

A Correspondent Khulna: Despite having all facilities, the Victim Support Centre (VSC) of police in Khulna can hardly come to the use of those for whom it is meant; mainly due to people does ignorance of such a centre exist. Set up in October, 2013 on the premises of Sonadanga Model Police Station in the city, the victim support centre of the division has provided services to highest 23 victims in the last one year, a number which is not worth mentioning. Bangladesh police established the victim support centers in a bid to give legal aid to the women and children subjected to repression and torture both at family and social levels and rehabilitate them with the help of non-government organizations in the remote areas. The authorities concerned said most of the people have no idea about the victim support centre which gives the victims of repression and torture living facilities and foods and provides them with health services and legal assistance free of cost. Khulna Metropolitan Police sources said one victim support centre was established in each of the seven divisions of the country in 2011 under the Police Reforms Project. The Victim Support Centre in Khulna started functioning on October 7, 2013. The victim support centre here was set up with the joint financial assistance of the government, UNDP, DFID and European Commission. Actually, the centre operates to provide support to the women and children, who have fallen victim to torture, living facilities, legal and health services and so on. Besides, it also works to rehabilitate the victims through counseling with the help of different private organizations. There are nine beds in the centre. Female victims, children and boys under eight are entitled to get services in the centers. During a recent visit, this correspondent found the centre virtually vacant for the last one month as no victim turned up here to receive support. As per the centre log, five victims had come here to receive services in 2013 while 11 in the current year. Nine police personnel, including seven female, are performing their duties round the clock. Besides, ten NGOs are providing health services, legal assistance, counseling and rehabilitation to the victims here. These are Ain-o-Salish Kendra, Association for Community Development, Association for Correction and Social Reclamation, Aparajeya Bangladesh, Acid Survivors Foundation, Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, Bangladesh Mohila Parishad, Dhaka Ahsania Mission and Marie Stopes Clinics. Representatives of some supporting NGOs said the victim support centre has been set up to introduce friendly- policing environment. It was recommended to give the well-mannered police members posting here so that they deal with the cases of the affected from humanitarian view. Talking about the low turnout of support seeking people here, the NGO representatives blamed harassment of the victims by the policemen in different ways. They informed that the victims have to come here for service via police; so they have a fear of being further harassed. They also demanded introducing a fixed rule to ensure the victims' direct entry into the centre. Mohammad Asaduzzaman, a police constable, said besides living and lodging facilities, the centre has enough arrangement for the inmates' entertainment. Apart from these, some paraphernalia, including IPS, solar panel and automated water filter are available here for the victims. Assistant commissioner of KMP Sonadanga zone and also in-charge of the victim support centre Molla Azad Hossain said they have distributed leaflets to publicize the victim support centre. Besides, letters regarding the matter have been sent to the officer-in-charges of 45 police stations in Khulna division.