

Probes designed to fail

FROM PAGE 1
the circumstances," Prof Mizanur Rahman observed.

The credibility of government investigation into extra-judicial killings has reached such a state that even rights organisations are currently reluctant to have their involvement in any such probe.

For instance, Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) sent its representative for investigation into disappearance of the youth in Sirajganj. Insiders say despite overwhelming evidence of Rab involvement, the report was vague and incomplete. In the investigation the ASK representative had no say whatsoever.

"During investigation our representative felt helpless under bureaucratic tangles and pressures, their findings were very sketchy," says an ASK source.

Legal and Media Wing Director of Rab Mohammad Sohail claims the government carries out impartial executive enquiry into each of the custodial deaths. He adds departmental enquiry is also being carried out against Rab men.

"As many as 350 Rab men lost their jobs, while 800 were punished on charges of posing threats, bribery and intimidating people," Sohail said.

However, Rab departmental enquiries did not have anything to do with any deaths in their custody. Sohail says the investigation reports could not be disclosed as all the cases are under trial.

The most frequent question asked is how the law enforces ask the victims died in "crossfire" when doctors examining their bodies say they were shot from a very close distance and sometimes point-blank.

SOME DEATHS AND INVESTIGATIONS

A night guard watched from a few yards away how law enforcers "executed" a young man on Dholaipar Natun Rasta at Mirhajirbagh in Jatrabari in the early hours of October 12, 2004.

Speaking anonymously, the night guard quoted one of the plainclothes law enforcers as saying, "Wasim, your mother is crying for you. Can you run back home if we let you go?"

Wasim, an alleged criminal of the area, was being taken to their van when they let him loose. As Wasim tried to run away, he collapsed and was shot in the head by the law enforcers, the night guard continued.

The next day the police claimed through media that following his arrest, Wasim, an accused in murder and robbery cases, was killed in a "shootout" as his gang members opened fire on law enforcers.

The night guard told The Daily Star he was ready to narrate his story as an eyewitness, but nobody showed any interest to talk to him.

In another incident, Khandaker Iqbal Hossain Masum, a resident of Mohammadpur, was killed in an "encounter" on July 8, 2005 after detectives picked him up. His father Abul Khayer said three bullets hit Masum almost in the same area of his body. Doctors at Dhaka Medical College Hospital also said he was shot point-blank.

It was raining at the night of the "encounter" in Rayer Bazar, but the flip-flop Masum was wearing were clean and his white panjabi and pajama did not have any trace of dirt or mud, said Khayer. He also produced a photo of his son's body lying on a stretcher at DMCH to substantiate his claim.

The investigation conducted into Masum's death by an additional deputy commissioner of police was biased and false, said Khayer. Following his petition a court ordered fresh reinvestigation into the case, which is still under trial.

6 lakh die from smoking

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This helps us understand the real toll of tobacco," said Armando Peruga, of the WHO's Tobacco-Free Initiative, who led the study.

"DEADLY COMBINATION" The study used estimates of the incidence of specific diseases and of the number of people exposed to second-hand smoke in particular areas.

The global health body said it was particularly concerned about the estimated 1,65,000 deaths from heart disease, 1,65,000 from lower respiratory infections, 36,900 from asthma and 21,400 from lung cancer.

According to the study, the highest numbers of people exposed to second-hand smoke are in Europe and Asia and the lowest rates of exposure were in the Americas, the Eastern Mediterranean and Africa.

The research also revealed that passive smoking had a large impact on women, killing



PHOTO: FILE

It was raining heavily at the night of the "encounter" when Khandaker Iqbal Hossain Masum was "caught in the line of fire" in a muddy Rayer Bazar area. Masum's father, to his shock, found the flip-flops, white panjabi and pajamas on his son's body mud free.

Anisur Rahman allegedly died of Rab torture in 2004. His brother Aminur Rahman said he saw Rab men snatching away medical papers from on-duty DMCH doctors after they declared him dead.

INSTANCE OF GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATION

The NHRC rejected outright and termed incomplete the government investigation report on disappearance of Tusher, who was allegedly picked up by Rab from Dukhuria Bera Bazar in Sirajganj in July 2008.

This correspondent had access to the report and followed the trail of the government investigation conducted by a three-member committee headed by Deputy Secretary (defence) Nazimuddin Chowdhury.

During a visit to Dukhuria Bera Bazar at least a dozen people, picked up randomly, were shown Titi's picture. All of them said they had seen four people (some claimed five, possibly including the human hauler driver) identifying themselves as Rab personnel picked up the person in picture.

Nosimon (human hauler) driver Abdul Mannan was an eyewitness of the incident. Four men identifying themselves as Rab members took Titi from the bazaar to Mukundgati in Belkuchi on his Nosimon.

Other witnesses include shop owners Faridul Islam Kalu and Mokbul Hossain and businessman Mustafizur Ali Hashu.

On arrival at Mukundgati, the Rab members stopped two motorcycles on the road and asked them to hand over their bikes for the sake of "state's need for fast transportation of a criminal to Dhaka".

During the conversation the bike owners, vital witnesses to the case, saw the Rab personnel's identity cards. As they were arguing with the force, Rab men finally took their bikes at gunpoint, they said.

Saiful Islam Faruk and Haji Ashraf, both hailed from Shreenagar village, filed a general diary (GD) with Belkuchi police station stating the incident (Diary No. 656 of July 22, 2008).

Both the bikers told the investigators how the Rab men took away their bikes and what happened next.

The government enquiry report also referred to police stopping and checking both the motorcycles but did not elaborate on it.

Before filing the GD both the bikers went to Jamuna police station the same day and the on-duty police officer

confirmed that the four men were Rab personnel.

The next day (July 23, 2008) Deputy Assistant Director Mukhlesur Rahman of Rab-3 with other members of his unit handed over the bikes to Belkuchi police. The handover was formally completed with filing of a GD (No. 680 on July 23, 2008) by Mukhlesur Rahman.

It appears the enquiry committee misquoted the GD claiming it to be contradictory to the statement of witnesses and Rab personnel.

The GD filed by Mukhlesur was read out to this correspondent by Officer-in-Charge of Belkuchi police Mostafizur Rahman. Mukhlesur stated that the motorbikes were taken for transporting an accused fast to Dhaka, a statement that corroborated with the witnesses' account.

As Rab never admitted to arresting anyone in the area that day, there is no scope of finding contradiction between its statement and that of the witnesses and the GD.

The enquiry committee finally managed to identify four Rab personnel -- DAD Hanif, ASI Feroz Ahmed, corporal Amin Ullah Tapu and ASI Humayun Farid -- who admitted before the committee that they were present in the area that day.

The four also told the committee that following an order from Capt Rezaul Karim they went to the area to recover equipment for printing fake notes. They categorically denied having arrested anyone there, which the investigation committee found incorrect.

The probe committee during investigation never tried to confirm Titi's identity with the people they interviewed.

It never attempted to identify the Rab men by the eyewitnesses. The main weakness of the investigation was its failure to question Capt Rezaul Karim who allegedly ordered the operation, says one of the people involved in the investigation asking not to be named.

The probe body did not question Capt Rezaul after Rab informed it that he had returned to his mother unit in the army.

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Cricket earns

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Back to the match and the differences between the two teams notwithstanding, the Guangong International Cricket Stadium in Guangzhou was witness to a captivating encounter with the minnows almost pulling off a win.

With 44 runs required to win, Bangladesh lost Shuvogoto Hom in the 14th over, making way for young Sabbir to join the unbeaten Naeem at the crease. The duo looked the least bit perturbed as they went about reaching the 119-run target. In the penultimate over when 19 was needed for the gold, Sabbir first smashed off-spinner Karim Sadiq out of the stadium and then lofted him in the same direction for two consecutive sixes, swinging the game towards Bangladesh.

Sabbir, the little-known youngster, kept rotating the strike before Naeem Islam sealed the victory with a fore-hand smash down the ground off the impressive Hamid Hassan.

Naeem top-scored with an

unbeaten 34 off 41 balls with the help of a six and three boundaries but it was Sabbir who had the most impact, smashing three sixes in his 18-ball 33.

For the valiant Afghans, the fairytale story of world cricket, a silver medal was an amazing achievement and they showed a lot of fight against their more illustrious opposition.

Defending their 118-8 in 20 overs, Mirwaz Ashraf removed Nazimuddin early in the piece before Samiullah Shewari ran out the other opener Mithun Ali for 22. Skipper Mohammad Ashraful followed soon after, falling to Sadiq before Hassan, the MCC-trained seamer, took the wicket of Faisal Hossain.

Earlier, Naeem, Ashraful and Shahadat Hossain took two wickets each as the Afghans struggled mostly against spin.

Asghar Stanikzai, the 23-year-old who batted without a helmet, struck 38 off 36 balls that included three boundaries and a six. Shabir Noori also made 25 off 19 balls with a six and three more boundaries.

"The prime minister also called for Belgium investment in various sectors including electricity," Azad said.

During the meeting, Hasina was highly appreciated for her leading role in tackling climate change impacts in the country as well as across the globe.

"The Belgian prime minister gave special thanks to our prime minister for her strong initiatives to root out terrorism and establish peace," he said.

As the prime minister thanked the European Union for its support to hold the December 29, 2008 election in a free and fair manner, the Belgian PM described Awami League's landslide victory as a rare one.

"We have taken this victory as a sacred responsibility towards people," Hasina was quoted as saying by the press secretary Azad.

The Belgian prime minister also hailed Bangladesh's economic progress even amidst the recent global economic downturn.

In this regard, Hasina informed the Belgian prime minister that her government is working relentlessly to attain universal food security for the people.

When Leterme congratulated Hasina on receiving the MDG-4 award, the PM said Bangladesh needs international cooperation to successfully tackle the climate risks.

"We are confident to attain the MDG targets by 2015, but climate change impacts are making the targets very difficult," Hasina said.

She said her government is trying its best to protect people from natural calamities, but more international assistances are needed to fully tackle the climate risks.

Bangladesh's vision 2021, capital and maintenance dredging in rivers, prospects of importing ships from Bangladesh, among other issues, featured in the meeting.

Hasina congratulated her Belgian counterpart for the success of the eighth Asia-Europe Meeting held in Brussels on October 4-5, 2010.

Teacher

FROM PAGE 16
indecent comments and deliberately stumbling on the applicant in the exam hall. He was assigned as an invigilator there.

The victim, an HSC holder from Vigarunnisa Noon School and College, was taking the admission test under Business Studies faculty of DU at 10:00am.

She filed a complaint of harassment with Shahabgh Police Station after the exam.

Magistrate Mohammad Al Amin, who led the mobile court, said Saiful also offered his mobile phone number to the examinee and insisted to give him hers. The envelope where Saiful wrote his cell number was recovered from him.

Another invigilator Farzana Fauzi, a teacher of the same college, witnessed the incident, said the magistrate.

Selina Banu, acting principal of University Laboratory School and College, said they have earlier received several allegations of such harassment against Saiful.

Meanwhile, a mobile court in Thakurgaon yesterday sentenced two persons to different terms of imprisonment for stalking at Sarkarpara and Thanapara areas under Sadar Upazila.

The court led by Rashedul Islam sentenced Wazed Ali, 32, to 15 days in prison for stalking a female schoolteacher at Sarkarpara Thursday. That evening victim's father filed a complaint with Thakurgaon Police Station in their regard.

