

## Army acted to save lives

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"We didn't protect any particular group or individuals. In Gopalganj, just like in previous operations, we responded to life-threatening situations. Life comes before political identity ... Be it Gopalganj or elsewhere, our response has been uniform. If anyone's life is in danger, we will not stand idle, regardless of which party they belong to."

About use of lethal force, Col Shafiqul Islam, colonel staff at the MOD, said, "It was an unexpected situation. It wasn't just brickbats being thrown -- cocktails [improvised explosives] were also hurled. There was a threat to lives. In such a situation, law enforcement personnel were compelled to use force in self-defence. No lethal weapons were used there."

Regarding security being provided to leaders of the National Citizen Party, he said, "We did what we have always done -- protect civilians under threat."

On July 16, day-long clashes broke out between Awami League activists and law enforcers, following an attack on the venue of a pre-scheduled NCP rally in Gopalganj Poura Park. Four people died from gunshot wounds during the incident.

Another person with bullet injuries later died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital on July 18.

At least 15 cases were filed against 16,212 people in this regard. So far, 336 individuals have been arrested across the district.

**CHT SITUATION**  
At the briefing, Col Shafiqul said that between July 3-31, at least 10 firearms, nine rounds of ammunition, gunpowder, walkie-talkies, and other items were recovered from different locations in the Chattogram Hill Tracts.

"Seven were arrested, including three UPDF members and two Yaba smugglers. A significant recovery operation on July 29 in Bagailhat uncovered SMGs, rifles, pistols, and walkie-talkies."

On July 30, an abandoned training camp of the Kuki-Chin National Front (KNF) in Bandarban's Ruma upazila was destroyed.

He added that armed clashes continue between the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) and the Parbatya Chattogram Jana Samhati Samiti (JSS) over territorial control, with grenade explosions reported.

In this regard, Brig Gen Nazim said criminal activities in the CHT have increased. "The regional political parties in the CHT, groups we refer to as UPDF, JSS, and similar outfits, have always sought to maintain their control through acts of extortion and kidnapping. They continuously strive to expand their sphere of influence, and in doing so, clashes and gunfights occur often."

"The army is working on this issue and is making every effort to keep the situation under control. It's important to note that the army is not the sole stakeholder in the Chattogram Hill Tracts; the civilian administration and the police are also integral parts of this effort."

He added, "If everyone works in a coordinated manner, I am confident that we can transform the situation to a more secure environment, which is absolutely necessary."

**KNF NOT GAINING GROUND**

Asked if KNF is receiving arms from the Arakan Army, Brig Gen Nazim said, "Yes, the Kuki-Chin National Front is receiving weapons, possibly from the Arakan Army, but that is not surprising given the shared ethnic and ideological links. However, it isn't true that they are gaining dominance in the region."

"Since their emergence, KNF's operational capability has significantly declined. Though eight army personnel were killed in earlier confrontations, we haven't seen such casualties in recent months."

He added, "Instead, many KNF operatives have been killed, arrested,

and their weapons seized. Several of their bases and training camps have also been dismantled."

Nazim noted that army operations are ongoing and gaining success.

About operational procedures in the CHT, Shafiqul said, "We're effectively operating from our existing camps. We establish Temporary Operating Bases wherever needed. There's no operational deficiency."

**COUNTRYWIDE OPERATIONS**

Col Shafiqul Islam began the press briefing with a summary of the army's operations in recent weeks, including anti-crime, anti-drug, and anti-smuggling drives across the country.

From August 2024 till yesterday, the army recovered 9,729 of 12,190 missing firearms and 287,000 rounds of ammunition from across the country. In the past four weeks alone, 37 illegal firearms and 179 rounds of ammunition were seized, he said.

Meanwhile, 16,459 people were arrested since August last year, including 813 in the last four weeks. Arrestees include listed criminals, members of juvenile gangs, drug dealers, and extortionists.

"The army has arrested 5,576 individuals for drug-related crimes since last August, including 55 in the past month from areas like Rampura, Mohammadpur, and Uttara in Dhaka, and Faridpur," he said.

Responding to a query about law and order, he said, "All law enforcement agencies must work together to maintain law and order. And those who need to take the lead must become more effective."

"If you refer to us in particular, the army has been granted magistracy powers, but the clauses under which we are empowered allow us only to conduct searches and arrest suspects. Once we arrest someone and hand them over for judicial processing, we don't have any further role to play."

25, 2024, police lodged cases against 92,486 people, most of them related to murder.

Nearly 400 former ministers, members of parliament and other AL officials have been named in over 1,170 cases, which also include hundreds of unnamed individuals.

The New York-based rights group urged the interim government to end arbitrary detention, prosecute abusive security personnel and disband Rab.

The HRW called on foreign governments and the UN to support the interim government through targeted sanctions on alleged abusers.

The other governments should prosecute individuals allegedly implicated in serious abuses who have left Bangladesh, including under the principle of universal jurisdiction.

And they should make clear that Bangladeshi participation in UN peacekeeping operations is contingent on ensuring accountability for grave violations of international human rights law, HRW said.

"No one is in any doubt that Yunus's interim government faces enormous challenges, but more needs to be done now to ensure a real and lasting change in Bangladesh's human rights situation," Ganguly said.

As in most other cases, the authorities have not filed charges.

Detainees in other high-profile political cases have also cited baseless grounds for arrest and accused the authorities of denying them medical care and bail.

The first high-profile trial, involving

Hasina and two others, is set for August 3, but thousands remain in jail without evidence or trial dates.

Many cite arbitrary arrest, denial of bail and lack of medical care, HRW said.

A commission formed in August 2024 to probe enforced disappearances during Hasina's rule has received 1,800 complaints, but faces resistance

from security agencies, with evidence reportedly destroyed or withheld.

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