

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



1,355
New cases in 24hrs



4,90,533
Total cases



7,052
Deaths



4,20,896
Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE



1,615,189
Deaths



72,313,792
Total cases

Govt preparing to send kids back to school

Says PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government was taking preparations so that children could return to their educational institutions and resume their academic activities normally.

"We hope that good day will come in the future [when] our children will be able to go [back] to their schools [and] carry on their studies normally. We're preparing to that end," she said.

The prime minister said this while speaking virtually at the Graduation Ceremony of National Defence Course-2020 and Armed Forces War Course-2020 at National Defence College at Sheikh Hasina Complex DSCSC in Mirpur Cantonment from her official residence Gono Bhaban.

She said that the government cannot reopen schools because of the existing Covid-19 situation and noted that classes have been continuing through online and television.

In March, shortly after the country reported its first Covid-19 cases, the government shut down educational institutions to protect the students and prevent transmission of the virus.

The closure was extended several times till Dec 19.

"It creates psychological pressure on the children if they cannot go to their schools," Sheikh Hasina said, noting that the second wave of Covid-19 hit when the government was preparing to reopen educational institutions.

There has been no word on whether the government will reopen educational institutions this year or



extend their closure.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been warning of a second Covid-19 wave and urging people to properly follow health guidelines to avoid getting infected. The government is running awareness campaigns and strictly

implementing "no mask, no service" policy.

National Defence College commandant Lt Gen Ataul Hakim Sarwar Hasan also spoke at the programme.

'BE READY TO DEFEND SOVEREIGNTY'

The prime minister reiterated her firm stance to remain on the side of peace, saying that Bangladesh believes in peace and wants peace. She also put emphasis on being prepared all the time to hit back if the country's sovereignty is threatened.

"We don't want war, we want peace [but] if anyone comes to hit on our sovereignty, we must need to attain the capability to hit back. We need to undergo training and take preparations for that. All members of our Armed Forces need to remember this all the time," she said.

In this connection, she said that more than 1 million Myanmar citizens took shelter in Bangladesh and Bangladesh never went for confrontation with them.

"We're in discussions to resolve the matter," she said.

Sheikh Hasina also said that in the world arena Bangladesh urged everyone to solve the crisis quickly as these Myanmar citizens are a huge

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PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

A flag-seller walks the streets of Gulshan-2 in the capital carrying Bangladesh flags of different sizes, hoping to capitalise on the patriotic fervour that takes hold in the month of victory. The photo was taken yesterday.

Blueprint of evil

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journalists, doctors and artists -- towards the end of the war when Pakistan forces sensed imminent defeat.

So brutal were the killings that many of the bodies were found mutilated beyond recognition at different killing fields.

The perspective behind formation of Al-Badr and its detailed mechanism, targets and activities to exterminate the pro-liberation forces, who they termed "enemies" and "miscreants", is evident in some war-time documents retrieved by a journalist days after Independence.

In these updated and unsigned documents, purportedly classified, Mojaheed insisted that only tested workers of ICS be recruited in Al-Badr. Then acting president of the ICS in East Pakistan, he preferred to call the organisation "Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba Pakistan".

Mojaheed proposed that the force would help the Pakistan army operations in picking up and interrogating the "miscreants" and build up an intelligence network against them.

He suggested placing the Al-Badr above the ranks of Razakars and Mujahids, two other auxiliary forces of the Pakistan army.

"Over and above the Razakars and Mujahids, a new batch of volunteers can be organised mostly consisting of students. Of course, intelligent and honest youths from the non-students may also be placed under them provided they are ready to be under the unified command," the document stated.

After Independence, Mojaheed went into hiding and resurfaced after the political changeover in the country with the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. In time, his political clout would grow, and he would become a minister of the BNP-Jamaat government.

The legacy of ICS would continue through Islami Chhatra Shibir, the student wing of Jamaat in Bangladesh. In 2013, the International Crimes Tribunal convicted Mojaheed for his role in crimes against humanity, including the mass extermination of intellectuals. He was executed two years later.

War-time journalist Ahmed Shafi Uddin recovered the cyclostyled copy of Mojaheed's proposal along with a letter of Pakistan's martial law administration from an abandoned headquarters of Al-Badr's sub-divisional unit in Rajshahi.

The proposal begins with description of ICS' allegiance for Pakistan and its army, according to the documents, copies of which have been obtained by this newspaper.

On the other hand, the martial law administration's letter, labelled "secret", outlined the formation of Al-Badr and its goals like assisting the government/army and forming commando type of bands for carrying out sabotage activities.

THE PROPOSAL

It was a two-page letter where Mojaheed addressed the deputy sub martial law administrator with the subject titled "Razakar, Al Badr wing". The proposal carried his name at its end.

He suggested preparing the force as strong and bold that it does not even

spare their closest relatives if they stand against Pakistan's integrity and for Bangladesh's freedom.

"On the one hand we are not ready to spare even our nearest relative if he is an active enemy to the integrity and solidarity of the nation and on the other hand we do not like to disturb the peace loving as well as innocent fraction of the mass rather we like to create confidence in them and dispel all sorts of misunderstandings that have been imposed on them."

Mojaheed in his letter mentioned ICS students were facing troubles in adjusting with non-student Razakars and Mujahids.

"... our practical observation is that in many places some selfish and opportune seeking fellows have crept into the Razakars who have become a great problem for our honest and bold activities.

"Nevertheless, we are ready to work unitedly with any Pakistani, but we feel victimised if someone gets into such an organisation with motives other than that helping the nation."

He wrote that the "problems" were placed to the Deputy Martial Law Administrator of Zone B.

Under the martial law administration, Pakistan was divided into two zones -- West Pakistan being the Zone A and the East Pakistan Zone B. Pakistani General Tikka Khan headed the Zone B.

Mojaheed explained why the ICS workers should be enrolled as Al-Badr men, saying it was the only organisation that maintained its separate identity as an all Pakistan based student body and no inter party clash would occur in the proposed outfit.

"We are not working for any political motive or party interest; rather we like to utilise our full strength in the best possible manner in meeting 'the national crisis'."

The letter pointed out that the deputy martial law administrator of Zone B had considered the proposals and ICS was instructed to organise Al-Badr throughout the East Pakistan province with "immediate effect".

PRINCIPLES AND PROGRAMMES

Mojaheed's letter described the principles of the force -- the first one was to recruit only tested activists who worked for the integrity of Pakistan.

It said Al-Badr will have three groups -- "One will try to restore confidence among the public. The second one will work as an intelligence branch, whereas the third will have armed training and work as a fighting group."

The force will chalk out its own plan and programme and obtain approval from the local army officers before execution, said the letter.

Mojaheed in the letter proposed the force's several activities including brainwashing people and picking up the country's pro-liberation people who he called "miscreants".

The Al-Badr programmes included "mobilisation of public opinion and the restoration of normalcy through mass contact, public meetings and village to village campaigns. Special emphasis will be given to indoctrinate the minds of the students".

It will bridge the gap between the locals and non-locals (Bangalees and Biharis), the letter shows.

Establishing a network of intelligence for keeping a constant eye

on the activities of the "miscreants" was one of the programmes.

Another programme was "helping the army in operations in picking up and interrogating the miscreants and in the maintenance of law and order in the public meetings and in educational institutions".

The last programme described in the letter was "to give information to the martial law authorities regarding the anti-state elements in the government, autonomous and non-government services and if need be to help substitute loyal Pakistanis for these elements".

PAKISTAN ARMY'S LETTER

The document labelled "secret" proclaims the formation of Al-Badr volunteer force and explains its activities. Some words were coded in military terms.

At the beginning, it mentions the pattern of "Battle of Badr" for formation of the volunteer force and says the militia will have two main goals.

One is to assist the government/army in the restoration of law and order and to form spec cdo (special command duty officer) type of bands for carrying out sabotage activities across the border.

Al-Badr will be an organisation at district/sub divisional level, it said, adding, "Each sub div [sub division] will have 313 student volunteers from schools, colleges and madrasas.

"These students will attend their regular classes in school/colleges and also carry out various duties as assigned to them by their executive committee."

PERKS FOR AL-BADR

In the letter, Mojaheed sought from the Pakistani army camp accommodation for trainees in the fighting group and office facilities with necessary equipment for all other groups.

They wanted ration and allowance for the trainees, transport for operation as well as publicity and information collection activities or "to pay conveyance needed and arms and ammunition".

"I pray and hope that your authority would be kind enough to allow our local workers of Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba to organise Al Badr throughout your area," he concluded.

HOW THE DOCUMENTS WERE FOUND?

Shafi was the chief reporter of Weekly Sonar Desh, founded in 1970 by AHM Qamaruzzaman, one of the country's four national leaders, and edited by the language movement veteran Sayeed Uddin Ahmed.

After March 25, 1971, the Pakistan occupation forces vandalised the weekly's office in Ranibazar area of Rajshahi town and announced death warrants for its journalists, forcing them to flee into rural hideouts.

"On my return to Rajshahi town after Independence, I decided to collect the evidence of the war from different spots. In one such visit to the house Mohini Niketon, I saw a bag floating in a well," Shafi, who later became an official of Rajshahi University, told The Daily Star.

With the help of his cousin Amjad Ali, he pulled out the bag which had documents of over 2,000 pages left by Al-Badr leaders. He gave documents to local freedom fighters, and kept some that had multiple copies.

He knew

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to dig into the drug trade on his own, although he had taken early retirement from the army in 2018.

Pradeep became the OC of Teknaf Model Police Station on October 19, 2018. At least 87 people were killed in 48 incidents of "gunfights" involving Teknaf police alone between August 1, 2018 and August 1, 2020, according to reports of this newspaper.

"Pradeep planned to kill Sinha before he could expose anything to the higher authorities," said Billah, while addressing the press conference.

He said they came to this conclusion based on confessional statements made by 12 of the arrested accused in the murder case, and upon analysing some digital contents, which were in the possession of Sinha and his associates Shipra Debnath and Shahedul Sifat.

While talking to this correspondent, Lt Col Billah added that the electronic devices were in the possession of the police for a considerable amount of time after the murder. When Rab officials finally got hold of them, the memory cards were found to be corrupt.

The devices were under Ramu Police Station's custody from the day of the murder till August 19, when a district court ordered that they be handed to Rab.

Yesterday, Senior ASP of Rab Mohammad Khairul Islam, investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet to Judge Tamanna Farah of Cox's Bazar Senior Judicial Magistrate Court-4 through the court inspector around 10:10am.

The charge sheet was filed after four months and 10 days of investigation.

"The conspiracy [of murder] was plotted by OC Pradeep, Inspector Liaquat, and local police sources Nurul Amin, Mohammad Aiyas and Nizamuddin," said Lt Col Billah.

Liaquat, SI Nandadul Rakshit and three APBn members then executed the plan, he said. The APBn members are SI Mohammad Shahjahan and constables Md Rajib and Mohammad Abdullah.

"In addition, other policemen from a nearby camp, namely SI Liton Miah and constables Safanur Karim, Kamal Hossain Azad, Abdullah Al Mamun ensured that a wounded Sinha bled to death as they assisted in the murder," he said.

"Constables Sagar Deb and Rubel Sharma staged an act of recovering narcotics from Sinha's vehicle. Both of them are on the run," Billah said.

The charge sheet named 83 people as witnesses.

A total of 14 people were arrested between August and September in the case. Twelve of them gave confessional statements to court.

OC Pradeep and constable Rubel Sharma were yet to confess.

In addition to murder charges, the accused are being charged for hatching a criminal conspiracy, evidence tampering and perjury.

Shipra and Sifat have already been cleared of narcotics charges, which were brought against them after Sinha's murder.

Meanwhile, a Cox's Bazar court yesterday dismissed a revision petition filed by Liaquat Ali, suspended inspector of Baharchhara Investigation Centre, challenging the legality of the murder case filed by the victim's sister, Sharmen Shahria Ferdush.

After holding a full hearing on the petition, Mohammad Ismail, judge of Cox's Bazar District and Session judge's court, passed the order, our Cox's Bazar correspondent reported, quoting Public Prosecutor of the court Faridul Alam as saying.

On October 4, Liaquat Ali filed the revision petition with the Cox's Bazar court, saying the murder case was illegal.

Sinha was killed at an APBn checkpoint on the Cox's-Teknaf highway on July 31. Local police said Inspector Liaquat's team had taken over the checkpoint from the three APBn officers before the incident.

Sinha was shooting videos for his YouTube channel at the village of Marishbunia right before he was shot. He had been residing in the area for a month for filming.

The law enforcers claimed that they tried to search the vehicle of Sinha Md Rashed Khan, but the former army official aimed his pistol at them, prompting them to shoot in self-defence.

They also claimed that they found drugs in Sinha's car.

Witnesses, however, gave different accounts of the incident. They said Sinha got down from his car, put his hands over his head, and then the police members shot him.

Sinha's family termed the incident a cold-blooded murder and launched the legal battle seeking justice.

Later, the case's investigation was handed to Rab.

Iran summons German, France envoys over criticism of journalist's execution

REUTERS

Iran yesterday summoned the envoys of Germany, current holder of the European Union's rotating presidency, and of France over criticism of the execution of an Iranian journalist, Iranian media reported.

The Foreign Ministry voiced Iran's protest to the two ambassadors over French and EU criticism of the execution on Saturday of dissident journalist Ruhollah Zam, who had been based in Paris before he was captured in Iraq and taken to Iran.

Govt cannot withdraw, or even ask for it

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the trial proceedings of the ACC cases were conducted under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1958.

Under section 10(4) of the act, the cases of the ACC can be withdrawn by the trial courts only if there is written approval from the ACC.

The government cannot interfere in the question of running the trial of the ACC cases, he said.

The divisional special judge's court in Sunamganj on January 26, 2012 approved an application from the government to withdraw a corruption case filed against Md Abdul Kashem, chairman of No.4 Borodal Uttar Union in Taherpur upazila, and two others, he added.

The Sunamganj court also exempted the accused from the case proceedings. The case was filed with Taherpur Police Station on April 5, 2007 against the accused on charges of embezzling 17 bundles of government relief tin-sheet worth Tk 1.36 lakh.

On February 11, 2011 the home ministry recommended for withdrawal of the case.

The ACC filed the revision petition with the HC on November 19, 2014 challenging the Sunamganj court order.

Following the revision petition, a HC bench led by Justice M Enayetur Rahim issued a rule asking the state and the accused persons to explain why

the home ministry recommendation for withdrawal of the corruption case should not be declared illegal.

The bench also ordered the three accused to surrender to the trial court concerned in four weeks in connection with the corruption case. The accused surrendered to the lower court concerned and were granted bail.

After hearing the pending rule, the HC on Thursday delivered the short verdict.

The details of the HC observation will be known when the full text of the HC verdict will be released, lawyer Fazlul Hoque said, adding that the government did not place any argument on the rule.