The same court sentenced Rabiul, 27, to three months in jail and fined him Tk 5,000 for stalking a girl at Thanapara area.

Rabiul harassed the girl forcibly picking her in a microbus.

DU Vandalism FROM PAGE 16 12:30am yesterday when the owner of the car that hit Sadhan Kumar Ghosh, a fourth year DU student, gave assurance of bearing all the treatment cost.

Rezaul Karim, officer-in-charge of the Sahabgh Police Station, said they released the two DU students detained for vandalism and Rubaiya, whose car hit Sadhan, her driver and two friends who were in the car when the accident occurred.

After a discussion with the DU authorities at Sahabgh Police Station, Rubaiya's family handed over Tk 50,000 to the authorities for Sadhan's treatment and promised to give more if needed, Rezaul said.

Rubaiya Haque, a first year student of Dhaka City College, hit Sadhan, a resident of Jagannath Hall, on the DU campus around 12:30pm on Thursday.

Meanwhile, owners of the vandalised cars and a journalist who lost his camera filed six general diaries (GD) with Sahabgh Police Station.

After the accident, angry student of the university mainly from the Jagannath Hall, torched two cars and vandalised 25 others in the campus area.

NTV's DMCH correspondent Al Amin alleged that the students seized his camera when he was taking photos of the vandalism.

DU Proctor Prof KM Saiful Islam also said he had heard about it and will try to return it to the reporter if the students hasedzeated.

Meantime, Sadhan, who was undergoing treatment at the DMCH, told The Daily Star yesterday that he was feeling good except for a headache and a little pain in the left leg.

Sources in the DMCH said Sadhan talked with his friends throughout the day and seemed fit.

Call for more

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political will nothing will happen, no matter how good the documents are," he added.

During the meeting, Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Mohamed Mijaral Quayas said the issues of human and food security, and investment in agriculture should be at the centre of the next programme of action to be adopted in the Turkish city.

"Improving domestic infrastructure and regional connectivity is also critical," he said.

Human resources development and quality of education should also get adequate attention to turn the vast population of the LDCs into a productive asset, he added.

Quayas said LDCs should not sit idle just by formulating documents; they have to work and build on those. "We have to go beyond Istanbul and the development partners have to come forward."

He said political commitment is also crucial. "The governments of LDCs, developed nations, global partners, and the people have to have a feeling of ownership, otherwise nothing will happen."

Anna Batyra, coordinator of OECD Development Finance Network, said the entry of emerging economies in the global scenario could not be ignored. "How these emerging economies could contribute to help LDCs reach targets should be formulated."

Batyra also said the LDCs should bring domestic reforms, and mobilise internal resources to help themselves.

Economic Relations Division Secretary of Bangladesh Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan said LDCs have to redefine their positions at the economic front of the new world order, and restructure their relationships with developed countries, to reap more benefits.

Debapriya Bhattacharya said, "We have had political support, as at the end of the day it's a political process."

"We have created documents and put them on the table. Now is the time for the governments to take them forward," he added.

The prominent economist also said the Istanbul Conference will be a litmus test for all. The participants will look to see how many heads of states attend the conference, whether there is any interest from France, the next president of G20; Switzerland, the incumbent chair of United Nations General Assembly; and the emerging economies, he noted.

He said the Brussels Programmes of Action could not generate enough enthusiasm, as there was no fund and resource dedicated to the programme.

The governments of LDCs have to be more active in attracting the attention of developed countries, and emerging economies. Besides, the development demands of LDCs must be presented during Istanbul negotiations with human dimension, he stressed.

He said due to the global economic crisis, new funds may not be available, but the international partners and developed countries must implement the old promises, and solve the problems stemming from the crisis.

Rehman Sobhan, chairman of CPD, while chairing the event, said the world order has evolved much in the last couple of decades.

The new global trade architecture is relocating from the North-South axis to an East-West axis. This phenomenon needs to be reflected in the way the LDCs perceive their relationships with the rest of the world, he said.

