

NEWS

Respect people

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"We don't believe in violence," said Shafiqur, adding that if they are met with any violence, they will stand firm and resolute.

Speaking about constitutional reform, he said that what is needed is not merely an amendment but a meaningful reform that addresses fundamental flaws.

Questioning how fascism took root despite repeated amendments to the constitution, he said, "This constitution has been amended time and again. How did fascism emerge despite so many amendments?" He argued that the provisions responsible for enabling fascism must be "banished" from the constitution through reforms.

The Jamaat chief said fascism is a disease, and it spreads from one person to another, and they are already witnessing transmission. "The blatant disregard, disrespect, and denial of the people's mandate mark the beginning of fascism. We don't want fascism in the country anymore."

He also criticised the ruling party for favouring amendment over reforms.

Blaming the government for creating the current "crisis", Shafiqur said it failed to take a responsible role by not convening the Constitutional Reform Council. "We took two oaths, you took one. It was your responsibility to request the competent authority to convene the reform council. You only

asked for a parliamentary session, not for the reform council. You have failed in your responsibilities and broken your commitment to the people."

He added that there is still time for a resolution, and it could be achieved in parliament if the government wishes. "We wanted a solution inside parliament. You did not take that opportunity. You have pushed us to go back to the people."

"The people who, with bare hands, confronted armed miscreants and brought change are still alive," he said, urging the youth to "sharpen once again the tools of your revolution - patriotism and faith."

He warned that the movement would continue until their demands are met and that they would return to the streets if necessary. "An equity-based Bangladesh is not possible without fulfilling the demands."

Clarifying his party's stance on the constitution, he said they have never called for scrapping it altogether. "We have said we want reforms, not that we want to throw it away. False allegations have been made against us."

The Jamaat chief also demanded independence of the judiciary, media, anti-corruption, and human rights commissions. "We don't want to see any subjugation in these four areas. But we fear that attempts may be made again to control them."

Rose Garden: a palace

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Khan Bahadur Abdur Rashid. The mansion was then renamed "Rashid Manzil".

Later, it came under the ownership of Kazi Mohammad Bashir (popularly known as Humayun Saheb) and subsequently to Kazi Abdur Rakib and his wife Laila Rakib.

The mansion is deeply entwined with Bangladesh's political history. Following the Partition of India, many significant political meetings were held here, including the first informal meeting to establish the East Pakistan Awami Muslim League in 1949. Numerous renowned politicians and leaders from Bangladesh and India were hosted here.

In 1966, the property was leased to Bengal Studio. In 1993, the Rashid family regained ownership. In 2018, the Government of Bangladesh acquired the

property for Tk 331 crore.

After 2022, the building was restored and reopened on July 30 last year. Now, visitors can enter the building from 11:00am till 6:00pm. It remains fully closed on Sundays. On Mondays, it remains open partially from 2:00pm to 6:00pm. Entry tickets are priced at Tk 30 for regular visitors and Tk 10 for students each.

Afroza Khan Mita, regional director of the Department of Archaeology, said the Rose Garden has seen a steady stream of local and foreign visitors since its reopening.

"In August and September last year alone, we earned a total of Tk 17 lakh from ticket sales. Clearly, there is immense public interest. The site offers Dhaka residents a peaceful retreat while also contributing to government revenue," she said.

TIB expresses concern

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"Among the 133 ordinances issued during the interim government, some made significant progress in strengthening democratic and institutional foundations," he said.

"These include the Supreme Court Judges Appointment Ordinance, the Supreme Court Secretariat Ordinance, and the Human Rights Commission Ordinance. Repealing or suspending them sends a worrying message about the government's commitment to judicial independence."

Referring to the ruling party's election pledge, he questioned whether the move reflects its commitment to ensuring judicial independence and strengthening a separate Supreme Court secretariat.

"It is highly disappointing that, within such a short span of time, the government appears to have forgotten how compromised the judiciary had become during the previous authoritarian regime and how it was used as a tool to suppress dissent," he said.

Dr Ittekkharuzzaman warned that suspending the Human Rights Commission Ordinance could create uncertainty in protecting citizens' rights.

"The fact that people's lives can become extremely difficult in the absence of an effective Human Rights Commission, an independent judiciary, and provisions for preventing

enforced disappearances should not be forgotten by those in power, including the head of the ruling party."

He said political parties that had suffered rights and institutional violations in the past should support the immediate enactment of these laws.

He also questioned the rationale behind reviewing ordinances related to enforced disappearances, cautioning against using the process to weaken protections or shield perpetrators.

