

Over 1,100 sharp weapons seized from New Market shops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More than 1,100 sharp weapons were recovered from shops and warehouses in Dhaka's New Market area last night.

At least nine people were detained during the operation, said Lt Col Nazim Ahmed, commanding officer of 23 East Bengal Regiment of Bangladesh Army and in-charge of Suhrawardy Medical College army camp.

"We primarily suspect that they are used in criminal activities involving teenage gangs and muggers," he said.

Based on intel reports, the seizure was part of a two-day operation under the supervision of the army's Suhrawardy Medical College camp.

The operation was carried out following confessions of recently arrested suspects and media reports indicating that such knives were being rented or sold to criminal groups, said the commanding officer.

The confiscated weapons will be handed over to the Detective Branch for further legal action.

Investigations are underway to determine whether shop owners had any links to criminal networks, the official added.



Banners, posters, and festoons have been pasted and hung on virtually every patch of blank surface found on sidewalks, electric poles, road dividers, and even tree trunks across a street in Khulna city. This unchecked spread of promotional materials is making the city look messy, with no visible effort from authorities to clean it up. The photo was taken in front of City College on Khanjahan Ali Road yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Prof Yunus leaves for KL on Monday

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus is scheduled to meet Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in Putrajaya on Tuesday, aiming to strengthen bilateral relations and achieve tangible outcomes in multiple sectors, including trade, investment, and labour cooperation.

Yunus will leave Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka for Kuala Lumpur on Monday for a three-day official visit at the invitation of Anwar Ibrahim, a senior official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs told UNB.

Ensuring the smooth and transparent recruitment of Bangladeshi workers, expanding cooperation in energy, trade, higher education, halal food production, the blue economy and addressing the Rohingya crisis are among the issues to be discussed, the official added.

A number of cooperation documents in the form of Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and notes are expected to be signed during the visit.

Chief Adviser's Deputy Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad Majumder said on Saturday that the media will be briefed in detail about the visit at 3:00pm Sunday at the Foreign Service Academy.

Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain, Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Adviser Dr Asif Nazrul, Energy Adviser Fouzul Kabir Khan, and Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) Executive Chairman Chowdhury Ashik Mahmud Bin Harun are likely to accompany the chief adviser during the visit that will see a series of other meetings in addition to bilateral talks.

Student politics banned at DU halls: proctor

FROM PAGE 1

After that, the students returned to their dormitories.

A Provost Standing Committee meeting was held on the matter yesterday evening. However, the outcome could not be known till the filing of this report around 9:00pm.

Nahiduzzaman Shipon, general secretary of the DU JCD, said the proctor's announcement reflects "clear administrative weakness."

"After failing to control a mob situation, they rushed into making such a decision. If we were to form a similar mob now, would they then make a decision in our favour? The university administration must take a stronger stance on this."

Citing the 1973 ordinance, he said the DU administration has no authority to interfere with anyone's freedom of expression unless it involves anti-independence or anti-state activities.

"The administration may have acted in response to a particular situation, but under no circumstances can it make such a decision. This is our political and social right, guaranteed by the constitution. There is no scope to violate this right."

Jabir Ahmed Jubel, general secretary of Biplobi Chhatra Moitree's central committee, said the proctor's announcement goes beyond his authority.

"There is no legal basis for banning student politics in any part of the university."

"A moral ground was established following the July uprising... After that, there was an opportunity for the university administration and student organisations to jointly decide on politics in educational institutions, but that didn't happen. There is still a chance to reach an agreement on how student organisations will conduct their activities."

Meghmallar Bosu, president of the Chhatra Union DU unit, said the proctor's announcement conflicts with the 1973 ordinance and added

that if someone files a writ, the announcement may not hold.

He added that it is concerning if the administration has to make such decisions under pressure.

"We want to discuss a campus charter that outlines how politics will be conducted here, what actions are permissible in the halls, and how monitoring cells will operate within the halls."

Abdul Kader, president of the DU unit Bangladesh Democratic Student Council (BDSC), said a solution cannot come through a statement made in the face of a mob.

He added, "This ban only applies to organisations that are visible. There is no way to identify the covert ones. How will you prohibit them?"

Kader said decisions should be made through discussions with all stakeholders. "BDSC's position will remain the same -- organisational activities will not continue in the halls and other academic spaces."

Saif Md Alaaddin, president of the DU's Islami Chhatra Andolon Bangladesh, termed the announcement banning hall politics "short-sighted".

