

Honour or insult for martyrs?

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pledge as he said his party would make the list if voted to power.

The BNP-led by Gen Ziaur Rahman, Justice Abdus Sattar and Khaleda Zia was in power for five times and governed the country for one and a half decades. BNP never spoke about preparing such a list during their periods in power. Rather, previous BNP-led governments always recognised and defended the historic fact regarding killing of 30 lakh Bangalis in 1971 by Pakistani occupation army and their collaborators.

The party's pledge for preparing the list came only after BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was sued for sedition recently by a lawyer with the government's permission for making derogatory remarks by questioning the number of martyrs in the Liberation War.

This pledge, which the BNP leader made at a programme organised to protest the sedition case against Khaleda, therefore, is nothing but an outrageous reaction to the government's actions against Khaleda Zia.

Before Nazrul, a member of BNP national standing committee, BNP senior leader Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, had demanded that the government publish names of all 30 lakh martyrs of the Liberation War.

But the BNP leaders' pledge and demand are not consistent with the international practice of estimating the numbers killed in genocide.

War crime researchers say no country has prepared such a list in over 5000 years of history. A government's official version and record of death tolls are always considered international practice to determine the number of victims of genocide.

They say there is a huge risk in preparing such a list. If a single name is left out, the credibility of the entire list can be questioned.

Even after World War II, European

countries did not take any initiatives to prepare any list of their citizens killed in the war.

The question then arises as to how the BNP, if it comes to power, would prepare this list? Is it possible after 44 years to trace everyone who was killed in 1971?

The BNP's move, if it is taken in such a case, creates a risk of sparking a huge controversy diverting focus from the magnitude of the genocide to the controversy of the number of martyrs. If so, this will serve Pakistan well, the country that carried out the genocide but keeps denying the atrocities of 1971 let alone apologise for the crimes.

Nazrul Islam Khan says the necessity for preparing such a list is to "honour martyrs properly."

The BNP's track records however show something different.

Dishonoring the martyrs and the spirit of the Liberation War started from General Zia and is being continued by his wife Khaleda Zia. They have been rehabilitating anti-liberation leader and forces in politics for a long time.

Zia, who grabbed state power in an extra-constitutional way, made the anti-liberation leader Shah Azizur Rahman a minister in 1978 and the prime minister the following year.

Shah Aziz was again made prime minister by Justice Abdus Sattar-led BNP government in 1981.

Gen Zia, who became the chief martial law administrator and later took the office of the president, had relied on the anti-liberation forces to consolidate his political power base.

He made Abdul Alim a minister in 1978. A war crimes tribunal in 2013 convicted Alim of crimes against humanity.

Anti-liberation leader Abdur Rahman Biswas can be considered more fortunate than many others. He was made a minister by Gen Zia in 1979. The Khaleda-led BNP in 1991

elected Biswas the parliament's speaker and later the country's president.

His wife, Khaleda Zia followed Zia's footsteps. She appointed Jamaat-Islami leader Matiur Rahman Nizami and Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed ministers of her government 2001. Both Nizami and Mojaheed were convicted of war crimes. Mojaheed has already been executed.

She also made another war criminal Salauddin Quader Chowdhury her parliamentary affairs advisor in 2001 with the status of a minister. Salahuddin has also been convicted on charges of war crimes and executed along with Mojaheed in November last.

In the verdict against Nizami, the International Crimes Tribunal-1 in 2014 strongly denounced the appointment of the anti-liberation leader as minister in Khaleda Zia's cabinet in 2001.

The appointment was a great blunder, said the court, a clear slap in the face of the Liberation War as well as the three million martyrs and the two lakh women who were raped in the war.

Jamaat, the major anti-liberation force, is still a key ally of the BNP of Khaleda Zia. And she keeps close with Jamaat despite strong criticism from her party leaders and outside.

If BNP won the next election with its ties with Jamaat intact then it would form an alliance government again like in 2001. What will be the role of Jamaat in that case in preparing the list of martyrs? Will Jamaat, a political party accused of killing unarmed civilians including intellectuals and assisting Pakistani army to carry out genocide, advice the government how to prepare the list?

If that happens, it will be another slap in the face of the Liberation War as well as the three million martyrs. It would not be honouring the martyrs.

Modi's net assets worth Rs 1.41 cr

Discloses Indian PMO

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has assets worth Rs 1.41 crore, including a residential property whose price has appreciated by more than 25 times since the purchase over 13 years ago.

According to the latest details of his assets disclosed by the Prime Minister's Office, Modi had total "cash in hand" of just Rs 4,700 at the end of the last fiscal year (April 2014-March 31, 2015) down from Rs 38,700 disclosed on August 18, 2014. He assumed office as prime minister on May 26, 2014.

As per the disclosure, he does not own any motor vehicle/aircraft/yacht/ship. The Indian PM retains his bank accounts in Gujarat; he has no bank account in Delhi.

While he has no loans, his jewellery holdings include four pieces of gold rings weighing approximately 45 grams with a value of about Rs 1.19 lakh as of March 31, 2015.

The latest disclosures are updated till January 30 this year, as per the PMO website.

Modi's investments include tax-saving bonds worth Rs 20,000, government's National Savings Certificates worth about Rs 5.45 lakh and life insurance policies worth Rs 1.99 lakh, taking the total value of his movable assets to Rs 41.15 lakh.

The immovable assets include one-fourth part of a residential property at Gandhinagar in his home state of Gujarat and his share is 3,531.45 square feet with a built-up area of 169.81 square feet.

Stating that this was not an "inherited property", the disclosure mentions the date of purchase as October 25, 2002.

The cost of purchase was Rs 1.30 lakh while the "investment on the land by way of development construction, etc" has been shown as Rs 2.47 lakh.

The "approximate current market value" of the property has been disclosed as Rs 1 crore.

U-19s face

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first quarterfinal in the tournament's history, going by the huge amount of experience that this young Bangladeshi side have, the hosts will be expected to ease past the cricketers from Africa.

Bangladesh might have aced much more difficult tasks in the past, but the youngsters know that there is no room for complacency. Their struggle in the opening overs against Scotland in their last game suggests that the hosts are yet to hit their best form with the bat.

"We are not thinking too much about the fact that we are playing Namibia. We are going to plan for this match as seriously as we plan for any other game," 18-year-old left-arm spinner Saleh Ahmed Shawon told reporters yesterday.

"In fact, we are not looking at any of these games as World Cup encounters. We are trying to look at all the games as a normal bilateral series. We are taking them one by one and our target is to win six of them," he added.

The junior Tigers had made a slow start in the last game and only recovered once Nazmul Hossain got set and went on to score a century. He will once again be the key for the hosts.

England, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India and Nepal are the other teams to have sealed quarterfinal berths. The winner between West Indies and Zimbabwe in Chittagong today will get the last spot of the knock-out stage.

Ershad group

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However, the Raushan-led group in the party is apparently against it.

"From now on, GM Quader and ABM Ruhul Amin Hawlader will speak to the media on behalf of the party," said a JP statement signed by Ershad's Press and Political Secretary Shunil Shuvo Roy.

Any "isolated" opinion, speech or statement by "anyone" would not be considered as the party stance on any issue, it said.

Ershad and a group of JP senior leader's move to quit the cabinet got momentum after the JP boss on January 17 appointed GM Quader as the party's co-chairman, known as a critic of the January 5 "one-sided" polls in 2014.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Hawlader, who replaced Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu as the secretary general around two weeks ago, said his party would continue to stay with the government in the development activities.

"The Jatiya Party will not take any decision that may cause any trouble for the government," he said.

Also, a cabinet member of the party said without the support of the government, the JP would not be able to perform well in the next general elections.

UK okays embryo

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DNA is the blueprint of life - the instructions for building the human body. Gene editing allows the precise manipulation of DNA.

In a world-first last year, scientists in China announced they had carried out gene editing in human embryos to correct a gene that causes a blood disorder.

Prof Robin Lovell-Badge, a scientific advisor to the UK's fertility regulator, told the BBC: "China has guidelines, but it is often unclear exactly what they are until you've done it and stepped over an unclear boundary."

"This is the first time it has gone through a properly regulatory system and been approved."

"The experiments will take place in the first seven days after fertilisation. During this time we go from a fertilised egg to a structure called a blastocyst, containing 200-300 cells."

The work will be led by Dr Kathy Niakan, who has spent a decade researching human development.

Earlier this year, she explained why she had applied to edit human embryos:

Take Bangla literature

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country gain experience about international standard publications, she added.

She welcomed the president and the general secretary of International Publishers Association (IPA) to this year's fair.

The PM handed over Bangla Academy Literary Award-2015 to 10 recipients and unveiled the covers of two Braille publications.

Greeting the Bangla Academy Literary Award recipients, she said her government has taken long-term initiatives for advancement of education, literature and culture.

Bengali people achieved everything by making sacrifices, Hasina said. "Ekushey February is a great inspiration for us. With much expectation, we wait for the book fair all year long. The martyrs of the Language Movement have created the expectation in us."

