

The army exercised restraint despite emotions running high.

areas, and any exit plan would be heavily dependent on sympathy from the public. The rebels knew that if the atrocities became widely known, they would be mobbed as soon as they scaled the wall.

From the very first day, there was a conscious attempt to rally public support. Questions have also been raised about some of the reporting by sections of the media on the first day of the mutiny. The rebellious jawans were given plenty of airtime, and many talk shows seemed to be taking the mutineer's words at face value. In a hostage situation the spotlight is usually on the condition of the hostages, but in this case the talk seemed to be about how the BDR were oppressed. There was very little focus on the fate of the army officers and their families. Security experts have also raised serious concerns about the power cut which they say allowed thousands of BDR Jawans to escape.

Reports in the Daily Star quoting a mutineer said that the BDR jawans had printed leaflets headlined "Save BDR! Save the Country!" Yet no one knew about this. The intelligence failure is doubly shocking considering that the Prime Minister had been to the Pilkhana on Tuesday. This usually means a blaze of scrutiny from various agencies. At what level did the intelligence failure happen? Did the agencies fail to report anything, or were their warnings ignored?

It has been suggested that an outside group might have assisted in the massacre. Since this episode has seriously weakened both the army and the BDR -- tactically and strategically -- mutterings about a conspiracy cannot be ignored. But talk about an outside group should not distract from the failings within the BDR, the army, the intelligence community, and indeed, the administration. Blaming outside groups is an all too common phenomenon whenever something violent happens- be it student violence or garments workers running amok. It should not stand in the way of identifying weaknesses in our institutions.

The ringleaders of the mutiny had no problems getting a large number of BDR jawans to join them. Although bodies of slain BDR jawans proves that at least some soldiers died trying to resist the mutineers, most of the rank-and-file soldiers either fled or took up arms.

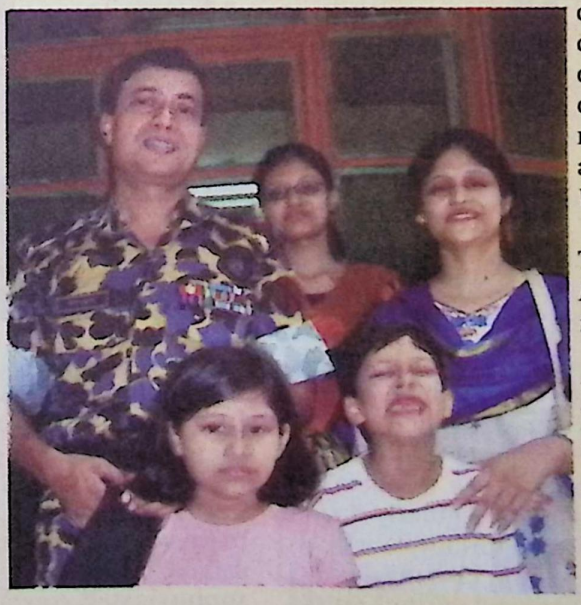
Any investigation into what certainly seems to be a conspiracy needs to dig deep and present us with the whole, unvarnished, truth. The nation stands united today. United in grief, united in seeking justice and united in trying to rebuild what we have lost.

What happened then?

I lost track of time. It was dark. At one point, the guards suddenly went out. I think it was after midnight. I heard voices. It was the Home Minister Sahara Khatun speaking. I couldn't clearly make out the words, but we were very hopeful. I heard the BDR jawans clapping. Then she asked them to hand in their weapons. "Apnara nij dayitte ostro joma diye den". A few minutes later the guards came back and sat down facing us.

Were you hopeful that you would be rescued?

Very much so. She was right outside. One Bhabi had a 4 month old baby who was crying. Elderly people were coughing. We were sure she could hear us. But she never came in. I later heard she rescued two families from the residential quarters and went away.



Late Lt Col. Elahi Manzoor Chowdhury with his family.

When were you finally rescued?

It was in the afternoon of Thursday.

Please tell us your thoughts at this point.

Look, my husband was on three UN missions. Liberia, Kuwait and Ivory Coast. I used to be so afraid for him. But he came back unharmed. His country men did to him what foreign soldiers did not do.

I have only one wish now -- that we should know the truth. His killers should be punished.