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# Virtual death of a force

Over 9,000 jawans lost job following mutiny

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Over 9,000 jawans of the erstwhile Bangladesh Rifles lost their jobs for involvement in the mutiny at Pilkhana headquarters and 46 other units across the country on February 25-26.

The 33-hour rebellion that killed 74 people including 57 army officers at Pilkhana headquarters of the then BDR shook the country to the core and prompted the authority to rename the over 200 year-old force to Border Guard Bangladesh or BGB.

Following the bloodbath, the paramilitary force underwent massive structural and legal reforms including changes in name, flag, monogram and uniform.

Eleven special courts and 60 summary trial courts headed by the commanding officers of different units were set up to try those involved in mutiny.

In those courts, 17,306 border guards were convicted.

"Of the convicts, 9,019 were either dismissed or sent into forced retirement," Major General Aziz Ahmed, Director General of BGB, told The Daily Star in a recent interview.

The rest 8,287 either faced different jail terms or punishments like demotion, withholding of promotion and increments, and reprimand. Most of them, however, retained their jobs, the BGB chief said.

Earlier, the maximum penalty for rebellion was seven years in jail as per the Bangladesh Rifles Order 1972, but the

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PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Family members of some Pilkhana massacre victims arrive at the court to hear the verdict in the BDR carnage case.

## AL thinks justice ensured

BNP unhappy at Pintu's conviction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling Awami League has said the families of those killed in the BDR carnage got justice through yesterday's verdict, while the main opposition BNP has refused to make any comments on the verdict saying it is an issue of the force.

The main opposition party only protested the verdict against its leader and former lawmaker Nasir Uddin Pintu, who was given life term in the case, and demanded his immediate release.

The AL said the government had promised to try the culprits responsible for the killings of 74 people including 57 army officials, which has been kept through the verdict.

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## Next legal steps to take 3 years

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

At least three years will be needed to execute death sentences of the convicts in BDR carnage case, if the High Court and the Appellate Division affirm their convictions after hearing and disposing of their appeals.

Two criminal law experts -- Attorney General Mahbub Alam, and Khurshid Alam Khan, editor of Dhaka Law Report -- gave the view to The Daily Star yesterday.

The trial court will send the record of the case along with the verdict, which sentenced 152 people to death, as a "death reference" to the HC within next seven days for examining the sentences, they said.

The convicts can also file separate appeals with the HC in 60 days after receiving the copy of the verdict, challenging their convictions as per the relevant provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and the Limitation Act.

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## Justice, finally

State counsels happy; defence says it's a farce

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The Director General of Border Guard Bangladesh and the state counsels expressed satisfaction with the verdict over February 2009 carnage at then Bangladesh Rifles headquarters, saying that the long-awaited justice was served.

The defence counsels, however, termed the trial 'a farce' and said, they would appeal against the verdict.

A Dhaka court yesterday awarded death to 152 mutineers, life term imprisonment to 161 and sentenced 256 others to different terms in jail for their roles in the February 2009 carnage at Pilkhana headquarters of the frontier force, now renamed Border Guard Bangladesh.

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## 78 deaths in detention shrouded in questions

M RAHMAN

Deaths of at least 78 border guards, most of whom were detained after the BDR carnage in 2009, still remain a big mystery as most of them died of "heart attack" but had injury marks in their bodies.

As many as 4,089 accused mutineers were detained in the capital following the carnage at the former Bangladesh Rifles headquarters where 74 people including 57 army officers were killed.

Allegations were rife that many of the detained were ruthlessly tortured during interrogation by army, Rapid Action Battalion and other government agency personnel before they were sent to prison.

Despite widespread controversy and repeated urge from the rights bodies for proper investigation into the deaths, the government only issued death certificates to settle the matter.

Home Secretary CQK Mustaq Ahmed told The Daily Star the jail authorities concerned had conducted investigations, so the ministry did not initiate further probes.

