

Another major reshuffle in judiciary

Govt transfers, promotes 244 lower court judges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has transferred and promoted as many as 244 lower court judges in another major reshuffle in the judiciary a month after the interim administration took charge.

They include district and additional district judges, and metropolitan and chief judicial magistrates.

Among them, 23 joint district judges have been promoted to the posts of additional district judges.

The law ministry issued nine notifications to this effect yesterday.

It said the transfers and promotions of lower court judges were done in consultation with the Supreme Court.

Earlier, the government transferred 81 lower court judges on August 28, just around three weeks after the advisers of the new government were sworn in.



Four workers precariously perch atop a truck with oversized cargo as it traverses Notun Bridge in Chattogram city. Two are seated on the roof of the cab and two are atop a towering stack of sacks. Such blatant disregard for safety and traffic rules contribute to thousands of road fatalities annually in Bangladesh.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Hero Alom assaulted on Bogura court premises

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura



Ashraful Hosen Alom, popularly known as Hero Alom, was beaten up by a group of people in the Bogura Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court premises yesterday after he filed a case against Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader and former chief election commissioner Kazi Habubul Awal.

Hero Alom subsequently alleged that BNP supporters attacked him. He is now undergoing treatment at the Bogura Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital (SZMCH).

Earlier in the morning, he went to the Bogura Chief Judicial Magistrate Court and filed a case against 39 people for attacks on him and conspiracy to make him lose past few elections.

The main accused are Quader, Awal, Alom's opposition candidate and former lawmaker Rezaul Karim Tansen (Jasad) of Bogura-4 constituency, and 27 other named AL leaders and activists.

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More surprised than worried

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statement," he told reporters at the foreign ministry.

At an event in Lucknow on September 5, Singh said India's armed forces need to be prepared for war in order to preserve peace.

Rajnath asked the country's top military leadership to analyse the current situation in Bangladesh and the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Hamas conflicts, predict problems that India may face in the future and stay prepared to deal with the "unexpected."

Presiding over the maiden Joint Commanders' Conference in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, on the second and final day of India's top-level military leadership meeting, Rajnath "emphasised the need for a broader and deeper analysis by the top military leadership in view of the situation along the northern border and the happenings in neighbouring countries that are posing a challenge to peace and stability in the region," according to a statement of India's defence ministry.

Asked about this, Hossain said, "I don't find any reason why he made such a comment."

Hossain also said he in no way thought that there was any possibility of a war or conflict with India.

He said it was important to understand if Rajnath Singh made the comment for domestic consumption. "His statement is like beating around the bush."

"There is no reason for India to be prepared because of the Russia-Ukraine war. It is not fathomable how the Hamas and Ukraine issues are comparable to that of Bangladesh," he said.

Hossain went on to say that Dhaka would not want to show any knee-jerk reaction but check why such a statement was made.

Asked if India is providing political asylum to former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, Hossain said any country can give political asylum to anyone.

Asked about the possible meeting between Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, he said there has been no confirmation yet.

Dhaka has requested New Delhi for a meeting with Modi, but the latter has yet to respond, The Daily Star learned from foreign ministry officials informed of the proceedings. "There is a procedure for top leaders on the sidelines of UNGA, and Bangladesh will proceed accordingly," Hossain said.

Yunus will lead a delegation of 10-12 people to the UNGA for five days. He will go to New York on September 22.

Meanwhile, the UN Refugee Agency wants Bangladesh to provide shelter to the Rohingyas now displaced near the Bangladesh border amid the fighting between the Arakan Army and Myanmar military.

"We clarified to them that we have played our role beyond our capacity by sheltering 12 lakh Rohingya refugees. Sheltering more of them is not possible," Hossain said.

"The Border Guard Bangladesh is pushing back the Rohingyas who are trying to cross into Bangladesh. But some are managing to sneak into Bangladesh because of limitations in BGB capacity," Hossain added.

Want to make people feel they own the state

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created for the time being. Some appointments have already been made and some are under process. I believe normalcy will be restored soon.

Even if the entire executive is politicised, nowhere in the world the system changes overnight when the government changes. For instance, top officials are changed after the change of government in America, but it does not apply to all officials.

We saw many photos where public wrath led to police officers being beaten to death and hanged, but it is totally unacceptable. However, it is also true that many government officials acted as politicians.

I want to mention the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police that detained people for days when the law enforcers are legally bound to produce any detainee before the court within 24 hours of detention. A part of the Army also operated Aynagar (secret detention centre). All happened in broad daylight, but the highest court didn't take any measure. We destroyed all the institutions.

TDS: This government is the outcome of an anti-discrimination movement. How will you address discrimination between different cadres?

Ali Imam: I'll be very happy if there's no discrimination between cadres. But long-term efforts are needed to solve this problem. I don't know how much of that is possible within a short period.

Career opportunities are not equal for all cadre services. There are two types of cadres: general and specialised. There are many sections under specialised cadres. It is a complex system that can't be ignored. So, the method of promotion is

Don't stop till the job is done

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He urged the students to write to him at least once a month so that the government does not go off course.

