

Services stuck

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The survey titled "Service sector corruption: National Households survey 2010" was conducted on 6,000 households and the results were revealed yesterday. The households shared their experience of 13 service sectors.

"This is not the full picture of corruption in the country; this is just a part of the picture. Prevalence of corruption is more than this survey revealed," said Anti-Corruption Commission Chairman Gulam Rahman.

"The corruption the survey reflects is the corruption at lower level involving the experience of ordinary people. Higher level corruption must be included in the survey for having a comprehensive picture," he added.

According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics there are 3.012 crore households in Bangladesh and the survey estimates that these households paid Tk 9,591 crore bribes during the survey period. The estimate was made since each of 71.9 percent households paid on an average Tk 4,834 in bribes.

The household survey is totally an independent TIB survey, having no connection with Transparency International. It aimed at knowing the nature and rate of corruption at different government and non-government service institutions through the experience of households.

The survey has been done every two years since 1997. It revealed corruption almost doubled in the judiciary since the last survey while corruption in land administration, NBR, and power sector also had a sharp rise.

However, corruption at law enforcement agencies, health, education, and banking sectors and at non-government organisations dropped since the last survey.

TIB Executive Director Iftakharuzzaman, former JU vice-chancellor Prof Kazi Saleh Ahmed and JU Prof M Kabir were present at the result unveiling programme which was presided over by TIB trustee M Hafizuddin Khan at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies auditorium in the capital.

JUDICIARY
About 11 percent of the surveyed households that received services from the judiciary paid an average Tk 7,918 bribe each.

Households that sought service from the High Court paid on an average Tk 12,761 each for services. They paid on an average Tk 6,598 and Tk 6,178 each at magistrates' and judges' courts.

Usually lawyers, court employees, court clerks and brokers take the money to hasten or postpone hearings, for withdrawing and destroying case documents and influencing the court.

JS body hails

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"We don't want to comment against him (Dr Yunus) or Grameen Bank on the basis of media reports before the investigation is done," Lotus Kamal said.

He also blasted a section of media for publishing reports that the parliamentary standing committee on finance ministry is likely to summon Dr Yunus at its meeting.

"Publishing such baseless news is really unfortunate. Some of the newspapers even quoted me regarding summoning Dr Yunus, but I did not talk to reporters of those newspapers," he added.

He commented that Dr Muhammad Yunus is certainly a dignitary and renowned personality both at home and abroad.

The Microcredit Regulatory Authority (MRA) informed the meeting that there are 540 microcredit organisations in the country that have government certificates for running operations.

The MRA also informed the committee that Grameen Bank is not under their authority. The committee asked the ministry to take steps against those microcredit organisations that are running operations without following the MRA rules.

"There cannot be separate rules for an individual microcredit organisation. We have asked the ministry so that all microcredit institutions run under a common rule and platform," Lotus Kamal said.

The committee also asked the ministry to launch investigation into anomalies against "jubok" and other such fraud organisations.

encing the judgement. **LAW ENFORCEMENT**
About 20 percent of the total surveyed households went to different law enforcement agencies during the survey period.

According to the survey, about 2.6 percent of the service-seeking households bribed the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) to avoid getting "killed in crossfire". Police took bribes for filing and not filing general diaries and cases, submitting or not submitting charge sheets, arresting or not arresting criminals and for not torturing detainees in their custody.

A number of household also complained of extortion by law enforcers at bus, train, launch terminals, highways, pavements, village and town markets.

Of the households that faced mass arrests, around 89 percent had to pay on an average Tk 4,045 each to avoid harassment. Even services like police verification or clearance certificates required on an average Tk 731 each.

LAND ADMINISTRATION
Around 28.4 percent surveyed households went to the land administration for service.

Households had to bribe Tk 21,836 each for leasing or getting allocation of land while deed registration, land survey, mutation, withdrawing and searching for documents and land development tax required an average bribe of Tk 8,374, Tk 6,860, Tk 3,556, Tk 1,514 and Tk 825 each.

The bribes were paid for tampering with the size of a piece of land, distributing and leasing land to government loyal people, political influence, imposing of extra tax, destroying evidence, dilly-dallying and the selection of fake landless people.

AGRICULTURE
About 95 percent of the households who sought agricultural services had to pay on an average additional Tk 314 each for getting fertiliser. However, 85.9 percent of those households did not receive fertiliser on time.

