

Dhaka Central University for 7 colleges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

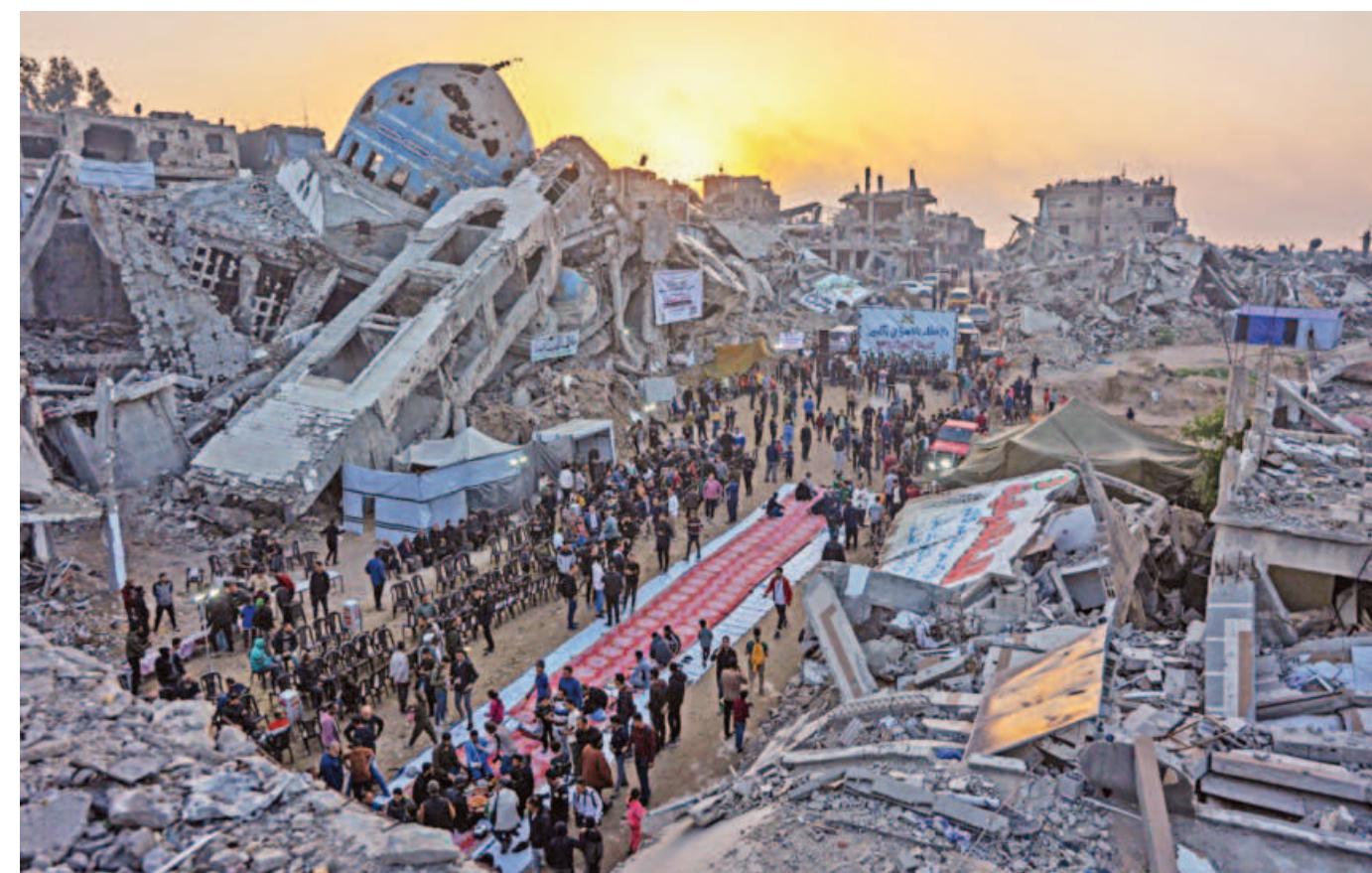
The newly proposed university comprising seven government colleges in the capital will be called the Dhaka Central University.

The seven colleges involved in the new university are Dhaka College, Government Bangla College, Government Titumir College, Eden Mohila College, Kabi Nazrul Government College, Government Shahid Suhrawardy College, and Begum Badrunnesa Government Girls' College. The colleges currently serve about 2 lakh students in both graduate and postgraduate programmes.

The decision was made yesterday at a meeting held at the University Grants Commission (UGC) with a delegation of 28 student leaders, said Abul Kalam Azad Majumder, the deputy press secretary to the chief adviser, at a press briefing yesterday.

Regarding the university's interim administration, a proposal has already been prepared and sent to the University of Dhaka (DU) authorities via the education ministry.

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Palestinians gather for a mass fast-breaking iftar meal in front of the destroyed Salim Abu Muslim mosque in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip, during the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan. Israel and Hamas are set for more indirect talks yesterday on the Gaza ceasefire, but deep divisions persist between the two warring sides on the terms of the fragile truce. The photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

Correction

In our story titled "The Disappeared of the July Uprising: Families Want Closure, However Painful" published on March 16, 2025, we ran a photo of Iftikharuzzaman, a college student from Bogura, and said he remains unaccounted for since August. He had indeed remained missing for a few days at the time, but has since returned home. We apologise for failing to provide the updated information.



'Rape is rape'

FROM PAGE 1 statement, it reflects the institutional culture and practices. This is shocking, and we must express our outrage," Iftikharuzzaman said at a human chain in front of Parliament yesterday.

TIB organised the programme to protest violence against women and children.

Iftikharuzzaman rejected the DMP chief's comments and termed those "arrogant" and "unacceptable," especially from a law enforcement official.

He called for the media to reject the commissioner's position and to amplify coverage of rape incidents to ensure that the issue remains in public attention. "We must continue to draw attention to the horrific reality of rape, not suppress it."

Reflecting on the state of women's rights in Bangladesh, he said, "In 54 years of independence, men have largely enjoyed freedom, but women have not truly experienced it. If women were truly free, they would not continue to suffer from rape and violence."

Iftikharuzzaman also urged the government not to implement legal reforms on rape cases unilaterally, but to involve civil society organisations in the process to ensure the law is effective in protecting women and children.

Also speaking at the programme, Laki Akter, of Nogorik Uddyog, said that punishment for perpetrators must be severe enough to deter future offences. "The punishment must instill fear in future offenders."

Mohuya Leya Falia, of the Manusher Jonno Foundation, criticised the culture of disrespect towards women, pointing to the prevalence of harmful social media content and religious sermons that perpetuate misogyny.

"These must be stopped," she said, urging the government to take immediate action to eliminate all forms of sexual violence.

Mohuya also said that no reforms will succeed if women continue to feel unsafe. "Political parties must demonstrate what measures they are taking to protect women's rights."

Shamsun Huda, executive director of the Association for Land Reform and Development, called for a redefinition of rape and sexual abuse, stressing that women face insecurity across all areas of life—whether at school, work, or in public spaces. "Women are subjected to sexual assault even in the presence of many men. We live in a barbaric society, and it is shameful."

Shamsul also emphasised the need for reforms in the justice system, urging the expansion of the definition of sexual harassment and abuse, which should also include harmful discussions and misogynistic content on media platforms.

Over a hundred participants from various rights organisations attended the human chain, demanding justice for all incidents of violence against women and children and calling for an end to the culture of impunity.

Highway Police struggling

FROM PAGE 1

Naogaon, with logs and attacked a BRTC bus and a microbus, stealing Tk 3 lakh in cash and valuables. A gang looted cash and mobile phones from teachers and students on an educational trip in Tangail's Ghatal upazila on February 25.

On March 1, robbers attacked a microbus carrying a Bangladeshi expatriate in Pabna's Santia upazila, injuring three people and looting valuables. A day later, a moving bus near Savar's Bank Town area was ambushed in broad daylight by armed robbers.

In response to these incidents, police have prepared a list of 1,446 suspects, including individuals who have been formally charged or convicted in past highway robbery cases.

Md Shafiqul Islam, deputy inspector general (operations) of Highway Police, told The Daily Star that the force had already sent the list to the Police Headquarters with a request to launch a coordinated drive by district police and other units concerned.

UNDERSTAFFED, ILL-EQUIPPED

With its headquarters operating from a rented house in Uttara, the unit faces an acute shortage of vehicles, leading to heavy reliance on patrolling on foot or requisitioned vehicles.

It had around 99 patrol vehicles and only 2,931 personnel for over 3,000 kilometres of highways across

Bangladesh—an average of one vehicle per 30 kilometres.

Of the original 99 patrol vehicles, nine were torched during the July uprising, leaving even fewer resources to maintain order.

The Highway Police operates under four regions, nine zones, 36 police stations, 37 outposts, and seven camps.

Alarmingly, nine police stations or outposts do not have a single patrol vehicle, forcing officers to rent human haulers to conduct their duties.

One official from the Bogura region, wishing anonymity, revealed that Haikumrul Highway Police Station has only two patrol vehicles to cover an 88-kilometre stretch across three major highways.

With limited resources, officers struggle to cover high-risk crime zones, leaving vast areas completely unguarded. In some instances, the lone ambulance designated for accident rescue is repurposed for patrolling.

To improve highway security, DIG Shafiqul stressed the need for each police station and outpost to have at least four patrol vehicles.

"We have 90 vehicles and around 3,000 members, but we need at least 250 vehicles and 6,000 officers," he said.

The DIG said that although reports of highway robberies waned in the first half of Ramadan, 700 additional policemen would be deployed on deputation ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr

Dhaka should weigh all options carefully

FROM PAGE 1

diplomatic implications, given that global and regional powers have significant stakes in the region.

They say Bangladesh has been a victim of Myanmar's policy on the Rohingya, who fled in their hundreds of thousands since the 1980s.

Though many of them had returned to Myanmar earlier, there was no repatriation at all since the largest influx in 2017 when around 750,000 of them fled to Cox's Bazar.

With the deterioration of security and economic situation amid the conflicts between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army rebel group, about one lakh more have fled since July last year.

According to a UNDP report published in November last year, there is a famine-like situation in Rakhine State, most of what is now being controlled by the Arakan Army, though they could not take control of the sea and airport yet.

Bangladesh's sole intention is to have the Rohingya repatriated, but ensure humanitarian support before it. That also has become challenging with the World Food Programme reducing food aid.

Dr Imtiaz Ahmed, former professor of Dhaka University's International Relations Department, said the UN

secretary general or even the UN General Assembly cannot go ahead with such a humanitarian corridor if the UN Security Council does not approve it.

Former Bangladesh ambassador to China, Munshi Faiz Ahmad, said if humanitarian assistance is transported to Rakhine through a corridor, there can be an opportunity for the Rohingya to go back to Rakhine, instead of staying in Bangladeshi camps.

"We have been talking about a safe zone within Rakhine. Eventually, that can happen," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

This can be done under the UN supervision. Such an arrangement can also help bring more aid, he said.

"However, the control of the corridor's Bangladesh part has to be under Dhaka's authority. If any issue arises, Bangladesh should have the authority to seal the corridor," Munshi Faiz said.

Also, the UN has to guarantee that there will be sufficient aid, he added.

"Nothing is clear yet about the proposed humanitarian corridor. We need to have a thorough discussion about it before we agree," he said.

Bangladesh needs to carefully weigh the pros and cons", the security analyst said.

The DMCH register lists Sub-Inspector Mahfuz of the DB police as the officer who admitted Ezaz.

However, DB chief Rezaul Karim Mallick denied that Ezaz died in their custody.

"A team detained him at a city hospital. As he was sick, we immediately took him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where he died. We did not take him into our custody," said Rezaul, an additional commissioner (Detective Branch) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, on Saturday.

Hafizur Rahman, inspector (investigation) of Mohammadpur Police Station, said Ezaz was wanted in a murder case.

The Inter Services Public Relations Directorate (ISPR) said on Saturday, "This is not our issue. He was detained by the army long ago, handed over to the police,

to maintain law and order on the highways during the holiday travel rush.

He also said 39 people allegedly involved in highway robberies were arrested after the recent incidents.

A shortage of firearms and ammunition has further weakened the force. During last year's student-led mass uprising, several Highway Police establishments were attacked and torched, while 33 firearms and over 11,000 rounds of ammunition were looted. Among the looted arms, 10 are 7.62mm rifles, one submachine gun, nine 9mm pistols, 10 shotguns, and three gas guns.

The challenges extend beyond manpower, vehicles and firearms.

The design of highways, particularly on four-lane and eight-lane sections, makes it difficult for officers to respond quickly to incidents on the opposite side. Delayed response times only embolden criminals.

Furthermore, the force's wireless communication system has a range of just two kilometres, severely hindering coordination among units.

To ensure road safety, DIG Shafiqul called for access to the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) database, which he said would help track offenders more effectively.

"If a driver violates traffic rules, the owner may receive an automated SMS alert, and BRTA may collect the fines during document renewal," he said.

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