



Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz-Zaman yesterday called on Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at the state guest house Jamuna. During the meeting, the army chief briefed the chief adviser on the overall security situation in the country and the army's current operations.

PHOTO: ISPR

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, CHILDREN

Prioritise prudence over populism in legal reforms

Experts urge government

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government must prioritise prudence over populism before finalising the reforms they are planning for the existing Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000, urged legal experts at an event yesterday.

They stressed the importance of a fair and effective judicial process, calling for broader consultation with legal experts and women's rights activists, instead of hastily imposing harsher punishments.

Titled "Rape and Abuse: Legal Safeguards and Way Forward," the event was organised at the Jatiya Press Club by Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), which serves as the secretariat of the Rape Law Reform Coalition (RLRC) – a platform of 17 women's and human rights, legal, and development organisations.

Maheen Sultan, member of the Women's Rights Reform Commission,

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expand definition of rape to include all genders
- Broaden the interpretation of 'penetration' in legal terms
- Set a specific age threshold for sexual consent
- Determine fines based on the severity of offence
- Prohibit disclosure of identities, photos, videos of victims
- Establish state-run compensation fund for victims

Harsh punishments alone do not guarantee justice, as stricter laws often result in lower conviction rates, allowing perpetrators to evade punishment. We need a system that ensures thorough investigations and fair trials so that every rape case leads to justice and accountability.

MAHEEN SULTAN
Member of the Women's Rights Reform Commission

advocated for a shift in societal attitudes towards gender, relationships, and consent.

Acknowledging the interim government's recent initiatives, she said, "Harsh punishments alone do not guarantee justice, as stricter laws often result in lower conviction rates, allowing perpetrators to evade punishment. We need a system that ensures thorough investigations and fair trials so that every rape case leads

to justice and accountability."

She also recommended identifying the key barriers to justice, including why survivors hesitate to file cases, why investigations are inadequate, and why many cases collapse in court.

Criticising the interim government, she pointed out that RLRC has long been advocating for necessary reforms, but has not been consulted.

She also expressed concern over the government's rush to finalise these changes within a few days.

"This is a national issue, not just a matter of the interim government alone. It should not be about making a quick statement for the sake of appearances," she added.

Advocate Salma Ali, president of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association, emphasised that swift justice is possible with the government's sincere intention and efficient trials.

Citing examples where verdicts in rape cases were delivered in just four days, she stressed that proper coordination between the police and judiciary ensures efficiency.

"However, legal reforms alone are

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Yunus praises army's role, dedication

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday expressed his confidence in the Bangladesh Army's professionalism and dedication, emphasising its role in ensuring national sovereignty and security.

Prof Yunus made the expression after Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz-Zaman met with him at the state guest house Jamuna, according to a press release from the Inter-Services Public Relations.

During the meeting, the army chief briefed the chief adviser on the overall security situation in the country and the army's current operations.

General Waker-Uz-Zaman also highlighted the military's ongoing initiatives to contribute to national stability and development.

The discussion covered various strategic matters, including the army chief's

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DMP issues security guidelines for Eid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police has issued security guidelines to ensure safety of homes, institutions, and shopping centres in the capital during Eid-ul-Fitr.

The directives were given in a press release from DMP's Media and Public Relations Department yesterday. DMP sought public cooperation in this effort, said the release.

Auxiliary police have been deployed to assist law enforcement in maintaining order.

DMP stressed raising security awareness at the individual and institutional levels to help prevent crime.

It also urged city dwellers to follow essential security measures during Eid. Security personnel at homes, apartments, banks, institutions, and shopping centres are advised to remain vigilant with round-the-clock monitoring, while institutions should keep some employees on duty for security oversight.

Residents are advised to secure all doors and windows with multiple locks, and repair the defected ones. Installing and maintaining functional CCTV cameras, auto-lock systems, and security alarms on the main entrances are crucial.

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TONU MURDER

9 years without closure

KHALID BIN NAZRUL

It has been nine long years since the rape and murder of Sohagi Jahan Tonu, yet the case remains unresolved.

Despite six officers from four agencies investigating the case during this time, no probe report has been submitted so far, and law enforcement agencies have failed to make a single arrest in the 3,287 days since the murder.

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) previously claimed to have interrogated around 200 individuals, including army personnel, but no significant progress was made.

Meanwhile, Inspector Tariqul Islam took charge of the case as the latest investigation officer in October last

year after being appointed by the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) in Dhaka.

Tonu, a student of Cumilla Victoria College's history department and also a theatre activist, was raped and murdered inside Cumilla Cantonment on March 20, 2016.

The incident triggered nationwide protests and garnered widespread media attention, both locally and internationally. However, no trial has taken place in the nine years since.

Even after two autopsies at Cumilla Medical College Hospital, the cause of death could not be determined.

The only confirmed development in the case was through DNA tests, which proved that Tonu had been raped before her murder.



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CSOs condemn abduction, abuse of 2 NGO workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Civil Society Organisation (CSO) Alliance has strongly condemned the abduction, brutal torture, and sexual harassment of two NGO workers in Cumilla's Chandina.

Expressing grave concern over the incident, the alliance has called for the immediate arrest and prosecution of the perpetrators.

The CSO Alliance – a coalition of over 300 NGOs, youth platforms, women's rights organisations, environmental groups, human rights organisations, social entrepreneurs, and researchers working in Bangladesh – made this call in a press statement issued yesterday.

The statement was signed by prominent civil society leaders, including Rasheda K Choudhury, executive director of Campaign for Popular Education; Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh; Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation; author Maleka Begum; Asif Saleh, executive director of BRAC; and Farah Kabir, country director of ActionAid Bangladesh, among others.

Expressing outrage over this horrific violation of human rights, the signatories raised concerns about whether legal loopholes are being exploited to shield the perpetrators from justice.

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PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Pedestrians walk past fumes rising from a pile of burning garbage. Waste collectors are supposed to transport the trash from this area to a designated dumping site, but they often neglect this duty and burn the waste on-site instead, causing air pollution. The photo was taken in the Imamganj Ghat area of the capital yesterday.

EID VACATION

DGHS issues 16 directives for health services

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Director General of Health Services on Tuesday issued a 16-point directive to ensure uninterrupted healthcare services across the country during the upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr holidays.

According to the directives, the presence of doctors must be ensured round the clock in the emergency department. The emergency department, labour room, emergency operation theatre, and laboratory must remain operational at all times.

To ensure adequate manpower and medical services at the workplace, staffers may be granted leave in phases before and after Eid through proper coordination, it said.

The head of the institution will grant leave, prioritising uninterrupted emergency medical services and public interest, it added.

The heads of the hospital's indoor units must monitor their departmental activities daily. Emergency labs and x-ray services must be operational round the clock at medical college hospitals, specialised hospitals, district hospitals, and upazila health complexes, the directives read.

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