

AUG 17 BLASTS

# Charge framed against 4 JMB men in Dhaka

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A court yesterday framed charges against four Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) members for the first time in Dhaka in connection with an August 17 bomb blast case.

The Court of First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge could not proceed with two other cases filed against JMB chief Abdur Rahman's son Navil Bin Abdur Rahman, his younger brother Ataur Rahman Sunny and nine others. JMB military commander Sunny and regional commander of Gazipur Enayetullah were not produced before the court yesterday.

Judge Mohammad Shamsul Alam Khan fixed February 12 for trial of the case filed with Airport Police Station and summoned the complainant that day.

Pleading not guilty, Rezaul Haq alias Reza, 25, of Jamalpur demanded justice after the charge was read out to him. The court framed charges against three others in their absence.

The three on the run are Musa alias Mustafizur Rahman, 22, of Naogaon, Habibur Rahman alias Habib, 23, and Mohammad Sagor Hossain, 35, of Dhaka.

Reza had earlier given a confessional statement to a magistrate, naming the other JMB members involved in the blasts.

Detective Branch (DB) of police on November 24 last year pressed charges against the four in connection with a blast near ZIA Concourse Hall around 11:25am on August 17 last year.

DB Inspector and investigation officer (IO) Mohammad Fazlul Haq submitted the charge sheet to the Court of Chief Metropolitan

# EC finally decides

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proposal for filing the appeal and demanded discussion on the ongoing work of the voter list, added the sources.

But with the newly appointed election commissioners Justice Mahfuzur Rahman and SM Zakaria siding with the CEC, the meeting decided to file the appeal against the HC directives.

By taking the decision to file the appeal yesterday, the CEC in fact showed his absolute sway over the commission and sought to justify the ongoing task of preparing the fresh voter list, also preferred by the government.

Although the HC in its January 4 ruling asked the commission to hold an immediate meeting, it was not convened before the CEC had two more election commissioners appointed by the government to win him the majority.

He remained absent from January 8 to January 18, the time the government took to give the new appointments.

After about two and a half hours of meeting, MA Aziz left his office hurriedly without making any comment to the waiting journalists.

New Election Commissioner Mahfuz, who on the first day in office on January 17 termed the HC directives contradictory and unlawful, also did not talk to the press, while SM Zakaria said he was not authorised to talk.

According to a statement on the decision taken by the EC meeting: "Chief Election Commissioner Justice MA Aziz, Election Commissioner Justice Mahfuzur Rahman and SM Zakaria opined in favour of filing an appeal with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court to taste the legal validity and constitutionality of the judgement."

Read out by acting Secretary to the EC Secretariat Mohammad Zakaria, the statement said election commissioners Mohammad Ali and Munsif Ali expressed their unwillingness to be party of the appeal.

"They [Munsif and Mohammad] however said they have no objection if anyone files an appeal against the High Court's judgement."

The decision of the meeting will be communicated to the counsel of the EC and he will take necessary steps soon to this end.

Election Commissioner Mohammad Ali however said the CEC and the two new election commissioners decided on their own to file the appeal. "It's not a decision of the Election Commission," he argued. They were not even informed when the CEC and the secretary to the EC secretariat contested the two writ petitions challenging the preparation of a fresh roll, he said.

"We are not aggrieved by the High Court's judgement. We don't want to file the appeal against it," he said adding that the CEC held up a number of arguments for filing the appeal.

**VOTER LISTING AT STANDSTILL?**

The EC meeting yesterday did not discuss the continuing work of the fresh voter list although it was on the meeting agenda.

Munsif and Mohammad at the meeting demanded discussion on the issue, but the CEC did not allow it,

11-party

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It alleged that SM Zakaria has been the one responsible for all the previous vote riggings and his appointment along with CEC's non-compliance with the High Court order has severely undermined the acceptability of the EC.

Instead of heeding to the opposition's demand for reforms, the CEC is busy paving the way for the government to rig the election in its favour, the 11-party resolution added.

Bangladesh Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon presided over the meeting attended among others by its General Secretary Bimal Biswas, Gono Forum Presidium Member Pankaj Bhattacharya, Samyabadi Dal General Secretary Dilip Barua.

Meanwhile, Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain said appointments of the two new election commissioners and continuation of the work of a faulty voter list, bypassing the HC verdict, have made things even more complex.

"The present situation proves that reforms in Election Commission and implementation of 14-party opposition alliance's 23-point demand are rational," Dr Kamal said at a meeting held at the party's central office.

He observed that people now seem to have little trust in the electoral process.

Calling on all to unite in opposition to the evil forces, the noted jurist said, "We all have to work together to bring about a meaningful change, fighting against black money, corruption and communalism like we did in '52, '66, '69, '71 and in '90."

# More arms

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According to security analysts, the GPS and range-finders, found in the country for the first time, are considered worldwide as highly sophisticated military navigational tools.

A joint group of Bangladesh Army and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) personnel raided the deep forest of Bhaginajhiri in Naikkhongchhari early hours yesterday and made the recovery. They also demolished three terrorist dens.

The army and border guards also detained six criminals in the last 15 days.

On Wednesday, on being informed, the BDR raided a criminal hideout around the Bhaginajhiri hills and seized 7kg TNT, a M1A1 machinegun, an AK47, one .303 and four M16 rifles, a long-range rocket shell, 3,500 bullets and a 500yard wire. The security forces destroyed the hideout and detained three foreign criminals.

Earlier, three other foreign criminals were held on January 3.

The army's Bandarban regional sources claimed that the criminal camp belonged to the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation, but said the identity of the foreign criminals remained unknown despite continued interrogation.

# Rocca arrives

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Bangladesh (JMB). The source said Rocca is likely to have talks with government and political leaders on a broad range of issues, including counter-terrorism cooperation, next general election, corruption, human rights and good governance.

During her three-day stay here, Rocca will call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and hold talks with Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan and State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar. She is set to depart on January 28 afternoon.

She is also expected to meet Leader of the Opposition and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina. The source said Rocca has expressed desire to meet some other top-level officials during her stay in Dhaka.

A high official of the foreign ministry told The Daily Star that a number of countries, including US has praised Bangladesh government's anti-militancy crackdown in the recent months.

He said the US government expressed its desire to extend all-out assistance to Bangladesh in curbing terrorism and enhancing the capability of law enforcers in Bangladesh to fight terrorism.

An official of the US embassy in Dhaka, while talking to The Daily Star, said the US-Bangladesh relations are excellent. The relationship was boosted in March 2000 when President Clinton visited Bangladesh, the first visit ever by a US president, and when Secretary of State Colin Powell visited in June 2003, as well as when Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld visited in June 2004. Senior officials from the State Department regularly visit Bangladesh, the official added.

He said Bangladesh has become a valuable US ally in the global war on terrorism recently. As part of the war effort, Bangladesh has publicly addressed problems of money laundering, weak border controls, and other factors to ensure that Bangladesh does not become a terrorist safe-haven.

This will be Rocca's 4th visit to Bangladesh since her appointment in 2001 and her last visit to Dhaka was on May 11-12 last year.

# 15 hurt in Tel Aviv suicide bombing

AP, Tel Aviv, Israel

A suicide bomber blew himself up inside a restaurant at a crowded pedestrian mall near Tel Aviv's old central bus station Thursday, and at least 15 people were wounded, police said.

The Islamic Jihad militant group claimed responsibility in a phone call to The Associated Press.

"This happened in two seconds, he entered the shop, took two steps, and blew himself up," said Ari Sharon, owner of the targeted restaurant, the Mayor's Shwarma.

A witness, who identified himself only as Itzik, said he was eating at a fast-food stand when he began suspecting the man standing next to him.

"All of a sudden, a policeman came. He pulled him (the suspect) out, and started searching him," he told Israel Radio. The suspect fled, Itzik said, and five minutes later, the explosion was heard.

In Ramallah, Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas said the bombing was meant to derail next week's Palestinian parliamentary elections.

"This is sabotage and aimed at sabotaging the elections, not only the elections, but also the security of Palestinians," Abbas said. "The culprits must be punished."

Witnesses said the bomber entered the restaurant pretending to be a peddler selling disposable razors. Israel radio reported he was carrying a heavy pack on his back.

Police said the bomber blew himself up in the restaurant's bathroom and may have been trying to prepare the explosive device when it went off prematurely.

After the blast, a crowd gathered outside the restaurant. An elderly man wearing a fed hat wept.

