LOCAL POLLS

Khelafat Majlis mulls alliance without Jamaat

MAMUNUR RASHID

Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis is considering forming a separate electoral alliance with other Islamic parties, excluding Jamaat-e-Islami, if the latter insists on contesting local government elections independently, raising the possibility of a fresh realignment among Islamic parties.

The party fears that separate participation would split opposition votes and weaken unity within the Jamaat-led 11-party alliance. It is also exploring cooperation with Islamic parties outside the alliance.

Khelafat Secretary General Jalaluddin Ahmed told The Daily Star that his party wanted the alliance to contest the local polls together. If Jamaat refused, it could consider an alternative alliance.

"Contesting separately would create two problems. First, our votes would be divided, benefiting the ruling party. Second, separate candidates could affect the unity, cordiality and goodwill among us. During elections, we would have to speak against and compete with one another's candidates, creating distance and divisions within the alliance," he said.

Jalaluddin proposed central coordination in selecting candidates. For instance, among the 10 city corporations, parties with stronger organisational presence and public support in particular areas could be allowed to field candidates.

However, Jamaat leaders have repeatedly expressed their intention to contest independently, prompting alliance partners to select candidates on their own, he said.

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PHOTO: PMO

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, accompanied by his wife Zubaida Rahman, arrives at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka early yesterday after attending the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP31) in Antalya, Turkey.

Eatery vandalised over seating row

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of people attacked and vandalised Durbin Bangla restaurant in Dhaka's Mohakhali yesterday following a dispute over seating arrangements.

The incident took place around 11:00am in Amtoli, near Government Titumir College, leaving several people injured in clashes between the attackers and restaurant staff.

Banani Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mohammad Salahuddin said the trouble began when a group refused to wait in a queue for seats, leading to an argument and a scuffle with employees.

"We are yet to identify those who carried out the attack. No case has been filed yet," he said.

A police source, however, said a group of Titumir College students had refused to queue, triggering the clash.

The source said some locals, along with people from the nearby Korail and Sattola slums, later gathered and vandalised the restaurant, allegedly in support of the students.

Restaurant owner Shafin Baig said

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Eight sued

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The accused are Mir Ahsanul Islam Abhi, president of Kushtia district BCL, and Papu Shahriar Arnab, general secretary of the unit; Ashik Shikdar, president of Daulatpur upazila BCL; and Md Ridoy, joint convener of the same unit; Mir Saiful, president of Kushtia district Jubo League; and Harun-or-Rashid, general secretary of the unit; and Md Monirur Rahman Mohon, president of Daulatpur upazila Swechchhasebak League; and Shariful Islam, general secretary of the unit.

In the case statement, Nusrat said the accused and their associates had been conspiring to create instability in the area through criminal activities since the fall of the AL government on August 5, 2024, amid a student-led mass uprising.

The NCP leader also alleged that they had been looking for chances to kill her and her family members while spreading propaganda about her and the party on Facebook.

Nusrat was in Dhaka when the fire incident took place.

According to the case statement, her parents, Md Abdul Halim, 61, and Johura Khatun, 58, woke up around 12:15am after hearing three loud explosions. They came out of their rooms and found the house engulfed in flames.

The MP alleged that the accused, along with their associates, used bomb-like objects to set fire to the house and detonated three explosive devices in an attempt to burn her family members alive.

The fire destroyed furniture, household appliances, and other belongings. Five of the house's eight rooms were gutted. Three goats kept at the house died in the blaze, said the case statement.

Nusrat estimated the damage at around Tk 40 lakh.

[Our Kushtia correspondent contributed to this report.]

Delhi sticks to legal route on Hasina

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to appeal against her death sentence and ensure a fresh trial over the killings during the July uprising.

Hasina fled to India amid the youth-led mass uprising and has been living there since. She was sentenced to death in November 2025 for crimes against humanity committed during the uprising.

Bangladesh has formally sought her extradition twice, first through a diplomatic note verbale in December 2024 and again after the death sentence was handed down in November 2025.

