

Police reform

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can serve people freely and fairly. The Daily Star organised the roundtable titled 'Police Reforms: Some Immediate and Long Term Goals' at its office.

"The success of any reform depends on political will. The primary goal of the reform is its insulation from illegitimate interference from wherever it comes," former adviser to a caretaker government and also a former inspector general of police (IGP), ASM Shahjahan, said at the roundtable.

"Police should be pro-active, not be reactive as has been known and experienced in our country over the years. In a democratic country performance of the police should be measured by the satisfaction of the community and not only by some statistical data," he said.

"There is hardly any police station which can be run with the insufficient money given by the government. Their day-to-day need should be met properly, so they do not have to look out for other means of income," he said.

The PRP should have a provision that would make the force serve the people, instead of making it a quasi-force of the government, said the former IGP, who is also UNDP's senior adviser on police reform.

In his key-note speech, ex-IGP Nurul Huda said the Police Act of 1861 should be replaced by a new police act which would not only change the system of superintendence and control over the police but also widen their role to make the body function as an agency to promote the rule of law and render impartial service to the community.

"Another important thrust of reform should be to ensure that the investigative tasks of police are kept beyond any kind of intervention by the executive or non-executive," Huda said.

He also suggested relieving the police from general administration tasks like collection of intelligence of political parties for the government.

"We are living in a time of great irony in Bangladesh when democracy is restricted for the betterment of democracy," he said.

Huda stressed the need for bringing substantial changes in the strategies of policing and a smaller but skilled police force.

He suggested fixing the tenure of the police chief and forming of a commission, through appropriate statute, which would approve any premature expiry of the tenure.

"The onus of ensuring mal-practice-free management of the force, including recruitment, promotions, postings and transfers, squarely rests with the police hierarchy," Huda said.

He said efficient human resource management, efficient use of financial resources and adoption of modern technologies are other areas for which the police leadership need to take initiatives.

Officers of impeccable integrity, good repute and proven competence have to be deputed to probe public complaints against the police, he said.

He said ensuring gender-sensitive policing should be a critical element of the ongoing police reform efforts. Programmes and strategies aimed at changing police's attitude towards women should involve proactive induction of substantially large proportions of women into the police force. A gender-sensitive training strategy should be integral to the police reform agenda.

He said the problem of corruption stems from several interrelated factors which include low pay of policemen, wide discretionary powers available to them, outdated performance appraisal systems, poor working conditions, ineffective internal accountability (by seniors) and abysmally weak external accountability mechanisms.

Expressing grave concern over the politicisation of recruitment in the police department, former IGP M Azizul Haque said political governments' unfettered changes and transfers in the top posts of the force led to the collapse of the chain of command. He cited the incident of changing the IGP six times in five years of the immediate past BNP-led government.

If the police are guided by the law, political influence will reduce to a great extent, former IGP Ismail Hossain said. He suggested privatising police recruitment.

Editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam said the general impression of the people is that police beat up people taking part in processions, do not file any case without instructions from the political party in power and they take bribes from people.

He said the police have been used as a mechanism for oppression whereas a civil society cannot exist without a people-friendly, just and honest police force.

"The draft has to be something that will make people feel comfortable. The reform must have some system through which different interest groups can get benefits," said Khushi Kabir, head of Nijera Kori, an organisation working for protection of the livelihoods of the rural poor.

Prof Asif Nazrul of the Faculty of Law of Dhaka University said people must be sympathetic to the police. They are working for the society round the clock without any overtime payment, he added.

"Police have to disobey illegal or undue orders of ministers. If there is no scope, it needs to be created through reforms," he said.

UNDP Programme Manager Hubert Staberhofer said the drafted PRP is now being translated into Bengali, which will be distributed in the country for widespread discussions. He said the reform proposal has the standard of the countries in Europe.

Executive Director of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association advocate Salma Ali, Director of Ain-o-Salish Kendra Dr Faustina Pereira, barrister Tanjibul Alam also took part in the roundtable moderated by Brig Gen (ret'd) Shahedul Anam Khan, editor, defence and strategic affairs of The Daily Star.

Venus

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won a game to make it 3-1, but she double-faulted for the fourth time for set point, and Williams converted by charging forward to put away a backhand volley.

The 19th-ranked Bartoli held serve to close to 3-1. But Williams hit a backhand winner to break serve for 5-1, and closed out the victory with a 124-mph service winner that handcuffed a weary Bartoli.

The crowd roared as Williams raised her arms, grinned and, after shaking hands with her opponent, let out with an exultant "Woooooo!"

