



PHOTO: STAR

(From top left) An unexploded grenade lies amidst strewn sandals in front of the Awami League Central Office (top left); a bus set on fire by an angry mob (middle); a man who has just witnessed the carnage wails in angst (right); (vertical) rescuers carry an wounded man to hospital; a woman smeared in blood is taken away; two men sit by an injured knowing not what to do.



Repeated attempts on life stalk Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Attacks on the Awami League (AL) leadership including its President Sheikh Hasina at different public rallies across the country have increased recently as the party stands firm against religious radicals.

The AL recently initiated steps to unite all left leaning parties to launch movement against the extremist outfits.

Even at yesterday's public rally organised to protest frequent bomb blasts at different places the opposition leader asked the people to unite against the ruling BNP-Jamat coalition what she said harbours the religious fanatics.

After repeated death threats and attacks on Sheikh Hasina, the Opposition Leader in Parliament on July 5 this year filed a general diary with the Dhanmondi Police Station seeking security of her life, but to no effect. The government, so far, has not taken any step to thwart threatening attempts on the former prime minister's life.

On April 2 this year, Hasina's motorcade came under attack as it reached Gouranadi in Barisal.

Prior to yesterday's attack, the AL leadership on four occasions this year

came under attacks at Barisal, Sylhet, Sunamganj, and Gazipur.

In last five years at least 140 people were killed at bomb blasts in different places and of them, AL leaders and workers alone account for 40. But none has yet been brought to book for these heinous acts.

Political observers believe the more the AL leaders and activists get united in opposition to the religious extremists the more frequent the attacks on them get.

Many eyewitnesses said the way yesterday's blast was carried out suggests AL President Shiekh Hasina was the prime target of the barbaric act. Fortunately, she narrowly escaped the bloody attack that left at least 14 people dead and over 200 injured including AL top brass.

On June 16, 2001 as many as 22 people were killed and more than 100 injured in a bomb attack on AL office at Narayanganj.

Within three months, eight people were killed and more than 100 injured in yet another bomb attack on an AL public rally this time at Mollarhat in Bagerhat.

Only three days into the Bagerhat

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Indian PM expresses concern

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yesterday expressed grave concern over the attack on the Opposition Leader and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, who narrowly escaped a series of grenade attacks and gunfires yesterday.

"Manmohan Singh has phoned Sheikh Hasina and expressed sorrow over the attack and assured all sorts of cooperation from his side to combat such heinous acts", Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil told the reporters last night at Sudhasadan, the AL president's residence.

The Indian prime minister expressing his worry over the attack on the daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman said that, they (Indian government) have taken the incident seriously, Jalil added.

Editors worried at threat to Prothom Alo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Editors of the country's leading dailies and weeklies yesterday expressed grave concern and condemned the destructive activities by religious fanatics against the Prothom Alo.

They urged the government to take appropriate steps against the 'evil quarters' and hoped all concerned would help stop their destructive activities.

"We note with grave concern that a section of bigots are involved in destructive activities and negative propaganda against one of the leading newspapers -- the Prothom Alo-- following publication of a series of stories titled 'Terrorist activities in greater Chittagong,' they said in a joint statement

It is depressing and condemnable. It is an attack on the freedom of the press, the statement added.

"We urge all concerned to help stop this type of unholy activities.

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Ministers wait out the rage in Press Club

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two influential ministers were stuck in Jatiya Press Club for about an hour yesterday evening, as angry mobs went on rampage in the adjacent areas after a series of bomb blasts ripped through an Awami League rally on Bangabandhu Avenue.

BNP Secretary General and LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Water Resources Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmed had to wait out the frenzy in the press club auditorium following a seminar they had participated in as the chief

and

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Prayer Timing		
August 22		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-30	5-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-33	6-36
Esha	8-00	8-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

US pulls Dhaka one notch up on list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United States has moved back Bangladesh one notch up in its human trafficking watch list from 'Tier 3' to 'Tier 2' after a reassessment by the US State Department found Dhaka's efforts in combating human trafficking 'substantial', a foreign ministry press release said yesterday.