The foreign minister also raised the issue at a bilateral meeting last April, a foreign ministry official said, adding that India had not responded to Bangladesh's extradition requests.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, the official said Dhaka had received no communication from India about the reported conditions.

"We are not aware whether the Indian side made any such request at the political level. Diplomats were also not involved in discussions when she left Bangladesh in 2024," the official added.

At a biweekly media briefing in New Delhi yesterday, Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson for India's Ministry of External Affairs, was asked about Hasina's extradition and the two reported conditions.

"What I refer to as a legal matter is the extradition part. And the extradition will be dealt with accordingly. On the other part of your question, I have no comments to offer," he said.

Diplomatic sources in New Delhi said Hasina's continued presence in India had become an obstacle to the Indian government's "neighbourhood first" policy, with the delay in improving ties also drawing domestic criticism.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a diplomat said Prime Minister Tarique Rahman had yet to visit India, nearly a year into his tenure, and was instead moving closer to Türkiye, China and Pakistan, causing discomfort in New Delhi.

The diplomat said a visit would depend on the creation of a conducive environment and the fulfilment of certain preconditions.

"Hasina is not the Dalai Lama. She sought shelter in India when she was in distress, and India provided it. But India cannot afford to keep her indefinitely. She has been advised to use back channels to negotiate and secure the best possible deal for her return," the diplomat said.

On the postponement of the Bangladesh-India consular dialogue, Jaiswal said India wanted to maintain a positive, constructive and forward-looking relationship with Bangladesh.

He cited meetings under existing bilateral mechanisms covering trade, railways, water resources, and border management.

The next round of the Bangladesh-India consular dialogue, which will also discuss revised travel arrangements, will take place on a mutually convenient date, he said.

"India remains ready to discuss all bilateral issues with Bangladesh through these existing mechanisms, including at the technical level," Jaiswal added.

Party ties, family links, 'bribery' taint fertiliser dealership

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Ayub denied financial transactions, saying some party members were spreading misinformation to discredit the process. Chand Sarker could not reached for comments.

In Pirgachha, local BNP leaders and activists alleged that bribes had been paid for appointments in seven of the upazila's nine unions. The wives of upazila BNP President Aminul Islam Ranga and General Secretary Shariful Islam received dealerships in two unions.

Ranga acknowledged his wife's appointment but denied involvement in other appointments or financial dealings.

"Many party leaders and activists who failed to secure dealerships are spreading false information against us.

"There were no financial transactions involving us in the appointment of fertiliser dealers," he said.

BNP MP Rokon Uddin Babul, whose Lalmonirhat-2 constituency comprises Aditmari and Kaliganj upazilas, said he had received many complaints.

Dealers would be monitored for six months and their dealerships would be cancelled if they failed to distribute fertiliser properly, he added.

ABANDONED RICE MILL

In Brahmanbaria-1, BNP lawmaker Abdul Hannan's son Adnan Sadi, husband of the MP's younger sister, and wife of the MP's nephew were among those who secured dealerships.

A Daily Star investigation found that an old, abandoned rice mill near the MP's house had been listed as the warehouse for his son's dealership. Local sources said Hannan bought the land and established the mill years ago, when he was a union chairman, but it had remained closed for years.

Hannan disputed the information about the mill.

Asked whether his son, a student with no prior business experience, met the eligibility requirements, he pointed to party activists' deprivation under the previous government.

"Did we have the opportunity to do business over the past 17 years? The previous government did not even give us trade licences," he said.

In Kushtia, at least 50 of the 70 dealerships went to BNP-linked people or their relatives, including the son of district BNP Convener Md Kutub Uddin Ahmed and the brothers of the Sadar upazila BNP president and general secretary.

Kutub Uddin acknowledged seeking the dealership for his son. "My son was looking for a source of employment. When an opportunity to run an established business came up, I tried to secure it for him," he said.

The district agriculture office's deputy director, Md Shawkat Hossain Bhuiyan, said, "We have to work following the directives of the higher authorities of the government."

