

Stage set for surrender

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Thousands of people are expected to join as the suspects are to surrender with a huge cache of illegal arms, ammunition, and arms-making equipment.

Police sources claimed that Ayub Ali, 45, of Huanok union, is the boss of a gang that has been active in the area for the last 14 years.

Ayub is wanted in over a dozen cases, including murder, abduction, robbery and illegal arms cases. He was accused in the Sub-Inspector Paresh Karbari murder case.

Rab and police conducted several drives last year to capture Ayub. Due to the mounting pressure of the drives, Ayub's right hand with eight of his followers surrendered when 43 pirates gave themselves up in October last year.

Like Ayub, suspects Ziaur Rahman Zia of Zia Bahini, Jahangir Alam of Jahangir Bahini, Mohammad Ali of Mahmudullah Bahini, Sirajouddullah of Siraj Bahini, Mujibur Rahman Prakash of Mujib Bahini, and Kalu Prakash of Kalu Bahini, are expected to surrender tomorrow along with 15 to 20 members of each gang.

The Daily Star ran a report in March this year about the gangs who make guns in Maheshkhali.

At least six organised gangs had gun-making workshops on the island, sources in a law enforcement agency said.

There were no permanent structures for the workshops. Bamboo, reeds, grass, and leaves were used to build at least 30 workshops in forests, they said.

They claimed that the gangs were involved in extortion and land grabbing too.

Locals said the most notorious gang

in Maheshkhali is Kodalia Bahini led by Jinnat Ali. The gang has been active since 2001 and has around 40 to 50 cadres.

This gang is not expected to surrender tomorrow.

Those who would surrender would "not receive any general amnesty". They would have to face trials, police sources said, adding that the suspects would be given legal aid.

Last year, a journalist of a TV channel approached police and mediated the surrender of the 43 pirates who surrendered in October.

Inspired by the move and outcome, the government allowed the surrender of 102 yaba godfathers and dealers in Teknaf in February this year.

"This time, the arms manufacturers and top criminals of Maheshkhali, Kutubdia, Chakaria and Pekua neighbourhood, will surrender at the programme," the journalist said, adding that they have contacted around 200 criminals, of them 150 might surrender.

According to sources in law enforcement agencies, half the robbers and pirates who surrendered last year are now on bail.

The surrender of the yaba godfathers this year brought little visible change to the drug trade in Cox's Bazar.

Locals are unsure whether surrender of the arms makers and gangs would actually improve law and order.

Police Superintendent in Cox's Bazar ABM Masud Hossain said, "Many of the arms manufacturers, pirates, and criminals wished to return to normal lives. Higher authorities were informed of the matter."

"The administration will help them if they surrender and shun the life in crime," he added.



Security personnel detain a student during a demonstration in support of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) students for their ongoing protest against accommodation fee hike, in New Delhi, yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Netanyahu indicted

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since 2009, is Israel's longest-serving prime minister and dominates the country's political scene.

The indictment comes as Israel faces a potential third election in a year, with neither Netanyahu nor his main rival able to form a government after deadlocked elections in September.

Netanyahu is not legally required to resign until he is convicted and all appeals are exhausted, but political pressure is likely to be intense.

A close ally of US President Donald Trump, the 70-year-old may now ask the Israeli parliament, or Knesset, to grant him immunity from prosecution.

The justice ministry statement said copies of the charge sheet had been sent to both Netanyahu's lawyers and the Knesset.

The charges against him range from receiving gifts worth thousands of dollars to a deal to change regulatory frameworks in favour of a media group in exchange for positive coverage.

Mandelblit is due to give a public statement, with Netanyahu expected to respond.

Netanyahu has outlived most political rivals and Hugh Lovatt, Israel-Palestine analyst at the European Council on Foreign Relations, said the indictment may still not be "the end of the story".

"Israel will now have to brace for a political roller-coaster ride over the coming months. Now more than ever Netanyahu will be fighting for his political and personal life." What are the allegations? In February, Mandelblit announced his intention to indict Netanyahu on charges of fraud, breach of trust and bribery, following up on police recommendations.

In May he extended until October a deadline for Netanyahu's pre-indictment hearing but rejected a request for a 12-month delay.

Netanyahu has vehemently denied all the allegations, calling the corruption investigation a "witch-hunt" and alleging it has been motivated by his enemies' desire to force him from office.

Of the investigations against Netanyahu, the third, known as Case 4,000, is seen as the most serious.