Bangladeshis did not get such an opportunity to rebuild the country since its birth. All should remain alert so that no one can take this away, he said, adding that if the opportunity was taken away, there would be no future for Bangladesh.

Nearly 150 students from various educational institutions who played key roles during the uprising were present at the event.

Briefing reporters at the Foreign Service Academy later on, Chief Adviser's Special Assistant Mahfuj Alam said issues related to Bangladesh-India relations came up in the discussion.

"Sir [Prof Yunus] repeatedly said that we need good relations with our neighbours, but it needs to be based on equity, honour, and justice."

MOB JUSTICE, VIOLENCE
During the views exchange, a student leader pointed out that stopping the incidents of mob justice is one of the main tasks of the interim government.

If mob justice spreads to different parts of the society, then a vested group can infiltrate and definitely try to destroy the students' unity, the leader said.

Mahfuj in the briefing said, "The government has a clear position regarding mob justice. It can in no

way be allowed."

He said the law would take its own course when it comes to vigilante justice like attacks on mazars, temples or any person.

"People will not 'try' anyone who was part of the fascist government or the sycophants that surrounded it. Rather, they will remain alert so that there is no compromise [with the perpetrators] and no one betrays the martyrs and those who got injured," Mahfuj said.

He said that the government has already taken some stern actions and will take even stronger measures.

RELIGION IN POLITICS, CASES
Another student leader said religion has consistently been used as a political tool and this has to be stopped.

Mahfuj after the event said a student of BRAC University raised the issue of religions being used in politics.

He said there were no discussions regarding the matter as it involved the constitution and other institutions.

When a reporter asked about the large number of people being accused in cases, Mahfuj said that a due and standard process should be followed when a case is filed.

CAMPUS POLITICS
A woman student leader said a teacher or a student may have their own political ideology, but on campus they should only be a teacher or a student.

corruption, the ACC is there.

TDS: Journalists and politicians are being charged wholesale. What will be the fate of these cases?

Ali Imam: Murder cases against journalists without specific allegations are unacceptable. These are nothing but the outcome of peoples' wrath. But weren't some questions raised by certain journalists behind rising tensions? It isn't unusual for some people to have such anger and hatred towards some journalists for their activities.

The home ministry, however, has formed a cell to scrutinise these cases. If the accused are not found to be involved, the cell will ensure that the final report clears them.

TDS: Why do minorities come under attack whenever there is a change of power in our country? Does the government have any plan for the minority communities' long-term demand for a Minority Commission?

Ali Imam: Some incidents of attacks on minorities occurred when there was no government after the fall of Sheikh Hasina. After Muhammad Yunus took charge, he warned against such attacks and police were asked to take stern actions against the assailants. Cases have been filed in many places and police arrested many suspects.

Not just minorities, but those who are weak in their societal position also come under attack. The question is not about minorities or the majority. Everyone has the right to seek justice.

TDS: What is the government's plan for the demand for rewriting or reforming the constitution?

Ali Imam: To my knowledge, the advisers have discussed no such issue. We took an oath to uphold the constitution. The constitution is not anything unchangeable, but no discussion to change it was held.

"We don't want to see any politically labelled teacher or student on campus," she said.

Mahfuj said many agreed in the meeting that the kind of student politics Chhatra League and Awami League practised should not return to campuses.

There is an ongoing debate and discussion at educational institutions about what kind of politics the students and teachers can be involved in on campus. The government will decide only after seeing a consensus reached through that debate, he said.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS
The student leaders recommended that the interim government take steps to control the price of essentials and ensure voting rights of the people by reforming the Election Commission.

They said the government should focus on increasing agricultural production by providing subsidies to farmers, lowering the costs of pesticides, diesel, and farm equipment.

They also expressed concerns over brain drain; border killings; and law and order.

A student leader appealed to Yunus to take steps so that those who go abroad for postgraduate and PhD degrees return home afterwards.

Another student called upon the interim government to allocate a greater portion of the GDP to the education sector.

Citizens' platform launched

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said they have pledged to fulfil their civic duties.

"We will work to cooperate with the government formed on August 8 to ensure its accountability and play a role in formulating policies that serve the public interest.

"The proper trial of mass killings, restructuring of state institutions, and formulation of public interest-driven policies are prerequisites for a new political settlement," she said.

Sharmeen also mentioned that the committee would hold discussions with social, cultural, and religious leaders, as well as people from various groups who joined the uprising, in all metropolitan cities, districts, and upazilas.

"By expanding this committee to the grassroots level, we will work to rebuild the state by consolidating the spirit of the uprising," she said.

The committee has outlined eight primary tasks, including upholding the collective intentions and democratic aspirations reflected through the uprising of students and the people; taking necessary initiatives to ensure punishment of those responsible for the killings of students and people; establishing space for cooperation with the interim government to facilitate urgent reforms and restructure the state organisations; mobilising people from all walks of life through discussions, exchanges of views, and pro-public programmes in collaboration with various social, cultural, and political initiatives.

