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Civil admin still on edge

BAHARAM KHAN

Chaotic is the word that best describes the days at the Secretariat after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government of 15 years on August 5.

Those who were denied promotions for political reasons or poor track records; those who were given promotions but not their placement of choice; and those who are in good positions but were denied a big promotion for below-par performance are agitating – all at the same time.

Throughout last week, processions were seen every few hours. None of those were to press home demands for improved public services but for personal benefits.

"I have never seen such a situation in my 29 years of service – it is unimaginable that BCS cadres of the Secretariat can behave like this," said a secretary who asked not to be named to speak candidly on the issue.

It is a "chaotic" situation", he said, adding that such a situation has arisen due to a lack of qualified leadership.

"This administration is rotten. We have failed to set a good example in the administration," the secretary added.

So disorderly are things that the ministries housed in the Secretariat have not been able to do their normal work since August 5.

However, the ministries and departments that have new advisers or secretaries are returning to normalcy.

To avoid getting heckled, Mohammed Mezbah Uddin Chowdhury, the senior secretary of the ministry of public

"This administration is rotten. We have failed to set a good example."

A secretary who asked not to be named



Policemen working in a charred room of Chattogram city's Kotwali Police Station yesterday. Hours after the ouster of the Awami League government on August 5, a mob attacked and torched the police station, causing extensive damage. The station resumed partial operations on August 10.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

GLOBAL SOUTH SUMMIT Yunus pledges fair polls, inclusive democracy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser of the interim government Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday said the government is committed to ensuring a transition to inclusive and pluralistic democracy and creating an environment in which free, fair, and participatory elections can be held.

The young generation has impressed upon the people their aspirations for a revolutionary change and the restoration of all state institutions to ensure democracy and human rights through meaningful reform, he said in a speech delivered virtually during the "3rd Voice of Global South Summit 2024" hosted by India.

"Our task is now to carry

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"I invite you to visit Dhaka soon. Otherwise, you may miss something important. Much of Dhaka has turned into the graffiti capital of the world."

S Alam drains Janata branch dry

AM JAHID and MD MEHEDI HASAN

As much as 90 percent of the loans disbursed by a branch of state-run Janata Bank was for S Alam Group, in yet another instance of how the Chattogram-based business giant exerted its influence on the country's banking sector.

Janata's Sadharan Bima Bhaban Corporate Branch in Chattogram provided Tk 8,216 crore to S Alam Group, which is 167 percent more than the branch's single borrower exposure limit, according to the bank's documents.

The business conglomerate took another Tk 2,233.45 crore from Janata to take the tally to Tk 10,449.45 crore, which is 451.57 percent of the struggling state-run bank's paid-up capital.

As per law, a bank is not allowed to lend more than 25 percent of its paid-up capital to a single client. At the end of June this year, Janata's paid-up capital stood at Tk 2,314 crore.

The loans to S Alam, which has controlling stakes in as many as eight

banks, accounted for 10.7 percent of Janata's total disbursed loans of Tk 98,000 crore at the end of June.

As much as 49 percent of the bank's outstanding loans have turned bad, putting its financial health at risk.

Amid such a situation, the bank on June 25 rescheduled the Tk 1,844.60 crore loans taken by the six companies of S Alam Group for four years – by breaching rules but with special permission from the central bank.

Of the sum, Tk 1,038.75 crore was for S Alam Refined Sugar Industries, Tk 1,186.43 crore for S Alam Trading Company, Tk

696.42 crore for S Alam Vegetable Oil, Tk 221.13 crore for Global Trading Corporation and Tk 1,229.55 crore for S Alam Cold Rolled Steels.

The companies were given the rescheduling facility although S Alam Group had outstanding loans of Tk 8,895.91 crore.

As per banking rules, a fresh loan rescheduling facility can be granted for a client only if it is within the permitted limits.

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INJURED IN PROTEST They are to be treated at separate units in hospitals

STAFF CORRESPONDENTS

Separate specialised care units will be formed in all government hospitals nationwide to ensure better treatment for those injured during the Anti-discrimination Student Movement.

The decision was made during a meeting between two coordinators of the student movement and the authorities of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

At the meeting, it was decided that only doctors, nurses, and legal representatives of the patients would be allowed to enter these specialised units as many of the injured were in critical condition.

Besides, it is also required to prevent the spread of diseases, particularly during the post-operation period.

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administration, comes to the Secretariat occasionally. But he is struggling to handle the aspirants for promotion, The Daily Star has learnt with people familiar with the proceedings.

The chief adviser is at the helm of the ministry along with several other ministries. The ministry, the most important in state administration, does not have a dedicated adviser.

Besides, Cabinet Secretary Md Mahub Hossain is not coming to the Secretariat at all from August 6. He is discharging his duties by going to the office of the chief adviser of the interim government or the Bangabhaban.

The Daily Star spoke with a host of mid-level officials, who attributed the current state of general administration to two issues.

Firstly, the top brass of the current administration – the secretaries – have not been able to set an example of integrity in their work and leadership.

"This is why most of the secretaries did not join office after the fall of the Hasina government. As a result, subordinates do not respect them," said one of the officials.

During the past regime, the top officials have only spent their time taking various benefits including promotion, and contractual appointments, said a joint secretary of the public administration ministry on the condition of anonymity.

In the last decade and a half, no administrative reforms were done, and those who wanted to push for reforms were not allowed to work, he said.

"Despite having a lot of merit, some officers were cornered along with some corrupt ones. However, incompetent, corrupt and partisan officials were mostly promoted. As a result, many of the beneficiaries of the previous government are trying to destabilise the administration by claiming they have been deprived," the joint secretary added.

Those people with a view to safeguarding personal interests including transfer, appointment, promotion and change of designation exploited the vacuum in governance for the first three days after the fall of the Awami League government, officials said.

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Hasina sued in two more murder cases

STAR REPORT

Former prime minister Sheikh Hasina has been accused in two more murder cases.

With this, Hasina is now facing 10 cases, including seven for murder, one for abduction, and two for committing crimes against humanity and genocide.

In Narayanganj, Hasina, along with former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan and 46 others, was sued over the killing of a 20-year-old man during a clash between protesters and Awami League men on August 5.

Abul Bashar Anik, brother of the victim, Abul Hasan Sajan, 20, who was shot in the city's Chashara area, filed the case last night, said Abdus Sattar, officer in charge of Narayanganj Sadar Model Police Station.

Former MP AKM Shamim Osman, his brother former MP AKM Selim Osman, son Imtihan

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A freight train waits at Kamalapur Railway Station yesterday afternoon as necessary maintenance on the lines is going on ahead. During the nationwide protests and violence, train services had been suspended. Bangladesh Railway resumed operation of cargo trains on August 12 after nearly a month.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Star INTERVIEW

'Big defaulters won't be spared'

Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed shares his plan to discipline rogues in banking sector

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed has vowed to mete out exemplary punishment to big loan defaulters as the interim government scrambles to fix the ailing banking sector of Bangladesh.

The new government has begun its journey with banks struggling to cope with a ballooning bad debt. At the end of March, delinquent loans increased to Tk 182,295 crore, the highest in the history of Bangladesh. That means 11.1 percent of the disbursed loans have soured. The amount is even higher if outstanding rescheduled loans and outstanding restructured written-off loans are taken into account.

"How did it happen?" said Salehuddin, who worked as the central bank governor from 2005 to 2009. He presided over the financial system during the army-

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