He is alleged to have negotiated with Shaul Elovitch, the controlling shareholder of Israeli telecommunications giant Bezeq, to get positive coverage on his Walla! news site in exchange for policies benefiting Bezeq.

Mandelblit said in February he intended to indict Netanyahu for bribery, fraud and breach of trust in this case.

Case 1,000 involves allegations Netanyahu and his family received gifts including luxury cigars, champagne and jewellery from wealthy individuals, estimated to be worth more than 700,000 shekels (\$200,000, 185,000 euros), in exchange for financial or personal favours.

Another case, known as Case 2000, concerns allegations Netanyahu sought a deal with the owner of the Yediot Aharonot newspaper that would have seen it give him more favourable coverage.

"Weaker hand" - The decision is expected to have a wide-reaching impact not just on the embattled leader but on Israeli politics in general, as the country has been without a government for nearly a year due to political infighting.

Neither Netanyahu nor his centrist rival Benny Gantz have been able to form a coalition government following deadlocked elections in September, with the country edging closer to a third election within twelve months.

Earlier Thursday Israel's President Reuven Rivlin turned to the country's parliament in the hope of avoiding a third election in 12 months.

Following the near neck-and-neck polls in September Netanyahu and Gantz were given four weeks each to try and form a new government.

Netanyahu, head of the Likud party, was given first go but failed. And Gantz, who leads the Blue and White coalition, admitted defeat late Wednesday after a similar period.

Rivlin has now given parliament 21 days to find a candidate who can command the support of the majority of the country's 120 MPs.

Gantz reportedly tried to woo MP's from Netanyahu's Likud party to join him in a broad national unity government, but there were no takers during the long and ultimately fruitless coalition negotiations following the September election.

Ofer Zalberg, analyst with the International Crisis Group think-tank, said Netanyahu would be severely weakened by Mandelblit's announcement.

"Netanyahu has a weaker hand for the coming 20 days so may agree to compromises toward Blue and White he so far ruled out," he said.

Netanyahu could now face internal threats from within his Likud party, Zalberg added.

Drives against

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your own country by working sincerely from their respective position."

The prime minister said the Bangladesh Armed Forces has been playing a role in serving the distressed people in the country.

Alongside protecting the independence and sovereignty of the country, the Armed Forces plays active role in facing any disaster, she said.

"Our Armed Forces are acclaimed in the international arena in restoring and maintaining peace and stability in the world," Hasina said.

Many members of the forces sacrificed their lives going to the peacekeeping missions for protecting peace, said the Prime Minister seeking salvation of the departed souls and expressed sympathy to bereaved families.

She said the government wanted to make the Armed Forces fit for the 21st century and formulated the Forces Goals and undertook long-term plan for them to this end.

Stop promoting 'falsehoods'

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been perpetrated and propagated by the Russian security services themselves," said Hill, who until July served as the director for European and Russian affairs at the White House National Security Council.

"In the course of this investigation, I would ask that you please not promote politically driven falsehoods that so clearly advance Russian interests," she said.

Some Republican members of the committee have advanced a discredited conspiracy theory, embraced by Trump and some of his allies in Congress and the conservative media, that Ukraine, not Russia, interfered in the last presidential election.

Yesterday's hearing marks the fifth and last scheduled day of public hearings by the Democratic-led House Intelligence Committee. The inquiry is focused on Trump's June 25 telephone request that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy investigate former Vice President Joe Biden, a leading contender in the field of Democrats seeking to challenge Trump in the 2020 election. Trump also asked Zelenskiy to investigate the debunked conspiracy theory that Ukraine interfered in the 2016 election.

Lawmakers also will question David Holmes, a staffer from the US Embassy in Ukraine, as they seek to learn more about a July 26 phone call in which he says he overheard Trump ask about the status of the investigation.

In his opening statement, Holmes said his work at the embassy started to become overshadowed in March 2019 by the work of Trump's personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, who was pushing Ukraine to carry out the two probes.

"I became aware that Mr. Giuliani, a private lawyer, was taking a direct role in Ukrainian diplomacy," Holmes said.

US intelligence agencies and former Special Counsel Robert Mueller have determined that Russia interfered in the 2016 election with a campaign of hacking and propaganda intended to sow discord in the United States, boost Trump's candidacy and harm his Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton.

16 found

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on a boat sailing to Britain and forced the vessel to return to port.

The 16 individuals in the latest discovery were found aboard a Wednesday night sailing of the Stena Horizon ship from Cherbourg in northern France.

"One of our employees during a routine inspection discovered 16 people in a sealed container on the vehicle deck," Stena Line chief communications officer Ian Hampton said in a statement.

