

Rab to act as 'striking force' during election

Says DG Shahidur Rahman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rab Director General AKM Shahidur Rahman yesterday said the elite force will act as a striking force to maintain law and order during the upcoming national election, working alongside other law enforcement agencies.

Speaking at a press conference at the Rab Media Centre in Dhaka's Karwan Bazar, he said police and Ansar members will be deployed at polling centres, while the Army and Border Guard Bangladesh will remain on mobile duty.

"Rab will perform its duty as a striking force," he said, adding that more personnel will be deployed than in any previous election.

During the briefing, the Rab chief also updated the media on several high-profile cases.

He said they arrested three accused on Saturday night in connection with the burning and murder of businessman Khokon Chandra Das in Damudia upazila of Shariatpur and has so far arrested seven people in the lynching of Dipu Chandra Das in Mymensingh.

Rab also arrested one person over the double murder on the Khulna court premises, with efforts underway to arrest

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3



Inqilab Moncho continues its blockade at Shahbagh in Dhaka yesterday, demanding a swift trial over the killing of its spokesperson Sharif Osman Bin Hadi, who died on December 18, six days after being shot in the city.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

SUNDARBANS Bengal tiger rescued from poachers' trap



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna
The Forest Department has successfully rescued a Bengal tiger from a trap allegedly set by deer poachers deep inside the Sundarbans.

The incident took place in the forest area near Sharik Khal, close to Baidyamari in Bagerhat's Mongla upazila, according to the Forest Department.

Nirmal Kumar Pal, the divisional forest officer of the Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Division, Khulna office, confirmed that the tiger was rescued around 2:50pm yesterday.

"We used a tranquilliser gun to sedate the tiger and safely freed it from the trap. Since there is no veterinary surgeon in Khulna, we arranged for one from Gazipur Safari Park. The tiger has been transported to Khulna," he told The Daily Star.

According to the Forest

Department and local sources, the tiger was trapped on Saturday between the Baidyamari and Joymoni areas, where poachers frequently set snares to hunt deer.

Mohammad Mofizur Rahman Chowdhury, a fisheries expert and smart data coordinator at the Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Division, said the tiger is an adult and has sustained a serious injury to one of its legs.

"The tiger has become somewhat weak, so we are administering saline. It has been taken to the Forest Department's Wildlife and Nature Conservation Rescue Centre in Khulna. After treatment, further decisions regarding its care will be made," said Howlader Azad Kabir, in charge of the Karamjal Eco-Tourism Centre under the Chandpail Range of the Forest Department.

Over 9,100 killed on roads last year

Says Jatri Kalyan Samity, blames unchanged policies, poor governance and extortion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country witnessed higher road crashes and casualties last year compared to previous years, exposing poor road safety, Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity said yesterday.

The organisation said at least 9,111 people were killed and 14,812 injured in 6,729 road crashes last year.

Compared to 2024, road crashes have increased by 6.94 percent, fatalities by 5.79 percent, and injuries by 14.87 percent last year, the Samity said in its report, which was prepared based on news reports.

In 2024, at least 8,543 people were killed and 12,608 injured in 6,359 road crashes across the country.

At least 2,983 people were killed and 2,219 injured in 2,493 motorcycle-related crashes last year, accounting for 37.04 percent of total crashes, 38.46 percent of deaths, and 14.98 percent of injuries, it said.

Among those killed were 1,691 drivers, 551 transport workers, 832 students, and 29 teachers. Of the total fatalities, 1,056 were women and 622 were children, it said.

Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury, secretary general of the organisation, revealed the data at a press conference

at Dhaka Reporters' Unity.

He said despite a change in power, road crashes and public suffering on roads have increased as relevant policies remain unchanged.

Due to rising traffic congestion and extortion, fares for goods and passenger



9,111 killed, 14,812 hurt in 6,729 road crashes last year

Crashes up 6.94%, deaths 5.79%, injuries 14.87% from 2024

Motorcycles involved in 37.04% of crashes; caused 38.46% of deaths

1,056 women and 622 children among the dead

Annual economic loss estimated at Tk 60,000cr

transport have increased again, he alleged.

As the interim government has failed to reform the road transport sector, people's daily travel woes, road safety, and fare anarchy remain at the mercy of transport owners, he said.

He added that the country incurs financial losses of around Tk 60,000 crore annually due to road crashes and fatalities, stressing that strong political commitment is essential to prevent further loss of lives.

