

# The persistent trend in custodial deaths

RIFAT MUNIM

THE combustible political situation that has been stifling the country has served to distract us from one insidious disease that we have long been plagued by: That of violation of fundamental human rights by none other than the all-powerful law enforcing agencies. With the budget stealing the limelight and Jamaat going into hiding after several rounds of violence on the streets, the key political players seem to be resting awhile perhaps to gather up steam for a renewed spate of activities. Meanwhile, the law enforcement agencies are back to their usual, self. The recent incidents of two custodial deaths testify to this as well as raising some fundamental questions as to their overall role in maintaining law and order.

Shamim Reza, a youth of Sonargaon Upazila, Narayanganj, was allegedly picked up by police on May 14, forced to make a confessional statement before a court on May 20, and died on the morning of May 22 while in custody. In less than two weeks time, Shamim Sarkar, another young man of Hemayetpur Upazila, Savar, was picked up by police on June 5 and died next day in police custody. Victims' families confirmed they were in good shape when arrested. In both cases, however, police denied allegations of torture and putting pressure on the victims' families for bribe.

Two committees were formed to probe Reza's death. The first one, however, included Uttam Prasad, an ASP of Narayanganj, who was allegedly involved in the torture of the victim. A second three-member committee, therefore, was formed with Dhaka Range Additional DIG (Crime) Golam Faruk leading the team. The first committee dropped ASP Uttam Prasad, thanks to persistent follow-up of the case by The Daily Star, and conducted its probe. Both committees confirmed brutal custodial torture on Reza. The second committee confirmed acceptance of bribe from Reza's family by OC Arup Tarafdar. It also validated his relatives' claim that he was confined to the residential quarters of police under the watch of Arup Tarafdar for six days which is completely illegal. Any arrestee, must be produced before a court within 24 hours and it is upon the court to decide on the next

course of actions.

Following the probe reports, ASP Uttam Prasad, OC Arup Tarafdar and Sub-Inspector Paltu Ghosh were withdrawn; a process of posting Prasad to another district is underway while the other two have been attached respectively to the Dhaka Range and Narayanganj Police Lines. The probe is still on.

This has become a trend, an established one at that. First, media reports dig out horrifying details of custodial torture, then probe committees are formed, then allegations are proved true and finally the responsible officials are withdrawn from their stations. After that, as it is in this coun-

justice. In some cases these police officers are "closed", in some cases transferred, but never punished at least not that we know of. And if the implicated officer is politically affiliated, then he will remain untouched.

The case of Shamim Sarkar, however, makes us a bit optimistic and apprehensive at the same time. In a case filed by his elder brother, four accused (all of whom are police officers) were shown arrested and even granted five-day remand in two days after his death. This is an astonishing development, to say the least. Hardly ever before in Bangladesh's history has any case against the police been filed and action been taken so promptly. In Sarkar's case this development may be due to his alleged political affiliation. His death caused a veritable mayhem along the Dhaka-Aricha highway. If it be so, this development cannot be welcome. This is another proof that even justice depends on how strongly one is politically connected.

In addition to politicisation of the police force, there are several draconian laws such as Section 64 and Section 167 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrCP) which allow police high-handedness in matters of searching and arresting anyone upon suspicion. In spite of these sections, police are bound by law to not subject anyone to any form of custodial remand unless it is granted by a court.

Therefore, police excesses such as all the above-mentioned cases are punishable offence under the law. If this is the case, then why Rab and police brutalities are so rife in the country? The answer lies in the impunity with which they get away. The ex-Home minister played a majestic role in guaranteeing impunity to the errant elements of law enforcement agencies. In reply to a lawmaker's query in the parliament in March 2012, she claimed that victims of extrajudicial killings are criminals, not Rab or the police. Now it is Mr. Mohiuddin's turn to address this. We hope he will not repeat the injudicious remarks of his predecessor, and will take every step necessary to ensure punishment to those responsible not only for the murders of Shamim Reza and Shamim Sarkar but also for all the yet-to-be-resolved cases of custodial torture and extrajudicial killings.

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Shamim Reza

try, more important political events such as Padma bridge or Hefajat-e-Islam or death of more than 1100 people in Rana Plaza collapse dominate media attention, and we the general people, forget everything and find ourselves occupied by the issues at hand.

We do not ask what happened to the Limon case even though he is still an accused in a few cases; we forget to ask what happened to all those cases of enforced disappearance including the one of labour leader Aminul Islam; or what happened to the responsible police officers who made a criminal of an innocent DU student Abdul Quader; or the arrogant officers who molested Farzana and beat up and robbed her parents in a police club next to Dhaka Magistrate's court in May 2012 only because they went there to seek

# La Nada is over, is La Niña next?

## How likely is flood this year?

DR. MD. RASHED CHOWDHURY

MOST of you have heard about El Niño and La Niña, but I doubt how many of you have come across of the word "La Nada". When it is neither El Niño nor La Niña, but a neutral state sometimes referred to informally as La Nada. La Nada, or "nothing" in Spanish, is called when surface sea temperatures in the equatorial Pacific Ocean are roughly normal. That means ocean temperatures are not too warm -- which would trigger El Niño and typically means dry or drought in Bangladesh. The sea also is not too cold -- which produces La Niña and usually means a wet or flooding in Bangladesh.

Interestingly, scientists don't like La Nada (or neutral state), "Why is that? Because in La Niña or El Niño, you can actually make a forecast, because they provide some structure to the climate system -- you can make a fairly decent seasonal-range forecast. But "With La Nada, it's like teenagers without rules. It's unconstrained and unpredictable. La Nada years can coincide with the most troublesome of weather. When we have a weak-to-zero signal, then we can expect almost anything. By the end of May, there was a 50-50 chance the situation will remain La Nada or will develop into a weak El Niño.

La Nada has just ended in May; but what may come next is still not clear. At this stage it looks like something similar to La Niña may develop. The surface sea temperatures in the equatorial Pacific Ocean has just started to cool down. So, instead of El Niño (warm) we are now expecting La Niña (cold). That's why La Nada years are unconstrained and unpredictable.

According to most recent El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) diagnostic discussion ([http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis\\_monitoring/ens\\_advisory/](http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis_monitoring/ens_advisory/)), neutral state is favored through the Northern Hemisphere summer 2013. However, below average sea surface temperatures (SSTs) in the eastern Pacific strengthened, which is a sign of La Niña development. Despite a tendency toward cooler conditions, the overall state of the tropical Pacific is consistent with neutral or La Nada condition. The majority of the model forecasts favor the continuation of neutral state; a smaller number of models (mainly statistical) predict weak La Niña conditions (Niño-3.4 less than -0.5 °C) as soon as the Northern Hemisphere summer. As a result, the forecast consensus indicates larger chances for La Niña relative to El Niño.

Bangladesh is often a victim of higher than normal flooding during La Niña years (either strong or moderate strength) (e.g., 1984, 1988, and 1998). Right now, it looks like a weak La Niña is developing, which may cause a slight enhanced rainfall (along the greater Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna basin system) during the monsoon season. Therefore, based on information available now (as of June 10, 2013) and from the perspective of La Niña (or ENSO) impacts, the possibility for Bangladesh to face a normal flooding is high! But if the La Niña condition continues to gain strength then a different climate scenario may appear for which we need to wait and watch carefully. Also note that this is a probabilistic forecast that is based on monitoring of the ocean and knowledge of how the atmosphere has responded in the past during a La Niña year in Bangladesh.

So, at this stage we all need to be very vigilant to this La Nada or La Niña condition. By weekly monitoring of the oceanic and atmospheric interactions in the Pacific Ocean, Indian Ocean, and the Bay of Bengal, the relevant climate forecasting centers in Bangladesh should be able to generate a better insight -- whether we are moving to La Niña, La Nada, or EL Niño -- in the weeks to come.

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# How safe are the Russian civilian nuclear reactors?

QUAMRUL HAIDER

THE Russian state-owned nuclear power company Rosatom has an all-in-one bargain package for third-world countries seeking to build nuclear power plants. It is known as BOO—"build, own, [and] operate" power plants for 60 years or BOOT—the T being for "transfer." Under one of these models, Rosatom will build a two-unit power plant with VVER-1000 model reactors at Rooppur. These water-cooled, water-moderated, pressurized water reactors were first introduced in the 1980s and are now operating mostly in Russia and former Soviet Republics.

Several articles have been published expressing deep concern and raising questions about the wisdom of building a power plant in a densely populated deltaic country prone to severe flooding and natural disasters. While reactors are designed to be safe both during operation and in the event of any malfunction or accident, no industrial activity can be certified as 100 percent risk-free. Examples are the nuclear accidents at Three Mile Island (1979), at Chernobyl (1986), and at Fukushima (2011).

In January of this year, power plants at Belayorsk, Kola, Kursk, Rostov, and Kalinin had emergency shutdowns (scrams), emergency repairs, and power reductions. The cause of the incidents has been documented by Rosatom and Rosenergoatom Concern, a Russian company that deals with the construction, operation, and decommissioning of reactors. They are summarized below:

Belayorsk: In order to remedy a number of abnormal findings regarding the functioning of the equipment, the plant operated at 76

percent output for three months.

Kola: There was a scram of Unit 1 (VVER-440) following a transformer failure.

Kursk: An increase in moisture was detected in the RBMK-1000 reactor in Unit 3. It was shut down for unplanned repairs.

