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GREEN FACTORY AWARD 2025



HIGHEST SELLING CEMENT for more than **20 YEARS**
SHAH CEMENT

Govt decides to rename Rab instead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

While the United Nations and various human rights organisations have long called for the abolition of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), the government has instead decided to rename it.

Its name will be Special Intervention Force (SIF).

Confirming the development, Home Adviser Lt Gen (ret) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said, "The chief adviser has already given his approval. A government order will be issued soon."

The adviser told a press briefing, after a meeting of the law-and-order core committee at the home ministry on Tuesday, that the force's uniform would also be changed.

He added that the decision reflected changes in the force's operational standards over time.

"You have already seen their standard of work. If you compare their standard of work from one-and-a-half years ago to now, there is a big change," he said, adding that the renaming was part of that broader transformation

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Vehicles kick up a cloud of dust on a busy street in Hasnabad of Keraniganj, Dhaka, yesterday. Construction work and improper cleaning of roads result in such poor air quality in the neighbourhood.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

'No reason to fear going to polling stations'

Says army chief alongside air force, navy chiefs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Army chief Waker-uz-Zaman said the government, all its institutions and law enforcement agencies, and the three armed services are fully committed to holding a free and fair election, stressing that there is "no scope" for the polls not being held.

He said voters, including members of minority communities, have no reason to fear going to polling stations on February 12, as authorities have deployed an "unprecedentedly large security force" to ensure a peaceful election.

More than one lakh army personnel have been deployed for the polls, alongside 3,730 air force members and 5,000 naval personnel, he said. The wider security arrangement also includes around 1.5 lakh police members, six lakh Ansar personnel, and members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), and Bangladesh National Cadet Corps (BNCC).

Addressing an exchange of views in Gazipur on Tuesday,

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Fines for illegal gas use to double

Govt set to amend gas act

BAHARAM KHAN and ASIFUR RAHMAN

The government is set to amend the Bangladesh Gas Act 2010, nearly doubling the fines for illegal gas use and introducing provisions to penalise property owners – including land, flat or building owners – for illegal usage.

Fines for illegal household gas use – currently between Tk 10,000 and Tk 20,000 – will be increased to a maximum of Tk 40,000, as per the draft of Bangladesh Gas (Amendment) Ordinance, 2026, which is set to be placed before the advisory council meeting today for approval.

Commercial users will face fines of up to Tk 80,000, up from the existing Tk 40,000.



For industrial users, captive power plants and CNG refuelling stations, the maximum fine will rise to Tk 4 lakh from Tk 2 lakh.

Meanwhile, irregularities in the power and fertiliser sectors will attract fines of up to Tk 10 lakh, double the current ceiling of Tk 5 lakh.

The draft ordinance has retained the imprisonment provisions unchanged, ranging from six months to five years.

A new paragraph added to the offences and penalties chapter states that if gas is used illegally – either directly or with the assistance or instigation of a contractor or any other person – the owner of the premises where the offence is committed, along with any involved employee of the gas company, contractor or other individual, will be deemed offenders.

According to the draft, the use of gas by non-metered consumers with more stoves than the approved number, as well as gas consumption by metered consumers

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Political violence kills 195 in 17 months

HRSS reports; Odhikar says 328 killed since Aug 2024

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 195 people have been killed and 11,229 injured in political violence across the country over the past 17 months, according to the Human Rights Support Society (HRSS).

In its report titled "Human Rights Situation in Bangladesh (September 2024–January 2026)," unveiled at a press meet at the Press Club yesterday, HRSS said nearly half of the incidents – 704 in total – resulted from internal feuds within the BNP and its affiliated bodies. These clashes led to 121 deaths and 7,131 injuries.

In another report titled "Report on Violence Prior to the 13th National Parliamentary Election" published on the same day, HRSS said at least five people were killed and 970 injured in election-related violence across the country in the two months following the announcement of the 13th Parliamentary Election schedule.

The report documented 162 incidents between December 11, 2025 – the day the election schedule was announced – and January 31, 2026. These incidents included clashes, attacks, vandalism, and arson involving rival candidates and their supporters, often stemming from disputes over nominations and local political dominance,

HRSS said at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club.

Meanwhile, human rights organisation Odhikar yesterday reported a higher death toll for a similar period. According to Odhikar, 328 people were killed and 9,182 injured in political violence between August 9, 2024, and December 31, 2025.

HRSS REPORT (Sept 2024-Jan 2026)

- ➔ BNP's internal clashes leave 121 dead
- ➔ Mob violence claimed 259 lives
- ➔ 60 became victims of extrajudicial killings
- ➔ 127 died in prison custody

Odhikar's data on BNP internal conflicts, covering January 1 to December 11, 2025, showed at least 76 BNP members killed and 3,746 injured due to infighting. According to Odhikar, two people were killed and 25 injured between the announcement of the polls and

December 31, 2025.

