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DB raid spirals into internal investigations

Officers accused of misappropriating Tk 2.8cr of seized cash

TOUSIF KAIUM

Officials at the Detective Branch (DB) of police are facing an internal investigation over alleged misappropriation of Tk 2.8 crore in cash said to have been seized during a raid to recover counterfeit currency in the capital.

The detectives, acting on a tip-off, conducted a raid in Wari on November 8 last year, recovering counterfeit currency and cash, and arresting two people.

In the seizure list prepared after the raid, officials recorded the recovery of counterfeit currency worth Tk 6 lakh and Tk 19 lakh in legitimate cash.

However, during interrogation, the detainees -- Nurul Haque, 32, and Saidul Amin, 24, both Rohingya refugees from Teknaf -- claimed detectives had seized a total of Tk 3 crore in legitimate cash, leaving out Tk 2.8 crore from official documents.

Shafiqul Islam, additional
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A group of women wait in line to buy rice and flour at subsidised rates from a TCB truck yesterday near the Martyred Intellectuals Memorial in Rayerbazar, Mohammadpur. Unable to cope with rising prices of essentials, more and more people from low- and middle-income groups are depending on the OMS (Open Market Sale) initiative.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Political leaders start getting armed escorts

127 of them are on 'risk list'

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and BAHARAM KHAN

Law enforcers have started providing security to top political leaders and election officials ahead of the national election after assessing their security risks or threats.

Alongside gunmen, some leaders are receiving police escorts and house guard deployments at their residences.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) has provided police security and escorts, and gunmen, to 15 political leaders and government officials, according to officials of the home ministry and the DMP.

Additionally, the Special Branch has provided gunmen to 17 individuals, most of whom reside in Dhaka and nearby areas, Khondoker Rafiqul Islam, additional inspector general of Police Headquarters, told The Daily Star yesterday.

In addition to security for leaders, the government has also decided to issue firearms on application, The Daily Star has learnt from home ministry officials involved with the proceedings.

Following that decision, many leaders have applied for firearms, and at least 100 people have applied for gun licences so far, they said.

Among the top political leaders receiving police escorts are BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman and Jamaat-e-Islami Shafiqur Rahman, said a senior official at the DMP.

Besides them, four election commissioners and the chief election commissioner are also receiving police escorts from the DMP.

For the Jamaat-e-Islami's security, the home ministry issued a letter on January 12 requesting the Inspector General of Police to arrange a gunman and deploy uniformed police members at his residence in Uttara citing existing security risks or threats.

In another letter issued on January 6, the ministry
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Yunus seeks UN support to counter misinformation

STAR REPORT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday sought support from the United Nations Human Rights Office to counter a surge of misinformation targeting the February 12 elections.

"There has been a flood of misinformation surrounding the elections. It is coming from both foreign media and local sources," he told Volker Türk, the UN high commissioner for human rights, during a phone conversation, according to the CA press wing.

"They have flooded social media with fake news, rumours and speculation. We are concerned about the impact this may have on the elections," he added.

Türk said he was aware of the problem and offered the support of his office to address what he described as a growing challenge. "There is a lot of misinformation. We will do whatever is needed."

He added that the UN rights agency would work closely with Bangladesh to tackle the issue.

During the conversation,
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ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES 82 officers, 13 detention centres identified

Inquiry report details secret sites, executions and senior-level oversight

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 211 uniformed personnel -- 100 from the army, 98 from the police, five from the BGB, three from the navy, and one from the coast guard -- were interrogated, the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances said in a report released yesterday.

Submitted to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus earlier, the report also contained a list of at least 13 secret detention centres where torture and enforced disappearance had taken place.

The centres were run by the Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Unit, the Detective Branch, and police units in Bogura, Cox's Bazar, Dinajpur and Bagerhat.

The cells run by police were located in the respective lines, while the CTTC held its detainees on the first and seventh floors of its office, the commission found.

The sites run by Rab included the Taskforce for Interrogation Cell (TFC) operated by Rab Intelligence, a detention centre referred to as the "clinic" located in a glass facade building behind

PRIMA FACIE INVOLVEMENT

40 Rab officers

11 DGFI officers

11 police officers

9 officers of CTTC

6 DB officers

3 officers of Lawful Interception Centre

2 NSI officers

the Rab Headquarters, and cells inside Rab-1, Rab-7 and Rab-11.

Meanwhile, the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence ran a Joint Interrogation Cell located in the same compound as the DGFI Headquarters, and the National Security Intelligence operated a secret detention centre inits Gulshan office.

The DB and CTTC often maintained weaker secrecy, allowing detainees to identify locations and officers, while Rab Intelligence and DGFI used tightly controlled systems to obscure identity and location, with military

officers operating in a culture of institutional

secrecy even without formal military oversight, said the report.

The full report details evidence found against key officers involved in enforced disappearance, with the operations codenamed "Golf Operations".

The commission also identified the prima facie involvement of 40 Rab officers, 11 DGFI officers, 11 police officers, nine CTTC officers, six DB officers, three Lawful Interception Centre officers, and two NSI officers.

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100 children killed in Gaza since ceasefire

Says Unicef, blames Israeli airstrikes, ground forces

AFP, Geneva

At least 100 children have been killed by Israeli airstrikes and ground forces in Gaza since the start of a tenuous ceasefire three months ago, the United Nations said yesterday.

The UN children's agency Unicef said that at least 60 boys and 40 girls had been killed in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territory since early October.

"More than 100 children have been killed in Gaza since the ceasefire," Unicef spokesman James Elder told reporters in Geneva.

"That's roughly a girl or a boy killed here every day during a ceasefire," he said, speaking from Gaza City.

"These children are killed from airstrikes, drone strikes, including suicide drones. They're killed from tank shelling. They're killed from live ammunition. They're killed from quad copters."

"We are at 100 -- no doubt," he said, adding that the true number was likely higher.

"A ceasefire that slows the bombs is progress but one that still buries children is not enough," AFP has sought a response from the Israeli military.

An official at Gaza's health ministry, which maintains casualty records, has reported a higher figure of 165 children killed during the tenuous ceasefire, out of a total



The biting cold and thick fog left Sylhet city's streets largely deserted yesterday morning. The photo was taken at 8:30am in the city's Rikabi Bazar area.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

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CAMPAIGN MONITORING BNP rolling out centralised system

From Gulshan, party seeks grassroots discipline in digital push

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The BNP has intensified preparations for the upcoming election, rolling out a centralised system of instructions, monitoring and training aimed at tightening control over grassroots campaigning and candidate activities.

At the heart of the operation is the party's Election Steering Office in Gulshan, which has emerged as the command centre for election planning.

From the office, the BNP is coordinating training programmes for grassroots leaders, overseeing digital campaign strategies and gathering constituency-level information to guide decisions on messaging and tactics.

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman's daughter Zaima Rahman has been regularly visiting the office and often spends several hours there, according to party sources.

The party has rented a four-storey building at House SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

53 more aspirants now back in the race

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission yesterday upheld appeals from 53 aspirants, restoring their candidacy for the 13th National Parliamentary Election scheduled for February 12.

On the fourth day of hearings on appeals against returning officers' decisions to reject nomination papers, the EC reviewed 70 appeals. Of these, 53 were declared valid and 15 invalid.

The EC rejected the appeal of BNP-nominated candidate TS Ayub from Jashore-4 over allegations of loan default. However, it approved the nomination of his son, Farhad Sajid, who is contesting the same constituency as an independent candidate.

In Dhaka-2, Jamaat-e-Islami candidate Md Abdul Haque also regained his candidacy after the EC accepted his appeal.

The EC began hearing appeals on January 10 and will continue until January 18.

So far, 203 candidates have regained their candidacy over the past four days.

Earlier, 645 appeals were filed between January 5 and 9 during the scrutiny of nomination papers.

On January 4, the EC declared the nomination papers of 1,842 candidates valid and 723 invalid across 300 constituencies.

PLOT SCAM Verdict in case against Hasina, Azmina, Tulip on Feb 2

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special court yesterday set February 2 to deliver the verdict in a case filed against deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and 17 others, including her two nieces -- British MP Tulip Siddiq and Azmina Siddiq -- over the Purbachal plot scam.

Judge Md Rabiu Alam of the Special Judge's Court-4 of Dhaka fixed the date after hearing arguments from both prosecution and defence, said Anti-Corruption Commission Public Prosecutor Mir Ahmed Ali Salam.

Former housing and public works state minister Sharif Ahmed, former secretary Kazi Washi Uddin, former additional secretary Md Oliullah, former administrative officer Saiful Islam Sarkar, former senior assistant secretary Purabi Goldar, and Rajuk's former chairman Anisur Rahman



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