

BDR revolt

This should never have happened

WE unequivocally and in the strongest possible terms condemn the action taken by a section of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) jawans in rebelling against the chain of command and taking up arms against both their senior officers and the Bangladesh armed forces.

For those in the service of the republic, such actions can never be justified, no matter what the grievance, real or imagined. It is utterly intolerable that the actions of the rebelling jawans have caused the death of two officers and led to civilian casualties as well.

There are many non-combatants, including children, inside the BDR headquarters compound, whose lives were endangered by the fire-fight, and the residents of the surrounding areas in Dhaka city have had to suffer through an ordeal that no ordinary citizen should ever have to face.

We are glad that, following direct negotiation with the prime minister, the situation appears to have been to a large extent resolved, and that some semblance of normalcy is returning. We welcome the end of the stand-off and the fact that civilians are no longer in harm's way.

However, now that the initial uncertainty is over, the time has come to answer the many troubling questions that have been raised by the incident.

First, we are aghast at the magnitude of the intelligence failure. It is astounding that the very venue where the prime minister appeared not 24 hours previously could be the site of an hours-long armed rebellion with no prior intelligence as to the matter.

Let us also now take the time to address the long-standing grievances that apparently triggered the revolt. The grievances revolve around the jawans' service conditions and the fact that it is not possible to rise through the ranks to officer level; all BDR officers are seconded from the army.

There is no question that these issues need to be reviewed and we would like a high-powered body, possibly a commission, to look into it. It is regrettable that such a review was never carried out before, even though the demands are not new.

But, in the final analysis, the rebelling jawans must understand that this kind of violent and undisciplined action can never be acceptable. There can be no excuse for violating the chain of command and unleashing violence, greatly damaging the prestige of a respected institution that guards our border.