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Two special assistants to PM appointed

Ziauddin

Saimum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has appointed two special assistants to the prime minister, assigning them portfolios in health and environment, according to separate gazette notifications issued by the public administration ministry yesterday.

Ziauddin Hyder has been appointed special assistant to the prime minister on health with the status of a state minister, while Saimum Parvez has been appointed special assistant on environment, forest and climate change with the status of a secretary.

A notification signed by Cabinet Secretary Nasimul

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PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

People stuck in traffic under scorching heat on a narrow street in Segunbagicha in Dhaka yesterday. Bikers occupy one lane while queuing for a nearby petrol pump, and roadwork by Dhaka South City Corporation has excavated another, leaving little space for commuters.

AL-picked fertiliser dealers to be replaced

Tarique tells JS, reaffirms to repatriate laundered funds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday said all fertiliser dealers appointed during the Awami League-era will be dismissed and replaced with new ones.

He made the announcement during an unscheduled discussion in the parliament.

Earlier, Chief Whip Nurul Islam told the House that fertiliser dealers appointed under the "fascist government" were attempting to create an artificial crisis.

Urging immediate action, the chief whip called for cancellation of such dealerships and appointment of new ones so that farmers can access fertiliser at fair prices.

In reply, the prime minister, also the Leader of the House, said, "If there is consensus across the House, the government will soon take steps in this regard."

The PM also outlined a series of "time-befitting" plans undertaken by his government to develop the country's agriculture sector in the face of mounting challenges stemming from climate change, population growth, reduction of land, and technological limitations.

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Govt mulls free schooling for children up to 13

Says Bobby Hajjaj

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government plans to make education free and compulsory for children aged between four and 13, as well as extend primary education up to Grade 8 in phases, State Minister for Primary and Mass Education Bobby Hajjaj said yesterday.

He made the remarks at a pre-budget consultation on education titled "Education Budget: Trends and Lessons", organised by Campaign for Popular Education (Campe) at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in Dhaka.

"Children aged 4-5 years will be considered pre-primary, 6-10 for primary, and 10-13 years would take it up to Grade 8. We want to make it compulsory," Hajjaj said.

The state minister said the government was moving towards professional skill-based education so that students are better prepared for work and future livelihoods.

He also said development of a new

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SUPER SPECIALISED HOSPITAL

Long-delayed BMU facility to be fully functional soon

Says VC, blames recruitment complications for delay

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Super Specialised Hospital at Bangladesh Medical University (BMU), which has remained underutilised for around four years, will be made fully functional within six months, newly appointed Vice Chancellor Prof FM Siddiqui said yesterday.

Prof Saifulllah Munshi, director of the 750-bed facility built at a cost of Tk 1,868 crore, said the hospital could not be fully operational due to a lack of manpower. Recruitment delays have been the main obstacle, he added.

The hospital, established with a loan from South Korea, was inaugurated in September 2022. However, no dedicated workforce has been appointed so far, and only limited services are being provided using BMU's existing staff and budget.

The facility aims to offer world-class healthcare and reduce the need for Bangladeshis to seek

treatment abroad. It includes five specialised centres: Cardio and Cerebrovascular, Hepatobiliary and Liver Transplant, Mother and Child Healthcare, Kidney Disease and Urology, and Accident and Emergency.

The recruitment process during the Awami League tenure was halted over allegations of corruption. An attempt was made to recruit manpower during the interim government, but it failed.

Prof Siddiqui, who took charge on April 5, said making the super specialised hospital fully functional is one of his top priorities.

Around Tk 2,000 crore has been spent to build the hospital, but it could not be made fully functional due to complexities over recruitments, said the BMU VC.

"Changes will come within three to six months, and the hospital will become dynamic within this time," he said while

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Farida Khanom

Dhaka district gets its first female DC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Farida Khanom, a deputy secretary at the Ministry of Home Affairs, has been appointed deputy commissioner (DC) of Dhaka, becoming the first woman to hold the post.

The Ministry of Public Administration issued a notification yesterday through its Field Administration-2 branch confirming the appointment.

Farida is currently serving in the Public Security Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

She will replace incumbent Dhaka DC Rezaul Karim. As of filing

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SAGAR-RUNI MURDER CASE

No headway in probe even 1.5yrs since HC directive

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Even after around one and half years since a High Court directive, the taskforce formed by the government has yet to come up with any breakthrough in its investigation into the killings of journalist couple Sagar Sarwar and Meherun Runi.

Meanwhile, the High Court is scheduled to hold a hearing and pass an order today on a government's petition involving the investigation into the murders.

"There is no significant progress [of the investigation]. That's all I can say," Md Mustafa Kamal, additional inspector general of police and chief of the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI), who is leading the taskforce, told this correspondent recently.

Asked whether more time would be sought from the HC to complete the investigation, Kamal said, "I can't say that right now. It can only be said after discussions with the government."

He, however, said the taskforce is scheduled to submit a progress report on the investigation to the HC through the Attorney General's Office during today's hearing.

Earlier, the Detective Branch of Police and

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No consensus yet on revised transport fare

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite several rounds of discussions, the government and transport owners have yet to reach consensus over revising bus fares following the recent fuel price hike.

While government officials say they are trying to keep fares tolerable for passengers, transport owners have pushed for an increase of 28 paisa per kilometre, citing rising operational costs.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Shaikh Rabiul Alam yesterday said no decision has been made yet.

"A final decision will be taken after tomorrow's [Thursday's] meeting with all stakeholders," he said.

A ministry official, speaking anonymously, said the delay stems from the government's intention to keep transport fares unchanged.

Transport owners, however, urged a quick fare adjustment, saying that rising diesel prices, a stronger US dollar, and higher costs for parts and maintenance have pushed up operating expenses.

Saiful Alam, secretary of the Bangladesh Road Transport Owners' Association, said, "The recent fuel price hike has significantly increased our

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Farmers queue with containers and tractors at a filling station in the Medical Intersection area of Rajshahi's Mohonganj yesterday as they continue to struggle for fuel amid a nationwide crisis triggered by the Middle East conflict.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Biman eyes fleet expansion to 47 aircraft by 2034-35

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman Bangladesh Airlines is eyeing a significant fleet expansion, aiming to increase its total number of aircraft to 47 by the 2034–35 fiscal year, with a focus on potential Boeing acquisitions.

The roadmap for this expansion was discussed in detail during a meeting held at the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism yesterday.

The discussion reviewed the integration of Boeing aircraft into the current fleet, as well as initiatives previously undertaken by the former government regarding aircraft procurement.

Biman currently operates a fleet of 19 aircraft, including 14 from Boeing. Under the new plan, the carrier will buy eight Boeing 787-10 Dreamliners, two Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners and four Boeing 737-8 MAX aircraft.

During negotiations over the 37 percent reciprocal tariff imposed by the US last year, the Ministry of Commerce had mentioned plans to order 25 Boeing aircraft.

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