

Explain what is 'Hanadar Bahini'

On Sunday, the BNP, Jatiya Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh issued their statements on the occasion of Martyred Intellectuals Day without naming the Pakistani army and their local collaborators who spearheaded the killing of the intellectuals.

In her statement BNP chief Khaleda Zia said the intellectuals were killed by the “Hanadar Bahini” (occupation forces) and their collaborators.

Jatiya Party chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Raushan Ershad also mentioned Hanadar Bahini.

The Jamaat acting secretary general in his statement said the entire nation remembers with due respects the intellectuals who embraced martyrdom on December 14 [1971], without mentioning who killed them or why.

For BNP and Jamaat, shying away from mentioning Pakistani forces is nothing new. But we would like to know why BNP, Jamaat and JP feel shy about pinpointing who the killers were and who their collaborators were.

What could be the reason? Is it that they feel mentioning Pakistan’s name or its collaborators – the Razakars, Al Badr and Al Shams – would be improper?

Is it possible that mentioning Pakistan’s name might offend Pakistan and BNP, Jamaat and JP do not want to ‘hurt’ the feelings of their friendly nation?

Is it possible that they believe the Pakistani army or the collaborators were not involved in the killings?

Or is it possible that BNP, Jamaat and JP just want to wash off our hands from the history and say: let’s forget the past and let’s look to the future. No point in bringing the murky part of history.

Maybe the BNP, Jamaat and JP believe all of the above. But then they must explain why they want to pay homage to the martyred intellectuals. If they must pay their homage then they must recognise who killed them and why they were killed. They must also explain who are these ‘Hanadar Bahini’? Until then, their homage means nothing to this nation because it’s shrouded in self-contradiction, deceit and greyness.

When the Pakistani forces killed our people – they did not feel shy. And today Pakistan still arrogantly denies committing atrocities during the 1971 war.

It’s sad to see that a major party like BNP is harping the tune of Pakistan. By saying Hanadar Bahini once again, BNP, JP and Jamaat are denying the country’s history.

The word “Hanadar Bahini” was ironically introduced in the country by General Ziaur Rahman, a sector commander in the Liberation War who rose to power following the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in August 1975.

Though a freedom fighter himself – Ziaur Rahman – who took over presidency in 1977 –changed the reference of Pakistani forces and Razakars or Al-Badr from all occasions, news and even text books. The word Hanadar Bahini replaced the Pakistani forces.

Ziaur Rahman also reinstated Razakars into the mainstream politics and brought them into his cabinet; lifted ban on Jamaat-e-Islam’s politics; built children’s park in the place where

Pakistani forces surrendered to the Allied forces in the Suhrawardi Udyan; erased records of rape victims who were rehabilitated after independence and took many other measures that would only make Pakistan happy.

It was his twisted politics that made pro-liberation forces look guilty and pro-Pakistani forces heroes.

But times have changed. Replacing “Pakistani forces” with “Hanadar Bahini” did not change the history – but has left Ziaur Rahman a controversial freedom fighter today. We all know who the Hanadar Bahini was.

Our politicians must realise that the treacherous politicians who still regret the birth of Bangladesh have no future in this country. The people of this country are proud of its history and know who killed the intellectuals; the roles of Razakars or Al-Badr and they do not like political parties who still feel shy about the country’s history.

The BNP must be black and white on this issue. And Jamaat could redefine its politics by admitting role of its leaders in killing the intellectuals and people of this country. Or else these parties themselves will rapidly become history in this country.

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