On the ACC Ordinance, he urged revision in line with the ACC Reform Commission's recommendations, including provisions for an independent selection and review committee and extending anti-corruption measures to the private sector.

Regarding the Police Commission Ordinance, he said it fails to establish a neutral, independent commission needed for professional policing.

He also urged revision of the Right to Information (Amendment) Ordinance, including definitions of information, commissioner appointments, and tenure, before placing it in parliament.

The TIB emphasised that all ordinances should be reviewed with expert and stakeholder input and enacted into law promptly to strengthen governance, judicial independence, and human rights in Bangladesh.



The B1 bridge damaged by a strike, as the US-Israeli conflict with Iran continues, in Karaj, Iran, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Trump vows to destroy

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Israel's military also reported a new missile salvo from Iran, with its air defences activated to down them. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

Israeli emergency services reported some damage to houses and cars from an unintercepted cluster missile, while Israeli military radio said a train station in Tel Aviv was damaged by shrapnel.

The Iranian fire came as Trump said the US military "hasn't even started destroying what's left in Iran. Bridges next, then Electric Power Plants!" on his Truth Social platform, after saying Iran's tallest bridge had been destroyed.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi posted that "striking civilian structures, including unfinished bridges, will not compel Iranians to surrender."

Meanwhile, over 100 international law experts in the US, including from schools like Harvard, Yale, Stanford and the University of California, said in the letter released on Thursday

that the conduct of US forces and statements by senior US officials "raise serious concerns about violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including potential war crimes."

The experts said they were "seriously concerned about strikes that have hit schools, health facilities, and homes," noting a strike on a school in Iran on the war's first day.

The letter particularly noted a mid-March comment from Trump where he said the US may conduct strikes on Iran "just for fun." It also cited comments from Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth from early March in which he said the US does not fight with "stupid rules of engagement."

Writing in the US journal Foreign Affairs, Iran's former top diplomat, Mohammad Javad Zarif, said that Tehran should make a deal with the United States to end the war by offering to curb its nuclear programme and reopen the Strait of Hormuz in exchange for sanctions

relief.

Iran has virtually blocked the Strait of Hormuz since the war began, where in peacetime one-fifth of the world's oil and natural gas passes through. As a result, fuel prices have skyrocketed worldwide.

Iranian military spokesperson Ebrahim Zolfaghari warned that in response to Trump's threats to attack infrastructure, Iran would increase its own attacks on energy sites in the region, calling on "countries hosting US military bases" to "force the Americans to leave their countries."

A drone attack on a refinery owned by Kuwait's national oil company yesterday sparked fires at several of its units, state media said.

An air strike also hit a power and desalination plant in the country. Kuwaiti authorities blamed Iran for the strike. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) denied responsibility and blamed Israel.

Hard-earned reforms at risk

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According to the constitution, parliament must approve or reject ordinances within 30 calendar days of its first sitting, which was on March 12. If they are not ratified by April 10, the ordinances will expire.

Of the four ordinances the committee recommended for repeal, three are related to judicial independence, creating judicial posts, and the development of the judiciary.

Masder Hossain, retired district judge and member of the Judiciary Reform Commission formed by the interim government, expressed disappointment.

He told The Daily Star that repealing these measures would frustrate the Supreme Court's landmark judgment separating the judiciary from the executive. He cautioned that appointments and control of judges could revert to politicisation and nepotism.

If the judiciary is not strong, how would the human rights of people be established, he questioned.

Supreme Court lawyer and human rights activist ZI Khan Panna said the rule of law has to be established first in the country, then the human rights commission or the inquiry commission on enforced disappearances might be constituted.

TIB Executive Director Ittekkharuzzaman said, "The fact that people's lives can become extremely difficult in the absence of an effective Human Rights Commission, an independent judiciary, and provisions for preventing enforced disappearances should not be forgotten by those in power, including the head of the ruling party."

"If they have truly learned any lessons from the authoritarian rule and the bloodshed of the July uprising, they should demonstrate this to the people by taking immediate steps to have these ordinances placed in parliament in their original form for approval."

He questioned as to why the government, whose own party leaders had been victims of enforced disappearances and killings during the previous regime,

has placed the ordinances related to the prevention of enforced disappearances into the "trap" of further review.

On the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Ordinance, Ittekkharuzzaman, also chair of the ACC Reform Commission formed by the interim government, urged that the ordinance be revised in line with the recommendations of the ACC Reform Commission that were included in the July charter with consensus from all political parties, including the BNP.

Calling for the repeal of the Police Commission Ordinance, the TIB executive director said, "The ordinance fails to reflect the need for an independent and neutral police commission, which is essential to transform the police into a people-friendly and professional force."

