of mass graves; they dumped some bodies in the sewer, which carried the corpses to the dam near Keranaiganj.

As the mayhem was going on inside, army was rolled in to stop the murderers from coming out of Pilkhana, the BDR headquarters. The plan paid off; the murderers remained confined to the area. The negotiations ensued and the army waited patiently. As the negotiation with the Prime Minister ended, the government declared Prime Ministerial Amnesty to the mutineers. Brig. Gen. (retd) Shahedul Anam Khan, a national security expert, believes it was given on the spur of the moment, without taking into consideration of the ground realities. "In any case, amnesty can only be given for revolt, it can never be applicable to those who have committed murder, arson and other serious kind of atrocities," he says.

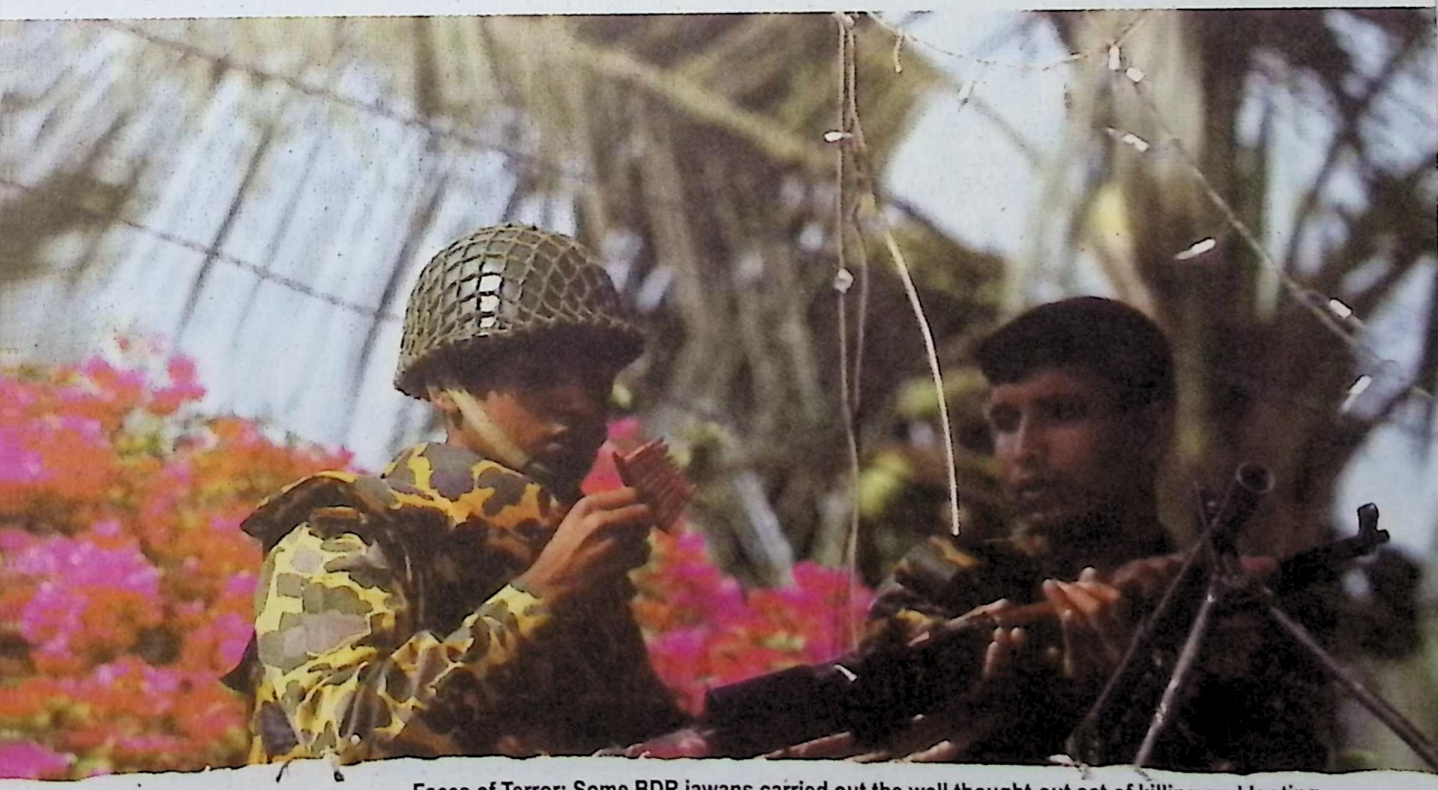
Even though the government's approach of negotiating with the mutineers has saved many lives, it has also brought into light the other possible option the government could have taken. "The government's steps have not caused any further loss of life. There is always the temptation to think that if something could have been done, instantly perhaps...yes I agree, the government could have gone for a swift sharp action to surprise the mutineers, the rebel elements, who were not large in number," Anam says.

He believes that there was a possibility of reducing the mutineers. The former Brigadier General says, "I do not know why it was not done... there may be some tactical problems such as the problem of the built-up area in the BDR Headquarters. There were a large number of families who were eventually saved who would have been killed had the mutineers got a whiff that there was an offensive. The government chose a path that saved more bloodshed.

All the imponderables! In hindsight you can ask why it was not done, but what if the action would have resulted in more bloodshed; in that case we would have asked the government why it had taken action without going for negotiations. There are always two sides to an issue."

What would Brig Gen (retired) Anam, a courageous commander in his prime, have done in such a situation? "If I came to know that some of my officers were in danger, I would have moved a company or two, would have gone for commando style operations, which would send the mutineers in several directions and split them apart. It might have been successful or it might not have, one cannot tell. I would not have waited; I would have gone for it. If I came to know that my officers were treated in such a way, I would not have been able to stand still. I would have relied on the element of surprise, being an infantryman I would have gone the whole hog. Everybody does not have to agree with me. There are so many other factors here-- this is my personal opinion," he answers.

Syed Ashraful Islam, the Local Government Minister and spokesperson, has a different opinion. He says, "The prime minister sent out the troops no sooner had she got the news. But it takes time for the army to reach a certain place. Whatever happened in Pilkhana had happened before the army members had reached the scene. After



Faces of Terror: Some BDR jawans carried out the well thought-out act of killing and looting.