

Recognised as freedom fighters at long last

More needs to be done to support the war heroines

It is, indeed, a momentous occasion when 26 war heroines are finally recognised by the state as freedom fighters for their contributions during the Liberation War, even if the acknowledgment comes almost 45 years too late. This recognition, on a very material level, means that they will receive the same benefits as freedom fighters – a monthly allowance of Tk 8,000 and special quotas in government jobs, among others – but beyond that, it is an official affirmation of the importance of their sacrifices to our collective struggle for liberation, a belated acknowledgement that fighting a war does not simply entail shooting the enemies with a gun.

Forty-five years is a long time to be subjected to humiliation, ostracism and neglect by society for being raped and tortured by the Pakistani army and their collaborators. It is our collective shame that rather than treat them with the respect and provide them with the support they deserve, we have maligned them, and marginalised their trauma. The state's failure to recognise them as freedom fighters from the beginning, and terming them as Biranganas, apparently to 'honour' them, have only served to mark them as 'dishonoured' women in society's eyes.

While the process of recognising Biranganas as freedom fighters is a step – a process initiated last year – in the right direction, more needs to be done to eliminate the stigma attached to their roles in the war and concrete steps taken to support them, financially or otherwise, so that they can lead the rest of their lives in dignity. The government should prepare the full list of Biranganas to be recognised as freedom fighters as soon as possible and incorporate a progressive narrative about our war heroines in our curriculum.

NID card

Lessen the travails of card seekers

The ordeal that Umme Kulsum had to go through to obtain her national ID (NID) card from the national ID Registration Wing (NIDW) in Dhaka is an experience that a large number of people have to undergo, particularly those seeking a corrected version of one's original NID. And this was brought out very clearly in a report in this paper yesterday. No one should have to come to the NIDW four times like Kulsum, and that too from as far off a place as Chandpur with a minor child, and run from pillar to post to get the NID card in hand.

NID has been an important addition to everyone's personal document since its introduction. And this has become indispensable in the daily life of a person, from seeking a job to applying for a license or for a visa. Admittedly, the authorities have done a very good job of issuance of NID cards but have had to contend with a large number of cards that have mistakes. We are glad to learn that the correction service has been decentralised to the upazilla election offices which will reduce the burden on the NIDW.

That being so, we would hope that the upazilla election offices as well as the NIDW would organise their work in a manner that would lessen the burden on the card seekers, be it for a lost NID or for correcting it. It should not be lost upon the authorities that it is quite difficult to get about without one's NID card, and to be without it for five months, let alone one, as in the case of Kulsum, can make life very arduous.

DR. ABDULLAH SHIBLI

THE news that foreign hackers attempted to off \$101 million from Bangladesh Bank's account with the Federal Reserve Bank of New York need not be viewed as a catastrophic failure; nor does it forebode disaster but it should give us some food for thought. It also is a wake-up call for the central bank, and calls for a transparent and diligent review process leading to an actionable plan to lower the chances of a repetition. In a recent piece in Prothom Alo, Dr. M. Farashuddin, former Governor of Bangladesh Bank, aptly points out that our central bank is the custodian of the nation's hard-earned money and it needs to guard it securely.

Bank heists in this day and age are not such a novelty, but what is worth noting is that from the information we have, it was carried out very efficiently and might have been executed by a gang of criminals working across four or more countries. The facts are well known. Bangladesh Bank (BB), which has been piling up foreign currency reserves in recent years, parks some of its foreign exchange reserves with the New York Fed. On or around February 4, 2016, BB apparently made several payments requests worth \$101 million. These payment requests were processed and authenticated through SWIFT, an electronic communication channel utilised for financial transactions. Some of the money was transferred to accounts in the Philippines and Sri Lanka. The money laundering was detected the following week and BB officials and Bangladesh government have been successfully able to recover some of the funds, while it successfully froze others, and are in discussions with the NY Fed to get to the bottom of the whole episode.

The task before us, including government officials, central bankers, and cyber-security experts is to identify steps to prevent such occurrences in future and track down the criminals. Without getting too much into the technical details of this so-called "weekend caper", it appears that the criminals were able to crack the code that BB officials use, and decipher the practices that BB follows in authorising a

BANGLADESH BANK HEIST

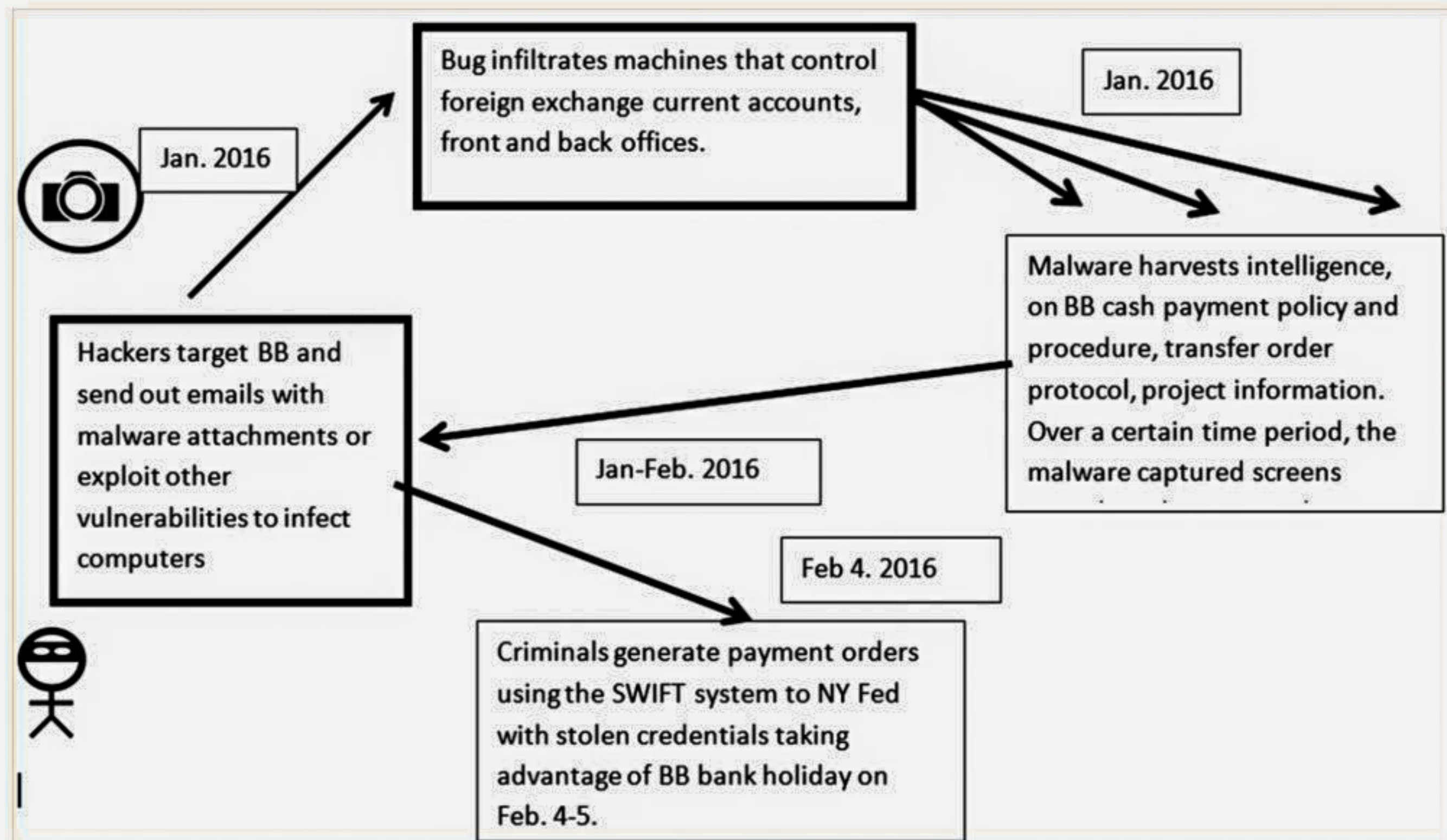
Need for better systems and protocols

transfer of funds from its account at the NY Fed, and bypass the checks and balances in place.