To reduce deaths and financial losses, he urged all political parties contesting the national election to include commitments to road safety and improved public transport in their election manifestos.

The organisation identified 22 causes of road crashes, including overspeeding, dangerous overtaking, unfit vehicles, driver incompetence, ignorance of traffic laws, and flaws in road construction.

It also made 12 recommendations to curb road crashes.

They include increasing the road safety budget, establishing a road safety wing under the Road Transport and Bridges Ministry, stopping the issuance of driving licences without completion of the mandatory 60-hour training at BRTA approved driving schools, and ensuring good governance in the transport sector by ending monopolies of owners' associations, corruption, irregularities, and extortion.

Food stock hits 2 million tonnes, highest in 5yrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country's food stock has reached its highest level in the last five years, totalling 20.24 lakh tonnes.

Of this, 1,696,787 tonnes are rice, 233,224 tonnes wheat and 97,409 tonnes paddy.

In previous years, stocks were recorded at 15.52 lakh tonnes in 2024, 18 lakh tonnes in 2023, 18.81 lakh tonnes in 2022 and 7.27 lakh tonnes in 2021.

Addressing a press briefing at the Secretariat yesterday, Food Adviser Ali Imam Majumder said the country's food stock situation was highly satisfactory and that there was currently no risk of a food shortage.

He said the country's annual wheat demand is around seven million tonnes, while domestic

2025: 20.24 lakh tonnes
2024: 15.52 lakh tonnes
2023: 18.00 lakh tonnes
2022: 18.81 lakh tonnes
2021: 7.27 lakh tonnes

production is about one million tonnes, making imports necessary to meet the remaining demand.

According to a press release from the Ministry of Food, quoted by Majumder, most of the country's rice comes from local production, with only a small portion imported. Some rice is still in the import pipeline, and the exact quantity cannot be confirmed at this time.

"We will be able to provide numbers in a few months. However, compared to previous years, we expect this year's import requirement to be lower," he said.

On trade relations with India, the press release quoted Majumder as saying political factors would not affect economic and trade ties between the two countries.

"We import rice from India, and they sell it.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Tamal elected president, Badsha GS of CRAB



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A fundamental overhaul is required for the country's national security framework, said security analysts, retired military officials, and academics at a seminar yesterday.

They stressed institutional reform, civilian oversight, and a holistic response to emerging regional geopolitical threats.

The seminar, titled "National Security Risks in the Context of New Equations in Regional Relations", was jointly organised by Voice for Reform and BRAIN at the BDBL Building in Karwan Bazar.

Speakers said the post-2024 political landscape and shifting global alliances require a new way of analysing national security.

They emphasised that security guidelines must be shaped through a democratic process led by political leadership, with the military and other civic institutions playing supportive roles.

Lt Gen (retd) Aminul Karim described national security as a "broad canvas" that includes political stability, food, energy and environmental stability.

He said political interference has "crippled the upper tiers of the military and intelligence agencies."

"Past governments misused the DGFI to suppress political opponents, although its primary role is to address external threats. This politicisation over the last 15 years has severely weakened its capacity to provide security," he said.

"Politics is the head; if politics is fixed, the military will follow," he added.

Other office bearers

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

Overhaul national security framework Urge speakers at seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



A large hole dug by Dhaka South City Corporation for drainage work has remained without safety barriers for over a week on Bailey Road, near the Officers' Club in Dhaka, posing a risk to pedestrians and approaching vehicles. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

JUSTICE FOR HADI Inqilab Moncho launches 'March for Insaaf'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Inqilab Moncho has launched a new campaign to mobilise public opinion demanding justice for its slain leader and July frontrunner Sharif Osman Bin Hadi.

As part of the campaign, titled "March for Insaaf," the platform yesterday began a truck-mounted march scheduled to cover six locations in Dhaka.

Fatima Tasnim Zuma, convener of the Dhaka University unit of Inqilab Moncho and Ducusu secretary for Liberation War and Democratic Movement Affairs, said, "We will continue this campaign till January 6 to build public opinion for justice for Hadi ahead of the police chargesheet scheduled for January 7."

The platform also aims to inform people about its four-point demand, she said.

The programme began at the Shahbagh intersection around noon. According to the announced schedule, the march will pass through Shahbagh, Dhanmondi, Mohammadpur, Pallabi, Mirpur 10 and Uttara.