



Black Night revisited
 Independence Day today
 STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The horrors of March 25 night return to haunt the nation as it observes the 40th Independence Day today, but this time with a mixed emotion of joy and worry as the

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Stage set for war trial

Govt announces tribunal, investigation agency, prosecution unit to try genocide, crimes against humanity, peace

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK and HASAN JAHID TUSHER

On the eve of the anniversary of the genocide committed by Pakistan occupation forces in 1971, the government yesterday announced the tribunal, investigation agency and prosecution team for trying war criminals of the Liberation War.

The landmark announcement came just seven hours before the moment the massacre was committed on the black night of March 25, 1971.

In a packed conference room of the home ministry at 4:00pm, Law Minister Shafique Ahmed declared formation of a three-member tribunal, seven-member investigation agency and a 12-member prosecution team to hold the trial under the country's own law, International Crimes (Tribunals) Act 1973.

Trial of war criminals has long been a demand of the nation and the Awami League promised in its election manifesto to meet that demand.

The investigating agency may kick off investigation from now and even arrest accused war criminals and confiscate their properties in the interest of investigation upon the tribunal's permission. The trial will begin on completion of the investigation, said Shafique.

If any specific evidence is found that a person committed the offence, the trial and investigation will continue simultaneously, he added.

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No innocent to be punished

Tribunal chairman tells Star

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Hours after his appointment as the country's first ever war crimes tribunal chairman, Justice Md Nizamul Huq said yesterday this is a new assignment for him but his task remains the same since as a judge he has to ensure justice.

"We will hold trial of the war criminals in such a manner that the real culprits, and not a single innocent person, are punished," he told The Daily Star.

Justice Nizamul, who is a judge of the High Court,



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Neutral trial, revision of law demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Praising the government's move to form tribunal for trial of war criminals, experts and offspring of liberation war martyrs said the entire process should be carried out neutrally and in a transparent way.

Stressing the need for intensive training of people involved in the process, they said the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, should be revised in line with the international laws.

They said the government should set a time frame for the trial.

Lt Gen (retd) Harun-ar-Rashid, general secretary of Sector Commanders' Forum, welcomed the move and said time has not come yet to say whether we are completely satisfied.

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DOUBLE MURDER IN GULSHAN Teasing ended her school life year ago

MUKHLESUR RAHMAN and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Investigation into the killing of a schoolgirl's parents at Gulshan reveals a year's history of fear and torment.

Killer Rubel attempted to drag Iti from the house in front of her parents on Wednesday in order to forcefully marry her. As her father Sadequr Rahman tried to stop him, Rubel shot him in his head and then his wife as she rushed to her husband's help.

Rubel had been teasing Iti on her way to school, which compelled her to stop attending classes for the last one year.

"I only used to appear in the exams as Rubel set his friends to tease me," Iti told The Daily Star at her residence yesterday.

Rubel then started intruding her house. This unwelcome visit continued for the last six months.

"Rubel also propagated in the area that I was his wife," said Iti. Iti's brother Shihab returned from Malaysia yesterday. He said, "I requested Rubel's maternal uncle Monir over and over to stop Rubel from teasing my sister but it all went unheeded."

Rubel did not dare to intrude her house until Shihab went to Malaysia.

Shihab said, "My father did not file any case against Rubel fearing the worst and now his fear has come true."

Unable to hold her tears, Iti said when Rubel came to their

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Jamaat to wait, see

SQ Chy terms it bid to embarrass BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, whose top brass opposed the country's Liberation War, stays mum about yesterday's formation of the war crimes tribunal.

The party, which termed the freedom fighters "traitors" and "enemies" of Islam and instructed Razakars and other auxiliary forces to destroy them, however, said the trial is a legal matter and lawyers should speak about it.

"We'll give our reaction once we learn about the government's aims and objectives behind the trial," Jamaat Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed told The Daily Star last night.

Intriguingly, the main opposition BNP also remains silent about the much-awaited

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Proud soldier of the soil Sajjad A Zahir, standing first from right, with his co-fighters at Borolekha battlefield of Moulvibazar in October 1971.

PHOTO: COURTESY

Flight to freedom

INAM AHMED and JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

Sajjad lay panting at the bed of the shallow gorge. Bullets were flying overhead. He knew he was safe in the dried-up gorge. But for how long?

He could hear his team leader Pakistani army Capt Munir's voice. "Shoot him! He is fleeing! Shoot!" And he could hear the eardrum-shattering rat-a-tat-tat of a sub-machine gun posted near the watchtower just 700 metres away. Then he heard the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) open fire. Second Lieutenant Q Sajjad A Zahir, later to become Lt Col, smiled. He knew the Indians would react with fire.

He was safe at the bottom of the gorge as no-one would chase him when both sides had opened up. He started crawling fast. The rough surface of the gorge scraped his elbows and knees. But he did not stop. He took maximum advantage during the firing time and moved towards the Indian border as quickly as possible.

The firing had stopped now and he heard the excited voice of Capt Munir from a distance. "Find that bastard! We must find him!"

Sajjad felt the urgency to hide and found a place -- a long narrow channel. He squeezed himself in and lay calm. He could see the blue sky of the northeast frontier border turning grey with the approaching dusk. Sajjad waited for the night to come. He reflected upon the things that had happened in the past few months since March. It was now the

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Tales of Victory in Spirit of Independence

The liberation war of 1971 started with the desire for victory. Our dreams take us forward but it is our determination and hardship that decides our destiny. We, the people of Bangladesh witnessed the victory of 1971, and it is now the time to see victory through the eyes of those 25 victorious people -- the ones who paved their ways against all odds to clinch their dream and realize contentment and prepare themselves to strive for even greater victories in life. These are tales that surround us with astounding inspirations.

On this Independence Day, watch these stories of victory in "Bijoyer Golpo Boli" at 7.45 PM on Desh TV, and stay close to new victories.

The book "Bijoyer Golpo Boli" is available at Jagriti Prokashoni (1st floor, Aziz Supermarket) and at all Grameenphone Centers across the country.