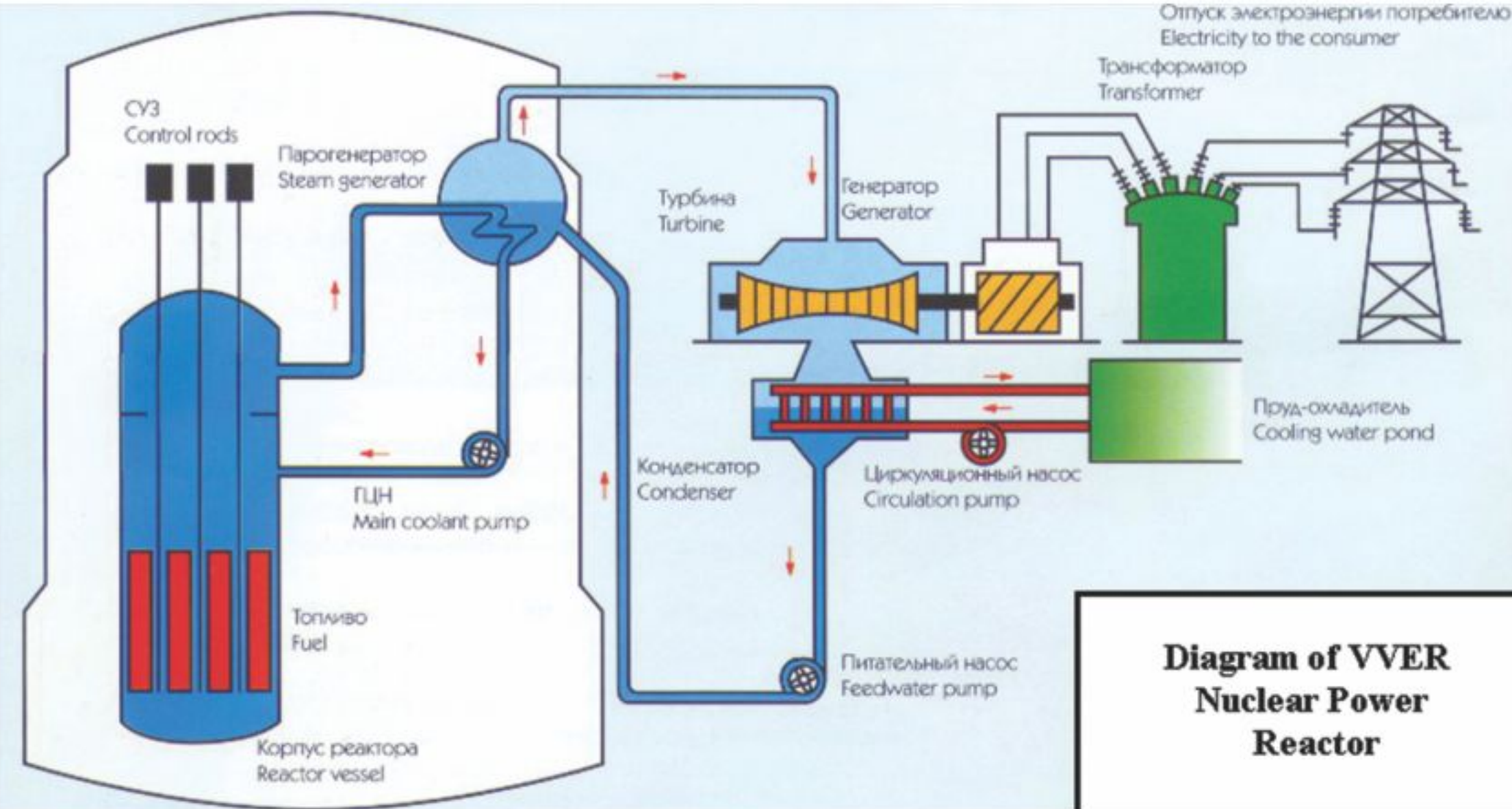
Rostov: After just 2 years in operation, a VVER-1000 reactor at Unit 2 "experienced glitches of one sort or another." The generator underwent a power cut "with subsequent power shedding at the Unit."

Kalinin: There was trouble with the turbogenerator that led to a reactor scram. "Activation of the automatic protection system occurred due to a disconnection of the generator from the grid."

These incidents involving VVER and RBMK model reactors do not speak well for Russian-built reactors. They clearly demonstrate that unscheduled shutdowns and/or repairs are common occurrences. Fortunately, none resulted in any significant release of radiation. But they do serve as a precursor to more serious accidents that could happen in the future.

The question to ask now is: Are Russian reactors really safe? The answer is an emphatic NO. Russian reactors are beset with numerous safety related issues.

