

## 14 SAD activists held for ‘looting, vandalism’ in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Joint forces yesterday detained 14 leaders and activists of Students Against Discrimination (SAD) of Kalabagan unit, including its convener Salauddin Salman, over attacking and looting the office of a construction firm in the capital’s Kalabagan area.

They were handed over to Kalabagan police, its Officer-in-Charge Muktaruzzaman told a press briefing at 11:30pm.

He said the detainees vandalised and looted the office of Kabico Ltd, owned by Sheikh Kabir, at Russell Square around 2:30pm, saying that it was an Awami League office.

The suspects took away Tk 3 lakh and four computers from the office, the OC said, quoting the firm owner.

Police went there upon getting a 999 call. Army personnel also went to the scene.

Police recovered Tk 31,000 from the detainees, the OC said, adding that they filed a case in this connection.



Police use teargas to disperse a procession of banned militant outfit Hizb ut-Tahrir in front of Baitul Mukarram Masjid in the capital after Juma prayers yesterday. Law enforcers detained several men from the spot.

PHOTO: STAR

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## NCP ready for polls anytime

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The NCP wants to see the rapid implementation of a July Proclamation as well, Nahid said, adding that the charter and proclamation are two different things.

The proclamation was demanded by the students much earlier while the Charter was mentioned by the chief adviser.

Responding to a question, Nahid said it would be possible to hold both the constituent assembly and national parliament elections within the desired timeframe if political consensus could be reached.

“I do not think it’s impossible to hold the polls in December even if it is an election to the constituent assembly. It primarily depends on political will and consensus.”

Referring to an interview he gave to Reuters, Nahid said his statements were mistranslated by various media outlets on Thursday.

“I did not say that [holding] an election this year was not possible. I said given the current law and order situation and the weak state of police, holding elections would be extremely challenging.”

Besides, the police officers lack recent experience in working while a fair election is held, he said.

“From that standpoint, we said that the policing system and law and order situation must be improved before elections could be held. The government, political parties, and various social forces must come forward and cooperate to achieve that.”

Nahid said the NCP leaders strongly condemned the incidents of rape, sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women.

“We call upon the interim government to take a firm stance to ensure women’s safety. We demand that perpetrators be brought to justice.”

He said the female members of the NCP and its student wing had been the target of cyberbullying by the Awami League activists.

### TRANSPARENCY IN FUNDING

“We want transparency in who is providing financial support [for a political party] and how it is being spent. This culture of accountability should be adopted by all political parties...”

But the NCP alone cannot develop a political culture, Nahid said.

“If we disclose the names of people who financially support us, the government must ensure that they will not face any harm. In reality, this culture of transparency has not yet been established in Bangladesh.”

Nahid then sought support from honest individuals who wanted to rebuild the country.

As a people’s party, the NCP will be run by people’s money, he said.

“We formed a financial policy team, and are discussing with Bangladeshi economists at home and abroad to develop a political-financial policy. We will present this policy to you in the future.”

Responding to a question, he said, “It will take us more time to express our stance on forming alliances...”

### STUDENTS AGAINST DISCRIMINATION CEASED TO EXIST

“The Students Against Discrimination is no longer in its previous form. A student body has been formed, and a political party has emerged. We call upon the law enforcement agencies to take legal action against anyone who uses this identity for wrongdoing.”

## 8-year-old

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According to a family member, the child’s condition was deteriorating, and as there were injuries to her throat, doctors say she could have been strangled too.

“We are waiting for her to regain consciousness. That’s our only hope now,” said her uncle.

Medical Officer Subash Ranjan Halder of Magura Sadar Hospital said the child was bleeding from her vagina, had an injury mark across her neck and scratches on several parts of her body.

Ayub Ali, officer-in-charge of Magura Sadar Police Station, said police were investigating the incident.

[Our Benapole correspondent contributed to this report]

## Govt eyes quick completion

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In a meeting with Rosatom Director General Alexey Likhachev in Dhaka towards the end of last month, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus emphasised the timely completion of the project to meet Bangladesh’s growing energy needs.

“We are looking forward to your support, which is very important to us,” Prof Yunus told the Rosatom director general, according to a media statement from the Chief Adviser’s Office.

Earlier in January, Finance and Science and Technology Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed told The Daily Star that the interim government was committed to completing the Rooppur power plant project. “We have been prioritising the project for its quick implementation,” he said.

Rooppur is among the top 15 projects that received a total allocation of Tk 44,822 crore in the revised ADP.

Besides Rooppur, Matarbari coal-fired power plant project has seen a rise in allocation in the revised ADP, from Tk 6,105 crore to Tk 7,050 crore. It is the second highest allocation for a single project in the revised ADP.

The 600MW unit-1 of the Matarbari plant, funded by Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica), has been commercially operational while the second unit with the same capacity is undergoing test runs.

The total cost of the power plant project is Tk 56,693 crore, of which about Tk 44,000 crore was spent as of June last year.

## Ensuring data interoperability a top priority

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working on ICT initiatives, and now that I have been given executive authority over these ministries, I will accelerate the execution of key reforms.”

In November, Taiyeb, an electrical engineering graduate of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, was appointed as ICT policy adviser with a status of state minister.

He has extensive experience in the global telecom industry, having worked for companies like Vodafone Ziggo Netherlands, Ericsson and MTN Communications.

He said that he will continue pushing for reforms in the ICT sector.

“For the postal division, digitising the postal system is the biggest challenge, and we are committed to tackling it.”

Certain vested business groups have gained undue control over the telecommunications sector and his administration will act swiftly to restore order.

“We will focus on current projects that enhance data speed and will undertake new projects if necessary. The fibre network will be optimised by eliminating monopolistic control, unlocking economic potential and making data more affordable – something the public has long demanded.”

When asked about steps to investigate allegations of massive corruption under the previous administration, Taiyeb revealed that a committee for a white paper on ICT has already been formed, involving ICT experts, legal professionals and journalists.

“They have already started their background work and an official gazette will soon be published to formalise the committee.”

Discussions would take place with government advisers regarding the formation of a separate committee to investigate corruption in the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission and the Posts and Telecommunications Division.

“In ICT, where I have worked for the past three months, we have paused

The allocations for most other projects have been cut as their implementation has been hampered due to political unrest in the country since the start of this fiscal year.

Three more projects currently underway at Matarbari in Maheshkhali for the development of a deep sea port have been allocated a total of Tk 5,139 crore in the revised ADP against the original allocation of Tk 8,758 crore.

Planning ministry officials said the fund cut for the three projects was high because of slow implementation. The total cost of the three projects approved in 2020 is Tk 48,762 crore, of which Tk 1,601 crore has been spent so far.

Three other Jica-funded projects on Dhaka’s transport system have received large allocations in the revised ADP. They are MRT-6, MRT-1 and MRT-5 with a combined total cost of Tk 1,28,687 crore.

They have been allocated Tk 4,552 crore in the revised ADP against Tk 6,537 crore allocated in the original one.

MRT-6 has already been operational from Uttara to Motijheel, while the construction of its extension from Motijheel to Kamalapur is underway.

This project has been allocated Tk 1,641 crore in the revised ADP.

The estimated cost for MRT-1 is Tk 53,972 crore, and as of June last year, Tk 2,469 crore has been spent.

In the revised ADP, Tk 2,043 crore has been allocated for the project.

MRT-1 will run from Hazrat

Shahjalal International Airport to Kamalapur via Purbachal with parts of the line to be built underground.

MRT-5 northern route, which will connect Hemayetpur of Savar with Bhatara in the capital via Gabtoli, Mirpur, and Gulshan, will be implemented at a total cost of Tk 41,238 crore. So far, Tk 4,063 crore has been spent for the project.

In the revised ADP, MRT-5 has seen a slightly reduced allocation of Tk 868 crore from the original Tk 968 crore.

The allocation for Shahjalal airport’s Jica-funded third terminal has remained unchanged at Tk 3,535 crore.

Another Jica-funded project, Jamuna Rail Bridge, has received Tk 2,337 crore in the revised ADP.

Three China-funded projects are also on the list of projects with large allocations in the revised ADP.

Of them, the Dhaka-Ashulia Elevated Expressway project saw a slight cut in allocation and received Tk 3,663 crore in the revised ADP.

Its total cost is Tk 17,553 crore, of which Tk 8,691 crore was spent as of June last year.

The two other China-funded projects, which are related to strengthening power lines, received Tk 4,625 crore combinedly in the revised ADP while the original allocation was Tk 7,039 crore.

The combined cost for the two projects is Tk 34,794 crore, of which Tk 15,986 crore was spent until June last year.

and suspended several unnecessary and questionable projects.”

The white paper committee will also examine corruption in project components and subcomponents.

“Alongside the Anti-Corruption Commission team, which has already begun its work, my priority is to facilitate and extend the highest level of support to their efforts.”

When asked about unnecessary licences in the telecommunication sector, Taiyeb said that no businessman would be forced out of the industry.

However, he emphasised the need to dismantle monopolistic structures within the licensing regime.

“This must be addressed at any cost, as without breaking these monopolies, we cannot ensure accessible telecom and ICT services for the people. To achieve this, we will abolish the layers that create monopolistic barriers.”

There are two key measures to eliminate monopolies: first, fostering competition where monopolies exist, and second, streamlining the licensing process by reducing the current seven to eight licensing stages to just two or three.

This discussion began during the tenure of former Telecom and ICT Adviser Nahid Islam.

“And I intend to revive it.”

Several licenses had been issued but were not yet operational.

“We will take measures to revoke inactive licences and reallocate them to businesses that can actively contribute to the sector.”

Regarding the alleged mismanagement of the social obligation fund, Taiyeb emphasised that a stakeholder discussion will be held to evaluate whether a committee should be formed to investigate corruption or policy missteps in handling this significant amount of public money.

When asked whether he would take steps to restore the BTRC’s independence, Taiyeb stressed the need for both autonomy and accountability.

“I want to see the BTRC as a capable and independent commission. However, an organisation only

becomes truly independent when it is held properly accountable. We may arrange a public hearing to determine how BTRC should be made accountable.”

Stakeholders – including civil society, the judiciary, political parties and businesses – should participate in the process to ensure both independence and accountability.

During the previous administration, the BTRC chairman, vice chairman and commissioners wielded excessive power, allowing them to violate regulations without oversight.

The BTRC has issued numerous directives that unfairly benefited certain business entities, and many of these directives remain unreviewed.

“If you grant full independence to the BTRC without ensuring accountability, corrupt officials may exploit their authority, undermining the very purpose of providing uninterrupted data and voice services to the public.”

In 2010, an amendment to the telecom act stripped BTRC of its authority and transferred power to the ministry. And as the secretary of the ministry serves as a board director for multiple state-run telecom organisations that BTRC regulate, it has been creating regulatory challenges.

The BTRC has been unable to take action against these state-owned entities since the ministry itself became the commission’s regulator after the amendment that empowers ministry to preapprove all the key decisions of the BTRC.

Asked about it, Taiyeb said: “There will be an effort to establish a balance of power between the ministry and the BTRC. If the public hearing recommends reducing the secretary’s authority in this matter, we will act accordingly.”

He emphasised that achieving the right balance would require public engagement.

Addressing concerns over slow reforms and ministry interference in the BTRC’s initiatives, he assured that he would closely monitor progress and work to overcome bureaucratic hurdles.

## Police foil Hizb ut-Tahrir procession in the capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police charged truncheons and fired teargas shells to disperse a procession taken out by banned outfit Hizb ut-Tahrir in the capital’s Baitul Mukarram area yesterday.

Police detained several people from the spot.

Witnesses said the outfit activists brought out the procession as part of its “March for Khilafat” programme after Juma prayers at the national mosque.

The procession was intercepted twice before it reached the Paltan intersection. As the procession moved from Paltan towards Bijoynagar, it was blocked by police.

At that point, the law enforcers dispersed them by firing teargas shells, sound grenades, and charging truncheons.

After this, Hizb ut-Tahrir men attempted to regroup and resume the march, but police dispersed them. This back and forth lasted for around 30 minutes.

Masud Alam, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (Ramna Division), said the Hizb ut-Tahrir activists tried to bring out a procession, but law enforcers removed them.

Meanwhile, Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain, the LGRD adviser, secured the release of a detainee named Arman Ali, an employee of a shop at Karwan Bazar wholesale market.

Arman was seen chasing and beating up Hizb ut-Tahrir operatives alongside police personnel and was later picked up by the law enforcers. A video of the incident went viral on social media.

## The picture of violence

FROM PAGE 1

Dowry-related violence also claimed the lives of 290 women.

Domestic violence also took its toll, with 1,262 women killed, 386 injured, and 416 taking their own lives.

Acid attacks have also affected 94 women and girls, with nine fatalities resulting from these horrific assaults.

The situation remains equally troubling in 2025, with shocking numbers reported in the first two months.

At least 224 women and girls have already faced violence, including 107 raped, of whom 66 were minors.

A further 27 women and girls were gang-raped, and 29 faced sexual harassment, 16 of whom were children. Six women died due to dowry-related violence, and two were injured.

58 women lost their lives to



domestic violence, while 20 took their own lives. One woman was killed in an acid attack.

HRSS executive director, Izazul Islam, highlighted several reasons behind the rising violence, discrimination, and misogyny against women in Bangladesh.

“Superstition and distorted religious interpretations regarding women’s participation in education are significant factors,” he said.

He explained that while more women seek education and work, it remains taboo in many areas, leading to discouragement and obstacles that marginalise them.

“Religious groups, through misinterpretations of religion, appear as barriers to women’s development in social and political spheres. The lack of proper implementation of laws, police ignorance, and delays in the judicial system allow criminals to evade punishment,” he added.

He also said social barriers often prevent women from seeking legal

assistance, leaving them without proper legal and social protection.

Fauzia Moslem, president of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, while talking to The Daily Star, emphasised collective effort to deal with the situation.

“The rising violence, moral policing, and mob justice have turned women’s issues into a broader social concern that requires the active participation of all, not just women,” Moslem said.

She added, “Society is descending into chaos, where lawlessness and criminal impunity are growing. The failure of law enforcement, compromises, and lack of accountability are empowering criminals.”

She said if society as a whole does not wake up, tackling this crisis will be extremely difficult.

“Justice is being replaced by negotiation, giving more power to those who oppose women’s rights and exploit the system,” she said, noting that complacency, silence of authorities, including women in leadership roles, a general disregard for law – all are fuelling growing hostility towards women.

Eminent social activist Khushi Kabir echoed the same sentiment, saying, “We are facing a deep crisis where some people believe they have the right to abuse others. Some individuals, who act against societal norms, try to legitimise such actions, with support from some members of the public, which worsens the issue.”

“The core problem is the weak law and order situation in our country. There are no effective measures against criminals, and often, the public supports the offenders. This makes the situation dangerous for society as a whole,” she added.

She said the promises made on International Women’s Day must be fulfilled, and women’s rights, safety, and dignity should be the government’s top priority.

“The government must enforce strict laws to ensure women can live safely and freely,” Kabir added.

The HRSS urged the government to strictly enforce laws and expedite legal proceedings in gender-based violence cases. It emphasised the need for thorough investigations and prompt justice for all instances of violence against women.

The organisation also called for increased women’s participation in social and political spheres, safer work environments, and stronger measures to address online harassment and ensure digital security for women.

## 119 citizens slam CSA cases

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The statement said that Rakhal and Nahid have been sued under the CSA over “hurting religious sentiments”.

“Poet Sohail Hasan Galib has already been arrested and imprisoned under this law. Rakhal Raha and Nahid Hasan played a crucial role in Bangladesh’s democratic movements, including the struggle for voting rights, religious and cultural freedom, and freedom of speech,” read the statement.

They were also at the forefront of the July movement against the AL government’s repression, it said, adding that after the July uprising, they took on significant responsibilities in advancing the reform plans of the interim government and are currently working in two key government institutions.

“However, baseless allegations of hurting religious sentiments are now being used to discredit their contributions and achievements. By inciting collective resentment against them, their personal and social lives are

being placed at risk. Such actions are unacceptable in a democratic society,” the statement stated.

It also said that those who believe in democracy, freedom of speech, and pluralistic culture are deeply saddened by these incidents.

“A stable political settlement cannot be achieved in this country by abandoning the culture of respect and tolerance for differing opinions. Furthermore, the state cannot maintain laws that are used to suppress dissenting voices and encourage intolerance,” it read.

The statement signatories include economist Prof Anu Muhammad, singer Kafil Ahmed, lawyers Hasnat Quaiyum, Sara Hossain, and Jyotirmoy Barua, Dhaka University teachers Prof Kazi Maruful Islam and Samina Lutfi, Jahangirnagar University teachers Suman Sazzad and Syed Nizar, Rajshahi University teacher A Al Mamun, and Chittagong University teacher Kh Ali Ar Raji.