With Wimbledon paying equal prize money to men and women for the first time this year, Williams won 1,407 million dollars. Bartoli received 703,500 dollars.

Saifur's son

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His tenure in the administrative post. **HOW BABU GOT THE LEASE**

Babu applied to then state minister for land Shahjahan Omar in March 2002, seeking a lease of 524.59 acres of land at Majidih in Srimangal upazila of Moulvibazar to establish a tea garden.

In the application written on the letterhead pad of his Shahjalal Tea Garden Estate, Babu said people illegally occupied the state-owned land in the area and it should be handed over to him so that the state can benefit from the creation of a tea garden there.

Shahjahan Omar sent the application to Mokhes on March 11, 2002, who later sent it to the then additional deputy commissioner (ADC) Abdul Kader and assistant commissioner (land) Badrun Nahar to report on the matter.

Nahar reported back to Mokhes that the land could be leased out to Babu to increase government revenue and that the 300 families living on the khas land should be evicted.

In the preliminary stage, Moulvibazar district administration in a letter to the land ministry dated June 12, 2002 had sought approval for 212 acres of land for Babu, saying the land is very suitable for establishing a tea garden.

When the ADC (revenue) of Moulvibazar visited the area for an investigation the people living in the

area manhandled him and his fellow officials.

Mokhes later recommended that the government should lease out a total of 585.45 acres of land to Babu—60 acres more than what Babu had originally sought.

Following the land ministry's approval, the district administration leased out 100 acres of land.

Sources alleged that Mokhes recommended the additional land for getting favour from the then finance minister and his elder son Nasser Rahman.

Mokhes, who was widely reported to have acted as a private secretary to Nasser, was later promoted as joint secretary and posted at Saifur's ministry. He later became the Chittagong divisional commissioner during the lajuddin-led caretaker government.

It is reported that at one stage Kaiser Rahman Titu, Saifur's second son and a director of Shahjalal Tea Garden, went to negotiate a settlement with the landless people and became sympathetic to them. He, however, failed to persuade his brother to give up his pursuit of the land.

Later, these people went to the High Court on orders of which the eviction process was abandoned. The progress of leasing out the rest of the land also halted.

Pope allows wider use of Latin mass

AFP, Vatican City

Pope Benedict XVI gave the go-ahead yesterday for greater use of the old Latin mass, signalling a bid to heal a decades-old split in the Roman Catholic Church.

But the move, which also applies to other religious rituals, is controversial and leading figures have already expressed misgivings.

A papal decree said priests should now meet requests by the faithful to hold mass in the traditional Church language, which had widely been dropped after the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s.

"In parishes where there is a stable group of faithful who adhere to the earlier liturgical tradition, the pastor should willingly accept their request to celebrate the Mass according to the rite of the Roman Missal published in 1962....," said the decree.

"The pastor, having attentively examined all aspects, may also grant permission to use the earlier ritual for the administration of the Sacraments of Baptism, Marriage, Penance and the Anointing of the Sick, if the good of souls would seem to require it," it added.

The virtual abandonment of the Tridentine mass after the Second Vatican Council in 1965 was one of the causes of a breakaway led by French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre in 1970.

The move was to encourage the greater use of the mass in local languages, one of a series of reforms made by the council in a bid to modernise the Church.

Traditionalists say the Tridentine mass, named after the town of Trento, now in northern Italy, is more spiritual and historically authentic than the modern version.

French bishops secretly approached the pope late last year to voice their concerns about his then apparent readiness to revive the Tridentine mass.

Cardinal Jean-Pierre Ricard, chairman of the French bishops' conference, said in November that differences with followers of Lefebvre were not only liturgical, but also theological, dealing with religious freedom, ecumenism, inter-religious dialogue and politics.

Motia Chy

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are eliminated.

"The caretaker government on the one hand speaks of secularism and establishing democracy. On the other hand, it is creating such an environment that will encourage militancy in the country," Motia told journalists at the entrance of Sudha Sadan, Hasina's residence, after being barred from entering there.

The AL leader termed the restriction on visiting Hasina undemocratic and said that as per the constitution, the citizens of the country have the right to meet one another.

Two AL lawyers -- advocates Sahara Khatun and Kamrul Islam -- were however allowed by the police to enter the Sudha Sadan.

"The insinuation by the Election Commission of splitting up of the political parties will also hinder democracy and give rise to militancy," Motia said.

Motia also questioned about the authenticity of the much-talked letter that AL general secretary Abdul Jalil supposedly sent to the government.

Advocates Sahara Khatun and Kamrul Islam told journalists that they were visiting party chief Hasina to discuss legal aspects of graft cases filed against her.

They termed the graft cases against Hasina as "false, fabricated and baseless" and said they were confident about winning those 'false' cases.

The two lawyers also questioned under what authority Jalil's letter, written to the government, made its way to Jalil's family and the news media since according to the jail code, an inmate has to acquire prior government approval to send letters to anyone.

Jubo Mohila League observed its fifth anniversary

Leaders of Jubo Mohila League, a front organisation of AL for young women, yesterday celebrated its fifth anniversary at the entrance of the Sudha Sadan as the law enforcers barred them from entering residence of the AL chief.

Around 35 leaders and activists of the Jubo Mohila League cut a cake and celebrated the anniversary in a quiet manner.

Hasina

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ensure supply of fertiliser to the farmers.

The government has an obligation to guarantee supply of agricultural inputs to the farmers as they make an important contribution to national development, she observed, says a UNB report.

"Filing cases against farmers for demanding fertiliser at fair price is not acceptable on any logical ground. Likewise, any death in safe custody or in prison is not admissible -- it's unconstitutional and inhuman," Hasina said.

Police filed the cases against the farmers on Thursday on charges of attacking and damaging government properties on the premises of Nachole UNO office in Chapainawabganj on Wednesday.

Titas gas leakage

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crisis like this one. The gas and power sector is unlike all other sectors, where such a crisis can imply huge losses or even a national disaster. The present procurement rules do not recognise this urgency," he added.

Earlier, based on arguments of a Bapex expert that the leakage problem has originated from well-3 located three to four kilometres off the gas leakage area, the BGFL floated a tender to assign an operator for remedial action in well-3. Sources said that by the end of this month, the BGFL would open the tender and select the best bidder for the operation.

"Well-3 will need expert intervention because it is actually unstable. But fixing this well alone is unlikely to resolve Titas field's crisis," said a high official admitting that there is confusion among local experts about the origin of the gas leakage, which is resulting in a very slow response to resolving the crisis.

One expert, who had reviewed data of the gas field to pinpoint the problem, argues that origin of the leakage is well-10, which is close to the leakage area. He says that well-9 should also be looked into. Several experts of foreign oil companies, who looked into the data and made field visits, also agree to this point of view.

But another expert from Bapex had long been arguing that well-3 is the trouble spot as its gas production level has dropped significantly since late 2003, about the same time when the gas leakage problem started to surface slowly.

Presenting data and his interpretation in March, this expert convinced the authorities to look into well-3 from mid-April. This operation was left incomplete when gas production from this well surged to 30 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) from 15 mmcf.

Though its gas production had increased, the well became unpredictable, forcing the BGFL to go for appointing an international operator

to fix the problem on an urgent basis. Since this appointment was being made on the basis of unsolicited negotiation, the deal was called off at the last moment on intervention from Bangladesh Bank. After that, the BGFL floated a tender for the job.

"We are troubled by the Public Procurement Rules, 2003, which outlines elaborate formalities to ensure transparency," said a high official. "When we need an emergency procurement like we need for Titas, the PPR can be counter productive."

Wells 9 and 10 were supposed to undergo a work-over that was approved last year, he said. "The BGFL took the initiative to purchase materials for the work-over last year. But after complying with the PPR, required materials would be delivered in August this year. Is this how a gas company should operate? Who is going to pay for the gas loss which may be worth Tk 50-60 crore or more?"

Meanwhile, our Brahmanbaria correspondent reports that the number of gas-leaking holes in Titas field location-3 has increased recently. Villagers in the adjacent areas expressed their grievances against the authorities for what they said was not taking any reasonable step to stop the leakage for the last three years.

In recent times, many of the leakage holes have become larger and some of those located in croplands have become sealed by streaming mud due to heavy rains. At the same time, new holes are emerging, and villagers say gas is coming out in big bubbles from croplands and marshy lands there.

Air at the villages is getting full of gas, and the villagers are fearing a possible explosion.

As the entire areas of Sampur and Anadapur villages and Loiska Beel are now submerged with rainwater and all croplands and the beel are under five feet water, bubbling of gas from the holes is visible.

While visiting the areas in a boat, this correspondent found that gas is coming out of water in big bubbles at many spots and small bubbles at many other spots.

Villagers say gas leaking holes have spread like spider's web. Gas is leaking at numerous spots as soil has become soft due to inundation.

Meanwhile, gas is also gushing out through the pipes of all tube wells in two villages. Alongside, underground hot water mixed with gas and petroleum is streaming out in high speed. Finding no other alternative, the villagers are drinking such water and using it for all their work.

About six square kilometre area of Sampur and Anandapur villages, the Titas river and Loiska Beel are at high risk.

According to sources at the deputy commissioner's (DC) office, a five-member Social Survey Committee headed by the ADC (General) through a survey has collected information about all families and their property so that actions can be taken quickly if there is a disaster. The BGFL however assured the DC office that chances of major disasters were slim.

But people in the localities are fearing sudden explosions. Since the air at Sampur and Anandapur villages is being full of gas, the villagers cannot use fire openly. The gas blowing in the air starts burning as soon as it comes in touch with fire from kerosene lamps and earthen ovens.

In a bid to save lives and property in such situation, the district administration a few months back advised local people over microphones not to use kerosene lamps, hurricanes and fire matches at the trouble spots. And they were advised to use torch lights at night.

Bhuiyan

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chairperson has the authority to convene a council but the secretary general's move is causing confusion among the party rank and file.

"The way Bhuiyan announced the reform proposals was unconstitutional as the BNP constitution states that any reform proposal must be placed before the council," he told reporters at his residence.

Bhuiyan however continued meeting former lawmakers and leaders and workers down to the grassroots level to mobilise support in favour of the proposed reforms.

In reaction to Khaleda Zia's warning against anti-party activities, Bhuiyan on Friday said they have not been doing anything contrary to the party constitution.

He also said that once he is done with the work on reform proposals, he would meet the chairperson for permission to hold the council.

Criticising the pro-reform group's activities, Goni said it was unlawful to talk about issues relating to the organisation outside the party forum and without the consent of chairperson.

Referring to the reform proposals unveiled on June 25, he said, "The secretary general could've waited till the council and it was not right to talk openly about the party matters before the media."

"Madam [Khaleda] considers the activities unconstitutional," Goni said when asked about the ongoing preparations for council.

"Without long discussions, the council will risk making wrong decisions if it's held in haste," he said.

About the grievances that the BNP has not seen a council in the last 14 years, he questioned why they [pro-reform leaders] did not raise the issue before.

"It needs great time and efforts to organise a council as the party has thousands of councillors across the country," he added.

At the meeting at Bhuiyan's residence yesterday, some former lawmakers from the Rajshahi Division expressed solidarity with the reform initiative.

Among others, ex-deputy minister Asadul Habib Dulu, who was known as a Hawa Bhaban man during the BNP-led alliance rule, and former lawmakers Abdul Alim, GM Siraj, Ziaul Haque Mollah, Mozahar Hossain and Masud Arun were present at the meeting that discussed the reform proposals and preparations for the planned council.

Later, Abdul Alim told the reporters that the secretary general would soon meet the party chairperson for approval to hold the council.

Bhuiyan is planning to announce his second set of proposals to bring reforms in the party and the state machinery.

Biman flyers

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told the reporters adding "No high officials came as yet and talked to us about our sufferings."

"We do not even know when our miseries would end as we are yet to know when the flight will leave for Abu Dhabi," he said. "We could not sleep and toilet is also a big problem," he further said.

Another passenger said, "The fly by Biman thinking that 'the state-owned airline would make a profit,' adding "No foreign airlines make these sorts of delays like the Biman does."

No Biman high officials were available for comments about the sufferings of the passengers and the delayed flight.

Suicide bomber

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the wounded had been taken to at least six emergency rooms up to 100km away around the region.

The chief local civilian administrator, Hamad Rasheed, said he had seen reports that up to 125 people could be confirmed dead after rescuers finish digging through the rubble of dozens of buildings.

"The security reports that I have received from the scene confirm that 115 were killed, five are missing and around five more were collected as loose flesh. Some 40 homes, 20 shops and 10 vehicles were destroyed," Rasheed said.

"The corpses were under the debris of the collapsed buildings. Some were burnt and others were torn apart. This is a big disaster for the town, all of the casualties were civilians," he added.

Abdullah said the dead and wounded had been brought to the emergency room at his hospital in Tuz Khurmatu, to two hospitals in the provincial capital Kirkuk and two more as far away as the Kurdish city of Sulaimaniyah.

The attack was the deadliest to hit Iraq since April 18, when 190 people were killed in a spate of car bombings against Shia districts of Baghdad.

Police Captain Nuzad Abdallah said the early morning attack occurred when the market was crowded with people. Three children were brought alive out of the debris but died before they could be taken for medical treatment.

