

Launch movement to force govt to hold trial of war criminals

Sector Commanders' Forum urges people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Sector Commanders' Forum and relatives of slain freedom fighters yesterday called for launching massive movement across the country to force the government to hold trial of the war criminals.

"When a strong movement will be launched across the country, the government would be forced to put them [war criminals] on trial," said Sector Commander CR Dutta while addressing a view-exchange meeting in the city.

"We have taken the initiative as some quarters are saying that war criminals cannot be tried," he said, adding, "They were not tried in the past, but that does not mean that they cannot be put on trial now."

Forum Convenor Lt Gen (Retd) Harun-ur Rashid said although previous attempts to bring the war criminals to justice were of limited success, their latest venture would be a success.



PHOTO: STAR

Sector Commanders' Forum Member-Secretary Dr MA Hasan speaks at a view exchange meeting at the WVA auditorium in the city yesterday. On his right are Forum Convenor Lt Gen (Retd) Harun-ur Rashid, Sector Commander CR Dutta and Sector Commander Abu Osman Chowdhury.

"Now major political parties including Awami League, Bangladesh Nationalist Party, Jatiya Party and some Islamic parties that bagged around 90 percent of total votes in election, are of the opinion that trial of war

criminals must be held," he said.

"Our aim is to form a strong public opinion in favour of the trial ahead of the general election and ask the political parties to include the issue in their election manifestos so that once they are elected,

they will be obliged to put them on trial," Gen Harun added.

Sector Commander Abu Osman Chowdhury said Bangladesh won the independence due to unfaltering unity of people minus Al Badars and Al Shams.

That unity is now needed again to materialise the demand for the trial of war criminals, he added.

Stressing the need for unity of pro-liberation forces, Farzana Mazid, whose father was killed during the liberation war, said for want of a strong and united platform, war criminals could not be tried in the past.

Forum Member-Secretary Dr MA Hasan, Rashid Haider, Maj Gen (Retd) Amin Ahmed Chowdhury, Trustees of Liberation War Museum Alku Chowdhury and Dr Sarwar Ali, Lt Col (Retd) Sazzad Zahir, Shyamoli Nasrin Chowdhury, Shaheen Reza Noor, Shaheed Reza Noor and Shaon Mahmud were present on the occasion.



PHOTO: STAR

Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee shakes hands with Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury after handing over relief materials for the cyclone victims to him at Zia International Airport in the city yesterday.

Indian Muslims to meet on Taslima row today

AFP, New Delhi

Hardline Indian Muslim groups said they would meet today to decide whether to keep up demands for the expulsion of Bangladeshi author Taslima Nasreen, hounded into hiding by protests against her.

The Milli Ittehad Parishad, an umbrella alliance of 12 Muslim groups, yesterday announced the meeting, a day after Nasreen promised to remove passages from her autobiography that some Muslims found offensive.

"The Milli Ittehad Parishad has called a meeting to take a unanimous stand on Taslima Nasreen," Siddiqua Chowdhury, general secretary of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind, one of the member organisations, told AFP.

The dozen groups have been demanding her deportation from India for "hurting the religious sentiment of Muslims in India."

Nasreen, who has lived in Kolkata since 2004, said on Friday she hoped the move to take out the controversial passages from her autobiography "Dikhandito" or "Split into Two" would enable her to live peacefully in India.

The federal government has pledged to protect Nasreen and moved her to a safe house outside New Delhi last weekend after thousands of Muslims rioted in her adopted home city, demanding her ejection from India.

But the government warned her not to make any statements that might "hurt the sentiments of our people" -- a reference to India's 140-million-plus Muslims.

Extremists accused the author of blasphemy over her 1994 novel "Laja" or "Shame," which depicts violence against minority Hindus by Muslims in Muslim-majority Bangladesh. She fled her homeland the same year.

Before living in Kolkata, Nasreen, who has often received death threats over her works, spent time in Europe and the United States.

She holds a Swedish passport but has been seeking permanent residence in Hindu-majority but officially secular India.

So far the government, fearful of angering the nation's Muslim community, has only granted her six-month visa extensions.

Matin urges int'l agencies to help construct cyclone shelters

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

The impact of American Muslim groups on US foreign policy has been very 'modest' and the success is 'negligible', said Dr Ahrar Ahmad, a Fulbright scholar from the USA.

Dr Ahmad, currently engaged in teaching and research at the Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), was delivering a lecture on 'Muslim groups in the US and American foreign policy' at IUB Baridhara campus in the city recently, says a press release.

He said the misgivings are not groundless given the US attitude in different countries. "If people know how long and how US soldiers will work here, then they will get relief from confusion."

Other panelists in the Sanglap included Awami League (AL) president Moti Chowdhury, adviser to BNP chairperson Enam Ahmed Chowdhury, and president of Bangladesh Economic Association Dr Kazi Khaliquzzaman Ahmed.

Echoing Harun, Moti Chowdhury said the US would have to prove that public confusion over their presence here is pointless.

She said people do not know about the terms and conditions under which the US service personnel arrived here. As the government did not make the terms public, they are now in uncertainty as to whether the US soldiers have intentions other than relief operations.

Dr Ahrar pointed a demographic context of the US Muslims -- when they arrived, where they settled, from which countries they came and the socio-economic profile that they represent.

He underscored that Muslim groups are gradually becoming more and more active in the US acquiring institutional, economic and intellectual capacity and strength. They have tried to affect US policy formulation but so far have only been partly successful, he added.

Drawing some comparisons with Jewish groups, Dr Ahmad indicated that US Muslim groups have a long way to go, and the challenges they face are many and diverse. However, the process has begun. Muslim groups have now become more capable and more confident; and their voices are becoming increasingly valuable to the American political discourse.

Prof Bazlul M Chowdhury, vice chancellor of IUB, Prof Omar Rahman, pro-vice chancellor, Prof Nazrul Islam, director of the School of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences, Dr GM Shahidul Alam, head, Media and Communication, and Prof Shawkat Hussain, head of English Department, also spoke on the occasion.

The president also expressed deep sympathies for the cyclone victims in the country's southern belt and said the government has engaged its highest efforts to provide emergency supplies for them.

He called upon all to extend all-out cooperation in mitigating the sufferings of the affected people and expressed his gratitude to the friendly countries and international organisations as well as the expatriate Bangladeshi for extending their valuable supports for the cyclone survivors.

He said Islam, over the ages, has been a fountain spring of the message of peace and hope for

Leaders of Freedom Fighters' Day Observance National Committee place wreath at the Shikha Chirantan in the city yesterday on the occasion of Freedom Fighters' Day.

Islam's liberal, humanistic appeal has great relevance to present-day world

President tells int'l conference

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday eulogised Allama Jalaluddin Rumi saying that the great poet has been unique in his presentation through the 'Masnavi' of the universal message of hope of Islam.

"Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi devoted himself to upholding and

nourishing the finesse of Islam throughout his life," he told an international conference, marking the celebrations of the 800th birth anniversary of Rumi, at the Osmany Memorial Auditorium in the city.

Allama Rumi Society in collaboration with Cultural Affairs Ministry, Iran Cultural Centre and UNESCO, Bangladesh organised the function.

UNESCO has declared 2007 as 'Rumi Year' to commemorate the contributions of Allama Rumi.

Iajuddin appreciated the organisers for holding such a remarkable conference on the great scholar and proponent of Sufism Maulana Rumi.

"The liberal and humanistic appeal of Islam with its emphasis on the importance of spirituality has great relevance to our present-day world. All peace-loving people of the world are aware of these universal values acting as the main source of strength of Islam," he said.

He said Islam, over the ages, has been a fountain spring of the message of peace and hope for the

entire humanity, and Jalaluddin Rumi most forcefully articulated the desire of all people to overcome their inner conflicts and attain peace in the most ennobling manner.

Iajuddin said Dhaka University introduced the study of Persian language and literature as an integral part of its curricula ever since its establishment in 1921.

He thanked the Rumi Society of Bangladesh for its splendid endeavour in encouraging research on and popularising Rumi's teachings.

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87th anniversary of artist Kamrul Hassan's birth today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 87th birth anniversary of famous artist Kamrul Hassan.

Different organisations have taken up programmes to commemorate the life and achievements of the artist who is popularly known as Potua Kamrul Hassan.

Potua Kamrul Hassan Art School will place wreath at the grave of the artist on the premises of Dhaka University (DU) Central Mosque at 9:00am.

The school will arrange a national art competition for children and adolescents on the premises of DU Institute of Fine Arts on December 7.

Cartoonist Rafiqunnabi will

hold a discussion on Kamrul Hassan at Sufia Kamal Auditorium of the National Museum on December 15.

Born in Calcutta on this day in 1921, Kamrul died of cardiac arrest while presiding over session of National Poetry Festival organised by Jatiya Kobita Parishad on February 2, 1988.

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