

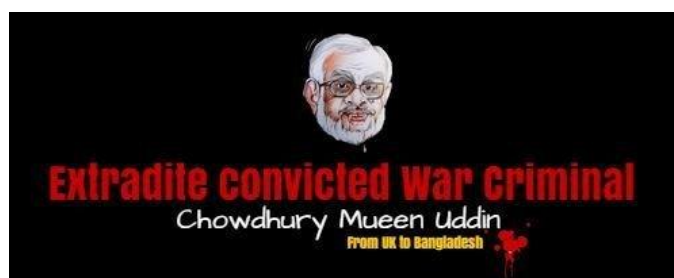
Demand for trial of Pakistan's military for war crimes & Call for Extradition of War Criminal Chowdhury Mueenuddin from UK

London, (EBF): Bangladeshi diaspora living in Britain demanded immediate extradition of the 1971 War Criminal Chowdhury Mueenuddin, commander of infamous Al Badr, who was sentenced in absentia after the Bangladesh International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) in 2013 found him guilty for his involvement in the abduction and murder of 18 intellectuals- nine Dhaka University teachers, six journalists and three physicians. The demand was made at a Candlelight vigil arranged in observance of the “Martyred Intellectuals Day” on 14 Dec 2017 at East London Altab Ali Park, Whitechapel.



(London: Candlelight vigil in front of Shaheed Minar at Altab Ali Park by Bangladeshi diasporas) The Day, known as ‘Shaheed Buddhijibi Dibosh’ is observed in Bangladesh and abroad by the Bangladeshi communities, to commemorate those who were killed by the Pakistani forces and their collaborators at the end of the Bangladesh’s 1971 Liberation War. It may be mentioned that sensing an imminent defeat, the Pakistani occupation forces and their local collaborators Razakar, members of Jamaat-e-Islami, Al-Badr and Al-Shams para-militia on 14 December 1971 abducted and killed Bengali intellectuals and professionals to cripple a new born nation intellectually. Renowned academics, teachers, litterateurs, doctors, engineers, journalists and other eminent personalities were dragged out of their homes blindfolded, killed and then dumped in killing grounds.

Paying tributes to the golden sons of the country, speakers also demanded the closure of the activities of the London-based charity organisation, Muslim Aid, which according to them, is involved in patronizing the terrorist activities in Bangladesh including Rohingya camps in Chittagong. They said, sensing the birth of the



new nation the anti-liberation forces including Jamaat and their allies made the blueprint to abolish the intellectuals of the country. They called upon the Bangladeshi diaspora to target the members of the Dawatul Islam and Islamic Forum of Bangladesh, which enjoy the patronization and support of Jamaat abroad.

The meeting was presided over by the executive President of Secular Forum, UK and moderated by its Joint Secretary Jamal Ahmed Khan. The meeting was addressed among others by President of UK Awami League Sultan Mahmud Sharif, President of EBF Ansar Ahmed Ullah, Warcrimes Tribunal Manch President journalist Matiar Chowdhury, Senior Vice President of Secular Forum Harmuz Ali, spokesperson of UK Ganojagoran Manch Ajoyanta Deb Roy, visiting cultural activist from Bangladesh Asma Aktar Liza, Vice President of UK Awami League Maruf Chowdhury and journalist Sarwar Kabir.

Mueenuddin in Interpol's most wanted list but still free in London

According to a report of The Sun published on 26 December 2017, the former NHS director Chowdhury Mueenuddin, the alleged war criminal named as one of Interpol's most wanted British fugitives is living in a London cul-de-sac. Chowdhury Mueenuddin, 69, was convicted in his absence in 2013 of crimes against humanity Bangladeshi War of In-1971. Interpol's most fugitive is pictured leaving North London. The former allegedly led a vicious have executed 18 intellectuals while it Mueenuddin hanged by a war capital Dhaka, highly flawed.



His lawyers branded it a he refused to attend. Included a photo of the among 25 most wanted BUT The Sun easily £1million home in

North London. *(Photo left: Chowdhury Mueenuddin pictured picking up supplies at a supermarket in London. He was seen shopping and visiting a mosque).* A neighbour said: "Interpol can't be looking very hard." Speaking at his home, Mueenuddin said: "It's all rubbish." He has launched an appeal against the Interpol red notice. Mueenuddin fled to Britain after the war, gaining citizenship and having four kids with Farida, 57. He was even pictured with Prince Charles at a Leicestershire Islamic event. Bangladeshi cops urged Scotland Yard to arrest him.

"show trial" and terpol has pub-Muslim leader Brits on the run. found him at his Southgate,

But a human rights lawyer pointed out experts agreed the trial was a "flagrant denial of justice". Human rights lawyer Toby Cadman said they were unaware he was hunted by Interpol until told by The Sun. He has launched an appeal against the Interpol red notice. Cadman said: "We are highly confident that the Red Notice in respect of Mr. Chowdhury Mueenuddin issued by the Bangladesh authorities will be withdrawn. "The appropriate course of conduct would have been for the Bangladesh authorities to submit an extradition request, although it is quite clear that no British Judge would order Mr. Mueenuddin's extradition."

Seminar in Geneva: Demand for international recognition of 1971 Genocide in Bangladesh

Geneva (EBF): International Forum for Secular Bangladesh, Switzerland organized a seminar on, “Crime against humanity: Preventing Rohingya genocide in Myanmar and trial of perpetrators” on 8 December 2017 at Gandhi hall in Geneva. Although the seminar was arranged mainly on Rohingya issues, the 1971 genocide in Bangladesh by the Pakistani occupation army dominated the discussion.

Moderated by Secular Forum President, journalist and writer, Shahriar Kabir, the seminar was addressed among others by Dr. Nuzhat Chowdhury, daughter of one of intellectuals Dr. Alim Chowdhury, killed by Al Badr and Razakar on 14 December 1971, Fransesa Mario, an Italian journalist, Nicola Safford Furey, Vice President of Earth Focus Foundation, Sardar Shawkat Ali Kashmiri, Chairman, United Kashmir People’s National Party (UKPNP), Switzerland, Dr. Carl-Gustav Bjertnes, Co-founder of Cooperatives SEEDS, Ervin Santiago Franca Filho, Human rights officer, Civil Society Section of UN High Commissioners for Human Rights, Dr. Manoj Kurian, Coordinator of World Council of Church, Geneva, Akhtar M Zaman, President of Sweden Secular Forum, Bikash Chowdhury Barua of EBF, Dr. Laurent Subilla, Vice President of Autonomia Foundation, Geneva, M M Murshed, President of Peace of Solidarity from Belgium, Ajanta Deb Roy, a minority rights defender



(Photo: Sardar Shawkat Ali Kashmiri, Chairman of United Kashmir People’s National Party in Geneva is speaking at the seminar. From left are: Dr Ms. Nuzhat Chowdhury, Khalilur Rahman, Shahriar Kabir, Francesa Maria, Dr. Nicola Safford Furey and Dr. Laurent Subilia. Photo-EBF) from U.K., Dr. Biddut Barua, General Secretary of Denmark Awami Leauge, Masum Khan, Secretary, Switzerland Secular Forum and Udayan Barua from of Secular Forum, France. President of Switzerland Secular Forum, Khalilur Rahman chaired the seminar. The seminar was attended by Swiss human rights defenders, academics, campaigners from across Sweden, Netherlands, France, Belgium, Denmark and the U.K.

In his speech Shahriar Kabir called the world community to recognize the 1971 Bangladesh Genocide. He also called upon the Bangladeshi diaspora community to work with the mainstream policy makers and politicians to make it happen. He termed the 1971 genocide in Bangladesh as the biggest genocide in the world as 3 million people were killed by the Pakistani army in a span of only 9 months, which is unprecedented in the world history. Referring to the Rohingya issues he said, the Myanmar government should be sued in the International Criminal Court in the Hague. He said, the Muslims in Arakan are being victimized not because they are Muslims, but because they are Rohingyas.

Minority rights activist from U.K. Ajanta Deb Roy said, ‘it was shocking to see that 1971 war criminal of Bangladesh, Moinuddin Chowdhury in London, who was convicted by the International War Tribunal in Bangladesh, was present at a meeting on Rohingya issue in London, while he (Moinuddin Chowdhury) is one of the leading war criminals and responsible for the genocide in 1971.’ She told the participants how the minorities are regularly being victimized, killed, tortured and evicted from their ancestral homes. She asked the present government of Bangladesh to make its position clear in this regard.

Baloch

The Italian journalist Ms. Fransesa Mario said, human rights are being violated in many place around the world. The Baluchs are being evicted from the ancestral places. On recognition of genocide she said, Pakistan enjoys the support of big powers like China and that is why she dares to ignore demands to recognize genocide.

