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Counter-terrorism runs out of gas

Most imams refuse to give anti-militancy sermons; govt relies only on law enforcers

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

The country remains vulnerable to militancy, as the government relies mainly on law enforcers to combat the menace while keeping shelved its nationwide socio-cultural and religious campaign against militancy.

The Awami League government launched the campaign in 2009, which quickly fizzled out for lack of political will, said officials involved in the campaign.

They identified militancy as a social problem that couldn't be uprooted by using Rab and police alone, and thought that a campaign to make people aware of the scourge of militancy would be more effective.

Moklesur Rahman, director general of Rapid Action Battalion, believes that it's not possible to cleanse the society of the malaise only by using the law enforcers.

"All of us -- the government, politicians, journalists and non-governmental organisations -- have a role to play. If we can create awareness among people through such a

campaign, we will be successful in weeding out this menace," he told The Daily Star.

In the absence of a strong campaign, militancy has gained ground in remote villages, especially in south-western and northern districts over the last decade, according to law enforcers.

In April 2009, the government formed the Militancy Resistance and Prevention Committee comprising officials of different ministries, intelligence agencies and government institutions.

Though the committee headed by the state minister for home is supposed to sit every month, it held only 16 meetings in the last five years.

Initially, it came up with the idea of orienting imams and motivating them to deliver anti-militancy sermons during Juma prayers.

In line with a committee decision, the Islamic Foundation started providing orientation to imams. But it ran out of steam after interacting with only a few thousand of around three lakh imams in the country.

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A fish farmer tends his fish inside small cages dipped in Neyamatpur canal of Kalapara upazila in Patuakhali. Several fish farmers have been able to stand on their own feet using this method of farming in closed off canals and water bodies.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

Govt's days are numbered

Says Khaleda; Kazi Zafar's JP joins 18-party to make it a 19-party alliance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Asking the government to come out of its "five-year-in-power illusion", BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia last night said the days of Sheikh Hasina's "illegal administration" were numbered.

"Though the government is screaming it will stay in office for five years, it has in fact very few days. Count how many days you can remain in power," she said.

The BNP chief made the remarks while addressing a programme on Kazi Zafar Ahmed-led Jatiya Party's joining the 18-party alliance at her Gulshan office.

The opposition combine now turns into a 19-party one.

A Jamaat representative, along with

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Economy under strain

CPD says economic growth may go below 6pc as political turmoil battered first half of fiscal year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

GDP growth could slide below 6 percent this fiscal year due to the lengthy spell of political turmoil in the first half which put serious strains on the economy.

"There might be some recovery but we will not be able to fully recoup the losses of the last six months," Prof Mustafizur Rahman, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said yesterday at the unveiling of the think-tank's review of the macroeconomic performance in the first half of fiscal 2013-14.

CPD expects the economy to grow between 5.6 percent and 5.8 percent should there be no major supply disruption and political turmoil in the next half of fiscal 2013-14.

"It is disquieting to see that GDP growth acceleration, so critical to realising Bangladesh's ambition of becoming a middle-income country and graduating from the LDC bracket, has been lost in recent years."

GDP grew by 6 percent in fiscal 2012-13, down

from 6.2 percent in fiscal 2011-12 and 6.7 percent in fiscal 2010-11, a record.

Rahman said it would be a "major challenge" to return to the higher growth trajectory seen.

The CPD projection, which is way below the government's target of 7.2 percent, is in line with the World Bank's 5.7 percent.

However, Finance Minister AMA Muhith last week said the growth would not be less than 6.3 percent.

Bangladesh has maintained its growth trend in areas of exports and balance of payments, while some indicators including import payments demonstrated signs of recovery, he said.

Concurrently, economic performance of a number of indicators continued to deteriorate in the first half of fiscal 2013-14 including inflation, ADP implementation, remittance inflow and foreign aid utilisation. "Any major breakthrough in the area of private investment is yet to be seen."

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AKHERI MUNAJAT TODAY

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first phase of Biswa Ijtima, the second largest congregation of the Muslims after Hajj, ends today with Akheri Munajat or the concluding prayer in Tongi on the outskirts of the capital.

The Akheri Munajat would be offered sometime between 12:30pm and 1:15pm before Jehr prayers, said the organisers of the gathering. Maulana Zubairul Hasan of India is expected to lead the prayer, they added.

