

Abuse of religion

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The Sangram quoted him on September 15, 1971 as saying: "Everyone of us should assume the role of a Muslim soldier of an Islamic state and through cooperation to the oppressed and by winning their confidence we must kill those; who are hatching conspiracy against Pakistan and Islam."

These are the few examples of the anti-liberation political elements, which stood against independence of Bangladesh with the Pakistani occupation forces when the freedom fighters were sacrificing their lives to liberate motherland.

Several political elements of Bangladesh had not only campaigned against liberation but also actively helped Pakistani forces commit genocide. Although some of these elements gradually disappeared from the political scene, some others like Jamaat became more and more powerful.

Jamaat leaders had also formed some paramilitary wings like Razakar and Al-Badr during the Liberation War. These wings worked as the auxiliary forces of the Pakistani military and also killed many pro-liberation people across the country.

Records show that Jamaat formed Razakar and Al-Badr to counter the freedom fighters. Razakar force was established by former Jamaat secretary general Moulana Abul Kalam Mohammad Yousuf, while Al-Badr comprised the Islamic Chhatra Sangha activists.

During the nine-month bloody Liberation War, Pakistani forces and their Bangladeshi collaborators committed genocide and war crimes that left three million people killed and around quarter million women violated besides the planned elimination of the best Bangali brains on December 14, 1971.

Anticipating sure defeat, the Pakistani forces and their collaborators -- Razakar, Al-Badr and Al-Shams (mostly leaders of Jamaat and its student front) -- picked up leading Bangali intellectuals and professionals on December 14 and killed them en masse in an attempt to

intellectually cripple the nation. Demand for the trial of war criminals is one of the oldest issues of the country linked to the birth of Bangladesh.

Despite their defeat on December 16, 1971 with the Pakistani army, remnants of the collaborators have apparently never left their fight in the last 38 years. Even the nation witnessed it in the same manner in the national elections in December last year.

While the victorious Awami League had campaigned for secular Bangladesh, their main political rivals campaigned with the slogan "save Islam" through ballots.

Establishing Bangladesh as a secular state was one of the major essence of the liberation struggle and to liberate the country from the Islamic republic of Pakistan.

This historical split has not ended even after 38 years of independence as the political elements against liberation have not been tried for their war crimes.

The trial of war criminals is still a big challenge for the newly elected AL government, which led the War of Independence, even after having huge mandate for its major electoral pledges including trying the war criminals.

The demand for trial of war criminals has always been ignored due to several reasons including pressures from home and abroad to save the killers.

When the nation became hopeful about fulfillment of that demand, it has apparently been sidelined following the carnage at Pilkhana BDR headquarters in the name of a mutiny on February 25-26 that left 74 people including 57 army officers killed.

The brutality of the killings has again reminded the nation of many atrocities by the Pakistani occupation forces in 1971.

The investigators of the carnage suspect the aim of such a heinous act was, among others, to foil the government's firm move to try the war criminals.

-- Edited by Al Mamun Russell

Revamp in Ctg BNP starts soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP will announce the name of convener and joint convener for party's organisational districts under Chittagong division within a day or two as part of revamping the party.

According to the party decision, convener and joint convener will form a full convening committee for each district and later they will arrange council to elect a full committee for their district.

"Process already has been completed but it would be revealed anytime after completing some office works," Goyeshwar Chandra Roy who is leading one of the central teams formed for Chittagong division told The Daily Star yesterday.

Party insiders said the party has 14 organisational districts under Chittagong division and standing committee has discussed the forming of each district and upazila unit committees under the division.

After three days of discussion, Khaleda Zia-led standing committee has decided to form convening committee for all districts in a bid to reorganise the party.

Meanwhile, the standing committee yesterday night started discussion on forming district and upazila unit committees under Dhaka division.

Another central team, comprising party leader Abdullah Al Noman and Mizanur Rahman Minu, formed for Chittagong division also held meeting at BNP chairperson's Gulshan office.

The party leaders said the standing committee, highest policy making body of the party, will take decision on forming upazila, district and city unit committees under Dhaka division after elaborate discussion on the report submitted by the central team.

Noman-led central team after meeting with upazila level leaders submitted its report before the standing committee for taking next steps to rebuild the party committees.

MAHBUB FACES WRATH
BNP Standing Committee Member Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman yesterday faced wrath of a group of party men while speaking at a discussion meeting held at Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) ahead of the Independence Day.

Some BNP workers threw shoes and bottles at Mahbub and shouted 'agent...agent' when he started his speech on the dais, sources at the meeting said.

The senior leaders, including party Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain who presided over the meeting, did not take any instant steps to control the 'unruly activists', some of the party men alleged.

Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain, MK Anwar and Mirza Abbas, among others, spoke at the discussion, organised by BNP.

Govt to restart

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people specially workers.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Food Planning and Monitoring Committee at the food and disaster management ministry yesterday with Food Minister Abdur Razzak in the chair.

Under the OMS programme, the price of rice would be Tk 18 per kg. At present rice is being sold at Tk 21 to Tk 22 per kg in the market.

A high official at the ministry said, the decision on the OMS operation has been taken mainly to give some relief to the low-paid workers.

Most of the mills and factories in Khalishpur area of Khulna have been closed. OMS operation would be launched there so that workers can get rice at a cheaper price.

OMS programme would also be introduced in similar areas of other divisional headquarters, according to the source.

Procurement price for wheat has been set at Tk 16 per kg to help recover the production loss of the farmers, sources at the meeting said.

After the meeting, the minister told newsmen "Earlier we had decided not to purchase wheat. But as the wheat price has dropped we changed the decision to compensate the farmers on production loss."

The wheat will be procured only from wheat producing districts, including Pabna, Thakurgaon and Sirajganj, from April 1 to April 21.

The meeting also discussed production of wheat and market situation. At present wheat is selling in the market at Tk 12 to Tk 12.50 per kg. The production cost is almost the same. If this situation continues, next time no farmer would cultivate wheat, it observes.

Price of wheat has dropped in local market following significant price fall on international market.

Arms, ammo

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They are Subedar Haji Shafiquddin, Habilder Billal Hossain, Nayek Mattur Rahman, Lance Nayek Gausul Azam, Subedar Gofran Malik and carpenter Nayan Kumar.

Court sources said metropolitan magistrates AEM Ismail Hossain and Moazzem Hossain recorded their confessional statements under the section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

CID senior assistant superintendent of police (ASP) Abdul Kahar Akond, who is leading the 250-member team engaged in the investigation, told The Daily Star that all the six persons confessed their involvement in the mutiny and disclosed information what they knew.

He, however, declined to elaborate their confessions.

But another CID official who is also a team member said the six persons narrated the carnage incident and disclosed many names of the mutineers.

Talking to reporters at the press briefing, BDR Director General (DG) Brig Gen Md Mainul Islam, however, could not confirm how many more days would take to complete the assessment procedure though one month has elapsed after the mutiny.

"Everyday we are recovering arms and explosives from different places. This is why it is still not a safe place," he said.

The DG said, "We first kept the BDR members under tent in the field for their safety. But now they are staying at better places."

Brig Gen Mainul said although mutineers did not take away all explosives and grenades, they broke all the boxes containing ammunition and explosives, including grenades.

Regarding the scheduled DG level meeting between Bangladesh and India in New

Delhi on March 30, he said formalities and agendas of the meeting have been curtailed due to the mutiny and only a courtesy meeting will be held. A small BDR team will join the meeting to convey thanks to the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) for playing a very responsible role during the mutiny, the DG said.

Talking about the replacement of BDR officials, Brig Gen Mainul said most of the officials have already joined their designated places amid lack of confidence and are carrying out their duties.

"I am not saying that the BDR officers are able to carry out their duties fully. But the flag meetings are being held and smugglers are being resisted," he said.

Replying to a question, the DG said, "It is not the time to comment whether the existing BDR members would be included in the new organisation of border guards. Opinions are now being collected from various quarters to take decision in this regard."

"BDR members themselves have to regain their confidence through their own activities, including by confessing their involvement in the crime and disclosing information about others who were involved in the massacre," the DG said.

"It is true that many BDR members helped in saving the lives of some army officials and their family members. After the enquiry, authorities will reward those who will be proved innocent and anti-mutineers," he said.

War criminal

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opinion in favour of the 1973 Act. Once the home ministry approaches the law ministry, the law minister will initiate to forge the tribunal, he added.

"Prosecutor and investigation agency will be appointed soon to hold the trial immediately," the law minister said. As per the act the highest punishment for the offence is death penalty.

As per section 6 of the act, a person equivalent to High Court judge or court martial general will head the tribunal. The law minister, however, did not say the number of the tribunals to be formed to hold the trial.

The inter-ministerial meeting on the trial of war criminals was held for the first time nearly two months after a resolution was passed in the parliament unanimously calling on the government to ensure immediate trial of the war criminals.

Home minister Sahara Khatun chaired the meeting which was attended, among others, by State Minister for Home Tanjim Ahmed Sohel Taj, secretaries of the home ministry and liberation war ministry, additional attorney general, inspector general of police (IGP), joint secretary (political) of home ministry and director of national security intelligence (NSI).

The meeting discussed the formation of tribunal to try war criminals, appointment of prosecutor and investigation agency to initiate probe into crimes committed in 1971.

Earlier the government barred suspected war criminals from leaving the country. Sources at the home ministry said a list of war criminals was handed over to the intelligence agencies and the airport authorities.

BDR man

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four died at Pilkhana, one in Joypurhat, one in Rangamati, one in Barkal, one in Jaminipara and latest in Sylhet.

Meanwhile, the authorities concerned have cited heart attack or suicide as cause of deaths in all cases.

Five members died of cardiac arrest while four others committed suicides, according to the authorities.

The DG also said sailing from Khulna, Waliur Rahman was present at Pilkhana during the mutiny. He fled off the BDR headquarters and later reported to Akhila battalion though he was supposed to report to the headquarters, the DG added.

Our correspondent from Sylhet added that Kotwali police recovered Waliur's body hanging with a napkin (gamchha) from a sewerage pipeline inside a bathroom.

BDR official sources said BDR man of 9 Rifles Battalion in Bagaichhari upazila of Rangamati district died of cardiac arrest on March 22.

Earlier, on March 17, a sepoy died at Pilkhana and two days before that, another BDR man allegedly committed suicide at the barracks of Battalion 3 in Joypurhat.

On March 9, a nayek subedar Mozammel Haq reportedly took his life by hanging himself from a bathroom ceiling at BDR 44 Battalion Building inside Pilkhana headquarters.

Two days later, Pesh Imam of the BDR mosque Mohammad Siddiqur Rahman died at DMCH of cardiac arrest.

Militancy not a big challenge yet

Says foreign minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister Dr Dipu Moni yesterday said militancy is not a big challenge for the country right now as a non-communal alliance came to power through a landslide victory in the national election.

"Militancy will not be able to defeat the power of people who elected a non-communal alliance on December 29," she said at a press conference at the foreign ministry.

"Militancy is not Bangladesh's problem alone. It exists all over the world. But businesses and investments were not affected in the countries that fell victim to militant attacks," Dipu Moni said replying to a query on business leaders' concern that some ministers' remarks on militancy might tarnish Bangladesh's image.

The foreign minister, however, said militancy might hamper the country's image if it escalates.

"The world leaders should come forward to find the root of militancy to tackle it," she said.

The Bangladesh government has requested India to provide it with information on construction of Tipaimukh Dam, the foreign minister said.

India said it would not do anything that might affect the ecology of Bangladesh, said Dipu Moni.