At least 78.1 percent had to pay on an average extra Tk 207 each for getting a pack of seeds. However, 12.0 percent received substandard seeds, 10.6 percent did not receive them on time, while 3.8 percent used political influence to get the seeds.

About half the service-seeking households had to pay additional money for opening bank account to get government subsidies while 46.5 percent did not get the subsidy on time.

The government had fixed Tk 10 for opening a bank account for farmers.

Sayedee

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to submit a inclusive probe report to the tribunal shortly.

Mokhlesur Rahman Badal, a prosecutor of the tribunal, told reporters that they submitted the petition for the sake of fair investigation into the allegations against Sayedee, Nayeb-e-Ameer of Jamaat.

Requesting anonymity, an investigator told The Daily Star they have received evidence and documents of Sayedee's involvement in various offences including killings, arson and rape in Pirojpur during the country's Liberation War.

So, it is necessary to keep him detained, he said, adding, the investigation will be hampered if he is released.

On November 23, the tribunal directed the prosecutors to submit a progress report to it on investigation into the allegation against the Jamaat leader on December 23.

The tribunal had also directed jail authorities to keep Sayedee detained till December 29.

Meanwhile, Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday said the trial of the war criminals, who have been arrested on evidence, will formally begin in January or February.

"All the war criminals will be brought to justice in phases," he said at the inaugural ceremony of freedom fighters' reunion at Shilpakala Academy organised by Betiyar Shaheed Shoho Jodhha Sangsad in the capital.

Shafique said those committed war crimes and crimes against humanity will be tried for establishing rule of law, and not for any political purpose.

Speaking as the chief guest, he said the trial must be held even as conspirators are out to make it questionable.

"All the necessary steps have been taken to hold the trial as per international standard, and in transparent manner," Shafique noted.

2 muggers injured in gunfight

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gunfight between Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members and a gang of muggers left two alleged muggers bullet injured yesterday in the capital's Agargaon Taltola.

Identified as Mohammad Shafiq, 24, son of Suruj Ali of Khariganj upazila in Kishoriganj district, and Akram Hossain, 28, son of Saber Uddin of Islampur upazila in Jamalpur district, they were arrested and later admitted to the city's Pongu Hospital with bullet wounds to their legs.

Rab-2 officials said the gunfight erupted when a team of the law enforcers challenged some youths for their suspicious movement at Taltola area at around 12:30am.

When the Rab men challenged the criminals, they started firing at the law enforcers who also retaliated with gunshots resulting in the gun battle that left two muggers injured, said Rab-2 officials.

"The bullet-hit criminals were arrested but their cohorts ran away leaving behind two pipe guns and two knives," a Rab official added.

According to Rab, the detained persons are the members of a muggers' gang.

Ulamas

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this yesterday during a meeting with journalists at a city hotel.

Majumder said they had explained their grounds for calling the hartal at a meeting with the prime minister's adviser, HT Imam, on Wednesday.

Imam had assured them of providing a feedback after discussing their demands with the premier, he added.

Majumder also said they were expecting a government handout which will clearly state the government's position regarding their demands.

They will seriously consider withdrawing the hartal when the handout is issued.

Presidium member of the parishad and secretary general of Islami Oikya Jote, Abdul Latif Nezami, said Imam had inquired whether there was any pressure from Jamaat-e-Islami behind declaring the hartal.

There was no instigation from any political party, he had replied.

Sammilito Ulama Maschayek Parishad on December 8 announced a nationwide dawn-to-dusk hartal protesting the National Education Policy terming it anti-Islamic.

Primary, JSC

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the results of the two largest public exams by this month to enable students to attend classes of the next academic year on time.

The terminal exams began on November 23 and ended on November 29. Nearly 24,88,148 class-V students from schools and madrasas got registered for the exams.

Of them, some 21,57,317 were from primary schools and 3,31,448 from madrasas.

Wishing anonymity, an official at the primary and mass education ministry said the ministry will hold a steering meeting on the examination on December 26 and the results will be published the next day.

However, the results might be published a day later in case Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is not available to formally receive a copy of the results, said the official.

The results of JSC and JDC exams will be published on December 31, said an official at the Dhaka Education Board.

The government will hold Textbook Festival on January 1 and the prime minister is expected to inaugurate the textbook distribution programme on December 30.

The JSC and JDC exams started on November 4. Some 15,05,391 class-VIII students from 27,221 educational institutions sat for the exams. Of them, 12,33,391 were from eight education boards and 2,72,000 from the madrasa education board.

