



## ELECTION-YEAR BUREAUCRACY Govt in a bind over new picks

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

A massive reshuffle in the bureaucracy is awaiting the government's nod in a year considered crucial in the lead-up to the next election.

The reshuffle includes appointments in three top civil service positions – cabinet secretary, principal secretary to the prime minister, and Prime Minister's Office secretary.

Besides these, 35 out of the 78 secretaries will go into retirement before the national election due early 2024.

According to Secretariat insiders, the government may face serious challenges in filling up these posts as those who will be promoted to secretary will likely come from the 11th and 13th BCS batches, recruited during the BNP-Jamaat rule between 1991 and 1996.

It faces similar challenges in picking deputy commissioners as they too will likely be from among those recruited through the 21st, 22nd and 24th exams held during the 2001-2006 tenure of the BNP-Jamaat alliance.

Perception is widespread that applicants having affiliations with the ruling party get priorities during recruitments in civil service, and these government officials remain loyal to that party.

As part of the reshuffle, Kabir Bin Anwar, senior secretary of the water resources ministry, may be appointed the cabinet secretary, the highest post in the bureaucracy, since the three-year contract with current Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam expires on December 15, government sources said.

If Kabir Bin Anwar joins office on December 18, he will get only 13 working days to serve as the cabinet secretary, as he is slated to go on post retirement leave (PRL) on January 3. In this situation, the government may opt to extend his tenure.

When the government appointed Khandker Anwarul Islam as the cabinet secretary on 28 October 2019, he only had two weeks to go on PRL. His tenure, since then, has been extended twice.

- 35 secretaries to go on PRL before national polls
- 11 of them will go on PRL this month
- Cadres of 13th BCS likely to be promoted to secretary
- Cadres from 27th BCS likely to be DCs before polls

Tofazzel Hossain Miah, senior secretary at the Prime Minister's Office, is likely to be the PM's principal secretary, as the contract of incumbent Principal Secretary Dr Ahmad Kaikaus expires on December 31.

Kaikaus was bid farewell at the last cabinet meeting on November 28. He is going to join World Bank Group as alternate executive, replacing Mohammad Shafiul Alam, the last cabinet secretary, said sources.

On the other hand, Mohammad Salahuddin, PS-1 to the PM (additional secretary), may get promoted as the PMO secretary, according to the sources.

Changes have already been made at the public administration ministry, which is responsible for recruitments, promotions and changes in civil bureaucracy.

For example, Mohammed Mezbah Uddin Chowdhury joined as senior secretary there on November 2, as his

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Argentina's talismanic captain Lionel Messi celebrates his goal against Australia during their Round of 16 match of the Qatar World Cup at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium in Al-Rayyan yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



## Messi sets up Argentina-Netherlands quarterfinal

AFP, Doha

Lionel Messi produced a moment of trademark quality to score the opener in a 2-1 win over Australia and send Argentina into the quarterfinals of the World Cup on Saturday.

Messi's 789th goal in his 1,000th career appearance – but first in the knockout rounds of the World Cup –

helped set up a last-eight clash with the unbeaten Netherlands on Friday.

Julian Alvarez scored the other in the 57th minute after some calamitous Australian defending, before Enzo Fernandez's 77th-minute own goal set up an unexpectedly nervy finale.

Messi's classy first-half goal, bending the ball into the bottom

corner, broke the resistance and ultimately the hearts of a gutsy Australian side who defied all expectations in Qatar and went down fighting.

Graham Arnold's Socceroos set out to unsettle their opponents. Keanu Baccus left one on Messi and Jackson Irvine was booked for

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## DESERT FEST Mbappe the game changer



SAMAMA RAHMAN

Lending credence to the idea that fate itself would conspire against the holders in the group stages – as was the case with Italy in 2010, Spain in 2014, and Germany in 2018 – was the fact that reigning champions France were suddenly being ravaged by injuries ahead of the 2022 World Cup.

It almost felt undeniable when Ballon d'Or holder Karim Benzema was ruled out at the eleventh hour, injured while training in Doha, to add to a list

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**TODAY'S MATCHES**

France v Poland 9:00pm  
England v Senegal 1:00am

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