"Ekushey February inspires us, teaches us the language of protest, supplies strength of struggle for realising any lawful demand and shows us the road to victory," she added.

She said the people of Bangladesh established their right to speak in mother language by sacrificing their lives, which is unprecedented in world history. "Bangladesh was born as an independent country as its people could be united for the cause of their mother language."

The PM recalled the role of Bangabandhu and others in mobilising public support for the Language Movement. After assuming office in 1956, the then Awami League government had declared Ekushey February as "Shaheed Dibash" and gave Bangla the status of an official language.

She thanked Bangla Academy for arranging a discussion on Bangabandhu's historic six-point demand during the book fair.

Recalling her memories of studying in

"We would really like to understand the genes needed for a human embryo to develop successfully into a healthy baby."

"The reason why it is so important is because miscarriages and infertility are extremely common, but they're not very well understood."

Out of every 100 fertilised eggs, fewer than 50 reach the early blastocyst stage, 25 implant into the womb and only 13 develop beyond three months.

And at the blastocyst stage, some cells have been organised to perform specific roles - some go on to form the placenta, others the yolk sac and others ultimately.

How and why this takes place is unknown - but some parts of our DNA are highly active at this stage. It is likely these genes are guiding our early development, but it is unclear exactly what they are doing or what goes wrong in miscarriage.

The researchers will alter these genes in donated embryos. The regulator, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA), yesterday gave its approval and the experiments could start in the next few months.

Bangla Academy library during her student life, Hasina said: "I feel well when I come to this premises."

The Ekushey Book Fair not only inspires local people, but also creates enthusiasm among the expatriates and foreign nationals living in Bangladesh, she noted adding that the fair has now become one of the largest book fairs in the world in terms of duration.

The UNESCO's recognition of Ekushey February as the International Mother Language Day has enhanced Bangladesh's dignity on the world stage, said the premier.

About preservation of endangered languages, the PM said her previous government (1996-2001) had taken an initiative for construction of International Mother Language Institute. But the project became stagnant when the BNP-Jamaat assumed office in 2001.

The then AL government revived the project in 2009. The UNESCO has recognised it as a second category institute which is now engaged in research and preservation of languages, she mentioned.

Hasina congratulated all the fellows of Bangla Academy on the occasion of its 60th founding anniversary this year.

Prof Emeritus Dr Anisuzzaman was in the chair while Cultural Affairs Minister Asaduzzaman Noor was present as special guest.

Director General of Bangla Academy Shamsuzzaman Khan, British educationist and poet Joe Winter, IPA President Richard Charkin, Czech writer and researcher Robert Martin also spoke, among others.

Speaker of Jatiya Sangsad Shirin Sharmin Choudhury, cabinet members, eminent writers, researchers, poets, publishers and fellows of Bangla Academy were present.

Later, the PM visited different stalls of the book fair.

New era in Myanmar

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Many NLD MPs are also political novices, unskilled in the business of government.

They must swiftly adapt to a difficult decision-making process in a legislature where unelected soldiers occupy 25 percent of all seats.

"It's a historic moment for the country," said Myanmar political analyst Khin Zaw Win.

The country will now choose a new president to succeed President Thein Sein, the former general who in 2011 launched dramatic political and economic reforms which culminated in the election.

Suu Kyi herself is barred from the post by a military-scripted constitution because she married and had children with a foreigner.

The 70-year-old has vowed to sidestep this hurdle by ruling "above" a proxy president, although she has yet to reveal her choice for the role.

While there is no clear schedule for the selection of candidates, it could be within days.

Elected members of both houses and the military will nominate three candidates to replace Thein Sein, who retains his post until the end of March.

The new president will then be chosen by a vote of the combined houses.

Observers are closely watching Suu Kyi's relationship with the still-powerful military, which holds key ministries as well as the 25 percent parliamentary bloc.

Suu Kyi may try to persuade the army to help her change the charter clause that blocks her path to power, analysts say, although it has so far balked at any attempt to redraft it.

After decades under the military yoke, Myanmar's people queued in their thousands to cast ballots for Suu Kyi and her party last November, throwing their support behind her simple campaign message of "change".

With a resounding parliamentary majority, her lawmakers are -- at least initially -- expected to act as a rubber-stamp for her government.

While the NLD majority will need to time to find their feet, the military has had plenty of time to prepare for the handover.

A quasi-civilian government has steered reforms since outright army rule ended in 2011.

The military has appointed "more senior and experienced, and probably better prepared" soldiers to parliament, according to Renaud Egretau, an analyst who has studied Myanmar's legislature.

Thein Sein has led the opening up of the long-isolated country, spurring international investment with sweeping political reforms.

