



### BCB set for major shake-up

P11



### Echoes of colonialism in Bangladesh

P9



### Our transitional political settlement and ways forward

P8



### Biden passes baton to Harris

P7

## Govt transfers 25 DCs in one go

BAHARAM KHAN and MOHUDDIN ALAMGIR

Amid lobbying by deputy commissioners seeking transfer from their once desired post, the interim government yesterday transferred 25 of them.

The interim government has also been facing pressure from officers, who feel they were "discriminated against" during the Awami League-led government, and want to be DCs.

The officers are seeking transfer from the usually coveted post of DCs because many of them have been fearing attacks and embarrassment following the ouster of the Hasina-led government on August 5.

Many DCs say they are receiving threats over the phone.

In the tumultuous weeks leading to the fall of the previous government, law enforcers and Awami League supporters opened fire on protesters in many places. When the mass uprising peaked and the government fell, government facilities and officers were attacked by locals in many places.

DCs are the head of civil administration in the districts. Since Monday, the DCs oversee the Zila Parishad and school managing committees.

A top officer of the public administration ministry, requesting

DCs feel insecure, fear embarrassment

At least 17 were PS to former ministers

'Deprived' officers lobby to become DCs

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



## Inside the Aynaghar

MUNTAKIM SAAD and SAJJAD HOSSAIN

After years of denial by the authorities, chilling details about secret prisons are now emerging as victims of enforced disappearance begin to speak out after their release following the dramatic fall of Sheikh Hasina's 16-year regime.

Victims who once kept themselves shut are now providing distressing accounts of these detention facilities, commonly known as "Aynaghar," (house of mirrors), where victims of enforced disappearance were held in inhuman conditions over the last one and a half decades.

Although these victims come from different age groups and political and social backgrounds, their narratives of these thick walled, iron-door prison cells are strikingly similar.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

READ VICTIMS' STORIES ON PAGE 2

### BUSINESS

#### Steps against S Alam Group

Three state agencies yesterday made a series of moves against S Alam Group, its chairman Mohammed Saiful Alam, and his family members amid allegations of loan irregularities during the tenure of the recently ousted Awami League government.

Bangladesh Bank dissolved the board of National Bank linked with S Alam Group, and the stock market regulator restricted transfer and sale of shares of six banks with ties to S Alam.

Also, an NBR field office formed four teams to audit VAT compliance status of 18 concerns of the Group.

STORY ON B1

## AL gov't leaves behind \$156 billion debt

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

When Sheikh Hasina returned to power in 2008, Bangladesh's total debt was just \$33.66 billion. When she fled amid an unprecedented student-led uprising on August 5, she left behind a burden of \$156 billion in local and foreign loans for the country to carry.

Converted to the local currency, the country's total debt stood over Tk 18.35 lakh crore as of June 30, according to finance ministry data.

These included \$88 billion or over Tk 10.35 lakh crore from domestic sources and the remaining \$68.33 billion or nearly Tk 8 lakh crore was external debt.

To put in words how the vast debts are affecting Bangladesh's finances: Tk 1.135 lakh crore or 14.02 percent of the total has been kept for interest payment in the proposed budget for this fiscal year, which is the highest among the sectors in the outlay of over Tk 8 lakh crore.

Economists have blamed stagnant revenue growth against a huge rise in expenditure, coupled with corruption in mega projects, for the massive debts.

The government spent around Tk 54 lakh crore in total in its three consecutive terms while revenue earnings amounted to just Tk 37 lakh crore. Government expenditure increased from

Tk 94,000 crore in FY09 to over Tk 7 lakh crore in the revised budget for FY24.

Bangladesh's revenue-GDP ratio has hovered around 9 percent, one of the lowest rates in the world.

A lack of government initiatives to bring reforms to the National Board of Revenue (NBR), along with tax dodging and huge tax exemptions provided to different pressure groups is blamed for the low revenue collection.

Besides, corruption in different mega projects increasingly made the revenue-expenditure gap bigger, said some leading economists.

Most of the mega projects were riddled with corruption, said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office.

"Big Projects, big corruption," he told The Daily Star last night.

He mentioned Bangladesh built the Padma Bridge with its own funds that came from domestic loans while the funds for the Karnaphuli Tunnel and the under-construction Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant have come from foreign sources.

"Corruption happened through cost escalation. Many, many unnecessary layers were added to the projects," he said, citing the Rooppur power project as an example.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 5

## Dipu Moni, Joy placed on remand Assaulted while taken to court

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Former social welfare minister Dipu Moni and former deputy sports minister Arif Khan Joy were placed on remand yesterday in a murder case.

The case was filed over the death of a grocery shop owner Abu Saeed in Dhaka's Moham-madpur on July 19.

Dhaka Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Sultan Sohag Uddin placed Dipu Moni on a four-day remand and Joy on a five-day remand.

Earlier, Dipu Moni and Joy came under attack by a group of people when they were being taken to court for the hearing.

Witnesses said that some people reached over the police escort to land blows on both the accused.

In the courtroom, the



## AUG 21 GRENADE ATTACK 20yrs on, justice not served yet

ASHUTOSH SARKAR and SHARIFUL ISLAM

Uncertainty looms over quick delivery of a High Court judgement in the August 21, 2004, grenade attack cases as the hearing on appeals and death references has recently been halted.

It has not been specified when the HC will resume the hearing and the verdict will be delivered as the bench concerned of the HC



dropped the case from its list of matters to hear.

The hearing is very unlikely to resume before October 20, when the court reopens after its annual vacation.

The horrifying grenade attack on an Awami League rally on Bangabandhu Avenue claimed 24 lives and left about 300 injured.

Then opposition leader Sheikh Hasina, who later ran the country for 15 years as prime minister and was forced to resign and flee on August 5 following a mass uprising, narrowly escaped the attack on this day 20 years ago.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

### RECENT VIOLENCE

## UN team flies in tomorrow to discuss probe framework

PORIMOL PALMA

A team of UN experts is set to arrive in Dhaka tomorrow to set a framework for the fact-finding mission that is expected to probe the "atrocities" committed during the unrest that toppled former prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

They are expected to discuss detailed terms and conditions for investigating all the human rights violations that took place between July 1 and August 15, a UN official based in Dhaka told this correspondent yesterday.

"This is the primary UN team of experts before the UN fact-finding mission comes and investigates [the atrocities]. We are expecting to sign an agreement of framework for the probe," a UN official based in Dhaka told this correspondent yesterday.

The delegation will stay here for at least a week and meet the civil society groups, victims of human rights violations, students and government officials and any other actors concerned, the official added.

Foreign ministry officials also confirmed the arrival of the three-member UN team.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4



HSC examinees protesting inside Bangladesh Secretariat yesterday demanding cancellation of their remaining tests. They blocked the gate of the Secretariat and prevented people from getting in and out of the compound.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Remaining HSC exams cancelled in face of protest

Decision on results to come later

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday cancelled the previously postponed Higher Secondary Certificate and equivalent examinations after hundreds of students entered the Secretariat and demonstrated for hours.

The students gathered in front of the Secretariat in the morning and around 2:00pm, they entered the premises defying restrictions at the gate and then demonstrated there until around 5:00pm.

A 10-member delegation met Education Adviser Wahiduddin Mahmud to submit a memorandum. But at one stage, several hundred students went to the education ministry on the 18th and 19th floors.

Hasnat Abdullah, a key organiser of the student movement against discrimination, tried in vain to calm the protesters.

By 4:00pm, the protesters blocked the gates of the Secretariat, barring anyone from leaving or entering the premises.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

