

# Independent commission needed to make police pro-people

Say speakers at Star roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police reform means putting safeguards in place so that the force can never again be abused for political gains, said lawyers, politicians, academics, and current and former police officials.

The only way forward to make the changes lasting is to form an independent police commission, they observed at a roundtable organised by The Daily Star at its office yesterday.

"No political party can dictate against whom I can file a case or submit a charge sheet. This is the least that must be ensured," said Baharul Alam, inspector general of police.

BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed admitted that parties used the police for political gains.

"We all have, at some point in time, used the police -- either to stay in power or to return to power. The police also allowed themselves to be used. Every government has tried to keep them happy, turning them into kingmakers during elections," he added.

The police are still pandering to the powers of the day, Salahuddin said. "The filing of retaliatory cases en masse and mob violence represent this government's failure. The police could have refused to accept such cases."

"For example, when I was forcibly disappeared, my wife was not even allowed to file a general diary. This shows that the police do, in fact, have the capacity to refuse cases."

Justice Farid Ahmed, a former High Court judge, said, "Investigators take so much time because police officers operate on orders from political parties. They intentionally delay the submission of investigation reports."

At the roundtable, titled "Need for Police Reform: Civil Society Perspective", the speakers called for a new ordinance befitting a modern-day police force, replacing

the colonial-era laws still governing the police.

They debated about what a truly independent police commission looks like.

Earlier, on September 11, the interim government directed the law ministry to draft laws for the establishment of two commissions within the police: the Independent

is holding talks with parties on key reforms, Iftekharuzzaman lamented that recommendations of the Police Reform Commission were never properly discussed. "No recommendations, no reports -- nothing was debated. There was resistance. This needs research."

He criticised the reform commission's composition as well, saying eight of the 11 members were bureaucrats, including five in service, and two police officers. "Full of conflict of interest," he said.

Mohammed Iqbal, a member of the reform commission and former director general of the Department of Narcotics Control, said no conclusive recommendation on the formation of an independent police commission was made because of debate over the issue of its oversight.

"Some interpreted it [independence] as a commission that is out of the government executive branch. Fundamentally we agree that there should be an independent mechanism that will oversee police activities and how the state manages this institution. However, we cannot have a fully independent police commission outside of ministerial oversight," he said.

Former IGP Nurul Huda countered, "If police's investigative power cannot be separated from the government's executive authority, then you will see that one person faces 20 cases and ends up in jail, and once power changes, all those cases get dismissed."

Badiul Alam Majumder, secretary of Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (SHUJAN) and a member of the consensus commission, noted that political parties unanimously agreed to an independent police commission.

"However, this won't be a constitutional commission. Being a constitutional body does not guarantee independence. This has to be created through law," he said, pointing out that the home ministry dissented on the proposal.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

Prevent police's use for political party agendas

Make recruitment free from political influence

Dedicate teams for gender-based violence cases

Ensure budget, resources reach ground officers promptly

Investigation Services, headed by the law adviser, and the Internal Complaints Commission, headed by the home adviser.

TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman questioned this move. "So, the government retains the authority and control over the commissions," he said.

A member of the National Consensus Commission, which



Shamim Hossain jumps in the air after completing the final run that sealed Bangladesh's four-wicket victory over Sri Lanka in the first Super Four match of the ongoing Asia Cup yesterday. Opener Saif Hassan and Towhid Hridoy struck fifties as the Tigers chased down Sri Lanka's 169-run target with one ball to spare at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium. Story on page 12.

PHOTO: ACC

# World should not be intimidated by Israel

Says UN chief as Israel intensifies its 'horrendous' Gaza offensive; 51 Palestinians killed

AGENCIES

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the world should not be "intimidated" by Israel and its creeping annexation of the occupied West Bank, as the nearly two-year-long Israeli offensive in Gaza intensified yesterday, killing at least 51 people.

Guterres spoke to AFP on Friday ahead of the UN's signature high-

level week at which 10 countries will recognise a Palestinian state, according to France -- over fierce Israeli objections.

The meeting of more than 140 heads of state and government, which paralyses a corner of Manhattan for a week each year, will likely be dominated by the future of the Palestinians and the war in Gaza.

Israel has reportedly threatened to

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Star gets Superbrand status for 2025-26

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Daily Star, the highest-circulating English daily in Bangladesh, has been recognised as a Superbrand for 2025-26.

Superbrands Bangladesh, the local representative of SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

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