



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina along with high-ranked police officials at Prime Minister's Office yesterday. This year, the six-day police week is being observed from February 27 to March 3. PHOTO: PTD

Be prepared to tackle new crimes: PM

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said new crimes are emerging with the advent of advanced technology, and she asked police personnel to take necessary preparations to thwart those.

"As the technology advances, new types of crime are emerging. So, our police force should be prepared to deal with them properly," she said while addressing the police officers of higher ranks at PMO.

The premier said her government is very careful about the capability of police and has a close eye on the issue.

"Because, if the system of dealing with the crime doesn't work, then it [the offence] can't be controlled properly," she added.

She called the police a friend of the people, and said nowadays people are not afraid of police and instead keep confidence in the law enforcement agency.

"Now they [police] have regained trust of people. The countrymen consider the police as their friend... Police have earned this trust and confidence through their works."

She said, "In any workplace, you [police] should always consider the countrymen, whether they are women, men or children, as near and dear ones and serve them."

19 died in prison custody in February

Rights situation as alarming as ever, says MSF report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Deaths in prison custody continue to occur as at least 19 people died in the month of February, according to rights organisation Manabdhikar Shongskriti Foundation (MSF).

Of the 19, nine were inmates and 10 were in custody.

The number of deaths in prison custody was the same in January.

In a report released yesterday, signed by MSF founder Sultana Kamal, the rights body said apart from improving the medical system in prisons, such incidents can be controlled if the causes of death in custody are properly investigated and those responsible are brought to justice.

MSF said the rights situation in the country was as alarming as ever in February. Casualties in

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'Lured, duped and harassed'

Four youths complain against unlicensed Probashi Sheba Limited

MD ABBAS

Md Abdur Rasel, a medical representative at Reneta Limited, left his job after being lured to go to Portugal by an agent of Probashi Sheba Limited, a consulting firm based in Dhaka's Gulshan.

"The agent told me I could earn at least Tk 85,000 monthly excluding food costs, by working at a restaurant in Portugal. So I left my job and used the amount from my provident fund," Rasel said.

Sanaul Islam, who was also lured by the firm's agent to go to Europe, had to sell his land and borrow money from relatives.

Despite not having a licence to operate as a recruiting agency, Probashi Sheba Limited had made deals with four persons, including Rasel and Sanaul, for Tk 3.10 lakh each, luring them to go to Europe.

It also provided them with block booking appointments at the Portugal Embassy in New Delhi for visas, using sniping bots and fake details under the name of VFS Global Limited, a visa processing agency.

It was only after travelling to New Delhi to submit their visa application that the four came to realise that they were duped.

The victims were supposed to submit visa applications with help of the firm's agents. However, upon reaching New Delhi, they did not find any agent.

"They had merely provided us with fake visa appointments and deceived us in various ways," said Sanaul.

After returning to Dhaka, one of the victims lodged a complaint with Gulshan Police Station. The firm later agreed to return Tk 1.50 lakh to each of them. It has, however, been dilly-dallying with conditions for returning their money since then.

Gaurav Pilley, a senior executive at VFS Global's customer care, in an email response to The Daily Star, said through numerous investigations they became aware

that Probashi Sheba Limited was block-booking appointments using sniping bots and fake details to sell free visa appointments.

The organisation also claims to be linked to VFS Global to appear more trustworthy, he also said, adding that VFS Global is working on ways to stop them from making block-booking appointments.

"Instead of returning our money, now they are subjecting us to harassment and threats as we seek reimbursement as per the deed," Sanaul said.

Contacted, SM Rezaul, business development specialist at Probashi

by any international organisation."

When asked about the fake appointments for visas, and imposing conditions on the victims - including withdrawal of a news report published in a Bangla daily - to get their money refunded, he could not provide any satisfactory answer and asked this correspondent to visit his office.

"I have heard about Probashi Sheba Limited for the first time. It is not on the list of BPO (business process outsourcing) companies," said Towhid Hossain, general secretary of BPO Business



Despite not having a license to operate as a recruiting agency, Probashi Sheba Limited had made deals with four persons, including Rasel and Sanaul, for Tk 3.10 lakh each, luring them to go to Europe.

Sheba Limited, said they provide consultancy to people wishing to go abroad according to their needs and qualifications and provide services through contracted organisations if they need assistance to complete the process.

When asked if it is legal to sign a deed in exchange for money to facilitate someone's travel without being a licensed recruiting agency, Rezaul said, "A recruiting agency is not required for white-collar or skilled jobs. We can assist people in reaching specific destinations by facilitating visa applications and obtaining visas along with offer letters if the candidate is selected through a direct interview

Operators' Society. Tipu Sultan, joint secretary-general of the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies, said, "People cannot trust real recruiting agencies for fraudulent entities like Probashi Sheba Limited. Action should be taken against such companies for deceiving people."

"A BPO company has no legal way to sign a deed with people to take them aboard in exchange for money. Only an international recruiting agency can do it," said Zohora Monsor, deputy director at the Bureau of Manpower and Employment Training.

222 women, girls faced violence last month

Says Mahila Parishad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 222 girls and women suffered various forms of violence in February, according to Bangladesh Mahila Parishad's monthly media monitoring report.

The report, titled "Statistics of Violence against Women and Girl Child: February 2024", was based on reports published in 13 daily newspapers.

The statistics shows 42 women, including 26 girls, endured sexual assault, while five girls narrowly escaped rape attempts.

Eleven victims, including three girls, fell prey to gang rape, and, one woman lost her life after an incident of rape.

Additionally, 16 females, comprising 11 girls, faced sexual assault, and four girls encountered sexual harassment.

Two women suffered acid attacks, and two others succumbed to burn injuries.

Four women were tortured in dowry-related incidents, resulting in one fatality.

Seven women faced physical violence, and three domestic helpers, two fatally, endured torture.

Forty-five females, including 12 girls, were murdered for various reasons, and three narrowly escaped murder attempts.

Seventeen females, including five girls, died by suicide, with two girls attempting it. Thirteen females, including four children, died under mysterious circumstances.

Additionally, seven females were abducted, and four encountered cyber violence.

One hospital bed for every 990 people in country

Health minister tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There is only one hospital bed against every 990 people in the country, Health Minister Samanta Lal Sen told parliament yesterday.

"According to the Health Bulletin of 2022, there are total 1,71,675 beds in hospitals across the country, including 71,660 beds in public hospitals and 99,975 in private ones," he said.

"As per the figures, there is one bed against every 990 people in the country," he added.

Public hospitals are in a sorry state with only 0.0211 beds for every 50 people, the minister said in reply to a query of independent lawmaker ABM Anisuzzaman from Mymensingh-7.

The minister said the government has a plan

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IN JAIL BEYOND SENTENCE Send 157 foreigners back home: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the government to send 157 foreign citizens, who have been languishing in prisons of Bangladesh even after expiry of their jail sentences, back to their own countries.

The foreign affairs secretary, home affairs secretary and inspector general of prisons have been ordered to comply with the directive.

The HC also set May 28 for passing further order on the issue, petitioner lawyer Bivuti Tarofder told The Daily Star.

The HC bench of Justice Naima Haider and Justice Kazi Zinat Hoque delivered the verdict after going through a report on the detainees, which was submitted by the office of the inspector general of prisons on January 21.

Of the detained foreign nationals, 150 are from India, five from Myanmar, and one each from Pakistan and Nepal, the report said.

According to the report, Md Sajjad Hossain, a 45-year-old resident of Tripura, India, finds himself in a Bangladesh prison for nearly two decades, despite completing his initial jail sentence.

On November 6, 2003, the First-Class Magistrate of Cognizance Court in Khagrachhari sentenced Sajjad to six months' imprisonment and fined him Tk 500 in a case filed under the Bangladesh Control of Entry Act, 1952.

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Address poor nutrition among CHT children Speakers urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday called upon the government for more initiatives to address the poor nutritional status among children in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

Despite Bangladesh's overall progress, focused efforts are needed to improve the nutritional status of children and communities in the CHT region, they observed.

They called for multi-sectoral initiatives engaging the local administration, communities and experts to this end.

The roundtable titled "Advancing nutrition commitments for Chittagong Hill Tracts", jointly organised by Right to Food Bangladesh and Leadership to Ensure Adequate Nutrition at Cirdap in Dhaka, was participated by rights activists and indigenous leaders, among others.

Presenting the keynote, Ruhul Amin Talukder,

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Speedy Trial Act set to become permanent law

Bill placed in House amid criticism from opposition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The much-debated Speedy Trial Act was placed in parliament yesterday in a bid to make it a permanent legislation.

Law Minister Anisul Huq placed the bill in the House on behalf of Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan as he was not present.

Opposition Chief Whip and Jatiyo Party MP Mujibul Haque Chhunu opposed the placing of the bill. He reminded the ruling party that back in 2002, when BNP passed this law, Awami League and all other political parties had criticised it.

He also questioned the effectiveness of the law, pointing out that despite its name suggesting "speedy trial," only a few cases are actually being disposed of within the specified time-frame in court.

Chhunu also feared that the law would be used to harass people or opponents.

"You (Awami League) are in power today, if someone else comes in power tomorrow, you will be harassed by this law too," Chhunu said.

If necessary, extend the term for one or two years, he said, adding that people will suffer if the law is made permanent.

In response, the law minister defended the move.

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Speakers at a roundtable on "Economic and Social Impact of Digital Financial Inclusion" yesterday. The discussion was jointly organised by The Daily Star and the Policy Research Institute at The Daily Star Centre in the capital. PHOTO: STAR



Fazr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 5-15	12-30	4-30	6-05	7-30
JAMAAT 5-50	1-15	4-45	6-10	8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION