it was granted 30 more workdays to complete the probe. That deadline expired on May 11.

The spotlight on the committee's work was further intensified when the minister in charge of coordinating the inquiry announced that militant links had been discovered. On March 12, commerce minister Faruq Khan announced to the world that some detained BDR Jawans had something to do with JMB. Then he suggested the involvement of "several militant organisations." His comments were reported with due importance by the international media. The BBC's headline read "Militant link to Dhaka mutiny" (March 12). "Bangladesh's Minister Reiterates Militant's Link to BDR Mutiny" said Voice of America (March 16). Then the commerce minister backpedaled, saying that these were his "personal observations."

Soldiers in uniform breaking the chain of command and going to politicians with demands should in itself raise serious concerns. Did the political leadership fail to realize the gravity of the situation? Did they inform the relevant government ministries of possible unrest? The probe report does not address these questions.







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In the end, the government probe report had more bark than bite. The report, running to 309 pages, failed to dig up the exact cause of the bloody revolt. "It can be said with certainty that real reasons and motives behind this brutal incident could not be clearly determined," committee chief Anisuzzaman Khan told a crowded press conference at the Home Ministry. The committee did not find any political, militant or foreign links to the mutiny.

The government naturally chose to dwell on the fact that it had made the report public, when so many probe reports in the past had been swept under the carpet. "This is historic," said Home minister Sahara Khatun. "Previous governments have never made such reports public before. We gave our word that we would make public the findings of the probe committee and we have done it," she noted.

But the 7-page summary that has been made public fails to shed light on many important issues. The report suggests that the mentality of not accepting army command, resentment over the "Daal-bhat programme" and dispute over pay and benefits formed the backdrop of the mutiny. At the same time the committee notes that such demands do not seem sufficient cause for such a bloodbath. The inquiry report duly praises the government but heavily criticises the intelligence services for their failure to provide advance warning. The report also lists as an auxiliary cause the "irresponsible media coverage" of the different demands of the mutineers by the electronic media and the information ministry's "overall lack of control" over the media.

Although Anisuzzaman's report gives the administration the benefit of every doubt, glaring questions remain. The committee found that the mutineers had met political leaders including MPs before and after the election regarding their demands. Failing to get a response from the political leaders, the mutineers decided to take the Director General of the BDR and other officers hostage.