Asia led by China is emerging as a significant trading partner of Africa. It is a significant point of departure from the North-South relationship, which in fact dominated the external economic relationships of LDCs so far, he noted.

But now the whole external relations have moved eastward, where new trade relations are being forged laterally as Asia is emerging as a big economic player, he added.

He said China will probably be overtaking the United States within a decade as an economic power and India has been emerging. "If we include Japan, a developed country, three of the world's four largest economies are going to be in Asia."

PM seeks

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to increase European Union's support for implementing Bangladesh's 134 climate change action plans.

She sought Belgium's support for preparing green projects and making available green technology for a green economy.

"The prime minister also called for Belgium investment in various sectors including electricity," Azad said.

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"The Belgian prime minister gave special thanks to our prime minister for her strong initiatives to root out terrorism and establish peace," he said.

As the prime minister thanked the European Union for its support to hold the December 29, 2008 election in a free and fair manner, the Belgian PM described Awami League's landslide victory as a rare one.

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In this regard, Hasina informed the Belgian prime minister that her government is working relentlessly to attain universal food security for the people.

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"We are confident to attain the MDG targets by 2015, but climate change impacts are making the targets very difficult," Hasina said.

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Khaleda unhappy

FROM PAGE 16
aides, for failing to come up with a plan and mobilise supporters to help her keep the house.

Khaleda showed resentment against Khoka at a standing committee meeting on Sunday when a committee member requested her to form a Dhaka city unit committee before announcing protest programmes.

"The mayor [Khoka] was there. What did he do? Why did he not try to build resistance when they [the cantonment board] evicted me from my house?" the source quoted Khaleda as saying.

On Wednesday, the former prime minister at a meeting with city leaders expressed displeasure at the thin presence of BNP city unit leaders on the streets during her eviction from the house.

The cantonment board took possession of the disputed cantonment house that she then army chief had allotted to Khaleda after the assassination of her husband.

Khaleda alleged that she was evicted from the house but the Inter Services Public Relations Directorate claimed that she left the house voluntarily showing respect to the rule of law.

BNP enforced a dawn to dusk hartal on November 14 protesting the eviction of its party chief. A handful of senior leaders were seen on the streets during the hartal.

Withdraw

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BNP Dhaka district unit and hoped that the chairperson would consider it.

Asked about his stance only 72 hours ago that he would not appeal for the withdrawal of his expulsion order, he said, "The desire of my people prompted me to appeal."

The national standing committee of BNP on November 21 expelled Huda, who was vice-chairman of the party and president of the party's Dhaka district unit, from the party for breaching organisational discipline.

The decision came following a few comments of Huda against Khaleda's counsels. He had said that Khaleda had to leave the house due to the mistakes of her counsels. He also criticised the hartal programme and raised questions about Khaleda's crying after her eviction from the cantonment house.

On November 22, Huda at a press conference at his Dhanmondi residence said, "I do not regret my comments and that is why I will not appeal for the withdrawal of the expulsion."

A day after his expulsion, Khaleda replaced Huda in the district unit with Abdul Mannan.

In his letter to the chairperson, Huda, also a two-term minister in Khaleda's cabinet, said some of his public statements for which he was expelled would not cause any harm to BNP.

AL moves

FROM PAGE 16
office in Dhanmondi with acting party chief Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury in the chair.

"Our main objective is to sit with our 14-party coalition partners to boost coordination among us. We must make coordinated effort to face opposition's upcoming movements and their conspiracies against the government and implement our electoral pledges," AL Presidium Member Obaidul Quader told The Daily Star.

The overall socio-economic and political situation of the country would come up for discussion at the meeting, AL Deputy Office Secretary Mrinal Kanti Das said in a press release.

AL insiders said after the 14-party coalition meeting, the ruling party would talk with HM Ershad's Jatiya Party to strengthen political ties.