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Govt forms five new reform commissions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government on Sunday formed five new reform commissions to address key challenges and promote development, according to cabinet division summaries.

Each commission has been instructed to begin work immediately and submit a report to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus within 90 days.

The health commission, led by Prof AK Azad Khan, president of the Bangladesh Diabetic Society, includes 12 members.

It aims to ensure universal healthcare access and address systemic issues in the health sector.

The labour reform commission, chaired by Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed, executive director of the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies, has 10 members. It will focus on safeguarding workers' rights and promoting their welfare.

An 11-member media commission, headed by senior journalist Kamal Ahmed, will propose measures to improve media practices and ensure press freedom.

The local government reform commission, led by Tofail Ahmed, former public administration professor at Chittagong University, includes eight members.

It is tasked with strengthening and making local governance more accountable.

The women's affairs reform commission, chaired by Shireen Parveen Haque, founding member of Nari Pokkho, has 10 members.

It aims to enhance women's participation and empowerment at all levels of society.



The International Crimes Tribunal has shown arrested 13 high-profile individuals, including nine former ministers, in a case filed over crimes against humanity and genocide during the July uprising. The accused were brought to the court premises around 9:45am yesterday. They include former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's adviser Salman F Rahman, former law minister Anisul Haq, former social welfare minister Dipu Moni, former minister Shajahan Khan, Workers Party president Rashed Khan Menon and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal president Hasanul Haq Inu, and former state minister for ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

HC hearing on Adani power deal today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court will hear a writ petition today challenging the legality of the government's power purchase agreement with Adani Power (Jharkhand) Limited, signed on November 5, 2017.

The HC bench of Justice Farah Mahbub and Justice Debasish Roy Chowdhury fixed the date after petitioner Barrister Md Abdul Qaium sought an urgent hearing.

Barrister Qaium, a Supreme Court lawyer, filed the petition as public interest litigation on November 12, seeking a directive for the termination of the agreement between Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPPDB) and Adani (Jharkhand) Ltd if the latter refuses to renegotiate fairer terms.

He alleged the

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‘No political background check in police verification’

Recommends reform commission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Police Reform Commission has recommended discontinuing the practice of checking political affiliations during police verification, especially for job recruitments.

Safar Raj Hossain, the commission's chief, told this yesterday after meeting Home Affairs Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury at the ministry.

"Police verification is essential for government, semi-government, and bank jobs. However, current procedures, influenced by British-era practices, include questions about candidates' political identity and whether their relatives engage in politics or oppose the state," said Safar Raj.

He said the proposal has been made based on allegations that many candidates have been denied jobs in the past because their relatives were politically active but not aligned with the ruling party.

"This practice has deprived many qualified individuals of employment. We recommend abolishing such practices," he

added.

However, he said checks for criminal backgrounds, the authenticity of national identity cards and similar verification measures must continue for security purposes.

But cops should avoid causing harassment

RECOMMENDATIONS

» Harassment-Free Police Verification

» Uphold rights of detainees

» End political influence in police

» Reviewing salary to prevent corruption

or suffering to job candidates in name of verification.

REFORMS ON ARREST AND DETENTION

Addressing concerns over laws allowing arrests without warrants and remands, Safar Raj said the commission lacks authority to

make decisions on these issues, as they fall under the jurisdiction of the law ministry.

To address this, a joint secretary from the law ministry has been included in the commission.

"These issues have been litigated for years. A High Court directive, following a writ petition by Dr Kamal Hossain on behalf of BLAST, highlighted the need for safeguards, including notifying families upon arrest, conducting interrogations in visible glass rooms, and producing arrestees in court within 24 hours," he said.

Although the government appealed the directive, the Appellate Division upheld the HC's stance, requiring compliance with these safeguards.

TACKLING CORRUPTION, POLITICAL INTERFERENCE

The commission chief also stressed the need to address corruption within the police. "If corruption decreases, efficiency increases, and public trust in the law strengthens. We are reviewing the police salary structure as part of our recommendations," he said.

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WORKERS' UNREST
RMG factory set on fire, three hurt in Gazipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

At least three garment workers were injured, and a factory was set on fire during a clash between two groups of workers in Gazipur's Panishail area yesterday.

The clash ensued around 11:30am and continued for over four hours, turning the area to a battleground, said locals.

The factory of Amazon Knitwear Ltd was set on fire by some agitating workers, said fire fighters and police.

Md Sarwar Alam, superintendent of Industrial Police in Gazipur, said workers at Beximco Industrial Park started their agitation demanding unpaid salaries on Dhaka-Tangail highway in Gazipur's Kashimpur area around 7:00am for the fifth consecutive day, blocking the Chakraborty intersection.

As vehicular movement remain halted at the intersection, vehicles resorted to use alternative routes, said Rafiqul Islam, a sub-inspector of Gazipur Industrial Police.

A protester said they continued their demonstration as they are yet to receive any assurance from the authorities.

The workers were still blocking the intersection till last reported at 8:00pm yesterday.

Around 41,000 people work in garment and ceramic factories at Beximco Industrial Park, according to Industrial Police.

Amid the agitation of Beximco's workers, authorities of at least 20 other garment factories in the area, including Doreen Fashion Ltd, announced holiday fearing that the movement might flare up.

Earlier on Sunday, Doreen's factory reopened after a 16-day closure since November 1 following recent workers' unrest.

When its workers came to the factory yesterday morning, they were infuriated to see the closure notice again on the factory gate, and they later joined the agitation of Beximco's workers.

The protesters tried to bring in workers of other factories to strengthen their agitation, said police and locals.

As part of this efforts, some agitating workers went to Amazon Knitwear's factory, but their workers refused to join the protests, which triggered the clash.

At least three protesters were injured in the clash, said a senior officer of Gazipur Industrial Police, wishing anonymity.

Later at around 11:40am, the protesters set fire to the factory, he added.

On information, two firefighting units rushed to the spot and brought the blaze under control around 3:40pm, said Abdullah Arefin, deputy assistant director of Gazipur Fire Service.

The extent of damages could not be ascertained immediately, he added.

Beximco Industrial Park and the Doreen Fashion Ltd authorities could not be reached over phone for their comment.



No security threat surrounding Victory Day
Says home adviser

UNB, Dhaka

There are no possible threats to law and order during the upcoming Victory Day celebrations, said Home Affairs Adviser Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday.

Victory Day is for everyone and not just for any specific group, he said.

The adviser made the remarks following a security meeting at the ministry's conference room at the Secretariat ahead of the Victory Day.

"December 16 marks our glorious Victory Day. The meeting was convened to ensure that the day can be celebrated smoothly and without incident. We are confident that there will be no disruptions to the law and order situation," he said.

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People hang wet clothes right next to this electric transformer for drying. This puts people who use this path at risk of electrocution. The photo was taken in the Kawran Bazar Municipality Market recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN