

Anti-terror unit of police awaits rules

SHARIFUL ISLAM

The newly formed Anti-Terrorism Unit is expected to start operation within months with a countrywide mandate, using most of the manpower, resources and logistics of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

"We expect the rules for the unit will be approved in a couple of months. Once the rules are in place, the ATU will start operation and the CTTC unit of DMP will be dissolved," Additional Inspector General of Police Shafiqul Islam, chief of the ATU, told The Daily Star recently.

The Police Headquarters last month sent draft rules for the ATU to the home ministry, which approved the formation of the 581-member unit on September 19 last year.

After the dissolution of CTTC, the DMP will have a small anti-militancy team under a different name.

Formed in December 2015, the CTTC is the only specialised counterterrorism unit of the police. It needs special permission from the Police Headquarters to launch anti-militancy raids outside Dhaka metropolitan area.

The ATU will run independently with the jurisdiction to operate countrywide, unlike the CTTC unit.

Although it will be based in Dhaka, the ATU having all modern facilities will be able to launch operations in remote areas of the country at short notice.

All metropolitan and district police will be legally bound to assist the ATU. In future, it will have offices in metropolitan cities, said sources.

Officials at the Police Headquarters said the government has already allocated Tk 350 crore that will be spent for infrastructural development of the unit, purchase of modern equipment and software to combat militancy, and for

de-radicalisation programmes in jail.

Apart from investigating cases relating to militancy and terror financing, the unit will take measures for de-radicalisation of militants in jails, said Additional Inspector General Shafiqul.

All militants now scattered at different cells and prisons across the country would be kept at a certain place. Divided into groups, they would be "de-radicalised" with the help of psychologists, religious scholars and other experts, he added.

A top militant suspect who was released from jail upon bail recently, and the mother of another suspected militant who is now in prison said at a programme that militants were getting more radicalised in prisons.

According to Police Headquarters statistics, law enforcers arrested 779 suspected militants of different outfits from January 2016 till September last year.

During the same period, 564 militant suspects, who were accused in 292 cases, walked out of jail on bail, the statistics revealed.

According to the draft rules, all the cases already filed under the Anti-Terrorism Act, except for those being probed by Rab, will be transferred to the ATU.

Cases relating to terror financing and robbery or embezzlement by militants to collect funds will also be investigated by the ATU, according to the draft rules.

The unit members would not face any legal action for anything they would do in good faith during anti-militancy drives.

For example, during drive against militants in their den an innocent might be killed. In such cases the force members should not face any legal action, Shafiqul said.

The chief of CTTC unit Monirul Islam will work as the deputy to Shafiqul while

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The iron-rod carrying truck turned turtle on Bogra-Rangpur highway in Palashbari upazila of Gaibandha. The accident killed seven people who were travelling on the flatbed. Within a kilometre of the spot, a bus rammed a power tiller pulling a trailer, inset, and three labourers on the trailer were killed.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Twin tragedies kill 10 in Gaibandha

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rammed a power tiller pulling a trailer on Rangpur-Bogra highway around 9:30am.

The OC said the Nilphamari-bound truck was being driven recklessly. The driver fled immediately after the accident.

On information, police and fire fighters with the help of locals rescued the injured and took them to Palashbari Health Complex.

Dr Wazed at the hospital said seven of the injured were in critical condi-

tions and they were referred to Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

Police could confirm the identities of five of the deceased. They are Motahar Hossain, 44, Rezia Begum, 70, and Marufa Begum, 35, of Nilphamari Sadar, Fahad Hossain, 22, of Kishoreganj upazila, and Mofizul Islam, 55, of Domar in the district.

Atower Rahman, one of the injured, said everything happened in the blink of an eye. "It was a nightmare. I don't know how I survived."

With his fractured leg, Shafiq Mia, another labourer, said he was worried because he would not be able to work until he recovered.

The OC said they often try to stop people from travelling on trucks but many chose the risky journey as it was cheaper.

Meanwhile, Gautam Chandra Pal, deputy commissioner in the district, visited the spot and announced compensation of Tk 20,000 for each of the deceased.

In the other incident, the Bogra-bound bus hit the power tiller, leaving the three labourers dead on the spot.

OC Mahmudul said the driver lost control over the bus after one of its rear tyres burst.

The dead -- all construction workers from Gobindaganj upazila -- were identified as Jakir Hossain, 25, Khasru Mia, 23, and Raju Mia, 26.

Meanwhile, five more people were killed in road accidents in Benapole, Natore and Comilla yesterday.

Standing up to tyranny

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journalist asked him about challenging the authority of the Pakistan government in the province.

While the non-cooperation movement kept gaining momentum with each passing day, Bangabandhu established across the country that East Pakistan ran under his direct orders.

Earlier when it was rumoured that Yahya Khan was to fly to Dhaka for a talk with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, one newsman inquired him about whether he would agree to the meeting. His response to that was "If Yahya Khan comes to Dhaka, he will be our guest here," clearly indicating that Dhaka belonged to the Bangalees.

Under the movement, the High Court judge and administrative secretary, along with many office goers throughout the East Pakistan, resigned from their services.

Agitated civilians put up barriers and created obstacles in the process of procurement of day to day items by the military authorities. In Sylhet, one convoy supplying rations was intercepted by them.

In Tangail's Bindubashini High School field, National Awami Party leader Maulana Bhashani announced his support for the freedom fight. He said Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is the leader of seven crore people and asked

the people to follow his instructions. He added that to achieve the goal, all must unite and fight.

Awami League general secretary Tajuddin Ahmed thanked the people of Bangladesh for rallying behind the party and making the civil disobedience movement launched by Bangabandhu a success.

That night, the army enforced its 114 number military order saying that if any civilian, willingly or unwillingly, harms government property or creates obstacles in the work of the military, it will be punishable by law.

Meanwhile, Pakistan International Airlines cancelled most of its international services, and all available aircraft were used to bring "Government Passengers" to Dhaka. These "Government Passengers" were troops in civilian clothes.

In Rawalpindi, the military establishment was now being dominated by an influential quarter of blood-thirsty officers. Top army officials were clearly of the opinion that the Bangalees' movement had to be crushed and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman severely dealt with.

Yahya explicitly warned that force would be used against any move for separation.

But the Bangalees already knew that. And they were prepared for it.

[Source: Liberation War Museum]

PM flies to Singapore

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important" as it would also help mobilise support from Singapore for becoming "Sectoral Dialogue Partner" of the ASEAN.

"This visit will significantly contribute to increasing cooperation in various sectors including public-private partnership, air connectivity, trade, investment and energy," Ali told a press briefing on Wednesday.

As per the programme schedule, the premier along with her entourage leaves Dhaka this morning on a VVIP flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines and reaches Changi Airport in Singapore at 2:45pm local time. She would stay at the Shangri-La Hotel during her visit.

Singapore would name an orchid in its Botanical Garden after the Bangladesh prime minister in her honour. According to tradition, all heads of states and governments making state/official visits to Singapore are provided with the opportunity to have a unique orchid named after them. The practice of naming orchids after visiting VVIPs has been in place for a few decades.

Hasina would be given a welcome reception by the Singapore government tomorrow. After the welcome reception, she would pay a courtesy call on the first female president of Singapore, Halimah Yacob, at Istana.

Official talks between Sheikh Hasina and Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong would also take place tomorrow. Following the talks, the two countries are expected to sign six agreements/Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs).

The PM would address two business meetings of Bangladesh-Singapore Business Forum-2018 and Bangladesh-Singapore Business roundtable as the chief guest. Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali, State Minister for Power and Energy Nasrul Hamid, senior government officials and a high-level business delegation would accompany her.

The deals to be signed include MoU on Collaboration of Investment activities in Bangladesh; MoU on Public-Private Partnership; Confidential MoUs to expand the Air Service Agreement; MoU on Digital Leadership, Innovation, and Digital Government Transformation; MoU between FBBCI and Singapore Manufacturing Federation to strengthen business relations and promote economic cooperation; and MoU between MCCI and Singapore Manufacturing Federation to strengthen business relations and promote economic cooperation.

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Europeans, who grew wild grapes, ate salmon and made canoes out of animal hides.

The first site uncovered is at L'Anse aux Meadows, a United Nations (UN) World Heritage site, on the northern tip of Newfoundland.

Over the decades, academics have suggested possible locations where the remains of Hop might be found, including Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Maine, New England and New York.

After studying Norse texts and using the description of the settlement from sagas of Viking voyages, together with archaeological findings

at L'Anse aux Meadows and at Native American sites on America's east coast, Ms Wallace now believes it was located in New Brunswick.

"I am placing Hop in the Miramichi-Chaleur Bay area," she said.

However, she said Hop may not be a single settlement. Instead she said the Vikings may have created multiple short-term settlements in the area, the locations varying from year to year.

Tales of the Viking voyages were passed down orally through generations, and "Hop" may have referred to several seasonal settlements, Ms Wallace said.

Vegetables 'safe'

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chillies -- from 10 kitchen markets in the capital and the seven other divisional headquarters were used for test.

Data shows pesticides were found in 62.5 percent of the vegetables collected directly from farms. Even after a rinse, 37.5 percent of the samples still contained pesticide residue. After cooking, 81.25 percent of the samples were safe for human consumption though they still contained some level of the contaminants.

"The presence of pesticide is found at dangerous levels when vegetables are collected from the fields. But it decreases when they are washed. Good news is that after cooking, it is safe for human consumption," said BARC Director (nutrition) Md Monirul Islam, also the lead researcher of the study.

According to Codex, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India and European Union recommendations, a

person can intake 0.002-0.05 milligram pesticides every day, adjusted to their body weight. After cooking, the pesticide amount falls below the limit.

In the examined vegetables, 30 pesticides were found, including chlorpyrifos, fenvalerate, dimethoate, spinosad, thiamethoxam and diethiocarbamates.

Chloropyrifos and Dimethoate are used for killing insects and worms.

Introduced after the 1950s by two American companies, they attack the nervous system of pests and are rated highly toxic and hazardous.

Dithiocarbamate, a fungicide, was found in cauliflower even after it was washed but not after cooking.

However, in country beans, pesticides were found even after cooking although the level was below the permissible limit.

In the case of long yard bean, washing made no difference in chlorpyrifos' presence but cooking helped eliminate

the contaminant.

The presence of chlorpyrifos and cypermethrin was found in cabbage at all stages -- from collection, washing and even after cooking.

No pesticide was found in the case of ladies finger and eggplants.

Wais Kabir, former executive chairman of BARC, said increased awareness among consumers and growers and restriction on harvesting vegetables 72 hours after pesticide use have contributed to limiting the amount of pesticides found.

He also said the Department of Agricultural Extension has intensified monitoring of pesticide use.

Kabir added that a new generation of pesticides with no long term effect like dichloro diphenyl trichloroethane (DDT), a pesticide banned worldwide due its harmful effects, is being used in Bangladesh.

Kaoser Alam, a physician at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical

University said pesticide has long term implications on a person's health. "If one instantly consumes too much pesticide there's vomiting, drowsiness and a drop in blood pressure. But prolonged consumption may result in blood, esophagus or stomach cancer."

According to the World Health Organisation estimates, there were three million global cases of acute and severe pesticide poisoning with some 220,000 deaths every year, the majority of them in developing countries.

In his recommendations after the study, Monirul Islam suggested all the stakeholders need to be more active in ensuring food safety from farm-to-fork.

He also said the vegetables should be collected from field 72 hours after spray of pesticide.

He stressed the need for creating more awareness among farmers about judicious and proper application of pesticides.

Khaleda will restore democracy

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The party had sought permission to hold the rally at Shaheed Hades Park, but police allowed it to stage it in front of the party office on KD Ghos Road.

The BNP has a plan to hold rallies in all divisional cities as part of its demonstrations to have Khaleda released from jail. Yesterday's programme was part of the agitation.

In his speech, Fakhrul said the government would not be able to "implement its blueprint to hold a one-sided election as we'll surely restore people's democratic and voting rights by freeing our leader [Khaleda] from jail".

He said Khaleda was kept in "solitary confinement at Dhaka's abandoned central jail".

"But she won't bow down to any pressure and threats."

BNP standing committee members Abdul Moyeen Khan, Nazrul Islam

Khan, Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, among others, addressed the programme presided over by Khulna city BNP President Nazrul Islam Monju.

5-MINUTE PROCESSION

After staying at the party's Nayapaltn headquarters for over a month to avoid arrest, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi took to the streets early yesterday to join a protest procession.

Rizvi along with about 10 BNP men brought out an impromptu procession from in front of the party office around 6:30am demanding release of Khaleda.

The BNP leader returned to the office within five minutes. There were no members of law enforcement agencies in the area at that time, said witnesses.

The procession was brought out as part of the BNP's scheduled programme in all thanas of the capital,

protesting foiling of a sit-in by police on Thursday.

According to party sources, Rizvi has been staying at the BNP office since January 30.

Talking to The Daily Star, Rizvi said, "There is an arrest warrant against me and that's why I took part in the procession early in the morning."

Addressing a press conference at the party office yesterday, he criticised Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda for his remarks that the commission would not take any new initiative for ensuring participation of all political parties in the next parliamentary polls.

The CEC's comments and activities gave people the impression that he was not interested in holding a free, fair and neutral election, the BNP leader told journalists.

ORDER ON BAIL

PETITION TODAY

The High Court bench of Justice M

Enayetur Rahim and Justice Shahidul Karim fixed today for issuing necessary orders on Khaleda's bail petition.

The court fixed the date on Thursday after Khaleda's lawyer Zainul Abedin had prayed to it to issue an order on the petition.

The lawyer told the court that it ordered the trial court on February 22 to send the case records to it within 15 days and the timeframe expired on Wednesday.

After hearing Khaleda's bail petition on February 25, the HC bench said it would issue an order on the prayer after receiving the case records from the lower court.

The BNP chief landed in jail on February 8 after the Special Judge's Court-5 of Dhaka had awarded a five-year jail term to her in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case.

(Our Khulna Correspondent contributed to file the report)