

Identify sources of finance to stamp out terror

PM terms terrorism a major global concern

UNB, Dhaka

Describing militancy and terrorism as major global concerns, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has underscored the need for identifying the sources of terror financing to stamp out the scourge of the menace from the society.

"We never allow anybody to use Bangladesh land to do anything evil. We'll continue to remain as a nation of peace guided by pluralism, secularism and the spirit of Liberation War," she said.

The PM was addressing the graduation ceremony of the National Defence Course and Armed Forces War Course-2016 at Sheikh Hasina Complex at Mirpur Cantonment on Tuesday.

She reiterated her government's stance that there would be no place for terrorism and militancy on Bangladesh soil. "We're firm in this regard."

Noting that the Armed Forces have been able to gain the trust and confidence of common people, she said her government has ensured supply of modern equipment with newer technologies to the forces.

"We've been working relentlessly to establish professional and trained Armed Forces."

Hasina said she was pleased to know that during the one-year hectic



and challenging National Defence Course and Armed Forces War Course, the participants learned different aspects of state craft, including socio-political culture, economy, international relations and national security.

She said Bangladesh is playing a major role in promoting regional integration as its geo-strategic location made it an important "actor" in global politics.

"We're developing inter-state relations based on our foreign policy. Our strategy and policy have proven to be effective in human development and economic empowerment of the people in general. However, there remains serious challenges in ensuring continuing growth and development," she said.

The PM expressed her belief that the graduates with the acquired knowledge from respective courses will be better prepared to tackle these challenges.

She reminded the graduates that the developing countries have to remain prepared to face unexpected challenges originating from the ever-changing environment of the 21st century.

Hoping that the foreign graduates are satisfied with the traditional Bangladeshi hospitality, the premier

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Palm trees and 11 war heroes

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about 100 kilometre from Dhaka, and managed to cross the border into India. There he took a short training in guerrilla warfare and returned to Kalatia in August to recruit more young men to join the war against the Pakistanis.

He gathered a band of eleven - all buddies from his school days at Kalatia High School. As night fell one day in mid-August, Babul embarked with his raw recruits for India to fight an unequal war against a highly trained professional army.

But things did not go as planned.

Babul had planned to take the same route via Kasba to India as the first time. He knew the route well. As they neared their destination, just a few kilometres from safety across the border at India, they were intercepted by a Pakistani patrol.

Accounts of the hows and wheres of their last moments vary. Their bodies were never found. Later groups of recruits tracing their footsteps to cross over to India came across descriptions of the eleven being gunned down with automatic fire or bayoneted, Babul's 90-year-old father recalls in an almost undecipherable voice.

Every December people of Kalatia, a Dhaka outskirt, recall the sacrifice of these eleven lost heroes with great reverence.

To remember them by, eleven palm trees were planted in Kalatia and a Shaheed Minar was erected in the school premise in 1982 where Babul was a student. Eleven Devdaru trees were also planted there.

The headmaster of Kalatia High School Sadek Ali along with the villagers planted the trees to remember the eleven martyrs.

The eleven martyrs are AFM Shahabuddin Babul, Nazrul Islam, Shahjahan, Shahadat Hossain, Abul Hossain Badal, Nasiruddin, Harunur Rashid Mintu, Abdus Salam Molla,



Nazrul Islam



Abul Hossain Badal



Shahjahan



Abdus Salam



Shahadat Hossain



Abdul Kader



Mohammad Ahsan



Harun ur Rashid Mintu



Kazi Nazimuddin



Nasir Uddin

Kazi Nazimuddin, Abdul Kader and Ahsan.

Babul's father Shahjahan Ali told The Daily star, "When he returned home from India, Babul's mother requested him several times not to go to India anymore but Babul was determined. He again left in August without informing us."

"After the end of the Liberation War, I came to know that Babul was caught by the Pakistani army at Kasba but my wife could not accept this and neither could I. I went to India several times after the war to look for information on Babul and visited many places of India and Bangladesh."

