

Civil servant Tabassum fired

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has dismissed admin officer Tapasi Tabassum Urmi for making objectionable remarks about the head of government, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, and the interim government on social media.

A gazette notification, signed by Public Administration Ministry Senior Secretary Mokhles Ur Rahman, yesterday dismissed her from service in a departmental case.

On October 6 last year, she was made an Officer on Special Duty (OSD).

The following day, the ministry issued a notification suspending her.

According to the notification issued yesterday, she was found guilty in a departmental case under Rule 3(b) of the Government Servants (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 2018, for misconduct, leading to her dismissal.

At the time of her Facebook post, Tapasi was serving as assistant commissioner at the office of the deputy commissioner of Lalmonirhat.

According to the notification, Tapasi was served with two show-cause notices, to which she submitted written replies. However, she said it would not be possible for her to attend hearings in person.

As per service rules, the decision to sack Tapasi from service was referred to the Public Service Commission (PSC) by the public administration ministry for its opinion. The PSC concurred with the decision, following which the dismissal order was issued with the approval of the president.

When asked for comments, an officer of the ministry's discipline wing told The Daily Star that since Tapasi was serving on probation, such a lengthy process was not required to impose punishment. The matter could have been settled at the level of the public administration ministry secretary. Even so, the government followed all procedures at every stage to implement the punishment in her case.

Help counter fake news, uphold ethics

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project officer, Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists Section, UNESCO, met him at his official residence, Jamuna.

The UNESCO officials called on Yunus ahead of the launch of a report titled 'An Assessment of Bangladesh's Media Landscape: Focusing on Free, Independent and Pluralistic Media', jointly prepared by UNDP and UNESCO.

"We are really looking forward to the report," Yunus said, according to the Chief Adviser's Press Wing.

"Our main problem is disinformation, fake news Some of this disinformation is spread by people living outside; some local people are involved. It's a continuous bombardment," he said.

The statement said the regular media are also a source of much disinformation alongside digital platforms. The chief adviser sought a UN role in the fight against it and said, "You just don't talk to the government; you also talk to media."

He said that independent regulation is necessary, adding that if a media outlet continues to spread disinformation, it should be reminded that it is not trustworthy.

"You are the UN. Your words are very important We need your support," he said.

UNESCO Representative Vize said the report, scheduled to be released today, would highlight the issue of self-regulation, among other things, the Chief Adviser's Press Wing said in a statement.

"The report is about what is working, what is not working, and the assessment holds important recommendations aligned with international standards. There would be a need to train officials, law enforcers, and the judiciary to better align their practices with this standard," she said.

Senior Project Officer Benchelah said the report would also make some recommendations about journalists' working conditions, which is a global concern, and the safety of female journalists in newsrooms.

Key government action can have a huge influence in these matters, he said.

The report has been prepared under the framework of UNDP's Strengthening Institutions, Policies and Services project and in alignment with UNESCO's mandate to promote freedom of expression and media development, said the officials.

ON THIS DAY LAST YEAR



Thousands of university students gathered at Dhaka's Shahbagh intersection on July 3, 2024, for a second straight day, protesting the reinstatement of the quota system in government recruitment.

PHOTO: FILE/ANISUR RAHMAN

Anti-quota protests spill beyond campuses

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is expected tomorrow. If the quota system is reinstated, we will escalate our movement."

Elsewhere in the capital, students of Jagannath University held a procession from their campus to the Taantibazar intersection, blocking the road towards Jatrabari and halting incoming vehicles for about an hour.

At Jahangirnagar University, several hundred students marched from the Central Library to the Dhaka-Aricha highway, blocking it at around 3:15pm. The blockade lasted until they were persuaded to withdraw by university authorities and the police.

Protests were not confined to Dhaka. In Chattogram, students of Chittagong University began demonstrating at their Shaheed Minar at 11:00am before marching to the main gate. There, they blocked the Chattogram-Khagrachhari highway for around 40 minutes. Similar demonstrations occurred across the country: Students of Barisal University blocked the Barisal-Kuakata highway, bringing passenger and cargo vehicles to a standstill. In Mymensingh, students of Bangladesh Agricultural

University stopped train services along the Dhaka-Mymensingh route for over an hour. In Rangpur, students of Begum Rokeya University barricaded the Dhaka-Rangpur highway, joining the nationwide chorus against what they deemed a discriminatory recruitment system. In Rajshahi, protests continued for the third day at the University of Rajshahi.