PARTY TIES, FAMILY LINKS

In Jhenaidah, an analysis showed that around 90 percent of the dealers appointed for 67 unions and six municipalities had no previous fertiliser business experience.

The list includes the younger brother, brother-in-law and the brother-in-law's wife of district BNP President and Zila Parishad Administrator MA Majid. Another appointee, Md Nazmul Haque Misu of Shimla-Rokonpur Union in Kaliganj, is a first cousin of Majid's wife.

Md Anwar Hossain, a caretaker at the district BNP office earning Tk 10,000 a month, secured a dealership in Saduhati Union.

Md Amir Hossain, organising secretary of the union BNP, was appointed in Halidhani Union. During an on-site inspection, the verification committee found paddy stored in the warehouse listed in his application.

The policy requires applicants to be permanent residents of the area and have an owned or leased warehouse with a capacity of at least 50 tonnes.

Majid did not respond to calls seeking comment. District BNP General Secretary Zahiduzzaman Mona and Deputy Commissioner Noman Hossain, who chairs the district fertiliser and seed monitoring committee, declined to comment.

In Rajshahi, a review of 85 newly appointed dealers found that most were BNP-affiliated or had family members in party politics. They include an upazila Chhatra Dal convener, an upazila BNP leader's brother and a municipal BNP secretary.

In Godagari's Basudebpur Union, unsuccessful applicant Ziaur Rahman said he was initially ranked first on the deputy commissioner's list but was later moved to third.

"My warehouse is the best in Basudebpur. I was initially placed first on the list prepared at the deputy commissioner's office. I do not know what happened afterwards, but I was moved down to third," he said.

Deputy Commissioner Kazi Shahidul Islam said the appointments would be reviewed if complaints were received.

HEATED EXCHANGE IN JS

Heated exchanges erupted in parliament on Wednesday after NCP MP Hasnat Abdullah alleged a "festival of irregularities" in fertiliser dealer appointments, citing Thakurgaon as an example.

He accused some reserved-seat MPs of issuing demi-official (DO) letters recommending preferred candidates for dealerships in exchange for money.

Agriculture Minister Mohammed Aminur Rashid and Chief Whip Nurul Islam Moni rejected the allegations.

Also on Wednesday, the agriculture minister told parliament that the government had allocated Tk 17,000 crore in fertiliser subsidies for FY2026-27, down from Tk 28,987.45 crore in the previous fiscal year.

Dealerships secured through nepotism or financial transactions could undermine efficiency, encourage corruption and keep qualified traders out of the business.

Jahangir Alam Khan
Agricultural economist

The country will need to import more than 46 lakh tonnes of fertiliser this fiscal year, as domestic production capacity stands at 12 lakh tonnes against an annual demand of 58 lakh tonnes.

In Thakurgaon, 28 of 31 newly appointed dealers across four upazilas are reportedly BNP leaders, activists, relatives or associates. Several allegedly lack trading experience or warehouses of the required capacity.

In Pirganj municipality, Shyamoli Akter, wife of upazila BNP Organising Secretary Rezwanul Haque, secured a dealership despite having no fertiliser trading experience, according to local residents.

In Ranishankoil, six of eight dealerships went to relatives of BNP, Jubo Dal and Chhatra Dal leaders. One appointee, Jahangir Alam, elder brother of a former Dhaka College Chhatra Dal leader, lives in Singapore.

He said he applied on his brother's advice after returning home on September 5.

District BNP General Secretary Poygam Ali denied party influence, saying activists had long been denied business opportunities.

DAE Deputy Director Mazedul Islam said political affiliation was not considered.

Thakurgaon-2 MP Abdus Salam also denied involvement, saying unsuccessful applicants were making allegations. He said upazila nirbahi officers and the deputy commissioner handled the process, but any irregularities should be investigated.

