

When belief is a weapon, don't be surprised by who wields it



OF MAGIC & MADNESS
BADIUZZAMAN BAY

A dramatic turn of events since the March 17 attack on Hindu villagers in Sunamganj's Shalla Upazila has been reshaping the narrative on the culpability of potential actors and, by extension, the politics of communal violence in Bangladesh. On Saturday, police arrested Shaidul Islam Swadhin, the prime accused in two cases filed over the attack. Until then, the narrative was quite simple: supporters of Hefazat-e-Islam, incensed by an alleged Facebook post by a Hindu young man criticising their leader Mamunul Haque, carried out the attacks. No ulterior motive. No political machinations. Just the work of some run-of-the-mill fanatics out for revenge. The simplicity of the message meant that the "liberal right"—the so-called liberal supporters of the political right—could safely denounce religious fanaticism without being pulled into awkward questions about Hefazat's tryst with the ruling establishment. But Swadhin, a UP member who even newspapers loyal to the government identified as a Jubo League leader, threw cold water on that narrative. According to *The Daily Star*, Swadhin allegedly orchestrated the incident by gathering Hefazat supporters over the said Facebook post and then led a mob that went on a rampage through the village. About 90 Hindu houses were damaged or looted as a consequence. Now, timeline it with what we came to know about Swadhin's past records—his feud with the Hindus of the Noagaon village in Shalla over fishing in a nearby *jolmohal*, his deliberate attempt to deprive them by stopping the flow of water and pumping it out and taking all the fish forcibly, the fines he had paid for his actions—and an ulterior motive presents itself. This led political opponents to openly hint at an AL/Jubo League connection. The turnaround in narratives is as dramatic

as it is significant in understanding communal politics in Bangladesh. It offers important lessons about the need to investigate the build-up to such cases of violence. It would be wrong, however, to suggest that such violence is always manufactured to serve vested interests. The threat of religious intolerance leading to spontaneous communal violence or other faith crimes is a real and dangerous one. And a crowd that supports persecution of religious minorities is perhaps as much to blame as the crowd that carries out the persecution. But we live in an environment that allows religion to be exploited for personal, political or economic interests, and it can open up a whole gamut of possibilities which we should be ready to accept. Unfortunately, after nearly every such violence, we're given only half the picture: that of a blood-thirsty menagerie of wild zealots seeking revenge for a supposed assault on their faith, as if no other scenarios may exist. Rarely are such crimes investigated with an intent to get to the bottom of them and to bring the real culprits to justice. And rarely, if ever, do these investigations end in convictions, a major reason why the crimes keep happening. At this point, we must acknowledge that Facebook or social media has added a new, very dangerous dimension to the conception and commission of communal violence, which should worry the policymakers. Consider four cases from recent history: On November 1, 2020, 10 Hindu homes were reportedly vandalised and torched in Cumilla. On October 20, 2019, over 13 Hindu homes were similarly attacked and a temple destroyed in Bhola. On November 10, 2017, at least 30 Hindu homes were burned to the ground in Rangpur. On October 30, 2016, over 100 Hindu homes and 17 temples were destroyed and 100 Hindu individuals attacked in Brahmanbaria. All these attacks were carried out by crowds outraged over Facebook posts, real or fake, allegedly "demeaning Islam". The poor, helpless souls at the receiving end of these heinous crimes in the name of religion are yet to get justice. Will they ever? Will the

Shalla victims? Will the victims of other types of communal violence? It may be impractical to hope so, despite the assurances of the higher authorities. But even if they do get justice, how much of an impact will it have on religious freedom in a country that still officially prefers one religion over all others, where there is little tolerance of diversity in general, and where a curious interaction of faith, politics and economics has somehow made cultivation of intolerance a very profitable project for all parties involved? The Swadhin case in Shalla can be seen as a template for how this interaction plays out. It entails a political link-up with faith crimes to serve a vested interest. Researches of communal violence in Bangladesh highlight two major motivations for such link-ups: 1) grabbing the land, properties and businesses of members of the minority communities (religious, language or ethnic); and 2) political/electoral calculations. There can be other motivations but these two remain a major influence, and we

have seen how often violence took place with the provocation, explicit or implicit support, leadership or at least consent of the political leaders. Like Swadhin, the names of many local leaders of mainstream parties have also come up in connection with attacks on minorities. The link-up with faith—and like-minded faith leaders—offers rich dividends in communal politics. Faith, to the beneficiaries of communal violence, is a weapon to be used at will. It helps to whip up anti-minority matters little that minorities, too, are citizens, with equal rights and deserving equal access to the services, opportunities and protection this country can offer. But communal provocateurs don't thrive on facts or questions of morality. They thrive on mischaracterisation and dehumanisation of the minorities. Swadhin, as one of them, is rather a small fish in a big pond—the politics of divisions, "sentiments" and communalism is playing out on a national stage today. But he amply shows why we should critically probe the inner dynamics of communal violence and never let any narrative go unscrutinised. In Shalla, the irony of what happened couldn't be starker—here is a place that, until recently, was better known for being the birthplace of BRAC, where Sir Fazle Hasan Abed launched his post-war nation rebuilding work in 1972. The love that once flowed through this region and gave hope to an entire nation seems to have been replaced by fear, hatred and bitterness. How this transformation came about should be studied and learned from, if we are to stop this rot from spreading far and wide. True, the public can be easily manipulated with the fear of an imaginary threat to their faith or community, and we have to continuously work on developing inter-faith and inter-community trust and respect for diversity so that they find a peaceful way to communicate and resolve their differences. But those who try to exploit people's emotions to stoke communal unrest—politicians, community/faith leaders, and other actors—are a bigger threat here. We need to see them for what they are. We need to stop them from weaponising faith. Unless we stop this destructive interplay among faith, political and economic interests that has taken root of late, the casualties will only pile up, further destabilising our already deeply fractured society. The responsibility to ensure it doesn't happen rests squarely on the government.

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PHOTO: STAR

Bangabandhu: A man to match the hour



PROVIDENCE has myriad ways of working miracles. It can summon up the spirit of a hapless people, struggling to break free, and decide the fate of nations yearning for deliverance. Destiny delivers to a people and nation a man or woman to match the need of the hour and meet the warrant of history. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was to Bangladesh what Gandhi was to India, de Gaulle to France, and Mandela to South Africa. Little wonder that history honours Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as Bangabandhu, Father of the Nation of the brand new Bangladesh that he galvanised and led his brave compatriots to create half a century ago. In the words of his illustrious daughter, the honourable Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, "Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was able to make the dream of freedom that Bengalis had been dreaming for a thousand years come true". It is in the fitness of things, therefore, that a profoundly grateful nation celebrates the centenary of the birth of the extraordinary leader who matched the hour and delivered what has come to be known as the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Born on March 17, 1920, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the first President of Bangladesh and served later as the Prime Minister from April 17, 1971, serving his country throughout until his brutal assassination on August 15, 1975.

of Bangladesh was as passionate as it was direct, befiting the compelling call of the moment and the wish for the well-being of the new nation. The personal involvement of Bhutan's King and her people during a most crucial period in its history was most graciously acknowledged by the Government of Bangladesh, and over the years, the friendship forged in need has flourished in diverse spheres indeed. Bhutan and Bangladesh share the same hopes and dreams for our people and our nations, and indeed, for our planet Earth and the world. We care for our children and their future, and the future of humanity, and are committed to securing their well-being as our common commitment. Forged over many years by successive generations of our leaders, the Bangladesh-Bhutan relationship celebrates personal bonds between heads of states and governments and links our farmers in remote communities.

