



# Bureaucracy falters without clear direction

BAHARAM KHAN

More than seven months have passed since the interim government took charge, yet the civil service is steeped in a sense of inertia.

While expectations were high for dynamic governance under this government, the bureaucracy is badly in need of vital changes that remain stalled.

Career civil servants say that a gap has grown between them and Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus over the months, leaving the administration adrift.

They say that retirees who are leading crucial ministries on contract have little accountability or motivation for change, as they do not have incentives such as promotions. Also, they have long been out of service. As a result, critical reforms that require only administrative directives are in limbo.

Top civil servants, however, either declined to comment on the matter or denied allegations of a gap.

Cabinet Secretary Sheikh Abdur Rashid, who is the first in the country's history to hold the post on a contract basis, dismissed allegations of a gap between the administration and the chief adviser.

"This is not true; this is not a fact. There is no such thing



A SHADOW OF ITS FORMER SELF ... The state of the Shibsra river in Khulna's Paikgachha continues to deteriorate. Sedimentation and obstruction to upstream flow have been choking the once-mighty waterway. Related story on page 12.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

**"The kind of leadership required in the post-uprising period is missing among many top officials. Young officers are left without proper guidance, and in such a situation, it is natural that they will not take the initiative for reforms."**

AKM Abdul Awal Mazumder, former secretary

as isolation. Everyone maintains professional relationships with each other," he told The Daily Star last night.

This correspondent spoke to a dozen bureaucrats, ranging from deputy secretary to secretary in five ministries, who acknowledged that routine changes in the civil service are stuck.

They pointed out that there are no representatives from the civil administration in the chief adviser's personal wing.

As a result, regular bureaucrats feel isolated and without effective leadership from the chief adviser. Many of them have adopted a passive approach, merely counting down until the next elected government takes over.

Senior bureaucrats argue that certain internal reforms should have already been carried out, as they require only administrative orders rather than major policy overhauls.

For example, an additional secretary of the Cabinet Division said, the advisory council instructed the ministry to conduct a necessary review regarding quotas on January 30. But no proposal on the review has been

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## Tarique warns of extremists, fascists waiting to pounce

**Says secularism, democracy will be priority of BNP**

UNB, Dhaka

Warning that extremists and fascists could again bury democracy in Bangladesh, BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday said his party, along with other democratic parties, will prioritise

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# 970 killed in Gaza in 48 hours

Shows health ministry data as Israel continues to pound enclave amid global outrage

### AGENCIES

At least 970 Gazans have been killed in the span of 48 hours, according to Gaza's health ministry, as Israel continued its renewed bombardment of the territory for a second day, despite a chorus of calls from foreign governments to uphold a fragile January ceasefire.

Long lines of fleeing civilians filled the roads of the tiny, war-ravaged Palestinian territory as the Israeli army yesterday dropped leaflets in the northern and southern Gaza Strip, ordering residents to evacuate their homes, warning they were in "dangerous combat zones".

The war death toll, updated daily by the

- At least 183 children among the dead
- Thousands flee after new evacuation order
- Hamas says 'not closed the door' on talks

health ministry in the Hamas-run territory, showed an increase of 970 in the span of 48 hours, though AFP could not confirm how many of them were recorded as casualties from the strikes. The ministry said 183 children were among the dead.

As of yesterday, the ministry reported a death toll of 49,547 since Israel launched its offensive in Gaza on October 7, 2023. Just a day earlier, on Tuesday, the toll stood at 48,577.

Israel and Hamas accuse each other of breaching the truce, which had offered a respite for Gaza's 2.3 million residents after 17

PHOTO ON PAGE 7

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## Tension in camps after arrest of ARSA chief

MOKAMMEL SHUVO and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

A sense of unease prevails in the Rohingya camps following the arrest of ARSA Commander-in-Chief Ataullah Abu Ammar Jununi.

Many Rohingyas, especially those who have spoken out against the armed group, are worried about possible violence, while law enforcement agencies have intensified security measures to prevent any untoward incidents.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, John Quinley, director of Fortify Rights, said, "Bangladesh authorities must ensure Rohingyas who speak out against ARSA crimes are not targeted. They must make it clear that targeting dissent is unacceptable."

"Many Rohingyas are at risk and need protection. Bangladesh authorities must work with UNHCR to provide safety."

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