An operation of this cadre requires three steps: 1. Implantation of malware on the victim's computer system by taking advantage of a vulnerability or "back door". This is often done through "phishing," whereby emails are sent to targets which have attachments with malware; 2. Once the BB computers were hacked into, the criminals received regular information

crimeware, banking Trojans, and bots. The sophistication level of the hackers has reached new heights, and users need to be on the watch against MS Word and PDF attachments even from apparently known sources. Monitoring and virus disinfection routines plus regular software and hardware updates are standard practices in today's world. The forensic experts hired by BB need to examine existing protocols followed by the Forex Reserve and Treasury Department, and the Budget and Account Department and recommend state of the

such breaches are not 100 percent preventable but all measures available must be taken to minimise such risks. Experts recommend all financial organisations to carefully scan their networks for the presence of malware, and if detected, report the intrusion to law enforcement, both national and international. Incidentally, participants at a cyber security conference held last week in Washington, DC, and organised by the Homeland Security Department and the Secret Service, identified some



Sequence of the Bangladesh Bank heist

on bank protocols, transfer messages, passwords, and other authenticating keys; 3. The hackers then mimic the staff using stolen credentials.

It is a fair guess that hackers employed familiar methods, using phishing emails or other tricks to entice BB officials to lower their guards to download malware from emails. A few technical tools are widely available, and system administrators at any financial institution are on the alert against: Advanced Persistent Threats (APT), Spear Phish emails with exploits, financial

art practices from the world of computer and network security.

News accounts have identified three roles in initiating a transfer of the funds: the maker, checker and authoriser. The breach probably happened on one or multiple of these sources, and allowed the hackers to gain a good understanding of BB's internal workings. The modus operandi could be spying electronically on bank workers, identifying patterns in bank payment orders, and breaching the SWIFT protocol. The important takeaway is that

- key areas for improvement:
- Test human response and coordination in case of cyber attacks
 - Ensure people have and follow protocols
 - Allow security personnel to share information effectively
- I can vouchsafe that all these measures are equally applicable to enhance the cyber security of our treasured foreign exchange reserves.

The writer is an economist and has been working in ICT for three decades.

Bangladesh's remarkable reduction in maternal mortality

More can be done

NIENKE DE LEEUW

A pregnant young woman in labour from a local village is being carried by two men into the Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) health clinic in Kutupalong, Cox's Bazaar. Her body is so swollen that she cannot walk. Our medical team immediately identifies that she has preeclampsia – a pregnancy complication that is potentially life threatening for both mother and baby. Successful treatment requires early identification; we have never seen this woman before at our clinic.

Despite her physical condition, the woman musters the strength to give birth to a premature baby after we referred her to the nearest hospital. But days later she returns to our clinic, with her tiny baby, and the team cares for the mother and her child in the neonatal unit. But the woman's condition deteriorates. She is referred to the hospital in Cox's Bazaar and we continue to follow her progress alongside the Ministry of Health staff, but sadly, less than a week after her baby is born, she dies.

Worldwide, pregnancy and child birth place one of the biggest demands on national healthcare systems. Between 1990 and 2015 the number of women dying in childbirth worldwide fell 44 percent according to the World Health Organisation (WHO). In Bangladesh in the same period, that number tumbled from 569 to 176 per 100,000: a reduction of over 300 percent. This is a level lower than most of the South Asian region, and an astonishing achievement worthy of celebration this International Women's Day.

But childbirth only stops being life risking for mother and baby when

women have access to trained medical professionals during their pregnancy. Those professionals can identify complications, such as preeclampsia, and work with women and their families to ensure appropriate medical action is taken. Experts highlight that there is still a need to improve the access to life saving emergency obstetric care, especially in rural Bangladesh. My experiences in MSF's health clinic in

Basic Emergency Obstetrics and Neonatal Care (BEmONC) services completely free of charge.

But we still see the results of women not accessing consultations. For many, services are simply not available close enough to them or sometimes people are not seeking medical assistance until there is a problem, by which time the risks are far greater.

In another case, a young pregnant

her condition, they found that she had stopped taking her medication, as she didn't have any serious symptoms. Again her blood pressure was very high and we brought her back to the birth unit to prevent any unnecessary complications.

Preeclampsia is one of the most common causes of maternal deaths, alongside conditions such as postpartum haemorrhage, obstructed labour, and postpartum sepsis. They



Kutupalong suggest this is the next priority for Bangladesh to continue its remarkable progress.

MSF's birth unit in Kutupalong, Cox's Bazaar, runs 24 hours a day, and offers women antenatal/postnatal care and hosts a neonatal ward. The priority is identifying and managing complicated pregnancies and deliveries. The birth unit is just one part of a busy health clinic, which runs under the authorisation of the Ministry of Health to provide quality

woman arrived, this time from the Kutupalong makeshift camp housing Rohingya refugees. She had very high blood pressure. This was her first baby. Our midwives again identified the preeclampsia symptoms, but since she was in the early days of her pregnancy, we prescribed her regular medication to prevent the convulsions. The mother felt much better and was soon able to return back to the camp. When our outreach teams went the following day to check

Worldwide, pregnancy and child birth place one of the biggest demands on national healthcare systems. Between 1990 and 2015 the number of women dying in childbirth worldwide fell 44 percent according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

need to be identified early so that they can be monitored and treated to reduce maternal mortality. This can be done by ensuring access to skilled and well-trained obstetric professionals over the course of pregnancy. In this way, we can stop these conditions from reaching levels that are harmful for both mother and child.

The writer is a midwife from Holland and currently supervising the birth unit at the MSF clinic in Kutupalong.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Find the truth

Although I am an ardent supporter of Bangladesh Awami League, the recent allegations against TDS editor Mr. Mahfuz Anam seem outrageous to me. We all know the reality of that time: No newspaper was able to voice opinions against the rulers of those days.

The Daily Star has always been a pro-independence news organisation and maintained impartiality since its inception. I think the government needs to revisit the circumstances of that period and find the truth instead of making Mr. Mahfuz Anam the scapegoat.

Dhananjay Roy
 New York, USA

COMMENTS

"Taskin, Sunny reported?"
 (March 10, 2016)

Imran Bhuiyan

I am actually confused whether there is any forum named International Cricket Council (ICC) or should we just call it "Indian Cricket Council?"

Ikrumul Islam

So, if any bowler from BD bowls well, there will be such actions...

Salim Charania

Some are working really hard to keep the Tigers away and the umpiring during the last few matches with India was questionable. Clear LBWs were not given.

Phoenix Bird

This ICC has destroyed the bowling style of Saeed Ajmal, Ajanta Mendis, Shohag Gazi and some other players. Now they are after Taskin and Sunny. Who is next, Mustafiz?

Sadman Sakib Mridul

But no Indian bowler has ever been suspected except a part-time bowler named Shikhar Dhawan. Really strange.

Jakirul Islam Shafi

What's going on? It's a sign of a silent conspiracy against Bangladesh. Bangladesh cricket has been improving day by day and has a great prospect. Actually, some people don't like the success and progress of Bangladesh cricket. That's why they are after us and they always had a hostile attitude towards us.

Mohammad Sohail Rana

Just unbelievable! It is India's plan to damage our cricket. They did it with Pakistan and Sri Lanka. (The same questions were raised against Hafeez, Narine, Ajmol, Abdur Razzak, Shohag Gazi and Ajanta Mendis' bowling).

Faisal Patwari

So this is the last thing they could do. If you can't play the bowlers, just ban them. They couldn't play Ajmol and Narine so they ruined their careers. Now they can't play Bangladeshi bowlers, so they are trying to ban them. They do this just