



PUBLIC ADMIN REFORMS

Cluster system may be proposed for ministries

Commission likely to suggest reducing number of ministries, divs to 30 from 55

BAHARAM KHAN

The Public Administration Reform Commission is likely to recommend reducing the number of ministries and divisions to 30 from 55 to improve coordination and slash the government's operational cost.

It may also propose allowing political appointments for personal secretaries (PS) to the prime minister, ministers, the Speaker, and other senior policymakers in the government.

Led by Abdul Muyeed Chowdhury, the reform commission is deliberating whether to suggest the introduction of clusters of ministries and designating officials of certain cadres to a particular cluster.

Besides, proposals to divide the country into four administrative provinces and upgrading the standard of Bangladesh Civil Service exam questions are expected, said sources with knowledge of the matter.

POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATIONS

- ⌚ 50pc promotions to DS reserved for non-admin cadres
- ⌚ Personal secretaries of high-ups to be political appointees
- ⌚ Country may have four administrative provinces
- ⌚ Ministries could be grouped in 5 or 6 clusters
- ⌚ Govt employees' associations may have restrictions

The commission is expected to submit its recommendations on January 31 with a view to building a pro-people, accountable, skilled, and neutral public administration.

CLUSTER SYSTEM

The reform commission is planning to recommend five or six clusters of ministries and divisions where officers of certain cadres would be working, said the sources.

For example, a cluster focused on food security may include ministries like agriculture, food, environment, fisheries and livestock, and disaster management.

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2018 NATIONAL POLLS
ACC to probe roles of Hasina, ROs, chiefs of police, Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has decided to probe the roles of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, chiefs of police and Rab, returning officers, and others in the December 30, 2018, national polls.

During a press briefing yesterday, ACC Director General (prevention) Akhtar Hossain said allegations of various irregularities, such as ballot box stuffing the night before the election, voter fraud, falsely reporting voter turnout above 90 percent at certain centres, illegal financial transactions, and abuse of power to ensure the victory of certain candidates, have been reported by various media and filed with the ACC.

A five-member team has been formed to probe these allegations, said Akhtar, adding that the team would analyse videos, reports from local and international media, election result sheets, and other necessary materials to prepare and submit their findings.

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Palestinians set up a new tent camp in Gaza City yesterday to shelter people expected to return to northern Gaza after being displaced to the south by Israel's order.



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday met UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on the sidelines of World Economic Forum (WEF) summit in Davos, Switzerland.

PHOTO: PID

Help bring back laundered money
Yunus urges global leaders at World Economic Forum

UNB, Davos

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday called on Bangladesh's international allies to help in the recovery of substantial amounts of stolen money.

Prof Yunus made the call during his meetings with world leaders on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) summit in Davos, Switzerland.

The chief adviser met Antonio Guterres, UN secretary general; Wolfgang Schmidt, head of the Federal Chancellery and Federal Minister for Special Tasks, Federal Chancellery of Germany; King Philippe of Belgium; Paetongtarn Shinawatra, prime minister of Thailand; Ignazio Cassis, federal councillor, Federal Department for Foreign Affairs, Switzerland; and Felix Tshisekedi, Congo's president; among others.

The chief adviser urged the global leaders to send top experts, think tanks, journalists, and international

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Draft cyber ordinance gets a scrubbing

9 provisions scrapped; once effective, most cases under DSA, CSA to be dismissed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

When the new cyber protection law comes into effect, a majority of the cases filed under its predecessors -- Digital Security Act and Cyber Security Act -- will automatically be dismissed.

Defamation, cyberbullying, and hurting of religious sentiments, among others, will be decriminalised, said the ICT Division secretary and the division's policy adviser at a press conference held at the ICT Tower yesterday while unveiling the amended version of the

draft Cyber Protection Ordinance.

On December 26, 2024, the cabinet had approved the draft, but the draft drew flak from different quarters as it retained much of the controversial provisions of its predecessors.

At the press conference, Secretary Shish Haider Chowdhury said the government has scrapped nine provisions in the draft Cyber Protection Ordinance that were remnants of the DSA and the CSA.

These provisions criminalised, among

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Make right to vote a fundamental right
Constitution reform body proposes

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Constitutional Reform Commission proposes voting to be recognised as a fundamental right, so that people can seek legal remedies if it is violated.

Members of the commission say that this constitutional recognition will allow people to go to courts if they cannot exercise their voting rights.

This change will also help rid the country of elections in which many people cannot cast their votes and compel the Election Commission to arrange free and fair elections.

The reform commission proposes expanding the fundamental rights to include food, shelter, vote, and internet.

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NBR revises down VAT, SD on 9 items

| | BEFORE | AFTER | REVISED |
|----------------------------|--------|-------|---------|
| Mobile phone use | 20% | 23% | 20% |
| Internet | 0% | 10% | 0% |
| Restaurant | 5% | 15% | 5% |
| Non-AC hotel | 7.5% | 15% | 10% |
| Auto-workshop | 10% | 15% | 10% |
| Branded clothing store | 7.5% | 15% | 10% |
| Non-branded clothing store | 7.5% | 15% | 7.5% |
| Sweetmeat | 7.5% | 15% | 10% |
| Trade VAT on medicine | 2.4% | 3% | 2.4% |

SOURCE: NBR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Board of Revenue yesterday revised down the value added tax and supplementary duty (SD) on nine goods and services, including mobile phone usage, internet services and medicine.

The revision comes nearly two weeks after the government hiked the rates of about 100 goods and services, drawing criticism that the move would stoke inflation, which has remained over 9 percent since March 2023.

VAT on clothes, restaurants, sweets, non-AC hotels and motor workshops has been slashed, said the NBR in a press release.

The NBR restored SD on mobile phone usage to 20 percent from 23 percent and withdrew the 10 percent SD on broadband internet services.

Trade VAT on medicine has been rolled back to the previous rate of 2.4 percent, down from 3 percent, while VAT on restaurants has been

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