is the happy culmination of many years of exemplary goodwill and close partnership. People-to-people relationships have been a most beautiful element of our bilateral engagement over the years. As Bangabandhu told the BBC in 1971, "My greatest strength is the love for my people; my greatest weakness is that I love them too much". As the deeply grateful People's Republic of Bangladesh celebrates the golden jubilee of the founding of the great nation, and honours the timeless legacy of the Father of the Nation, this land of myriad colours and contrasts can take legitimate pride in the multiple milestones that it has crossed as a vanguard of innovation and enterprise, bold experiments and breath-taking achievements. Unremitting challenges posed by natural calamities and lingering economic disparities have not deterred this buoyant nation that provides home and hearth to the displaced and the deprived, even as it sends its sons and daughters to keep peace in the troubled regions of the world far away from home, as the country pursues its expanding role in global affairs. This land of geniuses, artists and philanthropists, thought-leaders and path-finders, tillers of soil and makers of masterpieces, riders on the sea, builders on land, and gazers of the sky, is a gift as Nature gave it, and a miracle as its recipients made it by right and responsibility. On the most joyous occasion of the golden jubilee year of the establishment of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the year-long celebration of the birth centenary of

Jatir Janak Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, I offer my fervent prayers for the blessings of peace, prosperity and happiness for the great nation and the people of Shonar Bangla forever. The timeless legacy of one of the greatest statesmen of the modern

age continues, as in the reflections of Anandashankar Roy: "As long as Padma, Meghna, Gouri and Jamuna flow, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, your accomplishments will also live on..." The liberator and founder of the incredible nation of many blessings and limitless possibilities, Sheikh

Mujibur Rahman belongs not only to Bangladesh, but to the world. May the silken knot of the Bangladesh-Bhutan relationship grow stronger with each passing year. Thakur S Powdvel is Former Minister of Education of the Royal Government of Bhutan.



PHOTO: ARCHIVES

Since the founding of the nation in 1971, the People's Republic of Bangladesh has been a country on the move, with its head held high and eyes focused on the future. Today, Bangladesh is a success story of an amazing order, growing by leaps and bounds, in all spheres of human and societal development, and is all set to graduate to the status of a developing country, in tandem with Bhutan, in 2023. Bangladesh and Bhutan meet at multiple points—diplomatic, social, cultural, economic and human, above all. We are the founding members of the SAARC family of nations and belong to the BIMSTEC fraternity, apart from being members of several regional and international institutions. Bhutan has followed closely the birth and evolution of the great nation with immense pride and deep involvement. The Father of Modern Bhutan Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck was the first Head of State, and Bhutan the first country in the world, to recognise Bangladesh as an independent, sovereign country poised to chart her own chosen destiny, befiting the sacred dreams and aspirations of a great people with an amazing heritage. His Majesty's letter of December 6, 1971 addressed to the Acting President

Besides our ever-growing trade partnership, the Bangladesh-Bhutan collaboration has expanded into educational, health, environmental, technological, agricultural, artistic and even spiritual spheres, enriched by a mutually supportive spirit based on integrity and goodwill at each level. Bangladesh has opened its heart and its doors to generations of Bhutanese scholars and citizens who have brought home strategic expertise in critical fields, even as experts from Bangladesh have earned the respect of the Bhutanese people and the government for their valuable service in diverse fields. The recent signing of the Preferential Trade Agreement

economic disparities have not deterred this buoyant nation that provides home and hearth to the displaced and the deprived, even as it sends its sons and daughters to keep peace in the troubled regions of the world far away from home, as the country pursues its expanding role in global affairs. This land of geniuses, artists and philanthropists, thought-leaders and path-finders, tillers of soil and makers of masterpieces, riders on the sea, builders on land, and gazers of the sky, is a gift as Nature gave it, and a miracle as its recipients made it by right and responsibility. On the most joyous occasion of the golden jubilee year of the establishment of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the year-long celebration of the birth centenary of