However, experts say that construction of the dam will pose a threat to Bangladesh's ecology.

Asked about the government's measures to reduce trade gap between India and Bangladesh, she said, "India has asked Bangladesh to submit the list of products it wants to export to India without any duty."

A Bangladeshi team recently visited India that sought special proposal from Bangladesh on demarcation of maritime boundary based on equidistance method.

India usually presses for demarcation of maritime boundary on the basis of equal distance method, application of which means India will get the Bay of Bengal's large areas, including those claimed by Bangladesh earlier.

Asked whether the US Embassy wrote to the home ministry expressing concern over the government restriction on suspected war criminals' leaving the country, the foreign minister said she knew nothing about any such letter.

Tk 1,100cr

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of transparency in maintaining accounts of expenditure of CAAB allowing massive corruption.

The office of comptroller and auditor general in its reports has already raised objections about Tk 1,100 crore.

Members of the committee raised questions on different matters including anomalies in accounts. "But officials of the civil aviation authority could not give satisfactory answers to the queries," the committee chief said.

Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister GM Quader, who attended the meeting on special invitation, also expressed dissatisfaction on the situation in CAAB, Mohiuddin said.

Mainuddin Khan Badal, a member of the committee, said, "The civil aviation authority came up with half cooked documents."

Another member of the committee, Zainul Abidin Farooque, who is also opposition chief whip, said there was large-scale corruption in the functioning of CABB, which is an autonomous body for management of civil aviation.

It is also responsible for airports' runways and air traffic control, taxiway, terminal buildings, warehouses, control towers, administrative buildings, car parks, air navigation and radio communication system.

"Analysing the facts, the committee thinks, the civil aviation authority was not able to discharge its responsibilities appropriately," Mohiuddin said. It asked CAAB officials to come out of the previous 'culture of corruption'.

The committee also asked CAAB to come up with a report in 15 days on allocations of shopping centres in the country's three international airports in last eight years.

SUB-COMMITTEES

Members of the parliamentary body on jute and textile ministry at its meeting observed that the state-run jute and textile mills have become sick due to alleged corruption and mismanagement.

Emerging from the meeting held at the Sangsad Bhaban, committee chief Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury told reporters that the four sub-committees were asked to come up with their reports in a month.

London NGO

FROM PAGE 1

bearing registration no 1099233 and located at 62 Green Pastures, Stockport as per its website. The Rab however found none at the clinic.

The Rab has meanwhile started a massive hunt to catch main suspects madrasa founder Faisal Mostafiz, 40, son of Mostafizur Rahman alias Golam Mustafiz of Char Umed village in Lalmoan upazila, and Faisal's cousin and caretaker of the madrasa Mohammad Badol Miah. The arrested suspects said the two had gone on a visit to Chittagong.

Talking to The Daily Star, Rab Lt Commander Mamun-ar-Rashid, who led the operation, said they would arrest the two main culprits, which would ultimately lead to revelation of many things.

On Tuesday, the Rab unearthed the mini-ammunition factory inside the madrasa-cum-orphanage and seized 10 firearms, 2,500 bullets, 3,000 grenade ball splinters, 200 gram gun powder, different parts of ammunition and 72 books on Islamic jihad, Abu Al Moududi and Osama bin Laden.

Meanwhile, the home ministry yesterday asked all district administration and law enforcement agencies to remain alert and beef up security and vigilance to avert any untoward incident following unearthing of the ammo factory.

"We have been asked by the home ministry to remain alert and increase security," Deputy Commissioner of Bhola Md Mesbahul Islam told The Daily Star yesterday.

Busting the den, the Rab arrested Maulana Mohammad Russell, Jasim, Abul Kalam and Abdul Halim.

During interrogation they told the Rab that a local committee comprised of Badal Sikder, Humayun, Alam, Shipon and Ripon supervised the activities of Green Crescent with the help of Maulana Mohiuddin, superintendent of Borhanuddin Darul Ulum Qawmi Madrasa and leader of the Qawmi Madrasa Association, the Rab claimed.

