

8 remanded over attack on Prothom Alo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed eight people on two day remand each in a case filed over the vandalism and arson attack on the Prothom Alo office in the capital's Karwan Bazar.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Hasan Shahadat passed the order after police produced the accused before the court with a seven day remand prayer, said a court sub-inspector.

The eight are Naim Islam, 25; Saidur Rahman, 25; Abul Kashem, 33; Pranto Sikdar, 21; Raju Ahmed, 33; Sagar Islam, 37; Mohammad Jahangir, 28; and Mohammad Hasan, 22.

After the attack on the night of December 18, the case was filed by the newspaper on December 22 with Tejgaon Police Station against 400-500 unidentified people under the Penal Code, the Anti-Terrorism Act, the Special Powers Act, and the Cyber Security Ordinance.

Property looted from the office during the attack is valued at Tk 2.5 crore, while the total damage from vandalism and arson is estimated at Tk 32 crore, according to the case statement.



Government supporters march in Caracas on Wednesday, demanding the release of Venezuela's ousted President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, following their capture in a US operation.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Law and order lapses stoke public fears

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Contacted by The Daily Star on Wednesday, Dr Tawhidul Haque, associate professor at the Institute of Social Welfare and Research of Dhaka University, said, "The ongoing operation is not sufficiently addressing the crime situation. With the election fast approaching, the failure to apprehend escaped criminals and recover looted weapons are causing anxiety among the people."

"Despite many arrests under Operation Devil Hunt, the rise in targeted killings and political violence is deeply troubling. If this trend continues, it is likely to undermine voter participation, as citizens may be reluctant to risk their lives."

He added, "For a genuinely participatory and fear-free election, law enforcement agencies and the Election Commission must take more stringent actions to ensure a stable and democratic environment."

However, AHM Sahadat Hossain, assistant inspector general of police, said, "While there are challenges in the current law and order situation, Bangladesh Police is working tirelessly to bring it under control."

"Despite limitations and fast evolving circumstances, we are ramping up patrols, conducting operations against criminals, maintaining intelligence surveillance, and taking prompt legal action. The police are performing their duties with professionalism and dedication to protect public life and property and to maintain normalcy."

SPATE OF KILLINGS

At least four murders have taken place in Dhaka city alone so far this year.

In the latest incident on January 8 (Wednesday), unidentified assailants shot dead former Sweekhchasebok Dal leader Azizur Rahman Musabir and injured another man near the Super Star Hotel in Karwan Bazar.

On the first day of the year, Naeem Kibria, a lawyer, was beaten to death after a private car collided with his motorcycle in the Bashundhara Residential Area.

On the same day, Shipon, a 24-year-old surgical assistant for circumcision procedures, was hacked to death in the Hazaribagh Zauchar area. Police brought him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in critical condition, where doctors declared him dead.

On January 6, scrap dealer Shahabuddin was hacked to death in Kadamtali.

Outside the capital, village doctor Khokon Chandra, who was critically injured in a knife and arson attack in Shariatpur's Damudya upazila on December 30, died at Dhaka Medical

College Hospital on January 3.

Two days later, three murders were reported in three districts: Rana Pratap Bairagi, a trader in Jashore's Monirampur, was shot in the head; Mohammad Jane Alam Sikder, a Youth Party leader in Chattogram's Raozan, was shot dead; and businessman Moni Chakrabarty was hacked to death in Narsingdi's Palash upazila.

On January 6, police recovered the body of Mohammad Shahed Islam, a student who had been missing for a day, in Chattogram.

PHQ data shows 3,785 murder cases were filed across the country last year, including cases related to killings during the uprising. In 2023, 3,023

Contacted, Saifur Rahman Chowdhury Sujan, general secretary of the Karwan Bazar Brihattar Paikari Kacha Bazar Arot Byabasayi Malik Samity, said, "The operation [Devil Hunt] needs to be strengthened, especially with the upcoming election. Disturbances are already visible. With looted weapons yet to be recovered, public concern is natural."

National Citizen Party spokesperson Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain described the election-time law and order as "very disappointing".

After a meeting with the Election Commission on Tuesday, he said, "Since the announcement of the polls schedule, a known criminal recently

arrested suspects and crime scenes, including after a gunfight between rival criminal groups in Chandgaon. In another case, bullet casings marked "police" were found at the scene of a businessman's murder."

Similar instances have been reported in Dhaka and other districts, where suspects confessed to using firearms stolen from police stations during the unrest.

An official of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, requesting anonymity, said a portion of the looted firearms were sold to criminal gangs in Dhaka.

