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## PM reaffirms women-only bus service in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman has reaffirmed the government's commitment to launching a dedicated bus service for women in Dhaka within 180 days of assuming power, as part of its election pledges.

The PM met with Prof Dr M Shamsul Hoque of the Civil Engineering Department at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology yesterday morning to seek advice to this end, the prime minister's press wing said.

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Hands marked with serial numbers, these women wait in line to buy essentials from a TCB truck at subsidised prices in the Ring Road area of the capital. TCB employees wrote the numbers on their hands to maintain order in the queue. *Inset*, people began assembling around 8:00am and waited until 12:00pm, when the truck arrived, hoping to secure a Tk 590 packet containing lentils, sugar, chickpeas, soyabean oil and dates. Only 400 such packets were available.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



## Govt offers deputy speaker post to the opposition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has offered the post of deputy speaker to the opposition ahead of the first sitting of the newly elected parliament, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed said yesterday.

"We respect the July National Charter and want to begin implementing the political understanding reached through consensus. We have agreed that two deputy speaker posts will be created. One of them will be nominated or elected from the opposition. We are offering that now," he said while briefing reporters after meeting with the prime minister at the secretariat.

Salahuddin said the offer was made as a gesture of goodwill in line with the July charter.

Asked about a reported petition seeking to bar the president from delivering the inaugural address on the first day of the session, he said he had no knowledge of such a petition.

"We have said that for freedom of speech and liberty we have given our lives. People can speak," he added.

However, he said the constitution, established practice and tradition still require the president to deliver the address on the first day of the first session of a new parliament and at the beginning of the parliamentary year.

If any future constitutional amendment changes the provision, it could be considered then.

On constitutional reform, Salahuddin said members

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## INTERNATIONAL CRIMES TRIBUNAL

### 'It felt like I was inside a grave'

Disappearance victim narrates harrowing details at ICT-1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Iqbal Chowdhury, a victim of enforced disappearance, yesterday described the trauma and despair he endured while allegedly being held in a cell of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence.

"I was terrified... I kept crying, I kept praying to Allah. It felt like I was inside a living grave," Iqbal, a former teacher turned businessman, told the International Crimes Tribunal-1 while narrating his ordeal.

He testified as the fourth prosecution witness in a crimes against humanity case against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and 12 others over the secret detention and torture of at least 24 people at the JIC between 2016 and August 2024.

According to his testimony, he was targeted for his critical social media posts on the 2009 BDR massacre, the Shapla Chattar killings, former BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia's eviction from her residence, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings during the then Awami League government's tenure.

Iqbal said that on May 7, 2018, plainclothes men identifying themselves as law enforcers picked him up from his Mohammadpur residence without disclosing details. He was taken at gunpoint in a white microbus with black glass, blindfolded and handcuffed, and threatened with "crossfire" before being confined in a

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### 'Hanif warned I would not return alive'

Student leader Mahin tells ICT-2

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A student coordinator of the July uprising yesterday told the International Crimes Tribunal-2 that a senior Awami League leader had threatened his life, warning his family that he might not return alive if he refused to withdraw from the movement.

Testifying as the fifth prosecution witness in a crimes against humanity case against Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader and six others, Abu Sayed Bin Mahin Sarkar said AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif phoned his father on July 18, 2024, and issued the threat.

"Hanif told my father that if I did not step away from the movement, he might not get me back alive," Mahin testified.

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## Sworn in, still missing from govt portals

Profiles of ministers, state ministers yet to appear on most ministry websites

WASIM BIN HABIB and BAHARAM KHAN

Nearly two weeks after the new government was sworn in, most ministries have yet to upload the profiles of the newly appointed ministers and state ministers on their official websites, leaving citizens without basic information about policymakers.

A review of 43 ministry websites found that only nine had updated their sites with biographies and photographs of their leadership as of yesterday. The remaining ministries display only the names and photos of their political heads, without any profile details.

Uploading these profiles is the responsibility of the respective ministries. Delays not only leave government portals incomplete but also limit citizens' access to essential information about their elected representatives.

