

Trump seeks to rebrand Dept of Defense as Dept of War

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump is changing the name of the Department of Defense to the Department of War, the White House announced Thursday, insisting the rebrand will project a more powerful image.

While the department's official name is set in law, Trump in an executive order is authorizing use of the new label as a "secondary title" by his administration, a White House document said.

Defense officials are permitted to use to use "secondary titles such as 'Secretary of War,'...in official correspondence, public communications, ceremonial contexts, and non-statutory documents within the executive branch," according to the document.

It was not immediately clear when Trump planned to sign the order, but his public schedule for yesterday said he would be signing executive orders in the afternoon as well as making an announcement in the Oval Office.

'We decide who stays' Says Pakistan after UN plea to pause mass expulsion of Afghans

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's government yesterday said "we decide who stays", after the United Nations refugee chief urged the country to pause its mass expulsion of Afghans after a major earthquake.

Thousands of Afghans who were registered as refugees have surged over the border from Pakistan in recent days, with returns escalating despite a weekend earthquake that killed 2,200 people and flattened entire villages in Afghanistan.

It prompted a call by Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees: "Given the circumstances, I appeal to the (government of Pakistan) to pause the implementation of the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan."

Pakistan has hosted Afghans fleeing violence and humanitarian crises for more than four decades, from the Soviet invasion to the 2021 Taliban takeover.



Brothers in arms and relatives lay flowers at the coffin of Vitali Panakhov, a Ukrainian serviceman with the call sign "Witch," during his funeral ceremony at Independence Square in Kyiv, Ukraine, yesterday, amid the ongoing Russian invasion. PHOTO: AFP

Venezuelan F-16 jets fly over US warship

Pentagon calls the move 'provocative'; US sending fighter jets to Puerto Rico to counter drug cartels

REUTERS, Washington

Two Venezuelan F-16 fighter jets flew over a US Navy destroyer in the Caribbean on Thursday, a US official told Reuters, triggering a stern US warning to Venezuela against interfering in intensifying US military operations in the Caribbean.

The incident, which the Pentagon said occurred in international waters, further raises tensions just two days after a US strike killed 11 people aboard a vessel from Venezuela that President Donald Trump said was carrying illegal narcotics.

Legal experts have raised questions about the attack, despite the Trump administration arguments that it has the authority to strike alleged members of criminal gang Tren de Aragua trafficking drugs to the United States after Washington designated it terrorist organization earlier this year.

In a terse statement confirming only the broad outlines of the incident, the Pentagon equated Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's government to a narco-trafficking cartel, allegations Caracas



denies. Trump has accused Maduro of running Tren de Aragua.

"Today, two Maduro regime military aircraft flew near a US Navy vessel in international waters," the Pentagon said in a statement, calling it a "highly provocative move."

"The cartel running Venezuela is strongly advised not to pursue any further effort to obstruct, deter or interfere with counter-narcotics and counter-terror operations carried out by the US military."

Venezuela's Communications Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the

Venezuelan military aircraft were F-16s and that they flew over the USS Jason Dunham.

The Dunham is one of at least seven US warships deployed to the Caribbean, carrying more than 4,500 sailors and Marines, in a military buildup that has drawn concern from Caracas.

US Marines and sailors from the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit have also been carrying out amphibious training and flight operations in southern Puerto Rico.

Trump's decision to blow up a suspected drug vessel passing through the Caribbean, instead of seizing the vessel and apprehending its crew, is highly unusual and evokes memories of the US fight against militant groups like al Qaeda.

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth defended the strike on Thursday and vowed such activities would continue, citing the threat that illegal narcotics pose to public health in the US.

Meanwhile, US is sending ten F-35 jets to Puerto Rico as part of President Donald Trump's vow to crack down on drug cartels in the Caribbean, sources familiar with the matter told AFP yesterday.

Mumbai on alert after bombs in cars message

Sender identified himself as 'Lashkar-e-Jihadi'

NDTV ONLINE

Mumbai is on high alert after the police received a WhatsApp message threatening dozens of blasts in the financial hub where the Ganesh festival is set to culminate today. The threat message claimed that "human bombs" had been planted in 34 vehicles, and it would shake the entire city.

The threat message was received on the WhatsApp helpline of the traffic police's control room on Thursday as the cops covered the city in a security net for Anant Chaturthi, which would mark the end of the 10-day Ganesh festival with the immersion ritual.

The sender identified himself as "Lashkar-e-Jihadi" and said that 14 Pakistani terrorists have entered India. About 400 kg of RDX will be used for the blast, which can "kill 1 crore people", the threat said.

Mumbai Police has become alert following the threat, and security deployment has been increased across the city. An official said the threat is being investigated from all angles and that the Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) has been informed.

"Our security forces can handle any threat," a senior officer said at a press conference.