"All the individuals are reported to be in good health and have been moved to a private passenger lounge on the ship."

The ship was due to arrive in port mid-afternoon yesterday, according to the firm, and immigration and security officials have been alerted to meet them.

Water vapour

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"Essential chemical elements and sources of energy, two of [the] three requirements for life, are found all over the solar system. But the third — liquid water — is somewhat hard to find beyond Earth," said Lucas Paganini, study author and Nasa planetary scientist. "While scientists have not yet detected liquid water directly, we've found the next best thing: water in vapour form."

But this amount is infrequent -- at least when scientists are trying to observe it from Earth.

"For me, the interesting thing about this work is not only the first direct detection of water above Europa, but also the lack thereof within the limits of our detection method," Paganini said.

Research suggesting the possibility of an ocean on Europa was published as early as 1977, after the Voyager mission observed long lines and dark spots instead of a cratered surface similar to other moons. Then the Galileo spacecraft reached Europa in 1996 and revealed for the first time that there was an ocean on another planet.

During its closest flyby of Europa in 1997, less than 93 miles above the surface, Galileo collected signatures of changes in Europa's magnetic field that the scientists didn't understand, said Margaret Kivelson, professor emerita of space physics at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Anti-Terror Unit empowered

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a set of draft rules for the ATU to the home ministry for approval.

The Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of DMP, formed in December 2015, is the only specialised counterterrorism unit of the police. It needs special permission from the Police Headquarters to launch anti-militancy drives outside the DMP area.

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

Although it is based in Dhaka, the

ATU, having all modern facilities, will be able to launch operations in the country's remote areas 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, as per the rules.

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.

As per the rules, apart from

investigating cases relating to militancy and terror financing, the unit will take measures for de-radicalisation of militants, make and implement plans for countering violent extremism and preventing violent extremism, carry out lawful interception of extremists and terrorists, and deal with hostage situations.

According to the rules, the ATU will investigate cases already filed under the anti-terrorism act if any unit of police wants to transfer the charge of investigation of the cases.

BGB detains over 300 intruders

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Station, said OC of the police station, Rashedul Alam.

He said although the arrestees claimed to be from Maheshpur upazila of Jhenidah and Sharankhola upazila of Bagerhat, they could neither tell the names of any of the local union parishad members nor give the mobile phone numbers of any relatives in Bangladesh.

Director of Maheshpur BGB Battalion-58 Lt Col Kamrul Ahsan also quoted the arrestees as saying that they went to India four to five years ago. He said BGB had been detaining such intruders since the beginning of this month.

Most of the arrestees were Muslims, he added.

Our Jhenidah correspondent managed to talk to two of the arrestees before they were sent to jail. One of them, Sabbir Sheikh, 42, detained on Wednesday, claimed that he had gone to Bengaluru in 2014 from Mahisdia village in Khulna's Dighalia upazila. He worked at the Indian city as a porter earning RS 500-600 daily.

He said, "police often harassed his family as they could not obtain Indian citizenship". In face of the harassment, they decided to leave India two

months ago, he claimed.

Tusher Sheikh, 38, who was arrested the same day also claimed to be from the village in Khulna. He claimed that he left for India in 2015 and worked at a bread factory in Bengaluru.

Quoting the arrestees, Jhenidah Deputy Commissioner Saroj Kumar Nath said they had no valid passport or other travel documents. They had to leave India in the face of heightened vigilance by Bengaluru police.

Jahid Hossain, who lives in Kushampur village in Maheshpur, said many people were being held for illegal entry for the last few days.

Locals said the number of those coming from India was higher than that of the detainees.

In Jashore's Benapole and other border points, officials of BGB Battalion-49 and Battalion-21 detained 115 for trespassing from India. Of them, 20 are children, 28 women and 67 men, said BGB sources.

Commanding Officer Lt Col Muhammad Monjur-E-Elaihi of BGB Battalion-49 said they detained 54, including an alleged human trafficker, in Daulatpur border area on Wednesday when they were trying to enter Bangladesh.

Later, a case was filed with the Benapole Port Police Station in

this regard. Since the beginning of October, 33 cases have been filed with the police station over illegal entry into Bangladesh, said Mamun Khan, officer-in-charge of the police station.

The BGB official said the arrestees were Bangla-speaking Muslims and that they claimed to be from Narail and Faridpur. They, however, could not show any documents to prove their claim.

