

Army foils

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accompanied on the dais by Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Sazzad Siddique, acting judge advocate general of the army.

Also present were Lt Gen Md Mainul Islam, chief of general staff, and Brig Gen Ridwan-Al-Mahmud, director of Military Intelligence.

Reading out a statement, Mashud said the army had unearthed specific information about some serving officers' involvement in the conspiracy.

"This evil plot has been resisted thanks to sincere efforts by the well-disciplined members of the force," he said adding that some serving and retired officials had already admitted their involvement.

Replying to a query, Brig Gen Mashud said around 14 to 16 mid-level officers were believed to have been involved in the bid.

Two retired officers -- Lieutenant Colonel Ehsan Yusuf and Major Zakir -- have been arrested in connection with the plot and they are now being interrogated. Another plotter, a serving major named Syed Mohammad Ziaul Haque alias Major Zia, has been on the run.

Some undisciplined and disgruntled officers had been involved in the attempt to execute the scheme by staying in contact with Major Zia by email and mobile phone.

To unearth details about the scheme, a court of inquiry was set up on December 28 last year. That court is still in operation, Mashud said, adding that stern action would be taken against the plotters once the investigation was complete.

In the past few weeks, rumours ran rife about tension in the army. This apart, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia told a rally in Chittagong on January 9 that army officers had been disappearing.

Meanwhile, army sources at the press briefing said two senior officers have been kept confined at Dhaka cantonment log area for interrogation.

According to the statement read out by Mashud, Ehsan and Zakir were arrested after they confided in two serving officers on December 13 and 31 last year their intent to topple the government and tried to provoke them into joining the bid by ceasing to be loyal to the government.

Informed by the two serving officers, the army authorities arrested Ehsan and Zakir.

On December 22, Major Zia met a serving officer and tried to get him involved in the anti-state plot.

As the officer approached informed his high command about the plot, the authorities telephoned Zia to join the Dhaka cantonment log area by cancelling the leave that he was on after completing training at Military Institute of Science and Technology (MIST). But Zia disobeyed the order and absconded. He is still involved in subversive activities against the army, the statement said.

On January 9 and 10, he

sent two "operational orders" to different serving officers through email and wanted to know from like-minded serving and on-study [MIST students] officers about preparations for the overthrow bid. He was relentless in his efforts to influence the officers into executing the plan on January 10.

On the same night, he called a non-resident Bangladeshi named Ishraq Ahmed, possibly living in Hong Kong, and discussed the "developments and execution process of the coup".

Maj Zia told Ishraq to ask local and international media to telecast and publish reports on "the army coup".

Zia had long telephone conversations with some officers at different cantonments, the army sources said. He urged all the officials, some mid-ranking and some junior, to come out of the cantonment with their forces to establish Islamic rule in the country.

At the press briefing, Brig Gen Mashud called upon all to thwart any plot that would harm the army's hard-earned image and said all the members in the army were ready to sacrifice their lives for the country's sovereignty and integrity.

It was not acceptable that any vested quarters, foreign or national, would implement their evil design by using the army, he added.

The army spokesperson also said a newspaper [Daily Amar Desh] on January 3 had published a fabricated story based on Maj Zia's Facebook write-up titled "Mid-level officers of Bangladesh Army are bringing down changes soon" as a motive to create confusion about the security force.

On January 8, the banned fanatical organisation Hizb ut-Tahrir distributed across the country provocative leaflets based on Zia's Facebook post.

The next day, a major political party of the country alleged, in line with the fabricated, misleading and instigating reports, that "even army officers were disappearing", giving rise to unexpected debate in the army and among conscious citizens, added the brigadier general.

Mashud sought the cooperation of all in overcoming the "temporary challenge", and inform the authorities of the whereabouts of Maj Zia.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Asked whether the plot was still on, Mashud said there was an "ill attempt" and the army had "succeeded in stopping it."

Queried what kind of coup attempt it was, he again said it was an ill attempt and in due time the military came to know about it and successfully quelled it through the combined output of command channel and discipline.

On a media report regarding the name of a major general of Comilla Cantonment, Mashud said, "He is now in the Log Area Sadar and staying at his residence with his family."

Asked whether he was under house arrest, he said there was no term as 'house arrest' in army law.

Replying to a question on whether any foreign state or force was involved in the coup plot, he said, "We will not brush aside the possibility and the investigation is going on by taking everything into consideration. We cannot say anything specifically before the probe ends."

To a query about the ranks of the officials involved in the failed attempt and if there was any such attempt outside Dhaka cantonment, he said, "I firmly want to say that the number is very, very limited. We have so far learnt that there are mid-level officers and a retired lieutenant colonel involved."

He also said fugitive Zia contacted one or two officials outside Dhaka cantonment over telephone, but "be clear that there was no move or action".

Queried as to whether any steps would be taken against Hizb ut-Tahrir and those talking about "disappearances of the army men", Brig Gen Mashud said if the probe body recommends, action can be taken as per the law of the country.

"We have arrested two and investigation is going on about others whom we cannot arrest without hard evidence. The number is in no way more than 14 and 16," he said replying to another query.

He also said two to three have already admitted their links with that banned Hizb ut-Tahrir.

Asked whether non-resident Bangladeshis would be brought back home for trial if they were found complicit, Mashud said the high government officials had already started the initiative to locate him [Ishraq] and take necessary measures.

India relaxes

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room for local sourcing, which would be determined on the basis of the nature and requirements of the projects.

The decision was reached at a high-level official meeting between the two countries, held at the Economic Relations Division (ERD) in the city's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar.

The meeting also decided to finalise three more project deals under the credit line in next month.

"India will do everything possible to expedite the project implementation and bridge the other related differences," ERD Secretary Iqbal Mahmood told BSS.

The Indian team was led by Radhika Lokesh, a joint-secretary of external affairs ministry, while ERD Additional Secretary Arosto Khan headed the Bangladesh side.

Bangladesh struck the billion-dollar credit deal with India on August 6 in 2010 for developing infrastructures, mostly in the communications sector.

Vice Chancellor Prof Moinuddin Khan and Prof Dr Iqbal Hossain also spoke at the dialogue.

Worker's death

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demonstrations, demanding immediate arrest of the bus driver and construction of a footbridge and speed breakers.

Angry workers also vandalised around 20 vehicles during the demonstration that continued till 10:45am compelling police to charge baton, said police.

Later, the police made repeated assurances for the workers' demands to be met, after which the situation was brought under control, said SM Kamruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Joydevpur Police Station.

The bus driver fled after the incident and nobody has been detained in this connection, he added.

BOAT CAPSIZE

33 rescued, many still missing

UNB, Cox's Bazar

A motorboat with about 150 passengers on board capsized in the Bay near the Saint Martin's island yesterday morning.

Coast Guard so far rescued 33 persons while others were feared missing.

The rescued persons were kept at the coast guard station at Shah Porir Island.

Coast Guard officials said on information of trawler capsize they rushed to Naikhondia area of the Bay and rescued 33 persons.

The rescued persons said 50 persons started the journey on January 13 from Boalkhali to reach Malaysia. The trawler anchored at the Shah Porir island for a couple of days from where about 100 another were taken aboard.

The trawler resumed the journey early Wednesday. But the lower part of the overloaded boat was damaged while passing by the Saint Martin's Island and later it capsized in the Bay.

Conspiracy

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minister adding, "It is not the government alone; all are responsible for protecting democracy as there is no future for Bangladesh without it."

Huge sacrifices have been made to attain democracy in Bangladesh and the democratic right of franchise has been ensured. In a democratic country, there is no room for plotting a coup, he maintained.

Although such coups took place in the past, the days are now gone for hatching a conspiracy because people believe in the constitution and democracy, insisted the government spokesperson.

He asked the conspirators to surrender so that they can come within a legal framework.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said hundreds of people had to die in the politics of coups and murder.

"I don't want to hear mothers crying [over losing their children]. I want democracy and peace," she said at a view exchange meeting with her party's Khagrachhari district unit leaders at Gono Bhaban around 12:30pm.

She said after the assassination of the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, elements in the army had staged around 18 to 19 coups, for which thousands of people had to die.

"Who are the beneficiary of the politics of killings and coups?" questioned the prime minister.

It is mainly the armed forces officers and soldiers who were killed in those coups, mentioned Hasina.

"Those who captured power by keeping weapons on their shoulders were mostly affected. When a coup took place in 1977, Ziaur Rahman [former president and founder of BNP] killed 17 officers of the air force. They faced court-martial and were taken to the firing squad on the same day," maintained the AL chief.

2nd phase

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event since 1946, which was first held at Kakrail Mosque. Due to incres in 1966, the present venue at Tongi was chosen to hold the Ijtema.

The Ijtema features sermons on fundamental issues of Tablig, prayer for spiritual emancipation, exaltation and welfare of the Muslim community.

Preparations for smooth holding of the Ijtema are almost complete with thousands of volunteers working round the clock to ready the 160-acre venue for accommodating the devotees.

Multi-tier security measures have been taken in and around the ground to avert any unpleasant incident, said Dhaka Metropolitan Police sources.

Around 10,000 security personnel from different agencies will be posted to maintain law and order.

Like the first phase, law enforcement agencies have set up 11 watchtowers and check posts at every entrance, while several CCTVs have been installed across the venue to monitor the Ijtema ground.



Brigadier General Muhammad Mashud Razzaq addresses a press conference at the Army Officers Club in Dhaka cantonment yesterday. Seated next to him is Lt Col Muhammad Sazzad Siddique.

PHOTO: STAR

The army statement

FROM PAGE 1

I, Brigadier General Muhammad Mashud Razzaq, director of Personnel Services Directorate, and Lt Col Muhammad Sazzad Siddique, acting judge advocate general of the army, welcome you to today's press briefing.

2. In today's press briefing I will first read out our statement. After I conclude you may ask questions, if you have any. I hope you have got copies of my statement. To allow all to speak, an official/journalist will place one question and mention his name and the media he represents.

3. Bangladesh Army, which was born through a glorious and bloody struggle for liberation, has earned its reputation by working sincerely at home and abroad and standing by the people of all strata.

At a time when the army was working hard to reach a higher level of quality through procuring military hardware and ensuring well-disciplined training in a well-organized manner under a democratic system of governance to arrive at Forces Goal 2030, it finds itself going through another challenging chapter in the aftermath of a legacy left behind by history. We seek the help of democratic and patriotic people through you in facing this temporary challenge.

4. Recently at the instigation of some non-resident Bangladeshis some retired and serving army officers with fanatical religious views and capitalizing on others' fanaticism led a failed attempt through their ill motivated activities to thwart the democratic system of Bangladesh by creating disorder in the army. The attempt has been foiled with the sincere attempts of the members of Bangladesh Army.

5. With the motive of creating disorder in the army a retired Lt Colonel on December 13, 2011 instigated a serving Major to join him in executing his malicious plan. The Major instantly passed on the matter through his chain of command and the retired officer was arrested under articles 2 (1) (D) (i) and 73 of the Army Act.

Another accomplice of the retired officer Major Syed Ziaul Haq on December 22, 2011 met with a serving officer and instigated him to engage in activities subversive of the state and democracy. The serving officer informed the proper authority of the matter, as a result of which the leave and

transfer order of Major Zia, who had recently completed his long term training, was cancelled. He was informed over telephone on December 23, 2011 and ordered to immediately join Army headquarters Log Area in Dhaka. Major Zia, who was on leave, remained fugitive and has been trying to continue "subversive" activities against the army.

Besides, on the basis of confirmed information, another serving officer of major rank was arrested on December 31, 2011 under the above mentioned articles of Army Act for instigating other in-service officers into refraining from being loyal to the government.

6. Against the backdrop of a leaking of partial information about the conspiracy to create disorder in the army and the arrest of some individuals, fugitive Major Zia sent an e-mail to his acquaintances describing an imaginative and incredibly cooked up story of his so-called arrest and torture. Later, one Abu Sayeed uploaded the e-mail in a blog, "Soldier's Forum", on the social network Facebook.

Later, the said officer sent out two e-mails containing imaginary and highly controversial contents styled "Mid-level Officers of Bangladesh Army are Bringing Down Changes Soon" through the internet.

On January 3, 2012, the daily Amar Desh, as part of yellow journalism and with an ill motive to spread confusion about Bangladesh Army, published the internet message of fugitive Major Zia.

In a similar vein, the banned fanatic organization Hizbut Tahrir on January 8, 2012 circulated provocative leaflets based on fugitive Major Zia's internet message throughout the country.

The following day (January 9) a major political party of the country, in tandem with the cooked up, confusing propaganda, alleged that "incidents of disappearance" had been taking place in the army, a stance which gave rise to an unwarranted, provocative debate among all conscious citizens, including those in the army.

Bangladesh Army takes this opportunity to thank all responsible print and electronic media which demonstrated their sense of professionalism and responsibility by not publishing the confusing information in the greater interest of the country.

7. On the basis of elaborate information provided

by the two retired officers taken under arrest and other serving officers, specific information about the involvement of some serving officers of the army in the conspiracy to overthrow the democratic system of government through using the army has been unearthed.

Some undisciplined and derailed army officers were actively involved in executing the vile conspiracy of fugitive Major Zia by misusing mobile phones and the internet. A court of enquiry was constituted on December 28, 2011 to unearth elaborate information about the plot and its proceedings are on-going.

8. To execute the anti-state conspiracy by using the army fugitive Major Zia on January 9 and 10, 2012 sent copies of two imaginary operation orders to different serving officers through e-mail.