The Right to Information (Amendment) Ordinance, 2026, must be revised - particularly regarding the definition of information, expansion of jurisdiction, and provisions related to appointment, status, and tenure of commissioners - before being placed in parliament as a bill.

"We strongly demand that all ordinances, including those recommended for suspension, be reviewed with the involvement of relevant experts and stakeholders and enacted into law without delay," Ittekkharuzzaman said.

Human rights activist Nur Khan Liton also expressed concern over the dropping of several key ordinances, saying the move risks undermining institutional reforms and accountability mechanisms.

Liton argued that amendments could have been introduced during the current parliamentary session without allowing the ordinances to expire. "That would have avoided any legal or institutional gaps," he said.

He warned that the expiry of the ordinances would create a vacuum, weaken institutions, and expose vulnerabilities in governance and human rights protection.

About the ordinance on

Artemis II

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to the moon began, known as the translunar injection burn.

The maneuver, which began at 7:49 pm ET (23:49 GMT), is an orbital exit ramp slinging them out of Earth's orbit and onto a figure eight-shaped trajectory toward the moon. It's the final major thruster firing of the mission, leaving the Orion capsule largely under the influence of orbital mechanics for the remainder of the mission.

Commander Reid Wiseman, testing cameras as the crew flew roughly 40,000 miles away from Earth earlier on Thursday, saw the planet as a shrinking sunlit globe, and said taking photos from that distance made it difficult to adjust exposure settings.

"It's like walking out back at your house, trying to take a picture of the moon. That's what it feels like right now trying to take a picture of Earth," he told mission control in Houston as he snapped photos of his home planet with an iPhone.

Wiseman earlier faced a minor tech issue when his initial attempts to use Microsoft Outlook to check emails failed, but that was fixed quickly with help from mission control.

Pakistan hikes

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prices driven by the US-Israeli war on Iran, reports Reuters.

State-run public transport in Pakistan's capital and most populous province will be free for the coming month, officials said yesterday.

The country's Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb separately in the news conference announced subsidies aimed at offering relief to small farmers, motorcyclists and intercity transportation of goods and passengers.

Malik said the government had given a subsidy of 129 billion rupees in the last three weeks, but it was no longer affordable due to the hike in international oil prices.

In Australia, the government yesterday urged motorists to fill their cars at city petrol stations if they're planning long road trips over the Easter holiday, as rural towns face fuel shortages.

Energy Minister Chris Bowen said hundreds of service stations had run out of diesel nationally and over a hundred were without unleaded petrol, reports AFP.

Bangladeshi

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a hammer. When Yasmin came out of the store to confront him, the attacker approached and struck her in the head, causing her to collapse. He then hit her several more times in the head before fleeing.

Police launched a large-scale search operation following the incident. As a precautionary measure, three nearby schools were placed on lockdown.

Although the suspect initially managed to flee, police were able to identify him. Authorities also said he may be linked to an unsolved homicide that occurred several months ago.

Yasmin was originally from Lakshmipur district. Her death has cast a shadow of grief in the Bangladeshi community in Florida.

Myanmar

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power since he toppled the administration of Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi in 2021 and put her under arrest, sparking widespread protests that morphed into nationwide armed resistance against the junta.

Yesterday, lawmakers from the dominant Union Solidarity and Development Party and the military's quota of appointed armed forces legislators coalesced to back Min Aung Hlaing, with the former commander-in-chief winning the vote by a huge margin.

EC yet to set women

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political party alliances. "Right now, our top priorities are the reserved women's seats election, the Bogura-6 by-polls, and the postponed Sherpur-3 election."

He confirmed that all political parties have already submitted letters regarding their desired alliances, which are being processed for distribution.

Akhtar also noted that independent candidate Rumeen Farhana has stated she will not join any alliance, while parliament election results in Chattogram-2 and Chattogram-4 remain pending - which may affect the calculations.

Under the relevant act, the 50 reserved seats for women are divided by the 300 general seats. The resulting ratio is multiplied by the number of seats a party or alliance wins, determining its share of reserved women's seats.

As per this law, BNP will get 35.16 seats, rounded to 36; Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami will get 11.33 seats, or 12 in total; and independent candidates will receive 1.16 percent, equivalent to two seats (if they ally). The National Citizen Party will get one seat. Other smaller parties will not get any unless they form alliances.

POSSIBLE ALLIANCES

EC Secretary Akhtar said that in the distribution of reserved women's seats, Bangladesh Jatiya Party's Andaleev Rahman Partho, Ganosmahati Andolon's Md Zonayed Abdur Rahim Saki, and Gono Odhikar Parishad's Md Nurul Haque Nur are joining hands with the BNP in this regard.