A three-member US State Department team that had reassessed the government's efforts in fighting human trafficking from August 9 to 11 however expressed concerns over complicity of state and police officials in trafficking.

The reassessment was conducted

ahead of the August 14 deadline the US had given to Dhaka to make significant efforts in the field. The deadline was set 60 days away from June 14, on which the State Department's 'Human Trafficking in Persons Report 2004' had relegated Bangladesh from Tier 2 to Tier 3.

If Dhaka were to remain in Tier 3, for what the report said was its failure to make significant efforts to prosecute traffickers, President Bush would have until September 30 to withdraw non-trade and non-humanitarian US assistance to Bangladesh.

After the June 14 relegation, the press release said, a monitoring

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Titas officials work under police guard

Employees' union issues threat to management after transfer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Top officials, including the managing director (MD) of the Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Limited, worked under police protection as the ruling BNP-backed trade union threatened them after the transfer of 18 employees.

The 18 employees, mostly meter readers, were transferred on Thursday in line with the recommendation of the parliamentary standing committee on the energy and mineral resources ministry for their alleged corruption.

After the transfer, supporters of Habibur Rahman, president of BNP-backed Titas Employees Union, threatened Abdul Majid, in charge of the establishment department of the company, with dire consequences at his Uttara house, sources said.

The Titas authorities yesterday asked the Tejgaon Police Station to give them security. Over 100 law-enforcers including officials were deployed at the Titas building yesterday morning.

Although the parliamentary body recommended for the transfer

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Shock wave runs thru' nation's spine

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The bomb blasts killing at least 15 and injuring hundreds in front of the Awami League's Bangabandhu Avenue office yesterday sent shock waves throughout the country generating instant, widespread outpours of grief, condemnations and protests.

Sporadic clashes were reported following the incident from different areas of the country, including Rajshahi, Natore, Noakhali and Pabna. Awami League (AL) Pabna district unit has called a dawn-to-dusk hartal today protesting the attacks.

A horde of political and socio-cultural organisations issued statements right away denouncing the blasts and demanding proper investigations into all such incidents and exemplary punishment of the persons responsible.

BNP Secretary General and Minister for Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan condemned the attack and expressed grave concerns over it.

President of Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh Prof AQM Badruddoza

Chowdhury expressed concerns over the incident, and demanded a judicial probe and trial of the persons responsible.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) condemned the attack and demanded unveiling of the mysteries of all such blasts and exemplary punishments of the persons responsible.

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) said such an attack would not be possible without backing from the high-ups in the government.

JSD President Noor-e-Alam Ziku and General Secretary (GS) Abdul Malek Ratan accused the government for its failure to solve mysteries of previous bomb blasts, adding it has no valid excuse for avoiding the responsibility of yesterday's blast.

JSD President Hasanul Haque Inu and GS Syed Jafar Sazzad accused the Islamist militants acting under protection of the government for the attack and called for national united opposition to this fundamentalist menace.

JSD President ASM Abdur Rob in a statement said the latest incident of bomb blast reflects a severe lawlessness in the country.

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No step yet to remove Basila brick kilns

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Authorities concerned have not yet taken any step to remove the illegal brick kilns from the middle of the river Buriganga that has devoured 11 houses, including a four-story building in Basila in Moha-mmampur since August 13.

Shipping Minister Col (retd) Akbar Hossain yesterday cancelled a visit to Basila, where locals were waiting for the minister to hold a rally demanding immediate removal of the brick kilns, construction of more culverts in the Basila Road, a stop to illegal extraction of sand and filling up of the adjoining flood plains.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) yesterday, for the third consecutive day, engaged nearly 50 labourers to remove the dyke built by the brick kiln owners. In the beginning of the flood season, millions of bricks had been dumped into the river to build the dyke. The dyke and the brick kilns combinedly forced change the course of the river Buriganga exposing Basila to the sudden erosion.

On August 18, the shipping

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