Residents of Mohammadpur alleged that firearms looted from Mohammadpur and Adabor police stations are now in criminal hands.

ESCAPED INMATES STILL AT LARGE

Around 2,241 inmates, including 88 death-row convicts, fled prisons during and after the uprising. Of them, around 710 remain at large.

Inspector General of Prisons Brig Gen Syed Muhammad Motahar Hussain said efforts to capture the fugitives and recover looted weapons have stalled due to limitations.

"Multiple operations were conducted at known addresses, but without success. We suspect some may have fled the country. We also don't have documentation for about 178 escapees, particularly from Narsingdi jail, as records were destroyed."

The relevant ministry and law enforcement agencies are aware of the issue. We have raised it in law and order meetings, and efforts are ongoing."

OPERATION DEVIL HUNT SO FAR

Following the launch of the second phase on December 13, law enforcement agencies arrested 15,009 people and seized 218 firearms by January 6.

In August last year, the government announced rewards for information leading to recoveries, but no major breakthroughs have been reported.

During the first phase, from February 8 to March 2 last year, 12,220 people were arrested, while 188 locally made weapons and 50 firearms were recovered.

After a January 5 advisory council meeting, Home Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said all forces were directed to work in coordination and intensify grassroots activities before and during the election.

"Instructions were given to take all necessary measures to ensure stability during political programmes and campaigning," he said, urging cooperation to ensure a conducive election environment.



murders were reported, while 3,126 were recorded in 2022.

According to Ain o Salish Kendra, 102 people were killed in political violence last year. The figure was 100 in 2024, 45 in 2023, and 70 in 2022. The Human Rights Support Society reported 133 deaths from political violence last year, compared to 145 in 2024 and 96 in 2023.

Last year, at least 197 people were killed in mob violence, up from 128 in 2024, ASK data shows.

During the interim government's tenure, which began on August 8, 2024, at least 293 people were killed in mob violence, the rights body's data shows.

A recent ASK report shows that at least eight people from minority communities were killed in different districts from December 2, 2025 till January 6 this year. The incidents include the murder of Amrito Mandal in Rajbari on December 29, Brajendra Bishwosh in Mymensingh on December 29, and businessman Prantosh Sarker in Narsingdi on December 2.

released on bail killed one of our comrades [Sharif Osman Hadi].... This has further intensified public concern about the election."

He also criticised the lack of visible security measures, adding that the NCP has urged the EC to increase law enforcement presence at the grassroots level.

LOOTED WEAPONS BEING USED

The Awami League regime was overthrown in a student-led uprising on August 5 last year, after which 5,753 firearms and 651,609 rounds of ammunition were looted from police stations and outposts, according to PHQ.

At least 1,333 looted firearms, including 113 Chinese rifles, 31 SMGs, three LMGs and 206 Chinese pistols, remain unrecovered. More than 243,000 rounds of ammunition are also missing.

Police have recovered looted firearms from multiple crime scenes in at least six incidents over the past year.

In Chattogram, police seized pistols and bullets marked "police" from

Cops focusing on turf war in Karwan Bazar

in the city corporation polls in 2020.

A police official familiar with the investigation said they suspect that a top criminal was behind the murder, allegedly over extortion and councilor elections.

Family members and party activists claimed that Musabir spent much of his time in jail during the Awami League regime and was repeatedly arrested in political cases.

Seeking anonymity, a senior Detective Branch official told The Daily Star that Musabir was friends on the second floor of Hotel Superstar before leaving for home with Masud on Wednesday night. When they reached in front of Ahsanullah Institute in Tejuti Bazar around 8:20pm, four to five armed assailants blocked their way and opened fire indiscriminately.

Musabir was shot in the right elbow and the right side of his abdomen and he collapsed on the spot. When Masud tried to help him, the attackers shot him in the left side of his abdomen.

His autopsy was done at the Dhaka Medical College morgue yesterday.

In front of the morgue, his wife Suraiya told The Daily Star, "I cannot say for certain who was behind the killing. Since CCTV footage is available, I hope law enforcers will check it and take swift action against the attackers."

"Incidents like this have happened before, are happening now, and may happen again. Without a proper investigation, many more families like mine will suffer," she said.

Hailing from Shariatpur, Musabir was the eldest among three siblings. His family lives on Garden Road of West

Karwan Bazar.

Musabir did not live in the Tejuti Bazar area. His wife said he visited the area occasionally.

These issues are being checked to see whether they align with the threats mentioned by his wife," said a police official involved in the probe, adding that political motive behind the killing is also being looked into.

