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Cops hardly corrupt

Finds DU study mostly funded by police

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a drum-beating move, the police department funded a survey by some Dhaka University teachers and students that showed a huge majority of city residents were "satisfied" with the services of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP).

Made public yesterday, the report draws a sharp contrast with another recent survey by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), which had found the police, along with political parties, as the country's most corrupt public service institution.

The study, Public Satisfaction with Current Policing Practice, was conducted by the DU's Criminology and Criminal Justice Programme at the sociology department.

In the survey, 81 percent of an altogether 617 respondents expressed satisfaction with the services provided by the 46 police stations in the DMP area, while 54

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percent said they received services without paying speed money.

Principal investigator of the study Prof Al Mahbub Uddin Ahmed, also the director of the programme, unveiled the study report at a function at the DU.

Nabab Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban.

The study, said a DMP official, was carried out to evaluate police performance and assess its image with people.

Experts, however, said any organisation can evaluate its performance by conducting a survey for its own purpose. But it would merely be a self-promotion vehicle for the organisation if the survey outcome is published in the media.

Talking to The Daily Star, TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said any organisation can sponsor independent bodies for conducting a survey or research on its activities so

that it can adopt strategies based on the findings of the survey to improve its performance.

But in the survey on DMP, there might be a conflict of interest as the DMP chief is a guest teacher at the sociology department of DU, he noted.

The DU study disclosed that 49.9 percent of the respondents found police manner good, while 31.1 percent rated it moderate.

Only 19 percent of the respondents termed police manner rough or bad.

Besides, 45.5 percent service seekers paid speed money to cops while receiving services. Of them, 16.5 percent paid the money willingly, mentioned the survey.

Surprised at the survey outcome, TIB boss Iftekharuzzaman wondered if the study was conducted to cover up the existing problems in the police department and redeem its image crisis.

Funded mainly by police, the survey was conducted between May 24 and November 4 last year on the respondents, who received services at any of the 46 police stations in the DMP area, said Mujib Ahmad Patwary, associate researcher of the DU study.

Two teachers and 13 students of the sociology department surveyed city residents, concealing their identities, he told The Daily Star.

Asked whether it was justified to receive financial support from an organisation for which the survey was conducted, Mujib said, "It doesn't matter who pays for the study as we followed our own methodology for the survey."

TIB, MEDIA FOUND AT 'FAULT'

Speaking at the programme as the chief guest, Home Minister Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir said to check corruption in different sectors, emphasis should be laid

first in fighting corruption at the state level as such corruption supports graft elsewhere.

For example, he mentioned, the last caretaker government had assumed power for only three months, but continued illegally for two years.

Inspector General of Police Hassan Mahmood Khandker said the nature of the government is reflected in police activities. If the government is democratic and pro-people, its police force cannot be tyrannical and repressive as police have to carry out the government's instructions, he added.

DMP Commissioner Benazir Ahmed, who is a guest teacher at the DU department, criticised the TIB's recent report saying that the anti-graft watchdog had prepared the report in a "flawed" system based on media reports.

The media often publish "misleading" photographs

of police, he complained. For example, he cited the photographs of policemen taking bribes from truck drivers on highways. He claimed that police on highways have to stretch their hands to the truck drivers to receive documents from them.

"If the police personnel were corrupt, they would have been the owners of every building in the capital," argued Benazir.

DU Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique attended the programme, among others, as special guest.

Revealing its biannual study on July 9, the TIB said 93 percent of the respondents of its survey found police and political parties as the most corrupt public service institutions in Bangladesh.

The anti-graft watchdog had surveyed 1,822 Bangladeshis between February 10 and March 15 last year.