

1971 remnants still active

FROM PAGE 1
 Mohammad Mujahid was president of East Pakistan Islamic Chhatra Sangha in 1971.

The Jamaat leader who moved up the ranks after independence is now contesting the ninth parliament elections from Faridpur-3 constituency on the slate of BNP-led alliance.

In 1971, Mujahid directed his party workers to build Al-Badr Bahini to resist freedom fighters, according to a "Fortnightly Secret Report on the Situation in East Pakistan". In line with an official procedure, the report had regularly been dispatched by the then East Pakistan home ministry to General Yahya Khan, the head of government.

Many researches, academic studies, accounts of both victims and collaborators, and publications including newspapers revealed that Mujahid, who headed the Al-Badr team in Dhaka at the time, allegedly led those who had been involved in the killings of the intellectuals — only two days before the victory of Bangladesh on December 16, 1971.

Thousands of people still bear the scars of war crimes by Jamaat and its student front Islamic Chhatra Sangha, and some other controversial outfits such as Nizam-e-Islami. Jamaat's opposition of the struggle for independence has been documented in different publications including those by Jamaat itself.

At a rally to mark what was then known as Badr Day on November 7, 1971, Mujahid came up with a four-point programme to "wipe Hindustan off the face of the earth".

"Move forward with your head held high and with the Quran in heart to materialise the programme. If necessary we will march up to New Delhi and fly the flag of greater Pakistan," he told the 1971 rally.

He raised funds, organised armed trainings for Razakars and persuaded students to join the paramilitary force, designed to eliminate freedom fighters.

Addressing a function of the Chhatra Sangha in Faridpur on September 15, 1971, Mujahid said: "Razakars and Al-Badr forces and all other voluntary organisations have been working to protect the nation from the collaborators and spies of India."

"But unfortunately we observe that a section of political leaders like ZA Bhutto, Kawsar Niazi, Muzi Mahmud and Asghar Khan have lately been making objectionable remarks about the patriots."

Ironically, the 1971 publications of The Daily Sangram, a newspaper known as the mouthpiece of Jamaat, carry evidence enough to expose Jamaat's anti-liberation roles.

An issue of the Sangram published on September 15, 1971 quoted Nizami, also the then commander-in-chief of Al-Badr, as saying: "Everyone of us should assume the role of a soldier of an Islamic country. With assistance of the poor and the oppressed, we must kill those who are engaged in the war against Pakistan and Islam."

The same newspaper on the third page of its September 16, 1971 issue ran another report headlined "No force on earth will be able to destroy Pakistan". In the news report, Nizami called on people to face a conspiracy of the so-called Banga Daradi (Lover of Bengal).

Jamaat formed Razakar Bahini and Al-Badr Bahini to oppose Bangladesh's struggle to win freedom from Pakistan.

At a rally of 96 Jamaat workers at an Ansar camp on Khan Zahan Ali Road in Khulna in May 1971, as historical documents show, Moulana Yusuf established the Razakar force.

"It was also Moulana Yusuf who gave this force its name," according to Genocide '71, a book that details accounts of the wartime killers and collaborators.

On November 28, 1971, Yusuf spoke to journalists in Karachi, "The Razakars are standing shoulder to shoulder with our brave soldiers in com-

batting the Indian aggression."

In order to annihilate miscreants, the Razakars should be provided with more modern weapons, Yusuf suggested.

The number of the Al-Badr and Al-Shams was 100,000 at one point in time, plus the Mujahid force, Genocide '71 quoted Yusuf as saying.

Another member of Jamaat's central executive committee, ATM Azharul Islam, was the leader of Islamic Chhatra Sangha in Rangpur.

The so-called "Fortnightly Secret Report" said Azharul Islam had presided over a conference of Islamic Chhatra Sangha in Rangpur town on October 17, 1971.

Mujahid had also addressed the conference, "explaining the present situation of the country and urging the party workers to mobilise the youths of Islamic spirit and launch a strong movement against anti-Islamic activities." Mujahid also urged them to form Al-Badr Bahini at different levels to defend the country from "internal and external attacks".

Mir Kasem Ali, another top player on Jamaat's central executive committee, was general secretary of East Pakistan Islamic Chhatra Sangha in 1971.

On December 10 of the same year, five days before the victory, Al-Badr force organised a rally at Baitul Mukarram Mosque to orchestrate public opinion against "Hindustani attacks". Kasem also addressed the rally, according to a news report published in the Daily Azad on December 11, 1971.

Kasem called upon people not to get misled by the "rumours and false publicity of Hindustani warmongers and Akash Bani", he reported said.

"We are fighting for truth and fairness. Victory must be on our side with the blessings of Khoda", Kasem was quoted in the report as saying.

Kasem was also president of Chittagong City Islamic Chhatra Sangha and chief of the Chittagong district Razakar forces in 1971. It is alleged in several historical documents, Kasem led the Al-Badr force in Chittagong.

In the latest development, Kasem filed a nomination paper to contest the ninth parliamentary election from Dhaka-8 constituency, only to pull back.

The list goes on. M u h a m m a d Kamaruzzaman, senior assistant secretary general of Jamaat, launched himself into the polls foray with a ticket from the four-party alliance in Sherpur-1 constituency. The Jamaat leader has a tainted past with Islamic Chhatra Sangha and is blamed for his close links to the Al-Badr force.

The Chhatra Sangha of Mymensingh district was converted into the Al-Badr force and provided with military training. The man responsible for organising the Chhatra Sangha into the Al-Badr was the chief of the Mymensingh district Islamic Chhatra Sangha: Kamaruzzaman, "Genocide '71" says.

"Under Kamaruzzaman, the entire body of workers belonging to the Mymensingh district Chhatra Sangha were recruited into the Al-Badr within a month. That Kamaruzzaman was indeed the man who consolidated this force in its initial stages is obvious from a report that was published on August 16, in the Sangram," the book says.

In the early 1990s, a People's Inquiry Commission was formed to investigate the activities of war criminals and collaborators.

According to a report by the commission, Jamaat's incumbent central executive committee member Moulana Abdus Sobhan had served the party as its acting chief of Pabna during the Liberation War. He was nominated for the so-called by-election in 1971.

With the blessings of the four-party alliance, Sobhan found himself in the ninth parliamentary election, set for December 29.

Sobhan was the vice president for Pabna unit of Peace Committee, an organisation of Pakistani collaborators. A field-level investigation revealed that Sobhan had organised the Al-Badr and Razakar and had been involved in a series of criminal activities.

The dreaded year, 1971, calls to mind the active role of Delwar Hossain Saydee, now a member of Jamaat's central executive committee. Saydee played an active part in organising Razakar, Al-Badr and Al-Shams forces in the southern district of Pirojpur, his stronghold, to assist the Pakistan army in the crackdown on Bangladeshis, says the commission report.

"Saydee was not associated with any political party in 1971, but conducted his activities in his individual capacity as a 'maulana' or Islamic scholar. There are allegations that he actively helped the Pakistani forces in their campaign of killings, looting, rape, arson, by forming local para-

military forces," says the report.

"During the war, he along with four associates formed an organisation called 'Fund of the Five'. The principal aim of the organisation was to loot and take over property of freedom fighters and Bangalee Hindus. He used to sell looted property and run a profitable business from the sales proceedings."

Saydee, an active player in politics, entered this year's election race, as a candidate from Pirojpur-1 constituency, leveraged by the BNP-led alliance.

Abdul Kader Molla, currently a central executive committee member of Jamaat, was known as a "butcher" to Bangladeshis in the Dhaka suburb of Mirpur in 1971, according to the report of the commission headed by the late poet Begum Sufia Kamal.

"Mirpur at the time (1971) was mainly populated by non-Bengali Muslim migrants from India, many of whom were among the most ardent champions of the Pakistan army's actions in Bangladesh," says the report.

One of the largest mass graves of people butchered by Pakistani troops and their allies was discovered in the Shialbari area of Mirpur after independence.

Local people told the commission that Molla was behind the killings of thousands of Bangladeshis in Shialbari and Rupnagar areas of Mirpur during the war.

"According to local inhabitants, Molla had begun his killing spree even before the army started its operation", the report says.

"We must be united with a determination that none of us would cast vote for a war criminal," said KM Shafiqullah.

He added, "The next government must raise a bill to try the war criminals at the very first session of the next parliament."

"Remain vigilant so that war criminals don't win this election. Let the sky and air of Bangla be resonated with the slogan 'We want trial of war criminals,'" said Commander of Sector-4 Maj Gen (ret) CR Dutta.

He emphasised the necessity to resist war criminals through election. "All the political parties have exploited the freedom fighters over the years since independence and some

opportunists and betrayers among the freedom fighters also enjoyed facilities from them," said Special Assistant to Chief Adviser Brig Gen (ret) MAMalek.

He said neither Muktiyoddha Command Council nor Muktiyoddha Kalyan Trust is running to protect the interest and welfare of the freedom fighters.

DCC Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, who chaired the programme, called on future mayors to name city streets after valiant freedom fighters.

The DCC named 65 streets in Dhaka after freedom fighters since 2002. Khoka also mentioned initiatives have been taken to decorate Osmani Udyan featuring the incidents happened in different sectors during the Liberation War.

Sector Commanders Forum Chairman and deputy commander-in-chief of the Liberation War Air Vice-Marshal (ret) AK Khandaker, Maj Gen (ret) M Azizur Rahman, Lt Col (ret) Zafar Imam, Lt Col (ret) HMA Gaffar and Lt Col (ret) Nurunnabi Khan spoke, among others, at the programme.

At one stage, the programme got heated with protests from freedom fighters as Lt Col (ret) HMA Gaffar uttered "Bangladesh Zindabad" on completion of his speech instead of popular "Joy Bangla, the Liberation War cry."

Seeing the huge protests Mayor Khoka avoided uttering the words and finished his speech saying "Allah Hafez" instead.

Meanwhile, President Iajuddin Ahmed and Chief Adviser Fakhrudin Ahmed placed wreaths at the National Memorial to pay homage to the Liberation War martyrs. They stood for a few moments in silence to pay respects to the gallant heroes.

The chief adviser later inaugurated the Victory Day rally and parade of children and juveniles at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in the capital.

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia with their party leaders also placed wreaths at the National Memorial in Savar.

They said making such remarks amounts to an act of sedition.

The statement was a trick to get media coverage ahead of the parliamentary election, they said, observing that people could give its appropriate answer in the polls. They also expressed regrets over failure to try war criminals as yet.

At the discussion programme organised by Jamaat's city unit at the Moghbazar Al-Falah auditorium, Nizami reiterated his support for Jinnah's theory and said it has gained strength in the last 37 years.

Jamaat expresses reservations about calling Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman father of the nation, saying it is not possible for it to call anyone father of the nation for religious reasons. Lately, the Islamist party has termed Bangabandhu the architect of the country's independence.

At the programme that was held to mark the country's Victory Day, Jamaat leaders did not discuss anything about the Liberation War and its background. They rather made several allegations against India that directly assisted the Liberation War in 1971.

"If India were not divided and we were part of the undivided India we need to think deeply if we would be independent until Qiamat," Nizami said, adding that India's attitude towards Bangladesh in the past 37 years has rather strengthened the two-nation theory.

Intellectuals have, however, trashed the two-nation theory, saying it lost its political, logical and historical bases long ago. They also brushed aside any possibility of making a debate of Nizami's statement.

"This is an audacious and tendentiously wrong reading of history. The birth of Bangladesh in 1971 clearly demonstrated the underlying falsity of the so-called two-nation theory," said noted historian Prof Syed Anwar Hossain.

"People can give an answer to the statement in the election and it would be the best answer. The matter has to be dealt with politically," he added.

War crime bill

FROM PAGE 1
 to our sacred parliament," said Sector Commander Lt Col (ret) Abu Osman Chowdhury.

The nation celebrated 37 years of liberation yesterday, saluting the valiant sons and daughters of the soil who made the supreme sacrifice in the Liberation War in 1971 for an independent and modern democratic state.

With the spirit of independence, thousands of people of all walks and ages across the country gathered at the memorials of the martyrs. They paid tributes to the national heroes amid renewed calls for trial of war criminals and boycotting them in the polls.

Osman Chowdhury added, "The harmful anti-liberation elements have grown up under shelter of dirty politics over the years and are getting prepared to eat up the country."

The programme titled "Reunion of freedom fighters living in Dhaka and Sector-2 in Dhaka" organised by Dhaka City Corporation at Osmani Udyan in the morning was attended by freedom fighters, government and DCC officials and many others.

"Prove it through your judgment on December 29 this is the country of freedom fighters and Jamaat-e-Islami, Al-Badr, and Al-Shams don't belong to this country," said Coordinator of Sector Commanders Forum (SCF) Lt General (ret) Harun-Ar-Rashid.

"We must be united with a determination that none of us would cast vote for a war criminal," said KM Shafiqullah.

He added, "The next government must raise a bill to try the war criminals at the very first session of the next parliament."

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opportunists and betrayers among the freedom fighters also enjoyed facilities from them," said Special Assistant to Chief Adviser Brig Gen (ret) MAMalek.

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Negligence

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 there to have a look at their patient.

Eyewitnesses said Dr Jubayer arrived at Jalli's cabin some 40 minutes after the patient died.

The aggrieved relatives detached the iron mosquito-net poles attached to the bed and swooped on the doctor, wounding him seriously in his left eye.

Dr Jubayer is now undergoing treatment at the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the hospital.

The Director of Holy Family Hospital, Dr Siddiqur Rahman, said that Jalli was suffering from several chronic diseases including diabetes, heart disease and blood pressure.

He said the unfortunate situation was brought under control with the help of Ramna Police.

Dr Jubayer is yet to decide whether or not to press charges against the attackers, he said.

Khaleda sees

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 setting up of industries, and you will live in peace."

Addressing the rally at Lalbagh, Khaleda praised the four-party candidate for Dhaka-7 constituency Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu, now in jail facing several criminal charges. Pintu has done many development work in the area but he has been detained for months without trial, she said.

"Now you (voters) can get him released by casting vote for him."

Thousands of four-party supporters, workers and leaders in processions, and carrying 'sheaf of paddy' joined the rallies.

The BNP chairperson urged people to vote for the alliance to ensure development of the country and to 'protect' its independence and sovereignty.

Criticising the 1/11 change-over, she said the country's economy has been destroyed, political leaders have been harassed by filing cases against them and businessmen were also thrown into jail in the last two years.

As part of her polls campaign, Khaleda will visit northern districts including Bogra, Gaibandha, Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Nilphamari and Panchagarh today.

Army proves

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 predecessors. We will not declare martial law. The problems that developed should be solved politically... That is why we did not step in," he said.

"The officers and other members of Bangladesh Army love this country with heart and soul. They want Bangladesh's development," he said, giving accounts of various achievements the armed forces accomplished in last two years.

He said the army came to the aid of the civil administration and it did the job the caretaker government gave, like checking terrorism, recovering illegal arms and preventing drug trafficking. The army is now happily returning to the barracks following the government's decision, he added.

He said past governments used the army during disasters and it responded to the calls spontaneously. Bangladesh Army has a reputation for sincere work in UN missions, Moeen said, adding, "And we hope we shall continue to have the reputation at home and abroad."

General Moeen said the army played a crucial role in helping farmers when two floods and cyclone Sidr devastated them in 2007.

The army helped develop the education system, the poor in munga-hit areas and provided farmers with seeds, fertilisers and fuel when the food crisis was looming in the country, he added.

The army's role in preparing the voter list, the national ID cards and introducing the automated system in Chittagong Port customs house was very important.

"We have many achievements but the time has not come yet to evaluate. I am sure the people of Bangladesh will rightly evaluate our activities and appreciate them," he said.

BSS adds: Gen Moeen said members of the armed forces would be deployed as per government directives so that voters could exercise their right of franchise without any hindrance.

The army would be deployed up to upazila level and they will be moving to the respective areas by December 20.

Asked about one election commissioner's apprehension that there might be acts of terrorism during the election, Gen Moeen said the army is there to prevent any such thing from happening.

He called upon the people to be vigilant against terrorists and inform law enforcers if they notice any suspicious movement or endeavours of terrorist outfits.

Hillary loves

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 image of America, which was damaged across the world in the past eight years.

She also plans to work for human rights and women's rights in future.

Hillary's husband and former president Bill Clinton also attended the function.

Project Director of Purbachal New Town Project ABM Rafiqul Islam Khan told this correspondent that following the land ministry's approval, the office of the deputy commissioner of Dhaka has already started the process of acquiring land for the flyover.

Earlier, a joint venture of three local firms assigned to conduct feasibility study for the flyover had submitted its draft report in February this year.

"Seven firms who participated in the bid for construction of the flyover have been pre-qualified, and they will submit their estimates within this month. One of them will be selected to do the job," Rafiq said.

The flyover with four loops (two Y loops and two U loops) will be 8.9-metre wide and 48 feet high. Its proposed exit points are at Banani and on Airport Road, Pragati Sarani and Purbachal road.

Flawed city plan

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 for two months but none of the people now raising allegations had turned up to give their reactions," he claimed.

Supporting the secretary, Project Director of DAP Tapan Kumar Nath said execution of the plan was urgent to check the current indiscriminate urbanisation of the capital. "It is high time we implemented the DAP."

Architects, planners and environmentalists have been saying DAP deviated from the original Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP), known as master plan, and demanded a technical committee of professionals to guide the plan.

"It will be a way for land grabbers to legalise filling up of more water bodies and open spaces and legalising already filled up water bodies," said Rizwana, adding that there are many areas in the structure plan of DMDP identified as flood flow zones but DAP identifies those as housing areas.

"Dhaka will be more vulnerable to flood and will be inundated after regular rainfall if the DAP is implemented," observed Prof Nizamuddin Ahmed of the Department of Architecture, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET).

He said DAP proposes to convert fertile agricultural land into plot for residential and multipurpose use. "DAP proposes only 5.05 percent of land as retention pond whereas the figure is 12 per-

cent in the Flood Protection Programmes (FAP)," he said.

Experts and environmentalists said DAP gives priority to high income or rich people neglecting the poor or low-income and middle class citizens. DAP proposes to acquire Badda-Merul residential area for the extension of Gulshan and Banani.

DAP also ignores the demand for enough open space for the city population as it keeps hardly one bigha of open space for every 1000 residents. Such space allocation is very little compared to populous cities like Karachi and Hong Kong.