

Over 90 rebel camps

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He said the remaining Shanti Bahini insurgent elements, who had not surrendered in 1998 and stayed back in India, together with some who had rejoined them after surrendering, were getting organised under the banners of two insurgent groups—United Peoples' Democratic Front (UPDF) and Jana Sanghati Samity (JSS).

Gen Chowdhury said that these insurgent groups were conducting terrorist activities against Bangladesh with assistance from Indian intelligence outfits.

"The remnants of the Priti group together with the wife of Manabendra Larma were carrying out anti-Bangladesh activities from across the border in the Chittagong Hill Tracts," he said.

The BDR chief said two more extremist groups, the so-called Banga Sena led by Kaliadas Baidya and Bir Banga led by Chittaranjan Sutar, were also carrying out insurgency in Faridpur, Barisal and Khulna areas.

These two extremist insurgent groups were also trying to foment communal tension in various areas of Bangladesh, he said.

The Chakma insurgent outfit, Bangladesh officials said, printed in Kolkata over 5,000 anti-Bangladesh propaganda booklets to fan the fire of insurgency in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

They said in the booklets the insurgents painted imaginary pictures of "brutal and ruthless attacks on Jhum villages in Mohalchhari of Khagrachari by Bangali settlers."

Gen Chowdhury was talking to the waiting reporters from print and electronic media at the North Block as he was coming out of the chamber of Indian State Minister for Home S Chinnayamand after paying a courtesy call on him.

BSF DG Ajay Raj Sharma accompanied Gen Chowdhury during the visit.

Asked whether Sharma had given him a list of Indian insurgent camps in Bangladesh or their locations, the BDR DG said, "From where he would give such a list or location as there is

none?"

Gen Chowdhury said that even if a single camp could be shown, "we shall destroy it."

Bangladesh, he said, would in no way allow any such camps to operate against neighbouring India.

At the border talks, Gen Chowdhury reiterated that the Bangladesh-India joint border guidelines should be followed in letter and spirit in resolving any problem cropping up along borders of the two neighbouring countries.

BSF DG Ajay Raj Sharma, according to a BSF press release, said that the complex problems along the India-Bangladesh border could be resolved through correct identification and "coordinated, comprehensive action."

Sharma, according to the press release, said that the "evil designs" and "threat from a microscopic minority consisting of various militant groups who believe in the cult of violence and have no respect for human lives and values" must be put to an end by "joining our hands and pooling our resources together to fight this menace in all its dimensions."

The BSF press release said the relations between the two countries have improved since the last DGEvel border meeting held in Dhaka in April 2003.

The two delegations yesterday exchanged drafts of a joint Record of Discussions to be signed Friday.

Gen Chowdhury is leading a 20-member Bangladeshi team at the talks, which began here on January 6, while Sharma is leading the Indian team.

Both the delegation leaders said that the talks were taking place in a cordial atmosphere.

The BSF DG hosted a reception for his Bangladeshi counterpart and the BDR DG hosted a return reception for his Indian counterpart yesterday evening.

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Prime Minister Khaleda Zia addresses a public meeting at Kadamtali Square, west of the second Buriganga Bridge, in Keraniganj yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Nazmul Huda

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BNP Joint Secretary General Ahsraf Hossain and senior leaders Mirza Abbas, Selima Rahman, prime minister's political secretary Harris Chowdhury, Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, Nazrul Islam Khan, Redwan Ahmed, Salahuddin Ahmed, SA Khaleque, Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu, Abdus Salam, Kazi Abu Bashir, Mojibar Rahman, Khairul Kabir, Khokon, Babul Ahmed, Mosharraf Ahmed Thakur, Shahjahan Mia Samrat and Nesaru Haq were present at the meeting.

Meeting sources said most participants strongly criticised BNP Vice-president Huda for supporting Jamaat's role against Bangladesh's liberation.

The leaders asked him to make his position clear if he stood by the speech.

They remarked that if the minister owned his speech to the conference of ICS, backed by the coalition partner Jamaat, it would undermine BNP's pride that its founder Zia 'proclaimed the Liberation War.'

The BNP would not take the responsibility of Huda's remarks, a leaders said.

The meeting also finalised a 10-day central programme to celebrate Ziaur Rahman's 68th birth anniversary.

19 leaders

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of Sathkhira, one BNP and two AL leaders of Jessor, two BNP leaders of Magura, one AL leader of Narail, one BNP leader of Jhenidah, one BNP and one AL leader of Kushtia and one BNP leader of Chuadanga. A union parishad chairman of Magura district is also on the list.

"The names of the leaders on the hit-list should not be disclosed. We have taken all possible security measures for them," said a senior police official on condition of anonymity.

Sources in two intelligence agencies also confirmed the information given by Raju.

Power crisis

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sector visited various plants on Thursday in a bid to gear up the process.

Last year, sudden shut-ups at some big plants caused major disruptions in power supply. The PDB wants to avert a recurrence of such a situation in the coming summer, sources mentioned.

PDB Chairman Syed Abdul Moyeed said they are trying hard to commission Siddhinganj plant right on the scheduled date - March 31. They have asked the Russian firm engaged in its construction to complete its task in time, he added.

Dhaka and its peripheries require about 50 percent of power generated in the country.

Phenomenal growth in multi-storey apartment blocks and modern shopping malls resulted in a rapid rise in the capital's power demand, sources said.

Power crisis in summer could be minimised if consumers take up power austerity measures and peak-hour load management is efficiently done, they said.

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AGM

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Rotary Dhaka Central

Weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka Central will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club, Shahbagh. Time: 1.30pm.

Rotary Dhaka North

Weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka North West will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club, Shahbagh. Time: 5.30pm.

Prize giving ceremony

The prize giving ceremony of annual

RPC power project

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The ADB questioned the transparency in signing the contract with Lahmeyer and observed that the Savar project appeared to be an exception among all independent power projects in Bangladesh.

Citing the transparency in bidding of Meghnaghat and Sirajganj power projects, the ADB said: "It appears that such transparency in bidding, pricing and setting out output parameters is lacking in the case of the DNPP."

The Savar bid document prepared by the consultant (Lahmeyer) invites "only original manufacturers of gas turbines (no licensees or EPC contractors or joint ventures) to submit bids for the design and other services."

"This clause violates all norms of international procurement including that of the KfW which dictates wider participation of qualified power developers as per certain standards. Ironically, the KfW professed to keep its credits untied, meaning no strings attached," observes an insider.

In addition, the tender terms require the bidder to also include a bid from an operation and maintenance (O&M) company for a 15-year O&M contract.

Although the O&M contract is separate, the RPC requires the O&M contractor to be a "sister" company from the "same country" as the bidder's.

Sources at the RPC and its parent company Rural Electrification Board (REB) said the KfW itself imposed two conditions -- that Lahmeyer be the consultant and that only the original manufacturers of gas turbines be allowed to submit bids.

The KfW is providing 40 million Euros as "untied" grant -- meaning there is supposed to be no conditions tagged with the fund. The major portion of the fund will be derived from nine REB cooperatives.

"The cooperatives will provide up to Tk 250 crore for the project with the assurance that they will get at least 15 percent dividend," said a REB source.

All PDB projects undertaken through open tenders -- including the Meghnaghat or the barge-mounted ones -- have been built either by consortiums, licensees or through EPC contracts. The O&M contracts are typically carried out by either PDB experts or through separate maintenance agreements.

According to industry experts, there are only a handful of "original" turbine manufacturers suitable for such projects. Most turbine manufacturers, even licensees, are interested in selling their turbines and not acting as contractors.

The PDB contract terms also impose other hard conditions to rule out competition.

For instance, while the PDB requires bidders to have experience in two similar size projects with one outside its home country, the PDB bid requires experience in four such projects.

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The agent virtually controls all tender processes of the RPC and the

operation and maintenance contracts, said an insider, alleging that the person might be linked with siphoning out huge funds through overpriced contracts.

REB Chairman Ziaul Islam Chowdhury ruled out any influence over RPC affairs by outsiders or the agent of Lahmeyer.

Lahmeyer executive Serajul Islam also rejected the allegations, saying the company was not involved in any overpriced contract or in any manipulation.

The RPC was originally formed in 1996 as a private-public enterprise with the REB owning 51 percent of its share while select Rural Power Cooperatives the rest.

The company has so far set up three power units in Mymensingh -- each with 70 MW capacity.

Allegations of corruption and excessive project cost were also made against all the projects, but neither the government nor the donors intervened.

The Savar power scheme earlier created uproar because it did not fit into the Power System Master Plan of the government, meaning that Savar is not identified as a viable power project site because there is no appropriate gas pipeline.

"I don't agree with the allegations of corruption," comments Ziaul, adding, "We are faced with the reality of loadshedding and KfW is helping us build this power plant. The KfW is closely monitoring the project, so there is no scope for corruption."

He however pointed out that the conditions of appointing Lahmeyer as a consultant without bidding and also the bidder's qualifications were set by the KfW.

RPC Managing Director Abdus Sabur says, "We are pursuing the project as per the KfW guidelines and there is no irregularity. If we see that the bidders are asking for excessive price after the tender is opened, we can raise questions. Our present estimate of 150 million Euros is standard."

Serajul Islam, director (technical) of Lahmeyer International Pally Power Services Limited, also refuted the allegations of corruption.

"We are not doing any overpriced consultancy for the RPC," he said. "As a financier, the KfW has set two conditions and there is nothing wrong with it."

Salma Ali, director (technical) of Lahmeyer International Pally Power Services Limited, also refuted the allegations of corruption.

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Remembering her contribution to protect human rights, Khushi Kabir of Nijera Kari said she stood up against fundamentalism and violation of human rights.

Salma Ali, president of Bangladesh Women Lawyers' Association, said Salma took the concept of law to the grassroots people who had no idea about their fundamental rights.

Mahbuba Begum of Bangladesh Association of Women for Self-employment said Salma always wanted to bring change to society through women empowerment.

Recalling the memories of his wife, Professor Rehman Sobhan said initially Salma did not think that she would involve herself with so many social activities.

"After our marriage in 1962, we settled in Dhaka and Salma coped herself with the new environment and gradually got involved in social activities with the objectives of playing a role in protecting human rights and encouraging women empowerment," he added.

"The contribution and activities of Barrister Salma will offer a source of inspiration and a guideline before us in the future."

Sultana Kamal of Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) gave the opening speech and Rokeya Rafiq Baby of Kamajiboti Nari read out Salma's profile.

Presided over by Dr Hamida Begum, the meeting was also addressed by Justice Naimuddin Ahmed, Executive Director of Prip Trust Aroma Dutt, Faustino Parera of Law Review and Senior Vice-President of Proshika Mahbub-ul-Alam.

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