



MY DHAKA

Shah Jahan's Dhaka campaign: A Mughal history footnote!

RIDWAN AKRAM

Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan is renowned for building the Taj Mahal, but few know that he also spent a week in Dhaka -- long before he ascended the throne.

At the time, Shah Jahan was still a prince -- called Prince Khurram -- embroiled in a power struggle with his father, Emperor Jahangir. The emperor's influential wife, Empress Nur Jahan, had begun to dominate the court and feared losing power if Shah Jahan became emperor. In April 1622, she married her daughter Ladli Begum to Jahangir's youngest son, Shahriyar, hoping to rule through him.

To sideline Shah Jahan, she convinced Jahangir to send him to Kandahar to confront Persian forces led by Shah Abbas. But the prince saw through this plan and refused to go -- effectively rebelling. He gathered forces in the Deccan, but after suffering defeat, he fled eastward toward Bengal, which, with its riverine geography, offered a natural stronghold for rebels. In mid-November 1623, he and his small army crossed into Orissa.

The Mughal court in Delhi immediately alerted Ibrahim Khan, the Subahdar (Governor) of Bengal, stationed in Dhaka. He was advised to monitor Orissa's Subahdar, Ahmad Beg Khan. But Ahmad Beg did nothing when Shah Jahan entered

Orissa. Soon after, the prince moved to Burdwan, captured the fort there, and sent shockwaves through Mughal administration.

Ibrahim Khan acted swiftly. He secured key outposts in Jessor, Tripura, Bhoila, Sylhet, Fulidubi, and Cachar. His personal aide Idris was entrusted with the safety of the Dhaka harem, backed by 500 cavalry and 1000 gunners. Realising the prince might march on Dhaka, Ibrahim Khan advanced to Akbarnagar (Rajmahal) to intercept him before he could reach the capital -- a standard medieval military tactic.

At the start of 1624, Shah Jahan tried diplomacy and invited Ibrahim Khan to switch allegiance. But the Subahdar, loyal to Emperor Jahangir, refused. A major battle became inevitable.

Unfortunately, Ibrahim Khan had deployed his experienced troops elsewhere and led the fight with inexperienced forces. He was killed in the battle -- struck down by an Afghan soldier unaware of his identity. Shah Jahan's forces triumphed.

Out of respect for the fallen Subahdar's abilities, the prince ensured Ibrahim Khan's head was not



PHOTO: COLLECTED



displayed publicly and allowed it to be buried with his body beside his son's grave.

With victory secured,

Shah Jahan rewarded his loyal commanders. Darab Khan, who had aided in the battle of Rajmahal, was appointed in charge of Dhaka with increased military strength.

Shah Jahan began his journey to Dhaka, entrusting the Rajmahal palace to Raja Bhim. After visiting

the shrine of Sheikh Nur Qutub Alam in Pandua and setting camp at Ghoraghata, he dispatched Khwaja Idrak ahead to calm any unrest in the capital. Six days after leaving Rajmahal, he camped in Shahjadpur, and arrived in Dhaka three days later, in May 1624.

Khwaja Idrak's efforts paid off -- there was no resistance. Ibrahim Khan's widow, preparing to flee with her possessions to Patna, was stopped by Shah Jahan's advance forces. Understanding the situation, local officials and Mughal officers came out in ranks to welcome the prince. Even the late Subahdar's widow greeted him respectfully.

Shah Jahan took residence in the Dhaka Fort -- the site we commonly refer to as Dhaka Central Jail. As Bengal's de facto ruler, he restored law and order in various regions, including Cooch Behar and Kamrup. But his primary goal was fundraising for his campaign to seize the throne in Delhi. Ibrahim Khan's nephew, Ahmad Beg, had already handed over property worth Tk 45 lakh and 500 elephants. By confiscating the late Subahdar's wealth, Shah Jahan acquired valuable goods, including silk, musabbar, weapons, and an additional Tk 40 lakh.

After a week in Dhaka, Shah Jahan left the city -- sending his commanders over land and himself departing by river.

We're in war-like situation: Yunus

FROM PAGE 1

The talks follow reports that Prof Yunus on Thursday expressed frustrations over some recent developments and expressed his desire to step down. BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, and National Citizen Party leaders met separately with Yunus on Saturday.

The CA observed that the 2024 mass uprising gave the country a great opportunity to turn around, Shafiqul said.

"Since the Awami League's activities were banned [on May 12], there have been relentless efforts to destabilise the situation. We must protect ourselves from this," Yunus said.

He urged everyone to be confident that he would not do anything that may harm the country.

"I feel confident as we all sat together. If I fail to hold a fair election, I will feel guilty."

Shafiqul said party leaders reaffirmed their support to the interim government, its reform initiatives, approach to the trials of July killings, and efforts to hold a national election.

The CA once again stated that he would hold the election between this December and June next year. The election will be held before June 30 and "everyone expressed their satisfaction" on the matter, Shafiqul said.

The political parties that met the CA demanded a clear roadmap to reforms, the election and trial for the July atrocities.

The leaders also said the interim government should hold trials of Awami League leaders' role in mass killings during the July uprising.

Mujahidul Islam Selim, former

president of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, said the reform process should engage people and the interim government might not have enough time to implement the reform proposals.

"The election can take place after making the necessary reforms and the interim government can leave fundamental issues to the people. Unnecessary delays can further worsen the already unstable situation."

There are conspiracies at home and abroad to destroy the national unity seen during the July uprising.

Nagarik Oikya President Mahmudur Rahman Manna said "The chief adviser has said that due to Indian hegemony, the country is facing a major crisis. Therefore, he believes that the entire nation needs to be united."

"We will remain united leaving behind differences of opinion. The nation doesn't want Yunus to resign," Manna said after the meeting.

Saiful Haque, secretary of the Biplobi Workers Party, said, "This government's main mandate is to make reforms, hold the trials for the July killings and the election. The government should give clear-cut roadmaps for these tasks."

He pointed out that there was a lack of coordination among the advisers.

The decision to establish a humanitarian corridor [to provide aid to the people in Rakhine State] and hand over the operations of the Chattogram port to a foreign party should not be made by the interim government without discussions and consultations with political parties, he said.

Mujahidul Islam Selim, former

"Prof Yunus did not make any straight comment regarding the humanitarian corridor and Chattogram port," he said.

Mojibur Rahman Monju, chairman of Amar Bangladesh Party, also emphasised the need for roadmap for reforms, trials and elections.

There is no alternative to unity among the July uprising forces, Monju added.

Rashtrô Songskar Andolon Chief Coordinator Hasnat Quaiyim said the trial, reforms and elections should not be pitted against each other.

The election should be held without further delay, strictly following the announced roadmap, Hasnat said.

Ganosamhati Andolon Chief Coordinator Zonayed Saki said the controversy surrounding the advisers is undesirable.

If the two advisers of the Students Against Discrimination have political plans for the future, then a question of their resignation arises.

A specific roadmap for the election will help the political parties prepare for that.

Islami Andolon Bangladesh Ameer Rezaul Karim said, "If necessary reforms are not implemented, the nation's hope for a fair election will be jeopardised."

Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis Ameer Munmun Haque urged the government to involve all political parties before making decisions on sensitive international matters.

Hefazat-e-Islam Secretary General Sajidur Rahman said that they informed CA that no law can be enacted contradicting the Holy Quran and Sunnah.

Thousands rally in Warsaw for Polish presidency rivals

AFP, Warsaw

Tens of thousands of people rallied in central Warsaw yesterday in rival demonstrations for the two candidates in Poland's presidential election on June 1.

Warsaw's pro-EU mayor Rafal Trzaskowski, who is backed by Poland's centrist government, will square off against nationalist historian Karol Nawrocki.

