

Revolt at the BDR Headquarters situated at Peelkhana

Report of the Investigating Committee

Created for Investigation of the Heinous Massacre

Chairman of the Investigating Committee: Mr. Anis Uz Zaman Khan

Submitted on 21st May 2009

1.0 Introduction:

‘Bangladesh Rifles’ is known as BDR in short. Its headquarters is situated at Peelkhana, Dhaka. Army Officers are appointed as Director Generals and for other commanding positions of BDR on deputation. Presently, around 44,000 members are working at various levels in BDR. BDR has a proud history. It started working as Ramgarh Local Battalion in 1975. Later, during the Pakistan rule, it was known as East Pakistan Rifles or EPR. It got its identity as Bangladesh Rifles or BDR after independence. Eight Soldiers of BDR laid down their lives in the independence war and 2 of them were adorned with the title of “Beersrestha (Bravest)” posthumously as recognition of their extraordinary bravery.

There are 446 Officer positions in BDR. Among them, 386 positions are filled in by the Officers deputed from army and 59 positions are filled in by the BDR Soldiers who were promoted as Officers. There is also a position for veterinary doctor. The total manpower at the Peelkhana BDR Headquarters is 4,866 (including 1,011 civil personnel), out of which, the number of Officers is 86. Number of Officers working outside Dhaka is 360 (*Annexure - 1*). There are totally 5 battalions at the BDR headquarters: Sadar (headquarters), Rifle Battalions 13, 24, 36 and 44.

BDR is mainly a paramilitary force. Its main responsibility is to guard the country’s border, prevent smuggling, and assist the army during war. Army Officers provide adequate training to the BDR Soldiers and develop them as efficient and competent in these works, including border security. Members of this force work as vigilant guards along the 4,427 km-long Bangladesh border. In addition to it, they also assist the government in disaster management, maintenance of law and order, organising the national election smoothly, and sale of food items etc, under special responsibility.

There are 5 Gates for entering the BDR Headquarters at Peelkhana. Among these, Gate No. 2 has been closed by erecting a brick wall. Gate No. 1 is located near Lalbagh, Gate No. 3 is adjacent to New Market, Gate No. 4 is near to Jhigatala, which is better known as the main gate and Gate No. 5 is located near the Bangladesh Leather Technology College, situated at Hazaribagh. (*Annexure - 2*)

“BDR Week” is celebrated every year officially. Following this tradition, the period from 22 – 27 February 2009 was earmarked for celebration of “BDR Week” at the BDR Headquarters. According to the agenda of the programme, on the morning of last 24th February, the Honourable Prime Minister of Democratic Republic of Bangladesh Government received the salutation of BDR Soldiers at a parade as the chief guest. The annual meeting of BDR was scheduled to happen on 25th February 2009 at 8 AM, following the agenda. Annual dinner and Pony Show was scheduled for the night of 26th February.

It is to be noted that the annual meeting is official. This meeting usually updates the Soldiers on topics such as policy making, etc. Meetings are also arranged at the levels of sectors and battalions of BDR. The meetings at sector and battalion levels work as bridge between the common Soldiers and Officers. Common Soldiers get an opportunity to express their complaints and demands to the higher officials during such meetings.

Peelkhana area was decorated with colourful festoons and flags for the BDR Week. Rehearsal for the Pony Show went on till around 10 PM on 24th February. At the end of the rehearsal, the timing of next day’s (25th February) meeting was changed from 8 AM to 9 AM as per the orders of the Director General.

In addition to many high-ranking Officers of the Bangladesh Army, several civil personnel were also hurt or killed during the revolt and heinous massacre executed at the BDR Headquarters of Peelkhana in Dhaka on 25th and 26th February 2009. (*Annexure - 3*) Among the killed, there were many Officers deputed from the army, including the Director General of BDR, Major General, Shakil Ahmed and the Assistant Director General. The rebels not only killed the Army Officers, but they also looted the armoury, scorched 16 cars, vandalised 18 cars, looted and vandalised the Army Officers’ houses, tortured the family members and relatives of Army Officers mentally and physically. On 25th and 26th February, the rebels were armed and they fired

repetitively, took the living Officers and their family members and relatives as hostages and pushed the country towards a terrorising and conflicting situation.

One hundred and thirty-three Officers were present at the Durbar Hall on 25th February, 9 AM, including the Officers who were working as Battalion Sector Commander, Director General, Assistant Director General and in various other positions. Among them, 86 Officers were working at the headquarters and the remaining 47 came to Dhaka for the occasion of BDR Week.

Totally 74 people have lost their life in the Peelkhana tragedy till now. Among them, there were 57 Army Officers deputed to BDR from the army, 1 retired Army Officer, 2 wives of Army Officers, 9 BDR members, 3 innocent pedestrians, 1 Army Soldier and 1 Police Constable. There were also 2 dead bodies of Army Officers that were yet to be identified. Among the Martyr Army Officers killed by rebels, there were 1 Major General, 1 Brigadier General, 16 Colonels, 10 Lieutenant Colonels, 23 Majors, 2 Captains and 4 AMC Officers. Among the survivors, there were 3 Lieutenant Colonels, 14 Majors, 15 AMC Officers, 1 newly appointed Officer, 5 Majors working on 'Operation Dal Bhat', 1 Officer Major arriving for the parade, 5 Majors who had reached to distribute invitation letters, 7 Majors who had reached to accept awards, 8 Departmental Officers (RDO), and 14 Civil Officers.

Around 3,000 Officers were supposed to participate in the scheduled Pony Show during BDR Week. 1,783 BDR members from outside of Dhaka were brought into Dhaka on the occasion of BDR Week. Around 10,000 Soldiers were present at Peelkhana on 25th February.

2.0 Formation of an investigating Committee and its scope of work

A 10-member Investigation Committee was constituted on 2nd March 2009, with former Secretary **Mr. Anis-Uz-Zaman Khan as its Chairman** and the additional Secretary of Home Ministry as a **Member Secretary**, under the Petition No./4-5/2009/208 of the Home Ministry (**Annexure - 4**), to submit an investigation report to the government on the revolt which took place at the BDR Headquarters at Peelkhana, Dhaka at 9 AM on 25th February (Wednesday) and on the associated heinous massacre.

- (1) Secretary, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Ministry – Kazi Habibul Awal
- (2) Director General, Bangladesh Rifles – Brigadier General Md. Moinul Islam, NDC, PSC.
- (3) Representative of the Prime Minister's Office – Ehsanul Haq, Additional Secretary.
- (4) Representative of the Cabinet – Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah, Joint Secretary
- (5) 3 Representatives of the Armed Force:
 - (a) Brigadier General Hasan Nasir, NDC, PSC, Director, Artillery, Military Headquarters
 - (b) Commodore M Nasir, (N), NSC, PSC, Naval Administrative Authority, Dhaka.
 - (c) Air Commodore M Sanaul Haque, NDC, PSC, GD (P), Air Officer, commander, Bashar base, Bangladesh Air Force.
- (6) Additional Police Inspector (Administration) – Naba Bikram Tripura, NDC.
- (7) Judge Advocate General, Military Headquarters - Brigadier General Noor Mohammad.
- (8) Additional Secretary, Home Ministry, Member Secretary—Md. Golam Hossain.

2.1 Investigating Committee's scope of work

- (1) Background of the incident:

- (2) Disclosure of the reasons behind the incident and
- (3) Recommendations on other relevant matters.

The Committee was initially given 7 (seven) working days to submit its investigation report. It was later extended further by another 7 (seven) and 4 (four) working days.

3.0 Agenda

Investigation Committee on the revolt and heinous massacre by BDR members at the BDR headquarters at Peelkhana, Dhaka on 25th and 26th February 2009 has considered the following matters to ensure proper investigation:

- a) Was it an isolated incident?
- b) What were the so-called demands of the rebels and their justification;
- c) Whether the authority had taken any initiative to fulfil these demands;
- d) Whether this revolt and massacre were the expression of the internal grudge of BDR;
- e) Whether any other conspiracy was there behind this or not;
- f) What is its relation with the Soldiers' demands;
- g) Whether any external force had assisted it from outside;
- h) Who were the beneficiaries of this incident;
- i) Long term effects of this revolt and heinous massacre, and
- j) What are the other relevant matters?

4.0 Investigation procedure

The Committee had physically inspected the BDR Headquarters and related settings on 03/03/2009 (*Annexure - 5*). The Committee had later listened to the opinions of the injured/rescued Officers of the army, Soldiers/Civil Members present at various important places and conference hall at Peelkhana, the Doctor of BDR hospital, wives and children of Army Officers, Manager of the bank adjacent to the BDR gate, rebel prisoners, all former Director Generals and few Officers of BDR, political personalities, businessmen associated with BDR and others; after questioning them, their statements were recorded (*Annexure - 6*).

An attempt has been made to gather information collected by the main detective agencies about the plans and reasons behind the conspiracy of revolt, motive of the diabolical massacre, BDR's grudge, Operation Dal-bhat, and the matters under consideration. The activities of the detective agencies, few days before and after the heinous incident of 15th February, have been reviewed. The head of the detective agency or its nominated representative was interrogated to know the facts, whether these agencies had alerted the government in advance, especially whether the detective agencies had monitored the happenings of 25th and 26th February. Written statements on this matter have also been collected from detective agencies such as DMP, SB, CID, RAB, SSF, etc. An attempt has been made to analyse the incident by sharing information with the agencies such as CID, RAB, etc, which were associated with the investigation after this incident.

The Committee viewed the video footages, which were received by RAB, DMP and SB from electronic media on the Committee's request, and also their own footages. The Committee requested CID and other detective agencies to identify the Soldiers seen in footages, who were carrying arms, using loudspeakers and driving cars. The Committee also interrogated those who had been already caught or who had participated at Peelkhana. The Committee had also used recorded audio, video and still images taken during or after the incident to uncover the truth.

Notice was given in magazines and newspapers requesting citizens interested to provide information confidentially by keeping their name and identity hidden. Complaint boxes were installed at visible places at all gates of the Secretariat and the main gate of Peelkhana for this purpose. But no such significant information was received in the complaint boxes which could have assisted in the investigation.

Information was collected from the BDR authority about the number of Soldiers present at Peelkhana on 25th February, number of Soldiers present at the Durbar Hall, list of hurt, killed or harmed Soldiers, information about appointment of all Soldiers since 2001, etc. Answers to the questionnaire prepared by the Committee were collected from Soldiers. The Committee tried to collect information by questioning few concerned Soldiers through analysis of the information provided by the BDR Soldiers.

5.0 Limitations

This Committee has considered it essential to interrogate the heads of some agencies and few important persons and collect detective information from various detective agencies in the interest of the investigation. But these could not be done due to lack of cooperation. As a result, it was not possible to identify the main conspirators behind this revolt and massacre with adequate material evidence and reveal the main reason or motive behind this incident.

The Committee had requested the concerned detective agencies such as NSI, DGFI, RAB, CID and SB of police to supply their collected detective information and required proofs after analysing from professional perspective. *But the desired cooperation was not received from the aforementioned agencies.*

As this Committee did not have proper tools, technology and technique for questioning the suspected persons to reveal the truth, almost no person presented or brought to the Committee for questioning provided any important information or proof.

As a result, it was evident to the Committee that, it would be a difficult and lengthy work to find the reasons and motives of this incident till the direct participants and background planners behind BDR's revolt are identified.

6.0 The background of Peelkhana tragedy

The Army has been leading BDR, an organisation with traditions of more than two hundred years, since its inception. So there was always a difference between common Soldiers and Army Officers. **A strong trend has been observed among the ordinary soldiers of BDR to be involved in immoral activities such as accepting bribe and corruption, as a result of their direct involvement in activities such as prevention of smuggling in the border areas. But majority of the Army Officers appointed in the BDR Soldiers' commands were obstruction to these unethical activities. It was common to see BDR members being penalised for indiscipline and unethical activity. But opportunity of employment till the age of 57, lighter punishments compared to the importance of crime, etc could not play an effective role in preventing corruption.** Rather, a covert mentality of not accepting army authority was always silently active among BDR members. Additionally, the departmentally promoted DADs and ADs of BDR used to instigate and confuse the ordinary and newly appointed Soldiers in many ways by their provocative talks.

6.1 Planning of revolt

According to the information received from an agency assisting in the investigation, (*Annexure – 7*) many civil citizens were involved in the planning of massacre, loot and other crimes executed on 25th and 26th February, along with many members of BDR. According to the same source, this planning went on for around 2 months. The conspirators held several meetings at various stages till this incident. The information about these meetings is as follows:

a) Few members of BDR had gone to the Office of **Barrister Taposh** (present Member of Parliament) before election. Noteworthy among them were, **Habildar Monir, Soldier Tareq, Soldier Ayub, Lance Nayek, Assistant Saidur**, along with 25 / 26 Soldiers and a **certain Zakir** were also present there.

b) Some BDR members involved in the planning went to MP Taposh' residence "Sky Star", 3/4 days after election. When he was asked to fulfil their demands, he told that nothing other than the demand related to ration can be considered.

c) 10/12 BDR members, led by 2 DADs and a civil citizen, Zakir met at the residence of Member of Parliament, **Sheikh Salim** in the middle of February. MP Salim told that these demands are under Home Ministry, but he requested for a written copy.

d) It has been revealed that this group had also tried to meet the respected Home Minister.

e) When these Soldiers did not get desired response on matters related to their demands from the political leaders, they planned for their future course of actions within themselves. As a part of this, they organised few meetings in their respective areas on different dates.

f) A certain leading BDR member commented in the meeting organised at the Headquarters Rifle Battalion on 16th February 2009 that, "**We will not be benefited by such demands, we will have to extract the demands by keeping Officers as hostage**".

g) A meeting was organised at the Prime Coaching Centre of civil citizen Zakir, adjacent to Gate No. 5 at 7.30 PM on 18th February 2009, which went on for nearly 1 hour. It is known that a draft leaflet was typed at the **Prime Coaching Centre** on 21st February describing their demands and it was distributed to the **RSU Officers**, including all battalions of Peelkhana.

h) Another 3 / 4 DADs, including **DAD Touhid, DAD Rahim** had met at the residence of a Soldier of 36 Rifle Battalion.

i) A final meeting took place at the **44 Rifle Battalion's field** on the previous night before the incident. But the conspirators took part in a meeting that was conducted at the rented tin-shaded house of **Lance Nayek Zakaria** (Signal) outside Gate no. 5 and it went on till 9.30 PM.

The following decisions were taken on that night:

- (a) **DG and DDG will be taken as hostage** and other Officers will also be taken as hostage through them;
- (b) **2 nominated BDR Soldiers will hold weapon** against DG;
- (c) Other Officers will be taken as hostage through the DG. Bullet will be fired if obstructed, but noone will be killed;
- (d) The attack was planned by capturing both arms depot and magazine.
- (e) It was decided that demands will be extracted from government after taking hostages; and
- (f) **20 – 25 BDR members** took oath after the meeting by holding each other's hands.

If the chain of incidents of 25th February 2009 is organised in order, a well-thought plan of revolt will be revealed. Firstly, the revolt planners provoked the other BDR members against Army Officers while distributing leaflets on 21st February. Secondly, while the DG was speaking on various topics including Operation Dal-bhat during his speech in the morning meeting on 25th February, a rebel suddenly entered the stage with weapons. Thirdly, moments after, that rebel aimed his arms towards the DG, a blank shot was fired which was used as a signal to start the revolt. Fourthly, some rebels present in the Durbar Hall immediately shouted "**run**" and indicated to all Soldiers to leave the hall. Fifthly, a rumour was spread everywhere in Peelkhana outside the Durbar Hall that Army Officers had killed a Soldier inside the conference hall, to extremely provoke the Soldiers against Army Officers, and later this rumour was spread over mobile and radio. The rebels were later heard to make the same claim in the media, but later, this proved to be a baseless allegation in the investigation by the Committee.

It was found in the investigation that grudge was piling up among the BDR Soldiers since long, based on some reasonable / unreasonable complaints and demands. **But the Committee feels that killing large number of Army Officers cruelly for this reason was not consistent with their grudge.** It is evident that someone was trying to fulfil his vested interest to destroy the security and stability of the country, hiding behind the demands of BDR rebels.

6.2 Leaflet distribution

A leaflet addressing the Prime Minister was distributed on 21st February 2009 in limited number (*Annexure - 8*) at Peelkhana. This leaflet came to the notice of higher BDR authority, before it could be circulated widely. But the major detective agencies of the country did not know anything about this leaflet. Some detective agencies were unaware of the said leaflet even few days after Peelkhana tragedy. The leaflet, which was published on the occasion of Honourable Prime Minister's visit, alleged that the deputed Army Officers enjoyed luxurious lifestyle and used cars. It also alleged that there was discrimination between the salary structures of BDR and that of the army, food was of inferior quality, money meant for Operation Dal-bhat was misappropriated, money allotted for breakfast of the Soldiers on Iztimar (*unclear*) duty was misappropriated, election bill was not repaid, and these allegations were brought against DG Shakil Ahmed, his wife, Dhaka sector Commander Colonel Mujibul Haque and others. The leaflet demanded that the process of deputing Army Officers to BDR must be stopped and a BCS (BDR) cadre needs to be created like Bangladesh Police and Officers will have to be appointed through it. Finally it threatened that, **"We do not want to see them in BDR force, if required we will remove them like dogs by agitation"**. Above all, this leaflet also complains that the Honourable Prime Minister did not have meeting with the Soldiers since 1996.

According to the information received, the then Director General of BDR was informed about this leaflet on 21st February itself. Initially he had taken it seriously and took an initiative to prepare a counter leaflet within the same day. But due to unknown reasons, this initiative was abandoned later.

A 2nd leaflet with almost the same allegations (*Annexure - 9*) was found in the surrounding areas of Farmgate and Peelkhana on 25th February morning. This leaflet called for removal of Army Officers from all positions, blaming them for torture, abuse, irregularity in Operation Dal-bhat, misappropriation of allowance fund given by the government, misappropriation of the income from Durbar Hall and Rifle Square market.

It is not a new attempt in BDR to highlight various allegations in public through leaflet distribution. This kind of leaflet has been distributed earlier too before annual parade and meeting. But it is true that the leaflet distributed on 21st February had an implied threat, and the authority failed to realise and evaluate it properly. It was not reviewed if this was a threat for security, as the respected Prime Minister was supposed to inspect a parade and had an inauguration programme for the BDR Week on 24th February. No proof was found to establish that the BDR authority had informed the detective agencies about this. On the other hand, various detective agencies of the country associated with the security of the Head of the Government were totally unaware of this. This highlights an extreme weakness of the detective agencies of the country, which is not at all desirable. Ignorance of the detective agencies about the Peelkhana tragedy of 25th February and their failure to provide reliable information about the incident that took place at Peelkhana on 25th and 26th February supports the above statement.

6.3 Operation Dal-bhat

100 fair price shops were commissioned by BDR to sell essential food items, towards the end of 2006 during Ramadan, following the erstwhile government's decision to prevent price rise. Later, under similar circumstances in 2007, the caretaker government again started a similar programme by BDR which was named "Operation Dal-bhat" by the government on 26 / 8 / 2007 (*Annexure - 10*). Significant number of BDR members got involved in commercial activities outside their professional duties as a result of Operation Dal-bhat programme continuing for long. The higher officials of BDR, including the Director General of BDR, had started 10 BDR shops in 2008 under the BDR Welfare Trust as an alternative, to bring BDR out of the harmful effects of this programme.

6.4 Officer – Soldier relationship

Though the relationship between the deputed Army Officers and BDR members seemed to be good from outside, but the BDR members maintained an adverse attitude towards the Officers coming from army on deputation. This is indicated in the two leaflets circulated by BDR members detailing their various demands. The practice of officially conducting monthly meetings in other battalions outside border area and headquarters has been continuing since long. Soldiers and Junior Officers can present their complaints to the captain directly in these meetings. On the other hand, this meeting takes place once in a year in BDR headquarters on the occasion of BDR Week. There is precedence of the Prime Minister and Home Minister presiding over these meetings. But since the meeting was presided over by the Prime Minister in 1996, it was being presided over by the Home Minister. But it did not happen in the past 3 years.

Army Officers prepare the BDR Soldiers by training them. The achievements of BDR at the border are the results of Army Officers' command, discipline and training. Officers and Soldiers used to play together in units outside Dhaka.

7.0 Two days of revolt: 25th February 2009

The meeting was scheduled to start at 8 AM on 25th February. The final rehearsal for Pony Show went on till 9.30 PM on the previous evening. When the DG was requested to postpone the meeting by one hour with an excuse of fatigue due to the morning parade and evening rehearsal, the meeting was rescheduled at 9 o'clock in the morning. BDR Director General Major General Shakil Ahmed, NDC, PSC was sitting on stage at 9 AM, and the Assistant Director General Brigadier, General M A Bari, NDC, PSC sat on his left side a little behind him. The meeting started at 9.02 AM according to practice. High-ranking Officers sat at the front of the stage, on the right side in the 1st row, Junior Officers sat behind them in the 2nd row and Officers / Soldiers of all designations nominated for awards sat in the 3rd (last) row. JCOs sat on the left side of the stage in three rows. Soldiers sat in the middle facing the stage and NCOs sat behind all others. Totally 2,560 persons were present at the meeting.

7.1 Plundering the armoury

Looting of arms from the central armoury (arms depot) started at 8.30 AM by breaking it open. The sector armoury was also looted after sometime. According to the time received from CCTV footage (*Annexure - 11*), looting of ammunition from the magazine started at 11.30 in the morning. The ammunition was taken in 2 pick-up vans. Most of the rebels involved in this crime had their faces hidden by cloth, however some of them can be easily identified from the video footage.

The initial firing around the Durbar Hall was done from blank cartridges, after the trouble started in Durbar Hall. It is to be noted that these blank cartridge bullets are only used for training purpose in the rifle training school at Baytul Izzat and this type of cartridges are not stored at the BDR headquarters. The live bullets used later were looted from the armoury and supplied to the rebel Soldiers by an old double cabin pick-up van of BDR.

7.2 Durbar Hall and its surrounding area

A group of rebels broke open the armoury (arms depot) located near Battalion No. 44 and started to loot it according to prior plan. They attacked the Army Officer on duty there, Major Md. Riazul Karim, suddenly and floored him and tied up his hands and feet and gagged him. The Soldiers of quarter guard, who were on duty there at that point of time, did not oppose in any way.

The BDR meeting started at 9.02 AM with Major General Shakil Ahmed presiding over the meeting. The meeting started with Koran Telawat. Md. Sidiqur Rahman, imam of BDR Jame Mosque, conducted Koran Telawat.

The main function started at 9.06 AM with the speech of the Director General. He saluted all, who were present, as part of the greeting and asked 'How are you?' According to many, the Soldier's reply to DG's salutation and greeting was not spontaneous. After the greeting, he informed all that the respected Prime Minister was happy after inspecting the parade conducted on 24th February on the occasion of BDR Week and that she had praised the parade. Then he started speaking on Dal-bhat. He said that he came to know that the soldiers had some doubts and questions about distribution of the profit earned from Operation Dal-Bhat. He informed the meeting that no money from the Operation Dal-bhat fund has been misappropriated; rather the profit gained from this programme has been spent for the Soldiers' welfare. Those, who had actively participated in the Operation Dal-bhat, received 100 percent DA according to their eligibility; even those Soldiers, who had not participated, received DA for 10 days. Therefore, he commented that nobody should have any grudge about this. He spoke for 18 minutes on various topics and then started his speech on discipline.

During the said speech by the Director General, at 9.26 AM, two rebels entered the stage suddenly from the pantry located at the left side of the backstage (South-east). One of them was armed. The unarmed Soldier ran through the stage and broke a glass window towards the North of the Durbar Hall and went out through this. The other armed Soldier had an SMG. He was wearing the combat dress of BDR. He was not wearing helmet, his face was uncovered. The Director General leaned to one side of his chair and fell to the ground after the armed Soldier hit him from his left side.

Some Officers then ran towards the stage and surrounded the Director General. A few Army Officers among them caught hold of that rebel Soldier and disarmed him. Major Aziz, the ex-assistant captain of Battalion 44 picked up that gun and commented at this stage that it was an arm of the Rifle Battalion 44. Director General said to the Battalion captain, Lt. Colonel Shams, "Shams, this gun is from your battalion!" The Officers running towards the stage had already pushed the armed rebel to the floor and tied up his hands and feet with the lace of a boot (Picture 1).

A blank shot was heard immediately after the Soldier carrying SMG approached the Director General, which was a special signal for all BDR rebels to leave the Durbar Hall. At this point, few rebels shouted "Awake". All Soldiers and a few among the Army Officers, who were present in the hall, broke several glass windows and doors within the next 2 / 3 minutes and exited through them. Shots were heard from everywhere around the meeting hall. The Officers stood there surrounding the Director General. Director General instructed everyone to be calm. He said to the Officers, "Officers! Go and control your troops". Some Officers (Dhaka sector commander Colonel Mujib, Captain of Battalion 36, Col. Enayet, Captain of Rifles 13, Lt. Col. Badrul and others) left the hall to control their respective battalions. An announcement was made asking the Soldiers to return to the hall. They were requested repeatedly to return to the meeting. Some Officers went out of the Durbar Hall and requested the waiting Soldiers to return to the meeting. Some of them did not return to the meeting themselves at this stage. Ordinary Soldiers were seen standing at various places randomly near the Durbar Hall. Many Soldiers were seen running here and there busily.

At this point of time, loud uproar was heard in addition to the intermittent firing at the said place. The rebels kept on firing blank cartridges from outside towards the Durbar Hall. Rebels were seen standing in a line, keeping 10 / 12 feet distance between each other, holding various firearms in the empty field on the Northern side. Almost all of them were wearing combat dress. They were shooting targeting the ground. After hearing the sound of firing, many people thought that they were firing blank bullets. An ash-coloured double cabin pick-up van of BDR rushed towards the Durbar Hall from the side of nearby Battalion 44. There were some armed rebels in it. They were continuously firing blank shots towards the sky. They supplied bullet magazines to the Soldiers, who had already taken their position in field. The armed rebels surrounded the Durbar Hall very promptly and took the Officers as hostage. At one stage, firing started from all around the place targeting the Durbar Hall.

The unarmed Officers stuck inside the Durbar Hall took refuge behind the screen at the back of the stage searching for a safe place. Some of them hid inside toilets. At this stage, an Officer died at the Durbar Hall's balcony after being hit on his head by a bullet. The rebel Soldier lying on the stage, whose hands and feet were tied was able to run away from the hall utilising this opportunity. Approximately at 9.30 hours, the BDR Director General himself spoke to the respected Prime Minister, Head of the army, the Director General of RAB and the Director General of DGFI from his mobile phone and informed them that the Rifle Battalion 44 had rebelled. He requested for immediate military intervention. Other confined Army Officers too called various people and sent SMS from their mobile phones requesting for help. They informed their relatives, friends and colleagues about their helplessness. The confined Officers told them, expecting help — **“Durbar Hall is in control of rebel BDR Soldiers. We are captives. We cannot talk any longer, please take prompt step. ...probably we will never meet again. Take care; look after my children, etc.”**

The rebels, who had taken position in the field, entered the Durbar Hall at around 10.30 AM and kept on firing. They ordered the Officers to come out, they threatened that they would be killed otherwise. At this moment, the other Officers who had taken shelter at the back of the stage in self-defence, came out from that place and encircled the DG. Rebels asked them to walk in a single line and to lift their hands up. DG moved to the front of the line voluntarily and kept on advancing towards the door on the Westside, following the rebels' order to lift his hands up. Rebels were abusing the Officers verbally using filthy language. A group of rebel Soldiers with their face hidden by a cloth, and standing outside beside the pick-up van, fired at the Officers immediately after the DG came out of the Durbar Hall and stepped on the staircase. A bullet hit the Director General on his chest. He leaned to his right and fell on the ground and probably he had embraced martyrdom instantly. Few more Officers standing in line were killed in firing. To ensure death of the remaining 1 or 2 people, who were still alive after being shot at, the Soldiers fired at them once again and poked them with bayonet. Few people, who had escaped miraculously, came out of the hall and spread across and some of them took shelter inside toilets (Lt. Colonel Kamruzzaman, Major Muneer and others are significant among them).

