



# Quandary Reflection

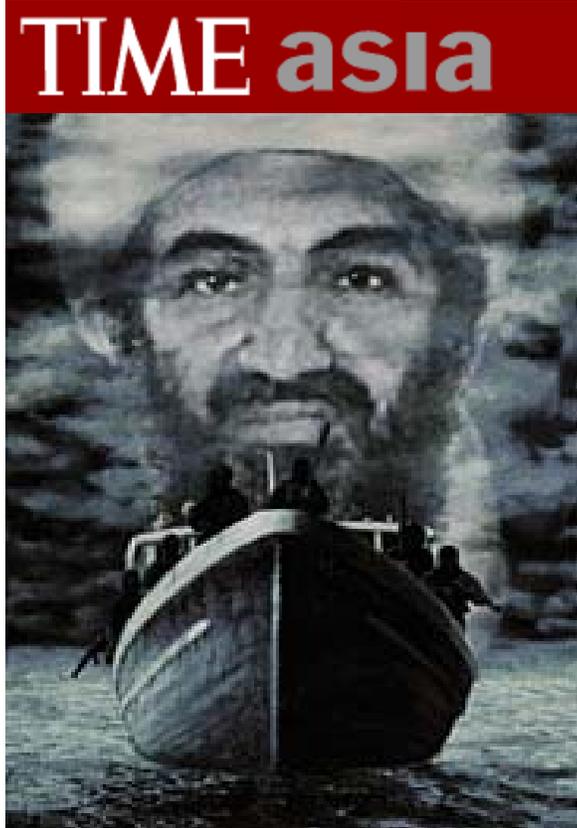
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## Deadly Cargo

<http://www.time.com/time/asia/magazine/article/0,13673,501021021-364423,00.html>



*continued on page 2*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Deadly Cargo: Al-Qaeda in Bangladesh??
- 2 Incessant Rape and Looting by Political Party Cadres in Bagerhat District
- 3 Site of Hindu Festival Attacked
- 4 Stop Muzzling Taslima Nasrin a la Bangladeshi style

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## SIGNS ABOUND THAT BANGLADESH HAS BECOME A SAFE HAVEN FOR ISLAMIC JIHADIS—INCLUDING TALIBAN AND AL-QAEDA FIGHTERS FRESH OFF THE BOAT FROM AFGHANISTAN

BY ALEX PERRY / CHITTAGONG

As it headed for port through the midwinter dusk, there was little about the M.V. *Mecca* that stood out from the other boats plying the waters off southern Bangladesh. Portworkers and fishermen noted the same squat deckhouse and plump hold that for centuries have sheltered fishermen from the cyclones of the Bay of Bengal. The *Mecca* had the usual rusted rigging and smoke-blackened stern. And the crew too was like most others working off Chittagong: pure Rohingyas—stocky Muslim refugees from western Burma. Only the thick salt marks high on the *Mecca's* bow hinted that it was ending a voyage longer than most fishing trips. But this was Chittagong, South Asia's premier hub for pirates, gunrunners and smugglers. When the dockworkers saw the *Mecca* anchoring on a sandbank three kilometers out to sea on the night of Dec. 21, it was a signal to all not to ask questions.

For nine months the exact nature of the *Mecca's* cargo or the shipment's eventual destination remained unknown. But there were clues. Portworkers that night said they saw five motor launches ferry in large groups of men from the boat wearing black turbans, long beards and traditional *Islamic salwar kameez*. Their towering height suggested these travelers were foreigners, and the boxes of ammunition and the AK-47s slung across their shoulders helped sketch a sinister picture. Then in July, a senior member of Bangladesh's largest terrorist group, the 2,000-strong al-Qaeda-allied Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI), told TIME the 150 men who entered Bangladesh that night were Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters from Afghanistan. Three senior Bangladeshi military sources also confirmed this was the case. And on Oct. 7, Indian police arrested Burmese-born HUJI fighter and weapons courier Fazle Karim (alias Abu Fuzi) as he arrived in Calcutta by train from Kashmir. A veteran of al-Qaeda's camps in eastern Afghanistan who told his interrogators he had twice met Osama bin Laden, Karim said he recognized two people he had trained with in Afghanistan while visiting HUJI hideouts in Bangladesh in August. The pair told him they were part of a group of "more than 100 Arabs and Afghans belonging to al-Qaeda and the Taliban who had arrived by ship at Chittagong in winter," Karim said, according to transcripts of his interview with Indian police.

The arrival of a large al-Qaeda group in the capital Dhaka that night raises pressing concerns that Bangladesh may have become a dangerous new front in America's war on terror. Indeed, one Bangladeshi newspaper last month even quoted an unnamed foreign embassy in Dhaka as saying Osama bin Laden's No. 2, Egyptian Ayman al-Zawahiri,

continued on page 3

## Incessant Rape and Looting by Political Party Cadres in Bagerhat District

The young men said "Kakababu, we are going to stay at your house tonight." That elderly gentleman's world collapsed at these words. This Hindu family, renowned as the most hospitable in the entire village, knew very well that this proposal from the men had sinister hidden meanings. Not only would they eat and drink they would also fulfil their worst desires that night. Otherwise they would kill as well. This is not an imagined tale - it has been happening in Bagerhat District in Bangladesh almost everyday. The areas with more Hindus are especially susceptible. After raping and looting the family, the armed men leave with an order to keep the incident a secret. Otherwise they will kill without mercy or force them to leave their houses. Or worse, tell the other villagers about the incident. Most families fear this third threat the most. So the day after the incident, the suffering families sell their houses and lands and try to leave the country. This too they have to do in secret for fear of the wrath of these armed robbers. This has been going on in all parts of Bagerhat but in the sub-districts of Rampal, Fakirhat, Morelganj, and Kachua these incidents have been happening more often.

A UP chairman from Fakirhat said Of late there are robberies almost every night in this area. All these robberies are inevitably accompanied by indiscriminate rape. These are much more in the Hindu areas. The thing to note is that no complaint or police case is being registered in most of these cases. The affected families prefer to keep the incident a secret rather than take the legal route. They know that they will not get justice through the legal system, instead their lives will be further endangered. They do not want to reveal their plight even to newspaper reporters. Perhaps a few of them file a legal case but even then they hardly follow it up. More than one victim has said that even the police officials usually discourage them from going to court. Far from filing a case, the policemen must consider all political angles even before registering a diary of the incident.

Even then there have been a few registered legal cases. About fifteen days ago in the Malipatan village in Gopalpur Union, Kachua four armed men raped a housewife. After the incident the police arrested two people. But the police is now in a quandary over the case. The relatives of the rapists and others have been threatening the victims almost daily. Most people in the area think that the family will not be able to continue legal proceedings for more than a month like this. Then they will be forced to retract the case. Another Hindu gentleman from Radipara Union admitted to another incident. Unwilling to reveal his name, he said that a ruffian named Mintu Shaikh raped his college-going sister in broad daylight. ...

[Al-Qaeda continued..]

had been hiding out in the country for months after arriving in Chittagong. (Last week, in an audio message that authorities have tentatively authenticated, al-Zawahiri warned of further attacks against the U.S., vowing that it will not go "unpunished for its crimes.") According to a source inside a Bangladeshi Islamic group with close ties to al-Qaeda, al-Zawahiri arrived in Dhaka in early March and stayed briefly in the compound of a local fundamentalist leader. It's unclear how al-Zawahiri came to be in Bangladesh, or whether he's still there. However, a source in the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (dgfi), a Bangladeshi military intelligence agency, told TIME that al-Zawahiri is believed to have left Bangladesh this summer, crossing over the eastern border into Burma with Rohingya rebels. U.S. intelligence, however, has no evidence this report is true.

As for the Mecca, its passengers' plans remained a mystery. One military source says most of the men stayed in Bangladesh rather than merely transiting, although he adds it was not clear whether the group sought only refuge or planned to establish a new base of operations. On Sept. 24, a fuller picture finally began to emerge when Bangladesh's domestic intelligence agency arrested four Yemenis, an Algerian, a Libyan and a Sudanese at three houses in the upper-crust district of Uttara in Dhaka. Bangladeshi intelligence sources said they received information from "several" foreign agencies that the men—Abu Nujaid of Libya, Sadek Al Nassami, Abu Sallam, Abu Umaiya and Abul Abbas of Yemen, Abul Ashem of Algeria and Hassan Adam of Sudan—were involved in militant arms training at a madrasah in the capital run by a Saudi-backed charity, al-Haramain. In September, Indonesia's al-Qaeda supersnitch Omar al-Faruq told the CIA that al-Haramain was the foundation used to channel bin Laden's money to him from the Middle East. An American expert in the region concurs that branches of the ultraconservative foundation have funded terrorism around the world—a fact that earned two al-Haramain foreign offices a blacklisting by Washington in March—although probably without the knowledge of al-Haramain's headquarters in Riyadh. "Disreputable folks have penetrated al-Haramain and used its offices, funds and personnel for nefarious purposes," he says.

The seven al-Haramain members were questioned by interrogators from domestic intelligence, police and the DGFI. Bangladeshi agents also fanned out across the country to investigate al-Haramain's 37 other branches, which promptly ceased operations. Although Bangladeshi intelligence sources confirmed the suspects were being questioned about links to al-Qaeda, they cautioned that no relationship with bin Laden's terror network had been discovered, nor any evidence of training. They added that the men had been in Bangladesh for three years and were also being interrogated over allegations of child trafficking. Sources within Bangladesh's intelligence community, however, told TIME the authorities had been embarrassed not to find any evidence at al-Haramain's five-story offices in Dhaka and were trying to play down the raid.

Continued on page 4

[Bagerhat continued..]

.....He said Mintu Shaikh calls himself leader of the students union but is a hardened antisocial. A few days back when the girl was returning from college, Mintu took her into a nearby house at gunpoint. He forced the people in the house to leave before raping her there. The rapists are so influential that the victim's family is too scared to take the matter to court. The family is now trying to sell all their land and leave the country.

The people involved in these incidents of rape are otherwise members of political cadres of the government. In fact they are particularly liked by the leaders of the political parties. They are used by the leaders to settle personal vendettas. In return they are "forgiven" for the rape and robbery they perpetrate. So in the rare cases when the police do arrest one of them, the political leaders start running around to effect their release. Not only are these cadre members used to terrorize Hindus or rival political parties, they are also used to settle internal party squabbles.

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ইন্টারনেট সংস্করণ  
পরিচালনা: ২৭ বর্ধন ১৯৯৬ খ্রিঃ  
১১ অক্টোবর ২০০৭ খ্রিঃ

জেলাজুড়ে চলছে নীরব ধর্ষণ II জড়িতরা সরকারী দলের ক্যাডার

শালু কামাল, বাগেরহাট থেকে লিখে: মুক্ত ফোনসেবা কেন্দ্র, "সকলবার" খাড়া হাতে আমরা আপনাকে বার্তিত্বের মাধ্যমে। এই একটি মাত্র বার্তা কেনে আমরা শেখব কেবল শ্রদ্ধা প্রকাশের মাধ্যমে। পুরো গ্রামে সবচেয়ে অতিরিক্তপারাম হিসাবে খ্যাত এই হিন্দু পুত্র জলকানাই জামান ফুলদেবের এই প্ররোচনের অধীনস্থিত বর্ধন। তাঁরা কেবল খাওয়া দাওয়াই করবে না, সেই সঙ্গে রাতে তাদের স্ত্রীসহ সব গাইনিও পুণ্য করতে হবে। না হলে যান-সম্বন্ধের পানপানশি খাবে তাদের জীবনকে।

এটা কোন পরিচিত ঘটনা নয়, বাগেরহাট জেলার প্রত্যন্ত অঞ্চলে প্রতিনিয়ত ঘটছে এমন। বিশেষ করে হিন্দুধর্মের এলাকাগুলোতে চলছে এরকম নীরব ধর্ষণ। সমস্ত ইচ্ছা চরিতার্থের পর সকলে চলে যাওয়ার সময় সশস্ত্র দুকেন্দ্রা শক্তিতে যার বিঘাটি গোপন রাখতে। নতুবা হত্যা করা হবে নির্বিচলিত, উচ্ছেদ করা হবে জিটমাটি থেকে। আর সেই সঙ্গে পুরো ঘটনা সফলকে জানিয়ে দিয়ে সামাজিকভাবে নিপথ্য করার বিঘাটি তো রয়েছেই। অধিকাংশ পরিবারই এই তৃতীয় ধর্মবিশ্বক ভয় পায় বেশ। তাই তুচ্ছজন্যী পরিবারগুলোকে দেখা যায় ঘটনার পরের দিন থেকেই ঘনিষ্ঠ ভাবে সশস্ত্র সুরক্ষা নিশ্চিত করে দেশ থেকে চলে যাওয়ার প্রয়োজনীয়তা করতে। এ প্রক্রিয়া করতে হয় তাদের গোপনে, না হলে আবারও যামলো পড়বে স্বামী গোষ্ঠী। বাগেরহাটের সর্বত্রই এই মূল্যের প্রবণতা ছাড়াও রাসপালা, হুন্ডিয়ার, মোড়েলগঞ্জ ও কুয়ূর উপজেলার এই নীরব ধর্ষণের প্রকোষে দেশে তুলনামূলকভাবে কিছুটা বেশি।