One of the arrestees, Rahima Khatun, in her mid-thirties, told our Benapole correspondent on Wednesday afternoon that she had gone to India about 10 years ago. She was a domestic worker in Delhi while her husband a day labourer. The couple and their two children, aged 8 and 10, left India fearing arrest.

On August 31, India published the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam, virtually stripping about 19 lakh people of citizenship. The register is a list of people who failed to prove they came to India before March 24, 1971.

On Wednesday, Indian Home Minister Amit Shah said the NRC would take effect across the country.

Bangladesh shares borders of over 4,000kms with India. The bordering Indian states are West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

Govt goes soft

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Tajul Islam, convener and member secretary of Bangladesh Truck, Covered-van Goods Transport Owners-Workers Unity Council, which enforced the strikes.

Rustam, also the executive president of Bangladesh Road Transport Owners Association, said they have asked for changes made to nine sections of the law and the minister promised them of meeting their demand.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation, which is holding a two-day meeting in the capital, said it would place a proposal to the government regarding the act.

Executive President of the federation Shajahan Khan, also an Awami League lawmaker, said transport workers in several districts had stopped plying vehicles voluntarily because they were scared of penalties.

The federation in a press statement asked workers to stay calm and start operation of vehicles.

Amid widespread student agitation for safe road, parliament passed the act in September last year to bring discipline on roads. But its implementation remained halted for more than a year as transport leaders allegedly lobbied against it.

PEOPLE BEAR THE BRUNT
People suffered in different parts of the country for the fourth consecutive day yesterday as transport workers continued wildcat strikes in different districts demanding amendments to the Road Transport Act-2018.

Very few buses left the inter-district bus terminal in the capital's Mohakhali yesterday. However, operation of buses within the city and at Gabtoli and Saydabad inter-district terminals were quite normal.

Goods transportation to and from Chattogram port resumed after truckers and lorry drivers called off their strikes following the meeting with home minister.

But there was little activity at the country's largest land port in Benapole.

Transport workers in nine districts enforced an undeclared strike on Monday, a day after road transport and bridges minister announced that the new act had come into effect. Transport workers in more than two dozen districts joined the undeclared strike later.

Besides, Bangladesh Truck, Covered-van Goods Transport Owners-Workers Unity Council observed work abstention on Wednesday to press home their demands, including changes to the act.

Many passengers were seen waiting for buses at Mohakhali terminal yesterday afternoon.

"Vehicles have been vandalised. At some places, the drivers were not allowed to drive. That's why we decided not to leave the terminal," Mizanur Rahman, an employee of Eza Paribahan, told The Daily Star at Mohakhali terminal.

Abdus Sattar reached the terminal around 11:00am to go to Tangail. But he returned home after waiting four hours there.

"A few buses that left the terminal charged three to four times more than the normal fare. So, I gave up," he said.

Abul Kalam, president of bus owner's association at Mohakhali terminal, said many buses left the terminal in the evening.

Mosharraf Hossain, general manager of Hanif Paribahan, said the number of buses leaving Gabtoli terminal increased as the day progressed.

Operation of buses at Saydabad terminal was normal, said Abul Kalam, president of bus owner's association at the terminal.

In Khulna, people suffered as long-haul buses to at least 18 destinations didn't leave the city for the fourth day.

Sajib Mia, his younger brother, and three-year-old daughter Sumaiya started waiting for a bus at Sonadanga terminal in the morning.

"We need to go to Dhaka immediately... But there is no bus. I may lose my job if I don't reach Dhaka today," the garment factory employee said in the afternoon.

Like them, many other passengers remained stranded at bus terminals. Although there was no demonstration on the road in Tangail, no buses left the town.

The Dhaka-Tangail highway remained almost empty until afternoon. Only a few trucks and three wheelers plied the highway.

Monnaf Ali, 65, came to Tangail from Nagarpur upazila, hoping to go to Gazipur by bus. "Now I am looking for an alternative," he said.

In Rajshahi, although some buses operated in short distances, long-haul buses remained off the roads.

Entajul Haque, a lawyer, who wanted to go to Bogura said he had to board a bus to Natore which dropped him off halfway. He had to change several buses and CNG-run three-wheelers to reach Bogura.

"The one-and-a-half-hour journey to Bogura took more than four hours," he said over phone.

In Dinajpur, a few buses operated in the morning but stopped around 11:00am.

In Nilphamari's Saidpur, transport workers intercepted two double-decker buses of BRTC.

In Naogaon, transport workers didn't allow buses from Rajshahi to enter the town. No buses left the town either.

People also suffered in Jashore, Magura, and Sherpur.