HRSS described the rise in mob violence and lynching as "extremely alarming." Its report recorded 413 incidents of mob violence nationwide under the interim government over 17 months, resulting in at least 259 deaths. Odhikar reported 181 deaths by public lynching during its reporting period.

Both reports highlighted the severity of these killings, noting that victims were often beaten to death or set on fire, citing, for instance, the case of garment worker Dipu Chandra Das, who was beaten and his body burned following allegations of blasphemy.

The HRSS report also documented at least 60 deaths in alleged clashes with law enforcement, in custody, or due to torture. The breakdown included six deaths in clashes or alleged "gunfights," 22 from torture, 12 in police custody, and 20 from gunshot wounds. In addition, at least 127 accused individuals died in prison custody nationwide during the same period. Odhikar reported 45 victims of extrajudicial killings and 122 deaths in prison custody over 17 months.

Attacks on minority communities were also recorded. HRSS documented 56 incidents,

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WORLD CANCER DAY

Tobacco major driver of cancer

Shows recent study on a Kishoreganj upazila

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Nearly half the patients in a rural upazila are suffering from tobacco-related cancer, indicating tobacco use is a major factor driving the country's growing cancer burden.

As much as 46 percent of the cancer patients in an upazila of Kishoreganj suffer from tobacco-related cancers, with cancers of the lip and oral cavity, larynx, stomach and lung being the most common, found a study by Bangladesh Medical University (BMU).

Around 73 percent of the male cancer patients have a history of smoking, while about 60 per cent of female patients have a history of using smokeless tobacco, according to the population-based cancer registry covering 2.32 lakh residents of Hossainpur upazila.

While there is no comprehensive government data on the country's overall cancer situation, the latest World Health Organisation (WHO) cancer report, published in 2024, shows these cancers topping the list, supporting the BMU findings on tobacco's harmful impact on public health.

The findings come at a time when the country's projected tobacco consumption prevalence among people aged 15 and above stood at 31.4 percent last year, higher than both the global and South-East Asia regional averages, according to the WHO.

Although the interim government has approved a stringent anti-tobacco law, its effective implementation remains a major challenge given the large number of tobacco users in the country.

An estimated 3.71 crore people aged 15 years or above consumed various tobacco products last year in Bangladesh, while 1.97 crore people smoked, according to

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Dhaka inks deal with Tokyo to upgrade defence

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and Japan have signed an agreement to accelerate Bangladesh's defence modernisation through the transfer of equipment and technology.

Principal Staff Officer of Bangladesh's Armed Forces Division (AFD) Lt Gen SM Kamrul Hasan and Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Saida Shinichi signed the agreement at the AFD headquarters in Dhaka on Tuesday.

"Through this agreement, the strategic partnership and long-standing friendship between the two countries have been elevated to a new height," the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement.

Earlier in 2023, Bangladesh and Japan signed a deal and exchanged notes for 575 million yen (\$3.8 million) to provide four patrol ships to Bangladesh under Japan's Official Security Assistance (OSA) framework.

Moving away from its pacifist policy amid global geopolitical shifts, Japan established the OSA framework in 2023 to deepen security cooperation with partner countries, including Bangladesh, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Fiji.

Currently, Bangladesh imports around 70 percent of its weapons from China, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Japan's foreign ministry has said Bangladesh, a strategic partner of Japan, is located in the Bay of Bengal region, an important sea lane for Japan. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly important to improve the

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Mourners gather near the bodies of Palestinians who, according to medics, were killed in an Israeli strike, at Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City yesterday. Israeli tank shelling and airstrikes killed 21 people, including four children, in the enclave.

PHOTO: REUTERS

3 juveniles rape, murder 7-year-old

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Three teenagers, arrested on charges of killing a seven-year-old girl in Tangail's Dhanbari upazila recently, have confessed before magistrates, police said yesterday.

Tangail Court Inspector Sazzad Hossain told The Daily Star that police produced the accused before the Tangail Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court on Tuesday. Magistrates recorded their confessional statements under Section 164.

During the statements, the teenagers admitted that two of them raped the child before killing her, while the third assisted in the crime. The magistrates later sent the accused, aged between 13 and 16, to the Youth Development Centre in Gazipur.

The victim, Maria, was the daughter of Uzzal Hossain of Baraipara village in Jadunathpur union.

Nurus Salam, officer-in-charge of Dhanbari Police Station, said Maria went missing on January 26. Her father filed a general diary (GD) with the police station the same day.

On February 1, locals reported a

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