

# Operation Dal-Bhat in spotlight

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the soldierly attitude and behaviour of the BCB members.

Earlier, a lower court in its judgment had observed that the glorious history of the 218-year-old Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) was damaged by its involvement in a programme like "Operation Dal-Bhat" that left a serious impact on the goodwill, professionalism and honesty of the force.

The lower court had also observed that involving the BDR in controlling price hike of essentials was not fruitful due to the absence of a specific mechanism to that end and it had destroyed the moral fabric of the disciplined force and led to the 2009 mutiny.

The Dal-Bhat operation was introduced in 2007 when food prices were soaring. Under the programme, the force sold essentials to people at a

reasonable price and kept the profit.

"By late 2008, most border guards started to believe that their bosses had deprived them of their right share of the profit. This resentment blended with their age-old discontent about being led by army officers on deputation."

A handful of hardcore mutineers cashed in on this pent-up resentment of the members of BDR, now renamed BGB, to stage the mutiny, said the court.

While delivering the verdict yesterday, the three-member special HC bench also called for investigating the failure of intelligence in the light of the Pilkhana carnage.

"This court strongly feels that the BGB authorities should make an inquiry into the matter by forming a probe committee as to why the Rifle Security Unit of BDR failed to provide necessary information of the BDR massacre in Pilkhana before commission of

the same," said the HC bench, asking to make the report public as early as possible.

"It is also the view of this court that the Ministry of Home Affairs and the BGB authorities should provide fast decision/reply to all problems of BGB members," said Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder.

"This is also the view of this court that the BGB should mitigate all the grievances of BGB members, if any.

"The court is also of the view that the BDR authorities should make quick payment of TA and DA [Traveling Allowance and Dearness Allowance], if any, to the BGB members which are still pending.

"The court further expects that the BGB authorities would consider the leave of the BGB members which are due to them and solve all problems relating to leave and other matters," it added.

# Diaz's mother

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nurses and doctors called in from the university medical centre forcefully picked her up and took her to the centre.

Acting Registrar Kamrul Huda told reporters that the woman was not well and needed medical attention.

"We are sending her home in an ambulance," he added.

But the attempt failed as the woman forced her way out of the vehicle and walked to the Central Shaheed Minar on the campus to resume the demonstration.

Between sobs, she kept telling students and bystanders how her son was killed and there was no justice to till 3:00pm.

She then went back to Bangabandhu Chatter where Diaz's family members, friends and university officials again tried to send her home.

They picked her up and took her home. But the desperate mother came back and stood at the campus gate.

Her daughter and other family mem-

bers finally took her home at 4:20pm, Diaz's sister Jobaida Sarwar said.

The body of Diaz, who was the assistant secretary of the central committee of Bangladesh Chhatra League, was found hanging at his home near Gate No-2 of CU on November 20 last year. His family members were not at home at the time.

A second autopsy on the body concluded that he was strangled to death.

The case is being investigated by the Criminal Investigation Department.

His family members said they were frustrated at lengthy investigation and alleged that police deliberately did not arrest the accused who roamed free on campus and sometimes threatened them.

"Diaz was murdered. But police are not arresting any of the accused," his sister Jubaida, a lawyer, said.

Diaz was also known to be loyal to Chittagong City Corporation Mayor AJM Nasir Uddin. Most of the BCL men

accused in the case are also loyal to the mayor.

After his death, the first autopsy at Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) concluded that he died by suicide.

But family members and fellow leaders said he was murdered by rival BCL group over tender manipulation.

Rejecting the post mortem report, his mother lodged a complaint with a Chittagong court accusing 10 people, including nine BCL men and a sociology teacher at CU on November 24, 2016, of murder.

The court ordered Chittagong CID to investigate the case.

A second autopsy report published by Dhaka Medical College Hospital on July 30, this year, concluded that Diaz was strangled to death.

A court on August 7 asked the CID to prevent the accused from leaving the country.

# Asif Nazrul sued

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Chittagong Port, mocking the minister.

"We recorded the complaint as a case under section 57 of the ICT Act on Sunday night after getting approval from the Police Headquarters in Dhaka," Quamrul Hasan, officer-in-charge of Madaripur Sadar Police Station, told The Daily Star last night.

Asif, a law teacher, said he was shocked to learn that the PHQ gave approval to record the case.

He said he clarified the matter with evidence before some newspapers that the post was uploaded from a fake Facebook account. He on several occasions also warned people through his Facebook account about the fake one.

"I will definitely be able to prove my innocence at the court, but even before doing that I could be arrested anytime and get locked up for an indefinite period.

"This law is now being used against me by the shipping minister's relatives only to cause harassment and suffering

to me and my family," the teacher told this correspondent.

Asif said the people behind the fake pages and those who filed the "false case" should instead be punished.

He called upon the law minister to repeal section 57 of the ICT Act immediately to save the innocents from the "wrath of influential people".

Saheli Ferdous, assistant inspector general (media) at the PHQ, said she was unaware of the approval and filing of the case.

If the case was filed upon approval, it must have some merit, she said.

A police investigation into the case would prove if the Facebook post was uploaded from a fake account, the AIG added.

The Daily Star contacted two more top police officials concerned at the PHQ, but they refused to comment on the matter.

The case was filed amid growing demands from different quarters for repeal of section 57 of the ICT Act for

its alleged misuse.

Some 300 cases were lodged under the section in the first seven months of this year. Over two dozen journalists were sued and several were arrested, according to statistics of the Cyber Tribunal.

Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Hoque on August 2 instructed all police stations to consult the legal wing at the PHQ before registering any case under section 57.

According to sources at the Cyber Tribunal, among the cases filed under the ICT Act, about 90 percent were recorded under section 57 and a large number of the plaintiffs were from the ruling Awami League.

A defamation case was also filed against Asif on Thursday over the same Facebook post.

Faruk Khan, cousin of the shipping minister, filed the case stating that the DU teacher "willingly tarnished the image of the minister socially and politically by uploading the post".

Rohingyas, he added.

Pope Francis is likely to meet a small group of Rohingyas in Dhaka during his three-day visit, he said.

"We are trying, with the approval of the government, to invite a small group of Rohingyas to Dhaka. We hope we can do it," the cardinal said.

Vatican-Bangladesh Relations Fantastic

Asked about the significance of the Pope's visit to Bangladesh during November 30-Dec 2, Cardinal Patrick said it is a recognition of Bangladesh's tradition of harmonious living and the development made over the years.

Vatican does not have economic or trade relations with Bangladesh, but there is an exceptional relationship based on humanity, morality and spirituality, he said.

Bishop Gervas Rozario of Rajshahi said the Catholic Church in Bangladesh has been making significant contributions to education, health and socio-economic development and to promoting the rights of the marginalised people.

"This relationship will continue," he said.

Bishops from around the country said approximately 80,000 Catholics will attend a prayer service at Suhrawardy Udyan and pray for peace and harmony with Pope Francis on December 1.

Chittagong Archbishop Moses M Costa, Bishop Sebastian Tudu of Dinajpur, Bishop Shorot Francis Gomes of Dhaka, Bishop Subrata Hawlader of Barisal, Bishop Romen Bairagi of Khulna and Father Kamal Corraya, convener of the media committee for the papal visit, also spoke during the briefing.

## Govt college

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not take part in any academic and administrative activities.

Many students went to colleges found that there were hardly any academic activities there.

Officials of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board, Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, different education boards and Government Alia Madrasas also observed the work abstention.

## 2 alleged robbers beaten to death in B'baria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

An angry mob beat two suspected robbers to death in Brahmanbaria's Kasba last night.

Moniruzzaman, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Kasba Police Station, said they were yet to identify the two men.

Quoting locals, he said a night guard in Hariyabaha village saw a group of men preparing for a robbery around 10:30pm and alerted the villagers.

Within moments, the villagers came out of their houses, caught the two men and beaten them to death. The others managed to flee.

## Pak govt

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he told a crowd of around 2,500 demonstrators, adding that his group was abandoning plans to issue a fatwa against Hamid and was calling for roads and schools to be reopened.

There was no immediate confirmation from the government of the resignation and no comment from the military.

The decision to capitulate to the protesters' demands is a major embarrassment for the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) as it eyes elections in 2018, analysts said, and underscores the influence of religious groups in the nuclear-armed country of 207 million.

Rizvi's previously obscure group has been calling for weeks for Hamid's ousting over a hastily-abandoned amendment to the oath which election candidates must swear. It has occupied a main highway into Islamabad since November 6 and virtually paralysed the capital.

The protesters have linked the amended wording to blasphemy -- a highly contentious charge in Muslim Pakistan which carries the death penalty. Even unproven allegations have spurred mob lynchings and murders.

## Time Inc

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Meredith had expressed interest in buying Time earlier this year then walked away because it could not secure the necessary financing.