Read to reduce sentence

Uzbekistan tells prisoners

AFP, Tashkent

Prisoners in Uzbekistan will be able to plead for reduced sentences if they read books selected by authorities to cultivate "correct spiritual and moral values", officials said.

Lawmakers in the Central Asian former Soviet republic passed a penal code amendment on Thursday introducing the scheme for around 13,500 inmates, all except for those sentenced to life imprisonment.

They will have to pick books "from a list approved by the Republican Center for Spirituality and Enlightenment (a state body), aimed at forming correct spiritual and moral values in convicts", the country's Senate said.

"For each book read, the sentence can be reduced by three days, but not more than 30 days per year," it added. A special committee will verify whether the inmate has actually read the book.

The list of authorised books has not been made public. Opening up to the world since the 2016 election of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev after a quarter-century of relative isolation, Uzbekistan has successfully attracted foreign investment and developed tourism.

But political opposition and civil society remain virtually nonexistent, while the press and economy are still largely controlled by the state.

Earlier this year, Uzbekistan, through its state news agency, said it was "working to ensure the rights and freedoms of convicts".

Tight battle among panels

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preparing himself for the Ducsu candidature, becoming vocal for solving campus related problems.

Umama, once general secretary of Bangladesh Chhatra Federation's DU unit, resigned after the uprising and later served as SAD's spokesperson until June. She quit SAD, alleging "ill-politics inside the platform", and is now contesting with the slogan "politically conscious, academic campus".

Both candidates face tough competition from partisan nominees: Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal's Abidul Islam Khan and Islami Chhatra Shibir's Abu Shadik Kayem, both MPhil students, of Islamic studies and political science, respectively.

Despite their affiliations, they earned respect for their roles during the movement.

Umama is expected to attract strong support from female students, but her chances may be diluted by two other female VP contenders, and independents like Shameem Hossen of the English department, who has won attention with dynamic campaigning.

"The more votes independents capture, the more Umama's share could shrink," said one student campaigner of Umama's team.

Still, she remains strong in three science faculty dormitories, being a student of biochemistry and molecular biology. The science faculty accounts for 15 percent of the electorate.

For general secretary, BGCS Convenor Md Abu Baker Mojumder of geology department is also expected to draw science faculty votes. A key contender with SAD roots, his chances brightened after fellow SAD coordinator Mahin Sarker withdrew yesterday in his favour. "If Abu Baker wins, it will be my victory as well," Mahin said at a Madhu's Canteen press conference.

Baker's strongest rivals are Chhatra Dal's Sheikh Tanvir Baree Hamim, Shibir's Farhad Hossain, and Ganatantrik Chhatra Jote's Meghmalla Bosu, a Chhatra Union leader. All come from social sciences, which together with arts and law

faculties make up 57 percent of voters. Heavy competition there may scatter votes.

Shibir faces low popularity in Jagannath Hall, DU's only non-Muslim dorm, but its 2,200 votes are expected to split between Hamim and Megh, potentially benefiting Shibir's Farhad. He may also gain from other candidates, including Sabina Yasmin of Chhatra Odhikar Parishad and journalist-turned-candidate Al Sadi Bhuiyan, both of whom reached out to female voters. Nearly half of total voters are female.

Students noted that Chhatra Dal struggles in female halls, while Shibir receives organised support from its sister body, Islami Chhatra Sangstha.

For assistant general secretary, BGCS nominated Ashrefa Khatun, whose chances hinge on female support. But rebel BGCS candidate Tahmid Al Muddassir Chowdhury is said to be stronger in male dorms.

Close contests are also expected among Shibir's Muhammad Mohiuddin Khan, Chhatra Dal's Tanvir Al Hadi Mayed, Umama's panel member Jahed Ahmed.

Though most panels have not announced hall union candidates, BGCS and Shibir members are running independently while informally aiding their central panels. Students said that both groups are also leveraging local networks to influence families, with regional ties emerging as a major factor.

Nahiduzzaman Shipon, Chhatra Dal's DU general secretary, said the panel faced a disadvantage as they were not allowed to reside in the dormitories, limiting opportunities to meet students during the Awami League regime.

"But we are getting positive responses from the students in the campaigns and we hope for a positive result," he said, adding that none of the panels are non-political.

He also alleged that the government and National Citizen Party are backing BGCS candidates, promoting them even on their pages, while Shibir is engaging in covert politics under the guise of general student interests.

JP central office set on fire again

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Khan said, "We had a rally in Shahbagh today [yesterday]. We heard about the incident. Jatiya Party has enmity with various groups. We don't know anything about it."

Earlier, on the night of August 29, a clash broke out between activists of the Jatiya Party and Gono Odhikar Parishad in Kakrail. Several people, including Gono Odhikar Parishad President Nurul Haque Nur, were injured when law enforcement personnel charged truncheons to control the situation. The Jatiya Party office was vandalised and set on fire the next day.

