



Fulfil people's mandate or pay a 'heavy price'

Says Shafiqur during 11-party long march

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday warned that the BNP government would have to pay a "heavy price" if it failed to implement the February 12 referendum verdict.

"Do not fall for anyone's deception. Another revolution is knocking at our door," he said at the opening rally of the 11-Party Alliance's Dhaka-Khulna-Jhenaidah-Kushtia long march at the south gate of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque in the capital.



Shafiqur, who is the leader of the opposition, said 70 percent of voters had voted "Yes" in the referendum, adding that the BNP and 32 other political parties had pledged before the election to accept the outcome.

"Implementation of the referendum verdict is the main among our seven demands. Had it been implemented, the other six demands would not have come to the fore," he said.

The alliance's seven-point demands include implementation of the referendum verdict and the July charter, trial of the July killings, resolution of shortages of electricity, fuel, gas and fertiliser, control of essential commodity prices, action against corruption, extortion and land grabbing, improvement of law

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Supporters listen to Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman's speech at a street rally in Shibbari, Khulna, yesterday, during the 11-Party Alliance's Dhaka-Khulna-Kushtia long march over several demands, including implementation of the referendum verdict and measures to control rising prices.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Jamaat, NCP face 'growing rift over local elections'

Leaders deny any plan to quit alliance

SHAMIMA RITA

The 11-Party Alliance is showing signs of growing strain as the Jamaat-e-Islami and the National Citizen Party (NCP) differ over their approach to the upcoming local government elections.

The NCP has decided to scale back its participation in programmes organised by the Jamaat-led alliance and instead focus on strengthening its own organisational base, according to members of the party's Political Council.

At least five senior party leaders told The Daily Star that while the NCP would maintain a limited presence at alliance activities, it planned to expand its independent political programmes across districts and metropolitan areas.

The apparent unease drew further attention yesterday

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INTERVIEW

'Graft in judiciary now an open secret'

SCBA President Mahbub Uddin tells Star

ASHUTOSH SARKAR



Allegations of corruption in both divisions of the apex court and in lower courts must be investigated and action taken against those responsible to restore people's trust in the justice system, Supreme Court Bar Association President AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon has said.

"There are certain things in society, which are called 'open secrets'. Corruption in the judiciary has, in many respects, become an open secret," he told The Daily Star in a recent interview.

There are allegations from lawyers and plaintiffs about having to pay money at several stages in the High Court and the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court and lower courts, he said.

He referred to allegations of corruption in the process of seeking adjournments, filing bail petitions and getting documents processed, among others.

"Work does not move forward unless money is paid... There are allegations that even some judges may be aware [of these practices]. But nobody speaks openly about them," Khokon said.

These practices have been normalised over many years, and as a result the "judicial process is affected, and justice is undermined," he said.

There are also allegations of irregularities in the appointment of judges. To ensure that judges are impartial and immune from political or personal influence in their decisions, there is a need for a comprehensive law laying down detailed criteria for judicial appointments, he noted.

During the Awami League

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Scrapping caretaker system triggered democratic crisis

Says Salahuddin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 15th amendment to the Constitution undermined political stability and democracy in Bangladesh, said Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday.

The amendment in 2011 abolished the caretaker government system, creating a climate of political instability and democratic crisis that eventually led to the July uprising, he said at the seminar titled "Constitutional Crises in Post-Independence Bangladesh and Baksal".

It was the biggest constitutional crisis since Baksal, he said at the seminar, which was the first of the "Democratic Journey Seminar Series" held at the Monsoon Theatre of the July Mass Uprising Memorial Museum.

The constitutional amendments are necessary to ensure good governance, build strong institutions and provide democratic safeguards to prevent the rise of authoritarian or fascist rule.

Salahuddin, also the chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on constitutional amendment, called for institutional checks and balances, independent watchdog bodies, press and judicial freedom, an independent Election Commission and a caretaker government system.

"We want democratic amendments, and we have a significant responsibility in this regard."

The amendments should reflect the expectations of the July Uprising, people's aspirations and the demands of the present generation.

"We seek everyone's cooperation in this regard. We do not want political divisions, divisions on religious grounds or divisions arising from the interests of any group. Bangladesh comes first for all of us," he added.

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France protests turn violent; 290 arrested

AGENCIES

More than 290 people were arrested across France yesterday as hundreds of thousands joined a third consecutive weekend of protests over soaring living costs, inequality and police violence.

Authorities said the demonstrations were largely peaceful, but clashes erupted in Paris and several other cities later in the day. The interior ministry said "radical elements" in cities including Bordeaux, Toulouse and Marseille attempted to enter city centres to carry out vandalism and looting.

In Paris, police fired tear gas and charged protesters after some demonstrators at the rear of a march hurled paving stones and at least one Molotov cocktail at officers, according to the police prefecture. Police said a "hard core of several hundred rioters" was responsible for the violence.

Similar clashes were reported in Lyon, while police in Toulouse used water cannon against an unauthorised protest involving several thousand mostly young demonstrators.

Earlier, thousands of people, some dressed as clowns, witches and other Halloween characters, marched through eastern Paris carrying placards denouncing rising prices and police tactics.

Authorities put nationwide turnout at 320,000, including 70,000 in Paris, while organisers claimed nearly half a million people participated.

The movement, bringing together Yellow Vest activists, trade unions and students, began as a protest against the cost of living and inequality but has since expanded to include demands for greater civil liberties and the right to protest.

The demonstrations come in a febrile political climate, with presidential elections less than six months away and far-right leader Marine Le Pen leading opinion polls.

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German authorities said the protests were largely peaceful, although some barricades were set on fire in Hamburg. Businesses in several cities boarded up shopfronts ahead of the rallies amid concerns they could mirror recent unrest in France.

Official numbers yesterday afternoon suggested participant turnout was below the 182,000 organisers initially expected. Police in Frankfurt, Munich and Berlin reported as many as 18,000 protesters, half the roughly 36,000 on the organisers' website.



People paddle their boats in a traditional race on the Sandhya river in Barishal's Uzirpur upazila yesterday, as hundreds of spectators watch from the Sector Commander Major MA Jalil Bridge and the riverbanks. Eight teams took part in the competition, organised by the upazila administration and a development organisation.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

'Form minority govt with Palestinians'

Palestinian lawmaker Tibi urges opposition leader Eisenkot

AGENCIES

Palestinian lawmaker Ahmad Tibi has urged Israeli opposition leader Gadi Eisenkot to show political courage and work with Arab parties to end Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's rule.

In an interview with Middle East Eye on Friday, Tibi called on Eisenkot to summon "the courage of [former prime minister] Yitzhak Rabin".

In 1993, Rabin's minority government of 56 seats relied on Palestinian-led parties for parliamentary support, amid the push to advance the Oslo Accords.

Tibi, founder and leader of the Ta'al party (Arab Movement for Renewal), said there was no democratic justification for ruling out cooperation with Palestinian representatives in the Knesset, Israel's parliament, this time around.

"I hope Eisenkot will be courageous enough to go forward and form a minority government, which will end this government of Netanyahu immediately," Tibi said.

A minority government occurs when the ruling coalition holds fewer than 61 of the Knesset's 120 seats. It survives by securing a "safety net" agreement, relying on outside parties to vote against opposition no-confidence motions without officially joining the cabinet.

Tibi's party is part of the Joint List, alongside two other Palestinian-led parties, Hadash and Balad. Together, they won 11 seats.

The results mean that neither a Netanyahu-led nor an Eisenkot-led bloc can secure a 61-seat majority without Palestinian parties.

Another Palestinian party, Ra'am, secured eight, giving the two slates a combined 19 seats - a record for Palestinian parties in parliament.

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Tibi said the Joint List's strategy was to support anyone willing to remove Netanyahu

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