Kashmir

Sardar Shaukat Ali Kashmiri said, Balochs are facing prosecution and being tortured by the Pakistani occupied army. The international communities, OIC, Muslim countries and human rights organisations have turned a blind eye to this persecution. Sardar Shaukat said, Bangladesh is the only secular country among the Muslim countries and this should continue to exist for secular democracy. He also mentioned about the threat of rise of insurgency in the Rohingya camps in Bangladesh and said, “Jamaat e Islami is trying to arm the Rohingya groups in the camps which will at the end endanger the whole area. He also echoed with others who demanded the international recognition of 1971 Genocide in Bangladesh.

An Exclusive interview of Major General (Retd) Abdur Rashid

(EBF took an exclusive interview of Major General (Retd) Abdur Rashid recently on the prevailing geo-political situation in and around Bangladesh. The Officer, who leads the Institute of Conflict, Law & Development Studies (ICLDS) in Dhaka and performs as Security and Strategic last international conference of EBF on ‘Countering violent context and Bangladeshi Diaspora’ at the Brussels 2017. In this interview he spoke on the threats of militant ya camps and said, Pakistan has credible history of har-
Editor)



*retired senior Army
opment Studies
Analyst attended the
lent extremism: Glob-
Press Club on 11 July
groups in the Rohing-
boring terrorists.*

Q.1. How do you see the current Rohingya crisis? Do you see any solution of the problem in near future?

Gen Abdur Rashid: More than 600,000 Rohingyas have taken shelter in Bangladesh in less than two months’ time of which 60 percent are women and children. State sponsored persecution on Rohingya has been termed by the United Nation as “Text book example of ethnic cleansing”. Rohingya crisis has created unexpected multi-directional problems of varying intensity and magnitude for Bangladesh. It is straining its scarce resources along with causing detrimental impact on its economy, environment, social tolerance, domestic politics, regional geo-strategic equation and security environment. Rohingya, the Myanmar’s most persecuted nationals need to return to their homestead immediately for the peace and stability of the region.

Global Consensus and undivided stance on creating a secured environment for Rohingya is a prerequisite to their safe return. Difference in strategic views of the crisis and perception on the solution mechanism and military supremacy in Myanmar in decision making have impeded for a quick solution for which crisis is unlikely to witness a quick ending. China’s recent initiative to reach a bilateral arrangement has raised the hope for a logical and acceptable solution. Bangladesh is pursuing a policy of peaceful solution maintaining friendly relation with Myanmar. Although Bangladeshi people strongly feel that Myanmar would linger the problem if international pressure is lifted off.

Q.2. Has the AL government been able to tackle the Rohingya crisis/Influx of refugees?

Gen Abdur Rashid: Sheikh Hasina, the Prime Minister has promptly acted to meet the humanitarian need and been supported by the people of Bangladesh. Her decision was applauded by the whole

world and termed her as “Mother of humanity”. Her government assigned the resources to face the humanitarian calamities. She employed Army to manage the humanitarian relief works along with civil administration. Rohingya camps were allotted with new lands to accommodate them. Health care and sanitation arrangement has been done with the assistance of international agencies. I would say situation was tackled with efficacy.

Q.3. There are recent reports that refugees coming from Myanmar are creating nuisance, law and order and engaging in fights with local Bangladeshis? There are reports that the local Bangladeshis are becoming minority, in the face of influx of Rohingyas? Do you see this as a threat?

Gen Abdur Rashid: Rohingya influx has caused demographic imbalance in the bordering areas where they have been mostly encamped. Rohingya population is two and half times more in numbers than the locals. Life and livelihood of the local populace is highly affected by the presence of Rohingya. demographic imbalance has strained the local economy and culture. Being persecuted and heavily suffered and endured plight – **the Rohingyas can easily be lured to organized crime network. Organized crimes group is availing the opportunity to indulge them in crimes like drug trafficking, gun running, violent extremism. Human trafficking rackets are seen active to trafficking children and girls to sex trade and slavery. It has a transnational connotation and threats are being brought to bear by regional countries equally. Religious tolerance and social tranquility are endangered equally.** Perceived threats are very genuine but Bangladesh law enforcements are seen to be very vigilant and kept the situation well under control. Myanmar and regional countries should be able to perceive the perilous threats and feel the importance of its prevention thereby work concertedly to create safe and secured conditions for the refugees to return home.