Time revealed in October an aggressive plan to boost revenue that included focusing less on magazine journalism and more on digital activities.

Time Inc was spun off from media and entertainment giant Time Warner, which was seeking to shed its journalism assets.

Meredith's offer is for \$18.50 per Time share, up about 10 percent from the shares' closing price of \$16.90 on Friday. Share prices rose over the past week on speculation over the purchase.

The boards of both companies have approved the transaction, which is due to be finalized in the first semester of 2018, Meredith said in a statement.

The all-cash transaction includes about \$1.7 billion for the company assets plus more than \$1 billion in debt.

Among the funds financing the purchase are \$650 million from Koch Equity Development, a fund belonging to Charles and David Koch.

"We are creating a premier media company serving nearly 200 million American consumers across industry-leading digital, television, print, video, mobile and social platforms positioned for growth," said Meredith Corporation chairman and CEO Stephen Lacy.

## Execute verdict

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The body of Idris and that of nine others were dug out of a mass grave in Pilkhana on February 28, 2009, two days after the mutiny had ended.

Maj Syed Md Yousuf Iqbal, elder brother of Idris, somehow, managed to escape on that day.

A relative of another martyred major said he did not want to comment on the verdict now as the HC verdict was not the final one and it could be challenged at the Supreme Court's Appellate Division.

"The incident happened eight years ago. The HC delivered the verdict yesterday. We will have to now wait patiently for the execution of the verdict. Once that is done, we will get some relief," he said, requesting anonymity.

Relatives of two BDR men acquitted of death sentences by the HC expressed their gratitude to the court, saying that they got justice.

Rehana Akhtar's husband Nayek Subedar Ali Akbar, who was awarded the death sentence by the lower court, was acquitted by the HC.

"I am very happy today. For the last eight years, my three children and I led a miserable life. We will be able to sleep soundly tonight," she said with tears rolling down her cheeks.

For Zinnatul Ferdous, the situation was totally opposite to Rehana's as her father's death sentence was upheld by the HC. Besides, the court also upheld life imprisonment of her two brothers and two uncles in the BDR carnage case.

She claimed that her father Subedar Maj Jakir Jamal had been in the BDR headquarters for several days before the BDR mutiny to have his pension-related documents completed and was not involved in the BDR carnage.

Zinnatul added that her mother was a nurse at BDR hospital and she was killed on the day of mutiny.

# MK Alamgir made to quit

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of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Farmers Bank Director Mohammad Masud has replaced Alamgir as the new chairman. Another director, Maruf Alam, has been made its vice chairman and also chairman of the Audit Committee.

Earlier on Sunday, the BB issued a notice to Farmers Bank Managing Director AKM Shameem, asking him to explain within a week why he would not be removed him from his post for failing to manage the bank efficiently and address its liquidity crunch.

It also asked him to explain why the bank disbursed fresh loans despite having restrictions on lending, according to the BB notice.

Talking to this correspondent, Md Anwarul Islam, assistant spokesperson of the central bank, confirmed the issuance of the BB notice.

Shameem could not be reached over his mobile phone yesterday.

Earlier in January, the BB slapped some restrictions on the bank in disbursing loans and opening new branches, given its precarious financial health.

Non-performing loans at the bank increased significantly in recent months as the board continued to sanction and disburse loans in breach of the rules.

Between September and November in 2015, the BB conducted special inspections at three branches of the Farmers Bank in the city's Gulshan, Motijheel and Shyampur, and found gross violation of the banking rules in disbursing loans of around Tk 400 crore.

Some directors of the bank were allegedly involved in sanctioning loans, violating the credit rules.

Last year, the central bank

appointed an observer to the bank to help it restore corporate governance, but the initiative went in vain.

As of September this year, Farmers Bank's non-performing loans (NPLs) amounted to Tk 377.68 crore, up by Tk 100 crore from the previous year's. The NPLs now account for 7.45 percent of the bank's total outstanding loans.

According to a BB report, 13 counts of irregularities were found in the bank, including disbursement of loans to nonexistent companies. The bank also gave loans to its own directors as well as those of other banks, violating the credit discipline.

Besides, the bank disbursed loans to defaulter clients against forged Credit Information Bureau reports, and took the burden of a number of bad loans from other banks, flouting the banking rules.

The Farmers Bank doesn't have the capacity to pay back the depositors' money and refund the credit taken from other banks, the BB report mentioned.

