

The Daily Star

Committed to PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO KNOW

Vol. 5 Num 1141

Tue. August 14, 2007

Front Page

Impossible task of crime investigation

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An investigation officer (IO) of a case gets a little over Tk 3 a day as conveyance although he has to travel to many places for investigation purposes besides regular duties; the IO also gets Tk 10 a day as the cost of three meals for an accused in police custody.

An investigator who has a government motorcycle gets around 1.7 litres of fuel a day--50 litres a month, but one who has his personal motorbike gets only Tk 127 a month as motorcycle allowance.

IOs who do not have government or personal motorbike get only Tk 100 a month as conveyance allowance which is slightly over Tk 3 a day.

Most IOs who happen to be sub-inspectors (SIs) of police do not have any motorcycle. Police officials said there are around 700 government motorcycles against 11, 211 SIs in the force.

Many SIs said they often simply discard the thought of withdrawing the money they spend for the meals of an accused in custody since it even takes two years to get the money "less than the alms of a beggar". They said they often have to undergo such ordeal to get other bills like the conveyance for visiting the previous work place for giving deposition as a witness in cases he had investigated.

"Because of long procedure it costs Tk 20 to withdraw Tk 10 from the fund of the district magistrates concerned," said an investigator, adding that one has to visit the district magistrate's office several times and appease the staff to get the bill.

Talking to The Daily Star, many SIs alleged that most often the money allocated against such bills is less than half the actual cost--so, many of them refrain from submitting any bill at all.

"I once withdrew a bill of Tk 1,300 in my 14 years of service," said an SI of Tejgaon Police Station.

The money the IOs do not claim is spent in other sectors of the department, sources said.

But, this has led to bribery in the police force, said the policemen.

Two SIs said an investigator has to visit frequently the places of

INVESTIGATOR'S DISINCENTIVE

Fuel cost: Tk 28/month

Meal cost: Tk 10/day (for accused in custody)

**No allocation for medical test on repressed women, children

occurrence, interview witnesses, arrange repeated drives for the arrest of suspects, visit the court for hearing of cases and laboratories for forensic test of seized items, and take accident victims to hospitals.

All these cost an IO a huge amount of money but they get almost no allocation.

Moreover, an IO has to make at least four copies of each case investigation report, each containing 30 pages on an average, to submit those to higher officials concerned before submitting them to the court.

An SI at a city police station always has on an average 15 cases in his hand to investigate besides his regular duty of around 12 hours every day almost round the year often without leave even on occasions like Eid or other festivals.

An officer-in-charge (OC) of a city police station said, wishing anonymity, that a fund has now been provided to the police stations for the last one year for buying stationeries and furniture, but that is not sufficient at all to meet the expenditure of a police station.

"The entire cost for an investigation goes from our own pocket. If I do not take bribe, how will I bear the expenditure?" an SI of Tejgaon PS said. Referring to the cost they have to bear for the food of an accused, he said, "Will any restaurant serve food for the accused today and take the payment after a year?"

Besides, policemen investigating cases of repression of women and children often need ultrasonogram of the victims and the IO concerned has to bear the expenses since the victims are poor, police officials said. But most district government hospitals do not have the facility, so, the tests have to be done elsewhere which cost even more.

This has led the police towards taking bribes from both the accused and the complainants and submitting investigation reports favouring those who pay the higher amount, said police officials.

Another SI of Mirpur PS told The Daily Star, "We have to collect money in forbidden ways to meet the expenses of investigation or submit flimsy investigation reports prepared without duly visiting the places of occurrence and without interviewing sufficient witnesses."

Police officials said the rate of conviction in cases is only eight to 10 percent now and the reason behind this low rate is flawed investigation reports.

The offenders thus get away with their crimes and this encourages them towards further criminal activities, police officials said.

"After joining the force many of us wanted to remain honest, but the situation has compelled us to take bribes," said another investigator. "It is as if I have committed a sin by choosing to serve the police as an SI. I cannot quit the job because my family depends on my income," he added.

The police headquarters have recently calculated sector-wise expenditures for the investigation of different cases and submitted a proposal to the home ministry for allocating a certain amount of fund for this purpose.

The proposal projected investigation costs of a murder case at Tk 13,000, robbery at Tk 8,000 - 10,000, repression of women and children at Tk 6,000, different law and order related cases at Tk 4,000 and others at Tk 1,500.

The police proposal has urged the government to allocate a budget of Tk 31.84 crore for investigations of cases.

"If the government allocates Tk 200 crore a year for the police, the whole picture can be changed," Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police Naeem Ahmed told The Daily Star. He said the money will be spent for increasing the salaries of policemen and meeting other costs like investigation of cases.

According to the police headquarters, the number of cases recorded at all police stations across the country in 2006 was 1,30,578; in 2005, it was 1,23,033 and in 2004, it was 1,19,322.

Most cases are, however, filed for petty offences and the IOs hardly investigate small incidents properly because of fund crisis. Due to the negligence many cases do not even survive long after being put into court for trial.