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Shakib back in
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CROWD CONTROL OPERATIONS

Police seek to restrict use of lethal arms

SHARIFUL ISLAM

A special committee of the Police Headquarters recommends replacing 50 percent of the long barrel firearms with short-barrel ones in order to lower casualties during crowd control operations.

The short-barrel weapons are recommended because they have shorter ranges, according to the Arms and Ammunition Entitlement Committee.

It also proposes a ban on the use of revolvers, 7.62mm bullets, and lead pellets in shotguns.

If approved, the 7.62mm calibre pistols will be replaced by 9mm ones, which have a shorter range, said senior police officers who drafted the recommendations.

In the tumultuous days of the July uprising, law enforcers' use of long-barrel rifles, 7.62mm pistols, and lead pellets contributed significantly to the large number of casualties, the committee found in its initial analysis.

According to the health ministry data, 826 people were killed and 11,306 others were injured during the uprising. The ministry periodically updates the numbers.

Contacted on December 29, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Baharul Alam said he was yet to review the report.

"It will be sent to the home ministry and then to the Armed Forces Division. After receiving their opinions, the arms policy will be finalised," he said.

For crowd control and stopping violence, tear gas and batons will be used, he said.

"I personally advocate zero use of lethal weapons. Nowadays, advanced weapons are used to control crowds and subdue violence effectively. Somebody hit by a bullet from such a weapon will remain unconscious for a few minutes," the IGP added.

Requesting anonymity, a member of the arms entitlement committee said, "It will take four to five years to replace the munitions. The surplus will be given to the army."

Deputy Inspector General Abdul Kuddus Chowdhury is the chief of the committee formed on August 22. He has prior experience of serving as a member of a UN committee on the use of force.

A senior police officer involved in drafting the PHQ committee's recommendations said sniper rifles were used on protesters during the mass uprising, which was completely illegal.

The long barrel firearms have an effective range of over 400 metres, while short barrel ones have a 50-metre range. The use of the latter will reduce the risk of unintended casualties, said the member.

The replacement of 7.62mm calibre pistols (100 metres range) with 9mm pistols (25 metres) will further limit casualties, he added.

In the days of the mass uprising in July, members of the police, Rab, Border Guard Bangladesh and other forces opened fire on protesters. Over 400 lost sight in lead pellet injuries. Many others suffered life-changing injuries.

The Daily Star analysed the pattern of injuries of 204 people who died as of August 1 and found that almost 95 percent of them were shot dead by live rounds or shotgun pellets. Of them, 113 were shot in the head, chest, and stomach.

The committee also mentions in the proposal that revolvers should be phased out because these are difficult to handle and prone to misfires.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- In each 30-member platoon, 2 officers to carry 9mm pistols, others non-lethal weapons
- To replace 7.62mm calibre pistols with 9mm ones that have shorter range
- Striking forces with lethal weapons to be kept ready in case first responders fail

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Foreign exchange reserves are showing encouraging signs of stability due to record remittance inflows and rising exports, but private sector investment remains a concern for the government.

Economists attribute this sluggish investment to ongoing political uncertainty and increasing business costs, predicting this trend may persist for another year.

While the central bank's forex management policy is expected to stabilise exports and remittances, sustained improvement hinges on boosting private sector investment and controlling inflation.

Key indicators of private sector investment include private sector credit and capital machinery imports.

Latest data published by the Bangladesh Bank on Thursday showed private sector credit grew 9.86 percent year-on-year in August and then 7.66 percent in November last year.

It fell by 9.20 percent in September and 8.30 percent in

Private sector credit growth slows

- LC opening, settlement for capital machinery import dip
- Reserves cross \$21b after record remittance, huge exports
- Stagnant private investment, inflation may hurt exports, remittance

October. The private sector credit growth target in the central bank's monetary policy of July was 9.8 percent for December.

During the July-November period of the ongoing fiscal year, letter of credit (LC) settlement for capital machinery import declined by 21.90 percent, compared with that of the same period of the previous fiscal year.