Despite offering 12 percent interest on its different deposit schemes, the bank failed to attract clients and suffered a severe liquidity crisis in recent months.

The bank has so far been fined Tk 18 crore for its failure to maintain the statutory liquidity ratio and the cash reserve requirement with the central bank.

Last week, the BB gave the cash-strapped bank a short-term loan of Tk 96 crore to help it meet the urgent liquidity demands.

Earlier this month, the bank failed twice to honour a cheque of Tk 35.44 crore presented by Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd due to fund shortage. The state-owned telecom firm got the money later.

# Sophia to visit Dhaka

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marketing agency, which is organising the much hyped exposition, is also arranging Sophia's Dhaka visit.

"Now it is confirmed. We have signed the deal with their authority regarding Sophia and its manufacturer David Hanson's Dhaka visit," said Syed Gousul Alam Shaon, managing director of Grey.

Along with Sophia, its manufacturer David Hanson will also be in Dhaka on December 5. Hanson will present a key note at a session of the event focusing on robotics and artificial intelligence.

Sophia was activated on April 19, 2015, using artificial intelligence, visual data processing and facial recognition.

A Hong Kong-based company, Hanson Robotics, developed the robot and it has been designed to respond to questions, and has been interviewed by media from across the world.

Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd is sponsoring the robot's visit to Dhaka. The humanoid robot can chat, smile and even tell jokes, according to different global media reports.

While it has some impressive capabilities, it does not yet have consciousness, but its manufacturer say they expect that fully sentient machines to emerge within a few years.

Grey has declined disclosing the value of the sponsorship. The entire event's budget stands at about Tk 12 crore.

"We are entering a global trend. Bringing the robot here will make the expo a success," Shaon said.

When contacted on Sunday, Zunaïd Ahmed Palak, state minister for ICT, said it will be a huge success presenting Sophia in Dhaka. "We are eagerly waiting for her."

Hanson Robotics has also shown a keen interest in coming to Bangladesh and knowing about the digitisation

process of the country, said Shaon.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the four-day-long expo and her ICT advisor Sajeeb Wazed Joy will also be present.

Though the much discussed robot has received citizenship of a country, it will not require a visa to visit Bangladesh, said a top official of the exposition's organising committee.

In the last few years, the government has been organising the event to highlight the innovation and success of Bangladesh's digitisation. This year, the government also plans to showcase the progress of Bangladesh's IT industries in their readiness for becoming an IT hub and will invite investments from international companies.

Ministers from Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, the Philippines, Congo and the Maldives are expected to attend the event.

The organisers -- the ICT Division and the Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services -- expect about 400 exhibitors from home and abroad to participate this year.

On October 11 this year, Sophia was introduced to the United Nations and had a brief conversation with Amina J. Mohammed, the UN deputy secretary-general.

"I'm more than just technology. I'm a real, live electronic girl. I would like to go out into the world and live with people," said Sophia, on its official website.

The robot uses voice recognition technology from Alphabet Inc. (parent company of Google) and is designed to get smarter over time. Sophia's intelligence software was designed by SingularityNET.

Saudia Arab gave Sophia citizenship earlier this year, making her the first robot ever to receive the status from a country.

# Prince Harry

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London and the prince then informed his grandmother Queen Elizabeth II, close members of the royal family and had also sought the blessing of Markle's parents.

"The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh are delighted for the couple and wish them every happiness," said a message on the monarch's official Twitter page.

The couple will live at Nottingham Cottage in London's Kensington Palace, where his brother William and his pregnant wife Kate live with their two children.

Harry's 36-year-old bride-to-be is best known for her role as a lawyer in the hit television show "Suits".

Reports that Markle, who is expected to become a duchess, was moving her two dogs -- Guy and Bogart -- to London further fuelled rumours of the first royal wedding since William and Kate in 2011.

The actress's parents Thomas Markle and Doria Ragland said in a statement they were "incredibly happy" and wished the couple "a lifetime of happiness."

"Our daughter has always been a kind and loving person," they said. "To see her union with Harry, who shares the same qualities, is a source of great joy for us as parents."

Wellwishers gathered outside Buckingham Palace, including Donna, 46, who called the news "amazing".

"He looks very happy, it's great for him," she told AFP.

"It says a lot for the royal family, younger people are interested, and

"I think the Pope would say as much as is necessary in public. But, surely he would raise his concerns over the Rohingyas and appreciate Bangladesh's stance in regards to the