

16 killed by law enforcers in July: Odhikar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The extrajudicial killings in the name of 'crossfire,' 'shootout,' 'gunfight' and 'encounter' have taken the worst turn in July by targeting non-violent people and the people who hold a certain political belief, human rights monitoring report of July by Odhikar revealed.

Citing example of the recent extra-judicial killing of Dr Mizanur Rahman Tutul, the report said more than one person were killed in two days in the month of July and recommended formulation of independent authority to investigate into the involvement of members of security forces in extra-judicial killings.

Odhikar report revealed that Tutul, a person with strong political views, was killed despite an appeal to take proper legal recourse against him instead of killing him in crossfire. But he was not spared and killed in so-called 'shootout.'

Earlier, Tutul's mother on receipt of the news of her son's arrest appealed that Tutul be taken into custody and put on trial in accordance with law. But within few hours after the appeal was made, Dr Tutul was killed with the extra-

judicial killing taking a new turn and putting in danger anyone holding a certain political belief, the report added.

The report mentioned that the people killed in the month include two Purbo Banglar Communist Party (ML Red Flag) leaders, two Purbo Banglar Communist Party and Purbo Banglar Communist Party (Jonojuddho) activists.

The report mentioned that extrajudicial killings are taking of life without due process of law. Odhikar reminded the law enforcement agencies that the due process of law be maintained in all circumstances.

The report estimated that a total of 16 people were allegedly killed by law enforcement agencies between July 1 and 31, with seven people killed in custody. Of them, Rab members killed seven people and policemen killed nine.

The report recommended immediate and effective initiatives to stop killing, injuring and abducting Bangladeshi citizens by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF), stopping threats to journalists, ensuring freedom of expression and special attention to stop violence against women.



PHOTO: STAR

Students are engrossed in painting at an inter-school art competition titled 'City, river and heritage' at Pogose School in the city yesterday. Urban Study Group and Campaign for Heritage Conservation jointly organised the event.

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British Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Hazel Blears visits Nokot Primary School, a school near Badaghat in Sylhet run by Friends in Village Development Bangladesh, yesterday. British High Commissioner in Bangladesh Stephen Evans and Sarah Sanyahumbi, acting representative of DFID Bangladesh, accompanied the British minister during the visit.

Slow pace of FP threat

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a two-decade long increasing trend in use of injectable contraceptives declined to 7 percent last year from 10 percent in 2004.

"There were shortages of supply of different popular contraceptives in the country even last year and since the logistics supply is totally import based, a huge number of eligible couple were forced to abstain from using contraceptives for its unavailability," said Dr Morshed Chowdhury, a public health expert.

The public sector is the predominant agent in the family planning programme, providing contraceptive methods like oral pills and condoms and consultation to one in two users, but its most important agents--the government field workers--can reach only one in five users.

The contribution of the public sector in providing modern family planning methods continues to decline, becoming 7 percent points lower last year than in 2004, according to the survey.

The use of field workers to supply contraceptives decreased to 20 percent last year from 23 percent in 2004 as some 8,152 posts including family welfare assistants, family welfare visitors, doctors, deputy director and assistant director have been lying vacant currently.

Besides, services for providing the long-term methods like the intra-uterine device (IUD) and injection at the union health centres are not satisfactory.

Recruitment in the family planning programme has remained halted for the last 12 years because of bureaucratic tangle. At the same

time, those who were recruited during early 1970s are awaiting retirement while many of these aged workers do not have the physical stamina and interest in door-to-door visits.

"Presently some 600 posts of field workers are lying vacant which has resulted in poor service at the field level and the number of vacant posts will increase by 200-300 every year as most of the field workers are awaiting retirement," said Ahmed Al Kabir, former chief of party of Urban Family Health Partnership.

The number of family welfare visitors will also be halved within five years, which will make the programme a failure, experts fear.

Director General of the Directorate General of Family Planning Quamrun Nessa Khanam, however, told The Daily Star that around 5,000 field level workers would be recruited soon and that they would be able to provide field level service within four months.

But the fact is that these people will work to increase awareness about the contraceptive methods among the people while the issue of unavailability of these methods remains.

The government should ensure adequate supply of the contraceptive methods, experts said, adding that more service providers on the clinical side should also be recruited and trained.

But the 12 training institutes for family welfare visitors have remained almost non-functional for the last 12 years.

The family planning programme got a boost in the 1980s following increase in the demand for long-term and permanent contraceptive methods. The supply of these methods was ensured in collaboration with the government and non-government organisations. The donor agencies also took this sector as a priority sector. But in the middle of the 1990s

the momentum of the programme began to slow down as programmes taken at that time emphasised more on the short-term methods and gradually shifted to other issues like maternal health and child health. The door-to-door service stopped soon after introduction of the Health and Population Sector Programme in 1999 and the family planning programme suffered a major setback.

The programme further stumbled when the health sector was merged with it at the upazila level. Because of this merger family planning activities received less importance that caused static TFR. In 2003, however, family planning was separated from the health sector and since then it has shown a little improvement because of the increase in use of modern contraceptive methods.

Experts observe that the most important thing is to regain the momentum the programme had generated in the 1980s. A sustainable, long-term and effective programme is needed for its success, they said.

"As family planning involves behavioural change we cannot force people. We should rather strengthen the motivation programme and increase door-to-door services," said Dr Halida Hanum Akhter, director general of Family Planning Association of Bangladesh.

