



## Civil admin runs slow as top tier still jittery

BAHARAM KHAN and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The interim government is struggling to restore normalcy at the top and local administration despite being in power for more than seven weeks, leaving the implementation of government policies and service delivery in a wishy-washy state.

Secretary turnover accounts for the disorganised state of the civil administration, according to people informed with the discourse.

Of the 55 ministries and divisions, 34 have secretaries who were appointed during the Awami League's tenure and 15 under the current administration. Six ministries and divisions have no secretary.

The secretaries who were promoted during the AL era are uncertain about their future, so they are not running their ministries and divisions effectively and with an iron hand, The Daily Star has learnt from people familiar with the matter.

"A decision is needed on the fate of these individuals without further delay - if they are staying on, the chief adviser must come out and tell these people that you are on my team, so do your jobs sincerely," said a secretary who has recently been made officer on special duty.



Protesters come face to face with law enforcers during a sit-in in front of the chief adviser's residence in the capital yesterday afternoon. Law enforcers later used teargas to disperse them. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## AGE BAR FOR GOVT JOBS 7-hour sit-in withdrawn after govt assurance

STAR REPORT

After a seven-hour-long sit-in in front of the chief adviser's residence, protesters last night withdrew their programme on the government's assurance that a committee will review their demand for raising the age limit for government job seekers.

They announced the withdrawal to journalists around 9:00pm after speaking to ICT Adviser Nahid Islam and Sports Adviser Asif Mahmud.

Speaking to reporters, Rasel Al-Mahmud, one of the coordinators of 35 Prottashi Somonnoy Parishad, said, "We'll attend tomorrow's [today's] meeting with the committee to reiterate our demand. The committee is to submit a report, based on our discussion, within seven days."

The administration yesterday formed a two-member committee to review the possibility of extending the age limit for applying for government jobs, following the protests by hundreds of job seekers in SEE PAGE 6 COL 5



**"If the secretaries are not being told that they must work without fear, there will be no speed in the administration."**

Former secretary Badiur Rahman

On the other hand, the secretaries promoted by the interim government are not familiar with the key government processes yet, which is delaying them from getting a handle on their new roles, they said.

Negative information regarding the newly promoted and posted officials is being circulated by their batchmates, bringing down their morale.

Some retired officials are exerting pressure to be appointed as secretaries, creating fear among officials who are hoping to get promotion. The government has so far appointed six former officials as senior secretaries on contractual basis.

Many officials who felt they were deprived during the AL terms are also pushing for promotion and posting, adding to the chaos.

"It is right that the administration is experiencing a noticeable sluggishness," said AKM Abdul Awal Majumder, a former secretary and public administration expert.

An official from the Cabinet Division shared an example of bureaucratic latency: 200 vehicles purchased by the ministry of public administration for deputy commissioners (DCs) and upazila nirbahi officers have been ready for delivery for more than a month now but have yet to be allocated.

The vehicles are parked out in open fields, leaving them exposed to damages.

As is practice, the secretary committee on administrative development makes important decisions on creating or dissolving government job posts, revising rules and approving new regulations.

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## TEXTBOOK REVISION Dissolution of panel a concession to zealotry: TIB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) expressed deep concern yesterday over the interim government's compromise on policy decisions and said it set a dangerous precedent by bowing to self-interested radical threats.

In a press statement, TIB criticised the government's decision to cancel the coordination committee tasked with amending and revising textbooks under the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB).

They said this decision undermined the vision of a non-discriminatory and non-communal "New Bangladesh".

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## STATE REFORMS

# Govt will now talk to the parties first

### 6 commissions to start full-fledged work afterwards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a major shift in its plans, the interim government has decided to sit with the political parties first to discuss reforms before the six commissions commence their work in full swing.

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam revealed the information at a press briefing at the Foreign Service Academy in Dhaka yesterday, a day before the commissions were expected to start their work in full force.

He did not cite any reason behind the change in plan.

The advisory council will solicit the political parties for their opinions in the dialogue which will be held soon, Shafiqul said, without

**The commissions were expected to start working today and finish their jobs within the next three months**

specifying the time.

"The commissions started their work to some extent. They were expected to start their activities fully tomorrow [today]. But now they will start their work after the advisory council holds another round of

dialogue with the political parties," he said.

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus had sat with the political parties earlier towards the end of August, weeks after taking charge following the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League regime.

When a reporter wanted to know if the Awami League would be invited to the next dialogue, Shafiqul asked journalists to talk to

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## BUSINESS

### IMF reaffirms support for interim govt

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has reaffirmed its support for Bangladesh's interim government in overcoming the various economic challenges the country has been facing in recent times.

In a statement issued yesterday upon completion of its fact-finding mission's visit to Dhaka, the IMF said the country's financial sector vulnerabilities have become more pronounced.

STORY ON B1

## CYBER LAWS

# Cases over 'speech-based' offences to be scrapped

### Says law ministry; 5,818 cases filed with 8 tribunals until August

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to quickly withdraw cases related to "speech-based offences" filed under cyber laws.

Additionally, anyone currently in custody under such cases will be released immediately through legal procedures, the law ministry said in a media release yesterday.

As of August 2024, a total of 5,818 cases were ongoing with eight cyber tribunals throughout the country. These cases were filed under the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act-2006, the Digital Security Act (DSA)-2018, and the Cyber Security Act (CSA) 2023.

Among these, cases filed for expressing free speech digitally have been categorised as "speech-based offences", while hacking or other digital frauds were categorised as "computer-based offences", reads the release.

According to the press release, at present 1,340 cases are ongoing related to speech-based offences, of which 461 are under investigation by law enforcement agencies and 879 are under trial in the cyber tribunals.

Of the 1,340 total cases, 279 are under the ICT Act, 786 under DSA, and 275 under CSA. Also, the 879 pending cases will be withdrawn in coordination with the law ministry and home ministry.

The release added that the government plans to expedite the withdrawal of these cases.

Investigators will be asked to submit final reports quickly for the 461 cases that are under investigation, the release said.

# RMG worker shot dead during clash with law enforcers

### 30 hurt; 20 factories shut in Ashulia; workers blame owners of breaking promises; BGMEA seeks better security for RMG units



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A garment worker was shot dead and around 30 people were injured during a clash between protesting workers and law enforcers in Ashulia of Savar yesterday.

Kawsar Ahmed Khan, 26, was a sewing machine operator at Mango Tex factory.

Five workers were in hospitals with bullet wounds.

The clash broke out in front of the office of Mondol Group in Tongibari area on Baipail-Abdullahpur Road around noon, workers said.

They said a meeting was held yesterday morning between the owners of Mondol Group, and its workers, labour representatives, and law enforcers over workers' demands.

No agreement was reached and some of the workers gathered outside the factory. Later, employees of other factories joined them.

The agitated workers then vandalised five vehicles of the joint forces, compelling law enforcers to charge truncheons on them, witnesses said, adding that the law enforcers opened fire at one point.

Sumon, a worker of Natural Denims, said, "Everyone was working in our factory in the morning. When the workers of Mondol Group started protesting in front of their factory, our workers went there to

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