Series of strong aftershocks

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to hit the country in decades.

In Nuristan province, north of Kunar, resident Enamullah Safi said he and others ran out of their homes when the aftershocks hit overnight.

"Everyone was afraid. We are still afraid and have not returned to our homes," the 25-year-old cook told AFP, saying he huddled under a blanket with several other people to keep warm in the cold, mountain night.

Some houses were damaged or destroyed he said, adding that they have received little assistance, as aid is concentrated in the worst-hit zones.

Access has been stymied by already poor roads blocked by landslides and rockfall that continued as the area was convulsed by aftershocks.

The disaster comes as Afghanistan is already facing multiple crises after decades of conflict, contending with endemic poverty, severe drought and the influx of millions of Afghans forced back to the country by neighbours Pakistan and Iran since the Taliban's 2021 takeover.

30 Bangladeshis sent back from US

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Abdullah, a 22-year-old deportee from Noakhali, told The Daily Star, "We were chained like criminals throughout this long journey. It felt as if we were treated like terrorists while returning to Bangladesh. I hope no one else has to face such a situation."

The US has intensified deportations of undocumented immigrants during Donald Trump's second presidential term. At least 180 Bangladeshis have been sent back in recent months as part of multiple phases of the crackdown.

Under US law, immigrants without valid documents may be deported by court order or administrative directive. If asylum claims fail, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arranges their removal. The process has recently accelerated, with increased reliance on chartered and military flights.

Cops under scrutiny over past poll roles

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officers, who held commanding positions in the past three elections, have been made officers on special duty (OSD) or sent into forced retirement, according to the home ministry database.

Around 15,000 officers, mostly constables, were appointed during the period, raising the number of police personnel to 1.93 lakh.

In the 2024 election, around 174,000 police members were deployed across the country, while the figure was 170,000 in the 2018 election.

Police high-ups insist that the force will draw on its experience of playing a neutral role in the 1991, 2001, and 2008 elections to restore public confidence in it.

THE SCREENING

The PHQ last month instructed all units across the country to check the backgrounds of police officers, their roles during the mass uprising and

Most Bangladeshis attempt to enter the US through Mexico or Latin America, often paying between Tk 30 lakh and Tk 75 lakh to traffickers.

Several deportees said they had been held hostage by Mexican mafias linked to trafficking syndicates. At least six reported being tortured until their families paid Tk 40-50 lakh for their release. Others said traffickers extorted up to Tk 75 lakh, forcing them to sell all their assets.

"There are countless Bangladeshis trapped by such national and international trafficking networks," said Tanzil Hasan of Munshiganj, who added that many deportees intend to pursue legal action against the traffickers in Bangladesh.

This is not the first time such treatment has sparked outrage. In 2016, 27 Bangladeshis were also deported from the US in handcuffs.

social media records.

The Daily Star has obtained a copy of a letter that the DMP's Intelligence and Analysis Division issued on July 30 to all police units, asking them to get details of officers with ranks of SI and ASI, and political affiliations of their family members and relatives.

The PHQ warned that any attempt to conceal information would result in strict action.

Several officers, who have already gone through the screening, said they found some of the questions from evaluators "embarrassing".

A DMP inspector said he received a call from the Special Branch in early August.

"The enquirer asked for addresses of my in-laws and wanted to know about political affiliations of my relatives, including uncles and aunts."

"I felt embarrassed to answer such questions about my relatives after 20 years of service," the officer said,

That episode triggered public outcry and raised questions about human rights and dignity, prompting discussions between the Bangladeshi government and US authorities.

Migration experts argue that deportees should not be restrained unless they pose a security risk. Handcuffing and shackling ordinary migrants, they say, violates international human rights standards.

Shariful Hasan, associate director of BRAC's Migration and Youth Platform, said, "People migrate seeking better lives but often fall prey to trafficking rackets charging Tk 30-75 lakh. While destination countries have the right to deport, chaining people for hours is extremely unfortunate and leaves them traumatised. We hope future repatriations are carried out more humanely."

adding that screening before an election is not new but such questions were never asked in the past.

An inspector from Narayanganj said he underwent screening about a month and a half ago by the District Special Branch (DSB).

"The DSB asked me about my earlier postings and my role as a commanding officer in past elections," the inspector said, requesting anonymity.

POLICE TO GET EQUIPMENT, VEHICLES

Keeping the next election in mind, police will introduce body-worn cameras for its members in January. The devices will allow real-time monitoring of field-level operations from the PHQ, regional offices and the EC, said IGP Baharul Alam.

Besides, communication devices, including walkie-talkies, and vehicles for police patrol are expected to arrive from abroad by October, he added.