The rebels attacked other targets at the same time, while these incidents were taking place at Durbar Hall. They united in a group and attacked the Officers' residence and Officers' mess, including the house of the Director General. It was discovered during investigation that none of the armed guards on duty at the Director General's house or his 5 armed bodyguards (who were ordered by the ADC of DG to go for his home security) put up any resistance. They physically tortured, shot and brutally killed the Director General's wife, 2 guests who had come to their house on a visit (retired colonel Delowar Hossain and his wife) and a maid servant. Apart from this, the killers plundered the Army Officers' houses and their mess indiscriminately and set a few houses on fire. Then they captured the wives and children of Army Officers and detained them inside the quarter guard. They killed most of the Officers indiscriminately, wherever they could find them and detained few of them inside the quarter guard.

The news of Peelkhana revolt reached various levels of the government, immediately after the incident started at 9.30 AM. A team of RAB reached the Gates 3, 4 and 5 at around 10.15 AM. An advanced team from the army too reached Peelkhana area after approximately one hour. After receiving this news at 9.50 AM, the Police Commissioner, DMP ordered the DC of Ramna zone and OC of Lalbagh Police Station to post forces at various important installations. All these forces took their position at a safe distance, near different gates of Peelkhana.

The air force copter started hovering in the sky at around 10 AM. A team from the 46 Brigade of the army took position in front of Medinova Clinic at Dhanmandi at 11.00 AM. The tension increased at Peelkhana after the news of army's position was received and the helicopter was seen patrolling in sky. The rebel BDR members kept on firing intermittently. They were also announcing over microphone, **"You need to be prepared, army is coming....."**. The rebels had already set fire to 16 cars at around 11 AM. The smoke rings from these burning cars could be seen from outside. It is to be noted that, these ransacked cars were the private property of the Army Officers.

Another section of the rebels reached the armoury (arms depot, magazine and store) and broke it open at around 11 AM and took the arms in their control and started to organise their armed position at different gates. They asked all Soldiers posted at the headquarters over microphone to pick-up arms and threatened those, who did not wish to take part in the revolt. It was seen from the video footage that some of their faces were covered with colourful clothes and some had their faces uncovered. These rebels were raising various grievances through media against the Officers, who came from army and they also demanded for removal of Army Officers from BDR. The situation was deteriorating very fast and it was not known what was happening inside.

The rebels created a scary and terrible situation inside and outside the Durbar Hall by 11.30 AM, which spread very rapidly across Peelkhana. The rebels rapidly spread the news of their revolt through radio, wireless and mobile to various BDR units across the country. The rebels started announcing over microphone asking all other Soldiers to come out of their line or home and ordered them to take up arms. Soldiers came out in groups and participated in plundering and started firing blank shots. The second round of firing started this way.

At 12.15 hours, the government distributed leaflets (*Annexure - 12*) in Peelkhana area from an air force helicopter, asking the rebels to surrender their arms. At this point, heavy firing started targeting the helicopter. The helicopter was hit by 6 bullets, which was very dangerous. It needs to be considered how effective it was to send such a risky mission to distribute leaflets at the initial and uncertain level. The pilot conducted this mission successfully by risking his life and the said air force pilot and his team proved their skills by landing the helicopter safely in spite of being hit by bullets.

More than hundred people took out a procession in front of the Gate Number 3 in support of BDR at around 12.30 PM. They expressed support for the Soldiers' demands and they were heard shouting slogans such as **“Victory for Bangla, victory for BDR”, “BDR and public are brothers”** etc. The rebels then randomly fired few thousand rounds of bullet for almost 20 minutes. Immediately after this, they demanded over microphone that the Prime Minister and Home Minister would have to arrive for discussion alone. They will provide security for them.

LGRD assistant minister Jahangir Kabir Nanak and chief whip of the ruling party in the parliament Mr. Mirza Azam arrived in front of Gate Number 4 at around 1.30 PM in the afternoon carrying white flag on behalf of the Prime Minister, as a first step to disarm the rebels through discussion. They called for discussion over microphone with an assurance to consider the rebels' demands. The rebels continued firing even after this.

The rebel BDR Soldiers posted in front of the Gate Number 4 agreed to speak to the Assistant Minister Jahangir Kabir Nanak, MP Fazle Noor Taposh and whip Mirza Azam at around 3 PM. MP Mahbub Ara Gini and MP Waresat Hossain joined with the above 3 persons from Jigatala.

Mr. Jahangir Kabir Nanak and Mr Mirza Azam convinced them to talk to the Prime Minister about their demands, after much discussion with the BDR rebels. **Later, they left for “Jamuna” to discuss with the respected Prime Minister along with a 14-member BDR-representative team. But this Investigation Committee did not find the list of these 14 names.** The representative team entered Jamuna at 3.40 PM. After reaching Jamuna, the team of rebel representatives imposed a condition in front of the Prime Minister that they will not take part in any discussion till all the serving or retired Army Officers are removed.

At this point, the chiefs of the three forces and the security advisor left the place. But 4 SSF members stayed back for Prime Minister's security. The team of representatives then spoke to the respected Prime Minister. The rebels raised their demands in this discussion. The rebels were clearly led by DAD Touhidul Islam during this discussion. The chiefs of three forces, Awami League presidium member Mr. Tofael Ahmed, Mr. A Razzak, Mr. Suranjit Sengupta were present at Jamuna. At the end of the discussion, Mr. Jahangir Kabir Nanak informed the waiting reporters at around 6 PM, according to the briefing given by the respected Prime Minister and the chiefs of the three forces, "The respected Prime Minister has declared general amnesty for the rebel Soldiers after the discussion with the team of BDR representatives and has ordered them to return to their barracks after surrendering their arms. She has also called for release of the captive children and women".

It is to be noted that the said statement did not mention anything about the fate of the Director General of BDR or other Officers or their release. However, the Assistant Minister Nanak told about this that they had discussed about the Director General and other Officers. The representative team of rebels had informed the Prime Minister that they were keeping well. She assured them that the rebels' demands will be fulfilled gradually. DAD Touhid gave similar statement on behalf of the rebel BDR members. He gave a statement requesting all BDR members to surrender arms and to return to their barracks. But it is not known whether the government had imposed any other condition apart from the condition of surrendering arms and releasing the captive children and women.

Mr Jahangir Kabir Nanak and Mr Mirza Azam returned to Peelkhana along with the BDR Soldiers at the end of the discussion with the Prime Minister. It was around 6.45 PM in the evening. A temporary relief was noticed at Peelkhana after they heard the news that the Prime Minister had declared general amnesty. But after sometime, they demanded that the declaration of general amnesty by the Prime Minister will have to be released as a gazette, and they again started undisciplined behaviour like before. It was then 7 PM in the evening. But DAD Touhid could not convince the rebels to surrender their arms after returning to Peelkhana, complying with the decision taken at Jamuna. At this moment, the rebels switched off electricity at certain places inside Peelkhana to assist in their misdeeds. But the Committee could not get a proper answer on why an alternative illumination arrangement was not made at Peelkhana. On the other hand, DMP brought 10 trucks and 10 buses in front of the Gate Number 4 in the hope that they might get an opportunity to bring out the Officers and their families detained inside Peelkhana following the decision announced by the government and the discussion. A source within ATN claimed that 15 hurt BDR members were brought in ambulance in 5 rounds to take them to the Red Crescent Hospital for treatment.

Another representative team of the rebels started a meeting with the respected Home Minister Advocate Sahara Khatun at the Hotel Ambala Inn (adjacent to Rifles Square) at around 8 PM. IGP of police, DG of RAB, Officers of the detective agencies, Mr. Nanak, Mr. Azam and others were present there along with the Home Minister. It became clear during this meeting that the rebels were divided on the issue of assurance of surrendering their arms, as given to the respected Prime Minister.

The objective behind disconnecting electricity inside Peelkhana in the evening was to resist an external attack and to cover their misdeeds. They utilised this time to bury the dead bodies. Initially they collected all dead bodies lying inside the Durbar Hall and at other places and kept them inside cars. The rebels had initially thrown a few dead bodies inside manholes, 2 dead bodies were found later at the banks of Kamrangi. Other dead bodies were laid to rest in mass graves beside mortuary and at other places in the darkness of night.

7.3 26th February 2009

At around 1 AM on 26th February, the Honourable Home Minister, Law Minister and the Director General of Police entered Peelkhana in a special car to have a discussion with the rebels. They sat for the discussion with rebels in an open field on the left side of the dark Durbar Hall. The rebels were speaking one after the other with raised guns in their hands. On many occasions, they did not even show a minimum courtesy to the Ministers present there. Finally the rebels agreed to surrender arms by around 1.30 AM at night. They came to the Central Quarter Guard and surrendered some arms to the Honourable Home Minister. BTV was called to record this scene. As the arms surrendered by rebels were not taken in safe custody, they again picked them up immediately after the Minister left the place. It is to be noted that many Army Officers and their families were kept as hostage at quarter guard, the place for arms surrender. But the Honourable Ministers were not informed about this, though it was known later that some hostages were witness to this arms-surrender process. When the Honourable Minister expressed eagerness to take the captive family members out along with her, the rebels took her to some quarters and the Officers' mess. In most places, nobody opened the door due to darkness and fear of rebels. The Minister brought 15 hostages out in a minibus and 2 sedan cars at 4.10 AM in the morning. The rebels were firing intermittently even when the Home Minister was inside Peelkhana.

Agriculture Minister, Matia Choudhury, Minister of state for local government Jahangir Kabir Nanak, Chairman of National Party, Mr. Hussain Muhammad Ershad, Minister of the State for Law, Advocate, Kamrul Islam and Member of Parliament Fazle Noor Taposh reached the Gate 4 of BDR headquarters at 9.30 AM. At 9.50 - 10.00 AM, two to three hundred people shouted slogans at the Gate 3 in favour of accepting the BDR rebels' demands. Some people supplied biscuits and mineral water to the rebels.

The meeting of the cabinet and senior leaders of the grand alliance started at 10 AM at Jamuna under the Prime Minister's leadership. Chiefs of the three forces were present at the said meeting.

It was known at 11.30 AM that Prime Minister had decided to deliver a speech to the nation. Prime Minister had a meeting with the chiefs of army, navy and air force in the afternoon. The policy makers and top leaders of Awami League were present there.

40 – 50 people took out a procession in front of the Gate 2 of Peelkhana in the afternoon and shouted slogans such as “BDR and public are brothers; we want trial of the army”. The procession emerged from Gate 1 and moved towards New Market via the Gates 2 and 3. 400 – 500 people again took out a procession from the Gate 1 at 1.30 PM in support of BDR members and moved towards Azimpur.

At 12.30 PM, 7 / 8 BDR members emerged from Gate 4 of Peelkhana and said “If army kills even one BDR member, we will shoot and blow off the entire city of Dhaka.” They also said, “We do not want to kill common people. Tell the army to go back to their barracks; else we will not surrender our arms.” In the meantime, the government information bulletin had fixed 2 PM as the deadline for arms surrender by the BDR rebels.

Rebels announced over microphone that, "**Military forces have surrounded Peelkhana. They might attack any moment.**" Everybody was requested to come out of their homes and line up in order to be ready with arms. They also announced that they could continue fighting for at least 10 days with the arms and ammunition that they presently had. Some witnesses have commented that though this had created fresh excitement, some rebels were disheartened at this moment.

At 1.30 PM, another team of representatives led by MP Begum Mahbub Ara Gini and MP Begum Segufta Yasmin Emily entered Peelkhana. They brought out families of 3 Army Officers after around 1 hour. Almost at the same time, everyone including Matia Choudhury and Ershad left the meeting at Hotel Ambala Inn. The meeting with rebels had failed. In the official announcement, rebels were ordered to surrender all arms and return to their barracks within 2 PM. After this, the BDR Soldiers suddenly started random firing at the Main Gate of Peelkhana.

A 12-member allied Mediatory Committee was formed at 2.30 PM. This Committee, led by Awami League leader Mr. Abdul Zalil MP reached Peelkhana. This Committee consisted of Rashed Khan Menon, Hasanul Haq Inu, Asaduzzaman Noor, Sheikh Salim, Mainuddin Badal, Ziauddin Bablu, Anisul Islam Mahmood, Nurul Islam BSc etc. They discussed with 5 / 6 rebel BDR members including DAD Touhid at Hotel Ambala Inn. They said in strict voice, "Inform us after surrendering your arms, we will accept your responsibility. Time is very short; we cannot take your responsibility later." Then DAD Touhid replied, "We will not surrender on your words." Then the BDR representative team went inside to discuss with other members.

The rebels were expecting that army may attack at any moment, as they did not surrender before the fixed deadline (2 PM). People residing in the 3 square kilometre area surrounding Peelkhana had already been told to evacuate the place over microphone, under the instructions of local Member of Parliament, Barrister Fazle Noor Taposh. Army too had announced over microphone to quit the place.

The Honourable Prime Minister's speech was broadcasted through TV and radio at 2.30 PM. She ordered the rebels to surrender and return to their barracks. She instructed them not to compel her to be harsh towards them. The rebels decided to surrender their arms after the Prime Minister's speech. The rebels had a meeting with the Honourable Finance Minister and Home Minister at Ambala Inn at 4PM, led by DAD Touhid. The Honourable Home Minister, Minister of State of the local government and whip Mirza Azam entered Peelkhana through the Gate 4. The rebels started to surrender their arms at 5.50 PM after a long discussion between themselves. Some policemen entered Peelkhana through the Gate 4 at 6.30 PM to take the surrendered arms into their custody. Police was also posted at Gates 3 and 5. Police stayed overnight at Peelkhana. Police took steps to collect arms and ammunition spread randomly here and there and arranged for guarding the place. Home Minister came out of Peelkhana at 8.30 PM and declared that the situation was totally under control. The totality of the number of arms and their types that were surrendered is a point to be noted; who took these arms into custody, and how many surrendered rebels were put in whose custody - all these details are not known. It was seen later that only approximately two hundred rebels present at Peelkhana were kept together at the BDR hospital under police protection.

8.0 Revolt in BDR locations outside Dhaka and control of the revolt

The news of BDR revolt of 25th February spread fast across various BDR sectors, battalions, camps and posts through BDR's own radio, rebels' mobile phone, their relatives and above all through the live broadcast by the electronic media, and it continued on 26th February. In total, 36 camps / battalions / sectors outside Dhaka revolted (*Annexure 13*) in 2 days from 25th to 26th February. "**Army is coming to attack**" – when this false rumour spread, Soldiers took control of the armouries by taking the Army Officers as hostages and started shooting. In some places, the Army Officers were compelled to run away to save their life. The rebels blocked various roads and highways by placing cut off trees, and stopped movement of traffic. They alerted the people staying nearby, by announcements over microphone.

Local people at Khulna took out processions and shouted slogans in favour of the BDR rebels, responding to their call. 3 BDR members were hurt in firing at the Baitul Izzat Training Centre at Satkania. BDR rebels at Teknaf also started firing. BDR officials at Naoga requested people using microphone, not to listen to the rumour of army attack. Rebels set few cars on fire on the Sylhet – Sunamganj road in front of the Akhaliya BDR Headquarters at Sylhet. Tourist vehicles were obstructed to enter various tourist places in Rangamati and Sherpur.

Rebels of Rifle Battalion 37 at Rajshahi took part in the revolt on 26th February morning, by hailing bullets continuously. A rickshaw puller named Mofiz Uddin was hurt in firing and was admitted to Rajshahi Medical College. Rebels of Rifle Battalion 11 at Jessore broke the lock open and captured arms depot. The rebels captured Captain Lt. Colonel Hafiz and Major Mahbub. There was a revolt at Teknaf Rifle Battalion 42 on the night of 25th February (around 10.30 PM) and the one-sided firing continued till late at midnight. The Army Officers were able to run away from the camp safely. Rebels of Panchagarh Rifle Battalion 25 declared revolt by firing few hundred blank shots and stopped movement of traffic on the Panchagarh – Dhaka highway. The chain of commands was broken at the BDR Headquarters at Dinajpur on the morning of 26th February. They appointed Assistant Director Md. Belal Hussain working at the Dinajpur sector and Sub-assistant Director Md. Mobarak Hussain working at the Rifle Battalion 2 as Sector Commander and Battalion Commander respectively. Rebels at Dinajpur declared the names of Sector Commander and Battalion Commander from their ranks. Rebels at Dinajpur declared the names of Sector Commander and Battalion Commander from their ranks.

Rebels of Battalion 22 at Jhumjhum, Jessore looted the armoury on the morning of 26th February. Rebels moved away from the border, keeping the 612 km-long border between Kaikhali of Satkhira and Chilmari of Kushtia unguarded. The rebels took position at Bhomra landport stopping work at the port. Sound of firing was heard at Naoga since morning on 26th February. The rebel Soldiers at Chuadanga Rifle Battalion 35 declared revolt by firing 12 rounds of bullet at 12 o'clock at night and took up arms. Rebels blocked the Netrakona – Mymensingh highway by placing trees and sand bags on the road. Sound of firing was heard at Naikhongchhori from the morning of 26th February at regular intervals. Army had surrounded the Bandarban District Headquarters BDR camp, but no untoward incident took place there. Soldiers at 8 BDR camps in Jhinadaha District stopped movement of traffic in the surrounding areas. Here, intermittent firing occurred since 10 AM. Few hundred rounds were fired at Jaylaskar BDR camp at Feni. Feni - Maijdi road was blocked by placing trees on the road. Firing took place at the Ramgarh BDR sector intermittently. Soldiers at the Akhaliya BDR headquarters of Sylhet declared revolt and took position outside the barrack. Soldiers at Kurigram BDR camp blocked all roads in Crump area and fired blank shots. The CO of Rifle Battalion 27 was captured. Soldiers of Rifle Battalions 41 and 7 at Satkhira declared revolt by firing few rounds of blank shots at 10 AM on 26th February. The activities at Bhomra landport were stopped.

9.0 Review and analysis of relevant matters by the Investigation Committee

9.1 Detective endeavours - before incident and ongoing

Heinous massacre, plundering, burning, and outraging the modesty of women went on at Peelkhana for 33 hours on the occasion of BDR Week on 25th and 26th February - did it happen according to a prior plan or was it just an instantaneous incident? After analysing the incidents that took place before or after, it can be concluded that this was a highly planned incident. If it is true, a question has been raised whether the major detective agencies of the country provided any advance alert regarding this to the government? If they had done so, what measures had been taken to prevent it from happening? If they did not do so, what was the reason behind this failure? Who was responsible for it?

There is no alternative to detective information for taking quick decision regarding the steps to be taken on various matters since the start of the incident. Questions have been raised on the roles of various detective agencies and BDR's own detective unit. Did they provide helpful information to the government while taking strategic and policy-making decisions, sitting for discussion with the rebels and above all, during the discussion before the Head of the government's meeting with leaders of the rebel group, which could have assisted in the discussion? Whether anyone was killed or injured immediately after the revolt, where and in what condition were the hostages kept – the concerned detective agency must have presented information collected on such topics to the Head of the government. But this was either not done or no proof has been found to support this.

The Honourable Prime Minister was supposed to inspect the parade on 24th February 2009 on occasion of the BDR Week. Attempt was made to collect information about matters such as – if any agency had provided any advanced information about any threat of attack or indiscipline on this occasion.

The Committee had presented the aforementioned questions to 3 main detective agencies of the country – NSI, SB and DGFI. The agenda of the Honourable Prime Minister's participation programme on 24th February 2009 at Peelkhana on occasion of “Bangladesh Rifles Week 2009” included the following: (a) Receiving salute from BDR Soldiers at the parade at 9 AM; (b) Taking part in the tea party at the end of the parade; (c) Taking part in the photo session scheduled at the BDR headquarters; (d) Delivering a speech to the Sector Commander and higher Officials at Durbar Hall.

A report (*Annexure - 13*) was sent by the Office of Director General of National Security Council to SSF on 23rd February 2009 regarding the Honourable Prime Minister's Peelkhana visit. This report said, “There is no information about any direct or indirect threat to the VIP persons' security while participating in the described programme as of now.” The report said while evaluating the situation, “...It will be proper to follow the highest level of alert in the VIP's security, as terrorist activities by the banned extremist organisations during the VIP's stay and travel to the venue cannot be ruled out.” Additionally NSI has suggested some routine recommendations to ensure the VVIP's highest level of security. Not much activity by this agency was noticed during and after the revolt.

A report (*Annexure - 14*) was sent from SB on 5th March 2009, signed by its additional Director General. He was present at the trial and gave his statement (*Annexure - 15*).

Defence detective department had sent a report (*Annexure - 16*) to the Director General of Special Security Force (SSF) on 22nd February 2009 regarding the Peelkhana visit of the Head of Government. This report had mentioned that there was no specific threat perception of organised or isolated attack by terrorist groups.

The following matters were observed in the review of statement given by SB, NSI and DGFI during written and personal interrogation regarding the BDR revolt on 25th February:

- (a) The higher authority could not collect any prior detective information regarding the revolt, as the BDR members on duty (FS) at Rifle Security Unit (RSU) and BDR's own detective unit themselves were involved in the revolt. The lack of awareness and failure of the Officers on duty at RSU had obstructed collection of detective information;
- (b) No agency had any specific prior information about the BDR revolt on 25th February, which could have helped to take required steps or strategy to prevent the revolt;
- (c) The leaflet describing the demands of BDR members (*Annexure - 17*) addressing to the Honourable Prime Minister came to NSI's notice on 23rd February and they immediately verbally informed Major Mahmudul Hassan, a member of RSU. But NSI did not inform the government about this. This leaflet was circulated on 21st February and the BDR authority was aware of this;
- (d) It is apparent that the NSI and BDR authorities did not consider the leaflet's threat of ‘removing Army Officers like dogs’ with enough seriousness.
- (e) NSI, SB and DGFI failed to provide necessary information to the government during or before the revolt, as they did not have any detective network inside Peelkhana.

(f) None of the agencies took any initiative to collect important information from Peelkhana on the incidents that took place on the 25th and 26th February through its own source.

The above situations have highlighted an image of incompetence, lack of professionalism, and unpardonable failure of the detective agencies during a national crisis. A coordinated programme must be taken immediately to reorganise all detective agencies and their methods of work, including building a counter intelligence force, to get relief from this situation.

9.2 About the arrival and operation of police, RAB and army

It came to light from the discussion with the concerned authorities of police, RAB and army (*Annexure - 18, 19 and 20*) that the news of revolt at Peelkhana reached them by telephone at 9.50 AM, 9.30 AM and 9.30 AM respectively. None of them had any advance information about the Peelkhana revolt. In spite of this, it was seen that the first team of RAB reached BDR Peelkhana area at 9.50 AM and the first army team reached there at 11.00 AM. The correct time and number of police presence was not known. But all of them were told by their higher Officers to take position at a safe distance. Later, around 350 RAB members and 500 armed members of the Brigade 46 reached the place of incidence at 12 noon. But army was asked to move outside the eyesight of BDR members, who were present at the various Gates of Peelkhana, in the interest of discussion with the rebels. Brigade Commander assessed that no operation can be carried out inside Peelkhana without tank and APC and accordingly 7 APCs were brought from depot to Dhaka cantonment by 12.30 PM, but they were not brought to the place of incidence for an operation. It was revealed from the interrogation of Police, RAB and Army Commanders present at the place of incidence that, there was no plan to carry out rescue operation to rescue the captive Officers and their family and relatives. They also informed that the reason for not conducting any immediate raid was that they did not receive any order to do so. Finally the order came at 5 PM to conduct a raid, but that was cancelled later.

9.3 Cordoning of Peelkhana by Police and RAB

The position of Police, RAB, Armed Police, DMP and Army was based on Gates, so Peelkhana area was never under an effective cordon in true sense. As the presence of army was a threat to the rebels, they were able to convince the authority to keep army at a distance by issuing counter threats. Opinions were taken from the responsible Officers of various forces regarding why the entire area was not taken under fire cordon, though it is essential to do so in these types of operations. It was found that the area was not cordoned giving an excuse of the geographical position (dense population, tannery, etc) of Peelkhana not being suitable for carrying out a raid by Police and RAB, which is not logical. As a result, rebels could easily run away by climbing the walls. According to witnesses, many BDR members and their family and relatives were able to go out easily through Gates 1 and 5 with help from their well-wishers. Additionally, rebels were helped to run away by switching off electricity in the evening.

9.4 Suppression of revolt and rescue operation

It can be seen from the review of various steps taken by the government on 25th and 26th February after commencement of the revolt, to carry out an operation to suppress the revolt and rescue people, that preparation for a military operation to suppress the revolt and political discussion to resolve the crisis were going on side by side. The only appropriate army commando battalion capable of instantly carrying out such rescue operations was based out of Sylhet, so it was not possible to involve them swiftly at the beginning of the revolt. In spite of this, it was seen that a significant number of army and RAB members were able to take position in Peelkhana area within 12 noon - 12.30 PM. But an attempt for a political resolution was considered with more importance, so these forces were ordered to take position at safe

distance under threat from the rebels. Neither a political solution nor a military operation was successful even after 29 hours of revolt, as the Honourable Prime Minister's discussion with rebels' representative team at 3 PM, attempt of the Home Minister to enter Peelkhana and compelling rebels to surrender their arms till 3 AM, and finally the final 2 PM deadline for surrendering arms – all of these had failed. Nevertheless, the rebels got a long time including a night to run away, after executing a massacre, hiding the dead bodies, torturing people and plundering the place. Finally at 5 PM on 26th February, when the revolt ended through discussion, there was practically no need for carrying out a military operation.

9.5 BDR rebels escaped from Peelkhana without any trouble

Some BDR members and Army Officers were able to escape at the first hours of night from the diabolical situation of Peelkhana. Though the Police and RAB had taken position a little away from the Peelkhana Gate, the boundary wall around the place was unprotected and no measure had been taken to cordon it off. As a result, the rebels could flee without any trouble by climbing the walls. But this process of running away probably occurred more on the 25th night, as electricity supply was intentionally switched off to help in this process. Rebels did not face any trouble to carry the looted items while fleeing at night. Rebels changed their clothes and mixed with common people by climbing walls, as there was no cordon. Thousands of uniforms of the BDR rebels, scattered near the wall bear a testimony to this. There are also allegations that they received help from the neighbouring civil citizens.

9.6 Absence of family members of the BDR rebels at Peelkhana

All family members of Army Officers were stuck due to the Peelkhana revolt on 25th February. Hundreds of JCOs and Soldiers used to live with their families in quarters at Peelkhana. But these families were not seen to come out of Peelkhana after the rebels surrendered their arms on 26th. This shows that they were already provided with an opportunity to leave Peelkhana safely. It can be guessed that family members of majority of the BDR Soldiers had left Peelkhana even before commencement of Peelkhana tragedy.

9.7 Role of electronic media before and after

Influence of media is infinite in the modern era. Electronic media's influence is more extensive and far-reaching than any other type of media, due to reasonable factors.

Different electronic media propagated instigating false propaganda against all Army Officers, from the erstwhile president to the present army chief, in almost a one-sided fashion through live programmes, talk shows, etc. Rebels had handed over several chits to the reporters for publicity in electronic media during the revolt. These chits had a lot of false propaganda and calumny against the army which were devoid of reality, and this was instantly broadcasted by the media injudiciously. The goodwill of such a glorified organisation like army was destroyed in the country, nation and international community and sympathy for the rebels was created in public mind as an effect of this. These types of programmes (Annexure 21) have added fuel to the increasing tension by giving partial statements randomly without knowing the facts about Operation Dal-bhat and the demands of BDR rebels. Many TV channels did not desist from such confusing negative propaganda in spite of the Information Ministry's request. Rather they circulated any news without verifying the truth (for example, news broadcast mentioning that DAD Touhid has been appointed by the government as DG). Media houses did not consider how this false propaganda, which was harmful to the national integrity and security, could have exerted a tremendous negative effect on Bangladesh's image in the external world. In some cases, even the minimum respect was not shown to any law,

rule or regulation in the name of broadcasting objective news.

The role of electronic media is commendable in showing Peelkhana tragedy continuously to the public. But in some cases, their unpardonable irresponsibility and over enthusiasm have raised few questions in the minds of the public. In some cases, the broadcasts played a vital role in spreading the incitement fast outside Peelkhana ignoring patriotism and modesty. This gave rise to a fear of agitation in the army camps. Overall programmes of the media were helpful in creating sympathy for the rebels in the minds of the public. A question has been raised if these activities of the media were intentional? Negative publicity by the media instigated the public against army, and rebels achieved success due to this. In some cases, media represented certain negative subjects in such a manner (especially in talk shows) which could have created restlessness and intolerance in the minds of army members.

The Investigation Committee interrogated the Head Information Officer of PID. It was revealed during interrogation that the Press Council Act is there to control media. This law has not been updated in consistence with the demands of modern era. Electronic media cannot be controlled by this law in greater public interest and according to the needs of time. No law has been passed for controlling electronic media. The electronic media are broadcasting without any control, as it is not being monitored whether they are applying the conditions properly, which were imposed on them while issuing license to them. There is no proof of legal actions being taken against any media for breach of conditions or irresponsible publicity.

9.8 Recent recruitment to BDR

It can be seen from the examination and review of witnesses, video footage and still photography that majority of the rebels were young. Most of their age was between 20 and 25. 13,376 Soldiers were recruited during seven years from 2001 to 2007. The annual appointment data is given below:

Year	Number of recruitments
2001	673
2002	2089

2003	1591
2004	2543
2005	2432
2006	2924
2007	1124
Total	13376

Source: BDR

There is an allegation that nepotism and closeness to party have received more importance during all these recruitments. There is also hearsay that people, who were active members of terrorist and fundamentalist organisations, got jobs. It has also been alleged that more people were recruited than required in some districts. Investigation Committee feels that these issues need to be explored more deeply without making random comments. BDR authority or Home Ministry may take a separate initiative to investigate this issue.

10.0 Who lead this revolt

The people associated with the revolt that happened on 25th and 26th February 09 can be grouped under 2 sections:

- a) Planners of the revolt; and
- b) Participants of the revolt.

10.1 Planners of the revolt

The Committee could not identify the main planners of revolt, even after detailed analysis of all proofs and information obtained during the tenure of investigation. The limitations of the Committee have been expressed earlier. But the Committee considers it necessary to investigate further into this issue.

10.2 Participants of the revolt

It can be seen from the video footage, still photography, information obtained from the rebels and witnesses that, a group of rebels were involved in indiscriminate killing of the Officers following a prior plan. This group killed the Army Officers and some of their family members in a planned manner at various places, including Durbar Hall. It can also be seen that, different groups of rebels were engaged at various important places in advance in an extremely organised manner, to execute specific responsibilities.

But the Committee strongly feels that the crimes, including commencement of the revolt and later massacre, could be committed only because of the direct participation and support of all BDR members during the revolt, who were on duty on the morning of 25th February, with or without arms at the Quarter guard, Arms depot, 4 Gates, DG BDR body guard, his residence, RP and MT sections and other places, or as a result of them not executing their respective duties.

On the other hand, many Soldiers joined the rebels spontaneously at the start of the revolt, some of them picked up arms voluntarily or due to threat to their life. Many had fled from Peelkhana on the first opportunity at the beginning of the revolt or later after committing a crime, either through Gate 5 or by climbing the wall. It is astonishing but true that, no attempt to prevent this revolt came to this Committee's notice except from that of **Central Subedar Major Nurul Islam**. The said Subedar Major obeyed the Director General's order at the beginning of the revolt at Durbar Hall and requested the rebels to be calm and to return to Durbar Hall. But he was killed later.

10.3 The supporters of revolt

The rebels took armed position at the Gates 3 and 4 in the initial hours of revolt. Their position at the Gates 1 and 5 was weak, because some common people from the surrounding areas of these two Gates had helped them. The fact that some local youths had supplied banana, biscuit, bread and cigarette to the rebel Soldiers at Azimpur and Hazaribagh Gates (1 and 5) proves the friendliness of rebels with the local residents. 50 – 60 young men took out a procession and shouted slogans in support of the rebels at 12.30 PM on 25th February; they declared their inseparable unity with the rebels and entered through Gate 5. Later at 3.30 PM, another procession consisting of more than hundred people led by a former soldier entered the premises similarly. We came to know that some rebels went out with them, while these two processions were moving out. Some slogans were shouted from these processions, such as “Victory for Bangla, victory for BDR”, “BDR and public are brothers”, etc.

It is to be noted that many working and retired BDR members live in Hazaribagh and Azimpur areas. Naturally, they were friendly with the local people. On the other hand, a procession was taken out at Dhaka University in protest to the barbaric incident, and some slogans were raised from the procession, such as “BDR is a beast”, etc. It needs to be explored if these organisers and participants of procession were supporters of rebels. A report by a detective organisation had mentioned, “According to confidential sources, supporters of Nasiruddin Khan Pintu participated and led the procession, which was brought out outside Peelkhana during the revolt by BDR rebels on 25th and 26th February 2009. Confidential sources have revealed that they helped the BDR rebels to flee by trawlers.” The Committee considers that this issue needs to be explored further by an investigation.

10.4 Role of certain units of Peelkhana

Significant among the important installations of BDR at Peelkhana include the Sadar Battalion, Rifle Battalion 13, Rifle Battalion 24, Rifle Battalion 36 and Rifle Battalion 44. There are also a Signal Sector and a Rifle Security Unit (RSU). Strength of these battalions / units is following:

Serial	Battalion / Unit	Army Officer	JCO	Soldier	Civil	Total
1.	Sadar Rifle Battalion	3	17	605	150	775
2.	Rifle Battalion 13	2	23	536	29	590
3.	Rifle Battalion 24	3	20	542	25	590
4.	Rifle Battalion 36	3	24	475	24	526

5.	Rifle Battalion 44	3	22	522	25	572
6.	Signal Sector (for the entire country)	3	18	571	27	619
7.	RSU (for the entire country)	7	55	653	12	727

Source: Parade state of BDR Headquarters dated 19/3/09

1,783 BDR members of various sectors from outside of Dhaka had also arrived at Peelkhana for celebration of BDR Week and Pony Show.

Please note that Sadar, Rifle Battalions 24 and 44 have a combined arms depot and quarter guard which is known as Central Quarter Guard. There is one more arms depot and quarter guard for Rifle Battalions 13 and 36 which are known as Sector Quarter Guards. There are several soldier lines for each battalion, where the Soldiers live. There is also an Officer's mess and few family residences for the BDR Officers.

Review of the unit-specific information of DADs, JCOs and Soldiers who played direct leading role at the initial planning stage of the BDR revolt and later at the commencement of the revolt shows that, many of them were members of Rifle Battalion 44. It was visible to the Committee at various stages of investigation that, the rebels had organised more than one meeting at the field / soldier line of Rifle 44 before the incident. Few civil citizens (such as a certain Zakir, Leather Litton etc.) had contacted these rebels of Rifle Battalion 44 and held conspiratory meeting on more than one occasion with them. The Investigation Committee also suspects that the leaflets were probably distributed on 21st February through Rifle Battalion 44. It is very important to note that, the rebels of Rifle Battalion 44 had captured the Central Quarter Guard at 8.30 AM on 25th February 09 even before the start of meeting. Above all, the weapon which was aimed at the DG on the stage of Durbar Hall was also from Rifle Battalion 44.

Most probably, due to the above relevance, while speaking to the Honourable Prime Minister and others, DG had very reasonably mentioned that “**Rifle Battalion 44 has revolted**”.

It is also known that, among the duties and responsibilities given by the BDR authority before the revolt included the responsibility given to Lt. Col. Shams as the Chief Security Officer on the occasion of the respected Prime Minister's visit on 24th February, who was the captain of Rifle Battalion 44 and the responsibility of all administrative arrangements including security of the meeting on 25th February was also given to the Rifle Battalion 44.

Whereas it was noticed that, among the 4 Officers of Rifle Battalion 44, everybody including Lt. Col. Shams remained alive, which may seem to be coincidental but the Committee considers it to be necessary to explore further if this had any relation to the incident. It is to be noted that among them, Lt. Col. Shams was caught by the Soldiers but he stayed safely at the house of a certain Subedar Siraz during the 2 days of revolt.

It is evident from the review of the above information that the role of Rifle Battalion 44, including that of its captain, was suspicious in this revolt. The Committee feels the need for further investigation in this issue.

Similarly, the role of RSU, BDR's own detective unit was also questionable. How much did they know about the revolt and how much were they associated and why did they not alert the higher authority sufficiently – these questions also need further investigation.

11.0 Reasons behind BDR revolt and massacre

Investigation Committee has tried to complete the investigation work within the specified time. But we can accept without any doubt that the real reason and objective behind this diabolical incident could not be identified certainly. Committee feels that there is a need for further investigation to ascertain the real reason. The Committee was able to identify the following probable reasons by reviewing the obtained information and proofs, which have been classified as immediate, contributory and ultimate reasons.

11.1 Immediate reasons

The demands, which the rebels had raised in the leaflet and while giving interview to different media were following:

- (a) Withdrawal of all Army Officers from BDR and appointment of BDR's own Officers from BCR cadre in their place
- (b) 100% family rationing system;
- (c) Providing time scale at right time, including increase in salary and allowances;
- (d) Opportunity to take part in foreign (UN) missions;
- (e) Providing election duty allowance;
- (f) Stopping abuse and maltreatment by Army Officers;
- (g) Investigation on alleged misappropriation of the fund of Operation Dal-bhat by Army Officers;
- (h) Investigation on the higher officials' apathy towards managing the welfare programme for the common members of BDR;
- (i) Providing an opportunity to the BDR members to hold discussion with the Honourable Prime Minister and Home Minister to raise their demands and acceptance of the demands; and
- (j) Withdrawal of the stationed members of army, RAB and police in the backdrop of this incident and declaration of general amnesty.

Explanation: It is not unusual for employees and officials working in an organisation to have certain demands. BDR is also not an exception. It will be evident by analysing the demands that a few ordinary demands were not enough for executing such a huge heinous crime. These were only used to spread venom among common BDR members. The main conspirators have pulled the strings secretly by hiding behind these demands.

A proposal (Annexure - 26) was sent to the finance department to raise the border allowance of BDR members from Tk. 260 to Tk. 500 per head. The said department informed that it would not be possible before the decision of National Pay Commission, 2008 (Annexure - 27). Similarly, the finance department conveyed its disagreement on 5th February 2008 (Annexure - 28) on another proposal to raise the family ration benefit from 60% to 80%. United Nations has objected to the proposal of BDR members being taken to foreign missions. Bangladesh Government has no jurisdiction in this matter. No truth was found in the raised allegation regarding Operation Dal-bhat programme. It is worth mentioning that DG had clarified this issue in his last speech at Durbar Hall (Annexure - 29).

It is evident that none of the Soldiers is eager to work at the headquarters. Everyone is eager to go to the borders, especially to those borders where opportunity of smuggling is relatively more. But Army Officers were obstacles in the way of the Soldiers' immoral and undisciplined activities, including smuggling, due to their strict discipline and strong sense of morality. Due to this, Soldiers have a negative attitude of looking at the Army Officers, which is not acceptable. On the other hand, the promoted DADs and ADs are generally received as 'intellectual' among the Soldiers. They have played a principal role in spreading revengeful and murderous instinct among the Soldiers. More or less, all Officers know this. But the probable negative effects could have been avoided, if this matter were considered seriously.

11.2 Contributory reasons

Some other matters have also played a contributory role in achieving the goal of BDR mutiny. These can be identified as probable contributory reasons. For example:

- (1) Overall detective failure because of the professional incompetence in executing their duty and indifference of the main detective agencies, such as SB of police, DGFI and NSI;
- (2) The nexus of BDR RSU with the rebels;
- (3) Unprofessional activities by all concerned, in suppression of revolt and management of rescue operation;
- (4) Absence of appropriate coordination between BDR and Home Ministry, lack of supervision and accountability;
- (5) Attempt of politicisation of their demands by some undisciplined BDR members, who have gone astray;
- (6) Circle of opportunistic people among residents living around Peelkhana (many of them are retired employees of BDR, their relative or have commercial relationship with Peelkhana), who utilised the soft attitude;
- (7) Lack of adequate crisis management by Home Ministry, Bangladesh Police and Bangladesh Army;
- (8) Wrong or delayed decision making at the strategic and practical levels;
- (9) Electronic media's incitement to the rebels by partial, intentional, unrealistic support for their unjust demands and abetment, and over-all, lack of the Information Ministry's effective control over the media;
- (10) Unprofessionalism of the security agencies including police, had helped thousands of rebels to run away from Peelkhana;
- (10) Some government officials had managed the arms-surrendering process on 25th and 26th February in an unprofessional manner which delayed the problem and as a result the rebels were able to run away with huge cache or arms.

Explanation: Investigation Committee feels that the abovementioned contributory reasons played a direct or indirect role in implementation of the plan. It will be possible to avoid incidents like Peelkhana tragedy in future, if these problems can be removed.

11.3 Ultimate reasons

These reasons can be divided into 5 sections, such as: Military and security, diplomatic, economic, political and social motive. These have been discussed in detail below.

(1) **Military and security-related motives –**

- (a) Annihilating the chain of command of Army Officers in BDR, by killing maximum or as many deputed Army Officers as possible;
- (b) Stabbing the dead bodies with bayonet, burn, amputate and disrespect the bodies so that no Army Officer garners courage to work in BDR;
- (c) Making a professional and efficient border security guard ineffective by breaking the chain of command;
- (d) Putting Bangladesh army and BDR in a face-to-face conflicting situation
- (e) Creating mistrust among military, paramilitary forces and public;

- (f) Creating mistrust among the senior and middle-level leadership of army so that the chain of command breaks;
 - (g) Creating an adverse attitude in public mind towards the efficiency and ability of army;
 - (h) Supplying arms and ammunition to the terrorist forces easily;
 - (i) Creating an atmosphere of insecurity among army and security forces;
 - (j) Above all, hurting the **sovereignty** of Bangladesh.
- (2) Diplomatic motives –**
- (a) Introducing Bangladesh as a terrorist country to the external world;
 - (b) Portraying Bangladesh army and paramilitary forces as an undisciplined and disobedient force to the external world;
 - (c) Introducing Bangladesh as a failed nation;
 - (d) Attempting to control the border security force by providing financial and technical assistance;
 - (e) Proving Bangladesh to be unfit for working in UN missions.
- (3) Economic motives –**
- (a) Discouraging internal and foreign investment;
 - (b) Making unprotected cross-border smuggling and drug dealing easier;
 - (c) Damaging Bangladesh economically by plundering arms and destroying properties;
 - (d) Portraying Bangladesh as an unstable country in tourism, industry and commerce sectors;
 - (e) Reducing Bangladesh's foreign currency earning by reducing its presence in UN missions.
- (4) Political motives –**
- (a) Transforming the armed force into an ineffective force;
 - (b) Destroying the reputation of armed force, paramilitary force and above all the nation's reputation;
 - (c) Destabilising Bangladesh by seditious activities.
- (5) Social motives –**
- (a) Insulting Army Officers and their families in society;
 - (b) Discouraging people from joining armed forces.

12.0 Far-reaching effects of the incident

The effects of this incident will surely be far-reaching. Army has lost a lot of intelligent and efficient officials. The heinous nature of this incident has traumatised the entire nation. Nation has been deprived of their services. A question has been raised in people's mind about the ability of army. It has also created mistrust among the Senior and Junior Officials of armed forces. Army's morale has been hit tremendously, which will need time to heal. The reputation that Bangladesh army had earned for itself in United Nations has faced a threat. This may reduce Bangladesh's participation in United Nations and the country might be deprived of earning valuable foreign currency. National economy might also be disturbed as a result of rise in smuggling at unprotected border areas. Social depreciation has also grown due to unobstructed infiltration of narcotics.

Sovereignty of the country has faced a threat as a result of the hostile border areas remaining practically unprotected. BDR has lost trust and respect in public mind due to the mutiny. Overall, Bangladesh's image has been tarnished in international circle.

13.0 Recommendations

BDR mutiny is the worst revolt and massacre that was committed in the history of Bangladesh. Its effects are not limited to BDR and army; rather they are multifaceted and far-reaching. As a result, Bangladesh's security and sovereignty have faced a threat today. The nation does not want to see repeat of any such incident. Therefore, the government and each responsible organisation have to play specific and effective role in its own area, at this crucial juncture of the country and nation.

With this historic background, this Investigation Committee is proposing the following short- and long-term recommendations on urgent basis for kind consideration of the government and for taking effective steps.

13.1 Short-term recommendations

1. Taking steps for fast and exemplary prosecution by immediate “field general court martial”, terming the BDR revolt as ‘mutiny’ and by issuing necessary notification according to military laws

2. Taking immediate effective steps for securing the borders to ensure national security, including prevention of smuggling;

3. Arrangement of appropriate honour and rehabilitation for the army members killed or injured in the BDR revolt and their family members. Similarly, arranging for appropriate honour and rehabilitation for other BDR members, who sacrificed their life while trying to prevent the revolt, including Central Subedar Major Md. Nurul Islam.

4. Creation of a “National Crisis Management Committee – NCMC” immediately at the highest level to deal with such national crisis.

5. Taking steps against the people, who failed to expose the conspiracy of BDR revolt at the right time and those who failed to take timely decisions to suppress the revolt;

6. Creation of a force combining the three forces, which can be deployed swiftly, to prevent such incidents from getting repeated;

13.2 Long-term recommendations

1. Restructuring of BDR;

2. Taking steps for review of all detective information by creating a “National Intelligence Coordination Committee - NICC” at the highest level and redistribution of duties and responsibilities of all detectives;

3. Creating the necessary policies and codes of conduct specifying the role of media (print and electronic media) for national security integration during crisis;

4. Determining effective strategy for increasing coordination between military, paramilitary and law enforcement forces under a concerned ministry, including Home Ministry;

5. Amending and updating the laws and sections related to revolt or mutiny of paramilitary forces including BDR;

6. Not involving the military, paramilitary and law enforcement forces in works such as Operation Dal-bhat and involving them in their respective duties to the extent possible, to ensure the highest standard of professional efficiency, necessary training, discipline and morality;

7. Updating the existing laws and rules and regulations to ensure proper work environment and benefits in military, paramilitary and law enforcement forces;

8. Considering qualification as the only criterion for recruitment in organisations such as military, paramilitary and law enforcement forces and strictly banning any type of nepotism / recommendation.