

STUPID REMARK, SCATHING REPLY



"Did any country win the war of independence anywhere without internal resistance? If the people did not show the courage to stay inside the country to provide shelter and treatment to the guerrilla fighters, how could we have won the war? Khaleda Zia and Goyeshwar Roy committed crimes against the state. Challenging the Liberation War is tantamount to negating the existence of Bangladesh. Khaleda Zia and Goyeshwar Roy do not believe in the existence of Bangladesh. That is why they are so adamant to challenge established historical facts regarding the number of martyrs and the contribution of intellectuals."

SHAHRIAR KABIR, WAR CRIMES RESEARCHER



"These remarks are nothing new. We have been hearing these from Pakistan-minded people since our liberation. Our independence was declared on March 26. Why would we leave our own country? We were captives, but we were in our own country. Those who were teachers, doctors and journalists, they stayed back for public interest, which is patriotism."

MEGHNA GUHATHAKURTA, DAUGHTER OF MARTYRED INTELLECTUAL PROF JYOTIRMOY GUHATHAKURTA



"Those who make such comments are not real patriots. A true patriot can never utter such disparaging comment on the country's best of the sons."

MAJ (RETD) RAFIQUUL ISLAM, A SECTOR COMMANDER AND AWAMI LEAGUE MP



"Such a remark against the brightest intellects of the country is an insult not only for individuals but also for the whole nation. He doesn't have the least idea how the Liberation War was fought."

DR SARWAR ALI, TRUSTEE, LIBERATION WAR MUSEUM



"Those who show such utter disrespect to the martyred intellectuals are completely stupid. His comment is tantamount to sedition as he has stigmatised the whole nation by giving bad names to the best sons of the soil. He should be given exemplary punishment in legal ways."

MA HASAN, CONVENER OF WAR CRIMES FACTS FINDING COMMITTEE

Goyeshwar goes crazy

FROM PAGE 16
that intelligent, why did they stay in their homes in Bangladesh till 14 [of December 1971]? Tell me."

It is a historical truth that the Pakistan army and their collaborators carried out one of the world's most murderous attacks on the eve of Bangladesh's victory.

Sensing an imminent defeat, they on December 14 started abducting and killing teachers, writers, doctors, lawyers, journalists and other professionals to cripple the nation intellectually.

did the rest 27 lakh come from?"

The official number of 1971 martyrs is 30 lakh (three million). During the nine-month war, about 2.5 lakh women were raped by the Pakistani forces and their local collaborators.

While some 10 million people fled the war to take shelter in India, millions more were internally displaced, historical documents show.

He said people died on the night of March 25, 1971, due to the ignorance of the leaders and due to the absence of advance warning. "But those who died on December 14 didn't die because they didn't know. They remained in their homes willingly; because till then they went to their offices regularly and drew salaries from the Pakistani government."

He added, "Those who drew salaries from Pakistan became freedom fighters and those who went unful and fugitive became Razakars. These things should be made clear."

"I will also call on the journalist brothers: You carry out a survey. Ask people to send you through text messages the number of people killed in their areas in 1971. And you will get the statistics. There is no need to debate over it."

He said, "Khaleda Zia said there was controversy; she neither said the number was less nor said it was more. This was also discussed in parliament in 1991. Late MP Col Akbor Hossain had raised the issue."

Violence continues

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In Chittagong, BNP leader Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin came under attack during campaigning for party candidate at Rangunia yesterday. Nine people were injured in the attack, reports our correspondent there.

long electoral campaign ends at 12:01am Tuesday, 32 hours prior to voting.

Candidates started campaigning on December 9 without electoral symbols, and with electoral symbols from December 14.

ELECTION MATERIALS
The Election Commission had already started sending electoral materials to the municipalities, said EC officials.

Over 2.17 crore ballot papers have already been sent to the electoral areas from the Bangladesh Government (BG) Press in the capital, said EC's Deputy Secretary Shamsul Alam.

Besides, ballot boxes and other materials would be sent from district election offices concerned to the municipalities, he said.

ELECTION OBSERVERS
Over 4,000 observers from 30 local organisations would monitor the polls. Besides, at least two international organisations have expressed interest in observing the polls. But that would be finalised in a day or two, said EC officials.

PRESS CONFERENCE OF AL, BNP
At a press conference yesterday, AL Joint General Secretary Mahbulul Alam Hanif claimed that the BNP was conspiring to stay away from the polls sensing its defeat. He urged the BNP to stay in the race.

Meanwhile, BNP Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi at a press briefing came down hard on the EC claiming that the commission had turned a blind eye to the violations of electoral code of conduct by the ruling party men.

RESIST MILITANCY
According to the home ministry, law enforcement and intelligence agencies would be more alert in resisting militant activities during the municipality polls slated for December 30.

Law enforcers would keep sharp vigilance on public meetings and religious institutions ahead of the polls, according to a draft circular of the ministry.

The ministry is likely to issue the circular today with its detail plan of action to maintain law and order ahead of the polls on voting day, and post-election period, said EC officials.

CAMPAIGN ENDS
As per electoral rules, the three-week-

Rescue workers and heartbroken residents on Friday sifted through what was left of homes wiped out by several ferocious storms and tornadoes that killed at least 14 people in southeastern United States.

The storms, feeding on unseasonably warm air, left a trail of destruction in rural communities from Alabama to Illinois, just as Christmas reached its crescendo.

Top men fled; risk too high

FROM PAGE 1
they were caught. None of them would go on the record with The Daily Star.

But DB Deputy Commissioner Mashrukure Rahman Khaled claimed that they would not be a big threat since they were on the run.

In the 15-hour crackdown, detectives seized 16 improvised grenades, other ingredients for making over 200 bombs and grenades, a suicide vest, and 15 bullets.

The faction members became inactive amid leadership disputes following the execution of its chief Shaekh Abdur Rahman and a number of other organisers.

They became active towards the end of last year and early this year after the inclusion of some operatives from pro-Jamaat-e-Islam student body Islami Chhatra Shibir and different radical Islamist organisations, they claimed.

They claimed that sometimes grenades or bombs were supplied from the Mirpur factory while other times Mostafizar would travel to destinations to make the bombs.

Kotwali of Dinajpur, he joined JMB two years ago. He also played the role of a researcher to find out tactics to avoid arrest, law enforcers claimed.

Five to six unknown militants were also accused in the case filed under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

A Dhaka court on Friday placed the three suspects on a six-day remand each for interrogation.

They also said the grenades used at the shia congregation at Hossaini Dalan and those recovered at the JMB den in Kamrangirchar were similar to those found in Mirpur.

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Air strike
FROM PAGE 16
Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's control over the rest of the area.

The rebel sources said that in the raid Russian planes fired at least 10 missiles at a secret headquarters of the group, which is the largest rebel faction in the area and has about 15,000 to 20,000 fighters, according to Western intelligence.

Joint Commissioner of the Detective Branch (DB) of police Monirul Islam said Hiron took over the charge of the operations commander of the faction after his predecessor was killed in a "shootout" with detectives last month.

Mostafizar has a diploma in electrical engineering.

Apart from training new recruits at the Mirpur den, Mostafizar used to visit different areas of the country to train recruits and make bombs and grenades as per the organisation's requirements, the police official said.

The JMB faction had at least 60 active operatives and over 100 supporters. Of them, 15 to 20 were diehard activists and eight to 10 of them were capable of making bombs and carrying out attacks, investigators claimed.

The faction's main source of funding was robberies and muggings, they added. They, however, did not disclose the name of the chief of the faction.

Monirul said, "A good number of JMB members recently arrested in the northern region were members of this JMB faction."

Around 35 members of the faction have so far been arrested, according to detectives.

DB inspector Shafiuddin Sheikh of the bomb-disposal unit on Friday filed a case against five identified JMB members, including Hiron and Mostafizar.

The other three arrested suspects were: Abu Sayeed Russell, 22, a fourth year student of East West University, Mohammad Elias Omar Faruk, 23, who hails from Matlab in Chandpur, and Mohsin Ali Rubel, 20, of Komor village in Joypurhat.

Russell, who is also a coordinator of the outfit, was capable of making improvised grenades. Hailing from

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"The goal behind this meeting was to humanise the other side by arranging a visit involving close family members," said the official, adding that some of Sharif's cabinet had opposed the visit.

Television polls suggested most Indians welcomed the development while newspapers praised Modi's decision to avoid weighty expectations by staging an informal "stop-over" on the way back from Kabul.

Yet members of the opposition Congress party denounced the "unpredictable" act, calling it unstatesmanlike, with some complaining such an important meeting should not have been announced on Twitter.

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Opposition leader in the parliament Syed Khurshid Shah said his Pakistan People's Party (PPP) supports Modi's visit.

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Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf party chief Imran Khan also welcomed Modi's trip and said it will help improve ties between the two countries.

Despite broad welcome, there were isolated voices opposing Modi's trip.

Sirajul Haq, chief of right wing Jamaat-i-Islami, said it was unfortunate that Modi was welcomed in Pakistan.

There were signs Pakistan's powerful army was not happy about the visit, with criticism on pro-army Twitter accounts believed to be run by the military.

