

PHOTO: ZAHEDUL I KHAN

The Martyred Intellectuals Monument in Rayerbazar.

Chowdhury Mueen Uddin's name on the list of MCB office bearers. It is a moment when I ask myself how such a notorious man can grace the councils of such a reputed organisation as the MCB. I sit down, have a mug of coffee before writing a letter to Iqbal Sacranie, president of the organisation. I give him the facts relating to Mueen Uddin, explaining to Sacranie that the man fled Bangladesh in December 1971 once it became known that he had been involved in the liberation-eve murder of Bengali intellectuals. I also remind Sacranie of the contents of the Channel Four documentary 'War Crimes File', where additional information about Mueen Uddin can be had.

Having mailed the letter to Iqbal Sacranie, I wait for a response. And I discover in the process, even as I wait, that a young Bengali woman at Oxford I had earlier known at Dhaka University and with whom I have reconnected in London is linked to the MCB's humanitarian activities. She knows Mueen Uddin, but she knows nothing of him or of his past. I give her a full account of what the man did in the dying days of East Pakistan in Bangladesh and how he fled the new country and made his way to Britain. She looks worried and tells me neither she nor anyone else has known of Mueen Uddin's past. So that is that.

A full month goes by. And then, on a cloudy, cold London day, Iqbal Sacranie's response to my letter reaches my table. He tells me he has had a talk with Chowdhury Mueen Uddin about the contents of my letter. Mueen Uddin, he informs me in very formal language, has denied the charges I have made against him in the letter. He did not commit any wrong in occupied Bangladesh in 1971. Besides, Sacranie tells me, Mueen Uddin has sued the government of Bangladesh over the charges levelled at him.

I sit at my desk once more, have a mug of coffee again, as I write to Sacranie yet once again. This time the point is straightforward: go into the record of the Bangladesh war, study the news reports which emerged in the Bangladesh and British media on Mueen Uddin's insidious role in 1971, conduct an internal inquiry about the man at the MCB and see what results emerge. Iqbal Sacranie does not reply to this second letter.

Like millions of other Bengalis, I am happy, indeed cheered by all this renewed spotlight on a man who helped to do away with far better men than he, back in that dark year for the country he killed for. At some point, there must be comeuppance coming his way.

And let's talk about other living, aging Razakars some other day.

The writer is Executive Editor, The Daily Star.