Education board officials had difficulties in evaluating the answer sheets and preparing the results in just a month due to shortage of manpower, said the official.

The examinees of terminal exams would be evaluated under the division system while those of JSC and JDC exams under the grading system.

Sherpur ammo

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look at them in the dark.

On December 18, Jhenaigati police recovered 13,680 rifle bullets, equivalent to 57 packets of ammunition, in plastic sacks from an abandoned room of octogenarian Wasir Uddin around 7:00am.

A man with a knife threatened Wasir Uddin not to disclose that bullets have been hidden in his house when Wasir stepped out of his house hearing a sound in the adjacent room, said Jhenaigati upazila freedom fighters' commander Yusuf Harun.

Harun, also a neighbour of Wasir, said, "He [Wasir] rushed to my house when the criminals left. With a few other neighbours I whisked to Wasir's house and immediately informed the superintendent of police and the officer-in-charge of Jhenaigati Police Station over the cellphone."

OC Abdur Rauf of Jhenaigati Police Station said, "The bordering villages on hills are so remote that our men and logistics are not sufficient to keep vigil over the area after nightfall. Besides, there are herds of wild elephants to deal with. The Indian insurgents have been taking this advantage of their hideouts."

The OC also suspects that Ulfa operatives might have left the bullets.

Earlier in October last year, the Rapid Action Battalion recovered 10 Arges grenades from Jhenaigati and arrested three persons including two indigenous men.

After preliminary interrogation Rab investigators said indigenous Pang Vang Sangma, 37, and Nipin Sangma, 25, of Gajni village in Jhenaigati collected the grenades from Indian separatists.

Locals and Ulfa intruders

Locals at some hilly villages in Jhenaigati upazila said they are living in constant fear. They cannot go out of home at night fearing Ulfa men.

They fear that since the villagers have informed law enforcers of the abandoned ammunition, the Ulfa men may come back and take revenge on them.

The villagers alleged that although Indian insurgents kept intruding and living with indigenous families in the remote hilltop villages during the BNP-led four-party alliance.

Oil spill

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prosecute the polluter under the environment conservation act," said DoE Director Zafar Alam in Chittagong.

The Ocean Pearl, that has remained grounded for more than two months, caused the spill in the Bay during an unauthorised transfer of 400 tonnes of furnace oil and diesel, said a DoE official wishing anonymity.

The captain of the ship defied the maritime and environmental laws that make it mandatory for any ship to seek permission from the Customs and Excise to sell or discard oil.

Customs officials said the ship did not take any permission from them. They suspected that the entire stock of furnace oil and diesel was dumped into the sea to salvage the ship.

Rehana Akhter Ranu were present.

NBR seeks info

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Salauddin was moved to Narayanganj jail yesterday.

Twenty-four out of the 35 BNP lawmakers took part in the one-hour-long human chain programme that began around 11:00am on the Jatya Sangsad Bhaban premises.

Opposition Chief Whip Zainal Abidin Faroque who led the human chain told The Daily Star that they submitted a letter to Speaker Abdul Hamid Wednesday urging necessary steps to stop the "torture" on Salauddin.

"The speaker assured us that he will talk to the home minister and will raise the issue," Faroque added.

He also said they would submit the same letter to different human rights organisations and the United Nations.

In a brief discussion after the human chain, the opposition chief whip said this government is running the country in an autocratic style.

He alleged that members of law enforcement agencies are torturing Salauddin and other detained BNP leaders on remand to force confessional statements from them as per the government's wish.

Jafur Islam Chowdhury, Mosharrif Hossain, Mojibur Rahman Sarwar, Shahiduddin Chowdhury Anee, ABM Ashrafuddin Nizam, Abul Khair Bhuiyan, Mahubuddin Khokon, Joyanal Abdin, Nazrul Islam Manju, Rumana Ahmed,

ance government, local police and administration remained indifferent about it leaving the locals insecure.

The insurgents used to roam about at night and sometimes scared wild elephants using firearms.

Some villagers seeking anonymity said Ulfa separatists had taken shelter at Chhoto Gajni, Boro Gajni, Nakshi, Halchhati, Tilapara, Naukuchi and Bakakura villages of Jhenaigati during the four-party alliance government and started leaving the areas during the tenure of caretaker government.

It has been around three months since Ulfa operatives were last seen in the area, they added.

Another local wishing not to be named told The Daily Star that Ulfa operatives usually married into indigenous families and settled here. They, however, did not come to Bangalee neighbourhood, he added.