Meanwhile, the National Citizen Party (NCP) and Jamaat-e-Islami are forming an alliance. "In addition, there is a separate front of independent candidates," he added.

Independent winners in the national election are - AZM Rezwatul Haque in Dinajpur-5; Md Abdul Hannan in Chandpur-4; Atikul Alam in Cumilla-7; Md Lutfur Rahman Khan Azad in Tangail-3; Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Iqbal in Kishoreganj-5; Mohammad Salman Omar in Mymensingh-1; and Rumeen Farhana in Brahmanbaria-2.

However, Rumeen informed the EC that she would not join any alliances.

Victims yet to be

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goods worth Tk 20-22 lakh in the fire, much of it bought on credit. "I did not receive any compensation from the city corporation. My two employees received Tk 25,000 each, but I got nothing," he said.

Belayet now sells children's clothing in a makeshift setup in front of the burnt market. "I am somehow managing to live. I don't know when I will get a shop again," he added.

Alter his shop was entirely gutted in the fire, Ibrahim Khalil, 32, owner of Dewan Fashion, failed to sustain a pavement stall, and now works as a shop employee in Annex Tower. Facing the uncertainty, his brother left for Saudi Arabia two months ago, he added.

According to sources, after the blaze, a joint account was opened with IFIC Bank by Bangladesh Shop Owners Association president Helal Uddin, Bangabazar Shop Owners Association general secretary Johirul Haque, and Gulistan section's shop owners' association president Nazmul Huda. A fund of Tk 6.19 crore was collected from institutions like the FBCCI and Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), and kept in the account, where it remains unspent while growing to Tk 6.25 crore with interest accumulated over the past three years.

Contacted, Helal Uddin said, "The money is still in the bank. It could not be distributed due to complications over the list of affected shop owners."

"We wanted to distribute

RESERVED SEATS: A HISTORY

In the 12th Jatiya Sangsad, formed through the January 7, 2024 national election, the EC published the list of reserved seat members on February 27.

For the 11th parliament, elected on December 30, 2018, members for the reserved seats were sworn in on February 20, 2019.

In the 10th parliament, elected on January 5, 2014, voting for reserved seats had been scheduled for April 3. However, with no rival contesting candidates, the Election Commission on March 19 declared all candidates elected unopposed.

The 2014 and 2024 national elections were widely criticised as one-sided, with most opposition parties boycotting the polls amid allegations of dummy candidates. The 2018 election, though contested, was overshadowed by claims of ballot stuffing, voter intimidation, and institutional failures.

Historically, elections to women's reserved seats in Bangladesh have seen the ruling party secure the majority, with members often criticised as offering unconditional support in parliament.

Critics have at times dubbed them "doll MPs", as nominations often hinge on whether they are wives, daughters, or relatives of ruling party parliament members.

Contacted by The Daily Star on Thursday, former EC additional secretary Jasmine Tuli said the party that wins the most seats in parliament also secures the majority of reserved women's seats. "This was why the Electoral Reform Commission had recommended allocating reserved seats proportionately, based on the percentage of votes each party received."

The proposal, however, was never implemented.

Asked whether ruling party relatives dominate nominations for reserved seats, Tuli, a former member of the Electoral Reform Commission, said, "History says so. Experience shows that most nominations go to family members of party leaders. A few grassroots leaders have made it to reserved seats, but the percentage is very low."

the money through the city corporation, and they had given us assurance in this regard. However, no decision has been made yet," said Johirul Haque.

Ghulam Faruq Khan, former vice-president of the joint committee of the four Bangabazar markets, said reconstruction is ongoing, with three to four floors completed. He noted that shop allocations would follow once the salami is fixed and payments are made in instalments, though he admitted the process would take time.

DSCC data indicate 3,845 shops were destroyed in the blaze that had likely originated from a short circuit or mosquito coil. However, some traders now allege that the market may have been deliberately set on fire to clear the land for a new complex.

On October 22, 2024, trader Kamal Hossain Ripon filed a case against 30 people, including the then DSCC Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Tapas, alleging damages of Tk 500 crore.

Contacted, DSCC Administrator Abdus Salam said initiatives to compensate the traders would be taken soon, noting that disputes over the list of beneficiaries had stalled the process.

For the victim traders of Bangabazar like Belayet Hossain, official explanations offer little comfort.

"We lost everything in the fire. Funds were collected in our names, but we received nothing. Now it is just a fight to survive," he said.

PRAYER TIMING					
APRIL 4					
Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
4:40	12:45	4:45	6:21	7:45	
JAMAAT 5:15 1:15 5:00 6:24 8:15					
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION					