

## 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 Shaheed 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 Ishtiak Hasan, 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.



Ishtiak Hasan

## 'Rape is rape'

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statement, it reflects the institutional culture and practices. This is shocking, and we must express our outrage," Iftekharuzzaman said at a human chain in front of Parliament yesterday. TIB organised the programme to protest violence against women and children.

Iftekharuzzaman 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."

Iftekharuzzaman 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 Nagorik Uddyg, 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."

Shamsul 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 Ghatail upazila on February 25.

On March 1, robbers attacked a microbus carrying a Bangladeshi expatriate in Pabna's Santhia 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 Hatikumrul 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

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.

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.

Also, though the Arakan Army controls the majority of Rakhine, the Myanmar Army is still the country's official authority. Both these parties also need to be consulted, he said. The other major countries in the region, including China, Japan and India also need to be engaged in the process. China or India, who are major neighbours of Myanmar, may not allow some other security forces to be in the region, he added.

"We need to do a lot of homework before agreeing to such a decision," said Dr Imtiaz. Shafiqat Munir, senior research fellow at the Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies, said there are many questions that need to be answered before any humanitarian corridor is established. "Who will establish the corridor, how will these be operated, and who will guard it? What will be the other end of the corridor and who will ensure security?" he asked.

"Bangladesh needs to carefully weigh the pros and cons", the security analyst said. "Who will establish the corridor, how will these be operated, and who will guard it? What will be the other end of the corridor and who will ensure security?" he asked. "Bangladesh needs to carefully weigh the pros and cons", the security analyst said.

and later granted bail."

Iftekhar Hasan, officer-in-charge of Mohammadpur Police Station, said, "An army team arrested Ezaz and then handed him over to us on March 11 as his name was found in a murder case. We produced him before the court the same day, but he got bail."

The suspect was undergoing treatment at a hospital, from where a DB team detained him, he told this paper.

A local trader alleged that Ezaz was closely associated with top criminal Emon and engaged in various criminal activities.

Refuting the claims, Shah Alam accused law enforcement of falsely labelling his son a criminal and subjecting him to torture, which led to his death.

"I demand a thorough investigation," he said.

## Trump targets Venezuela gang with wartime aliens law

AFP, Washington

Donald Trump tried Saturday to invoke a law last used during World War II against Japanese residents to target a Venezuelan gang -- only to find his decision blocked by a judge.

The US president had issued an order to deport alleged members of the Venezuelan drug gang Tren de Aragua, arguing he had a right to declare them "alien enemies" under a wartime act.

But rights lawyers went to court and a federal judge ordered the administration not to deport anyone until he has more time to consider the legality of the order.

The Alien Enemies Act of 1798

## HC upholds gallows for 20 Buet students

FROM PAGE 1

"No one else should have the same fate as Abrar Fahad."

The murder triggered widespread protests on campuses across the country, compelling the Buet administration to ban political activities on the campus in October.

On the night of October 6, 2019, the convicts tortured Abrar with skipping ropes and cricket stumps. Just a few hours earlier, he came back to the dormitory from his home in Kushdia and was in his room at Sher-e-Bangla Hall.

Around 8:00pm, some Chhatra League leaders and activists of the dormitory asked him to go to room number 2011 on the first floor.

At room 2011, Abrar saw some BCL leaders waiting for him. One of them took Abrar's phone and started checking his Facebook page and Messenger app. The BCL men asked him whether he had links with Shibir, the student wing of Jamaat.

The men started hitting him after finding Abrar's Facebook post which was critical of a government deal with India. Two of them had cricket stumps.

At one point, one of the stumps broke in half. A third man then picked up the broken piece and started hitting him with it while another whipped Abrar with a skipping rope.

Abrar begged for water, but they didn't give him a single drop. When he fell to the floor, the BCL men forced him back on his feet and started hitting him again. Abrar then started throwing up and became motionless soon afterwards.

The attackers then called Abrar's classmates and along with them took him to the staircase landing between the first and ground floors around 2:30am. The BCL men then went out to have dinner. After it became clear that Abrar had died, they took the body downstairs.

Abrar's father Barkat filed a murder case with Chawkbazar Police Station the next day.

After yesterday's verdict, Attorney General Asaduzzaman, expressing satisfaction, said the concept for bringing discipline to the state and society and ensuring justice was established.

Azizur Rahman Dulu, lawyer for convicts Morshed Amartya Islam and Miftahul Islam Zia, told The Daily Star that his clients were deprived of justice because they were not involved in the torture or murder.

"We will move appeals on behalf of my clients before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court against the High Court verdict once we receive the full text. After the appeals are filed, the execution of the death sentence will be suspended," he said.

If the verdict on the appeal goes

is a wartime authority that allows a president to detain or deport citizens of an enemy nation, and has been invoked three times.

It was used in the War of 1812, World War I and -- most famously -- between 1942 and 1946 during World War II to intern around 120,000 Japanese and Japanese-Americans.

Now, Trump, who has promised supporters an aggressive drive to deport thousands of undocumented migrants, is targeting Tren de Aragua.

In a proclamation, the White House declared that the transnational criminal organization is closely linked to the government of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro.

against his clients, they will file review petitions before the Appellate Division, the lawyer said.

If the review petitions are dismissed, those sentenced to death can seek the president's mercy.

**THE CONVICTS**

Those sentenced to death are Mehedi Hasan Russel, former general secretary of Buet Chhatra League; Mehedi Hasan Robin, ex-organising secretary; Anik Sarkar Apu, ex-information and research secretary; Moniruzzaman Monir, ex-literature secretary; Miftahul Islam Zion, ex-sports secretary; Ilti Mosharrar Shokal, ex-deputy social welfare secretary; Mustaba Rafid, ex-deputy office secretary; former members Mujahidur Rahman Mujahid, Muntasir Al Jemy and Ehtashamul Rabbi Tanim; activists Khandaker Tabakkarul Islam Tanvir, ASM Nazmus Sadat, Majedur Rahman alias Majed, Hossain Mohammad Toha, Shamim Billah, Mizanur Rahman Mizan, SM Mahmud Setu, Shamsul Arefin Rafat, Muhammad Morshed-Uz-Zaman Mondol and Morshed Amartya Islam.

Buet BCL's former vice-president Muhtasim Fuad, former library and publication secretary Ishtiak Ahmed Munna, former deputy legal affairs secretary Amit Saha and activists Akash Hossain and Moaz Abu Hurayra were sentenced to life in prison.

Among the convicts, Mustaba, Jishan and Tanim have been absconding while Muntasir Al Jemy, sentenced to death, escaped from Kashimpur Central Jail on August 6, a day after the fall of the Awami League regime. Abrar's family did not know that he had escaped until February 24 this year.

Abrar's brother Faiyaz said he did not know why the information was disclosed after six months.

According to the charge sheet, the accused held meetings for two consecutive days and had the intention to beat Abrar to death.

On January 6, 2022, the documents of the case reached the HC as death references to examine the lower court's verdict. The HC bench led by Justice AKM Asaduzzaman began the hearing on the death references and appeals on November 28 last year.

At the appeal hearings, the prosecutors were Attorney General Md Asaduzzaman, deputy attorneys general Jasim Sarker, Khandaker Bahar Rumi, Nur Muhammad Azmi and Rasel Ahmed, and assistant attorneys general Abdul Jabbar Jewel, Laboni Akhter, Tanvir Prodhan and Sumaiya Binte Aziz.

On the other hand, lawyers SM Shahjahan, Azizur Rahman Dulu, Masud Hasan Chowdhury and Mohammad Shishir Manir represented the convicts.