



the city that was

The Lalbagh Fort built in 1678 A.D. by Prince Mohammad Azam, son of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb was the scene of bloody battle during the first war of independence (1857) when 260 sepoys stationed here revolted against British forces. Outstanding monuments of Lalbagh are the tomb of Pari Bibi, Lalbagh Mosque, Audience Hall and Hammam of Nawab Shaista Khan now housing a museum.

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2,500 cases undecided for lack of autopsy reports



Doctors say they send reports in time but police hide them to make underhand dealings with the accused

MIZANUR KHAN

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At least 2,500 murder and unnatural death (UD) cases hang in the balance, as doctors did not hand in autopsy reports in time, home ministry officials said in an allegation that the forensic department brushed aside.

The ministry officials said no headway was made in the cases because of the delay in the last two years. "A postmortem report should be timely, as it is crucial to a case," a ministry official said.

In three months from January, 1,936 murder and unnatural death cases were filed across the country while the doctors gave reports on only half the cases. "As many as 935 reports are yet to be prepared," the official said.

Doctors gave reports on 59 cases in five days after the incidents, 116 cases in 10 days, 93 cases in 15 days, 104 cases in 21 days, 188 cases in a month, 2,267 cases in two months and 131 cases in three months, the ministry says. Only 25 autopsy reports were submitted on the day of the incident.

Doctors also did not issue post-mortem reports on 1,520 cases of the 4,356 filed before 2004. Police say they could not go ahead with the cases, as they did not receive autopsy reports in time.

"Sometimes, it takes more than six months to get an autopsy

report," said Mohammad Imamuddin, assistant officer-in-charge of Tejgaon Police Station.

Forensic doctors at Dhaka Medical College (DMC) say preparing autopsy reports is not their primary duty. "The home ministry is simply using the doctors without payment," said Dr Mohammad Akhteruzzaman, head of the DMC forensic department, who emphasised teaching as their prime concern.

"We defend our autopsy reports in court, but we hardly receive any money for this job. Some doctors did not receive travel allowances for the last four years," he alleged.

Dr Akhteruzzaman told Star City that he appeared in court 17 times in June 1999 alone and spent more than Tk 3,000 of his own. "I knew I would not get the expenses back."

The forensic department is overburdened with work: lecturers carry out autopsies up to 20 corpses a day.

"We need at least half an hour for an autopsy and half an hour more for writing the report. If the doctors remain busy carrying out autopsies when will they teach students?" Dr Akhteruzzaman asked.

Records show 4,800 bodies were examined at the morgue of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) last year, while only four professors and six lecturers run the department with rundown machines and poor fund. "Only one morgue assistant opens up to 20 dead bodies a

day and gets poor salary."

In a meeting of the home ministry's monitoring cell on May 24, officials sought help from the health ministry to sort out the problem and set up a guideline.

Health ministry officials said the doctors cannot complete reports in time, as they are often transferred or go abroad. The meeting suggested coordination between the two ministries and holding up transfer if the doctor does not clear his autopsy reports.

The forensic doctors denied the allegation of delay and said they send reports in time but police hide them to make underhand dealings with the accused.

"They take bribe from the criminals and collect a second copy of the autopsy report, which is not enough for a judge to hand down capital punishment," said the head of the forensic department.

The forensic department stopped sending autopsy reports to the police station by snail post. Every Thursday, doctors ask all police stations by phone to collect reports. "Sometimes they come and collect, sometimes don't," he said.

A committee formed by the health ministry, with the help of forensic doctors from Dhaka, Barisal, Mymensingh and Chittagong medical colleges framed a draft on policy with a suggestion for appointing forensic doctors to police departments for quick reports.

"Recently, I have checked the accounts of a city corporation. There I found the mayor bought a Pajero and was charging Tk. 24 lakh a year for its petrol alone."

 -- Saifur Rahman
Finance Minister

Tells a meeting with Economic Reporters Forum (ERF) in the city, on June 2. Source: The Daily Star.

"If we don't (beat them) then I don't think I am going to lead the team"

 -- Brian Lara
West Indies cricket captain

Tells press in Kingston ahead of their second Test with Bangladesh, on June 3. Source: The Daily Star.

"Let me say this clearly that we never send our troops to shoot at somebody or to get shot at by the people of any land."

 -- Morshed Khan
Foreign Minister
Tells press regarding sending of troops to Iraq or Afghanistan, hours before Donald Rumsfeld's visit to Dhaka, on June 4. Source: The Daily Star


"Many skilled workers are becoming unemployed because of the golden handshake."

 -- Rehman Sobhan
Economist

Tells a roundtable discussion organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue, on June 4. Source: Bhorer Kagoj

"Fear has gripped Khaleda Zia, so the government is now trembling."

 -- Badruddoza Chowdhury
Bikalpa Dhana chief and former president

Tells a public meeting in Munshiganj ahead of by-elections, on June 3. Source: Bhorer Kagoj

"Only Allah knows whether we can return to power again. But we are striving for it."

 -- H.M. Ershad
Jatiya Party chairman

Tells women journalists at a programme to exchange views, on June 1. Source: Bhorer Kagoj



Falling plasters at the 'ghostly' underpass at Karwan Bazar.

A run-down underpass cries for attention

SULTANA RAHMAN

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Lack of maintenance left the much-used underpass of the city's busiest road at Karwan Bazar in a run-down condition, causing inconvenience to its users.

Dirty water accumulating in it, water dripping from the surface in monsoon and inadequate lighting add to the trouble.

Karwan Bazar underpass is the only easy crossing point on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue and is more used than the other two in Gulistan and Gabtoli.

The walkway gets water-logged during the rains and passers-by get drenched with water beating in from the sides.

The only auto water-pumping machine has remained out of order over the last six months.

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) constructed the underpass at Karwan Bazar in 1990 at a cost of more than Tk 60 lakh

and the DCC zonal office-6 was designated to maintain the underpass, but no permanent employees were appointed.

"Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP) was authorised last year for maintenance of the underpass. We are not responsible for its bad condition," said a DCC official of the zone-6.

Neither the DCC official nor the DUTP official agrees to open up on the issue, but both organisations claimed its ownership.

"We don't have enough staff who can be deployed there for clean-ups," a DUTP official said.

The underpass, constructed with no entrance or exit from a sidewalk, falls on to the sub-line of moving traffic -- a situation that causes more delays in getting across the road rather than providing easy access.

Commuting through the underpass is risky during power failures. Muggers and hoodlums are on the lookout for opportunities and blackouts give them the chance they wait for.

"Not a single penny was spent on maintenance," another DCC official said.

"While I was using the under-

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pass last week the power failed. I heard a woman screaming. Hoodlums physically abused her," said Anisul Haque, an employee of a private firm at Karwan Bazar.

Only one tube light of the 16 installed during construction is in working condition, which makes it all the more difficult for pedestrians. Lack of adequate ventilation adds to the other problems, as the only blower has been out of order for the last six months.

Some officials of the DCC zone-6 say the underpass might be 'technically faulty' as water has been dripping from the surface for long.

The DCC formed a committee to repair and developed the underpass about two years ago, but the committee is now only on paper. DCC officials said Tk 26 lakh was allocated for maintenance of the underpass with five overhead footbridges in the zone.

"Not a single penny was spent on maintenance," another DCC official said.

"While I was using the under-

A PERENNIAL CONCERN



The kitchen markets along the railway tracks remain a perennial concern for city dwellers. But the authorities seem unconcerned for reasons best known to them. The best they did recently (right) was putting up a 'mini' public warning far away from the point of possible hazard.

SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN / AKH MORSIN