ফকিরহাটের এক ইইপি গোস্বামিনা জানালেন, ইন্দীয়া: তাদের এলাকার প্রায় প্রতিরোতেই ডাকাতি হচ্ছে। এই ডাকাতির ঘটনার প্রতিটিতেই অসহায়িকভাবে হস্তে নির্ভিয়ে ধর্ষণ। হিন্দু এলাকাতেই ডাকাতি এবং ধর্ষণের ঘটনা ঘটছে বেশি। লক্ষণীয় বিষয় হলো-এর বেশিরভাগ ক্ষেত্রেই মামলা হচ্ছে না কেন। স্বর্গীয় পরিবারের মামলা করার পরিবর্তে ঘটনাটি থাকে গোপন থাকে সে প্রতিই বেশি করতে দেখা যায়। তারা জানে, মামলা করে কোন প্রতিকারই পাওয়া যাবে না, উদ্ভা বিশুদ্ধ হয়ে আসেন জীবন। পুলিশের মতো সাংবিধানিকের কাছেও কিছু করতে চায় না এদের পরিবারের সদস্যরা। দু'তরফান হোক তোকে নেবারে মামলা করে, কিন্তু পরে আর ধা নিয়ে কোন ভয়ই হবে না। একাধিক হুন্ডিয়ারী জানিয়েছেন, ধার্মিক পুলিশ কর্মকর্তারা পর্যন্ত বেশিরভাগ সময় তাদের নিপাতনহিত স্বপ্নে মামলা করতে। তাছাড়া এনিয়েও ধার্মিকতার মামলা মূলে থাকে সাধারণ ভাবেই পরিবার থেকে দলীয় দৃষ্টিকোণে বিবেচনা করে আসতে হয় পুলিশকে।

একইকির মতো দু'কেন্দ্রা হলে মামলা যে হয় না তা নয়। দিন পরদিনে আসে কুয়ূর গোপনপূর্ণ ইইপিদের যদিপাটিন গ্রামে এক পুত্রবৃন্দে ধর্ষণ করেছে ৪ নবপত। এ নিয়ে মামলা হয়ে পুলিশ ২ জনকে গ্রেফতার করে। কিন্তু সেই মামলা নিয়েও বর্তমানে বড়ই বিপাকে রয়েছে পুলিশ। ধর্ষণের আত্মবিক্রমণ এবং প্রত্যন্তসরকারী প্রতিদিনই নানা ধরনের হুমকি নিয়ে চলেছে ধর্ষণের পরিবারকে। এলাকার একাধিক ব্যক্তির মতে, স্বর্গীয় মামলাসমূহে এভাবে মামলাটি চলতে পারবে তারা। অপর অংশের মতে বাধ্য হবে। আর একটি ঘটনার কথা বীতার করলে মামলাই ইইপিদের এক বিশু মন্ত্রণাবলী। নাম লেখা না করার আত্মকি জানিয়ে তিনি বলেন, তার কতগুলোপুত্র্য বোনকে মিলেদুপুরে ধর্ষণ করে মিশ্রু শেষ মামলে এক মামলা। এনিয়েও এলাকার সে ছাত্রাশ না হবার হিসাবে নিজেই পরিচয় দিয়ে নানা অপকর্ম করে বেড়াতে। কিছুদিন আগে উক্ত মেয়েটি কলকাতা থেকে ফেরার পথে ধর্ষণ মিশ্রু অধরে মুখে তাকে নিয়ে যার পার্শ্ববর্তী এক পুত্র হুন্ডিয়ারে সে বাড়ির লোকদের অধরে তার এনিয়ে বের হোক বের করে দেয়, তারপর সেখানে ধর্ষণ করে। ধর্ষণের ক্ষমতা এরাই বেশি যে এ নিয়ে হতভাগা মেয়েটির পরিবার মামলা করার সাহস পর্বে পারেন। অসংজ্ঞিত এই পরিবারটি এখন গৌরব করেছে সর্বত্রই বিক্রি করে দিয়ে দেশ থেকে চলে যেতে।

দেশজুড়ে লক্ষ্যন এই নীরব ধর্ষণের সঙ্গে জড়িত সমাজিকভাবে পরিচিত সরকারী দলের ক্যাডার হিসাবে। দলের নেতাদের কাছে তাদের কলকাতা রয়েছে বেশ। নেতারা তাদের বাধ্য করে থাকে নিজেদের ব্যক্তিগত স্বার্থ উদ্ধারে। নিশ্চিন্দে পায় তারা প্রুয়। তাই কলকাতা একজন স্বামী কেনে কারণে পুলিশের হাতে বরা পড়লে তার প্রুয়াদারা নেতার বেড়ে যায় স্ট্রেটস্ট্রি। কেবল হিন্দু কিংবা বিরাটী দলীয় নেতাকর্মীদের বেহেনা করাতেই নয়, উপনিষদ বৈশ্বাচার এই শ্রীতি ঠিকঠিকভাবেই স্বামীদের ব্যবহার করা হচ্ছে ইন্দীয়া।

Site of Hindu Festival Attacked: Icons destroyed – An Attempt to Usurp the Temple Property?

Translated from the Daily Janakantha dated 9th October, 2002.

Narayangunj, 7 October. Last Monday, in the Pagla area of the Phatulla Police Station, militants attacked the site of the forthcoming Hindu festival Durga Puja, and damaged the icons being readied for the occasion.

Continued on page 4

**[Al-Qaeda continued..]**

They said the passports and entry stamps indicating that the seven arrested men entered Bangladesh in 1999 were most likely fakes. Whatever the case, after being held for five days at a secret location, the men were driven to court and released on Sept. 29. No charges or proceedings were brought. After they were freed from custody, the seven were driven to Dhaka's Sheraton hotel where they spent the night, and then disappeared. TIME's HUJI source claimed the trafficking story was merely an official smoke screen.

"These are the same guys from the *Mecca*," he said. "These are bin Laden's people. They've been hiding here for several months."

Bangladesh, it is true, is no Afghanistan, or even Pakistan. For centuries, Bengalis have been united by a culture of tolerance that defies the familiar South Asian divide between Hindu and Muslim. After Sept. 11, the CIA did set up a new five-man base in Dhaka, but merely as part of a global policy of establishing a presence in all Muslim countries. The American intelligence community's view is summed up by one U.S. source who told TIME that Bangladesh is "not a real hot account." But Bangladesh also has its fundamentalists. And its southern coastal hills and northern borders with India are lawless and bristling with Islamic militants armed by gunrunners en route from Cambodia and southern Thailand to Sri Lanka, Kashmir, Central Asia and the Middle East.

Today, southern Bangladesh has become a haven for hundreds of jihadis on the lam. They find natural allies in Muslim guerrillas from India hiding out across the border, and in Muslim Rohingyas, tens of thousands of whom fled the ethnic and religious suppression of the Burmese military junta in the late 1970s and 1980s. Many Rohingyas are long-term refugees, but some are trained to cause trouble back home in camps tolerated by a succession of Bangladeshi governments. The original facilities date back to 1975, making them Asia's oldest jihadi training camps. And one former Burmese guerrilla who visits the camps regularly describes three near Ukhia, south of the town of Cox's Bazar, as able to accommodate a force of 2,500 between them. The biggest, he claims, has 26 interconnected bunkers complete with kitchens, lecture halls, telephones and televisions concealed beneath a three-meter-high false forest floor that stretches between two hills. Weapons available for training there include AK-47s, heavy machine guns, rifles, pistols, rocket-propelled grenades and mortars. Mantraps and mines, which can be triggered by spotters hiding in tree houses, protect approaches to the camp.

Over the years, the former guerrilla says, Ukhia has hosted militant visitors from the southern Philippines, Indonesia, southern Thailand, Kashmir, Pakistan, Afghanistan, even Uzbekistan and Chechnya. Videotapes showing al-Qaeda in training that were unearthed by CNN in August include footage from 1990 that feature Rohingya rebels.

And one of the five signatories to bin Laden's Feb. 23, 1998 call for a jihad against America was Fazjul Rahman, who signed in the name of "the Jihad movement of Bangladesh." Fighters trained and given new identities in Bangladesh also

*Continued on page 5*

*Continued from page 3*

**[Durga Temple...continued..]**

The incident has caused quite a stir in the locality, and a shock among the Hindus. According to the police, the attack took place between midnight and four o'clock in the morning. However, not one of the militants has been apprehended yet.



**Picture (Courtesy: The Daily Janakantha): Desecrated and destroyed Durga Idol at Fatullah, Bangladesh.**

The report says that in the Laxmi Narayan temple at Pagla, artists had been working on the icons for the last twenty days, and were at the final stage of decorating them. They had left the site at around 11 Sunday night. Local people said that early Monday morning they found the icons broken. This caused instantaneous grief and frustration among the believers. Many were literally overcome with emotions while tears were rolling down their cheeks. The militants had cut the fences erected to guard the site. Mr. Tapan Kumar, the General Secretary of the temple, says that there have been ongoing attempts to grab the temple property. Last October, there was a verdict from the higher court in favor of the temple, which was immediately followed by physical threats by the miscreants to the associates of the temple. The General Secretary has lodged a general complaint at the court without having been able to name the miscreants. The local MP has inspected the affected place and has promised some money for rebuilding the icons. He has also promised action against the miscreants. In the meantime, the police have apprehended two Moslems in connection with the tragic incident. In a journalists' meet, Shankar Saha and Nirmal Kumar Das, Chair and Secretary of the organization holding the meeting, expressed their hope that with cooperation of all faiths, the greatest Hindu festival of Bangladesh would be celebrated in peace and joy.

**A Statement from Mukto-mona:  
Stop Muzzling Taslima Nasrin a la  
Bangladeshi style**

Bangladesh's judiciary proved it again that they are not free.

*Continued on page 5*

[Al-Qaeda continued..]

regularly find their way to conflicts in Afghanistan and Kashmir. Indian intelligence says the Islamic hijackers of an Indian Airlines plane with 189 passengers and crew on board, which they forced to fly from Kathmandu to Kandahar in December 1999, had traveled to Nepal from Bangladesh. "With the right amount of money, whoever you are, you can do anything," says one Western diplomat based in Dhaka. "If 150 militants want to come in here and buy themselves new passports and new identities, stock up on any weapons they might want and maybe do a little refresher training before heading off again, there's nothing to stop them." Indeed, December was a repeat visit for the *Mecca*, according to the HUJI source. In June 2001, he says the boat sailed from Karachi to Chittagong with 50 other militants who had completed their training in bin Laden's camps in Afghanistan.

The Bangladeshi government typically reacts with fury to reports of jihadi camps or fundamentalism within its borders. The reason isn't hard to fathom. In October 2001 two Islamic fundamentalist parties with a history of links to terror groups were elected as part of a four-way electoral alliance led by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). The accession of Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Oikya Jote to power in Bangladesh rang alarm bells. Islamic Oikya Jote is open about its sympathies: it is well known for its support of Islamic fundamentalism, the Taliban and al-Qaeda. The party's membership largely duplicates that of the HUJI, which was founded in 1992 by Bangladeshi *mujahedin* returning from Afghanistan with orders from bin Laden to turn the moderate Islamic state into a nation of true believers. The HUJI has been involved in scores of bombings, including two attempted assassinations of then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in July 2000. And while Jamaat now projects a moderate face, its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir has been behind a string of bomb attacks and killings. At gatherings during the campaign, Jamaat leaders spoke of breathing the "Islamic spirit of jihad" into the armed forces while supporters rallied around posters of bin Laden and the HUJI slogan: AMRA SOBAI HOBO TALIBAN, BANGLA HOBE AFGHANISTAN. ("We will all be Taliban and Bangladesh will be Afghanistan.")

Jamaat is also the main force behind the phenomenal growth of unlicensed madrasahs, known as qami madrasahs, in the past decade. There are now an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 in Bangladesh, of which 30 to 40, run by mujahedin veterans, are known to shelter militants and recruit fresh fighters. Such militants sometimes receive explicit encouragement from Bangladesh's spiritual leaders. Mullah Obaidul Haque, head of the national mosque in Dhaka and a Jamaat associate, told a gathering of thousands in the capital last December: "America and Bush must be destroyed. The Americans will be washed away if Bangladesh's 120 million Muslims spit on them." So controversial were the BNP's partners in government and so infuriating did they find reports of rising fundamentalism that earlier this year Zia twice denied that there were any "Taliban" in her government, or even in Bangladesh.

*Continued on page 6*

*Continued from page 4*

[Taslima...Mukto mona..contd..]

Mukto-Mona, an assembly of freethinkers mostly from Bangalee descent in the Internet, strongly denounces the recent verdict of an obscure court located in the backwater of Bangladesh vis-à-vis the feminist writer Ms. Taslima Nasrin. The suddenness of the court verdict surprised most freedom-loving Bangalees. And worst of all, no attorney had represented Ms. Taslima Nasrin at the court. Therefore, it was a one-sided affair. This is what is called - justice in Bangladeshi style!

Ms. Taslima Nasrin is a prisoner of conscious. Beginning from her childhood, she saw repression against our womenfolk in Bangladesh. Similar to the action of a volcano, her rage, anger, disbelief, and all the incongruities of our repressive society pushed her to the brink of fervidness. She did what a volcano does when excess pressure builds up inside it. It simply erupts. In her case, the catalyst was the post Babri Mosque riot in southern districts of Bangladesh. Her cry for justice reverberated in her book *Lajja* (Shame). And cry she did. Most folks in Bangladesh those who lack a "third eye" saw the vulgarity in her novice write-up. And they cried foul. "Death to Taslima" was the shrill cry from Mullahs. Ms. Taslima Nasrin had to look for a safe place in abroad. She has been living in exile not through her choice. Fundamentalist Muslim clerics lead a violent campaign at that time for killing her and prize was set for her head in response to her books and articles. Her life is vulnerable in all parts of Bangladesh since a big chunk of the nation has trodden the path to Islamism. Throughout the period of her unhappy exile from Bangladesh, Dr. Nasrin constantly spoke of her love for her homeland and her people, and of her desire to return to her home. For a brief period, she returned to Bangladesh in 1998 under difficult circumstances, just to be near her dying mother. After her mother's demise, she returned to Europe. For a while, she lived in Kolkata to be imbued by the ambiance of Bangalee culture as she was missing her motherland dearly. The Moderator of Mukto-mona and the members have worked closely with Dr. Nasrin in recent years of her exile and have found her to be an outstanding representative of the rich culture of Bangladesh.

***Our forum is proud to count Dr. Nasrin among its members, and will be unstinting in its efforts to defend this courageous champion of human rights.***

Now by the verdict of a lone magistrate from Goplaganj, Bangladesh, Ms. Taslima Nasrin's fate is sealed again. But it has raised one important question in the minds of many freethinkers. Is the judiciary in Bangladesh really free? Past history shows us that the same judiciary decided to defer the verdict of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman killing of August 15, 1975. Similarly, the case against Shaik-ul Hadis Maulana Azizul Hoque, the head of Islamic Oikkyo Jot, for killing police constable Badsha Miah in Jamia Muhammadiyah Arabia Madrassah Complex on February 3, 2001, was thrown out soon after the caretaker government sworn into the office in July 2001. The highest seat of judiciary in Bangladesh, the Supreme Court, who are too afraid to touch the case of

*Continued on page 6*

**[Al-Qaeda continued..]**

But a Bangladeshi government official tells TIME that while Zia's administration is aware of the fundamentalist threat inside the country, tackling it head-on might trigger a violent backlash. Foreign Minister Morshed Khan took the same line, telling TIME that it was better to have such groups inside the government, looking out.

Al-Qaeda's links to the leadership of Jamaat or Islamic Oikya Jote may be largely rhetorical. But the DGFI, Bangladesh's military intelligence service, may have more to hide. Its agents maintain contact with their counterparts in Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence and have a long history of supporting rebels fighting Indian rule across the border, including providing safe houses in Dhaka for the leaders of the United Liberation Front for Assam (ULFA). The HUJI source and the portworkers who saw the Mecca arrive claim that the man who greeted the new arrivals was a major in the DGFI. The major checked the visitors in by name and led them to a fleet of suvs lined up on the docks, add the portworkers. A spokesman for the DGFI denied knowing that members of al-Qaeda had ever set foot in Bangladesh. He even denied that the major existed, although diplomatic registration records show the officer is a long-standing member of the service and was stationed in Calcutta in the mid-1990s. The HUJI source and a Bangladeshi military source maintain the major was the last link in an operation that began in Afghanistan. After leaving the Taliban's headquarters in Kandahar as the city fell in early December and crossing into Pakistan, the fugitives traveled to Karachi, hired the *Mecca* and made the sail around India.

The emergence of al-Qaeda in Dhaka is merely the latest sign that Bangladesh's more radical Islamic groups are coming out from the forests. The former Burmese rebel says three of the camps near Cox's Bazar have closed since October—not because of the kind of governmental pressure being applied in Pakistan, but because the militants feel safe enough to transfer their operations to like-minded madrasahs, some of them in the capital. On May 9 and 10, 63 representatives of nine Islamic groups—including Rohingya forces, the Islamic Oikya Jote and the ULFA—met in Ukhia to form the Bangladesh Islamic Manch, a united council under HUJI's leadership. So far, the Manch has restricted itself to circulating speeches by bin Laden and Mullah Masood Azhar, a Pakistani militant leader. But it has big plans, says the HUJI source: "The dream is to create a larger Islamic land than the territorial limits of Bangladesh to include Muslim areas of Assam, north Bengal and Burma's Arakan province." That dream, if Islamic terrorists are allowed to continue their operations in Bangladesh, could be a nightmare for the rest of the region.

*With reporting by Massimo Calabresi/Washington, Simon Eleganti/Jakarta and Scott Macleod/Cairo*

**[Dr. Nasrin...Contd..]**

Sheikh Mujib killing with a seven-foot pole was too eager to give verdict against Bangladesh's premier private TV channel Ekushey TV. It seems as if the judiciary is bent on giving verdict against any person or institution that has a tinge of secularism written all over it while the religionists have a field day getting a reprieve from the court. This is simply a mockery of justice in Bangladesh.

We, the Mukto-Mona forum appeal to the conscious of all freedom-loving people of the world to condemn the verdict meted out by the court of a magistrate in Bangladesh where the feminist writer Ms. Taslima Nasrin was "convicted" for a crime she did not commit in the first place. She exercised her inalienable right -- freedom of speech -- to speak her mind. The religious fanatics in Bangladesh say her writings are blasphemous. However, sinnce Bangladesh is yet to have any blasphemy law in the book, one of them lodged a case against the writer by stating that her writings had hurt "religious sentiment of the Muslims." She was tried in absentia and not only that there weren't any lawyer to defend her in the court of law.

**We demand to the judiciary of Bangladesh to declare the verdict against Ms. Taslima Nasrin** [an emblem of honor for Bangladesh, achieving the Ananda Puroshkar, India, 1994; Kurt Tukholsky Prize, Sweden, 1994; Feminist of the Year, USA, 1994; Human Rights Award from the French government, 1994; Edit de Nantes award, France, 1994; Monismanien Prize, Sweden, 1995; Sakharov prize for freedom of thought from EU, 1995; Honorary Doctorate from Gent University, Belgium, 1995; International Humanist award from IHEU, 1996; Ananda Puroshkar (second time), India, 2000; the Erwin Fischer Award, Germany, 2002 etc.] illegal since none had represented Ms. Nasrin at the court to defend. Therefore, not only the court verdict be annulled, the case against the writer should also be withdrawn unequivocally right away.

**We demand from Mukto-mona to the government of Bangladesh to allow Ms. Taslima Nasrin to return to Bangladesh. The government must also provide safety for the writer and her immediate family.**

Finally, the government should foster freethinking and defend the article of free speech as provided by the constitution of the land. To show that the government is serious about instituting the free speech clause of the constitution, all the orders for banning books in Bangladesh including the ones written by Ms. Taslima Nasrin should be rescinded right away.

What we want to see ultimately is the re-institution of secularism in our motherland. The country for sure was established at the high cost of a supreme sacrifice from 3 million lives in 1971 to foster secularism, egalitarianism, and democracy in the land of free. Let us all work for that cherished goal.

**Letter of support for Taslima from Mukto-mona members:**

## Army deployed in Bangladesh: Bangladesh Army's "Clean Heart" operation in pictures.



The struggle against rising crime has not improved: BBC  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/2335849.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/2335849.stm)



Bangladeshis are worried over rising crime: BBC



Bangladeshi police force often overstretched: BBC



সাবেক ডিফ হুইপের বরিশালের বাসা থেকে উদ্ধারকৃত অস্ত্র ও গুলি

[Dr. Nasrin...Contd..]

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mukto-mona/message/8139>  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mukto-mona/message/8154>  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mukto-mona/message/8167>  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mukto-mona/message/8166>  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mukto-mona/message/8168>  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mukto-mona/message/8169>  
 etc.

The above statement is created by the [members of Advisory board of Mukto-mona](#) and written by [Mukto-mona Moderator](#). Please circulate the statement as many places as possible.

[Mukto-mona\(www.mukto-mona.com\)](http://www.mukto-mona.com)

## Puja Mandap vandalised in Pabna

Report from "The Daily Star News".

<http://www.dailystarnews.com/200210/11/n2101101.htm#BODY7>

Unidentified miscreants demolished all images of Goddess Durga at the Durga Mandir at Shakharipara under Ataikula Upazila in Pabna yesterday. In another incident in Pirojpur, an organisation called Al Saidee Mujahid Bahini has sent letters to all Puja committees in Sadar and Nazirpur upazilas, intimidating Hindus not to celebrate Puja this year. In Pabna, the images at the Durga Mandir at the residence of district Awami League leader Chandan Kumar Chakrabarty were demolished in the early hours of yesterday. The incident has sent a wave of panic among the Hindus living in the upazila. In protest, they decided not to celebrate the Puja this year.

On information, Ataikula police and Additional District Magistrate Nurul Islam visited the temple. Police claimed that law enforcers were deployed at the temple, but no policemen were found there till yesterday noon. Leaders of the District Puja Celebration Committee also visited the temple and urged the authorities to ensure security to the Hindus in the area. In Pirojpur, the so-called Al Saidee Mujahid Bahini threatened that the Puja celebration would not be allowed at the birthplace of Delwar Hossain Saidee, local MP of the Jamaat-e-Islami and asked the Hindus to demolish idols by yesterday. The organization said that unless the Hindus demolish the images on their own, members of the Bahini would launch a demolition drive. The administration beefed up security and assured the Puja committees of their help in peaceful celebration of the Puja. State Minister for Finance Abul Hussain also met with local politicians and sought their all-out support. Meanwhile, Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police (Barisal Range) Golam Mostafa termed the letter of the Bahini an attempt to sabotage the Puja celebration. Pirojpur police arrested Convenor of the district Jubo League Sadullah Liton and former joint convenor of the district Bangladesh Chhatra League Kamruzzaman Shahin on suspicion of sabotage.



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Law and order was seen to be spiralling out of control in Bangladesh: BBC