

Brutal Massacre in BDR Headquarters

By Barrister Harun ur Rashid

Former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

The whole nation is mourning and three days of mourning were declared where our national flags has been flying half-mast to show respect to the departed souls of the shaheed army officers and others who were killed brutally on 25th and 26th February.

On 25th February, Wednesday a brutal carnage occurred in Peel Khana and continued the next day in which more than 100 brilliant and decorated army officers have been killed. This sort of senseless carnage has few parallels in the world during peace time. Even some say during wars so many senior officers were not killed at a time.

They not only killed men officers, wives of some officers and children after torture in many of the cases. Some of their bodies in uniform have been found in three mass graves within the BDR premises and at the time of writing 63 dead bodies have been identified. Some of their residences have been burnt and looting of valuables including gold ornaments took place at the same time.

This gruesome incident beggars no description and arguably constitutes crimes against humanity and exemplary punishment must be meted out to culprits. This is not a revolt for their grievances. It is an excuse used by the perpetrators to mislead people. Initially they were successful to hoodwink people. Later their evil plan was unveiled in the senseless massacre of officers.

Many questions have been raised, such as: how is it possible to carry out such pre-planned massacre within a disciplined force? What were their motives? Who were behind such massacre? Who financed them?

In recent days, TV talk shows in the country with senior retired army officers and civilians reveal the following:

First, when the meeting was being held in the morning at the BDR Darbar Hall during the BDR week, two jawans suddenly appeared from outside and entered the hall and one stood behind the DG BDR. Thereafter all present at the hall left without giving any defence to the head of the BDR. Such behaviour was found highly unnatural.

Second, most of the brutal killings took place within two hours between 9-30 and 11-30 in the morning of 25th February.

Third, some have alleged that a pick up from outside carrying unknown people entered the BDR headquarters before the massacre.

Fourth, some BDR jawans had covered their faces with white cloth and some of them had red band over their heads. How, when and from where did they get such things?

Fifth, the tragic event is a pre-planned conspiracy to destabilize the country at a time when the image of Bangladesh after the fair and free election gained a worldwide admiration.

Sixth the conspirators attempted to bring division among security forces to weaken the security and sovereignty of the state.

Seventh, the perpetrators attempted to weaken the army by killing so many senior and highly trained officers.

Eighth, there has been a huge intelligence failure not to detect such conspiracy within the BDR. Only one day before (24th February), the Prime Minister took salute from the BDR officers and jawans during the observance of the BDR week. Ordinarily intelligence agencies are alert and vigilant to detect any thing that is unusual.

The massacre included the son-in-law of the IGP (who married only two months ago) and a nephew of the former President Ershad.

An initial investigation committee headed by the Home Minister is expected to report within a week. Another committee headed by a nonpartisan individual of probity will be declared by the Prime Minister to investigate the circumstances leading to the carnage.

On 1st March, some MPs have suggested in the parliament that a parliamentary committee from all parties may be set up to investigate the tragic event.

The people and leaders of the parties want a quick trial and the government is committed to it, according to LGRD Minister Syed Ashraful Islam. The Minister further has said that the general amnesty does not apply to those who committed gruesome criminal offences. The amnesty is for the bystander BDR personnel.

The whole nation is traumatized, regretful and angry over the tragic event. The nation is numbed and shocked as the horrifying discoveries of mass graves were found. Have the perpetrators lost all human values and become animals? Even animals do not kill each other except rats and hyenas. The national psyche has been shattered and we pray for the salvation of the souls of shaheeds and offer our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families.

The nation should stand as united and must overcome this crisis through resolve and determination to make the country safe and secure.