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External interference obstructs police performance: Public Attitude Baseline Survey

DHAKA: A baseline survey on people's perception on Bangladesh Police conducted by the Police Reform Programme (PRP) of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) revealed today that police performances are obstructed by outside interference, influence or pressure, including political and social pressure and interference.

More than 6,000 respondents were included in the public attitude baseline survey which comprises of households, police personnel and other professional groups like lawyers, teachers, doctors, business persons, women leaders/professionals, elected local representatives, civil society, youth and media representatives. Majority of the respondents at households (72-77%) and the police (72-75%) opined that external influence obstructs the performance of police. Around 50-71% police considers hoodlums, fear of transfer, political leaders/cadres, local pressure groups, fear of being implicated in cases, and pressure groups like doctor, lawyer, trade union, leader of trade union as most frequent or frequent sources of influence or pressures on them.

"The respondents of the survey from households, former lawmakers as well as the community representatives advocated for stopping use of police for political purposes. This is an issue of critical importance and needs to be handled positively and with due sensitivity," states the baseline survey.

The Police Reform Programme (PRP) undertook this survey to analyze the present situation of Bangladesh Police so that a comparative analysis can be conducted over time to measure the degree of change, assess intended benefits and ensure that the programme is meeting its goals and objectives. The baseline survey was conducted during May to December 2006 in 11 model police stations (to be established under PRP) in 7 districts and 2 metropolitan units and in 2 other randomly selected areas for the purpose of comparative analysis. Qualitative and quantitative investigations, household level interpersonal interviews from poor, low economic class, middle and rich classes were taken for the survey.

"The Police Reform Programme intends to enhance the capacity of Bangladesh Police and key stakeholders to contribute in a collaborative manner to the creation of a safer and more secure environment based on respect for human rights, equitable access to justice and rule of law in accordance with a multi-party democracy," UNDP Country Director, Mr. Manoj Basnyat, said.



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The overwhelming majority of the respondents (82-83%) have mentioned that people most frequently report to police when the crime committed is a life-threatening one. Crimes which induce people to report to police frequently are physical tortures (63%); property related crimes (57-63%); and Honor related issues / defamation case (29-53%).

92-96% respondents of police and 91-92% respondents at households supported recruitment of women in the police services. Majority of both the police and the respondents at households expressed satisfaction with the services of the women police.

More than seventy percent of the respondents at households perceived that the police are overworked. Hundred percent of the respondents at the households perceived that the police remain busy in controlling political activities like hartals and agitations.

Almost universally (98-100%) the police respondents recommended introduction of targets for police functions and code of ethics for the police. They suggested that the code of ethics should incorporate the following elements: honesty, integrity, neutrality, respect and care, respect age, cultural, religious and gender diversity, policing by consent, equity of concerns for rich and poor, equity of concerns for men and women, depth/strong patriotism and professionalism.

In 2005, the Government of Bangladesh, UNDP and the Department for International Development (DFID) launched the first phase of the Police Reform Programme that aims at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Bangladesh Police by supporting key areas of access to justice; including investigations, police operations and prosecutions; human resource management and training; and strategic capacity and oversight. The programme is being implemented by the Ministry of Home Affairs and Bangladesh Police. The European Commission is also a major partner in the programme.

The overall purpose of the Police Reform Programme is to develop a safer and more secure environment based on respect for human rights and equitable access to justice through police reform, transforming it from a colonial government order model to a public service, which is responsive to all of the Bangladesh population including the poor, vulnerable, women, and children.

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