The government should plan well ahead. Collaboration between the government and the NGOs in terms of both planning and implementation is important for this while the donor money for this sector should be utilised effectively and timely, experts said.

If the government is committed to improve the family planning situation in the country, it should openly discuss the issue with the stakeholders. The private-public partnership should be strengthened, they added.



Citycell CEO Michael Seymour speaks at the inaugural ceremony of the World Breastfeeding Week at Japan-Bangladesh Friendship Medical Services office in the city yesterday. Women and Children Affairs Adviser Rasheda K Choudhury, extreme right, inaugurated the programme.

Moon sighting committee meets today

BSS, Dhaka

A meeting of the National Moon Sighting Committee will be held at Islamic Foundation conference room at 7:30pm today to discuss reports of moon sighting to fix the date of the holy Lilatul Barat and beginning of the month of Saban of 1429 Hijri.

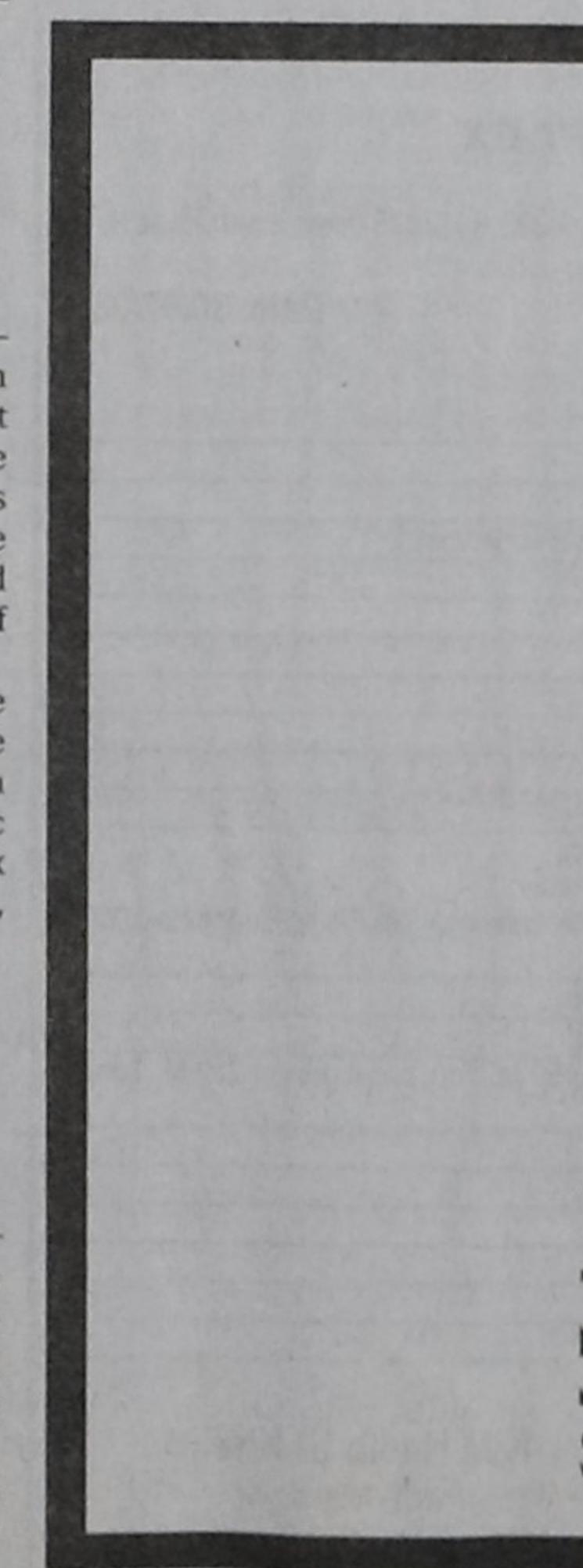
People sighting the moon of the month of Saban anywhere in the sky of Bangladesh have been requested to contact the Islamic Foundation by telephone and fax on 9559493, 9556407, 9555951, 9559643, 9558337 and 9555947.

Youth Brand Fair ends today

METRO DESK

Youth Brand Fair, a three-day fair for the youths, will conclude at the city's Bashundhara Expo Centre in Panthapath today, says a press release.

A total of 50 stalls have been set up at the fair. The fair is open from 10:00am to 8:00pm.



IRREGULARITIES AT RU

UGC probe body arrives today

RU CORRESPONDENT

A three-member probe committee of University Grants Commission (UGC) will investigate into the alleged irregularities and corruption in manpower recruitment at Rajshahi University (RU) between 2005 and 2008.

Members of the probe com-

mittee led by UGC Deputy Director Mizanur Rahman are scheduled to reach RU campus today.

Earlier, the body had quizzed a number of university high officials and went through the files about manpower recruitment.

Earlier on Thursday, UGC sent a letter to the university registrar and asked for explanation for the

deficit in the university budget.

Meanwhile, RU authorities have formed a 10-member committee led by Additional Registrar Dr Sheikh Shad Ahmed to assist the UGC probe body.

A high official of RU told this correspondent that the university has about one thousand vacant posts and need more officials and employees.

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Interview: August 8th, 2008

Registration: August 11th & 12th, 2008

Classes Commence: August 21st, 2008

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