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Rethinking the Uniform Paradigm

CHINTITO

I write the following report with a heavy heart for reasons obvious. We grew up and hopefully our children too are growing up with respect for men in uniform. But there is a paradigm shift due to the doings of some evildoers.

A few members of the hybrid Rapid Action Battalion(RAB) have been removed from military service for their alleged hair-raising involvement in last April's seven murders at Narayanganj, allegations to which they later confessed in an on-going lawsuit. It is most alarming that such gruesome murders could have taken place under the very aegis of some deranged men in uniform. Who would have thought that people trained, employed, and paid to protect the public would become so despicably dangerous in lieu of money? How much more money does a human being need? Being "human" is the quandary. It is however noteworthy that some of the officers have been taken into custody for further probe and course of law.

In the past some members of the police also made headlines for the wrong reasons. The men in uniform used their position to rape innocent and helpless victims. "Girl 'raped' in police station" was the headline of a story 6 Oct 2013 in bdnews24.com after five police constables allegedly raped an adolescent girl in their custody at Gaibandha's Govindaganj Police Station.

The most grave matter has reached our parliament too. A minister accepted *de facto* in parliament 9 June that indeed some members of the forces were involved in some very serious misdemeanour. "It would not be wise to evaluate the armed forces "negatively" for some isolated incidents carried out by the members of the three forces, LGRD Minister Syed Ashraful Islam told parliament yesterday. "Therefore, it would be more effective to identify specific problems, resolve those and to amend the existing system instead of suspending appointment [of armed forced members] on deputation and bringing major organisational changes," Ashraf, who is in charge of the defence ministry in parliament affairs business, said replying to a lawmakers' queries. Awami League MP Selim Uddin asked whether deputing armed forces members in the civil administration and Rapid Action Battalion will be stopped, as some of them used to engage in different "misdeeds" and thus defame their parent organisation.

Uniformed imams of masjid too have an identity of a respectable and knowledgeable person. But alas! Asia News reported 30 Nov 2010, "A ten-year-old girl was brutally raped on Saturday in Chittagong by Mohammad Moinuddin (42), the imam of the Chittagong Government Muslim High School", presumably in his religious attire. In another incident, a Shariatpur court sentenced September 2013 Yasin Sikdar, an Imam at the SadarUpazila's Tetulia mosque and Nurani Hafezia Madrasa, to life imprisonment and Tk 40,000 fine for raping a minor girl three years ago. The victims had trusted their religious uniform. What a setback for the society? How can we show our face to our children?

It is for us to take utmost precaution as a community. Persons in uniform should not be taken for granted. They must not be given access to one's premises and home. They must be queried about their identification. They must never be met alone, not anymore.

Elsewhere in India, four men, including two police officers, were arrested 29 May after police said they raped two teenage sisters and hanged them from a tree. How much more lustful and cruel can they get? The girls, 14 and 15 years old, disappeared from their home. (Daily News)Can you imagine their ordeal? And at this age?

Here is a news narration of an incident from Sri Lanka. On March 9, 2008, at about 11:30am, a police officer attached to the Hakmana Police Station came to Ms. X's house to inquire about the complaint she had made earlier regarding a land dispute with her