The home ministry had no plan to further investigate the incidents, said

LIST OF BDR MEN WHO DIED IN CUSTODY - SEE ONLINE

SEE PAGE 12 COL 1

## Reforms on to streamline BGB

Chief tells The Daily Star

SHARIFUL ISLAM

The border force has seen major reforms, from its restructuring and enactment of stringent laws ensuring death penalty for mutineers to increased benefits, since the rebellion in the force in February, 2009.

The changes came upon the findings and recommendations made by different enquiry committees that probed the February 25-26 bloody mutiny in the then Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), later renamed as Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

Director General (DG) of the paramilitary frontier force

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Maj Gen Aziz Ahmed



All smiles, a woman looking at the prison van carrying her husband acquitted in the Pilkhana carnage case yesterday. The man was a sweeper at the BDR headquarters where a bloody mutiny broke out in 2009.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

## Hazaribagh on list of most polluted spots

Report says 200m people at risk globally from toxic pollution

AFP, Geneva

Hundreds of millions of people worldwide risk exposure to toxic pollution, environmental groups warned Monday, publishing a list of the world's worst areas, including tannery-infested Hazaribagh of Bangladesh.

"We estimate that the health of more than 200 million people is at risk from pollution in the developing world," said Richard Fuller, who heads US-based environment watchdog the Blacksmith Institute.

The institute and Green Cross Switzerland published a new top 10 list of the "World's Worst Polluted Places" -- their first since 2007 -- based on more than 2,000 risk assessments at contaminated sites in 49 countries.

This year's list includes Hazaribagh in Bangladesh, which is home to most of the country's 270 registered tanneries.

Every day, they collectively dump around 22,000 cubic litres of toxic waste, including cancer-causing hexavalent chromium, into the Buriganga, Dhaka's main river and key water supply.

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The Daily Star

Integral Energy Limited

ONLINE POLL

Do you think it was justified for the garment factory owners to reject the government-formed wage board's recommendation of Tk 5,300 as minimum monthly salary for workers?

Yes (21%)  
No (79%)

TOTAL VOTES: 302

TODAY'S POLL

Do you think violence, vandalism, bomb blasting and killing people in the name of hartal could be a democratic right?

PLEASE CAST YOUR VOTE AT

www.thedailystar.net

PRAYER TIMING November 6

Fajr	Azan	Jamaat
5:00	5:35	
Zohr	12:45	1:15
Asr	3:45	4:00
Maghrib	5:25	5:30
Esha	7:00	7:30

Source: Islamic Foundation

## India launches Mars mission

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India yesterday successfully launched its first mission to Mars, aiming to reach the Red Planet with a programme showcasing its low-cost space technology.

A red-and-black rocket carrying an unmanned probe was blasted into an overcast sky at 02:38pm from the spaceport in Sriharikota in southern India.

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## Chy Mueen terms trial 'corrupt'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Condemned war crimes convict Chowdhury Mueen-Uddin has said he would be willing to face a "new trial to clear his name".

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## 60-HOUR HARTAL

## Clashes, arson mark 2nd day

STAR REPORT

At least 192 people were injured in clashes, arson, vandalism and blasts during the second day of the opposition's countrywide 60-hour hartal yesterday.

Although no life was lost yesterday, pro-hartal pickets torched over 75 vehicles, blasted around 90 crude bombs, removed rail clips from railway track and hurled cocktails at law enforcers across the country.

Among the injured are two cameramen from Desh TV and Channel-i and 15 policemen.

The BNP-led 18-party opposition combine enforced the

HARTAL KILLINGS SLATED IN JS - PAGE 10

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## SECOND DAY INTO SHUTDOWN

## Vegetable prices go up further

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The common man is the one who has to count out extra bucks for essential commodities, as the ongoing shutdown is fuelling prices by disrupting the supply chain throughout Bangladesh.

In kitchen markets across Dhaka, prices of almost all vegetables soared by Tk 5-Tk 20 a kilogram despite a thin presence of customers.

People in Chittagong also felt the pinch

of increased rice and vegetable prices, as transporters refused to run vehicles on the roads for risks of arson and vandalism by picketers.

In Moulovibazar district, prices of rice and onions rose for a supply shortage.

The price of cooking oil and flour in Dinaipur also shot up as supply, mainly from Dhaka, came to a halt.

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