Q.4. There are reports of existence of Islamic militants among the refugees? How do you see the reported presence of

ARSA elements within the refugees? *(Photo: Major General (Retd) Abdur Rashid, extreme right is seen at the Brussels conference of EBF)*



Gen Abdur Rashid: Rohingyas were denuded of political and citizen rights in Myanmar. Political isolation has lured them to religious fanaticism. Radical elements are seen active in their society. Existence of active militants are not rampant among them. They are believers and soft minded to the faith. **Local jihadi organizations have attempted to radicalize them in the guise of relief workers, Bangladesh state policy of zero tolerance to terrorism and not allowing its land to be used by any terrorists or secessionists outfits has prevented the breeding of violent extremism in the camps but it retains potentials of violent extremism if not kept under strong vigilance.** Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) a terrorist outfit of Rakhine is a poorly led, under-quipped and weak outfit and whose capacity as terrorist organization seems very limited. It launched simultaneous attacks on 30 security forces outposts on 25th August this year. Following which Myanmar Army launched atrocity driven operation against innocent civilians and committed innumerable crimes against humanity. Information acquired from Rohingya in the camps reveals on the structure, leadership and logistic capacity of ARSA. It seems that ARSA's existence is unclear and dubious. Attacks were mass driven, weapons used were mostly handmade and could not display significant military tactics. ARSA could not even launch a single retaliatory attack after the exodus. *(Photo below: Major General Abdur Rashid at the EBF conference in Brussels at Brussels Press club. Photo: EBF)*

Q.5. Do you think that external and internal religious extremists groups are trying to gain ground among the refugees which might pose a threat to Bangladesh and region?

Gen Abdur Rashid: Al Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent's area of operation encompassed the Rakhine and its top leader Ayman Al Jawahiri mentioned in his speech about the persecution of Rohingya and called for resistance. It could not gain ground owing to Bangladesh security forces vigil and local people's secular and multicultural ideals and views. Persecuted people are potential breeding ground for violent extremism and provide opportune ground for the recruitments which underlines the potentiality of threat to Bangladesh and region as a whole. Signs of attempts by the external and internal jihadi elements to gain ground was feeble.

Q.6. Is there any presence of Pakistan intelligence to make the area volatile or destroy peace of the region ?

Gen Abdur Rashid: A few international reports revealed credible contacts with unknown AR-SA leaders before 25th August attacks on security forces. Moreover, ARSA leaders are known to be Rohingya diaspora based in Pakistan and Middle East. **Its top leader was a Rohingya who lived in Saudi Arabia and was raised in Pakistan. Pakistan has credible history of harboring terrorists. Peace and stability in South and South East Asia and its integration does isolate Pakistan and does not favor Pakistan's geo-strategic interests in the region.** Rohingya crisis indeed disturbed considerably the initiatives of regional cooperation like BIMSTEC, BBIN, BCIM in which Pakistan is not a party. Rohingya crisis has induced trust deficit among the nations. Although Pakistan voted for the proposal on Rohingya in the UNGA but other South Asian countries restrained and most ASEAN nations voted against. That depicts the complexity of the problem.

Q.6. Do you think that it might affect the peace if the region in near future?

Gen Abdur Rashid: If Rohingya problem is not solved quickly, lurking threats might appear to bite the region in varied form and shape.

EBF Switzerland Chapter formed

European Bangladesh Forum (EBF), Switzerland chapter has been formed at a meeting held recently in Geneva. A 5-members Steering Committee of the organisation has been set up with Mr. Khalilur Rahman, a human right activist as its head. Other members of the Steering committee are: Zamader Nazrul Islam, Sasim Gouri Charan, Arun Barua and Shyamol Khan. This is the first Country Chapter of EBF set up with a view to expand the activities of the organisation across Europe and to act as a common platform for European Bangladeshis. EBF works as a collective voice for the advancement of Bangladeshi community in Europe and Bangladesh. EBF is active in activities such as promotion of research & education on issues relating to international development, universal human rights, democracy and secular ideals in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh enjoys Press freedom: Dutch envoy in Dhaka

The Hague (EBF): To exchange thoughts on different issues of Bangladesh, a meeting was arranged on 29 November at the Humanity House in the Hague where the Dutch ambassador in Bangladesh, Ms. Leoni Cuelenaere from Dhaka was the chief guest. Representatives from different Dutch development organisations, working in Bangladesh attended the meeting. Among them were Oxfam, BASUG, Clean Clothes Campaign, SNV, Free Press, SIMAVI, Netherlands Red Cross, De Futer, Max and Lepira Zending. It was chaired by Mr. Jan De Boer, Head of Bangladesh Desk at the Dutch Foreign Ministry in the Netherlands and Ms. Louise Huijbens, In charge of Pakistan and Sri Lanka Desk at the Dutch Foreign Ministry. A couple of Dutch foreign Ministry officials were also present in the meeting.