However, Musabir's younger brother Mahbubur Rahaman Azmaine dismissed the allegations of extortion against his brother and told this newspaper that his brother was involved in water supply business and providing internet services.

Meanwhile, police have checked CCTV footage from the area and identified two suspects. "One of their faces is partially visible. If we can identify him, it will significantly advance the investigation," said police official Ibne Mizan.

Police said CCTV footage shows two assailants fleeing the scene on foot, and more footage is being collected and analysed. Tejgaon police, along with DB and Rab, are jointly working to identify and arrest the suspects.

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Karwan Bazar.

He noted that nearly two-thirds

Another suspect arrested over Dipu killing

Police say he played 'leading role'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

The Detective Branch of Police has arrested another suspect in the killing of garment worker Dipu Chandra Das at Bhaluka upazila in Mymensingh.

Mohammad Yasin Arifat, 25, of Bhaluka was arrested on Wednesday afternoon from Sarulia, an area under Demra Police Station in Dhaka, said Abdullah Al Mamun, Mymensingh additional superintendent of police (administration).

Yasin had been serving as an imam at Sheikhbari Mosque in Kashar and teaching at Madina Tahfizul Quran Madrasa, he said.

"Yasin played a leading role in the murder alongside others. After the killing, he went into hiding and remained on the run for 12 days at different madrasas in Sarulia. He also joined a madrasa named Sufla as a teacher," Mamun said, citing preliminary investigation findings.

Police said Yasin's role in the murder was confirmed through earlier investigation, eyewitness accounts, descriptions of the tense situation at the factory gate on the day of the incident, and statements of other arrested suspects.

He was arrested with assistance from the Dhaka Metropolitan Police. Drives are continuing to arrest other fugitives linked to the case.

Dipu, 27, a garment worker, was beaten to death and set on fire by a mob in Bhaluka on December 18 last year on allegations of "hurting religious sentiments".

BNP planning clampdown

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Tarique Rahman should intervene and instruct the grassroots leaders to work for the party nominees.

Not only are grassroots leaders not working for their party nominees, but partners are also unhappy and angry, as local BNP leaders are not being cooperative.

In Munshiganj-3 constituency, where Quamruzzaman Ratan, social welfare affairs secretary of BNP's central committee, has been nominated, district BNP Member Secretary Mohiuddin Ahmed is also contesting the polls, causing a division among the supporters of the two leaders.

Ratan said, "My pain comes from seeing my party divided. Our leader, Tarique Rahman, wants a united BNP. Those who spread confusion and those who run as independents while still carrying the party's identity ... I don't think both can go hand in hand. I hope the party will take action on this matter."

The situation is similar in Noakhali 6, where the BNP-nominated candidate and two other BNP leaders are contesting, causing a split among grassroots leaders that is likely to benefit rival party contenders.

Speaking anonymously, a candidate from the seat, said, "BNP leaders and activists are divided into three factions. The party high command does not consider grassroots opinions, which is why many leaders are working against the party."

"The party should discuss the issues with grassroots leaders and resolve the matters as soon as possible."

In Manikganj I, BNP has nominated district convening committee member SA Jinnah Kabir, while former district BNP joint convener Tojammel Haq is running, who has been expelled from the party.

Govt to fix prices of all 295 essential drugs

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Contacted, Zakir Hossain, secretary general of the Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries, said the association had been made aware of the approval but had not yet received official documents. "We will give our formal reaction after reviewing them," he told this correspondent last night.

According to the World Health Organization, essential medicines are those that meet priority healthcare needs based on public health relevance, evidence of benefit and harm, cost-effectiveness, and affordability.

The existing list of 285 essential medicines was last updated in 2016. Of these, the government directly sets prices for 117 widely used drugs, while the rest are approved based on proposals from manufacturers.

The National Drug Policy 2016, citing WHO guidelines and expert opinions, recommends that the essential drug list be revised every two years.

However, it has only been updated twice since its inception in 1982: once in 2008 and again in 2016.

This time, around 135 new medicines have been added, replacing many from the previous list, sources said.

According to Prof Sayedur, the National Drug Policy 1982 led to the expansion of the country's pharmaceutical sector and helped make medicines available to the public.

However, a change introduced in 1994 limited government price control to only 117 of the then total drugs, instead of all medicines, resulting in price increases for drugs outside the list and causing public suffering, he added.

An independent authority will be formed to fix drug prices. Until it is established, the existing authority will continue to set prices.

He also mentioned that drug prices will be adjusted every year in March in line with the inflation rate.