

What's next to army drive?

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is yet to decide the next course of action to curb crimes after withdrawal of the army.

Although the government claims that the army, BDR, police and ansar are carrying out joint raids, it has been seen in the last two days that only the army has been in operation and has not taken any help from others.

The government sources said the deployment of troops and their authority to arrest criminals came apparently in the wake of police failure to carry out their duties to curb crimes.

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed said at a seminar yesterday the army will stay deployed as long as the civil

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250 more netted, two die during interrogation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The army continued its second day of crackdown on criminals across the country, netting some 250 people and recovering a small number of firearms. The navy also joined mopping-up operation from yesterday.

The house of State Minister for Telecommunications Ahsanul Huq Molla was raided in Kushiya town last night to nab his son Bacchu. But no one was arrested and no arms and ammunition were found.

Meantime, Organising Secretary of the BNP Uttara thana unit Yaqub Ali Patwari died yesterday allegedly during interrogation by the army.

His family alleged excess use of force by the troops. The army arrested the BNP leader in his Uttara residence on Thursday night.

Police confirmed the death of Patwari, but his body is yet to be handed over to the family. When his relatives wanted to file a case against the army, the police refused to take the complaint.

Intelligence sources said another arrested BNP activist, Jahangir, also died in army custody yesterday.

In the capital, the army raided the house of former Awami League lawmaker Mockbul Hossain and recovered arms and ammunition. Mockbul and

his sons were not home during the three-hour raid.

Starting at 3:00pm, the army raid recovered two pump-action rifles, a 7mm rifle, a 7.65mm pistol loaded with eight rounds of bullet, three rifle butts, two pistol magazines with 15 rounds of bullet, 61 rounds of 7.65mm bullet and 250 rounds of shotgun cartridge.

A massive 'block raid' was carried out on Tajmahal Road of Mohammadpur. The whole area had been sealed off and the army searched the targeted houses.

Yesterday was a repeat show of the first day's swoop as the army troops rolled into different areas of the capital and other towns and laid siege to the houses of 'criminals' according to their list.

They called the persons out of their homes and arrested them. Cellular phone networks were switched off again during the raids.

The arrested, most having links to the ruling BNP, have been taken to the cantonment and other places, including stadiums.

Meantime, a ward commissioner of the Dhaka City Corporation, Anwaruzzaman, arrested Thursday, was handed over to police.

Anwaruzzaman was taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH)

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Arms recovered from Mockbul's house

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Army yesterday recovered arms and ammunition from the residence of former Awami League lawmaker Mockbul Hossain at Mohammadpur in the city.

In a nearly two-hour raid that started at 3:00pm, army personnel also seized local and foreign currencies, passports, bank passbooks and some other goods. The raid took place at a time when Mockbul and his wife Mona are abroad. None of his sons was home during the search.

Mockbul's mother-in-law and a few housemaids were present at the time. The caretaker of the house has been rounded up.

According to eyewitnesses, dozens of army personnel encircled the Tajmahal Road residence of Mockbul,

who is also the convener of Awami Swechchasebak (Volunteer) League, and its whole neighbourhood at around three in the afternoon.

The army men had to wait for half an hour at the main gate as it was not being opened from inside despite repeated requests. They later broke open the gate to enter the house.

Searching the entire three-storey building, the defence force members recovered one 7.65mm rifle and its 61 bullets, a handgun and its 251 bullets, one 7mm fully loaded pistol and its 15 spare bullets and two magazines. Besides, they also got hold of two passports of Mockbul and another of his wife, unspecified amount of American and Singaporean dollars, one combat army jacket, a pair of handcuffs, one baseball bat, three rifle butts, over three lakh taka, four pass-

books of different banks and a cooperative society, 16 credit cards of different banks and 50 small bottles containing undetected liquid. However, it could not be known if any of the firearms was licensed.

The pistol and the handgun were found inside the bedroom of one of the former MP's sons while the rest was recovered from his bedroom. The 7.65mm rifle is not allowed for personal possession.

On recovery of the goods, a police constable was called in to prepare the seizure list.

However, Mohammadpur police last night said they knew nothing about the raid. Also they refused to say whether the caretaker of the house was arrested or the recovered goods were handed over to them.

Mixed reaction to crackdown

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government's decision to deploy the army in an effort to contain the appalling law and order situation across the country has apparently received approval from the city-dwellers while the move has drawn cautious optimism from various political quarters.

The government called out the army in the early hours of Thursday to arrest criminals and seize illegal arms to quell the unremitting acts of violence that has reached epidemic proportions.

The residents of Dhaka City, who have had to bear the full brunt of the declining law and order situation like the rest of the countrymen, have generally hailed the government's move as a bold step in the right direction.

The army crackdown has, at least temporarily, allayed fears of the daily murders and extortion the city-dwellers have so far had to face, in addition to the fairly recent phenomenon of bomb attacks in public places that have gripped the country including the capital.