Across campuses, protesters issued chants such as "Atharor hathiyar, gorje uthho arekbar," "Kota bebostha nipat jak, medhabira mukti pak," and "Medhabider kanna, ar na, ar na," reflecting their demand for a merit-based system and their frustration with the perceived injustice of reinstating quotas.

Meanwhile, the student platform Muktijoddha Quota Reinstatement Movement held a rally in support of the quota system at Shahbagh, before marching to the Raju Memorial Sculpture at DU. They demanded the enforcement of the High Court verdict and the issuance of a new circular reflecting it. Their seven-point demand included preserving the quotas for the descendants of freedom fighters.

In Rajshahi, members of Muktijoddha

Sontan O Projonmo formed a human chain at Rajshahi University, condemning what they called disrespectful remarks about the Liberation War and families of freedom fighters. Their placards read: "Those who made the country independent - why should they be insulted?" and "Quota system does not create discrimination, it ensures equality."

Adding to the political resonance of the protests, GM Quader, then opposition leader and chairman of the Jatiya Party, sharply criticised the reinstatement of the quota system during his closing speech in the 2024-25 national budget session. He remarked, "Creating a permanent and disproportionate quota in the name of the spirit of the Liberation War destroys the original objective of our independence - to build a society based on justice and free from discrimination."

As the day drew to a close, it became clear that the movement was beginning to extend beyond campus boundaries, with signs that it could soon evolve into a broader, nationwide mobilisation. With a crucial court verdict expected the next day, the stage was set for the agitation to enter a new phase.

Israel intercepts missile launched from Yemen

REUTERS

Israel's Defence Minister Israel Katz vowed to retaliate against Iran-aligned Houthis after his country's military intercepted a missile launched from Yemen toward Israeli territory.

"The fate of Yemen is the same as that of Tehran," Katz said in a statement, referring to last month's 12-day conflict during which Israel targeted Iran's nuclear and missile programmes.

"After striking the head of the snake in Tehran, we will also strike the Houthis in Yemen. Whoever raises a hand against Israel - that hand will be cut off," the statement said.

Houthi claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement released late on Tuesday.

Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Saree said the group carried out four operations targeting an airport and other "sensitive" Israeli targets.

Israel has threatened Yemen's Houthi movement - which has been attacking Israel in what it says is solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza - with a naval and air blockade if its attacks on Israel persist.

Since the start of Israel's offensive in Gaza in October 2023, the Houthis, who control most of Yemen, have been firing at Israel and at shipping in the Red Sea, disrupting global trade.

Four top NBR officials

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officials under the banner of the NBR Reform Unity Council, which observed a countrywide complete shutdown on June 28 and 29 to press home several demands, disrupting exports and imports.

Their demands included the removal of the NBR chairman, the inclusion of their representatives in an NBR formed panel to recommend tax reform measures and an end to what they termed "vengeful transfers".

Meanwhile, the Anti-Corruption Commission has launched investigations into 11 NBR officials over corruption allegations in two phases. Among them are two NBR members and Hasan Muhammad Tarek Rikabdar, president of the NBR Reform Unity Council.

The protest was initially triggered by a government ordinance issued on May 12 that dissolved the NBR and the Internal Resources Division.

In their place, the Revenue Policy Division and the Revenue Management Division were created.

The demonstration peaked on June 28 and 29, when all customs houses, VAT offices and income tax offices across the country were shut down except for international passenger services at airports.

In response, the government declared customs and bond commissionerates as essential services and warned of tough action.

The protesting officials called off the strike on the evening of June 29 amid pressure from the government and the business community.

Hasina jailed for 6 months

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In the audio clip, Hasina is allegedly heard telling former Gobindaganj upazila chairman Shakil Akanda Bulbul, "I have had 227 cases filed against me, so I have received a licence to kill 227 people."

The tribunal said such a comment from a former prime minister and leader of a major political party could intimidate victims, investigators, prosecutors, judges, and staff of the tribunal and witnesses of cases of crimes against humanity committed during last year's July uprising.

