

DHAKA MONDAY OCTOBER 1, 2007

Lone forensic lab limps for acute manpower crisis

Delay in preparing viscera reports seriously delays trial of sensational cases

DURDANA GHIAS

Country's lone forensic laboratory, already burdened with huge workload, is facing severe manpower shortage as two of its three chemical examiners are going to retire within the next few months.

Sources at the forensic lab at Mohakhali, officially known as Chief Chemical Examiner's Office, CID, said the lab will face a big void if the two examiners go into retirement and the posts are not filled up soon.

The police depend solely on this heavily understaffed laboratory especially for investigation of murder, unnatural death and rape cases as there is no other such forensic test facilities in the country.

Chemical examiners prepare the viscera reports usually after testing portions of stomach of the dead and its contents, portions of liver, kidney and other body parts taken as samples for investigation.

According to sources in the police department and the laboratory this is the lone laboratory in the country that has the facilities of testing poisonous substances in the internal organs and the presence of blood and sperm.

Toxaemia test is done to know the presence of poison in human organs and serum test is done to know about the condition and presence of blood and sperm, which is a vital tool in finding out the criminal in a rape case.

At present three chemical examiners are working at this lab against four sanctioned posts while there are three reporting officers against 10 posts. All the staff working here are the civil staff of CID.

The process of recruiting assistant chemical examiners is done by Public Service Commission through written test and vivavoce.

Officials working at the laboratory said generally it takes three to four months to get the samples and then three to four months more to prepare the viscera report. In the end it takes almost six months to get the report.

"In a normal murder or similar cases it takes five to six months to deliver viscera report and the delay is now silently accepted by the police, the victims' families and the press," said senior crime reporter of a national daily.

However, families of the victims still complain that they are not getting the report in time. Often they have to wait for indefinite time to get the reports.

Sultan Faruque, father of Sadia Nowshin Priyanka, a 17-year-old girl who was found dead at her house on July 18, said it is a very unbearable situation to wait for the second post-mortem report for his daughter for more than 7 weeks.

"When I tried to know why the report was being delayed officials said that the tests would be done at the forensic laboratory at Mohakhali, which is the only forensic lab in the country. They said that laboratory has to deal with heavy workload so I will have to wait till my serial comes," he said.

"When there is pressure from the higher authorities or in case of a sensational murder or death then we have to prepare the report in the shortest possible time," said the official.

While the victims complain that trial of cases are delayed due to late in preparing viscera reports, police officers claim that the situation is now much better than in the past.

Syed Nazrul Islam, officer-in-charge, Uttara Police Station, said that previously they had to wait from one to two years to get a viscera report but now due to the monitoring cell they are getting the report quickly.

"A one-year delay was very natural and a six-month delay

was minimum," said Nazrul. "Now we even get report within one month of giving samples."

"Previously there were over 100 UD [unnatural death] cases pending on an average with each police station. But my station has only four UD cases pending now," he said. "UD cases are fully dependent on the viscera reports. In the Evidence Act viscera report has been given vital importance as evidence," he added.

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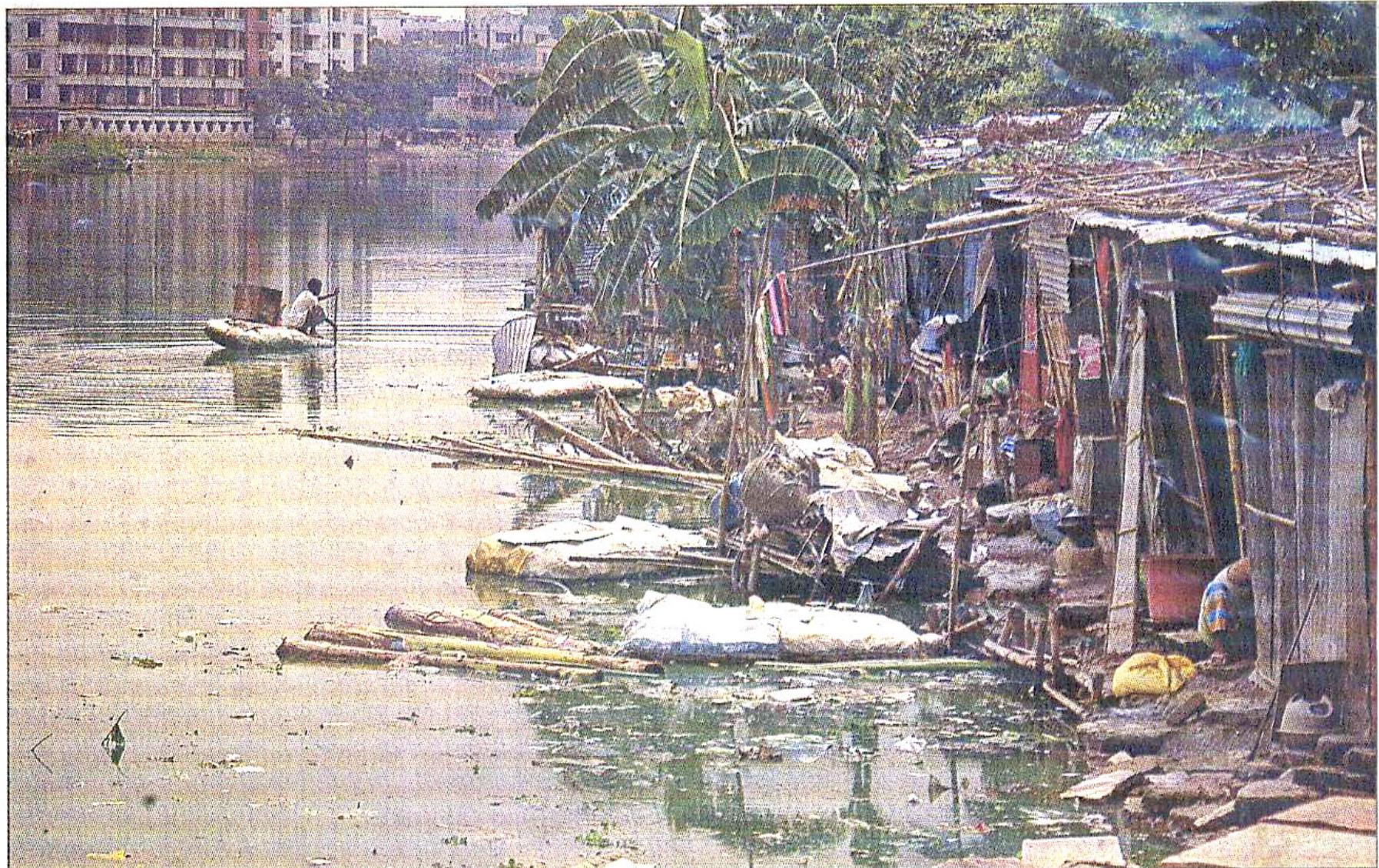
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Makeshift houses mushrooming on the Banani Lake. Encroachers are also polluting the lake's water with household waste. But the authority seems indifferent to it.

Worn out Zia Shishu Park cries for care

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

The Shaheed Zia Shishu Park, first of its kind in the country, was built by Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation in 1979.

DCC sources alleged that besides routine maintenance checks, no renovation work has ever been carried out during the park's 25-year existence.

Installed by Japanese technicians in 1979, rides named Merry-Go-Round, New Trabant, Wonder Wheel, Benkino Train, Roller Skating, Trampoline, Battery Car, Chair Tower, and Flower Cup are still the central attractions of the park.

Only three new rides -- Jet Star, Astro Fighter and F-60 Fighter -- were installed by DCC in 1992 and 1997.

Warranty period of nine out of twelve amusement rides expired

thanks to sincere maintenance work by the DCC.

Although DCC officials claimed that the rides are kept in top-notch state, they did not rule out the possibility of unwarranted accidents as the rides have exceeded their lifespan.

"It's true that the park has never experienced any fatal accident, but we do not have the luxury to relax. We must take precautionary measures to ensure the safety of our visitors," said Nurul Haque, assistant engineer at engineering department of DCC.

The DCC authorities also considered having private organisations do the renovation and modernisation -- a concept that could not draw any due attention of the ministry either.

city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

"We have been tasked with some specific duties ... we will go back [to the barracks] the moment the government asks."

-- General Moeen U Ahmed

Army Chief

Said while inaugurating a fair of handloom products in Manikganj on Thursday. Source: The Daily Star

"[Instead of undertaking gradual reforms] it seems that they are undertaking 'big bang' reforms, which is likely to have adverse rather than positive effects on the country."

-- Akbar Ali Khan

Former adviser

Said while speaking at the fourth Policy Debate on Reforms organized by Centre for Governance Studies at a city hotel, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star

"Be it defence or LGED we want to see all the budgets."

-- Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury

Chairman, Anti Corruption Commission

Said at a roundtable on right to information organised by Transparency International Bangladesh, on Thursday. Source: Prothom Alo

"We were hoping that indoor politics would be allowed all across the country with the same conditions attached. However, the government did not do so and it might have valid reasons for it since it is an unelected government."

-- ATM Shamsul Huda

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC)

Said at a view exchange meeting with representatives of different television channels and radio stations, on Sunday. Source: The Daily Star

"We too want lifting of the emergency but it depends on the politicians' behaviour as to when it will be withdrawn."

-- Mainul Hosein

Law Adviser

Said at the Secretariat responding to reporters' query about CEC's suggestion that the emergency should be relaxed in areas where local body elections are scheduled from next January, on Monday.

Source: The Daily Star

"The government has unveiled the list according to its promise but it should have included more names of the self-styled pro-reform leaders."

-- Brig Gen (Rtd) ASM Hannan Shah

Adviser to the detained BNP chairperson

Told reporters at his Mohakhali residence, on Friday. Source: The Daily Star

Compiled by Durdana Ghias



Pedestrians squeeze their way through a narrow lane littered with heaps of waste at Shankhari Bazaar.



the city that was

The Portuguese were the first among Europeans to step into Dhaka lured by its wealth aiming at only doing business. They set up many Khuthi (structures) here. However, it was the British who stayed in Dhaka for long. There was no relation between the Portuguese in Dhaka and those in Arakan and Swandip. Those in Dhaka came during Shahesta Khan's regime and set up homes at Sripur.

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