During this period, LC opening for capital machinery import dipped by 26.45 percent, according to central bank data.

Import of intermediate goods also decreased by 15.38 percent and LC opening for these goods saw an 11.52 percent decline.

Zahid Hussain, former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office, identified political uncertainty as one of the main reasons behind such a lack of activity in private investment.

"To what direction the country's politics will be headed is likely to be determined this year. In this context, 2025 is a critical year," he said.

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Dense fog,
biting cold
to stay for
3 to 4 days

STAR REPORT

The chilling weather conditions accompanied by dense fog, currently gripping the country, are expected to continue for the next three to four days.

"The current conditions are expected till January 6 or 7, when there's a possibility of light rain. Afterwards, the temperature may improve," said Bazlur Rashid, a meteorologist at the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD).

Between December 30 and January 2, the temperatures have dropped by 10-12°C, he added.

The BMD recorded the country's lowest temperature at 8.3°C in Panchagarh's Tetulia yesterday morning. The lowest temperature in Dhaka was recorded at 13.6°C.

The weather is coldest in the northern districts of Rangpur and Rajshahi divisions.

In its weather bulletin for 24 hours starting 9:00am yesterday, BMD said night temperature may rise slightly, and day temperature may rise by 1-3°C over the western part and remain nearly unchanged elsewhere over the country.

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'Nothing to
add at this
point of time'

India says about
Hasina's extradition

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
New Delhi

India yesterday said it does not have anything to add "at this point" to Bangladesh's interim government's request for the extradition of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

Asked at his weekly media briefing in New Delhi if there has been any response from India to Bangladesh's request for Hasina's extradition, Ministry of External Affairs spokesman Randhir Jaiswal said "A week ago, I had confirmed that we have received a communication from Bangladesh authorities in respect of former PM Sheikh Hasina. I have nothing to add at this point of time."

Asked to comment on a Chattogram court's rejection of bail for arrested Hindu monk Chinmoy Krishna Das, Jaiswal said,

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Palestinians mourn over the bodies of relatives, killed in an Israeli strike, outside a hospital in Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza Strip yesterday. Since October 7, 2023, Israel's military campaign has killed at least 45,581 people in Gaza, a majority of them civilians.

Rice prices rise by
up to Tk 8 per kg

Withdrawal of duty, fresh imports
seem to have no impact on market

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

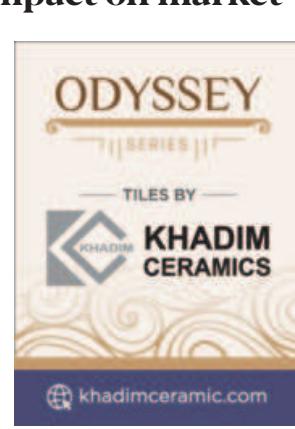
The prices of almost all varieties of rice have been increasing over the past three weeks, despite the withdrawal of import duties and the inflow of rice imports.

During visits to several kitchen markets in the capital yesterday, including ones in Karwan Bazar, Mirpur, and Kazipara, this correspondent found that the price of fine rice rose by Tk 6-8, medium-quality rice by Tk 5-6, and coarse rice by Tk 2-3 per kg compared to three weeks ago.

Miniket rice is selling at Tk 75-85 per kg, up from Tk 68-78; Nazirshail rice at Tk 78-90 per kg, up from Tk 72-82; BR-28 rice at Tk 64-66, up from Tk 58-62; and Paijam at Tk 62-65, up from Tk 55-58 per kg.

Additionally, coarse rice (Guti Shorna) has risen by about Tk 2-3 per kg. Three weeks ago, its price was Tk 50-52 per kg, but buyers now have to pay Tk 52-55.

MA Raihan Joglu, proprietor of Matlab Traders in Karwan Bazar, who has been in the trade for over 40 years, said rice prices were already high, and this recent hike, during the Aman harvesting season despite tax exemptions and imports from India, is unusual.



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