Abdul Malek Molla, brother of Abdus Salam Molla, one of the eleven-man team, said Salam was a first year B.Com student at Jagannath College when the war broke out.

"One August afternoon we heard that Salam bhai was ready to go to India. At midnight, Salam Bhai told me that he was leaving and would

come back after liberating the country from the Pakistani occupiers," recalled Malek.

Malek said four of his seven brothers were freedom fighters. "My elder brother Abdul Hai Molla was Keraniganj thana BLF (Bangladesh Liberation Force) Commander. He knew that all the eleven were killed by the Pakistani forces but did not disclose it before the victory day."

Six other friends who left Kalatia for India the very next day were lucky. They crossed the border into India, underwent guerrilla training, and returned home to fight in the Liberation War.

Reminiscing, Babul's friend Abdul Halim said, he along with some other friends were to accompany them also but the eleven left without letting the six know they were leaving.

"I heard early in the morning Babul and others have already left at night. I then got in touch with the other five and left for India the following night," Halim said.

Halim's companions were Shahadat Hossain, Shahnewaz Ali, Abdur Rob, Mosharraf Hossain Rumi, Fazlul Huq and Rabindranath Sarkar. "We were trained in India, returned home and fought in the war but our friends (the band of eleven) were martyred," he said.

Freedom fighter Shahnewaz recalled, "We were very close in school. We were planning to go to the Liberation War together but the eleven friends left Kalatia earlier than us. That memory of losing them still haunts us."

Begum Bedura Ali, daughter of headmaster Sadek Ali, said, "My father was a teacher at Kalatia high school for a long time. All eleven were students of my father. After the Liberation War my father planted the trees in Nazipur Razakar Vita to remember them."

Meanwhile, eleven classrooms of Bandhan Kinder Garden in Kalatia carry the names of each of the eleven martyrs.

AL probe finds instigation from cops, mills authorities

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

There was instigation from the Rangpur Sugar mills authorities as well as the police behind the incident that happened centering the eviction of Santals in Gaibandha's Gobindaganj upazila on November 6, finds an Awami League probe.

At least three Santal men were killed and many others were injured in clashes between the indigenous people and mills staff along with the police over land dispute that day. Many Santal homes were also burnt down.

On November 13, a probe team from the ruling AL, comprising central leaders BM Mozammel Huq, Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, Tipu Munshi, Sujit Roy Nandi and Afzal Hossain, visited the spot. It submitted its report to the party a few days later.

The report says the mill authorities showed their weakness in reclaiming their land as they did not inform the district administration about the matter, said one of the team members, quoting the report.

The mill authorities sought assistance of the police instead of the district administration to reclaim their grabbed land, says the report, adding that police are not meant for dealing with such issues.

The mill authorities' intention was to collect a handsome amount of money by leasing out their land to influential quarters, instead of giving them to the local Santals, said the

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Probe to find if policemen were involved

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Refuting the allegation, the district police have claimed that miscreants did it, and they are yet to identify the culprits.

A clash broke out between the Santals, Rangpur Sugar Mills staff and police over eviction of the members of the indigenous community from the disputed land in Gobindaganj on November 6.

The clash left three Santal men dead and 20 others, including nine policemen, injured.

The district administration formed a one-member committee, headed by Gaibandha Additional District Magistrate Mizanur Rahman, on November 17 to probe the incident. But the committee has not completed its job even in 38 days since the incident.

Asked, Mizanur said, "Investigation is going on. It will take more time."

On November 16, three rights bodies -- Ain o Salish Kendra, Brotee, and Association for Land Reform and Development filed a writ petition, seeking HC directives upon the government for ensuring security of lives and properties of the Santals.

Yesterday, they submitted a supplementary petition to the court, attaching to it copies of media reports that police set fire to Santal houses.

In its order, the HC bench directed police to take two Santals' complaints as first information report and probe those.

Victims Swapan Murmu and Thomas Hembrom filed two separate complaints with Gobindaganj Police Station on November 16 and 26 over the eviction drive.