The Dutch ambassador in this two-hours long meeting informed the participants of the latest socio-economic and political situation of Bangladesh as well as the recent developments following the influx of Rohingya refugees. She said, 'It is not true that there is no press freedom in Bangladesh. If I say so, then 'I would not be truthful to the press'. There are fantastic press, they write a lot, for example, on garments, corruptions, on politics etc. She emphasized on the need for 'responsible journalism'. She said, people don't like hartal anymore. People are not attracted by such calls (hartal). *(Photo below: in the meeting from left are Louise Huijbens, Ambassador Leoni Cuelenaere, Jan de Boer and Marlene Ras of Dutch Foreign Ministry)*



About the future of Bangladesh she spoke very high of this delta land. She said, 'I love being in Dhaka. The people are very nice, the country has huge potentials. The economy of Bangladesh is on the rise with 6.5% growth rate. It is exporting lot of items- all shrimps in Albert Heijn (a supermarket chain in Netherlands) and garments are from Bangladesh. On Rohingya issues the Dutch ambassador said, it was really appreciating that the Bangladesh people and government welcomed the Rohingyas. Dutch government wants that the situation for Rohingyas improves. Situations in Myanmar have to improve and Rohingyas must feel that they would be safe there before they return. About the garments sectors she gave a positive picture saying, there is no child labour in the export factories in Bangladesh. She regretted that the brands and the buyers don't not pay the due money so that situation of the workers at the ground could improve. Situation has to be improved, she added. Netherlands is a long term development partner of Bangladesh and Dutch government has the largest allocation for water resources sector, Bangladesh Delta Plan is one of the such programs in Bangladesh. Climate is also a priority areas of activity of ours in Bangladesh, she continued.

Geneva meeting demands ‘Stop cleansing minorities in Bangladesh’

Geneva (EBF): Bangladesh Minorities Coalition, Switzerland organized a Dinner Meeting on “Cleansing Minorities in Bangladesh: Crimes and remedies” at a conference hall near the UN mission in Geneva on the evening of 8 December 2017. The meeting was addressed among others by Mr. Sylvain Thevoz, a Swiss Social Party local leader of Geneva who is also Geneva Municipal Counsellor, Mr. Ruben Navarro, senior UN Counsel, ADF International, Geneva, Mr. Shahriar Kabir, Dr. Nuzhat Kabir, both from Bangladesh, Mr. Thierry Becourt, President, Circle of International Banner of Peace, Switzerland, Dr. Manoj Kurian, Coordinator of World Council of Church, Geneva, Ms. Ajanta Deb Roy, a human rights defender from U.K., Mr. Bikash Chowdhury Barua of EBF, Dr. Laurent Subilla, Vice President of Autonoia Foundation, Geneva and Mr. M M Morshed, President of Peace of Solidarity from Belgium. Mr. Jamie Barua, a young human rights defender from France conducted the meeting. The meeting was organized in observance of the International Human Rights Day’ in collaboration with World Council of Church and Earth Focus of Geneva. It was chaired by Reverend Jyotisar Shraman, founder President of Kusalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre in France.



(Photo: Ms. Ajanta Deb Roy is speaking at the meeting. From left are: Shahriar Kabir, Dr. Laurent Subilla, Dr. Nuzhat Chowdhury and Thierry Becourt. Photo-EBF)

Speakers in the meeting called upon the Bangladesh government to take more actions to stop what they termed, ‘the on-going torture and sufferings’ of the minority community members, especially the Hindus in Bangladesh. They said, if the minorities cannot live in peace, the majority population of the country cannot also live in peace. Speaking on the occasion Shahriar Kabir, President of Bangladesh Secular Forum said, vested quarters, the religious-traders are hatching conspiracies to create social unrest by attacking the minority community members in different areas of the country. In this regard the secular government of Bangladesh has to take more steps to ensure the lives and properties of the minority communities and more pressures have to be given on the local administration of the government, he added.