The former premier is facing at least three cases at the ICT-1. She and her two top aides have already been charged with five counts of crimes against humanity for murder, attempted murder, torture, and use of lethal weapons, superior command responsibility, among others.

"This is a clear threat, and it prejudices the case," the tribunal noted in its order.

During the hearing, Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam told the tribunal that the audio clip was forensically examined and authenticated. The conversation between Hasina and Shakil lasted about 40 minutes.

Women's football scales new height

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second match ensured that Bangladesh will go through as the lone qualifier from the group as they would edge Myanmar on head-to-head criteria even if they lose their last match against Turkmenistan on Saturday and the hosts beat Bahrain.

On the ranking parameter only, it was supposed to be a battle between David and Goliath as Bangladesh are currently ranked 128th while Myanmar, the top ranked side of the group, stand way above on 55th.

However, FIFA rankings could often be very deceptive, which Bangladesh have proved with their recent draws against Indonesia and Jordan in two FIFA friendlies.

But the 7-0 routing of 72-ranked Bahrain in the opening match of the group on Sunday gave Peter Butler's charges the confidence to attain a much bigger and more significant victory against the hosts, who were much more physical, egged on by a partisan crowd yesterday afternoon.

Butler's tactics were perfectly executed by the team, unchanged from the previous match, as Bangladesh played an impressive brand of attacking football, with three centre-backs marshalling a high-line defence.

While Bangladesh were the more dominant side from the get-go, the hosts had found a way past the

At one stage of the hearing, the audio call recording featuring Hasina was played in the court.

Justice Shofiul Alam Mahmood asked whether the accused said anything specifically targeting tribunal officials?

In response, Tajul said there were three kinds of threats evident in the conversation: against the complainants of July's uprising cases; against investigators of the tribunal; and against witnesses of cases.

Investigators told the tribunal that the call was recorded and circulated via a Facebook group called "A-Team," which was reportedly used by Hasina to coordinate with leaders at the grassroots level. One of the group admins allegedly sent the audio clip to a local journalist in Gaibandha via WhatsApp, leading to its eventual publication in the media.

Tajul said the source, content, participants, and phone numbers involved in the call were all verified, and the accused never denied the authenticity of the conversation.

During the hearing, state-appointed defence counsel Md Amir Hossain argued that the allegations were "unfounded".

"If experts conducted a forensic

test of the audio clip, they must come before the court and confirm that they signed and authenticated the report. Otherwise, how can we be sure of its authenticity?" he said.

The tribunal then heard submissions from senior High Court lawyer AY Masihuzzama, who said, "If someone is found prejudicing the administration of justice, it is your lordship who will decide what action to take."

In his final remarks, tribunal Chairman Justice Golam Mortuza said, "If the words of the accused create fear among victims, witnesses, prosecutors, or judges, especially when the accused is a former prime minister and leader of a major party, it qualifies as a clear threat and prejudice the cases."

He then passed the order, sentencing Hasina and Shakil.

After the verdict, lawyer Amir Hossain told journalists, "I'm not satisfied with the sentence and will take the next course of action after getting the order copy."

On April 30, the prosecution brought the matter before the tribunal, describing the conversation as an attempt to intimidate victims and witnesses in the ongoing trials.

to dominate age-group football in South Asia. BFF's Talent Hunt and the Bangamata Gold Cup proved fruitful as talented footballers started to come through from different pockets of the country, Kalshindur in Mymensingh a prime example.

Once the South Asian dominance was confirmed, the young Bangladeshi girls started making waves in age-level Asian women's football, making it to the final eight twice with Monika Chakma and Maria Manda, two of the mainstays of this team - showcasing the full repertoire of their skills at a very early stage.

With consecutive SAFF titles in 2022 and 2024 in the bag, Bangladesh, coached by Peter Butler, turned their focus to the continental level, determined to break into the top Asian bracket at the senior level, and they have done that with a show of great authority and conviction.

The Asian Cup berth not only gives Bangladesh an opportunity to rub shoulders against the top II teams of the continent, it also opens up their path to the qualifiers for the Women's World Cup in 2027 and the Los Angeles Olympics the following year.