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার			
বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ অধিনায়কের কার্যালয় র‌্যাপিড এ্যাকশন ব্যাটালিয়ন-৫ মোস্তাপাড়া, হুত্মাম, রাজশাহী			
দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি			
তারিখ: ২২ মার্চ ২০২১খ্রিঃ			
স্মারক নং-৫৩২৬/কিউ			
"The Public Procurement Regulation-2008" মোতাবেক চলতি ২০২০-২০২১ অর্থ বৎসরে র‌্যাব-৫, রাজশাহীর নিম্নলিখিত মেসামত প্রকল্প বাস্তবায়নের জন্য বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত ট্রিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট থেকে নিম্নোক্তবস্তুকে নামে প্রতিযোগিতামূলক দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছেঃ			
১।	সংস্থা	ঃ	র‌্যাপিড এ্যাকশন ব্যাটালিয়ন-৫
২।	সমগ্র বস্তুর নাম	ঃ	অধিনায়ক, র‌্যাব-৫
৩।	সমগ্র বস্তুর বিবরণ	ঃ	বর্তমানে ব্যবহৃত হচ্ছে না।
৪।	সমগ্র বস্তুর সূত্র নম্বর	ঃ	র‌্যাব-৫
৫।	তারিখ	ঃ	মেসামত কাজ।
৬।	দরপত্রের পদ্ধতি	ঃ	পুলিশ সদর দপ্তর স্মারক নং-র‌্যাব/৪৪.০১.০০০০.০৪৩.৯৬-২০২০/মেসামত/র‌্যাব/১১৬০(৩)।
৭।	বাজেট ও ব্যাঙ্গের উৎস	ঃ	১১ মার্চ ২০২১খ্রিঃ।
৮।	দরপত্র প্রাক্কলন নং	ঃ	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (OTM)।
৯।	দরপত্র সিডিউল সর্বশেষ প্রারম্ভ তারিখ	ঃ	র‌্যাব-৫ সদর দপ্তর, মোস্তাপাড়া, হুত্মাম, রাজশাহী।
১০।	দরপত্র জমা প্রদানের সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময়	ঃ	১২ এপ্রিল ২০২১খ্রিঃ সময় ১৭:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
১১।	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	ঃ	১৩ এপ্রিল ২০২১খ্রিঃ সময় ১২:০০ ঘটিকা।
১২।	দরপত্র সম্পাদনাকারীর অফিস ও ঠিকানা	ঃ	১৩ এপ্রিল ২০২১খ্রিঃ সময় ১২:৩০ ঘটিকা।
১৩।	দরপত্র গ্রহণের স্থান	ঃ	র‌্যাব-৫ সদর দপ্তর, মোস্তাপাড়া, হুত্মাম, রাজশাহী।
১৪।	দরপত্র খোলার স্থান	ঃ	র‌্যাব-৫ সদর দপ্তর, মোস্তাপাড়া, হুত্মাম, রাজশাহী।
১৫।	দরপত্রাদাতার যোগ্যতা	ঃ	"The Public Procurement Regulation-2008" অনুযায়ী মেসামত কাজের অভিজ্ঞতাসম্পন্ন সরকারি/খাসগতপনিত সংস্থার তালিকাভুক্ত বৈধ ট্রিকাদার।
১৬।	দরপত্রাদাতার ব্যোধ্যতা ও দরপত্রের সাথে দাখিলযোগ্য কাগজপত্রের বিবরণ	ঃ	"The Public Procurement Regulation-2008" এবং বর্তমান সংশোধনী মোতাবেক দরপত্রাদাতাকে দরপত্র দাখিলের সময় নিম্নলিখিত কাগজপত্রাদি দরপত্রের সাথে অবশ্যই দাখিল করতে হবেঃ (ক) নাগরিকত্ব সনদপত্র (খ) ট্রেড লাইসেন্স (গ) ভাতা রেজিস্ট্রেশন সনদপত্র (ঘ) টিআইএন নম্বর উল্লেখসহ হালসময়ের আয়কর সনদপত্র (ঙ) ফর্ম/প্রতিষ্ঠানের মালিকানা সনদপত্র (চ) পিডব্লিউডি/এলজিইডি/এমইএস এর তালিকাভুক্তির সনদ (ছ) অর্থিক স্বচ্ছলতা সনদপত্র (জ) ব্যালেন্স শীট, (ঝ) সর্বশেষ বছরের অভিজ্ঞতা সনদ (ঞ) দরপত্রাদাতার ফর্ম/প্রতিষ্ঠান কাগজে তালিকাভুক্ত নয় মিলে নিজ প্রাতিষ্ঠানিক প্যাকে প্রতিস্বাক্ষরিত মুহূর্তসহ (ট) প্রাতিষ্ঠানিক প্যাকে দরদাতার ০৩ (তিনটি) নম্বর স্বাক্ষর ১ম শ্রেণীর কর্মকর্তা কর্তৃক সত্যায়িত ও (ঠ) পাসপোর্ট সাইজের সত্যায়িত ০২ (দুই) কপি ছবি। এ ছাড়াও "The Public Procurement Regulation-2008" ও তদীয় সংশোধনী মোতাবেক অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী সিডিউলে উল্লেখ করা হবে।
১৭।	কাজের বিবরণ	ঃ	কাজের বিবরণ
১৮		লট নং	সিডিউলের মূল্য
১৯।		সিডিউলের মূল্য	দরপত্র জানামত
২০।		সিডিউলের মূল্য	কাজ সমাপ্তির সময়
২১।	১।	৩০০.০০	৮,৫০০.০০
২২।	২।	৩০০.০০	১৫,০০০.০০
২৩।	৩।	৩০০.০০	১১,৭০০.০০
২৪।	৪।	১৫০.০০	৫,০০০.০০
২৫।	৫।	১৫০.০০	৬,৫০০.০০
২৬।	৬।	৩০০.০০	১২,০০০.০০
২৭।	৭।	১৫০.০০	৫,৫০০.০০
২৮।	৮।	১৫০.০০	৫,৫০০.০০
দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম ঃ মোঃ আব্দুল মোজাকিম, এপিপি, পিএসসি, জি।			
দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার পদবী ঃ পোঃ কর্ণেল			
দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার ঠিকানা ঃ অধিনায়ক, র‌্যাব-৫, রাজশাহী।			
দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার সাথে যোগাযোগের মাধ্যম ঃ ফোন নং ০৭২১-৭৭১১২২, মোবাইলঃ ০২৭৭৭১০৫০০।			
বিশেষ জ্ঞাচক্যঃ			
ক। ব্যক্তি বা প্রতিষ্ঠানের সুল্লাধিকারী স্বাক্ষরপুত্র প্যাকে আবেদনপূর্বক অধিনায়ক, র‌্যাব-৫, রাজশাহী হতে অফিস চলাকালীন সময় পর্যন্ত দরপত্র সংগ্রহ করা যাবে।			
খ। দরপত্র সংগ্রহে অন্যান্য তথ্যাবলী দরপত্র সংগ্রহকালে নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারী কার্যালয়ে হতে জ্ঞানা যাবে।			
গ। দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ হতে দাখিলকৃত দরপত্র ৩০ দিন পর্যন্ত বলবৎ থাকবে।			
ঘ। অনুরোধিত ব্যক্তির আদৌকারে কার্যক্রম প্রদান করা হবে। এতদসংক্রান্ত কোন আপত্তি গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে না।			
ঙ। দরপত্রের উন্মুক্ত সময়ের মধ্যে কার্য সম্পাদন করতে হবে।			
চ। কোন কারণ দর্শনিতা ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন অর্থবা সুল্লাধিকারী দরপত্র গ্রহণ কিংবা ব্যতিল করার ক্ষমতা কর্তৃপক্ষ সংরক্ষণ করেন।			
ছ। কোন প্রকার কাটা হেঁচো, ঘামামা বা কারেকটিং হুইভ ব্যবহার করা যাবে না।			
জ। সিডিউল ত্রয়ের সময় অবশ্যই বাংলাদেশের তালিকাভুক্ত ট্রিকাদার প্রতিষ্ঠানের লাইসেন্সের সত্যায়িত ফটোকপি আনতে হবে।			
 মোঃ আব্দুল মোজাকিম, এপিপি, পিএসসি, জি পোঃ কর্ণেল অধিনায়ক টেলিফোনঃ ৭৭১১২২ মোবাইলঃ ০২৭৭৭১০৫০০			
জিডি-৫৯২			