

Three shown arrested in Star office attack case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three suspects were yesterday shown arrested in a case filed over vandalism, arson, and looting at The Daily Star's office in Dhaka.

They are: Saidur Rahman, 25; Abul Kashem, 33; and Azahar Ali, 33. All three had earlier been arrested in a separate case over vandalism and arson at the Prothom Alo office in the capital.

Excluding the three, 11 others had been arrested in the case by December 26 last year, and all are currently in jail, according to court records.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Aminul Islam Junaid yesterday showed Saidur, Kashem and Azahar arrested in the case following an application submitted by Sub-Inspector Jahirul Islam of the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said a court staffer.

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People of all ages light candles in remembrance of the victims of the 'Black Night' of March 25, 1971, as Udichi Shilpigosthi and Chhatra Union hold a torch procession and candle-lighting programme at Shikha Chirantan in the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan last night. PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

REVIEW OF 133 ORDINANCES

JS panel flags 20 issues for clarification

UNB, Dhaka

A parliamentary special committee formed to review 133 ordinances issued during the interim government has identified 20 issues requiring further clarification.

Committee chairman Zainul Abedin disclosed the development to reporters yesterday after an adjourned meeting held at the Cabinet Room of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

"We have examined all 133 ordinances and completed discussions on them over the past two days," he said.

"On many of them, we are in full agreement. Four issues were identified yesterday (Tuesday), and several more were added today (yesterday), bringing the total to 20 where we believe further clarification is needed," he added.

The committee will reconvene on March 29 at 8:30pm, following the parliamentary session, to deliberate further on these outstanding matters, said Zainul, adding, "We hope we will be able to settle everything and reach final decisions in that meeting."

He also noted that there had been no objections. SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



WASHINGTON SUMMIT Zubaida urges global action for children's welfare

BSS, Dhaka

Dr Zubaida Rahman, spouse of Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, has called for stronger global cooperation to ensure the welfare and development of children while addressing a high-level summit in Washington, DC, at the invitation of US First Lady Melania Trump.

She joined over 40 first ladies and spouses of world leaders at the "Fostering the Future Together: Global Coalition Summit", held at the US Department of State, which focused on advancing children's well-being worldwide.



In her speech, Zubaida stressed that "the future of every nation is written in the lives of its children", shaped by care, education, and values. She expressed gratitude to the US first lady for convening the summit.

Highlighting Bangladesh's progress, she cited initiatives such as the Family Card and Farmer Card programmes, aimed at strengthening families and ensuring a safe, nurturing environment for children.

As a physician, she expressed her deep commitment to ensuring accessible, quality healthcare for every child, with an emphasis not only on treatment but also on prevention from the earliest stages of life.

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Govt moves to unclog Dhaka roads

PM sets one-month timeframe for visible improvement in traffic conditions

HELEMUL ALAM

As part of government directives, Dhaka's two city corporations are set to take coordinated measures to ease traffic congestion, which include clearing footpaths and roads, introducing semi-automated traffic signals, and bringing rickshaws under a regulated framework.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Dhaka South City Corporation Administrator Abdus Salam yesterday said traffic congestion is not solely a matter of signal management but also involves clearing encroached footpaths, managing intersections, and improving overall coordination.

"Traffic is a multi-dimensional issue. All these issues are interconnected, and we are trying to address them in a coordinated way," he said.

Salam stressed the need to regulate street vendors, noting that unplanned occupation of roads and footpaths significantly contributes to congestion.

"We cannot allow the entire city to be taken over by vendors. If footpaths and roads are occupied, normal movement becomes impossible. To address this, we are planning designated evening markets in about eight locations across Dhaka. Vendors will be accommodated there so they do not occupy major roads," he said.

He added that the aim is not to remove livelihoods, but to ensure balance.

"We want vendors and rickshaws

to exist, but people must also be able to move freely. No one should be deprived of civic facilities. Vendors and rickshaw operators must come under a disciplined system while ensuring public convenience."

Describing the current situation



PROPOSED PLANS

- Footpaths, roads to be cleared of encroachment
- Street vendors to be relocated to designated evening markets
- Rickshaws to be brought under regulation
- Semi-automated traffic signal systems to be expanded
- Battery-powered vehicles to be regulated

as unsustainable, Salam said Dhaka has nearly become paralysed due to congestion.

"This cannot continue. We must restore functionality to the city, and that requires cooperation from all

stakeholders."

He said locations for the proposed vendor markets will be finalised in consultation with law enforcement agencies. "Vendors cannot occupy major streets where traffic pressure is highest. Instead, we will provide alternative spaces," he added.

On battery-powered vehicles, Salam said discussions will be held with engineers from Buet. "These vehicles will remain, but they must be regulated. Issues such as speed control and braking systems need to be standardised."

He also said certain major roads, particularly VIP routes, may gradually be restricted to vehicles that meet specific speed and operational standards, while slower vehicles could be redirected to alternative routes.

Echoing similar concerns, Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Administrator Shafiqul Islam Khan said multiple infrastructural and management issues are contributing to congestion.

"There are problems with footpaths, illegal structures, and U-turn systems. We have discussed these issues in meetings involving police and other agencies, and work is already underway," he said.

He added that meetings, including one with the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, have focused on resolving key infrastructural problems, such as unplanned streetlight poles in the middle of roads.

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15% journo face sexual harassment at work: survey

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fifteen percent of Bangladeshi journalists said they had experienced sexual harassment at work, with women reporting significantly higher rates of verbal, online and physical harassment than men, according to a survey of 339 journalists.

Among the 339 respondents, seven women and two men reported that they had experienced rape.

Among women respondents, 51 percent reported verbal harassment, compared with 8 percent of men.

Online harassment was reported by 43 percent of women and 14 percent of men, while 21 percent of women and 4 percent of men reported physical harassment.

AT A GLANCE

- Survey conducted on 339 journalists in 2025
- 51% women, 8% men reported verbal harassment
- 43% women, 14% men affected by online harassment
- 21% women, 4% men experienced physical harassment

Incidents of sexual harassment often remain hidden due to shame and social stigma. We feel uncomfortable and unsafe talking about it, but silence only allows the problem to continue.

ANGUR NAHAR MONTY
Coordinator at Women Journalists' Network Bangladesh

The findings were shared yesterday at the launch of the Sexual Harassment Response Protocol for Media Professionals, unveiled by BBC Media Action Bangladesh in partnership with the Women Journalists' Network Bangladesh at a hotel in Dhaka.

The survey, conducted in 2025 by the World Association of News Publishers in partnership with BBC Media Action, included 100 women and 190 men. Four respondents did not disclose their gender, while 45 preferred not to reveal their identity.

Arafat Siddique, senior media development officer at BBC Media Action, presented the findings, alongside the protocol.

The survey also highlighted weak institutional responses, particularly in cases of verbal harassment.

Arafat said institutional response was often weak. No action was taken in 43 percent cases of complaints by women and 60 percent of men regarding verbal harassment. Where action was taken, it was mostly limited to warnings. SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

ACC seeks to show Masud arrested in graft case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday filed an application with a Dhaka court to show Lt Gen (retd) Masud Uddin Chowdhury, a prominent figure in the army-backed government, arrested in a case filed over alleged embezzlement of Tk 119.32 crore through sending workers to Malaysia.

Judge (in charge) Mohammad Moin Uddin Chowdhury of the Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court set April 9 for hearing on the application filed by ACC Assistant Director Abul Kalam Azad, said bench assistant Riya Hossain.

On March 11, the ACC lodged a case against Masud under the Penal Code, under the Money

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Govt committed to ending 'mob culture': minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is determined to curb "mob culture" and firmly establish the rule of law in the country, said Information Minister Zahir Uddin Swapan yesterday.

He made the remarks at a press conference at the Secretariat, highlighting the initiatives taken during the first month of the new government.

Responding to a journalist's query, the minister acknowledged the ongoing challenges.

"Everyone knows our position on this. However, we must keep in mind that we have taken on the responsibility of establishing the rule of law against the backdrop of a long-standing culture of lawlessness," Swapan said. "We hope to move past this long accumulated mess and bad memories to quickly establish the rule of law."

Asked whether the government would formulate a policy to tackle fake news and ensure job security for journalists, the minister said the government plans to hold strategic policy discussions with media representatives in the near future.

During the briefing, the minister outlined several key decisions and development projects across various sectors. He mentioned that over 37,000 families have already received "Family Cards" under a pilot project, with each family receiving cash assistance of Tk 2,500 monthly.

Additionally, "Farmers Cards" will be distributed to 21,014 farmers on an experimental basis from the upcoming Pabela Baisakh, providing an annual incentive of Tk 2,500, he added.

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Morar Bhita: a '71 massacre site still frozen in fear

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

Residents of Baruipara in Harhar village under Barishal's Gournadi upazila still avoid a place known as "Morar Bhita", which translates roughly to "house of the dead", 55 years since the Liberation War.

The site, hidden behind thick betel leaf gardens, swamps, and dense jungle, is not safe enough to enter even in daylight, say locals.

On May 15, 1971, around 150 villagers who had sought refuge there were killed by the Pakistani army. Since then, generations of men, women, and children have grown up hearing the stories of Morar Bhita in hushed tones and avoiding the site altogether.

However, on December 14 every year, local freedom fighters enter the overgrown area to pay floral tributes.

Avilash Nandi, 58, is believed to be the lone survivor from those caught in the direct line of fire at the site.

On the fateful day, Avilash,



3, was hiding in a betel leaf garden with his mother, Nirmala Nandi, 55, and his sister, Anita, 7. During the firing, both his mother and sister were killed, and a bullet struck his leg.

Citing what he later learned from relatives and villagers, Avilash said he was rescued while lying on the chest of his dead mother, covered in blood. A bullet had pierced his leg, but a local doctor treated him well.

"Following my mother's

death on that day, I grew up with my sisters. I do not generally go to the site where the firing took place," he said.

Most residents of the village were Hindu farmers who cultivated betel leaves. The area was surrounded by gardens and jungle, which many believed would provide safety when news spread of the army's arrival.

However, according to villagers, local collaborators guided the Pakistani Army to

the spot, before they carried out an indiscriminate attack.

Freedom fighter Commander Kader Howlader said the army had set out from a camp at Ashwini Kumar School in Batajar.

"Hearing that army had arrived in the area, some villagers hid within the betel leaf garden, jungle, and swamps. Sensing their presence, the army fired at them indiscriminately, killing 152 people, including women, men, and children," he described.

The population of the village at the time was around 400, and nearly one-third of the village was killed. Most of the bodies were buried in a pit beside the betel garden, said locals.

Freedom fighter Ismat Hossain said although some bodies were taken away by relatives, many remained. "Some 92 bodies were buried there. Almost every family in Baruipara lost someone in the massacre."

Eyewitnesses carry vivid memories.

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