Ms. Ajanta Deb Roy was critical of the present government for its failure in ensuring the rights of the minority community members in Bangladesh. Dr. Nuzhar Chowdhury, a human rights activist from Bangladesh said, ‘I don’t like the word minority. In Bangladesh it is not the Hindus who are the minorities. The Secular Muslims are the real minorities in Bangladesh today. She said, my mother is a converted Muslim and added, killings, chopping of free thinkers are on the rise in Bangladesh. Enlightenment is the only remedy of these problems, she added.

Ratko Mladic found guilty of genocide in Bosnia

The Hague: A UN tribunal in the Hague recently convicted former Bosnian Serb military commander, Ratko Mladic of genocide and crimes against humanity for orchestrating massacres and ethnic cleansing during Bosnia's war and sentenced him to life in prison. Mladic, 74, was hustled out of the court minutes before the verdict for screaming 'this is all lies, you are all liars'. The UN Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia found Mladic guilty of 10 of 11 charges, including the slaughter of 8,000 Muslim men and boys at Srebrenica and the siege of the Bosnian capital Sarajevo, in which more than 11,000 civilians were killed by shelling and sniper fire over 43 months. The killings in Srebrenica of men and boys after they were separated from women and taken away in buses or marched off to be shot amounted to Europe's worst atrocity since World War Two. 'Today's verdict is a warning to the perpetrators of such crimes that they will not escape justice, no matter how powerful they may be nor how long it may take.'



What when the defeated ISIS fighters return!

On-line News: They want to come back to the US, UK, Europe, Bangladesh and so many other countries. In this case, the "they" are the defeated members of the ISIS foreign fighters' contingent, who are now abandoning the disintegrating Caliphate. There are an estimated five thousand (5,000) European and American fighters and their families who have survived so far and want to trek back to the homelands in Europe and the US. Many thousand more want to go back to Africa, Central Asia, Pakistan and other countries. For valid reason, these returnees pose an unparalleled security risk to any country that absorbs them.

The first reason for concern is that these people perpetrated great violence on other humans though the evidence of their crimes are still sketchy. However, this much is certain, even as a defeated force they will retain the toxic ideology that drove them to join the so-called holy war in the first place. Obviously, these ideologues will remain dormant for some time and their beliefs intact.



In such a scenario, the question: is it for the greater benefit of tolerant, pluralist communities around the globe that such fanatics are exterminated? The French defence minister did not mince any words when he said all foreign fighters should be killed in Syria and not in France. To that effect, the French dispatched Special Forces soldiers to Syria and Iraq with pictures of the French and other associated foreign fighters with specific goals to ensure that they never return to France. No one is sure how effective they have been in liquidating these murderers but the effort shows a clear sense of terror that the Western countries hold towards these rogue nationals.

Extremist attacks were by returnees:

In France the Bataclan massacre and Charlie Hebdo murders were all conducted by returnees and acolytes of the returnees. In the US, the latest terrorist act was enacted by an Uzbeki who immersed himself in the hate filled commentary from the Islamists and so called Islamic State. In recent Bangladesh crackdown on militant hideouts, the suspected blew up their own children and themselves instead of capitulating to the law. It seems that such people are convinced that they are doing God's work with rewards waiting on the other side. Now, once the Western citizens fighting for ISIS return to western societies, there will be greater possibility of lone wolf attacks, putting millions of law abiding Muslims in the West under long term suspicion, harassment plus ostracism.

As the ISIS is already looking at complete defeat in actual warfare, efforts need to be underway in almost all countries as to how they will deal with the many returnees, their wives and children. Defeated in war, their beliefs will remain and that is where the main work needs to be done. The fact is, facing a clearly defined adversary on the battlefield is easy, tackling them, even without weapons, on home soil within larger community, will prove to be more complex. That is where the main battle lies – neutralising the festering bitterness plus vitriol inside. (Concised version from online news).