As they marched, Nawrocki's supporters sang patriotic and religious songs and held up signs calling for an end to immigration.

"Change is coming. We will win!", Nawrocki told the crowd.

"I am Polish and so I am voting for a candidate who will guarantee our future and act as a counterbalance to the current government," said Piotr Slaby, a financial sector worker from the city of Przemysl in southeastern Poland.

Piotr Nowak, a technician from Warsaw, 41, said: "We have a cosmopolitan government. They want to introduce the euro and we will lose our sovereignty."

Organisers estimated there were around 200,000 people at the Nawrocki rally while Prime Minister Donald Tusk said 500,000 people had attended the pro-Trzaskowski rally.

But an analysis by the Onet media outlet estimated the size of the Nawrocki rally at 70,000 and the Trzaskowski one at up to 160,000.

"Since these recommendations have not yet been formally implemented, the provision has not been included in the ordinance at this stage," Mokhles said.

Nazrul Islam, general secretary of the Inter-Ministerial Employees Council, told The Daily Star last night, "The government has moved faster than we expected. So, we will discuss tomorrow [Monday] morning whether to proceed with our previously announced programmes."

Badiul Karim, convener of the Secretariat Employees United Council, told The Daily Star around 10:30pm, "Despite the ordinance, a staff rally will be held at 11:00am on Monday at the Secretariat."

Responding to a query, he said: "Though there was talk of blocking the Secretariat's entrance gates, we believe that should not be done. A peaceful gathering will be held in front of Building 6. However, if the government does not respond to our demands, a tougher movement will be declared."

No provision to scrap the rule allowing forced retirement of an employee after 25 years in service was included in the ordinance despite the recommendation of a reform commission.

any activity that causes disobedience among other government employees, disrupts discipline, or obstructs the performance of duties, it will be considered misconduct.

If the accused again fails to respond or is found guilty, the stated punishment may be imposed.

The ordinance allows notices to be sent via email, in addition to existing methods.

Punished employees can appeal within 30 working days. The appellate authority may uphold, cancel, or amend the decision. A review petition may also be filed with the appropriate authority or the president within the same period.

Secretary Mokhles said, "The government wants to carry out its state responsibilities swiftly. This amendment aims to ensure quick action in cases where anyone obstructs the discharge of such responsibilities."

A show-cause notice must be issued within seven working days of initiating proceedings. If the accused fails to respond or is found guilty, a second notice must be served within another seven working days, asking why the proposed punishment

Charges pressed against eight cops at ICT

FROM PAGE 1

The other accused are Sudip Kumar Chakraborty, then DMP joint commissioner; Sha Alam Mohammad Akhtarul Islam, former additional deputy commissioner; Mohammad Imrul, former assistant commissioner of Ramna Zone of DMP; Arshad Hossain, former inspector (operation) at Shahbagh Police Station; and constables Sujon, Imaz Hossain, and Nasirul Islam.

Arshad, Sujon, Imaz, and Nasirul are in jail, while the others remain absconding.

On April 20, the investigation agency of the ICT submitted its probe report against the eight policemen over the killings.

The victims named in the case are Shahriar Khan Anas, Sheikh Mahdi Hasan Junayed, Mohammad Yakub, Rakibul Haider, Ismailul Haque, and Manik Mia.

Tajul told the tribunal that the six young men had entered the capital as part of the March to Dhaka programme in support of the uprising. He said they were shot dead at close range by police using Chinese rifles.

According to the chief prosecutor, 40 to 50 officers had been deployed in the Chankharpul area to stop protesters from advancing towards the Shaheed Minar in the morning. While many police personnel may have been involved, not all have been named in the charges.

"Only those identified in video footage as directly using Chinese rifles to carry out the killings have been named in the charges," Tajul told the court.

He added that superior officers, including Habibur, Sudip, and Imrul, who either directly ordered the killings, were present at the scene and issued commands, or facilitated the crimes, have also been brought to justice.