Another car bomb attack against a military checkpoint in Baghdad killed at least three people and wounded 10, medics at the city's Ibn Nafees hospital said. A defence official said up to six people could have been killed.

The bombings came as the US military announced the deaths of eight soldiers over the previous two days and the British of two, and against a backdrop of mounting domestic opposition to the international troop presence.

Iraq is in the grip of several overlapping conflicts between religious and political factions, but the suicide car bomb is a hallmark of Sunni extremists such as those affiliated with al-Qaeda or Ansar al-Sunna.

The attacks appear designed to foment sectarian and ethnic violence and undermine Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's beleaguered coalition government, which is working with US forces to quell the fighting.

Meanwhile, eight more American soldiers have been killed in action over two days in Iraq and a ninth died for a reason unrelated to the fighting, the US military said Saturday.

In Baghdad, three soldiers and an Iraqi interpreter were killed Friday in two roadside bomb attacks, one of them carried out with an Iranian-

West Bengal floods

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billion-plus people.

Five people have been washed away by flood waters, taking the toll in the past week in the state to 20 and nationwide to 655, according to officials and the Press Trust of India.

Western Maharashtra state has recorded the most deaths with 385, the Press Trust of India reported.

The deaths have been caused by building collapses, lightning strikes and drownings across India.

The army and air force were called to provide assistance in West Bengal, but bad weather has hampered relief efforts.

In the state capital Kolkata, more than 100 people have contracted infections due to the rains, officials also said.

The deluge has also left a trail of death and destruction in Gujarat state in the country's west, and in the southern states of Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh.

Musharraf attack

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Pressure mounted on those inside the mosque to surrender.

Fierce clashes accompanied by deafening blasts erupted in the dead of night and again at lunchtime Saturday, when mosque students exchanged gunfire with troops and hurled grenades.

A government security official said troops were showing restraint because of the presence of children and women in the complex "but they cannot allow the militants inside the mosque to keep targeting security forces."

However, Ghazi said that Pakistani forces had so far killed up to 30 female and 40 male students in the siege of the mosque. The government insists that the toll is 19, including a soldier and several civilians.

"We buried the women because we did not want postmortems to be conducted as they are un-Islamic," Ghazi said.

A group of Islamist MPs said troops stopped them from entering the mosque to negotiate with Ghazi, whose brother, mosque leader Abdul Aziz, was captured by police on Wednesday while trying to flee dressed in a woman's burqa.

"We have been prevented because the forces of Musharraf are hell-bent on spilling the blood of women and children," said headline MP Maulana Shah Abdul Aziz, the leader of the delegation.

But Ghazi, who repeated his determination to die rather than

designed armour-piercing bomb. Six more soldiers were wounded.

Two more soldiers were killed south of Baghdad and two were wounded, also on Friday, when their foot patrol was hit by another road-side bomb.

Another soldier was killed in Baghdad on Thursday in a similar attack, and two marines were killed in western Iraq "while conducting combat operations in Al Anbar province," said a US military statement.

On Saturday, a soldier assigned to the US command died "of a non battle related cause" which is under investigation, said another statement.

These latest deaths bring the number of US military personnel to have died in Iraq since the March 2003 invasion to 3,599, according to an AFP count based on Pentagon statistics.

A so-called "surge" in American troop numbers, bringing the total in Iraq to 155,000, has allowed commanders to take back control of parts of Baghdad and reduce violence in a belt of towns around the capital.

But there are signs that insurgent groups are shifting their focus further north to avoid these operations, and US generals say that the increased troop levels will need to remain in place for many months.

This is likely to be a tough sell in Washington, where many lawmakers and most of US voters have turned against President George W Bush's strategy of using US manpower to prop up Mali's government.

Moroccan

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"Reliable information relayed in recent days to the interior ministry described the preparation of acts of terrorism in Morocco," a Moroccan security source told AFP on condition of anonymity.

"Morocco is cooperating fully with foreign police services," the source said, adding that in the face of the threat, Morocco "is putting itself in a situation of extreme vigilance."

The ministry said in a statement that the tightening of security meant raising the level of mobilisation, increased controls and the best possible deployment of security forces.

The ministry did not give details about the threats but Mohammed Darif, an expert on Islamist extremism, said the security measures were due "to the regional and national context".

"Moroccan security agencies are concerned by what is happening in Britain and by the arrests in Spain," he told AFP.

In Britain eight people were detained after failed attacks in London and Glasgow last week and in Spain police arrested four Moroccans suspected of having links to an al-Qaeda cell.