



REFORM COUNCIL Jamaat, allies threaten street agitation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 11-party electoral alliance has urged the BNP-led government to convene a session of the Constitutional Reform Council by today.

The bloc would be compelled to take to the streets with public support if swift steps are not taken to implement the July National Charter, said Hamidur Rahman Azad, assistant secretary general of Jamaat-e-Islami and coordinator of the alliance.

The alliance's top leaders would soon hold a meeting to announce agitation programmes, he said at a press briefing yesterday following a meeting of the alliance at Jamaat's central office in Moghbazar, Dhaka.

The winners of the 13th parliamentary election were sworn in as lawmakers on February 17. On the same day, elected members from the Jamaat-led alliance also took oath as members of the proposed Constitutional Reform Council.

However, the BNP lawmakers refrained from doing so, arguing that the council has no provision in the Constitution.

The new parliament began its journey on Thursday. On that day, the Speaker and Deputy Speaker were elected, the panel of chairpersons and several parliamentary committees, including the Business Advisory Committee, were formed, and the session was adjourned following the president's address.

Members of the opposition alliance, led by Jamaat, SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

US-ISRAEL WAR ON IRAN Flight chaos, high fares shatter Eid hopes of migrants

PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladeshi migrants' aspiration to return home for Eid-ul-Fitr has turned into a nightmare with the large-scale cancellations of flights to and from the Gulf countries amid the US-Israeli war on Iran.

Only those in well-paid jobs or facing emergencies at home are flying via alternative routes, but paying excessively high airfares. Others, living in fear amid Iranian attacks in the Gulf, are unable even to consider returning home for Eid, which is just a week away.

According to the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh, about 447 of the 895 scheduled flights on migrant-heavy Middle Eastern routes were cancelled until March 13 after the war broke out.

Mohammad Emon, a businessman in the Bahraini capital Manama, said he had purchased a March 16 Gulf Air ticket to return home. However, he has now shelved his plan to fly with no flight operating from Manama towards Bangladesh.

Some people are taking an alternative route through Riyadh from Bahrain, but the air ticket is too expensive, he told The Daily Star over phone yesterday.

"Whereas the airfare from Manama to Dhaka and back is 250 Bahraini Dinars [Tk 80,000], the one-way ticket to Dhaka via Riyadh is 300 Bahraini Dinars [Tk 97,000]," Emon said.

He said he was worried over his clothing and air ticketing businesses that experienced drastic drop in sales due to the impacts of war. "At this moment, I cannot go home and celebrate the Eid with my family. I'm trying to get the money back from the Gulf Air."

After the US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28, Iran has been responding by striking the US bases in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Jordan, and Lebanon.

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Preparations underway for the parade to observe Independence Day on March 26. The photo was taken on the Tejgaon Parade Ground in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

BNP unmoved by Jamaat's threat

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The ruling BNP is not bothered about the opposition Jamaat-e-Islami's warning of street protests if the session of the Constitutional Reform Council is not convened as forming the council is not on its priority list.

Besides, establishing a Constitutional Reform Council outside the parliamentary framework, in line with the July charter implementation order, could lead to legal complications, The Daily Star has learnt from several BNP leaders involved with the party's deliberations on the matter.

"Rival parties are raising the issue loudly, but they are not presenting arguments on constitutional grounds," said a BNP lawmaker asking not to be named to speak candidly on the issue.

The Jamaat-led 11-party alliance has threatened to take to the streets if a session of the Constitutional Reform Council is not convened in the parliament today.

Pressure from the rival parties is not significant enough to alter the BNP's approach to constitutional reforms, said the party leaders, adding

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Rains pile misery on potato farmers in North

Waterlogging hits fields as growers already
reel from low market prices

MOSTAFA SHABUI, S DILIP ROY, and
QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT

Heavy rains on Wednesday and Thursday nights submerged Rabi-season crops, including potatoes, across several northern districts.

The Rabi season in Bangladesh is the dry winter cropping season, typically lasting from mid-November to mid-March.

Potato farmers in the region, who were hit hardest, said they were already incurring losses since the beginning of the year due to low market prices. Now, sudden waterlogging in their fields has doubled their financial burden.

On Friday, visits to Gaibandha's Gobindaganj upazila, Joypurhat's Kalai upazila, and Bogura's Shibganj upazila found hundreds of acres of potato fields waterlogged, many fully submerged. Meanwhile, farmers were seen struggling to harvest their crops amid mud and standing water.

The most significant damage occurred in Joypurhat's Panchbibi, Khetlal, and Kalai upazilas as well as Bogura's Shibganj.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Joypurhat, crops on 141 hectares of land in the district have been affected by the sudden rain and Nor'wester storms.

This includes 90 hectares of potato fields, 13 hectares of vegetables, five hectares of paddy, 23 hectares of wheat, and 10 hectares of maize.

Md Momin, a farmer in Kalai upazila's Dudal village, said, "The

rain over the last two days was so heavy that potatoes on one acre of my field are now submerged. At least 100 acres in my village are in the same condition."

"I can neither store these potatoes at home nor keep them in cold storage. I will now be forced to sell them at a very low price."

the harvested potatoes in the field. The sudden rain submerged all the potatoes on my 1.5-acre field."