Tajul said prosecutors submitted various pieces of evidence, including a voice recording of Hasina allegedly directing forces to use lethal weapons on protesters. The ousted prime minister, however, was not named as an accused in this case, as a separate probe report had been filed against her. Formal charges will be pressed in that case, he said.

The prosecution submitted digital evidence including video and audio recordings, documentary material, reports from national and international bodies, as well as witness statements, victim testimonies, and bullet fragments recovered from the victims' bodies. A letter written by victim Anas to his mother before fleeing home to join the uprising was read out in court and accepted as evidence.

ALLEGATIONS OF AL MISRULE

While presenting the charges, Tajul called the day historic. He outlined what he termed the Awami League's legacy of repression -- from forming

Student advisers represent uprising not NCP: Hasnat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Condemning repeated efforts to link two student advisers to the National Citizen party, Hasnat Abdullah, chief coordinator (south) of the NCP, yesterday said Mahfuj Alam and Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain represent the mass uprising, not of any political party.

"We have made it clear that the two advisers whose resignations are being discussed are not affiliated with any political party or the NCP. They are in the interim government as representatives of the people who led and supported the mass uprising," Hasnat said.

He made the statement while speaking to journalists at Biplob Udan in Chattogram city before joining a series of roadside rallies across different upazilas, organised by the NCP's Chattogram South unit.

He said, "Division means there will be differences in policy among political parties. During times of crisis, it is our national character to overcome these divisions and unite once again. So, from that perspective, while differences and disagreements continue, the collective effort to overcome the national crisis is also ongoing."

East Timor could join Asean bloc by Oct: minister

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

East Timor is a step closer to fulfilling its longstanding wish to join the Southeast Asian regional bloc and could become its 11th member state by October, Malaysia's foreign minister said yesterday.

Mohamad Hasan said on the sidelines ahead of an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) summit in Kuala Lumpur that Dili "has made meaningful progress in implementing a roadmap" for it to join.

East Timor is one of the world's poorest countries and some concerns remain around whether it could participate meaningfully in Asean's development agenda.

However, the bloc's foreign ministers voiced "strong support for Timor-Leste's full membership in Asean, particularly in its efforts to fulfil the remaining criteria", Mohamad told a news conference, using the country's Portuguese name.

the Rakkhi Bahini in 1972 and carrying out extrajudicial killings of JASAD members, to the formation of BAKSAL in 1975.

He accused the previous AL government of suppressing dissent through enforced disappearances and killings, citing around 700 disappearances. The charge sheet included allegations of election manipulation in 2008, 2014, 2018, and 2024 to retain power.

Tajul also highlighted corruption scandals involving AL ministers and MPs, including cases of human trafficking and gold smuggling. He accused the regime of politicising the judiciary -- forcing former chief justice SK Sinha into exile and using the courts to imprison opposition leader Khaleda Zia.

He referred to the 2009 Pilkhana massacre as a blow to both the country and the military, and accused the government of brutally suppressing the Hefazat-e-Islam movement in 2013 with media blackouts and mass killings.

The prosecution alleged that the AL regime exploited the spirit of the Liberation War to stigmatise devout Muslims and divide the population. Tajul said that the use of force to crush the quota reform movement resulted in the deaths of 1,400 students and civilians.

He said that on August 4, during the uprising, then speaker Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury and senior leaders urged Hasina to resign. But a group of four -- former ministers Obaidul Quader, Asaduzzaman Khan, Anisul Huq, and Hasina's adviser Salman F Rahman -- allegedly incited her to stay in power and use force to suppress the movement.

Tajul added that when the army refused to fire on civilians, Hasina reportedly told them to kill her instead and bury her inside Ganabhaban. Her sister Sheikh Rehana allegedly begged her to resign, which she refused until a phone call with her son Sajeeb Wazed Tajul, after which she agreed to step down.