[Our Rangpur Correspondent S Dilip Roy, Jhenaidah Correspondent Omar Ali Shohag, Rajshahi Correspondent Shohanur Rahman Rafi, Kushtia Correspondent Anis Mondol, Thakurgaon Correspondent Md Quamrul Islam Rubaiyat, and Brahmanbaria Correspondent Masuk Hridoy contributed to this report]

ROSSINI'S FIGARO
gets a modern makeover in Dhaka

RBR



My first introduction to the tongue-twister calls of Italian composer Gioachino Rossini's famous "Figaro! Figaro! Figaro!" was through a Tom and Jerry cartoon. You could say I am no opera aficionado, but then again, my forever love is that same iconic "Figaro!" shout in Queen's 1975 masterpiece Bohemian Rhapsody.

Anyway, leaving behind all that "do I know or do I not know" dilemma, I finally researched and learned who Figaro is and what he represents. In Rossini's The Barber of Seville (Il Barbiere di Siviglia), Figaro is introduced as the ultimate jack-of-all-trades -- acting as a local matchmaker,



PHOTO: COURTESY

apothecary, surgeon-assistant, and trusted problem-solver in Seville.

Overwhelmed by his own success, he sings lines like "Figaro here! Figaro there! Figaro up! Figaro down!" The rapid, repeated shouts act as a musical comedy bit showing just how chaotic and in-demand his life really is.

Phew, now with the literary background sorted, I finally got to witness the most energetic version of it live: Italian contemporary dance company Artemis Danza's production of Il Barbiere di Siviglia (The Barber of Seville), choreographed by Monica Casadei at Shilpakala Academy

Representing the Embassy of Italy in Dhaka for their second consecutive cultural visit to Bangladesh, the Italian delegation brought the company to perform on Thursday. With the Ministry of Cultural Affairs of Bangladesh, supported by funding from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI), the Italian Ministry of Culture, and the Emilia-Romagna Region, the international ensemble featured dancers from Italy alongside global collaborators working under Casadei's long-standing direction.

What makes this production truly remarkable is the company's signature ability to take classical Italian opera and reinterpret it dynamically through high-energy contemporary dance and physical theatre. Choreographed, set-designed, and an absolute superb lighting done by Monica Casadei, she reimagined Rossini's celebrated comic opera as a futuristic "action ballet".

In this modern interpretation, Figaro is multiplied across the entire ensemble of dancers of all genders. He sheds his charming 18th-century skin and morphs into the modern man who has an exhausting obsession with relentless speed, unyielding ambition, and toxic efficiency.

Original protagonist's pride in juggling an endless parade of odd jobs acts as a direct parallel to today's punishing gig economy and side-hustle culture, where personal self-worth is dangerously tied to non-stop productivity.

Meanwhile, those iconic, overlapping shouts of "Figaro! Figaro! Figaro!" stop sounding like playful opera and start sounding like the inescapable barrage of digital notifications. By translating his classic, boastful swagger into frantic, hyper-kinetic motion, Casadei's modern adaptation lays bare how Figaro's tireless hustle is just our own anxiety-driven race to survive an unforgiving, fast-paced world.

As the choreographer explains, "Opera is never truly ancient; while the composers lived in the past, the underlying human stories remain remarkably contemporary. By bridging tradition and the present, the performance demonstrates how dance transcends language barriers."

"By offering a fresh perspective on classical art forms, this contemporary reinterpretation allows audiences to connect emotionally with the characters' journeys, proving that opera can be experienced in a vibrant, accessible way for everyone," Casadei adds.

To bring this vision to life, the production blends Rossini's original score with contemporary electronic arrangements and original compositions created in collaboration with electronic composer Luca Vianini and complemented by costumes from Daniela Usai.

Fulfilling a global mission to connect with what the team calls the "other family" of dance, the company regularly collaborates with local artists across different continents, including Bangladeshi dance groups met during their previous and current visits.

Following this opening show in Dhaka, the company's Asian tour continued to the Chittagong Theatre Institute on Saturday, before heading onward to Singapore.

MY DHAKA