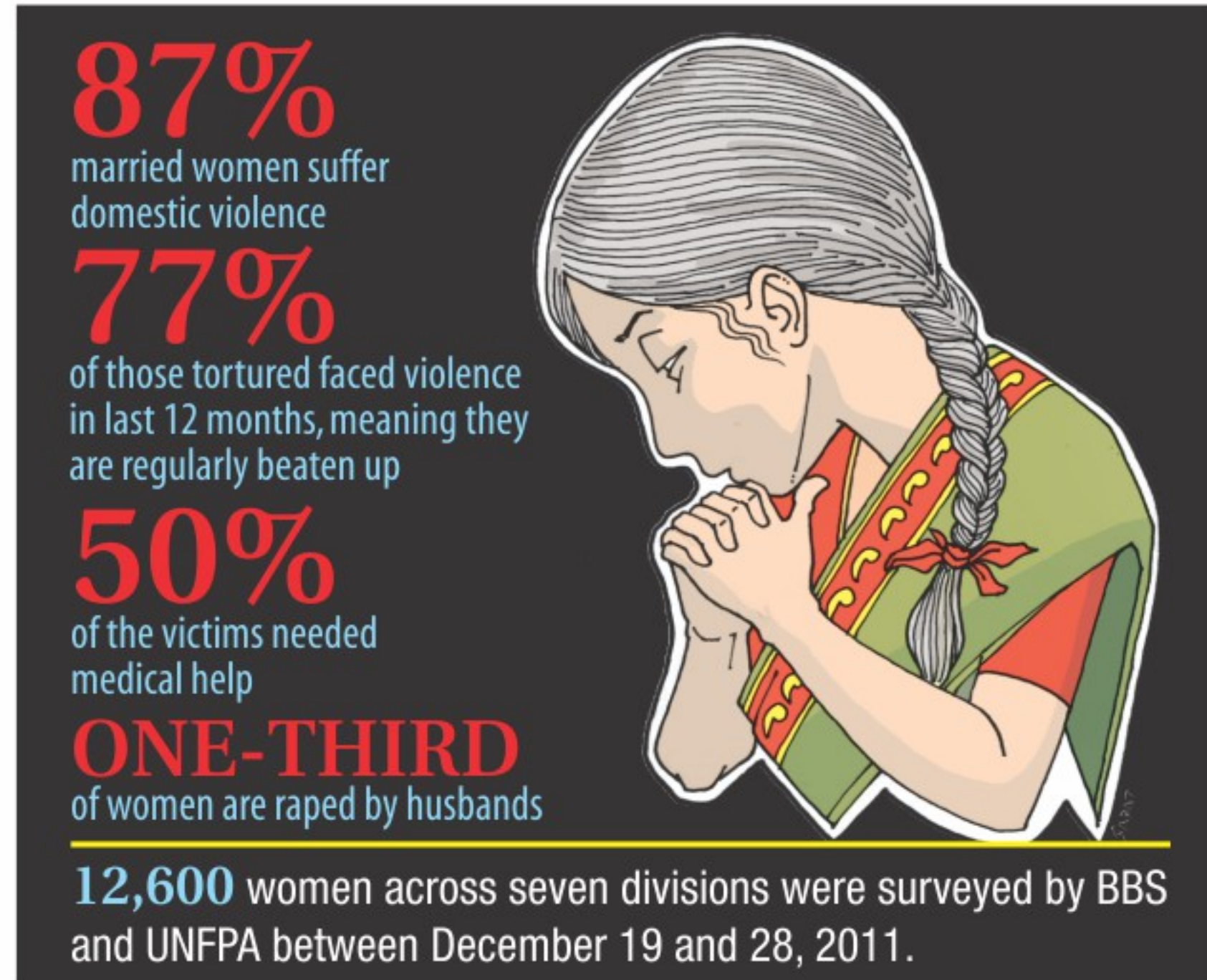
President Abdul Hamid, BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia, Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad, members of different political

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Devotees gather at a reservoir at the Biswa Ijtima ground for ablutions before Zohr prayers yesterday, the second day of the first part of the Ijtima on the Turag in Tongi. The Akheri Munajat (final prayers) will be held today seeking divine blessings of Almighty Allah.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



SURVEY ON WOMEN REVEALS Most abused at homes

87pc married women tell of torture by husbands

ZYMA ISLAM

Nearly nine out of 10 husbands abuse their wives in Bangladesh, according to a recent nationwide survey conducted by the government.

The survey conducted on 12,600 women randomly chosen across the seven divisions says an astonishing 87 percent of married women are abused by their husbands.

Around half of the victims said they had suffered severe injuries and had to go to the hospital. One-third of them refused to visit a doctor despite severe injuries in fear of their

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Raped before they reach 14

Say half the victims of sexual abuse

ZYMA ISLAM

Around half of the victims of sexual abuse living in urban areas in Bangladesh are raped before the age of 14, reveals a recently published nationwide survey.

The figure is also dismal in rural areas with 40 percent of the victims reporting the same.

Children falling victim to sexual abuse in the country is not a rare instance. In Khilgaon in the capital, a 10-year old girl bled to death last

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Dutch-Bangla Bank

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The list of **2518 recipients** of the Dutch-Bangla Bank **Tk. 102 crore** Annual Scholarship Programme (8th phase) who passed H.S.C/Equivalent Examination in 2013 will be published in the following newspaper and website:

Newspaper	Date
Daily Sokaler Khabor	26, 27 & 28 January, 2014

Website: www.dutchbanglabank.com/scholarship