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Govt plans to form paramilitary force for airports

Air force-led unit to oversee aviation security nationwide, says a proposal

ZYMA ISLAM

The home ministry seeks to create a paramilitary unit to oversee all security aspects of civil aviation, arguing that such an independent force is necessary to deal with organised crime, cyberattacks, and threats of drone and bomb attacks.

Named Aviation Guard Bangladesh (AGB), the force would comprise 7,650 personnel with a budget of Tk 771 crore, according to a proposal prepared by the ministry.

At present, the country's civil aviation security is overseen by 9,004 personnel from the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB), the Airport Armed Police Battalion (APBn), and Ansar.

The proposal noted that while Aviation Security (AvSec), a wing of CAAB, is designated to protect aircraft, passengers, crew, and airport infrastructure, security can be strengthened in sensitive areas such as aprons, boundaries, fuel depots, and cargo transport.

Beyond airport and airfield security, AGB would prevent money laundering, secure unused runways, and operate two helicopters for search and rescue missions.

The force would be managed by the Bangladesh Air Force and primarily staffed with its officers. Civilians and retired officers could also be included if necessary.

"Seventy percent of its members would come from the air force, and the rest would be civilians, with a long term goal of reaching a 50-50 balance," the proposal stated.

Leadership would come almost entirely from the air force -- an air vice

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An indigenous woman stands amid the ruins of her house, showing journalists the scale of destruction at Ramesu Bazar in Guimara upazila of Khagrachhari yesterday. Many shops and homes belonging to indigenous people were looted and set on fire on Sunday afternoon.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

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MORE STORY ON PAGE 16

3 lakh bullets fired during July uprising
IO tells ICT that LMGs, SMGs, rifles were used

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over 3 lakh bullets were fired during the July uprising across the country, Investigation Officer Md Alamgir told the International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday.

Citing a 215-page report of Police Headquarters, the IO said police used light machine guns (LMGs), submachine guns (SMGs), Chinese rifles, shotguns, revolvers, pistols, and other weapons to quell the uprising.

Some 95,313 bullets were fired in Dhaka, he said while testifying as the last prosecution witness in the case filed against Hasina, former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, and ex-IGP Chowdhury Abdulla Al-Mamun.

Ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her two co accused planned and executed a brutal and systematic crackdown on protesters, the IO alleged after reviewing various pieces of evidence related to the uprising violence.

The police officer stated that law enforcement agencies, acting under direct instructions from the top leadership, carried out attacks on the unarmed protesters.

According to his testimony, the suppression campaign resulted in over 1,500 deaths and thousands of injuries across the country.

"After reviewing seized evidence; reports of newspapers; footage; and audio clips; expert reports; books; and testimonies of victims, eyewitnesses, and family members of martyrs; and the confessional statement of accused Mamun, it became clear that then premier Hasina, home minister Kamal, and IGP Mamun were directly involved in ordering, provoking, and conspiring to suppress the student-led movement," Alamgir told the tribunal.

The accused are also responsible for arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, alteration of causes of death, and hasty burial of bodies without identification by family members, said the IO.

Alamgir said female protesters faced sexual violence, and many injured victims were also attacked at hospitals.

During his testimony, the police officer said he collected inquest and post-mortem reports of 81 individuals buried as unclaimed bodies by Anjuman Mufidul Islam.

CONFERENCE ON ROHINGYAS Dhaka to seek global pledge on Rohingya return

PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladesh will seek political commitment from the international community for Rohingya repatriation, funding, and accountability for the Rohingya genocide at the high-level conference on the Rohingya in New York today.

"We want three clear aspects of focus at the conference -- Rohingya repatriation is the ultimate solution to the crisis. Before that happens, the international community must support their humanitarian needs and the trial of the Rohingya genocide," a foreign ministry official told The Daily Star yesterday.

The event comes at a time when global attention on the Rohingyas is shifting due to other crises, while Bangladesh struggles to manage the growing number of refugees.

Since early 2024, nearly 150,000 more Rohingyas have fled to Bangladesh amid intense fighting in Myanmar's Rakhine State, raising the total population to about 1.2 million, according to the UN.

Despite several attempts, repatriation has not been possible as Rohingyas say there is no guarantee of citizenship and safety. Meanwhile, funding for their needs in Bangladesh has declined.

This year, donors have provided only 38 percent of the required \$934 million, affecting healthcare, food, nutrition, protection, and education. Unless new funds are secured -- at least \$60 million over the next six months and \$167 million over the next 12 months -- the World Food Programme faces a major disruption to food assistance starting in December 2025, said its Country Director Dom Scalpelli in a statement yesterday.

Bangladeshi officials warn of rising challenges in the camps, including domestic violence, human and drug smuggling, and extremist ideologies. They fear refugees may spill outside the camps.

Complicating the situation, the rebel group Arakan Army (AA) has taken control of about 90 percent of Rakhine State. During its clashes with the Myanmar military, scores of Rohingyas were killed and thousands displaced.

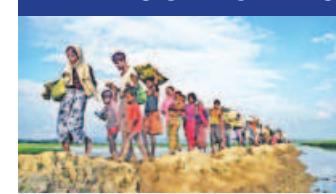
Against this backdrop, Bangladesh hosted an international event on the Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar in August, which saw participation from Rohingya leaders in the camps and diaspora communities.

"We have mobilised the Rohingya voice that will be placed at the UN conference," a Bangladesh official in New York told The Daily Star yesterday, adding that Rohingyas have emphatically said they want to return home.

The New York conference will bring together several heads of state and government, ministers, representatives of UN member states, UN agencies, non-governmental organisations, civil society, and Rohingya leaders from diaspora communities.

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus will deliver a statement urging global commitment to repatriation, humanitarian support, and

DHAKA'S 3 PRIORITIES



Repatriation as ultimate solution

Humanitarian funding until then

Accountability for Rohingya genocide

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Eerie calm in scarred Ramesu Bazar

STAR REPORT

An uneasy calm prevailed in Guimara upazila of Khagrachhari yesterday, a day after three Marma men were shot dead during protests over the rape of a schoolgirl.

Ramesu Bazar, the epicentre of the violence, looked deserted, with torched shops, houses and vehicles. There was a heavy law enforcement presence in the area, and journalists were barred from entering the bazar.

Meanwhile, police yesterday confirmed the identities of the three deceased.

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MORE STORY ON PAGE 16

Certain int'l quarters trying to foil polls
Yunus tells rights activists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus has voiced caution that certain international quarters are trying to obstruct the electoral process in Bangladesh.



"Some forces are determined to make sure that the election never happens. We don't know who is working for whom," he said at a meeting with a delegation of top rights activists at his hotel in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly on Monday.

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