The court said the deputy inspector general of police of Rangpur range



Barbed wire fences of the Rangpur Sugar Mills were vandalised some time between Monday night and early Tuesday morning.

PHOTO: STAR

would take initiative for investigation and an officer of the Police Bureau of Investigation will conduct the probe under supervision of a police officer not below the rank of superintendent of police.

The HC bench of Justice Obaidul Hassan and Justice Krishna Debnath fixed January 8 for passing further order on the matter.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, several rights activists and a former top police official said if any policeman is found involved in the arson, he must be handed down exemplary punishment.

Nur Mohammad, former inspector general of police, said if it's true that policemen were involved in torching Santal houses, stern action must be

taken against them.

"There is no alternative to taking tough action against the policemen involved in the arson," he said, adding that usually political goons do such things.

Referring to the Santals, Nur Mohammad, also a former secretary, said police, as a law enforcement agency, should have given all kinds of support to the marginalised people.

"Police involvement in the arson seems very unusual to me. The video clip should also be examined, as it still appears unbelievable to me that police could do this," said the former IGP.

Human rights activist Sanjeeb Drong said, "Though it's late, we hail the High Court order."

We want to see the culprits pun-

ished, whoever they are."

Referring to the Nasiragar attacks on the Hindus, he said at least the UNO and the officer-in-charge of Nasiragar Police Station were withdrawn from there, but no action was taken over the Gobindaganj incident.

"All the culprits [in the Gobindaganj incident] are moving freely. It seems the State does not consider Santals as human beings," Sanjeeb said.

Eminent rights activist Sultana Kamal said, "If policemen are found guilty of torching the houses, they should be punished. It's a heinous crime."

The allegations against police are distressing, as they are supposed to protect the weak, she said.

Prof Mizanur Rahman, former chairman of the National Human Rights Commission, said, "The incident will go down as one of the most shameful episodes in the history of Bangladesh's law enforcement agencies."

"It is totally unacceptable in a democracy," he said, demanding exemplary punishment to the culprits.

Contacted, Ashrafur Islam, superintendent of police in Gaibandha, refused to make any comment, saying the HC already issued an order on the matter.

Seeking anonymity, a top official at the police headquarters said they were probing to know whether members of the police were involved in setting fire to Santal houses.

"We have taken the matter very seriously."

The official also said someone with an ulterior motive may have doctored the video clip.

Election code

FROM PAGE 16

This was not the first-time violation of the rules by Shimul. In December last year, he accompanied party-nominated mayoral aspirant when the candidate went to submit nomination papers for Natore sadar municipality.

At the time he said sorry to the Election Commission formally for his misconduct and promised to refrain from repeating such activity in future.

However, this month he accompanied his party-backed district council chairman and member aspirants when they went to submit nomination papers.

The chairman and six other members have already been elected to Natore Zila Parishad unopposed. Three others also got elected for reserved seats. Natore elections will be held on December 28 to elect representatives for the remaining nine general positions and two reserved posts.

Shahina Khatun, deputy commission (DC) of Natore, who will discharge her duty as returning officer in the district council polls, said informed of the meeting, she told the MP that it would be violation of the electoral code of conduct.

"The MP told me it would not since he would only discuss how to celebrate Victory Day on December 16."

The DC said she was not aware of what had been discussed in the meeting.

A union parishad chairman who was among the 20-22 people in the meeting said the MP had directed them to take necessary measures to ensure the victory of the party-backed member candidates.

"If you don't follow the directions, you will not get development projects," said the UP chairman, a leader of the ruling party's local unit.

The Daily Star tried to reach Shimul repeatedly on phone for his comments, but he neither received calls, nor did he reply to text message.

A new model of elections

FROM PAGE 1

The first ever zila parishad election is the latest testimony of this practice. Twenty-two out of 61 chairmen and around one fourth of the members were elected unopposed.

No previous polls were replete with such huge number of uncontested elections to parliament and local government bodies. In the past, such uncontested polls took place after certain pauses but since January 2014, the phenomenon has become the order of the day.