They filed two criminal charges with Borhanuddin police against the four militant suspects.

"We suspect that militants used to take trainings at the madrasa at night and perhaps they used the identity of students as a cover," said a Rab official. "We have got some sensational information which we cannot disclose now for the sake of investigation."

Locals said unknown people including women often visit the madrasa by microbus and private cars in the dead of night.

"We have heard sounds of vehicles going to the madrasa around midnight every now and again," said Montu Mian, 65, who lives very close to the boundary wall of the madrasa. He, however, cannot say who the visitors are.

When Faisal Mostafiz, known to the locals as a Bangladeshi expatriate in London, bought land from his father-in-law in 2005, he told the locals that a social welfare organisation will be constructed there, Montu said.

But when construction began in 2007, mysteriously no locals, not even labourers from

Dhaka OCs

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sources at the police headquarters said.

The OCs are: Sirajul Islam, Fausul Kabir, Meer Rezaul Hossain, Mizanur Rahman, Nizamuddin Hawlader, Anisur Rahman, Mohsinul Huq, Mainuddin Khan, Abdul Hannan, Nazrul Islam, Nasiruddin Mandal, Nur Hossain, Mahiuddin Ahammed, Abdul Momin, Kamrul Huq, Salauddin Arshed, Abdur Rahman, Afizul Islam, Mahbub Alam Khan and Shafiqul Islam Sikder.

The other inspectors are: Shibli Noman, Abdul Mannan, Mahabubur Rahman, Kazi Wazed Ali, Jahangir Hossain, Majibur Rahman, Kamal Uddin, Nazim Uddin, Anisur Rahman, Zamir Uddin, Mainul Malek, Samsuddin Saleh Ahmmed Chowdhury, Nasir Ahmed Sikder, Kamrul Alam Mollah and Ramjan Ali.

SCBA poll

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Uddin and advocate SM Rezaul Karim were elected president and general secretary respectively as pro-AL candidates bagged all major posts.

Other office-bearers are advocate Kazi Mohammad Sarwar Hossain and Syed Haider Ali (vice-presidents), advocate Mohammad Ali and advocate Mohammad Badruzzaman Badal (assistant secretary) and advocate Mohammad Habibul Gani (treasurer).

Of the remaining seven posts of executive member, pro-AL candidates got six while pro-BNP candidate got only one post in the committee.

any nearby area, were employed for construction work, he said. Later also, when the madrasa opened no local students got admission, he added.

Locals said when the madrasa started they saw more than 50 students of different ages--both male and female--with turbans on their heads and their bodies covered with veils frequently visiting the madrasa at night and leaving early in the morning.

MAULANA RUSSELL
Arrested Maulana Mohammad Russell used to learn the holy Quran at a mosque beside his home in Joya village of Borhanuddin upazila, some 10km from the Green Crescent madrasa. During a visit to his house, family members told The Daily Star that a person named Zahur Maulana took Russell to Kushtia several years ago.

After returning from Kushtia, Russell, eldest son among the five children of farmer Abu Bashir, was admitted to Darul Ulum Keratia and Qawmi Madrasa in Borhanuddin and studied there for a year before getting a job at the Green Crescent Madrasa through his madrasa chief Mufti Mohiuddin.

"I got him the job," said Mohiuddin. "One day I visited Russell and saw huge political books there. I asked him to leave the organisation. But as he did not respond, I expelled him from my madrasa," claimed Mufti Mohiuddin, whom locals consider as a mysterious person.

There are several hundred unregistered Qawmi madrasas and NGOs in Bhola, according to district administration sources.

The district administration and law enforcement agencies yesterday held a meeting and decided to form a committee with police, the UNO, social welfare officer and ansar personnel to locate all madrasas in Bhola.

GREEN CRESCENT
Created in 1998, the charity NGO mainly operates in Bangladesh but has also started working in Pakistan, according to its website.

In Bangladesh, Green Crescent got registered with Bhola Social Welfare Office on April 13, 1999 with registration no 59/99 as an orphanage and free medical centre.

During the registration, a three-member managing committee was placed with Shafiqur Rahman as its president, Faisal Mostafiz as vice-president and Saifuddin Badal as secretary.

Its registration expired on November 15, 2005 and it has not been renewed.

The organisation has a bank account at the Doulatkhan branch of Uttara Bank.

Independence

FROM PAGE 1
Memorial) in Savar to pay tributes to those who laid down their lives for the freedom of the country.

It is a public holiday. National flag will be hoisted atop across the country. Newspapers will bring out special supplements while Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television and private radio and television channels will telecast special programmes on the significance of the day.

Post and Telecommunication Minister Razuddin Ahmed Razu and State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Tajul Islam released a commemorative postage stamp on the occasion.

MESSAGES
President Zillur Rahman, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia in separate messages have paid homage to the martyrs of the Liberation War.

The president in his message urged all, living at home and abroad, to work united in the spirit of Liberation War to expedite economic stability and democratic advancement.

The Prime Minister called upon the countrymen to remain alert against the concerted ill activities of the anti-liberation, communal, autocratic and identified reactionary forces.

The opposition chief said a deep conspiracy to make the country dysfunctional and dependent is now clear. She urged all to remain alert to resist all kinds of plots.

3 killed

FROM PAGE 16
the mill owner.

On information, fire fighters from Comilla district headquarters reached the spot and extinguished the fire caused by the explosion. They rescued the injured with the help of the locals.

The injured were rushed to Upazila Health Complex and other clinics in Comilla. Neither the upazila administration nor the local media knew anything about the incident, Burichang upazila nirbahi officer said, adding that they are investigating into the matter. Managing Director of Nishad Rice Mill Mahafuzul Islam claimed that the Boiler was properly made gas-free.

260 more workers

FROM PAGE 16
Pakistan, one from Oman and one from Singapore.

Meanwhile, two ministers--foreign and expatriates welfare--are going to Malaysia but their appointment with Malaysian counterparts for discussion on the Bangladeshi labour issue on the sideline of Malaysia's ruling party general assembly are yet to be fixed.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni leaves for Kuala Lumpur today while Expatriate Welfare Minister Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain who is now attending an ILO meeting in Geneva will join there.

"The expatriates' welfare minister has a plan to meet Malaysia's human resources minister and home minister. But, their appointment is yet to be fixed. We can be sure after going to Malaysia," said an official at the expatriates' welfare ministry.

"Malaysia's ruling party Umno has invited our prime minister to attend its general assembly (beginning today). We are basically representing the premier there," Dipu Moni told reporters at a press conference at the foreign ministry yesterday.

Malaysia on March 10 cancelled work visas of 55,000 Bangladeshis, and asked employers to retrench the foreign workers. As a result, on an average 100 to 150 Bangladeshi workers are returning from the country everyday.

Thousands of Bangladeshis

are living in precarious conditions in Malaysia caused by malpractices in the recruitment systems and retrenchments.

Dipu Moni said, "There might be informal discussion on the labour issue. We are hopeful that our workers whose visas have been cancelled will be able to go there in near future."

She said they would try to hold formal discussion, but if it is not possible, they would hold it in near future. All the labour related problems could not be solved immediately but the government will work for further strengthening relations with Malaysia.

Asked about the government's measures to ensure rights of Bangladeshi workers abroad, Dipu Moni said, "We are very much aware of their rights, but it cannot be ensured in all respects. We are discussing with Baira (Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies) on the recruitment system."

She said global financial recession will affect the overseas employments on temporary basis but at the same time some positive signs may also emerge for us.

Kuwait withdrew the restrictions on job transfer of Bangladeshis. Oman opened market for semi-skilled workers while Bahrain for