Those campaigns will be a big step-up for Butler's charges and they would need to pull up their socks and start working again, but for now, it's time for Ritu Porna and Co to celebrate.

Parties differ on how to appoint chief adviser

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duration: the government's Constitutional Reform Commission suggested 90 days, while the Electoral Reform Commission recommended 120 days.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Riaz said, "We have kept all proposals on the table. The commission does not wish to push any single idea, but rather seeks a durable, organic solution through consensus."

According to the 13th amendment, the immediate past chief justice should serve as chief adviser. If he or she is unavailable or unwilling, the president may select from among former chief justices. In case none of them are available, the chief adviser is supposed to be picked from retired Appellate Division judges. If all options are exhausted, the president may, in consultation with major parties, appoint a qualified citizen, or, as a last resort, assume the role himself.

The caretaker government system was introduced after the fall of the Ershad regime in 1990. It became a permanent feature following Awami League led protests in 1996 and was used until 2007-08, when a military-backed caretaker government took power. Then president Iajuddin Ahmed controversially served as chief adviser from October 2006 to January 2007.

In 2011, the Awami League abolished the system through the 15th amendment, despite opposition calls to retain it.

In December last year, the High Court struck down part of the amendment that had scrapped the non-partisan caretaker government system.

BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said that all parties had broadly agreed on restoring the system and that the BNP had proposed reforms to avoid past controversies.

"Specifically, the BNP does not support judicial figures being appointed as chief advisers and instead wants a new, inclusive mechanism to be developed with political consensus," he said.

The BNP proposed limiting the caretaker government's tenure to 90 days, with a one-month extension in emergencies such as Act of God. It opposed including local government elections under the interim administration, arguing they would require too much time.

NCP Joint Convener Javed Rasin said the party proposed forming an II member All-Party Parliamentary Committee, with each party nominating three candidates. A candidate with an 8-3 majority would be appointed chief adviser.

"If consensus fails, the matter would go to an upper house formed through proportional representation, which could use instant run-off voting to select a chief adviser from among the proposed names," he said.

Rasin stressed that the judiciary should not be involved in the process. "Bangladesh's past experience shows that transitions often lead to violent confrontations. To prevent this, we

proposed a democratic mechanism," he said.

Jamaat Nayeb-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher proposed that the immediate past chief justice serve as chief adviser. If no retired chief justice is available, the next most senior retired justice could be considered. If no consensus is reached, the president should appoint a mutually agreed-upon individual in consultation with parliamentary parties, as was done in the appointment of Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed in 1991.

Taher rejected the proposal that the president lead the caretaker government in the absence of consensus, warning it could trigger a repeat of a past crisis. Jamaat also proposed holding both national and local government elections under the caretaker government and supported a four-month term for the interim government, extendable by two months if needed.

Ali Riaz hoped that a consensus on these issues could be reached "very soon". And with the cooperation of the political parties, the commission would be able to prepare the July Charter, a document that will outline reforms agreed upon by them, within this month, he said.

The political parties will sign the charter, and whoever comes to power, the future government will be bound to carry on the reforms.

'HIGHEST SUPPORT'
While talking about a perception that the BNP was not agreeing with the majority of reform proposals, Salahuddin said the party has so far extended the highest level of cooperation in the efforts to build a national consensus.

"We have agreed to most of the proposals. If we had to agree to 100 percent of the proposals, then there would be no need for discussion at all," he said.

The party has agreed to 46 out of 47 recommendations made by the Anti-Corruption Commission Reform Commission, 127 out of 208 recommendations made by the Administrative Reform Commission, he said.

Salahuddin also said that the BNP directly agreed to 62 of the Judicial Reform Commission's 89 recommendations. Of the 243 recommendations made by the Electoral Reform Commission, the BNP agreed to more than 140.

The BNP leader said his party agreed that opposition MPs will chair at least four key parliamentary standing committees, and another proposal to allow MPs to vote against party lines, except on no-confidence motions and money bills.

Regarding the chief justice's appointment process, parties have agreed that the president should appoint the chief justice from among the two most senior judges of the Appellate Division.

Salahuddin said the BNP also agreed to a proposal to slap a 10-year cap on any person to serve as prime minister in their lifetime.