembly oath defies people's verdict



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The newly elected BNP representatives' refusal to take the oath as members of the Constitution Reform Assembly (CRA) on February 17 prevented what might have been a more meaningful new beginning for both the party and the country. BNP's reason for not taking the oath—that the constitution does not provide for the CRA or the oath—is constitutionally unfounded. This is because the people are supreme, even above the constitution itself. Article 7 of the constitution recognises this principle, stating that all powers in the republic belong to the people. Accordingly, it is not tenable to argue the absence of constitutional provisions regarding something that the people have overwhelmingly approved in a referendum.

Furthermore, if we are to speak of the absence of provisions in the existing constitution, many actions taken since August 5, 2024, including the parliamentary election of February 12, are not covered by the constitution's provisions. BNP does not appear to have any objection to most of those.

By refusing to take the oath, the ruling party has disregarded the people's verdict in two ways.

First, more than two-thirds of the participants voted "Yes" in the referendum. Among the questions in the referendum was whether the people approved the July National Charter (Constitution Reform) Implementation Order, 2025. Since "Yes" received an overwhelming majority in the referendum, the constitution reform order gained the people's approval. Among other matters, the formation and functions of



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

the Constitution Reform Assembly (CRA) are significant parts of this order. Even the requirement to take an oath as a member of the CRA is included in the order, and the form of the oath is also provided for in the order. Since the order received public approval through the referendum, these provisions likewise have the people's consent.

Second, there are strong grounds to say

that the BNP is disregarding the people's mandate because, before the election, BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman clearly called on the public to vote "Yes" on the election day. Just like BNP's other electoral promises—such as the family card and agriculture card—its position in favour of "Yes" in the referendum was also an election pledge.

Therefore, it is reasonable to ask: if BNP had taken a position in favour of "No"

position regarding the oath could have been justified only if the referendum result had been "No," whereas in its election pledges, the BNP took a position in favour of "Yes."

Thus, by disregarding the referendum outcome and by stepping back from its own electoral promise, the BNP has ignored the people's mandate.

As a result, the process envisaged for implementing the constitutional reform has

would face no disadvantage in doing so, as it will hold a two-thirds majority in the CRA.

If it is not possible to form the reform assembly, then constitutional reform will have to be implemented through the amendment of the constitution under Article 142. However, the problem of doing so is that the power to amend the constitution under Article 142 is limited, and it is not possible to alter the fundamental features of the constitution through it. This limitation arises from the basic structure doctrine which is a part of our constitutional law.

The basic structure doctrine is grounded in the idea that legislative power under the constitution is limited. Legislative power is derived from the constitution and must operate within its framework. In contrast, constituent power refers to the authority to create or fundamentally alter a constitution. This power resides with the people themselves, and the people have already exercised this power in the February 12 referendum.

Under Article 142 of the constitution, the parliament holds the power to amend the constitution. However, this is a derivative power and therefore subordinate to the constitution. As such, it cannot be used to alter the basic structure, which constitutes the inviolable core of the constitution.

In the past, amendments to the constitution have been declared unconstitutional by the courts by applying the basic structure doctrine. For example, the Eighth Amendment concerning the decentralisation of the High Court and the 13th Amendment concerning the caretaker government system were later declared unconstitutional.

It is worth noting that the court's annulment of the 13th Amendment made the establishment of an authoritarian system in the country possible.

Therefore, implementing the extensive and fundamental reforms of the July charter through Article 142 procedure may not be the most sustainable approach.

As noted earlier, it is still possible for the BNP to take the oath, which could lead to a satisfactory resolution of the entire matter.

instead of "Yes," would it have been able to achieve the electoral success it did? It is quite possible that, had the BNP supported "No," its performance in the election might not have been as strong. However, the situation that would have arisen if the referendum result had been "No" is now effectively what the nation is facing due to BNP's refusal to take the oath. In other words, the party's current

faced an initial setback. In this process, the first step was the issuance of the constitution reform order, the second step was the referendum, and the third step was the Constitution Reform Assembly. While the first two steps have been carried out, the third step remains pending.

But it can still be hoped that BNP representatives will take the oath. The party

Reading the new PM's first speech



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Through the general election on February 12, Bangladesh has entered a new political reality. After years of political conflicts, street-based movements, and institutional tensions, this transfer of power is not only a change of government but also a turning point for the project of rebuilding the country. At the centre of this stands Tarique Rahman, who has taken office as the country's 11th prime minister after being an opposition politician living in exile for 17 years.

Along with this transfer of power, his political language also seems to be changing. Earlier, he was the voice of resistance, and more recently, before the election, of promised reform, reconstruction, and revenge-free politics. But in his first speech as the prime minister, his tone was different. There, priority was given to stability, administrative discipline, and handling immediate crises.

The background of the 2026 election was full of instability. The student-led mass uprising of 2024 brought an end to Sheikh

Hasina's long rule. Through loss of lives, institutional breakdown, and deep political division, the nation passed through an uncertain period. In this context, the interim administration formed under the leadership of Prof Muhammad Yunus stabilised the state, and through political consensus the July National Charter was formulated, where commitments to future constitutional reforms were included.

Before the election, the mark of this revolutionary context was clear in Tarique's speeches. He spoke about rebuilding the country, restoring democracy, and rebuilding public trust. One of his most discussed ideas was the "rainbow nation"—a Bangladesh where diversity of opinion, path, religion, and identity would coexist. Against divided politics, this was the language of reconciliation. He promised reconciliation instead of revenge, and proposed forming commissions to heal political wounds. He also pledged to protect the rights of minorities and

women. At the same time, he gave warning messages about the influence of extremist religious politics, which made him acceptable to urban youth and women voters as well.

Talking about the economy, too, his language was ambitious. Family Cards, Farmer Cards, cash assistance, massive employment, development of small entrepreneurs—together, he presented a welfare-oriented state outline. He also raised the dream of a trillion-dollar economy in the long run. In other words, before the election, his speeches were a blueprint for repairing the state.

After coming to power, however, the practical form of that language has begun to change.

In his first speech as the prime minister on February 18, his tone was far more administrative. He gave the highest priority to the rule of law. He spoke about controlling disorder to bring back discipline. He clearly said state governance would not be run by party influence, but by the rule of law. This was a significant message to the administration and party activists.

Another noticeable matter in his speech was the emphasis on inclusion. He said those who did not vote for him were also citizens with equal rights. In this, there is an assurance of revenge-free governance. Perhaps he is interested in stepping into the role of a state guardian from a leader of resistance. However, some gaps between electoral promises and governing reality have

become clear, especially in the economy.

Before the election, promises of direct cash assistance like Family Cards and Farmer Cards created a strong response. But after coming to power, the government has begun speaking about a "fragile economy" and a "realistic time frame." Controlling commodity prices, ensuring electricity supply, and stabilising law and order, especially during Ramadan, have emerged as initial priorities.

This is the natural tension between promise and capacity. But if this gap cannot be explained, there may be misunderstanding and frustration.

The same reality exists in the issue of constitutional reform. Although the July charter spoke of major reforms, the government seems more focused on handling immediate governance crises. As a result, a silent shift in priority is visible between long-term reform and short-term stability.

International messaging is also clear in Tarique Rahman's speeches. Transparency, accountability, digital transformation, investment-friendly environment—through the use of these words, there is an effort to rebuild global confidence. In regional diplomacy, too, his language has been coordinated and inclusive.

A continuous element in his speeches is the remembrance of martyrs. By linking the Liberation War of 1971 and the mass uprising of 2024 in the same line, he has tried to construct a continuous history of

resistance across two generations. But at the same time, he has spoken about controlling "mob culture," which signals a transition from revolutionary politics to institutional governance.

Before the election, his speeches held dreams of a trillion-dollar economy, large infrastructure, and investment flows. Now his language has given more space to commodity markets, electricity, and administrative discipline. This is not retreat, rather a reprioritisation.

The government is speaking about a 180-day action plan. This period will be the most important test. If people see improvement in market prices, electricity, and law and order, then confidence in long-term reforms will grow.

This evolution in Tarique's political language reflects the transformation of his leadership. In opposition politics, the strength of protest is important, but in governing the state, patience, coordination, and institutional dependence are necessary.

Bangladesh now stands at a sensitive crossroads. Maintaining balance between revolutionary expectations and administrative reality will determine the success of this chapter. The countdown of the first 180 days has already begun. Within this period, the budget will also have to be presented.

There is only one question: can the promises of resistance turn into responsible governance?

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

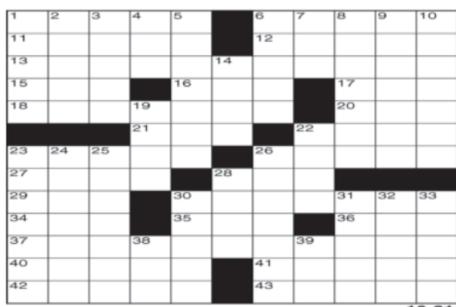
- ACROSS**
- 1 Deck of fortunes
 - 6 Origami need
 - 11 Love, in Lille
 - 12 Full of energy
 - 13 Tool with a bubble
 - 15 Annex
 - 16 Be a contender
 - 17 Mine yield
 - 18 Take back
 - 20 Finger count
 - 21 Bowler, for one
 - 22 Swift
 - 23 Olympics award
 - 26 Sailors
 - 27 Made fun of
 - 28 Use a needle
 - 29 Zero
 - 30 Apparition
 - 34 Court worker: Abbr.
 - 35 Feel poorly
 - 36 Dr.'s org.

- 37 Extremely hot
- 40 Spine-tingling
- 41 On the way out
- 42 Halts
- 43 Good judgment
- 1 Perp zapper
- 2 Plentiful
- 3 Stirs up
- 4 Owned by us
- 5 Far from
- important
- 6 Showed fear
- 7 Hoppy brew
- 8 Crucial
- 9 Highest peak
- 10 Lets up
- 14 Colour
- 19 Niger neighbour
- 22 Forest youngster
- 23 Oversees
- 24 Nickname
- 25 "Nightmare

- Alley" director
- Guillermo
- 26 Sailor's balance
- 28 Fleet unit
- 30 Party spreads
- 31 Short putt
- 32 Troubling signs
- 33 Homer's wife
- 38 Tentative taste
- 39 "The Raven" writer

WEDNESDAY'S ANSWERS

S P A D E P E C S
W A G O N A G A P E
A D I E T G O F A R
R U N I R E E R A
M A G I C T R I C K S
C I C E M A L E
M A R I S W A R E S
E D E N S A G
D O G G Y T R E A T S
I R A E L L B O O
U N T I L O S A K A
M E T A L C U T E R S
D A M S K E E N S



গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
নারী ও শিশু নির্যাতন প্রতিরোধ ও প্রতিরোধে সমর্থিত
সেবা জোরদারকরণ এবং কুইক রেসপন্স টিমের কার্যক্রম
নারী ও শিশু মন্ত্রণালয়
মহিলা বিষয়ক অধিদপ্তর

স্মারক নং: নাশিম/মবিঅ/নারিনির্যাসেজাকুরেটিকা/০২/২০২৬- ১২৭
তারিখ: ০৫ ফাল্গুন ১৪৩২
১৮ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২৬

আউটসোর্সিং পদ্ধতিতে জনবল সরবরাহের দরপত্র সংশোধনী বিজ্ঞপ্তি

মহিলা ও শিশু বিষয়ক মন্ত্রণালয়ের আওতাধীন মহিলা বিষয়ক অধিদপ্তর কর্তৃক বাস্তবায়নধীন "নারী ও শিশু নির্যাতন প্রতিরোধ ও প্রতিরোধে সমর্থিত সেবা জোরদারকরণ এবং কুইক রেসপন্স টিমের কার্যক্রম" শীর্ষক প্রকল্পের বিভিন্ন কার্যক্রম পরিচালনার লক্ষ্যে মাসিক সেবামূল্যে আউটসোর্সিং পদ্ধতিতে জনবল সরবরাহের জন্য ২১ জানুয়ারি ২০২৬/০৭ মাস ১৪৩২ এ স্মারক নং- ০২.০০.০০০০.০৫৭.০১৮.০৪.২৫-৯৮ সূত্রে প্রকাশিত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তিতে নিম্নবর্ণিত সংশোধনী আনা হল-

ক্রম	পূর্বের শর্ত	সংশোধিত শর্ত
১০	আউটসোর্সিং পদ্ধতিতে জনবল সরবরাহ বিভিন্ন বিশেষ ক্যাটাগরির মোট ০৪৭ জন	আউটসোর্সিং পদ্ধতিতে জনবল সরবরাহের জন্য বিভিন্ন বিশেষ ক্যাটাগরির মোট ৪৬৯ জন (দরপত্র ডকুমেন্ট অনুসরণে সংশোধিত হবে)
১১	দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের সময়সীমা ২৩ জানুয়ারি ২০২৬ হতে ২৪ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২৬ তারিখ প্রতিদিন সকাল ৯:০০ টা হতে বিকাল ৫:০০ টা পর্যন্ত	দরপত্র বিক্রয় ৯ মার্চ ২০২৬ পর্যন্ত প্রতিদিন ৯:০০ টা হতে বিকাল ৫:০০ টা পর্যন্ত
১২	(ক) দরপত্র দাখিলের সর্বশেষ সময়সীমা: ২৫ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২৬ সন্ধ্যা ১২:০০ টা (খ) দরপত্র বাজ খোলার তারিখ ও সময়: ২৫ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২৬, সময়: দুপুর ১:০১ টা	(ক) দরপত্র দাখিলের সর্বশেষ সময়সীমা: ১০ মার্চ ২০২৬, দুপুর ১২:০০ টা পর্যন্ত (খ) দরপত্র বাজ খোলার তারিখ ও সময়: ১০ মার্চ ২০২৬, দুপুর ১:০১ টা
১৭	দরপত্র নিরাপত্তা জামানত: ৪৬,০০,০০০/- (ছিটলিশ লক্ষ টাকা)	দরপত্র নিরাপত্তা জামানত: ৩০,০০,০০০/- (ত্রিশ লক্ষ টাকা)

মোহাম্মদ হফতুয়ার হোসেন
প্রকল্প পরিচালক