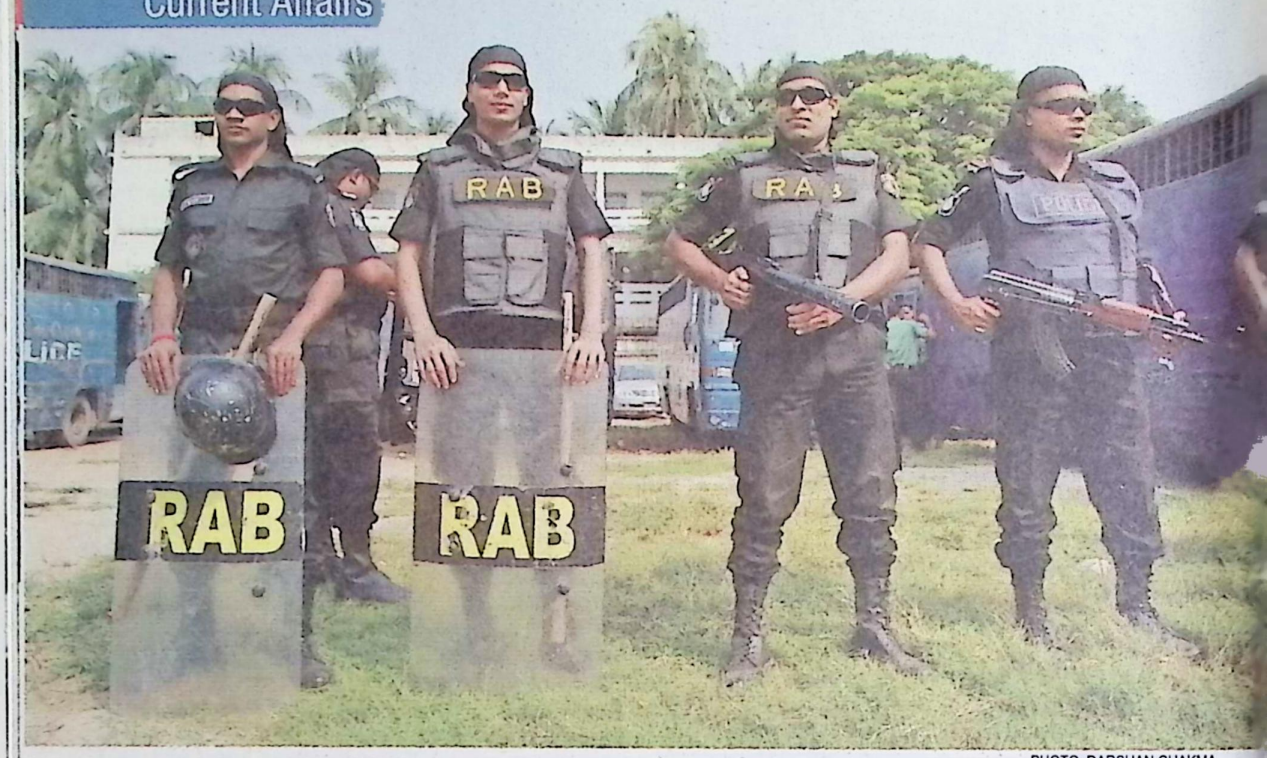


PHOTO: DARSHAN CHAKMA

Licensed to Kill?

SHAKHAWAT LITON

It was 8:30 at night of December 4 last year when Sajedual Islam Suman, general secretary of ward no 38 of Dhaka city unit of BNP and his cousin Zahidul Karim were having fried rice in the street of Bashundhara residential area. Three vehicles with stickers inscribed with the word 'Rab-1' stooped nearby. Some armed men got down from the vehicles and enquired about Suman. Being certain about his identity, the armed men picked up Suman, Zahidul and four other people. Since then they have been missing. Their relatives have made fanatic efforts to trace them, but failed to get any clue as to their whereabouts.

Asked about their disappearances, State Minister for Home Affairs Asaduzzaman Khan says he knew about them. He came to know about it two days after the incident. At that time he was in the parliament. He had tried to find their whereabouts. Relatives of the disappeared persons met him after he was sworn in on January 12 as the state minister. "But I can't do anything for them. All the law enforcement agencies have said they did not detain any one of them." [Prothom Alo, February 22].

The state minister for home affairs sounded quite helpless. If he cannot do anything about these incidents, then who will help relatives of Suman, Zahidul and others to trace them? Mothers and relatives of Suman, Zahidul and others have little to do but to wait for a miracle.

Any of us could 'disappear' on our ways home or our way to work. Will our relatives be able to see us again? Who will help them to do this almost impossible task? Law enforcers? A section of law enforcers have already been accused of being involved in such heinous crimes. If our relatives do not get any assistance from the law enforcers, then whom will they go to seek help?

So far 30 people were forcibly disappeared in the last two months, according to Ain O Salish Kendra, a leading human rights organisation. Of