



Booters confident about win against Maldives
P11



The case for internal reforms in political parties
P8



UN says Gaza aid far from enough
P7



Toiling their lives away in smoke and shadows
P3

Rab wants to shed its dark past

The force now wants to rebrand itself thru reform, regulations

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Since its formation nearly two decades ago to curb organised crime and terrorism, the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) has been dogged by serious allegations of human rights violations. Rights activists and critics accused it of morphing into a “government death squad” that operated with impunity.

From the infamous seven-murder case in Narayanganj to the killing of Cox’s Bazar municipality councillor Akramul Haque in a so-called gunfight, the force has earned quite a notoriety, eventually inviting US sanctions on its top officials in 2021.

Over the last 15 years, the specialised crime busting unit became a household name for alleged extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and torture of opposition political figures and government critics. During this period, numerous reports from international rights bodies detailed Rab’s rights abuse, including

- ➔ Rab seeks to change name, logo, uniform
- ➔ Preparing a draft law to regulate its activities
- ➔ ASK found its involvement in at least 467 crossfire from 2015-2023
- ➔ Action taken against 4,000 members since its inception
- ➔ Rights activists want reform, even dismantling of the force

extrajudicial murder by some of its trigger-happy members.

Some of them could even be hired by willing parties, as proven in court in the Narayanganj seven-murder case.

For years, rights organisations from home and abroad called for its reform, and the call intensified after Sheikh Hasina’s fall on August 5 in the face of a mass uprising.

Against this backdrop, Rab is planning to change its name, logo and uniform and is drafting a new law to regulate its operations. Currently, there is no separate law for the force, and it operates under the police ordinance.

“We have taken steps to reform the force, including changing its name, rules and dress,” AKM Shahidur Rahman, director general of Rab, told The Daily Star recently.

“We have already made a draft for changing the name and dress. We have also taken steps to make a new law for the force, which is in the drafting stage,” he said.

Some rights activists, however, call for dismantling the force.

“Rab should be abolished because there is no need for encounter or extrajudicial killing. Police have three to four departments, and are enough to ensure peace,” said ZI Khan Panna, a noted Supreme Court lawyer.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, along with other world leaders, poses for a photo in Baku, Azerbaijan, during the United Nations climate change conference, known as COP29, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Limon files case with ICT against eight ex-Rab men

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Limon Hossain, who was shot by Rab 13 years ago and subsequently lost his left leg, filed a complaint with the International Crimes Tribunal yesterday accusing eight former Rab personnel and an ex-army officer.

Among the accused are Maj Gen (ret’d) Tarique Ahmed Siddique, former security affairs adviser to ex-prime minister Sheikh Hasina; Maj Gen (sacked) Ziaul Ahsan, former director general of the National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre (NTMC); and Major Rashed, ex-company commander of Rab-8 in Barishal.

The other named accused are ex-Rab-8 deputy assistant director Lutfor Rahman, corporal



SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

WB points out myriad issues in healthcare

Commits \$400m to Dhaka for the next five-year plan

- Non-communicable diseases account for 68pc deaths
- Half the facilities offer services for non-communicable diseases
- 14pc adults are diabetic, 29pc have hypertension
- Only 18pc women receive quality antenatal care

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MD ABBAS

The World Bank has committed to giving Bangladesh \$400 million for implementing the next five-year plan for the health sector, which is estimated to cost around \$9 billion.

The government expects \$2.3 billion of it to come from multilateral and bilateral partners, including the World Bank (WB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Media should play due role in fighting misinfo

Info adviser says media now free of govt pressure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Information Adviser Nahid Islam yesterday urged the media to play a key role in fighting misinformation and stated that there is no government pressure on the media.

“The media should present objective news as it is free from government pressure,” Nahid said at a views exchange meeting with editors and senior journalists of daily newspapers at the information and broadcasting ministry.

He said the lack of accurate information is allowing rumours and misinformation that create



SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Red notice sought for Hasina’s arrest

ICT chief prosecutor’s office writes to Interpol through IGP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The chief prosecutor of the International Crimes Tribunal has requested police to seek Interpol red notice for the arrest of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam’s office on Sunday wrote to the Interpol through the inspector general of police (IGP).

Hasina is accused of committing crimes against humanity and she is a fugitive, he told reporters in front of his office yesterday, adding that the IGP would forward the letter to the international organisation which facilitates worldwide police cooperation.

“There is an arrest warrant for her [in Bangladesh].... We requested Interpol to arrest her or at least issue a red notice,” he said.

A red notice is a request to law enforcement worldwide to locate and provisionally arrest a person pending extradition, surrender, or similar legal action, according to the Interpol website.

Over 100 complaints of crimes against humanity have been filed against Hasina, said prosecutors.

Tajul said the tribunal also issued arrest warrants for four absconding police officers on charges of committing atrocities in the capital’s Jatrabari during the mass uprising.

“Journalists and citizens filmed how a young man, injured in the leg, was rescued by his colleague

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Scrapping of accreditation cards threat to press freedom

Says Editors’ Council

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Editors’ Council have expressed concern over the recent cancellation of press accreditation cards of 167 journalists.

The council in a statement yesterday said the organisation and its members were worried about the scrapping of the accreditation cards of many professional and active journalists and editors.

The platform believes

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



The Shyampur Road in the capital has been in a dismal state for nearly a month now due to a leak in a Wasa pipe and poor drainage in the area. This has not only damaged the road but has been causing heavy traffic jams there. Despite the plight of the locals, the authorities concerned are yet to take any measures. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Star INTERVIEW

Political consensus needed to make reforms sustainable

Says BNP vice-chairman and business leader Abdul Awal Mintoo

SOHEL PARVEZ

Without proper institutions, it’s not possible to prevent abuse of power, prevent corruption, and improve public life, said business leader Abdul Awal Mintoo.

“It is not the job of an adviser, not the job of a minister, not the job of a political party to do all that,” he told The Daily Star in an interview recently.

During the Awami League’s 15-year rule, self-interested groups took control of public institutions, which ultimately served their purposes instead of providing services to people and businesses, said Mintoo, a former president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Those groups used to get all the privileges in almost every sector during the Awami League’s last three terms.

“You can call them oligarchs, you can call them cronies, you can call them their allies. It doesn’t matter which name you are going to use.”

AL-affiliated groups particularly captured the banking, energy, road, and transport sectors, said Mintoo, also the chairman of Multimode Group, which has interests in agriculture, banking, insurance, consumer goods, energy, hospitality, food and beverage, manufacturing, real

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