He added, "If we stop politics through such a process, it will inevitably increase conflict rather than promote the political coexistence we speak of."

SM Farhad, president of Islami Chhatra Shibir's DU unit, told reporters that such unfortunate situations arose due to the university administration's failures and a lack of a fixed policy.

"It's the administration's responsibility to engage in discussions with all stakeholders as swiftly as possible to reach a favourable situation ... Legal experts can also be consulted to ensure the rights of any student wishing to engage in politics are not infringed, and the rights of those who don't want to be involved in politics are also protected," he added.

On Friday night, following DU

JCD's hall committee announcement, protests broke out at Begum Ruqayyah Hall, demanding a ban on all hall politics. A section of the residents broke the hall gate around 1:00am.

Later, students of Kabi Sufia Kamal Hall and Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall joined in.

Last year, the authorities were compelled to ban political activities in halls after Chhatra League activists were driven out a day after they attacked quota reform protesters on July 15, 2024.

The residents of Begum Ruqayyah Hall had taken the first step to drive out the BCL activists and secured an undertaking from the then provost to ban politics in their hall.

Bus collision with truck kills 11, injures 45 in Brazil

REUTERS, Sao Paulo

A crash between a bus and a truck in Brazil's center-western state of Mato Grosso killed 11 people and injured another 45 late Friday, the toll road operator and Brazil's federal highway police said on Saturday.

The injured were sent to nearby hospitals, firm Nova Rota do Oeste and the highway police said in separate statements.

Among the injured, 11 were in critical condition, 26 in moderate condition and eight had only minor injuries, they added.

Initial information indicates that a bus collided head-on with a truck transporting cottonseed near the city of Lucas do Rio Verde, according to the firm, which said it had been notified about the crash at 9:40 p.m. local time on Friday (0140 GMT Saturday).

Activists decry 'charity' quota for women in JS

FROM PAGE 1

she asked how 300 members could adequately represent today's population. "When the parliament started with 15 seats, what was the population then compared to now?... We need to increase the number of representatives, and in that context, the issue of women's seats must also be addressed."

"We are not asking for this to be permanent. Our proposal is for two terms because we believe that during these terms, many women leaders will be developed. This has also been proven at the local level in the union parishad elections."

Farah Kabir, ActionAid Bangladesh's country director, slammed political parties for seeking just 5 percent reserved seats for women.

"Is this supposed to be an act of charity?"

Noting that women comprise over half the population and contribute more than 50 percent to the economy, particularly through the RMG sector and remittances, she reminded that the government pledged 30 percent reserved seats in the 1995 Beijing Declaration.

Emphasising direct elections as the only solution, Kabir said women in parties must be properly prepared. She rejected the claim that suitable candidates cannot be found.

"We need to determine clear criteria for entering parliament: whether it's based on our performance, our service to voters, our support to the community, or if it's about muscle power, ransacking, and domination," she said.

"If that is the criteria, then assessing women's qualifications becomes problematic. However, if the focus is on nation-building, I believe there should be no obstacle to women taking on these roles," she added.

Rasheda K Choudhury, former caretaker government adviser, questioned whether Bangladesh was advancing or regressing in terms of women's political participation and empowerment.

"We (women) are being urged to apply pressure, but who is actually under pressure? Which direction is this government heading? The National Consensus Commission must carefully evaluate the path of women's empowerment," she said.

Rasheda also emphasised that it is the interim government's responsibility to demonstrate that it

is not biased toward any particular group or individual. "If people believe otherwise, it will be difficult for the government to operate effectively."

She also questioned why all decisions concerning women are being made solely by political parties.

Badiul Alam Majumder, a member of the consensus commission and chief of the Election Reform Commission, admitted the decision to keep 5 percent seats for women was "an unfortunate incident -- a disaster".

He said the commission's mandate was to discuss with political parties and reach consensus on various issues, but on women's representation in parliament, "we have failed to secure women's rights".

He said he warned parties the move was regressive but was ignored and even faced pushback. He also revealed that he personally "came under fire" for his stance, recalling parties asked him at commission's meetings why he was so interested in women's issues.

Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, expressed disappointment that despite coming to power through an anti-discrimination movement, the government has failed to tackle discrimination issues. She said the reform commissions have poor representation of women.

Describing the National Consensus Commission as a "boys club", Anam further noted a persistent negative campaign against women. "There is a hostile attitude towards women, not only on social media but also in large gatherings, which has never been properly challenged."

She also noted concerns about women's safety and whether those participating, voting, or being nominated in the upcoming elections can fulfill their roles securely.

CPD Research Director Dr Khondaker Golam Moazzem warned that women's empowerment remained "superficial and confined to symbolic roles".

True empowerment must start inside political parties, with meaningful female leadership from district to central levels, he said.

He criticised the reform commissions for ignoring political party reforms, calling this the root cause of women's continued marginalisation.

"I challenge that women's leadership in the upcoming

parliament will be even weaker. We are not heading in a good direction," he said.

Moazzem predicted even the symbolic presence of women will disappear unless post-election efforts intensify.

He pointed out barriers such as women entering reserved seats without election, which diminishes their accountability and ownership.

He also accused the drafters of the July Declaration of deliberately excluding women. "I read the entire declaration carefully. There is no mention of women anywhere. Their exclusion was intentional."

He further questioned how young representatives could endorse the document despite this omission.

Fawzia Moslem, president of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, said that without women's participation in decision-making, laws favouring women or eliminating discrimination cannot be created.

She cited two reasons for having reserved seats: the country's complex political culture and women's limited opportunities for independent decision-making. She explained that women often rely on others during elections, making reserved seats essential.

Dr Samina Luthfa, associate professor of sociology at Dhaka University, also said the consensus commission acted as a "boys club", where women's political futures have been decided without genuine participation of real women.

Calling the situation "ridiculous", she likened negotiations over women's seats to "bargaining at a fish market".

Khushi Kabir, coordinator of Nijera Kori, praised women in reserved seats for their strong contributions, in contrast to many unproductive male MPs. She said it was illogical to claim that qualified women cannot be found while unqualified men are deemed acceptable, noting that women are consistently held to higher standards and expected to be flawless.

Prothom Alo Senior Reporter Naznin Akhter presented the keynote, while rights activist Ilira Dewan, Bangladesh Garment Sramik Samhati President Taslima Akhter, and former student coordinator Nazifa Jannat also spoke. The event was moderated by Sumana Sharmin, associate editor of Prothom Alo.

Rab arrests one more in journo killing

FROM PAGE 1

"The journalist gave his life trying to expose the crimes of this organised gang. We have CCTV footage, witnesses, and all the evidence. Upon receiving the autopsy report, we will file the charge sheet within 15 days."

Nazmul acknowledged police responsibility and admitted shortcomings due to manpower shortages. "We cannot escape responsibility for the journalist's murder. We have failed in some aspects and lack sufficient personnel," he said, adding, "It is impossible for police alone to suppress crime."

He urged public cooperation to effectively combat crime.

Around 8:30pm on Thursday night, a group of miscreants killed Asaduzzaman, 40, with sharp weapons in front of a crowded market in Gazipur city's Chandana Chowrasta area. He had worked as a

staff reporter for the Mymensingh-based daily Pratidiner Kagoj for around five years.

Describing the incident, the GMP commissioner said it began with another victim, Badsha Mia, who had just withdrawn Tk 25,000 from an ATM booth.

One Parul Akhter, known as Golapi, tried to frame him by luring him into providing information. "When Badsha realised this, a dispute broke out and he punched Golapi, as seen on CCTV footage."

Immediately after, five to six of Golapi's associates attacked Badsha with machetes. Asaduzzaman saw the attack and began filming the assailants. "The accused saw him recording and feared exposure. They then chased the journalist. He took shelter at a tea stall, but they caught up and brutally stabbed him to death."

The next day, the victim's elder brother, Mizba Hossain filed a case against unknown people with Gazipur police.

Police later collected CCTV footage and identified eight suspects, seven of whom were arrested within 24 hours -- Mizan alias Ketu Mizan, 35; his wife Golapi, 25; Swadhin, 28; Al Amin, 21; Shah Jamal, 32; Faisal Hasan, 23, of Pabna; and Sumon, 26, of Cumilla.

The GMP commissioner added that Mizan is implicated in 15 cases. His wife, Parul (Golapi), is one of his associates. Two cases were earlier filed against Amin, two against Swadhin, eight against Jamal, and two against Faisal.

Meanwhile, the journalists across the country, including in Tangail, Narsingdi, Jhenaidah, Munshiganj, and Chandpur, held rallies and formed human chains to protest Asaduzzaman's killing.



A boy lies with an oxygen mask on a bed after receiving medical care at the trauma ward of Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP