

## RIGHTS VIOLATION BY LAW ENFORCERS

## NHRC helpless due to legal constraints

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) is helpless in taking actions against human rights violation by the members of the law enforcement agencies due to its legal limitations, says commission Chairman Kazi Reazul Hoque.

"There is an article in law [on which the NHRC was formed] that says if human rights are violated by any member of the law enforcement agencies, we will have to seek reports from the government, which means we cannot go for direct investigation," he told reporters yesterday after a meeting with Finance Minister AMA Muhith.

A delegation of the NHRC led by its chairman paid a courtesy call on the finance minister at his secretariat office. In the meeting, the NHRC chief talked about details of the problems

the commission was facing.

Reazul said Muhith wanted to know from them what was the public perception of the NHRC. "Then, I said the people are very much conscious."

He said there are many electronic and print media in the country now. When an incident of human rights violation happens, they rush there. At that time, it is the responsibility for the commission to go there.

"But in some cases, we have not only shortage of manpower and transport but also legal limitations."

He said if any allegation was brought against a public servant, they could investigate and recommend actions against him. But they could not do so against the members of the law enforcement agencies.

Reazul said the law was framed in 2009, and the NHRC was formed in

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## Big powers wooed

FROM PAGE 1

Foreign policy has so far remained one of the most visible dimensions of Hasina's government. The government has been successful in leaving its unique imprint, making clear its objective of positioning Bangladesh as an important global partner and regional player.

In the just-closed year, the PM's foreign policy received a shot in the arm as Bangladesh excelled in exploiting its geo-political importance in South Asia and Indian Ocean regions and has been able to keep the major powers happy.

The first three years were dominated by the PM's powerful personality. Her international visits had been the most visible manifestation of the government's foreign policy which brought the country closer to most of its neighbours and raised the nation's profile around the world.

Global powers China, India, Japan, Russia, the US and some other countries showed growing interest in Bangladesh to have deeper engagements.

Bangladesh remained vibrant through its strong presence in global forums. It made good maneuvering in dealing with China and India, the two regional rivals. Dhaka sought and received economic assistance from Beijing, especially in its infrastructure sector.

At the same time, Bangladesh has strengthened its traditional close relations with India through increased connectivity and growing cooperation in tackling terrorism that has hit both the countries. If it has been an act of balancing, Hasina has played it so well.

New Delhi has found Hasina on its side on key issues like fighting terrorism, peace and economic development in the region. Dhaka joined New Delhi in the boycott of last year's Islamabad Saarc Summit, the South Asian regional grouping, following the September 18 terrorist attack in Uri of Kashmir, an attack New Delhi blamed on Islamabad. Bangladesh, however, said it pulled out of the summit to protest Islamabad's brazen interference in the trial of the war criminals of 1971.

Bangladesh's relations with the US have also improved significantly. Visiting Dhaka on August 29 last year, US Secretary of State John Kerry praised Bangladesh's impressive economic development and its determined fight against terrorism. Kerry also visited Bangabandhu Memorial Museum when he strongly praised the leadership of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Hasina played host during this period to several top world leaders, including those from India, China and Japan. She also joined Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Mongolia, BRICS and BIMSTEC Outreach Summit in India and G7 Outreach meeting in Japan.

The landmark visits of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar apart from dozens of high-level incoming visits clearly showed the growing importance of Bangladesh among global players and also propelled the country into a new limelight.

Parrikar's visit to Bangladesh was the first ever by an Indian defence minister. During his talks with Hasina and other government officials, Parrikar reportedly discussed finalisation of "a new defence cooperation framework" with Bangladesh. The agreement is likely to be signed during Hasina's visit to India expected next month.

The premier also received awards for her outstanding contributions in vital areas including climate change. She was one of the winners of the UN's highest environmental accolade, in recognition of Bangladesh's far-reaching initiatives to address climate change. She got the Champions of the Earth award in the Policy Leadership category in 2015. International telecommunication Union honoured the PM with Sustainable Development Award.

One of the biggest success stories of Bangladesh's foreign policy in the past three years has been the pace at which Dhaka-New Delhi, Dhaka-Beijing, Dhaka-Washington, Dhaka-Moscow, Dhaka-Tokyo, Dhaka-Riyadh relations improved and more importantly, deepened. Settlement of the long-pending Land Boundary Agreement with India had been a great diplomatic success for her.

In the area of defence and security, Dhaka decided to move ahead with the major countries in Asia and beyond. Bangladesh is now undertaking military exercises with like-minded states like India, China and the US.

Adding of two submarines to the Navy fleet is a remarkable achievement of the government's defence diplomacy. Improving security ties with superpowers and major countries was another bold step of Hasina's government. The PM successfully proved her "zero tolerance policy" in fighting violent extremism and terrorism.

Although the Holey Artisan Bakery attack in the capital's Gulshan on July 1 last year shocked the entire world, the government got the international community beside it in addressing the new challenge.

In spite of all these achievements, Hasina's government has had a couple of challenges unresolved. In regards to India, the PM faces criticisms that under her stewardship Dhaka conceded more to New Delhi than it received in return. Critics refer to the unresolved issue of reaching a deal with India on a fair sharing of Teesta River waters to back their theory.

With no breakthrough in Teesta stand-off, the issue is said to have contributed to a delay in Hasina's first visit to India since PM Modi came to power in 2014.

It is apparently clear that traditional diplomacy of Bangladesh for now has failed to ensure that India inks the deal.

Besides, killing in the border by the Indian Border Security Force still remains a major concern and irritant of Bangladesh despite India's repeated assurance from the highest level to bring down the killing of innocent Bangladesh citizens to zero.

There is also apparently another failure in labour market front as the number of returnees have increased, which caused the drastic fall in remittance. The GSP issue with the US has been shelved and there is no immediate chance of restoring the trade benefit.

Bangladesh's involvement with the Saudi-led anti-terror alliance also remained unclear. Many raised eyebrows after Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali confirmed Bangladesh would join the forum. The Islamic Military Alliance of 34 countries was floated in mid-December 2015 at the initiative of Saudi Deputy Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman, also the defence minister, to fight terrorism. To some, it was a deviation from Bangladesh's declared policy of not joining any military alliance outside the UN mandate.

The recent influx of Rohingya Muslims to escape a brutal crackdown by the Myanmar military has brought Bangladesh face to face with a new challenge with Dhaka trying to build its way out of the problem amid pressure from some international human rights groups to open its borders for the Rohingyas.

Despite repeated efforts to find out a longstanding solution to the Rohingya crisis, the Myanmar government is still cold-shouldering with Bangladesh. The government could not mobilise adequate international pressure on Myanmar to resolve the Rohingya issue.

Nevertheless, there was disappointment in hosting the 9th Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD). The ministerial meeting has always been chaired by foreign ministers, but in Dhaka the foreign secretary chaired it. As a result, there were no such high level participations from countries across the world.



A Dhaka North City Corporation bulldozer knocks down an illegal structure on railway's land near the capital's Banani Railway Station yesterday. During the drive, the DNCC demolished over 2,000 such establishments, including Tehari on Wheels restaurant and parts of Banani Fast Food, in Mohakhali and Banani areas. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## 16 more in the offing

FROM PAGE 1

Over the last eight years, the government has approved 47 private universities allegedly on political consideration.

Since the start of their journey in 1992, private universities have been playing a vital role in accommodating a large number of students pursuing higher education. Some of those provide quality education and maintain a global standard.

However, a number of private universities are functioning without meeting some of the criteria laid down in the Private University Act 2010, UGC officials said.

Around half of the private universities don't have vice chancellors, and are run by acting VCs. Most of those have not fully moved to their own campuses despite repeated reminders from the authorities concerned. Questions were also raised about the standard of education in many of the universities.

On several occasions, educationists urged the government not to approve more private universities in the capital, citing lack of space as a major reason.

However, the process of approving more private universities is underway.

Upon directives from the education ministry, the UGC, the statutory apex body for higher education, has already completed inspection of half of the 16 proposed universities.

"We've already completed inspection of eight universities and sent reports to the education ministry. Inspection of the rest couldn't be done due to some errors in the addresses provided by them," UGC Chairman Prof Abd Mannan told The Daily Star on Wednesday.

Once these universities correct their addresses, the UGC will conduct inspection and send reports to the education ministry, said Mannan.

The ministry will analyse those and take the next step, he added.

Seeking anonymity, a UGC official said the ministry gave the UGC 120 applications for setting up private universities, and later asked it to inspect 16 of the proposed universities.

Contacted yesterday, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said that giving approval to private universities is part of "a regular process", and it is done keeping in mind the expansion of higher education in the country.

But all these universities may not get approval at a time, he said. "Before giving approval, we analyse and evaluate the inspection reports."

## Parents killing

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Every single step of near ones should be noticed. If anyone is found passing time in disturbance or stress, they must be taken to experts who can help strengthen ties between the individual concerned and her family members, Mekhala told The Daily Star.

Citing the media as one of the factors responsible for the unexpected deaths of children, she said the media publishing suicide news on their cover page sometimes encourages others, subjected to similar situations, to do the same.

Such incidents cannot be stopped through punishment, said Farida Yeasmin, deputy commissioner of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police's women protection wing. Rather, social and family values should be upheld.

"Killing beloved children is not an easy task for a mother. When a mother thinks that she has no value in society she takes her life and before that she kills her children thinking they would be in more trouble in her absence."

People must be encouraged to come forward to help their neigh-

THE PROPOSED UNIVERSITIES

Opposition Leader Rawshan Ershad is the patron of Rawshan Ershad International University, Bangladesh, in Mymensingh, while Chief Whip ASM Firoz is the initiator of South Region University in Patuakhali, according to the UGC documents.

The Daily Star called ASM Firoz on his mobile phone yesterday but he didn't pick it up.

Obaidul Muktaadir Chowdhury, AL lawmaker from Brahmanbaria-3, sought permission for opening the University of Brahmanbaria in his constituency. Another ruling party MP, Mohammed Shamsul Hoque Bhuyyan from Chandpur, is the initiator of Apollo University of Science and Technology in Chandpur.

This newspaper tried to contact Shamsul Hoque but his mobile phone was found switched off yesterday.

Former Jatiya Party lawmaker HM Golam Reza from Satkhira is the patron of Singapore University of Bangladesh in the capital's Mirpur.

Kazi Rafiqul Alam, president of Dhaka Ahsania Mission, and Prof Dr Mahmudul Hasan, director (international) of European Case Study Centre, UK, sought permission for two universities -- Khulna Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah University in Khulna and Ahsania Mission University of Science and Technology in Rajshahi.

Former Rupali Bank Chairman Dr Ahmed Al Kabir is the initiator of RITM Al Kabir Technical University in Sylhet, while Bangladesh Buddha Krishi Prachar Sangha President Siddhananda Mahathero is the patron of the University of Atish Dipankar in Munshiganj.

Businessman Mostofa Azad Chowdhury is the initiator of Rangpur University, and another businessman, Ashraf Alam Al-Amin, is the patron of North Bengal University in Rangpur.

The patron of International Culture University in the capital is Sultan Razzak, whose details could not be known.

Dr M Jubaidur Rahman sought permission for establishing the University of Management Science, Bangladesh, in Gazipur, and Kamrunnessa Ratna from the capital's Gulshan for establishing Kamal Uddin Ahmed University of Science and Technology in Gazipur.

Abu Noman Halder, a businessman, is the initiator of the University of Modern Technology in the capital's Banani area, while AKM Mosharraf Hossain, an engineer, is the patron of International Standard University at Mohakhali of the capital.

bours in distress, Farida added.

The brutal incidents are only a reflection of the fact that people in the country are passing a bad time, not friendly for a child to grow up, who witnesses bad things, even death, happening to those of his or her age, said AS Mahmood, director of BSAF.

Earlier, people used to live in joint families in which members had strong bonding between them and cared for each other. But now people don't have time for those of their nuclear family, let alone extended family members, and are always busy to be well-placed in society, Mahmood added.

Rapid changes are taking place in our society beyond imagination due to social media, urbanisation, cultural changes and global connectivity, said Prof Zia Rahman, chairman of the Dhaka University criminology department.

Such changes had led to similar incidents in the developed world as well but those countries had means to tackle them.

"Unfortunately we don't have those options," he said and sug-

gested that the state should take initiatives like introducing daycare centre, recreation centre and theater where people can share their thoughts and build relationships.

Apart from the Darussalam incident, some other incidents came into discussion.

On December 12, Marzina Akhtar Mukta, 23, wife of expatriate Tarek Mahmud, committed suicide after killing her son Mahin Ahmed, 4, and daughter Tasnim Ahmed Mahi, 8, in West Ukilpara area of Feni.

Police said the mother committed suicide by taking poison after strangulating her children with phone cable and towel over a family feud.

On February 29 last year, Nusrat Aman Aroni, 14, and her brother Alvi Aman, 6, were found unconscious in their apartment in Dhaka's Banasree. They were declared dead by doctors.

Their mother Mahfuza Malek Jasmine later confessed that she killed her children, having been disappointed by their school examination results. The case is now under trial at the Metropolitan Magistrate's Court.

According to the UGC documents prepared on December 29 last year, 42 private universities have no vice chancellor, and are run by acting VCs. The applications for appointing VCs to eight of those are pending with the education ministry.

Seventy-two of the universities have no pro-VC and 52 have no treasurer. Two applications for appointing pro-VCs and four for appointing treasurers are pending with the education ministry, show the documents.

Besides, a number of universities are yet to move to their own campuses, a basic condition stipulated in the Private University Act 2010.

The act makes it compulsory for a private university to have a permanent campus within five years of launching.

The government has so far extended the deadline four times for the private universities for moving to their own campuses.

With the latest deadline to end on January 31, only 12 of the 52 universities operating for seven years have moved to their own campuses, shows another UGC report sent to the ministry last month.

Ten private universities are operating academic activities partially on their own campuses, it said.

UGC officials said some of the universities don't have enough qualified teachers and properly equipped laboratories and libraries.

Nahid said, "We have been putting pressure on them [private universities] so that they meet all the conditions. Now many of them are operating in compliance with the law."

Noted educationist Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam said whenever a government assumes office, people loyal to it get approval for setting up private universities.

"I believe the initiators of these [proposed] universities are close to the party in power."

Most of those, who seek permission for establishing private universities, have taken such initiatives not for meeting "the educational need" only, they also have "a business motive", said Prof Manzoorul.

The government should conduct a survey on what types of universities the country needs right now, and give approval on the basis of this, he mentioned.

"I think the government should put more emphasis on improving the standard of education in the existing private universities before giving approval to new ones."

MP LITON MURDER

## Rab detains 'two key suspects'

STAR REPORT

Rab yesterday detained two men, one of whom according to the force is the "prime suspect" in the killing case of Gaibandha Awami League lawmaker Manzurul Islam Liton.

Tipped-off, a team of the Rapid Action Battalion picked them up from the roadside in the capital's Badda on Wednesday night, Lt Col Tuhin Mohammad Masud, commanding officer of Rab-1, told The Daily Star.

The alleged prime suspect, Ashraful Islam is the son of Sundarganj Upazila unit Jamaat ameer Yunus Ali. The other detainee is his cousin Jahirul Islam.

They will be handed over to Gaibandha police who are investigating the murder case.

The detainees did not admit to Rab to their involvement in the murder. To extract information from them, the law-enforcement agency will interrogate them on remand, if granted, the

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## Biswa Ijtema

FROM PAGE 1

Ijtema in four phases in two years, devotees of 32 districts performed their Ijtema that year in two phases, and the rest 32 will take part in two phases this year.

Devotees taking part in this year's first phase are from Dhaka, Tangail, Mymensingh, Joypurhat, Manikganj, Rangpur, Chapainawabganj, Brahmanbaria, Gazipur, Gopalganj, Shariatpur, Satkhira, Jessore, Bandarban, Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Moulvibazar.

Tablighi Jamaat has been organising the Biswa Ijtema, also called the World Muslims' Congregation, every year since 1946. In 2011, the Tablighi Jamaat authorities split the Ijtema into two phases, dividing 64 districts to reduce the pressure at the venue and ensure better management and security.

Engineer Gias Uddin, a Murobbi (an Ijtema organiser), said they were expecting that over 25,000 foreign devotees from 80 countries would attend the Ijtema, the second largest congregation of the Muslims after the Hajj.

Col Anwar Latif Khan, additional director general (operations) of the Rapid Action Battalion, said they took adequate security measures after assessing the overall law and order. "There is no threat regarding this year's Ijtema."

Superintendent of Police in Gazipur Harun Or Rashid said nine watchtowers of Rab and five watchtowers of police had been set up to ensure security of the devotees.

He said they were ready to tackle any kind of untoward situation.

Harun said around 12,000 members of the law enforcement agencies would be deployed at the Ijtema ground in the two phases for the devotees' security.

There are 8,106 concrete toilets, concrete bathrooms and houses with concrete walls and corrugated iron sheet roofs for the devotees at the venue.

Prof Abul Kalam Azad, a Murobbi, who is involved in preparing the Ijtema venue, said they had prepared separate rooms for foreign devotees at the northwestern side of the Ijtema ground.

An engineer of Gazipur City Corporation (Tongi zone) under said every day around three crore litres of water would be pumped out of tube wells set up at the venue.

He said they took all kinds of preparations to ensure supply of electricity round the clock.

Fire service and civil defence had also set up a control room to ensure fire safety.

Ali Haider Khan, civil surgeon of Gazipur, said they set up six makeshift medical camps to provide free treatment to the devotees. They also prepared a list of specialist doctors and medical officers who will be on duty at the Ijtema ground.

DEVOTEE DIES

Fazul Haque, 56, a devotee from Nandail of Mymensingh, died of cardiac arrest yesterday morning.

VEHICLE PARKING SPOTS

In a press release on Wednesday, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police asked the devotees to park their vehicles at their designated spots.

Devotees from Chittagong division will have to park their vehicles on Gausul Azam Avenue, Dhaka division at Sonargaon crossing to Diabari Khal Par, Sylhet division on Sha Makhdam Avenue of Uttara Sector-12, Khulna division at open spaces of Uttara Sector-16 and-18, Rangpur division at Katarpara-Truck Stand and Uttara Sector-10, Rajshahi and Mymensingh divisions at Protasha Housing, Barisal division at the park adjacent to Dhaour bridge and BIWTA landing station, and devotees from the Dhaka metropolitan area will have to park their vehicles at open spaces on Shahjal Avenue in Uttara and Nikunja-1 and-2.