Modi and Sharif have had a stop-start diplomatic relationship since the Indian premier's surprise decision to invite Sharif to his inauguration in May 2014.

A brief meeting on November 30 between the two leaders on the sidelines of the UN climate summit in Paris, followed by talks between their national security advisers in Bangkok, appeared to have broken the ice.

India welcomes

FROM PAGE 16
A source present in the meeting said the leaders of the nuclear-armed arch-rival nations "chatted like old friends" as they ate vegetarian food, with the Indian premier telling Sharif, "Your sincerity is beyond doubt".

India and Pakistan have fought three wars since gaining independence from Britain in 1947 and a lasting peace deal has so far proved elusive, with deadly violence still flaring in disputed Kashmir.

Modi's stunning decision to drop in for talks with Pakistan's leader -- something ex-premier Manmohan Singh failed to achieve in ten years of power -- was roundly welcomed in India, where it was seen as a calculated personal gamble.

"Modi has made clear he is willing to risk political capital to make peace," the Indian Express newspaper said, warning that any future terrorist attacks traced to Pakistan would invite "savagery criticism".

The visit, announced by Modi on Twitter, gave the appearance of being spontaneous, with Sharif's foreign affairs adviser not able to reach Lahore in time.

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Who, why?

FROM PAGE 1
his "suicide vest". Over three dozen Christian religious leaders, including a Bishop, received death threats via SMS.

And then came the latest: a suicide blast during Juma prayers at an Ahmadiyya mosque in Rajshahi's Bagmara upazila, the birthplace of banned militant group Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

The spate of attacks and threats since September seems to have left Bangladesh, a country of moderate Muslims, surprised rather than shocked.

Who and why? These two questions must be haunting most of the Bangladeshis now. The vague answers that we got from officials in the last three months are: a Western intelligence agency is conspiring to portray Bangladesh as an Islamic State-infested country, or the BNP-Jamaat axis is out with a plot to foil war crimes trial, or the JMB is regrouping to destabilise the country.

All these attacks and threats are unprecedented as well as unnerving. Unprecedented as this kind of attacks never happened before, and it simply does not go with the country that has a legacy of communal and sectarian harmony for centuries. And unnerving as, looking at Iraq or Pakistan, we can picture for sure the consequences of these religious extremism.

In the past, Ahmadiyyas were subjected to persecutions for which they squarely blamed Jamaat-e-

Islamic. Their complaints understandably saw no light as most of those incidents took place when Jamaat's main ally BNP was in power.

But there was no report of tensions between the majority Sunni and the minority Shia and Baha'i. Rather, Bangladesh has the unique culture of Shia-Sunni presence at traditional Ashura gathering. And the two killed in the October 24 attack in Old Dhaka and 90 percent of the injured were Sunni Muslims.

Who would dare kill Sunni Muslims in a predominantly Sunni-majority country, and for what?

Never before in Bangladesh were such attacks carried out on mosques, let alone on people in prayers. Just imagine what could have happened if all the 14 grenades had exploded at the two navy mosques. We have been told that the culprit concealed his educational qualification as a textile engineer to be employed as a batman in the navy. But what was his ultimate goal?

The attack on the Ahmadiyya mosque on Christmas Day must have caught law enforcers completely off-guard. The most chilling disclosure is that it was a suicide blast. The body of the Ahmadiyya mosque bomber was found with the circuit of the bomb tied to his chest and the switch held in his right hand.

This is the second such attack after a JMB man blew himself off at a Gazipur court in 2005, leaving eight dead.

If we take the suspicion of law enforcement and intelligence agen-

cies as the truth that the JMB is most likely behind all the recent attacks too, then a serious question is bound to come up. What was the basis of the previous claims of "successful" anti-militant drives?

"We've torn apart the JMB network Its backbone has been broken JMB is no longer capable of creating anarchy." Officials have frequently come up with statements like these since the execution of top six JMB leaders in 2007. Since then, the arrested militant suspects have been found to be members or supporters of Ansarullah, Hizb-ut Tahrir, or Islamic State.

Even after Burdwan blast in October last year, as Indian officials linked the incident to JMB, our militancy experts here went on record as saying, "JMB, even if it exists in Bangladesh, may be fragmented and weak."

If we can recall, a number of suspected IS agents or recruiters were arrested a few months back. Interestingly, all those suspects have now become "JMB men" while officials deny any IS presence in Bangladesh.

People are getting all too confused.

It's the job of the government -- law enforcers to be precise -- to find out the culprits and their motives. The government must nip the devil in the bud. And sooner is the better as people's nerves are fraying.

Together, we must prevent Bangladesh from becoming another Pakistan or Iraq.

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