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Govt to pursue bold, responsible foreign policy

Says foreign affairs minister

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will pursue a bold and responsible foreign policy while maintaining good relations with all countries and fully protecting national interests, said Foreign Minister Dr Khalilur Rahman yesterday.

"The guiding principle of our foreign policy is 'Bangladesh First'. We will conduct foreign affairs by fully protecting our national interests," he told journalists at the state guest house Padma after a meeting with Nepalese Foreign Minister Bala Nanda Sharma.

He said the BNP government's foreign policy would be based on sovereign equality, mutual respect, non-interference in internal affairs, national dignity and mutual benefit.

Khalilur, who served as National Security Adviser during the interim government, said the previous

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Prime Minister Tarique Rahman pays tribute to the martyrs of the Liberation War at the National Memorial in Savar yesterday.

Saleh appointed as press secretary to prime minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abu Abdullah M Saleh has been appointed as the press secretary to Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, with the status of a secretary.



At the same time, Atiqur Rahman Ruman has been appointed as the additional press secretary, Md Mehedul Islam private secretary-2, and Abdur Rahman Sani, assistant private secretary-2.

The Ministry of Public Administration issued four separate notifications regarding the contractual appointment yesterday.

According to the notifications, signed by the ministry's Deputy Secretary Mohammad Nur-e-Alam, their appointment will take effect from the date they join.

The BNP formed the government for a fourth time after 20 years, winning more than two-thirds of the seats in the 13th national parliamentary election. On February 17, Tarique and other members of his cabinet took oath.

PHOTO: PTI

Ducusu's gains marred by some leaders' excesses

MAHATHIR MOHAMMED

In its first four months at the helm of Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducusu), the Islami Chhatra Shibir-backed panel took a number of initiatives for the welfare of Dhaka University students, but some of its leaders faced criticism for their excesses on the campus.

With its own budget, the Ducusu organised seminars and workshops on career development, research and skill development. It arranged legal support for 119 students over cyber harassment and disputes since September last year, according to Ducusu's four-monthly report published last month.



Assault on anyone -- be it a teacher or a destitute person -- is a crime, which is not expected from Ducusu leaders... They cannot assault or harass anyone over ideological differences.

MUSTAQ HOSSAIN, Former Ducusu general secretary

Ducusu leaders persuaded the university authorities to allocate Tk 5.5 crore for the renovation of old dormitories considered vulnerable to earthquakes and another Tk 50 lakh for the facelift of the DU central mosque.

They also played a key role in fulfilling the longstanding demand for evening bus service for nonresident students and pushed for introducing an online subscription system at the central library to boost its resources.

These positive steps were marred by the actions of some Ducusu leaders, who drew flak for their involvement

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Dhaka, Ctg city polls likely after Eid

LGD writes to EC to prioritise city corporation elections

DIPAN NANDY and AHMED DEEPTO

With the 13th parliamentary election now over, the Election Commission (EC) has begun preparations for elections to three major metropolitan local government bodies.

The Local Government Division (LGD) has formally requested the EC to take necessary steps to organise polls for Dhaka North City Corporation, Dhaka South City Corporation and Chattogram City Corporation. Following the request, the EC has initiated preliminary preparations, with elections expected after Eid-ul-Fitr. Government officials have also indicated that local elections will be prioritised.

The secretary of the Local Government Division sent two separate letters to the EC in the last week of January.

The letters stated, "The first meeting of DSCC was held on June 2, 2020. Accordingly, its five-year tenure ended on June 1, 2025. Meanwhile, the first meeting of DNCC was held on June 3, 2020, and its term expired on June 2, 2025. In addition, the first meeting



AT A GLANCE

- DNCC, DSCC terms expired in June 2025
- CCC term ends Feb 22 this year
- Local bodies largely run by administrators after uprising
- Service seekers suffer due to absence of elected reps

of Chattogram City Corporation took place on February 23, 2021. Under the law, its tenure ends on February 22, this year."

The letters added that under the Local Government (City Corporation) Act, elections must legally be held within 180 days prior

to the expiry of a corporation's term.

Since the fall of the Awami League government following the July mass uprising on August 5, 2024, many local government institutions have remained without elected representatives. Except for union parishads, elected representatives of 12 city corporations, all 330 municipalities, 61 zilla parishad chairmen, 493 out of 495 upazila parishad chairmen, and 988 vice-chairmen and women vice-chairmen of upazila parishads were removed as many went into hiding.

Following a court order, Shahadat Hossain, who finished second in the election, assumed office as mayor of Chattogram City Corporation.

The remaining bodies are still vacant. Most union parishad chairmen and members are also in hiding. As a result, nearly all local government institutions are currently being run by administrators.

Due to the absence of public representatives in these local government agencies, people have been living in extreme suffering for the last one and a half years. For

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'Hadi received death threats repeatedly'

ICT-2 accepts Oct 6 statement of slain Inqilab Moncho spokesperson

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A few months before his death, Sharif Osman Hadi told the investigation officer in a crimes against humanity case that he had been receiving repeated death threats.

He warned that without swift justice, "future mass killings by Awami men would be unimaginable".

Hadi gave the statement on October 6 last year as a prosecution witness in the case against Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader and six other party leaders and affiliates.

Yesterday, the International Crimes Tribunal 2 accepted his statement as formal testimony

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July charter's legality challenged at HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A petition was filed with the High Court yesterday challenging the legality of the July charter.

Supreme Court lawyer Md Eunus Ali Akond submitted the petition.

Akond said the constitution contains no provision for a charter of this nature, particularly its proposals for a referendum and a 100-member upper house in parliament.

He said the HC could hold a hearing on the petition next week.

Jamaat-e-Islami lawyer Mohammad Shishir Manir said they will place arguments before the HC opposing both the petition.

Restore civic liberties, freedom of expression

PEN Bangladesh urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

PEN Bangladesh has congratulated the newly elected government on receiving an overwhelming mandate to lead the country at a critical stage in its democratic transition.

In a statement issued on February 16, PEN Bangladesh President Dr Shamsad Mortuza and Secretary Jahanara Parveen said the strong public endorsement carries both legitimacy and responsibility to revitalise democratic institutions, restore public trust, and rebalance authority and constitutional rights.

PEN Bangladesh -- the national chapter of PEN International -- urged the government to prioritise restoring civic freedoms, particularly the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression under Article 39 of the Constitution.

It called for the immediate release of writers, journalists, and activists detained solely for peaceful expression; an independent and transparent review of alleged civil rights violations; reform of repressive legal provisions that criminalise speech under broad or vague clauses; and institutional safeguards to protect media independence, artistic freedom, and digital rights.



US Ambassador to Bangladesh Brent Christensen visited the SM Sultan Art Conservation Project at Bengal Shilpalay in the capital yesterday. He was received by Bengal Foundation Chair Abul Khair and other trustees, and toured the foundation's exhibition and conservation facilities.

PHOTO: COURTESY

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