

Khaleda's remarks

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In her speech in the Jatiya Sangsads on Tuesday, the BNP chairperson denied the existence of Taliban and al-Qaeda elements in Bangladesh. She termed the reports about their activities nothing by the opposition's propaganda.

"It's a propaganda against the government and the country. And it [the propaganda] is aimed at causing a rift within the four-party alliance," Khaleda claimed, accusing the main opposition Awami League (AL) of launching the propaganda.

Jamaat-e-Islami chief Matiur Rahman Nizami on Sunday made similar comments in parliament in his speech on the thanksgiving motion on president's address.

"They (AL) want to make a rift within the four-party alliance through discovering the existence of so-called militancy. Because they (AL) know it will not be possible to win in the next election if the alliance exists," he said.

Islami Oikya Jote Chairman Fazlul Haque Amini, after the government launched a crackdown on militants last month, said in public meetings and statements that an 'evil force' has launched the propaganda about Islamists militants.

Another common point in the statements of Khaleda, Nizami, Amini and others is that a section of the media is orchestrating the propaganda 'to damage the country's image.'

The prime minister has said Islamic organisations have long been working to spread the message of Islam and its ideology. "They've also made an important contribution to maintaining social integrity and harmony; and there's no allegation against them."

Almost identical comments came

from Industries Minister Nizami in parliament and at a public meeting in Dhaka the same day. Not only Jamaat-e-Islami, none of the known Islamic organisations has link to militancy, he claimed.

A number of Jamaat lawmakers also joined the chorus with their chief while participating in the thanksgiving motion on president's speech.

"An evil force is working in a planned way to create distance between the government and the Islamic organisations," Jamaat lawmaker Abu Syed Mohamad Shahadat Hossain told the Jatiya Sangsads on March 10.

Another lawmaker from Jamaat Mia Golam Parwar in his speech in parliament on March 8 accused the Awami League of conspiring to make a rift within the ruling alliance.

As IOJ Chairman Amini had repeatedly blasted the government for the harassment of madrasa students in the name of crackdown on militants, the prime minister gave explanations and statements that an 'evil force' has launched the propaganda about Islamists militants.

The question here is not of 'extremism' or 'fundamentalism' - the government will take necessary measures against whoever responsible for unleashing terrorism and disturbing social peace and stability," she told parliament.

But the government, while banning Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh and Jama'atul Mujahidin Bangladesh on February 23, in a handout said they were trying to create anarchy in the society through misguiding youths using religious sentiments.

Indian HC terms

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for full cooperation, including the issuance of necessary instructions to the Bangladesh Rifles to avoid any untoward incidents.

The statement also said fencing work by the BSF has been underway since 1989 and greater part of the fence is located at or beyond 150 yards from the zero-line, the statement said.

"India's decision was guided by the spirit of friendship that exists between the two countries and with a view to enable the Bangladeshi authorities to check illegal trans-border movement and to contain criminal activities."

The statement also said that India greatly values its close and friendly relations with Bangladesh.

The Bangladeshi government is well aware of India's concerns regarding the illegal and criminal activities on the border, including large-scale smuggling, trafficking of women and children, narcotics trafficking, smuggling of arms and explosives, infiltration, illegal migration, etc.

India on numerous occasions conveyed to the Bangladeshi government that building a fence would help both countries to manage long and highly porous border in a better way, thereby contributing to the further strengthening of bilateral ties.

The Indian High Commission in its statement termed reports by the Bangladeshi media regarding construction of the fence by the BSF along the Bangladesh-India border as highly exaggerated and inaccurate.

29 die, 23 others

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crashed around 1100 GMT near the village of Varandei, in the Netenets autonomous region above the polar circle, news agencies reported.

The plane took off from Ufa, in Bashkortostan, and made stops in the cities of Perm and Usinsk before heading for Varandei, a town on the coast of the Barents Sea.

BSF to stop

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Both the sides sought cooperation from each other in handing over the criminals to their respective country, the source added.

The BSF told the meeting their fencing work has been underway since 1989 and the fence is mostly located at or beyond 150 yards from the zero line. But the fence has to be built within 150 yards in certain areas due mainly to the existence of villages, or because of rough terrains, it said.

The BDR team said if they (BSF) face such problems, they should bring that to the notice of the Indian government so that the two governments could resolve the problems through discussion.

The India side came up with their issues yesterday while the BDR on Tuesday raised its issues at the meeting being held at Salbaghan Headquarters of the BSF.

The two sides might reach formal agreements on a number of issues at the concluding session of the meeting today, sources said.

Deputy Director General of BDR Brigadier General SM Golam Rabban leads the eight-member BDR delegation while IG of BSF for Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur and Nagaland Shri SC Srivastava leads the 14-member Indian team.

Earlier on Monday, the Indian High Commission in Dhaka requested the government to instruct BDR not to resist BSF from constructing barbed wire fences within 150 yards of the no man's land.

The request was made in a letter sent to the foreign ministry.

B'DNEWS reports: Tension eased in border areas yesterday as the Agartala meeting between BDR and BSF progressed.

ABDR-BSF battalion commander-level meeting will be held at Dargapara of Ramgarh in Khagrachari at 11 am today.

Meanwhile, a ban on vehicular movement on Ramgarh-Ayodhya road is in force.

A sector commander-level meeting between BDR and BSF was held yesterday at Sona Masjid border in Chapainawabganj.

A BDR-BSF sector-commander level flag meeting was held yesterday at Bilondpur of Uttar Dinajpur in India.

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