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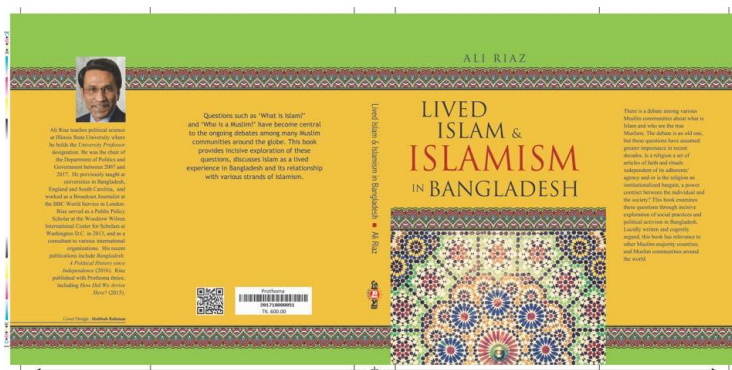
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Keep Razakars,Albadrs, killers out of power: Sk. Hasina



Dhaka: Prime minister Sheikh Hasina recently called on the people to keep anti-Liberation War forces, war criminals, history distorters and killers out of power forever. ‘We should remain careful so that the Razakars, Albaders, war criminals, killers and distorters of the history cannot come to power ever,’ she said at a programme to celebrate the UNESCO recognition of the March 7, 1971 speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as a world’s documentary heritage. The government organised the rally at Suhrawardy Udyan, from where Sheikh Mujib delivered the speech on March 7, 1971.

The celebration programs were organised to inform people, particularly the students and future generations, of the significance of the March 7 speech, said the organisers. UNESCO recognised the March 7 speech on October 30 and since then ruling Awami League continued holding different programs hailing the decision. Hasina said that the March 7 speech was an extempore one that had a clear directive to the people how to liberate the country and what would be the future course of the nation. ‘Speeches of many statesmen have been recognised but their speeches were written while March 7 speech of Bangabandhu was not written one,’ she said.

‘It is not only a speech, it’s the history of a nation as he [Sheikh Mujib] depicted 24 years of Pakistani oppression in it,’ said Hasina also the eldest daughter of Sheikh Mujib. Referring to the UNESCO recognition, she said that the history could not be erased and truth always took its place in the history. Appreciating the joining of the youth at the rally, prime minister said, ‘The new generation should grow up in line with the spirit of the War of Independence.’ (Courtesy: Daily Star).

Jamaat leader Aziz, five other War criminals to die

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 on recently handed down death sentences to former Jamaat-e-Islami lawmaker, Abu Saleh Mohammad Abdul Aziz Mia, 65, and five others, all from Sundarganj, Gaibandha, for their crimes against humanity they had committed during the war of independence in



1971, according a report published in Bangladesh newspapers. The three-member tribunal, led by Justice Md Shahinur Islam, announced the verdict when two other judges, Justice Amir Hossain and Judge Md Abu Ahmed Jamadar, were also present. Among the convicts- Abdul Aziz, Md Ruhul Amin alias Monju, 61, Md Abdul Latif, 61, Abu Muslim Mohammad Ali, 59, Md Nazmul Huda, 60, and Md Abdur Rahim Miah, 62- only Latif was present in the dock. The trial of the other suspects took place in absentia as they were absconding. On June 28, 2016, the suspects were indicted for their alleged involvement with three counts of war crimes at different places in Sundarganj. In 1971, Aziz, Latif and Nazmul were active members of Jamaat-e-Islami and Abu Muslim was an active member of Islami Chhatra Sangha, the then student front of Jamaat. The formal charge did not specify political identities of the other duo.

Women's rights advanced despite adversity in 2017

Pink hat-wearing protesters marched in the millions, celebrities called out their abusers as "pigs", and countries from Chile to India passed pro-women legislation, making 2017 a momentous year for women's rights despite setbacks, activists said. Beginning with the inauguration of US President Donald Trump, who swiftly moved to restrict abortions around the world, 2017 brought a reminder to many that women's rights have a long road ahead. But the trials ushered in a new era of resistance in the United States and elsewhere, while countries in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America made strides toward ending gender discrimination, campaigners said. "It was a year for tackling discriminatory laws," UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.



Lebanon, Tunisia and Jordan all scrapped laws this year that allowed rapists to escape punishment if they married their victims, a move activists hope will spread to other Arab states. In a string of victories against child marriage, Malawi, Honduras, Trinidad and Tobago, El Salvador and Guatemala all amended national laws to ban the practice, Mlambo-Ngcuka said. And in India, where child

marriage is illegal but common, lawmakers ruled that having sex with a wife aged 15 to 18 is punishable as rape. Millions of women around the world marched in protest to Trump the day after his inauguration, many wearing pink "pussyhats" in reference to his boast in a 2005 video about grabbing women's genitals. "I think this is just the beginning of a new awakening for women," said Bob Bland, one of the national co-chairs of the Women's March on Washington. "Going into 2018, we are galvanised for the fight ahead," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.