

War criminals in politics means graft

Says Kamal Lohani

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The presence of war criminals in politics and resistance by some politicians against the war crimes trial reveal that corruption has penetrated the country's political and cultural sectors, said journalist Kamal Lohani yesterday.

"Corruption is no more limited only to the social and economic sectors. It has already extended its reach to the political and cultural sectors too.

"It is some infamous politicians who participated in the butchers of 1971 to come back and become involved in the politics of independent Bangladesh," he said.

The veteran journalist was addressing a youth rally at Rabindra Sarobar in the city, attended by a large number of people, especially youths.

Transparency International, Bangladesh (TIB) organised the rally on the eve of International Anti-Corruption Day, being celebrated today.

Lohani pointed out that claims over Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra, the underground radio channel of independent Bangladesh, being run by Indian artistes and engineers during the War of Liberation is just propaganda.

Nothing was accepted from India for the radio station in 1971, except for two recorders and a transmitter, he added.

"Those spreading the propaganda never participated in the War of Liberation. They do not have any idea about the station. We established Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra as a revolutionary radio," said Lohani.

During yesterday's rally, Youth Engagement and Support (YES), a youth platform formed through the inspiration of TIB, staged a drama.

Afterwards, artists from Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra rendered songs based on the War of Liberation.

Speaking at the programme, State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Capt (ret'd) AB Tajul Islam pledged to continue rallying for the completion of the war crimes trial.



PHOTO: STAR

Artists perform at a youth rally at Rabindra Sarobar in the city yesterday organised by Transparency International Bangladesh on the eve of International Anti-Corruption Day.

TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman, said, "Corruption is one of the major obstacles to achieving the objectives of the War of Liberation and to establish a country free of deprivation.

"The struggle for a deprivation-free country is still going on and we do not want to wait for another century to achieve it. Today's youths will be the soldiers of our current struggle against corruption."

TIB Secretary General Selina Hossain urged the youths to pledge to free the coun-

try from corruption. Marking the day, TIB chalked out

Int'l Anti-Corruption Day today

programmes, including a cartoon exhibition and cultural programmes, for the next fortnight.

Meanwhile, the Anti-Corruption

Commission (ACC), its countrywide corruption prevention committees and educational institutions across the country will also observe daylong programmes which will include discussions, debates and documentary screening.

The ACC will inaugurate the programmes with an "anti-corruption rally" from its city headquarters at 10:00am.

Special supplements will also be published in four national newspapers to mark the occasion.

War tapes disappeared after killing of Bangabandhu

Say Betar officials

BSS, Dhaka

Officials of the state-run Bangladesh Betar have said that a number of politically crucial tapes, many containing evidence of crimes against humanity during the War of Liberation, were destroyed or disappeared after the August 15, 1975 carnage.

"Many of the wartime documents containing the statements of top collaborators and leading perpetrators of crimes against humanity disappeared after the carnage," Bangladesh Betar Director General AKM Shamim Chowdhury told the news agency.

Shamim believed that many of the missing tapes could have been used as evidence at the International Crimes Tribunal.

The then Radio Pakistan was used as a "propaganda machine", broadcasting statements of the Pakistani junta's several top collaborators including Ghulam Azam and those who spearheaded a massacre of Bangladeshis, he added.

Betar's Deputy Director Akhtar Jahan Dolon said a senior official of Betar had removed several recorded statements of Bangabandhu and interviews of his family apparently on orders from an influential quarter after the carnage.

"These tapes were never found," he said.

Former Betar regional director and Independence Award recipient Ashfakur Rahman said some military personnel led by Bangabandhu's convicted killer major Dalim seized Bangabandhu's recorded statements and locked those inside a cabinet after August 15, 1975.

"In 1994-1995, the tapes were recovered from an abandoned cabinet on a third-floor corridor," he said.

Betar Transcription Director Kamal Ahmed said his section collected several audio documents containing issues on Bangabandhu and War of Liberation and converted those into digital format.

10 injured as city AL factions clash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 10 Awami League workers, mostly women, were injured in a factional clash of the ruling party's Shyampur-Kadomtali thana unit that broke out during a party rally at Jurain in the city yesterday.

The clash virtually foiled the rally that was called in line with AL's earlier plan to organise rallies in all constituencies in the capital to mobilise public support in favour of the war crimes trial.

AL General Secretary and LGRD Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam was

supposed to address the Jurain rally as the chief guest.

Local AL lawmaker Sanjida Khanam, who was present during the clash, told The Daily Star that a group of party leaders led by Shyampur-Kadomtali thana unit AL President Tofazzal Hossain attacked the rally as she refused to agree to a BNP leader's joining the ruling party there.

Shyampur-Kadomtali thana unit Mahila AL President Rebeka Sultana

claimed that more than 40 AL women activists were beaten up by the rival party leaders led by Tofazzal.

Six of the injured received first aid at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). They are Shimran Akhter, 22, Shahinur Akhter, 22, Sheuli Begum, 40, Shikha Begum, 50, Momena Matin, 40, and Josna Begum, 38.

Meanwhile, Tofazzal said party workers became angry as some

members of the party's local unit were not allowed to address the rally. Also, the names of many associated bodies of the party that took part in the rally were not mentioned through loudspeakers, he added.

The clash erupted soon after the supporters of the lawmaker attacked his followers, he claimed.

Shyampur police said the clash took place centering around the longstanding feud between the two AL factions. No case was lodged and none was arrested in this regard, police said.

Rally over war crimes trial foiled

Shyampur-Kadomtali thana unit Mahila AL President Rebeka Sultana

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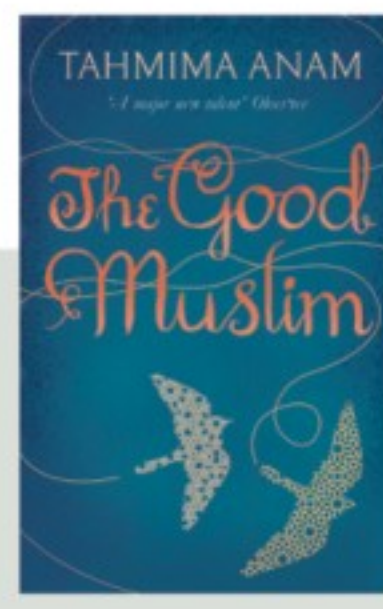
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