Hajiran, a middle aged poor woman, said on one evening three years ago, her son-in-law took his wife and one-year-old son for a walk and they went missing.

"After their disappearance, I came to know that my son-in-law was an Ulfa operative," she said, adding that he could not speak Bangla well but Hajiran agreed to marry her daughter off to the man as he was rich.

Several police officers said they also heard about Ulfa men disappearing with their wives and children from the country but no victim has ever reported that to police.

Food ration

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Under the OMS programme, rice will be sold at Tk 24 per kg in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur and Savar. A total three tonnes of rice will be sold from every truck.

An individual will able to buy maximum five kg rice per day. The OMS starts at 9:00am and will continue up to 5:00pm except Friday and Tuesday.

Food Ministry sources said that the government has taken such food distribution programmes so that ultra-poor could buy food grains at a cheaper price.

State minister

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subversive acts in the country as the trial of war criminals begins, alerting her ministers to remain vigilant against it.

Such remarks by the premier at this time have created anxiety among the people, Delwarsaid.

People know well who patronised militancy and terrorism in the country, said Tuku.

About alleged torture on detained BNP lawmaker Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, he said SQ Chowdhury was not tortured physically under police custody. News of torture on him is 'false and baseless.' BNP's politics is based on falsehood and fabrication, he added.

BNP has been observing various programmes to protect Khaleda's cantonment house as well as to hamper trial of war criminals, Tuku alleged.

Pareesh Barua

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kidnappers tactics "won't work".

Ulfa rebels have fought for a separate Assamese homeland since 1979.

"Thousands of young men and women have died fighting for Assam's independence and my son may join that long list of martyrs. If that happens, I will be prepared for it," he said.

Baruah did not provide details about when his son was kidnapped. He broadly alluded to "an Indian conspiracy", but the rebel chief was not specific about who could have been behind it.

But his statement attacked some senior Ulfa leaders, who Barua alleged, were now "throwing all ideals to the wind" and trying to start the negotiations with India.

Barua has opposed negotiations, saying there could be no dialogue with India, unless the "issue of Assam's sovereignty" was on the agenda, something that the government refuses to accept.

A spokesman for the group's pro-negotiations faction, Mithinga Daimary, dismissed the reported kidnapping as "a fiction".

A large number of Ulfa leaders have been released from prisons in Assam after they promised to start a dialogue with India.

The group's chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa, who was detained in Bangladesh last year and handed over to India, is also likely to be freed soon as the Assam government has not opposed his bail petitions.

20 accused

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Islam and Aktaruzzaman Liton four months each. Another Anisur Rahman was jailed for six months.

All the convicted were also fined Tk100 each. They were taken to Joypurhat Central jail immediately after the verdict.

Briefing the reporters, Lt Col Md Mehdul Hasan, prosecutor of the case, said mutiny charges against all the convicted have been proved.

Mehdi Hasan, also the commanding officer of Joypurhat-3 Rifle Battalion, said his battalion has been relieved through the verdict.

During the charge framing, 13 accused confessed to their involvement in the February 25-26 mutiny last year. They are Abdul Karim, Abdul Latif, Biplob Hossain, Abdur Razzak, Jamal Uddin, Jabirul Islam, Rabiul Islam, Firoz Hossain, Munirul Islam, Anisur Rahman, Hafizur Rahman, Aktaruzzaman and Afzal Hossain.

Seven convicts, however, claimed innocence. They are Obidul Islam, Ohidul Islam, Mofizul Haque, Asaduzzaman, Shiddiqur Rahman, Abdul Mannan and Abdul Karim.

The charge framing hearing began on November 29 and continued till December 1. The court recorded deposition of 18 witnesses.

Additional Attorney General Biswanath Roy was present at the court during the pronouncement of the verdict.

Meanwhile, the same court yesterday completed charge framing hearing against 23 accused mutineers of 39 Pulbari-40 Rifle Battalion under the district. The court adjourned till January 16 next year.

AL still working

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candidate for each seat.

Both Zafarullah and Nasim said organisational actions would be taken against those who would defy the party decision.

Zafarullah mentioned State Minister for Religious Affairs Shahjahan Miah's son withdrew his candidacy on Wednesday.

He also added Awami League will participate in the elections jointly with its allies.

Bahauddin Nasim said after selecting party candidates, they would consult the allies.