For example, until the January 5, 2014 parliamentary election, the highest number of MPs elected unopposed was in the one-sided parliamentary elections on February 15, 1996. As many as 49 MPs were elected unopposed then. But the uncontested elections of 153 MPs in January 5 polls surpassed all past records.

Previously, only 11 MPs were elected unopposed in the 1973 election after independence when AL was riding high on the patriotic tide immediately after the Liberation War. Its leader Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the undisputed leader of

YEAR	ELECTIONS	UNCONTESTED
2014	JS	153 Mps
2015	Municipality	7 mayors
2016	Union Parishad	220 chairmen
2016	Zila Parishad	22 chairmen, at least 300 members

Bangladesh. No other party had the audacity to challenge the AL in the battle of ballots.

In the second parliamentary elections held in 1979 during Gen Ziaur Rahman led martial law regime, 11 MPs were elected uncontested. AL was still reeling from the August 15, 1975 bloody changeover and the party was in disarray.

The number of elected uncontested MPs rose to 18 in the 1988 parliamentary election which was held during the autocratic Ershad regime amid a boycott by AL, BNP and other political parties.

But none was elected unopposed in 1986 parliamentary election in which AL and some other parties had contested even though it was held under the second martial law regime led by Gen Ershad.

Not a single MP was elected unopposed in four other contested elections held after the restoration of democracy in 1991, in June 1996, 2001, and 2008.

Uncontested elections in the last Union Parishads elections also surpassed all past records. In the last elections held in between March to May, 220 chairmen were elected unopposed. The number was 34 in 2003 polls, 37 in 1997, 4 in 1992 and 100 in 1988 elections.

Seven mayors were elected unopposed in the last municipality elections held in 2015. In the Upazila Parishad elections in 2014, some candidates to the vice chairman post were also elected unopposed.

The uncontested elections actually mean voters are denied of their constitutional rights to vote.

Such elections contradict the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and our con-

stitution.

Article 21 (3) of the UDHR unequivocally says that the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of the government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 1966 also stressed the need for free and fair elections.

Articles 65 and 59 of the constitution empower people to elect MPs and local government representatives by exercising their franchise.

But uncontested elections demolish the above provisions. It is unique to have this new model of elections in our electoral democracy to deny people's voting right.

If this continues, people will keep losing their voices in state affairs. The emphatic pronouncement by the constitution that all powers of the Republic belong to the people will remain only in the book and people will remain powerless in reality.

Tough year

FROM PAGE 16

This year marked the first time since 2008 that Iran was not among the top five worst offenders. China had jailed the most journalists worldwide in the previous two years.

TURKEY IN FOCUS

The CPJ says that at least 81 journalists were imprisoned in Turkey as of December 1, all facing anti-state charges.

A state of emergency is still in force in Turkey following a July 15 coup attempt, with a resulting government action against alleged coup sympathisers landing thousands in jail and forcing tens of thousands of people from their jobs.

In a separate report released Tuesday, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) reported that 348 journalists are currently detained worldwide -- six percent more than were detained at this time last year. The figure includes bloggers and freelance contributors.

The number of women journalists imprisoned more than quadrupled over the period (from five to 21).

"This reflects in part the growing role of women in journalism but above all the disastrous situation in Turkey,

which currently accounts for a third of the world's detained women journalists," RSF said.

"The persecution of journalists around the world is growing at a shocking rate," RSF secretary general Christophe Deloire said in a statement.

"At the gateway to Europe, an all-out witch-hunt has jailed dozens of journalists and has turned Turkey into the world's biggest prison for the media profession. In the space of a year, the Erdogan regime has crushed all media pluralism while the European Union has said virtually nothing."

Aside from Turkey, between them China, Iran and Egypt account for more than two-thirds of journalists imprisoned, RSF said, calling for the creation of a special representative for the safety of journalists directly attached to the office of the UN secretary general.

The number of journalists held hostage has however fallen this year, with 52, mostly locals, held around the world compared with 61 last year, although RSF said the 2015 number was particularly high.