According to a 2011 report written by Rosatom, the agency that will build the reactors at Rooppur, inspections of plants near Finland have revealed numerous serious shortcomings concerning the safety of the Russian reactors. The shockingly candid report was prepared for then-President



Dimitry Medvedev as part of the safety study of Russian reactors done after the nuclear accident at Fukushima in March of 2011. It was acquired by the Bellona Foundation, an international environmental NGO based in Oslo, Norway and leaked to the Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten.

The Rosatom report notes that the Russian plants are woefully under-prepared for both natural and man-made disasters. It also warns of the plants' inadequate reserve cooling systems. In addition, the report expressed serious reservations about the reactors' capability of remaining safe for extended periods of time if cooling systems fail. Should this happen, there is no guarantee that the power backup systems will be effective.

These reports are a damning indictment of the

Russian reactor industry, contrary to Russia's rosy assessment that its reactors are safe.

The Fukushima nuclear accidents in 2011 have completely changed the nuclear landscape. In the aftermath of the accidents, many nuclear nations decided to phase out their power plants in the next 10 to 20 years. United States cancelled most of the power plants planned for the future after the Three Mile Island accident in 1979; the rest were scrapped following the Fukushima events. Research in American and European laboratories is now underway to determine if nuclear reactors based on the fusion process that powers the Sun can be developed for generation of energy to power our future.

Why then, would Bangladesh want to build nuclear power plants when many industrial-

ized nations are shying away? Is the government aware that with a population density of about 3000 per square mile, a nuclear power plant is going to put the citizens in grievous harm's way?

As per the Bellona Foundation's paper, "The Economics of the Russian Nuclear Power Industry," the Russian nuclear industry operates in an environment fraught with corruption. Could it, therefore, be a case of Russia exporting unsafe reactors to Bangladesh to make questionable profit under the pretext of BOO or BOOT?

The Russians have the technology, resources, know-how, and experience to handle nuclear accidents in their own backyard. Bangladesh doesn't. Apart from the immediate damage that will be caused, the effects of nuclear accidents in Bangladesh resulting from technical failure, human error, or malevolence, no matter how small, would be vast and beyond the imagination of most of us. The radiation released would continue to affect the citizens all over the country and particularly those living around Rooppur for tens of thousands of years. Only those who cherish delusions about the nuclear future will deny the risks of nuclear fission's destructive power.

There can be no greater or more frightening burden for the people to bear than a Sword of Damocles hanging over their head. Not only must they live in continual fear that nuclear reactors may get out of control in their lifetime, but also with the shadow of radiation poisoning looming over their long-term future.

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ACROSS

1 Move like molasses

5 High card

8 Judicial garment

12 Place for sports reporters

14 Vivacity

15 Aware

16 Flex

17 Do sums

18 Kindle downloads

20 Sew loosely

23 Liveliness, in music

24 Wheel-base terminus

25 Obama's old title

28 — de Janeiro

29 Hawaiian dances

30 Delty

32 Dakar's country

34 Salver

35 Bacchanal blast

36 Yonder

37 Hallux, more

40 That girl

41 "Super-food" berry

42 Mexican miss

47 Show-room sample

48 One of three rulers

49 Paradise

50 Tree fluid

51 Harmonization

DOWN

1 Wife of Saturn

2 Raw rock

3 Buddhist sect

4 Mansion and its surroundings

5 Sleeping

6 Opposed

7 Outer

8 Start the PC up again

9 Bread spread

10 Savings units

11 Make — meet

13 Faction

19 Prejudice

20 Tavern

21 Line of symmetry

22 — gin fizz

23 Stop, at sea

25 Hints at

26 Shrek is one

27 Bellow

29 Medal

31 Coloring agent

33 Idea

34 Gas bill

36 Commandment starter

37 Commanded

38 On the rocks

39 Chess or checkers

40 Use scissors

43 Historic time

44 Wall climber

45 Can metal

46 Joan of —

Solution time: 24 mins.

PROPEASESOS  
AURAXRAYIMP  
STEPFIRELEA  
SHOEMATPNY  
RIPOVA  
MUSTNAPTINE  
ASPIGLEVEL  
SEAGOODPUREES  
BURTHEAITS  
AGGICONALEE  
ILLCOLTIBEX  
LYEEMMYLADY

Saturday's answer 5-6

CRYPTOQUIP

GZXJXFKHLWXXNPBP  
OXQBPCJZCIZ-BXOZ  
GLQVKHPOXHPSIZCBZCJVWLS  
OPHHBZXFILLHX'NICIHXN.

Saturday's Cryptoquip: THAT FASHIONABLE CHEF IS PRETTY PRETENTIOUS. FOR INSTANCE, HE ONLY BUYS DESIGNER LADLES.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: I equals G

BEETLE BAILY

by Mort Walker

HENRY

by Don Trachte

## QUOTABLE Quotes

"There is one thing alone that stands the brunt of life throughout its course: a quiet conscience."

Euripides