AL will sit with 14-party allies today at Sheikh Hasina's political office in Dhanmondi to discuss sharing seats in the polls.

However, Ershad's Jatiya Party, the key ally in the grand alliance, expressed dissatisfaction with the AL. Sources said JP demanded Awami League back more than 100 of its candidates but received no positive response.

AL insiders said the party could support five to seven JP candidates at best. But JP sources said it would stick to fielding candidates in at least 20 municipalities.

Talking to The Daily Star JP Presidium Member Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu said they are in talks with Awami League over sharing constituencies.

Another JP source said a party delegation would meet the prime minister within a couple of days and place their demand.

Grameen Bank

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"I have no comment," he told reporters. "We have received the report of Norway [on the reported transfer of Norad fund from Grameen Bank to Grameen Kalyan]; and of Grameen Bank as well. We will form an investigation committee this month. After that we will let you know the government's comment."

He also confirmed that a report will be submitted within this month.

Asked who will carry out the investigation, he said, "The finance ministry, the government."

A document of the finance ministry signed by the finance minister on November 13 however claimed that the Grameen chief had submitted his resignation letter to the minister.

But Mohammad Shahjahan, general manager of Grameen Bank, categorically told The Daily Star that Dr Yunus had not submitted any resignation letter to anyone.

"How could he still work if he had submitted his resignation?" Shahjahan asked.

"He is our pride," Muhith said about Yunus at the end of his discussion with reporters in his office yesterday. "You criticised him exaggeratedly. I am surprised that the news media are busy finding out dirt on others."

When pointed out that the government had also criticised the Nobel laureate, Muhith said the prime minister had made her comments on the issue only once. After that the government did not say anything again.

When asked about news reports that the standing committee on finance ministry had summoned Dr Yunus regarding the fund transfer issue, Muhith told reporters, "I told the committee that a government body is working on the issue. They can summon Mr Yunus, and I

am sure Mr Yunus would not refuse to appear before the standing committee."

Meantime, documents obtained by The Daily Star showed the finance minister had sought a meeting with the agriculture minister, foreign minister, economic affairs adviser to the prime minister, political affairs adviser to the prime minister, Bangladesh Bank governor, finance division secretary, chairman of the National Board of Revenue, the banking division secretary, and the chairman of Palli Karm Sahayak Foundation (PKSF).

He wanted to discuss Yunus' resignation, confirmation of his appointment as the chairman of Grameen Bank board, the bank's interest rate, and Grameen's plea for income tax rebate.

Grameen's status as a recipient of income tax rebate is now being debated within the government. The bank has been enjoying the facility since 1983 under the Grameen Bank Ordinance of the same year. This facility ends this year and Grameen sought further extension of it.

The finance division feels that the income tax rebate facility can be extended as Grameen uses the savings for rehabilitation programmes for the poor who are affected by natural disasters.

The National Board of Revenue however argues that incomes of other NGOs involved in microcredit operations are not tax free. Even the income of Krishi Bank is not tax free. It feels that there is no scope for allowing extension of the tax free status for Grameen as it has enjoyed the privilege for long 25 years. Grameen Bank however could not be grouped together with other NGOs, as its operations are governed by a special ordinance.

HR Watch urges

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from 1,000 extra-judicial slayings in the preceding five years, a 2009 report by Human Rights Watch alleged.

"The UK and the US should stop their cooperation unless there are immediate and visible efforts to reform RAB, and hold those responsible for human rights violations to account," she said.

The New York-based group said continued violation of human rights by the battalion will only harm Bangladesh's law enforcement capacity.

"Does Bangladesh really want a force that can easily run amok because it is protected by the state from being prosecuted for human rights violations," she asked.

CIA to assess Wiki damage

AFP, Washington

A CIA task force -- known by the suitable acronym WTF -- is to assess damage done by WikiLeaks' mass release of classified US documents, an official said Wednesday.

The WikiLeaks Task Force will "examine whether the latest release of WikiLeaks documents might affect the agency's foreign relationship or operations," CIA spokesman George Little said.

Few of the thousands of confidential documents leaked by WikiLeaks were from the CIA, but many were secret communications by high ranking diplomats discussing sensitive questions of world and US affairs.

Probe faulty

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Turning to the expressway tender, the committee members alleged irregularities in the selection process and asked the minister to produce all relevant documents before it.

Abul Hossain at first declined to come up with the papers relating to the selection process. But he grudgingly agreed as the committee members and chairman mounted pressure on him, Golam Maula Rony