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# NCP set to reshape central leadership

## Focuses on grassroots expansion

**SHAMIMA RITA**

The National Citizen Party (NCP) is set to announce its restructured central leadership in the coming days, excluding current Senior Joint Convener Samantha Sharmin and Senior Joint Member Secretary Nahida Sarwar Niva from the proposed top-tier leadership, according to party sources.

Nahid Islam is likely to remain convener, and Akhter Hossen the member secretary.

The positions of chief organiser, chief coordinator and spokesperson will be abolished, with Nasiruddin Patwary and Hasnat Abdullah tipped to become senior joint conveners.

Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain and Sarjis Alam are likely to become senior joint member secretaries.

The Political Council has agreed on the broad framework of the restructuring over two meetings in the past two weeks, leaving final approval to Nahid and Akhter, sources said.

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**Vendors try to salvage their belongings from the debris of demolished makeshift roadside stalls in the capital's Panthapath area yesterday. The stalls were demolished during a DNCC drive to clear roads of encroachments.** PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

IN FOCUS

# 'Religion being exploited to fuel unrest'

## 37 citizens condemn alleged attempt to deface Tagore mural, politicise niqab issue

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Thirty-seven eminent citizens have expressed concern over demands for punitive action against a Dhaka University teacher over her alleged remarks about a student's attire and an alleged attempt to deface a mural of Rabindranath Tagore, warning that such incidents could fuel religious extremism and communal tensions.

In a statement yesterday, they demanded impartial investigations into both incidents and punishment for those responsible.

According to the statement, a master's student of the English department alleged in an October 7 Facebook post that teacher Tasneem Siraj Mahbub had commented on students' financial circumstances and clothing at the beginning of a class.

She alleged that the teacher had told a student wearing a niqab that she did not need to observe

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# A night of flames, a future of uncertainty

## Chawkbazar traders fear losing life savings in Monday's fire



**Traders after the fire.** PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

For some traders, bags worth Tk 40 lakh may have gone up in flames. For others, the fire could mean losing cosmetics and other goods worth crores of taka. With their working capital and livelihoods at stake, they waited anxiously outside the building, unable to assess the damage.

This was the scene at Mansur Khan Plaza in Chhoto Katara Goli, Chawkbazar, Old Dhaka, yesterday afternoon, as traders feared their life savings had been reduced to ashes.

Businesses in another 10 to 15 nearby buildings also suffered

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# Intensify dengue prevention efforts

## Says PM; govt mulls dengue vaccine trials

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday directed the authorities to intensify public awareness campaigns and strengthen coordination among government agencies to contain dengue, which has claimed 316 lives and hospitalised 1,03,396 people so far this year.

He issued the directives at a meeting on dengue prevention and control at the Cabinet Division in the Secretariat, said PM's Deputy Press Secretary Hasan Shiplu.

The prime minister said the next few months would be crucial for controlling dengue and called for stronger preventive measures, particularly in areas reporting higher infection rates.

He directed the authorities to arrange regular loudspeaker announcements in neighbourhoods and include dengue prevention messages in Juma prayer sermons.

The meeting also decided to ensure cleanliness at government residential quarters and hospital premises.

Meanwhile, the government will consult experts on whether to conduct clinical trials of dengue vaccines vin Bangladesh or assess existing research before considering their use, State Minister for Health Dr MA Muhit said yesterday.

Speaking to reporters after a seminar on mental health at Bangla Academy, he said the issue was discussed at the meeting with the prime minister.

"Before approving a vaccine, we need scientific data and must consult experts to understand how it will work for our population," he said.

Muhit said several dengue vaccine candidates were at different stages of development internationally, while India had recently approved one for private-sector use.

The government is also considering trials of a Japanese mosquito-control technology alongside conventional preventive measures.

Muhit said the two Dhaka city

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- Dengue claims 316 lives; 1,03,396 hospitalised this year
- Fever clinics planned across Dhaka for prompt testing
- Japanese mosquito-control technology under consideration
- Around 2,000 doctors trained in dengue management

# Ensure safeguards against autocratic rule in constitution

## Academics tell JS body

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Academics have proposed constitutional checks and balances to prevent any government from concentrating power and turning authoritarian on the strength of a parliamentary majority.

They said constitutional reform should define the powers of state organs and ensure accountability.

The proposals came at a meeting between academics and the special parliamentary committee on constitutional reform at the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed, chair of the committee, said he was unsure whether the opposition's absence would trigger controversy, but there would be opportunities for debate.

Responding to academic Ali Riaz's concern that reform could become a partisan agenda without opposition participation, Salahuddin said the government was working to implement the July National Charter.

Opposition leaders would be welcome if they submitted their names, he said, adding that the initiative would proceed even without them.

At the meeting, academics said majoritarian politics and the "winner takes all" principle fuel discrimination and autocracy. Checks and

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# Tabligh Jamat demands Ijtema date, security

**OUR CORRESPONDENT,** *Gazipur*

Tabligh Jamat Bangladesh (followers of Maulana Saad) yesterday demanded an impartial investigation into the violence in 2018 and 2024 and security for the group's religious activities at mosques.

They also demanded an early announcement of the dates for holding the Bishwa Ijtema in Tongi under its initiative.

The organisation made a total of six demands in a press release issued yesterday.

The organisation also called for an end to religious and political interference in its internal affairs.

It described statements made at a recent press conference held under the banner of "Olama-Mashayekh Bangladesh" as false, misleading and politically motivated. It claimed those present did not represent Tabligh Jamat.

The press release called for an impartial investigation into the violence at the Bishwa Ijtema grounds in Tongi in 2018 and 2024, as well as other deaths, and demanded justice for those responsible.

According to the press release, Ismail Mondal and Shamsuddin Belal were killed at the Ijtema grounds in Tongi in

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**A boy rushes to buy a toy from Md Alamgir, who has been selling products from his bicycle in Patalia village of Jamalpur Sadar upazila for nearly four years. Earning Tk 15,000-20,000 a month from the business, he supports his family, who live in Chapainawabganj, Rajshahi, while he stays away from them. The photo was taken recently.** PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

# 70% of Jamaat women felt unprepared for polls

## Says MP Mardia Mumtaz on why the party didn't nominate women

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Seventy percent of Jamaat-e-Islami's women members said they were not ready to contest directly elected seats in the national election, which is why the party did not nominate any women candidates, said the party's reserved-seat MP Mardia Mumtaz yesterday.

Speaking at a conference organised by the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) at the BRAC Centre in Dhaka, she said the decision had been taken democratically by the party's Majlish-e-Shura, its consultative council.

"Many women had to support their families while male Jamaat members were in jail during the Awami League government, leaving them unprepared for electoral politics," said Mardia.

She said the party was not opposed to women's political participation but believed they needed training and

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