Besides on January 10, 2012 fugitive Major Zia, contacting some like-minded officers working in different formations or studying in different institutions over mobile phone, wanted to know about preparations for the so-called military coup as per their plan and motivated them to execute the plot.

On the same night, fugitive Major Zia contacted expatriate Bangladeshi (now probably in Hong Kong) Ishraq Hossain (father: M Raquib, Deen Manzil, village; Balubhara, union: Barshail, thana and district: Naogaon) several times. During conversation they discussed the progress of the coup and the process of implementing it. Fugitive Major Zia asked him to publish news in the media at home and abroad about the army coup in Bangladesh. Ishraq directed fugitive Major Zia to phone him at around 2 am on January 11 if the coup was completed by then so that he could reach Bangladesh by air in the shortest time. It is assumed that Mr Ishraq gave this instruction with the aim of taking advantage of conditions in a post-coup situation.

9. At a time when Bangladesh Army has been trying to organize itself as a force rich in quality through various reform activities under a political government established through democratic means, various evil forces have been making ill attempts to ride piggy-back on the army a patriotic state force- to destroy democracy. As in the near and distant past they have used the sentiments of fanaticism, propaganda and rumours. Some individuals

have been hyperactive in observing religious rituals, and, dissociated from family bonds, jobs and business, have joined these conspirators.

Newspapers with vested interests, banned religious militant organizations and platforms of such political parties have been used for conducting their propaganda.

In the past different evil forces banked on Bangladesh Army which grew out of victory in the Liberation War to create disorder and gain political advantage. Sometimes they succeeded and on some occasions they failed. Even so, as an organization Bangladesh Army has been carrying the burden of the disrepute such forces have earned in the past.

The professionally efficient and well disciplined members of Bangladesh Army would like to say, "We do not want to bear this liability on the shoulders of our organization."

10. It seems that the total episode is an ill attempt by some retired and serving army officers at the instigation of Bangladeshi citizens at home and abroad capitalizing on the sentiments of the fanatics. These individuals by taking all opportunities and advantages in the army and the country have been getting involved with vested interest groups and have been trying to tarnish the enviable success, development and unity of Bangladesh Army.

Some retired and serving officers involved in the conspiracy have already admitted to their involvement unhesitatingly. After enquiry stern legal action will be taken against the guilty persons.

Such vile attempts must be resisted firmly in order to uphold the hard-earned image of the army and to smoothen the path to progress.

Every army member is ever ready to make sacrifices to protect the sovereignty and integrity of the motherland.

Nobody wants that any local or foreign vested interest group will realise their ill motive by banking on the sacrifices of the members of the army.

Fugitive Major Zia needs to surrender to the army immediately in order to enjoy legal protection and justice. All are requested to inform the proper authorities if they come by any information about the present whereabouts and activities of fugitive Major Zia. Thank you all.

62pc political

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interest in teaching in schools, thriving private coaching business, excessive fees or donations for students' enrollments, lack of teachers' skills and low salary structure for teachers.

"An MP [lawmaker] becomes the chairman of seven to eight schools. If this continues, how will the standard of education go up? Educationists should hold the post of governing body chairmen," said Khalilur Rahman, professor of DU Biochemistry department.

There are many cases of teachers not giving the right marks if the students don't go to them for private coaching, he said, suggesting a stop to private coaching.

Dr Shah Kawthar Mustafa Abululayee, professor of DU Philosophy department,

questioned how morality could be expected from a teacher who is recruited in exchange for bribes.

Citing an example, he said a teacher was enlisted in the MPO (monthly pay order) in exchange for Tk 4 lakh. Political decision is imperative to stop such major anomalies, he noted.

ASA University professor Dr Helal Mohiuddin said an alliance headed to be formed for social activism to help upgrade ethical standards of education of the country.

DU Philosophy department Professor Anisuzzaman, Journalism department professor Robaet Ferdous, law department teacher Hafizur Rahman Curzon, National Academy for Educational Management's Director General Dr Shamsur Rahman, ASA University

utes after Sohel's death, people led by Mujibur and Iqbal fled the scene.

Traders of the market told police that Mujibur's group had launched the attack and opened fire on them.

Locals said around eight months ago Mujibur claimed that he had bought the market and he had since been trying to evict the traders so that he could build a multi-

storied building on the piece of land.

However, a group of traders of the market had been claiming that they had bought the land and were in the possession of some shops.

A faction of the AL sided with the traders while the other backed Mujibur.

The AL leaders allegedly involved could not be reached by The Daily Star.