

Sheikh Hasina vows to punish men behind BDR massacre

Historic 7 March observed in a befitting manner

Help probe unearthing plot, she urges Khaleda at 7th March meet

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon opposition leader Begum Khaleda Zia to provide evidence of the BDR massacre to the enquiry committee, if she possessed any.

"We must conduct probe into this carnage and the killers must be punished," the Prime Minister said while speaking at a discussion on the historic 7th March at the auditorium of the Engineers' Institution in the capital.

She said from her utterances it appeared that the opposition leader must be having a lot of evidence of the killings at BDR headquarters. "I request her to hand over that evidence to the enquiry committee."

Sheikh Hasina said after the mayhem began at BDR headquarters on February 25, she was focused on two things: rescuing the army officers taken hostage inside the headquarters and how to save the country from a slide into a civil war.

She said she had called the chiefs of the three services and kept open the option for resolving the crisis through negotiations. Responding to her call, the mutineers laid down arms. Thus she could save 43 army officers and their family members, she added.

Urging patience and unity at this difficult time, the Prime Minister said, "those who are trying to manipulate the situation and destabilise the country have been involved in the carnage."

The Prime Minister said the tragic incident occurred at a time when the government was putting in efforts to hold trial of the Bangabandhu Murder, war crimes, August 21 grenade attack and the smuggling in of 10 truckloads of weapons in which names of many big fishes were coming out.

She reiterated her assurance that the killers of army officials at BDR headquarters would be identified through a proper investigation then tried and awarded stringent punishment.

Referring to the conspiracy behind the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on August 15, 1975, she observed the power-hungry conspirators' machinations were continuing.

"Forge unity like that of the turbulent days of 1971 as we have to march ahead facing conspiracies being imbued with the spirit of the days of the Liberation War so that none can jeopardise the progress of democracy and the country's march for economic emancipation," Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina appealed to the people, as she was speaking at the discussion as chairperson.

Awami League organised the discussion meeting to mark the historic March 7, the day Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman called for a free and independent Bangladesh in a historic speech in Dhaka.

Earlier in the morning, Sheikh Hasina, also the president of ruling Awami League, along with most of the party leaders placed wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Bangabandhu Bhaban at Dhanmondi Road-32 in the city marking the day.

Besides, national and party flags were hoisted atop party offices across the country and at Bangabandhu Memorial Museum while the recorded 7th March speech of Bangabandhu was played out on mikes at party offices throughout the

city as part of the day's programme.

"Remain alert against conspiracy and remain prepared to face conspiracies with united efforts so that none could dare to unleash such a heinous crime and conspiracy in the future," the Prime Minister said pointing to the BDR massacre and asked as to why a number of capable, efficient and brilliant officials of the army were killed and for whose interest.

Sheikh Hasina said the Awami League-led grand alliance could achieve a landslide victory in the December 29 national election by winning 262 out of 300 seats in the Jatiya Sangsad, as the members of the armed forces prepared voter list with photographs and over one crore false voters were dropped from the voter enrolment.

"Why conspiracies are hatched to burn the country to death? They (opposition) used to say we would not get 30 seats, not to speak of sitting in the seat of the opposition leader in parliament. They even used to say that I would have to embrace the same fate to that of my father one day," the Prime Minister said adding that the people of the country gave a befitting reply to them in the polls.

Sheikh Hasina said the horrendous incident at BDR headquarters was unleashed within 50 days of coming to power by her government.

The Prime Minister also urged the people not to be misled by any propaganda and instigation of anybody, so that none could play with their fate anymore.

The Prime Minister said those who wanted dead bodies, spilling of blood and pushing the country towards a situation of conflict were frustrated as her government resolved the crisis successfully.

"We had to choose a peaceful solution to the crisis as we wanted to see no lap of a mother be emptied and no sister would be a widow and the country should not be pushed towards a situation of conflict," Sheikh Hasina said adding: "We have done whatever needed to save lives."

"As the head of the government and as the daughter of the father of the nation, I also realise the pains of the families of our heroes in the army as I had to go through such an ordeal and nightmarish days after losing almost all members of my family including my parents in the bloody incident of August 15 in 1975," Sheikh Hasina said paying homage to the army officials killed in the BDR massacre and expressing her sympathy to the bereaved families.

Paying tributes to Bangabandhu and four slain national leaders, the Prime Minister said Bangabandhu's address of March 7 inspired the whole nation to take up arms to face the enemies with courage and his speech also taught and helped the freedom fighters on how they could liberate the country from the clutches of the Pakistani occupation forces.

Awami League central leaders Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, Motia Chowdhury, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Mukul Bose, Abdul Mannan, Sultan Md Mansur Ahmed, MA Aziz and Advocate Quamrul Islam and Rashed Khan Menon of the Workers Party, Hasanul Huq Inu of the JSD, former vice-chancellor of Dhaka University Prof AK Azad Chowdhury and president of Dhaka University Teachers Association Dr Khondokar Bazlul Huq also addressed the discussion meeting conducted by Asaduzzaman Noor and Asim Kumar Ukil.