Gobindaganj Upazila Agriculture Extension Officer Md Mehedi Hassan noted that about five hectares of fields belonging to late-harvesting farmers were affected by the rain.



PHOTO: STAR

Shahjalal, a farmer in Udaypur village in the same upazila, said his potatoes on nearly two acres were underwater. "I couldn't get enough farmhands to harvest in time. It cost me Tk 1,200 per decimal to cultivate potatoes. Even good quality potatoes are not selling; where will I find a buyer for these wet, damaged potatoes?"

Firoz Kabir, another farmer from Rajosh village in Gaibandha's Gobindaganj, said, "All the cold storages in my area are full, so I left

In Bogura's Shibganj upazila, farmer Abdul Goffar from Kichak Bazar said, "I hadn't harvested potatoes on two bighas of land because I intended to save them for seeds. I never imagined there would be this much rain.... My field is now under knee-deep water, and there is no way to pump it out because the surrounding areas are also flooded."

Farid Uddin, sub-assistant agriculture officer of Bogura DAE, SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

HADI KILLING Man who helped key accused flee held in India

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Special Task Force (STF) of West Bengal Police has arrested Bangladeshi broker Philip Sangma, who is accused of helping the two key suspects flee the country after the killing of Sharif Osman Bin Hadi, spokesperson for Inqilab Moncho.

According to Indian media reports, the STF, acting on a tip-off, arrested Sangma near the Shantipur bypass in Nadia district early yesterday.

Preliminary interrogation revealed that Sangma had long been involved in facilitating illegal cross-border movement in exchange for money.

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Matiur, Shahidullah elected president, vice president of Noab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Matiur Rahman Chowdhury, editor-in-chief of Manab Zamin, has been elected president of the Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (Noab) for the 2026-2027 term.

He succeeds AK Azad, publisher of Samakal, who served as the Noab president for three consecutive terms.

The members of the executive committee of the association were elected unopposed at a meeting held yesterday. M Masrur Reaz, chairman of the Noab election

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Matiur Rahman



Shahidullah Khan

HASANAH ISLAMIC BANKING
البنكية الاسلامي
Prime Bank

PRAYER TIMING
MARCH 15

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:55	12:45	4:30	6:09	7:45
JAMAAT 5:05	1:15	4:45	6:14	8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN	MAR	SEHRI	IFTAR
25	15		6:09
26	16	4:51	6:10
27	17	4:50	6:10

ROOPPUR POWER PLANT UNIT-1 Fuel loading to begin April 7

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

Fuel loading at Unit-1 of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant (RNPP) is scheduled to begin on April 7, marking a major milestone toward starting electricity production at Bangladesh's first nuclear facility by mid-year.

Fuel loading is the process of placing nuclear fuel rods into the reactor core. These rods contain uranium pellets that, once inside the reactor, will start the chain reaction that produces heat. That heat is then used to make steam, which spins turbines to generate electricity.

According to senior officials at the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Russian contractor overseeing



the project has officially notified the government of the schedule.

Preparatory work on Unit-1 is expected to finish by March 27, after which the government will formally announce commissioning of the plant.

"The Russian contractor officially informed the government last week

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গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

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কল্যাণ-০১ শাখা
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গণবিজ্ঞপ্তি

ইরান-ইসরাইল যুদ্ধের প্রেক্ষাপটে মধ্যপ্রাচ্যের বিভিন্ন দেশ হতে বাংলাদেশে ছুটিতে আসা প্রবাসী কর্মীদের ভিসার মেয়াদ বৃদ্ধি সংক্রান্ত ইরান-ইসরাইল যুদ্ধ পরিস্থিতির প্রেক্ষাপটে বাংলাদেশে ছুটিতে অবস্থানকালে যেসব কর্মীর ভিসার মেয়াদ ইতোমধ্যে উত্তীর্ণ হয়েছে বা শিগগিরই উত্তীর্ণ হতে যাচ্ছে এবং এ মুহূর্তে সংশ্লিষ্ট দেশে গিয়ে ভিসা নবায়ন করা সম্ভব হচ্ছে না, তাঁদের বিষয়ে সংশ্লিষ্ট দেশসমূহ নিম্নরূপ পদক্ষেপ গ্রহণ করেছেঃ

- (১) সৌদি আরব, কুয়েত, সংযুক্ত আরব আমিরাত, ওমান এবং বাহরাইন হতে বাংলাদেশে আসা কর্মীগণের ভিসা নবায়নের জন্য কর্মীর নিয়োগকর্তা, স্পন্সর বা কফিলের মাধ্যমে যোগাযোগ/ অনলাইনে আবেদন করতে হবে;
- (২) কুয়েত, কাতার এবং সংযুক্ত আরব আমিরাত সরকার ইতোমধ্যে যে সকল ভিসার মেয়াদ শেষ হয়েছে বা শেষ হওয়ার পথে এমন সকল এন্ট্রি ভিসার মেয়াদ ১ মাস বৃদ্ধি করেছে।

সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতি ও কার্যার্থে গণবিজ্ঞপ্তি জারি করা হলো।

কর্তৃপক্ষ

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