But Myanmar remains blighted by civil war and ethnic and religious divisions. Poverty rates are high and the bureaucracy is poorly funded and riven with corruption.

Malaysia slaps levy on migrant workers

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Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi on Sunday said about 2.1 million registered foreign workers would come under the decision as they enjoyed many benefits like food subsidy and other services meant for the Malaysians.

The revised levy would bring additional revenue of RM 2.5 billion to the Malaysian government's coffers, reported Malaysian English daily The Star quoting the minister yesterday.

The foreign workers in construction and manufacturing sectors will pay Malaysian ringgit (RM) 2,500 equivalent to Tk 47,205 up from RM 1,250 or equivalent Tk 23,598 each, according to the recent decision of the Malaysian government.

Workers of the service sector will pay the same amount although they used to pay RM 1,850 or equivalent to Tk 34,926 each.

The new levy in the plantation and agriculture sectors has been set at RM 1,500 or equivalent to Tk 28,322, while it was only RM 400 or equivalent Tk 8,496 in the past. However, the levy for foreign domestic workers remains the same RM 410.

Officials at the Bangladesh High Commission observe that the new levy will put an additional pressure on the workers.

"Each foreign worker who is staying in Malaysia and who will enter here has to pay the levy once a year. So, the registered Bangladeshis will also come under it," Sayedul mentioned.

The labour counsellor expressed the hope that the Bangladeshi workers, who would be hired after signing of the MoU, can enjoy levy free facilities.

Asked if migration costs would go up due to the new levy imposition, he said there would be no impact on the work-

ers' migration expenditures.

However, Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) President Mohammed Abul Basher told The Daily Star that the new levy would definitely increase migration costs if the workers were to pay it.

"If employers pay the levy, migration costs will not increase," he headed.

Currently, workers from Bangladesh are going to Malaysia only for plantation jobs since April 2013 under a government to government (G2G) agreement, which could reduce migration costs significantly. But the system has failed apparently due to impractical measures taken by both the governments.

Malaysia has now agreed to hire the Bangladeshis for all sectors -- construction, industries, services and plantations. Dhaka and Kuala Lumpur are working to finalise an agreement to that end.

Court orders judicial probe into SI's role

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Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) Sheikh Hafizur Rahman to submit a probe report within seven working days.

The CMM will now assign a metropolitan magistrate to investigate the incident.

Meanwhile, upon the allegation, Ratan has been suspended and a two-member committee formed to investigate it, said Biplob Kumar Sarkar, deputy commissioner of Tejgaon Division Police.

A primary inquiry has found that the SI talked to the girl for 10 minutes in front of the shop, he said, adding

that action would be taken based on the committee's report.

The incident happened at a time when excesses of police members were reported across the country.

Alleged torture of two officials of Bangladesh Bank and Dhaka South City Corporation by two sub-inspectors of Mohammadpur and Jatrabari police stations drew a huge outcry from different quarters and on the social media.

According to the Sunday's victim, SI Ratan and two other cops confined her to the shop and then searched her purse and threatened to search her body.

As she protested Ratan's attempts to body-search her, the SI hurled abuse at her, said the girl, adding that Ratan had also tried to hit on her and gave indecent proposals.

"Before allowing me to leave, the SI said the OC [officer-in-charge] or DC [deputy commissioner] is nothing to him and that there will be no consequences for him even if I filed a complaint against him," she said.

Ratan, however, denied the allegations and said he had stopped her only to know about the whereabouts of her husband Sajib Ahmed Rana, a Jubo Dal leader of Adabor.

Huge ammunition haul in Sherpur

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under the ground of a house in Bakakura of Jhainagat's Kangsha union on September 13, 2007.

After his arrest another 10,000 bullets were recovered in the Garo Pahar area that very September.

Sangma who claimed to be a member of a criminal organisation of India was sent to jail. He is serving his terms in a Sherpur prison.

On December 18, 2010, police recovered 13,680 bullets of a Chinese rifle from an abandoned house in the same village.

A week later, the BGB recovered seven abandoned mines, one grenade, 97 bullets, detonators, Indian currency, walkie-talkies, and documents of Ulfa.

None was arrested then.

At least 2,053 bullets were recovered in the Garo Pahar area between May,

2011, and August, 2012.

Ulfa had been active in the area between 2000 and 2010 under the leadership of its military commander Masud Ranjan Chowdhury.

Rab on July 17, 2010, arrested him and his associate Pradip Marak.

On April 8, 2015, the duo were awarded life imprisonments and fined Tk 20,000.

They are currently serving their terms in a Kishoreganj prison.