In the backdrop of the police-BDR joint raids failing to produce

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PHOTO: STAR

An army personnel signals traffic at a check-post (left) in front of the Gabtali Bridge in the city as part of the army crackdown on criminals in the wake of rising trend in crimes across the country; and a police officer (right) prepares a seizure list on arms and ammunition recovered from the house of the former Awami League lawmaker Mockbul Hossain in a three-hour raid yesterday.

Khulna AL calls half-day hartal today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Khulna district and city Awami League have jointly called a half-day hartal in the city today to protest arrests of former Whip Mostafa Rashid Shuja and other party activists by army personnel in a pre-dawn swoop on Thursday.

Leaders and activists of Awami League brought out a procession in the city yesterday afternoon in support of hartal.

Army personnel arrested 17 people in the pre-dawn swoop suspecting their involvement in criminal activities. They also seized nine licensed arms from the houses of former whip and his two younger brothers Reza and Doza and also from the house of senior leader of BNP and former MP Abdul Gaffar Biswas.

No illegal arms could be recovered from possession of any of the arrested person despite interrogation by army personnel at the temporary camp at Khulna stadium.

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Only homegrown reforms to see success: Nishimizu

'Find meaningful way to curb lawlessness'

STAR REPORT

Visiting World Bank (WB) Vice-president for the South Asian region Mieko Nishimizu has said Bangladesh should find a meaningful way of curbing lawlessness.

United efforts can help improve the situation, she told journalists in the city yesterday.

"Lawlessness is an abuse of power and citizens must be empowered to act against it," she thinks.

About reforms, she said no reform would be successful if it is not 'homegrown'. "If it is not homegrown, it would be rhetoric and halfhearted."

"In a place where there is a democratic government, reforms should be initiated by themselves," she felt.

Nishimizu said that there was still a scope for further reforms, which will take a long time, though. "But



Mieko Nishimizu

the good thing is that the train has already left the station."

Asked about the type of reform the WB is suggesting, Nishimizu said the WB's approach is not to

dictate reforms and it underscores homegrown reforms that best suit the need of people.

Discipline in internal governance in the banking sector of Bangladesh is taking place -- a success for the government, she said.

"Such changes are of enormous importance," she said, appreciating the government for macroeconomic stability.

Termining fragile the situation after takeover by the present government, the WB vice-president said the government was successful in averting a 'very real' crisis.

Nishimizu also praised the government for having closed down the Adamjee Jute Mills.

The Adamjee Jute Mills was protecting interest of a small group at the expense of the whole nation, she said.

She, however, said it is also important to ensure that workers are duly compensated.

"Such issues have to be considered with caution about people who are affected but progress has to be made as SOEs losses have diverted good money from education and health sectors," Nishimizu said.

About her meetings with the government high-ups, she said the discussions mostly focused on reforms.

On the poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP), she said the WB board members will review the paper after its completion and

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Army called out to repress AL men: Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday blamed the government for what she said repression on opposition leaders and workers by calling out army after failing to run the country.

"There is no government in the country. Those who are running the country have totally failed and called out the army to repress Awami League leaders and workers," she said.

The Leader of the Opposition brought the allegation while addressing a discussion meeting at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the afternoon, as countrywide army operation continued for a second consecutive day to improve law and order.

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AL public rally today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Main opposition Awami League holds a public meeting at Paltan Maidan in the city today denouncing "failure and inefficiency" of the government in running the state and to protest deterioration of law and order, price-hike of essentials, politicisation and nepotism.

Awami League Chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to chair the meeting to be held at 3pm.

Today's AL rally is being held against the backdrop of army crackdown on criminals, a move the main

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Legality of army drive unclear

STAR REPORT

It is still unclear under what legal cover the army is arresting criminals and taking them to its custody.

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed told journalists at a city roundtable yesterday that the army was not given any magistracy.

The army has been called out under section 129 and 130 of the code of criminal procedure, which say the army can arrest anyone to disperse any illegal gathering on permission of police commissioner or magistrate, said legal experts.

Moudud also said the army did not arrest anyone. Police are arresting the criminals with the assistance of the army, he added.

A home ministry handout yesterday also claimed that the crackdown on criminals is a joint operation of police, Bangladesh Rifles, ansar and the army.

But eyewitnesses said the army has been carrying out the raids on its own for the last two days.

The law minister said police forces are accompanying the army in raids. The arrested will be produced before the court in 24 hours as required by the law, he said.

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Prosecution system to be improved: Moudud

BSS, Dhaka

Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Barrister Moudud Ahmed yesterday said that the government would improve the present prosecution system along with establishing an independent investigation unit to ensure justice for all in the country.

"Country's present prosecution system is weak and policing system is not capable enough to deal with the overall law and order in the country," he said while stressing the need for immediate improvement of both the systems in the greater interest of rule of law in the country.

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