The blast came just a week before Palestinian parliament elections, and two weeks after Prime Minister Ariel Sharon suffered a devastating stroke. Handling the aftermath of the bombing and deciding on a possible Israeli response will be a key test for Sharon's stand-in, acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana urged Israelis and Palestinians not to let the attack

# Ctg JMB man Mohammad, his aide on fresh remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) Chittagong divisional commander Mohammad alias Javed Iqbal was placed on a fresh 10-day remand yesterday while his accomplice Abu Zar was placed on a seven-day remand in a case filed with the Khulshi Police Station.

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday produced Mohammad, JMB Sitakunda commander Abu Zar, Cox's Bazar JMB commander Naimuzzaman alias Jafar, JMB activists Monirul Islam and Rafiqul Islam before the Court of Metropolitan Magistrate Akram Hossain on completion of Rab's investigation and handed them over to court custody.

The court granted the remand prayer of Khulshi Police Station for the two which was placed before the court on January 3.

Sources said Rab has finalised charge sheets in three cases in connection with the recovery of large caches of explosives, bombs, arms and bomb-making materials within the stipulated 60 working days that ends today.

They also obtained approval of the public prosecutor to submit the charge sheets on Wednesday. Rab would submit the charge sheets today.

Eight people including JMB chief Abdur Rahman, Majlish-e-Sura's member Siddiqul Islam alias Bangla Bhai, its military chief Ataur Rahman Sunny, Mohammad and Naimuzzaman were implicated in all the three cases filed with the Pahartali Police Station.

# JCD men

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The tenders were floated last month.

No boxes for dropping tender schedules were found at the NSC offices yesterday. Only an advertisement inviting bids was published inside a low-circulation newspaper last week, making it difficult for potential bidders to know about it.

When contacted, NSC Director Nurul Haq Pradhan claimed that the tender process was properly followed. "I don't know if any external syndicate got the tenders, but in our office everything was properly done."

Sources say the JCD men were patronised by two ministers, two lawmakers from Rajshahi and Barisal and NSC high-ups.

Some potential bidders, also backed by other BNP high-ups, said they missed out on the tenders because they did not pay matching commissions to the ministers and MPs concerned.

The renovations and additions include building new pavilions, a media centre, galleries, playground and development, security and border fencing, walk-ways, approach roads, a swimming tank and drains. Moreover, Tk 8 crore has been allocated for construction of new floodlights for Barisal district stadium.

derail the Palestinian elections.

Solana said the attack occurred at a moment of great importance "for the future of Palestine, because of elections." He appealed "to everybody to forget terrorist acts and to give political life a chance. Elections are the only way civilized countries can express themselves.

Medics said one person was seriously wounded.

"It was a single suicide bomber who entered the restaurant and blew himself up inside the restaurant," said Tel Aviv police commander David Tsar. He said there were no fatalities but 15 people were wounded.

The blast went off in a pedestrian mall near the old central bus station, an area crowded with shoppers and travelers. The bus station is in a working class neighborhood, where many foreign workers live.

Blood, shattered glass and debris covered the ground near shops. The windows of a parked car near the blast were blown out, and helmeted security forces cordoned off the area.

The Islamic Jihad militant group has claimed responsibility for each of the six suicide bombings in Israel since a truce took effect last February.

# Cellphone

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officer for new subscription.

Calling in the top brass of the six mobile phone operators, BTRC Chairman Omar Farooq yesterday briefed them in presence of intelligence officials at his office.

The regulator did not disclose any agenda prior to the surprise meeting, and no minutes were also distributed afterwards.

The operators vehemently protested such unrealistic directive but the regulator remained uncompromising citing national security, sources said.

The operators observed that it is almost impossible to gather personal details of the existing prepaid customers as the operators do not maintain any contact with them.

They also apprehended that the mandatory certificate for fresh subscription would deal a severe blow to the growth of the mobile phone market in Bangladesh.

The BTRC directive also sees issuance of certificates with flawed information as punishable offence.

Meanwhile, former advisor to caretaker government Major General (ret'd) Moinul Hussain Chowdhury doubted whether such certificate is going to serve any useful purpose of the authorities.

"Unfortunately, we can obtain 'genuine' documents fraudulently in our country," he said. "The BTRC should have been more concerned about the quality of services, tariff reduction and timely collection of the government dues instead."

As per the directive, the operators will have to develop a database of subscribers' personal details and make them available to the government as and when necessary. The BTRC has also asked the operators to record all calls, and archive text messages and contents transmitted in any other forms.

Academic luminary Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed feared that the mandatory certificate may open up new avenues for criminals. Had the government issued national identification card to every citizen no certificates would have been required, he opined.

# US govt

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to violence in Nepal by the Maoists."

The US State Department official said both USA and India want to see the kingdom to return to a democratic foundation.

On Sri Lanka, Burns said, "I think it's fair to say we want to see a strengthening of the cease-fire agreement, an end to the violence that we've seen over the recent weeks"

On Afghanistan, he said "We wish to support President Karzai, and we'll both be attending, India and the United States, a major international conference in London on January 31 to support the Afghan people and pledge economic assistance and support for the government."

# PM's visit

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invitations to her during the November 12-13 Saarc Summit in Dhaka, and she confirmed her visit.

"We had earlier given tentative dates in February and March when our prime minister may be free to visit the two countries," the foreign minister said.

Pakistan and India expressed eagerness to welcome Khaleda Zia at the end of February and March.

Officials are now working out details of the scheduled visits, he said.

This will be Khaleda's first visit to India since she assumed office on October 10, 2001. She however visited Pakistan to attend the 12th Saarc Summit in Islamabad in January 2004.

Sources said foreign ministry officials are in close contact with Indian and Pakistani officials. Besides, Bangladesh high commissions in New Delhi and Islamabad are also in touch with officials of foreign ministries of the two countries.

On press reports about uncertainty and complexity of the PM's visit to India, Morshed said, "The reports are most unfounded. There is no confusion, complexity or uncertainty regarding prime minister's visit to India. Both Bangladesh and India are moving forward very positively and the relations are excellent."

# 'Gunrunner' arrested

UNB, Kishoreganj

An alleged arms trader was arrested in Katiadi upazila of the district on Wednesday night.

The arrestee was identified as Shahadat Hossain, 20, son of late Sayeeduzzaman of Char Jhakalia under the upazila.

Being tipped-off, police arrested Shahadat at Katiadi Bazar and recovered a gun and six bullets from his village home.

On his confessional statement, the law enforcers recovered one foreign pistol, a home-made gun, and five bullets from a house of Shahadat's relative at Bhurangarchar village in Sadar upazila yesterday morning.

Police said Shahadat confessed to his involvement in arms trading.

# Bar sends

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discharge his duties in accordance with the constitution, not on political consideration," he added.

The SCBA's resolution demanded removal of Justice MA Aziz and the two newly appointed election commissioners (EC) - Justice Mahfuzur Rahman and SM Zakaria -- in the interest of holding free and fair general elections in the country.

The resolution also said the comments of controversial EC Justice Mahfuzur Rahman regarding the High Court (HC) order on preparation of fresh voter list are contemptuous. On Tuesday, Justice Rahman in his first day at the office termed the HC order as 'unlawful' and said the EC is not bound to abide the verdict.

Replying to a query, M Enayetur Rahim said lawyers would help to prove the misconduct committed by Aziz if the president constitutes the Supreme Judicial Council.

"CEC Justice MA Aziz has committed gross misconduct by continuing the work on fresh voter list with the controversial men violating the HC order and ignoring the opinions of two other election commissioners," he added.

# 14-party demands

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demanding resignation of the CEC and cancellation of the appointments of two new election commissioners, reports our RU correspondent.

City unit AL President Mahmuduzzaman Dulu chaired the rally, while former state minister Zinatun Nesa Talukder, city unit AL General Secretary AHM Khairuzzaman Liton, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal General Secretary Sayed Zafar Sazzad, among others, spoke.

AL leaders brought out a procession and held a rally demanding immediate resignation of the CEC and the two commissioners, reports our Noakhali correspondent.

They also burnt an effigy of the CEC, presided over by Mohammad Hanif, the rally was also addressed by Mohammad Ali, MP, Ekramul Karim Chowdhury and Belal Uddin Kiran.

# 5-tier security

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entrances to Khittas," a Rab officer involved in Jtjema security told The Daily Star.

Besides installing 54 closed-circuit television cameras at different points, law enforcers will use 20 video cameras to record people's movement.

Bomb disposal units from the army and Rab will work during the three days and 24 mobile courts will operate there.

Rab men will keep keen watch in and around the area with two helicopters and set up observation towers and control room to monitor law and order.

They will also use patrol boats and stop movement of any suspected individuals or boats in the Turag.

To ease traffic congestion in the city, devotees from Barisal, Khulna, Chandpur and other regions, who previously used to board buses at Sadarghat, will be taken by trawlers. The Ashulia Landing Station will be launched for them before the Jtjema begins.

The Progati Sarami-Ashulia-Baypail Road will remain off-limits to public vehicles for 24 hours since January 28 evening. The BRTC will provide 315 shuttle buses for commuters on the road during the 24 hours.

"There will be 18 parking lots for vehicles and no vehicles will be allowed to park outside the parking space," Babars said.

The Dhaka-Mymensingh Highway will be kept clear and wreckers will tow the vehicles parked outside the parking lot, he added.

Medical teams and advance teams of firefighters will remain stationed at different points so that they can rush to any point in case of emergencies.

The Jtjema organisers have been instructed not to set up any loud speaker on the road or outside the ground.

Highway police and other forces will be on hand to hunt down petty criminals like muggers and Criminal Investigation Department personnel will look for pickpockets.

The immigration desk at Zia International Airport has been directed for quick disposal of foreign devotees, who will use vehicles with special stickers to attend the Jtjema.

# Experiment on to probe climate riddle

BBC ONLINE

A three-week experiment to resolve the biggest riddle in climate science began in Australia yesterday.

Scientists will use radar, aeroplanes, weather balloons and a ship to study the life cycle of tropical clouds.

They are searching for details of how clouds form and carry heat high up into the atmosphere.

A better understanding of these crucial processes should lead to computer models that can predict the extent of global climate warming more accurately.

Current projections of global temperature rise, reported in the last assessment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), see increases by the end of the century that range from 1.4 to 5.8C.

The spread of possible temperatures represents a huge uncertainty - and much of it stems from unknowns to do with how the world's economy will develop over coming decades.

But there is also uncertainty over how the climate will react, and one of the key issues centres on a poor understanding of what goes on inside clouds - how they form, and how they behave.

Over the next three weeks, about 200 scientists drawn from 30 institutions in 10 countries aim to rectify this data deficit.

Tropical clouds carry heat and moisture from the Earth's surface high up in the atmosphere, a key process in driving heat around the globe.

"You have these 'hot towers', tropical storm clouds acting like chimneys to carry heat to the upper atmosphere," said Peter May from the Australian Bureau of Meteorology Research Centre, co-chair of the project's organising committee.

"Also, you've got large areas of cirrus clouds which are reflecting a lot of incoming sunlight back away from the Earth; but they're also absorbing infra-red radiation coming back from below," he told the BBC News website.

"So you've got competing processes going on; and that balance depends on how big the ice crystals are and what the density is, how high they are and so on."

Existing computer models did not reflect these processes accurately, said Tom Ackerman of the University of Washington in Seattle, US, because they typically treated convection and cloud formation as separate processes.

"We're working now to develop a more integrated approach to the convection where these processes are all tied together, and the convection leads directly to the clouds," he told the BBC News website.

"But in order to do that you need to understand this total life cycle of air going into the clouds, condensation, vertical lifting and then cloud being dumped out at other levels."

All of which provides a mandate for a comprehensive and intensive new research programme.

Investigators and funding for the Tropical Warm Pool International Cloud Experiment (TWP-ICE) come from a number of countries, including Australia, the US, Britain, Japan and Canada.

# Criminals rule

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more pirates and criminals.

The modern equipment and arms of the pirates and criminals further intensify the threat, the SFD official said requesting anonymity.

Besides replacing the outdated arms, training for the guards is necessary if the government wants to save the resources in the Sundarbans, he said, as none of the 177 guards for the 77 outposts are trained well enough to face the pirates or criminals.

# Nepal cracks down

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would steer clear of the rally.

The European Union voiced disquiet over the arrests.

"The EU heads of mission in Kathmandu are extremely concerned about recent developments in Nepal, in particular about the arrests of democratic party leaders, members of civil society and human rights activists," the EU said a statement.

Kashinath Adhikari, secretary of the Nepal Communist Party (United Marxist Leninist), said at least 15 of his party's leaders were detained at their homes before dawn, while the Nepali Congress party said 24 of its members were picked up.

"This is an attack on