The tasks include integrating social, cultural, and religious leadership at all levels to uphold the aspirations of the mass uprising, and continuing resistance against fascist forces.

Nagorik Committee convener Nasiruddin, a former student of Dhaka University's marketing department, joined Amar Bangladesh Party (AB Party) in September 2022.

He had served as the research and information affairs assistant secretary of the AB Party central committee. Party insiders said he resigned before the quota protest began in July.

Before joining the AB party, he was a leader of the Chhatra Federation of Dhaka University unit.

AB Party, founded by some former leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami, has recently got its registration with the Election Commission.

In February 2020, Nagorik Committee member secretary Akhter Hossen observed a hunger strike at

Raju Memorial Sculpture, demanding an end to border killing by Indian Border Security Force (BSF).

Akhter was involved in the quota reform protest back in 2018 and came into the limelight after observing a hunger strike on DU campus to protest the question paper leak during the university's admission tests.

A former DU law department student, Akhter was elected the social welfare secretary at Ducusu in 2019. He was also the president of Dhaka University unit Chhatra Odhikar Parishad. Former Ducusu vice-president Nurul Haque Nur was one of the founders of the organisation.

Later, Akhter became the founding member of Gonotrantik Chhatra Shakti, where Nahid Islam, now an adviser to the interim government, served as general secretary.

Akhter was one of the organisers of the recent quota reform protests. Nagorik Committee spokesperson Sharmeen, a former student of the sculpture department at DU's fine arts faculty, was involved in Rastrochinta, a platform that hosts discussions on political reform, rule of law and constitutional rights, among others, and DU's Chhatra Federation.

Apart from Nasiruddin, Akhter, and Sharmeen, The Daily Star identified at least 26 committee members affiliated with different organisations.

The organisations include Quota Reform Movement, Chhatra Odhikar Parishad, Chhatra Union, Chhatra Dal, Chhatra Federation, Adivasi Chhatra Sangram Parishad, Rashtia Sangskar Andolan, Rastrochinta, Mayer Daak, and DU Debating Society.

Among them are Ariful Islam Adib, ex-president of the Central Chhatra Odhikar Parishad; Sarwar Tushar of Rastrochinta; Anik Roy, former general secretary of Chhatra Union; Sabhanaz Rashid Diya, public policy manager of Facebook in Bangladesh; Shrobona Shafique Dipti, a teacher at ULAB; Sanjida Rahman Tulee, coordinator of Mayer Daak; Alik Mree, a leader of Adivasi Chhatra Sangram Parishad; Tasnim Jara, a doctor and social media influencer; Pritom Das of Rastro Sangskar Andolan; Manzur Al Matin, a lawyer; Kaneta Ya Lam Lam, ex-Chhatra Dal leader; Salman Muqtadir, a social media influencer; Syed Hasan Imtiaz, former leader of Chhatra League DU unit, and two family members of two people killed during the recent quota reform protests.

BB to rescue problem banks

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One such bank is Global Islami Bank, whose Chairman Mohammad Nurul Amin told The Daily Star that they will meet with the BB governor today to seek liquidity support to repay the depositors' money.

The new National Bank chairman Abdul Awal Mintoo told The Daily Star in an interview recently that the BB has an obligation to provide support for three reasons: for the sake of the country's economy, for the sake of depositors and for the sake of customers who are involved in production.

Nine banks including six S Alam-controlled ones were facing a severe liquidity crisis for more than a year due to huge irregularities and scams but the central bank suspended the liquidity support for them after the ouster of the Awami League-led government.

On August 12, the central bank instructed all banks not to honour cheques worth more than Tk 1 crore of the nine banks.

The banks are National Bank, Padma Bank, ICB Islamic Bank, and six others in which the S Alam Group holds majority stakes: Islami Bank, First Security Islami, Social Islami, Union, Global Islami and Bangladesh

Commerce Bank.

A senior central bank official who is observing the restructured banks told The Daily Star that only Islami Bank was able to reduce its liquidity crisis among the six banks that were under S Alam Group's control.

The other five banks – Social Islami, Global Islami, Union, First Security Islami and Bangladesh Commerce Bank face a severe liquidity crisis, as per the central bank official.

Those five lenders will not be able to run their banking activities without liquidity support.

The rest of the restructured banks are National, Exim, United Commercial, Al Arafah Islami and IFIC. Of them, National and EXIM are in tight liquidity situations.

In yesterday's press conference, Mansur said that every depositor will get back Tk 2 lakh from the previous Tk 1 lakh against bank deposit insurance if any bank becomes bankrupt.

As much as Tk 70,000 crore has gone outside the banking sector and of them Tk 30,000 crore have been returned, he said.

Now, the cash withdrawal limit has been lifted but around 10 banks still have problems so their customers will have to be patient for a little longer.