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Star City

Cops undergo reform with revamp of crime scene investigation

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City's police stations are going to experience a significant change as the police force is undergoing heavy reform under a \$16 million project, funded by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).



A foreign expert gives training on crime scene investigation to constables and sub-inspectors of Dhanmondi police station at Dhanmondi Club ground.

Courtesy: UNDP

Under the Police Reform

Programme (PRP), crime scene investigation (CSI) will be given high emphasis and the forensic department will be overhauled. Officials are hoping that the training of investigators on CSI will change the whole look of the crime investigation process.

Two model police stations -- Dhanmondi and Uttara -- in the city will be provided with CSI kits for collecting skin, blood, hair or any other body parts from the crime scene for DNA test. Sub-inspectors (SIs) who generally work as investigating officers will be given training on how to use the kit.

NBK Tripura, additional inspector general of police and national project director of PRP, said that they are going to put greater emphasis on physical evidence rather than on oral evidence during an investigation. "If DNA can be included as evidence then oral evidence will be secondary," said Tripura.

"We have started the basic training of SIs or IOs on how to operate the CSI kit. Forensic training will start after we have all the kits at hand," he said. "This new project has generated much interest among the police force and is about to bring some revolutionary change in the investigation process."

The officers will be trained on enclosing crime scene with yellow tape, collecting fingerprints, skin, blood or hair to have DNA samples. But to establish DNA as a means to prove someone guilty or innocent in court the Evidence Act will need to be amended, Tripura said.

"We are working towards this goal so that we can include DNA as a means to prove someone guilty or innocent," said Farid Ahmed, public relations officer, PRP.

When a crime takes place police often arrest several suspects from the crime scene among whom one may be the criminal. But police allegedly take all the suspects to the custody where they beat up many of them during interrogation, which is a violation of human rights.

"My son along with some other young boys were arrested as a suspect when a murder took place in our neighbourhood. He was beaten up in the custody but was later proved innocent," said a mother of a victim, seeking anonymity.

The officials hope that introduction of DNA test will eliminate the aforesaid practice during interrogation. "We are hoping that the attitude of beating up will be eliminated, as there will be no need to do that. That should end this age-old habit among the police force," said Ahmed.

CSI kits will be provided to 17 police stations across the country, including two in Dhaka. The training on CSI will start after all 17 kits are available. An initial training on CSI has been given to 98 police personnel of two model police stations.

Some 200 constables and sub-inspectors were trained on law enforcement and implementation, human rights and investigations so far.

In 2003, the government of Bangladesh thought of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the police force by addressing areas like crime prevention, investigation, prosecution, strategic planning and IT. At the same time UNDP approached the government with PRP.

UNDP did a basic analysis on what are needed to improve the image of police among cross-section of people and then started working on PRP.

Officials will be sent to Australian Institute of Police Management, Canadian Police College, Police Staff College, Bramshill, UK and Cambridge, UK for training.

Three model police stations are at work now and three more will be inaugurated by August 2007. A total of 66 police officials of the stations were trained in IT related jobs.

Problems that was addressed during the training programme were lack of managerial competence, training and resources, low motivation due to low pay scale, poor working condition, limited promotion prospects, less participation of women, more focus on protocol, inadequate strategy planning, people's lack of trust on police and police personnel's lack of sensitivity on the plight of victims.

The officials are expecting that if PRP can be implemented properly it would make police independent from political influence, enhance crime prevention through community awareness

PRP can build a good public image of police, train them in victim support, and make them more responsive to women, children and vulnerable people. Transparency and merit were given importance in PRP in police recruitment and promotion process.