The ministries that have updated their websites are: foreign affairs; power, energy and mineral resources; education; primary and mass education; local government, rural development and cooperatives; posts, telecommunications and ICT; science and technology; and liberation war

affairs.

A 50-member cabinet led by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, also chairman of the BNP, was sworn in on February 17, five days after his party's landslide victory in the 13th national parliamentary election.

➤ Only 9 of 43 ministry websites updated with profiles

➤ Most sites show names, photos but no biographies

➤ Just 6 ministers, 3 state ministers have profiles online

➤ Several key ministries yet to publish any info

➤ Experts term the delay administrative negligence

Portfolios were distributed among 25 ministers and 24 state ministers the following day.

Of the cabinet members, only six ministers currently have profiles available on their respective ministry websites. Three of them oversee two ministries each.

The number is lower for state

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## Efforts on to make judiciary partisan again: Nahid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

National Citizen Party Convener Nahid Islam yesterday alleged that an attempt to use the judiciary for political purposes and make it partisan yet again was underway.

Nahid, also lawmaker for Dhaka-II and opposition chief whip in the Jatiya Sangsad, also said the current government was formed based on the public mandate given through the July Charter and the Referendum.

"There is an attempt to use the court politically

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## Speechwriter, four deputy press secys to PM appointed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A speechwriter and four deputy press secretaries have been appointed to Prime Minister Tarique Rahman in the newly elected government.

The Ministry of Public Administration issued separate gazette notifications yesterday confirming the contractual appointments.

UNB Editor Mahfuzur Rahman has been appointed as the Prime Minister's Speech Writer (Grade-1) on a contract basis.

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## Jahanara Arzu passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ekushey Padak-winning poet, literary editor and cultural personality Jahanara Arzu is no more.



She breathed her last around 1:30pm yesterday at her Gulshan residence in the capital. She was 94.

She left behind two sons, one daughter, grandchildren and a host of admirers to mourn her death.

Jahanara Arzu, mother of Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam, a senior judge of the Supreme Court, was widely respected for her contributions to Bangla literature and the country's cultural sphere.

Over the decades, she earned recognition as a distinguished poet and editor, playing an influential role in shaping literary discourse and nurturing cultural engagement, a Supreme Court press release said.

## DNC officer shot during anti-drugs drive in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An official of the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) was shot and injured by suspected drug dealers during an anti-drugs drive in Dhaka's Sayedabad area yesterday.

The injured official is Siddiqur Rahman, 40, an inspector of the DNC's Khilgaon Zone. He was taken to the emergency department of DMCH and is currently undergoing treatment in the hospital.

The incident took place around 12:00pm on the railway tracks behind Sayedabad Bus Terminal. Md Raziur Rahman, deputy director of DNC Dhaka Metropolitan (South), said seven units under the south division conducted a coordinated anti-narcotics drive in different parts of the capital yesterday morning.

After completing a drive in Dayaganj area, the team moved to Sayedabad, where several suspected drug dealers were identified near the railway tracks behind the bus terminal. As Siddiqur attempted to apprehend one of them, the suspect allegedly pulled out a pistol and fired several shots. One of the bullets hit Siddiqur's left leg.

The alleged shooter has been identified as Masum, he added.



Members of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad organised a protest rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday, demanding action and accountability over the increasing incidents of rape, murder and violence against women and girls across the country. They urged the government to take immediate steps to curb such acts of gender-based violence and ensure security and safety for women and children.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## DU observes historic Flag Hoisting Day

DU CORRESPONDENT

The Flag Hoisting Day was observed at the Bot Tola premises adjacent to the Faculty of Fine Arts of Dhaka University yesterday.

On this day in 1971, the first Bangladesh flag was hoisted at DU, marking a significant step in the movement for independence.

On the occasion, students from the Departments of Music and Dance performed the national anthem, patriotic songs, and dances.

The programme was inaugurated by DU Vice-Chancellor Prof Niaz Ahmed Khan, who hoisted the national flag.

The event was presided over by Pro-VC (Administration) Prof Sayema Haque Bidisha, with Pro-VC (Academic) Prof Mamun Ahmed and Treasurer Prof M Jahangir Alam Chowdhury attending as special guests.