

Hurt AL leaders in hospitals improve

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All the Awami League (AL) leaders, now undergoing treatment at various city hospitals, are getting well and stated to besafe.

They were injured in the August 21 blasts on AL rally that killed 18 people and injured over 200.

Former water resources minister and AL leader Abdur Razzak, who is undergoing treatment at Sikder Medical College Hospital, is improving.

Talking to The Daily Star from his cabin, Razzak said. "My condition is improving but for diabetes, the healing is quite slow."

Apart from the splinter injuries, Razzak suffered severe burns on both the ankles. Doctors stated his condition to be pretty serious as diabetic complications were barring them from performing operations.

AL leader Suranjit Sengupta was discharged from Samorita Hospital yesterday at 6:40pm.

Suranjit, also a patient of heart

disorders and hypertension, was admitted to the private hospital with multiple splinter injuries in his head and forehead. Surgeons on Saturday operated on him and removed some of the sharp metal pieces.

Former Dhaka City Corporation mayor Mohammad Hanif and his son Sayeed Khokan were admitted to BIRDEM Hospital. They are still under observation with multiple grenade splinters that pierced their bodies in Saturday's blasts.

"I still feel pains in abdomen and head. Surgeons tried to remove some of the metal pieces but later postponed as they feared it might cause tissue damage," Hanif told The Daily Star from his cabin by phone yesterday.

His son Sayeed Khokan was accommodated in the same cabin.

Bahauddin Nasim, president of Sweccha Sebak League, in the intensive care unit of Bangladesh Medical College Hospital (BMCH), was receiving treatment for low blood pressure and respiratory troubles in addition to the splin-

terwounds.

He was admitted to the hospital on Saturday.

Doctor Ziaul Hague Bhuiyan, the on duty medical officer said, "Nasim still has a fever, may be for an internal infection resulted from the metal splinters embedded in various parts of his body."

"We're observing his condition though he is out of danger now," Dr Zia added.

AL Presidium Member Kazi Jafrullah, admitted to Samorita Hospital, had sustained multiple splinter injuries mostly in his left hand. Surgeons on Saturday took out some of them by surgery.

He was still under observation till yesterday.

AL leader Neela Chowdhury was undergoing treatment at female ward 13 of the same hospital. She received grenade splinters in her legs.

Condition of AL leader Ishak Ali Khan Panna, assistant secretary

AL rejects probe body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) yesterday rejected outright the one-member judicial inquiry commission and questioned the government's sincerity in probing Saturday's grenade attacks on AL rally that left 18 killed and over 200 hurt.

The probe body formed by the government Sunday will not be able to stop the bomb attacks, as the government itself harbours the criminals, the main opposition alleged.

"This investigation won't serve any purpose as the government has a hand in the blasts," AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil told reporters yesterday.

"We demand an international probe into the attack," he said.

Talking to reporters, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, political secretary of the opposition leader in parliament, said, "A judicial probe committee was formed to investigate the twin blasts at two cinemas in Mymensingh."

"But the government has not taken any step following the commission's suggestions. Even no-one knows about the findings of the commission and I think the same



PHOTO: STAR

Awami League president's Political Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury shows the European Union delegates at Sudha Sadan in Dhanmondi yesterday the bullet-riddled, splinter-pierced vehicle that came under attack while driving Sheikh Hasina to safety on Saturday.



PHOTO: STAR

Clockwise from top left, Awami League workers demonstrate around the car of the British high commissioner in front of Sudha Sadan yesterday protesting Saturday's grenade attack on a party rally; party activists chant antigovernment slogans sitting on the road in front of Sudha Sadan in Dhanmondi to prevent Prime Minister Khaleda Zia from meeting their party chief; and traffic on the road near Ramna Park thin out in fear of eruption of violence.

GRENADE ATTACK DB at helm of probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detective Branch (DB) of Police yesterday took the charge of investigation into the Saturday's grenade blasts that killed 18 people and injured over 200.

Shamsul Islam, inspector of DB, has been assigned as the investigation officer (IO) of the case, which was being investigated by Motijheel police.

Top officials of five intelligence agencies including National

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Clarification

Chargé d'affaires of the Royal Dutch Embassy in Dhaka Anne Marchal in a clarification yesterday said the European Union Ambassador to Bangladesh Esko Kentschynskyj did not issue the statement condemning Saturday's grenade attacks on opposition Awami League rally as he was abroad.

Marchal however said as chargé d'affaires, Kentschynskyj fully subscribed to the statement issued on behalf of all EU missions represented in Bangladesh, by the Dutch Embassy as the Netherlands currently holds the EU presidency.

The statement issued on August 21 condemned the attack and called upon the government to thoroughly investigate the attacks and bring those responsible to justice. The EU also called for adequate protection of opposition leaders.

AL walks out as JS body won't slate attack on Hasina

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Awami League (AL) lawmakers yesterday walked out of a parliamentary committee meeting as the ruling party refused to adopt a condolence and a censure motion on Saturday's grenade attack on the main opposition's rally in Dhaka.

After the stormy walkout, the House Committee allocated 184 Nam (Non-alignment Movement) flats proportionately among political parties having representation in the current Jatiya Sangsad.

The AL's proposals for condolence and censure motions on the attacks that killed 18 people and injured over

200 others on Bangabandhu Avenue sparked a half-hour heated debate at the meeting as the ruling party members and whips opposed the proposals.

Ruling BNP Whip Ashraf Hossain said the rules of procedure did not allow such motions.

Chief Whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain, chairman of the committee, supported his deputy, saying, "I personally condemn the attack, but cannot allow adoption of such motions."

Speaking for adoption of the proposals, Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid said lives of opposition lawmakers including the

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Kamal for ex-CJ heading neutral judicial body to probe attack

Seeks greater unity against communal, terrorist forces

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Oikya Mancha President Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday asked for a neutral judicial probe commission headed by an ex-chief justice (CJ) to investigate Saturday's grenade attack on Awami League (AL) rally and accused the government of failing to maintain law and order.

"We must insist upon an effective, independent, neutral commission of inquiry headed by one or more former chief justices, whose appointment should follow after consultations by the government with different segments of the public

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Quick burial of bodies fuels angst

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Quick burial of two unidentified bodies from Saturday's Awami League (AL) rally bombing drew fire from anxious relatives of the missing and raised questions about the otherwise sluggish authorities' usual promptness'.

After autopsy, Sub-Inspector of Motijheel Police Station Sharif Faruk Ahmed handed over the twin bodies to Anjuman Mofidul Islam and the charity buried them at Azimpur graveyard on Sunday night, 30 hours after the blasts.

Unknown bodies are usually kept at the morgue for at least 48 hours after autopsy before handing over to the charity for burial.

"The authorities hurried through the process to avoid responsibility," an angry relative said.

Morgue staff of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) said three relatives of Zahid Hossain, who went missing on the day of a series of

grenade attacks on the Bangabandhu Avenue rally, went to the morgue yesterday morning to see the bodies.

"The description of one of the bodies what we heard from the morgue staff closely matched Zahid," one of the relatives told the morgue staff.

Some DMCH officials sent them to Motijheel Police Station, but the police could not help them as the bodies were buried.

"I saw them (the relatives) to mill around the morgue on Sunday, but police did not allow them to go there. They came again yesterday morning to identify the bodies, but they were buried long before," a hospital staff said.

Sub Inspector Rawshan Ara of the police station yesterday dismissed the allegation, saying nobody went to them for bodies and they had no idea of such an allegation.

Authorities drew people's fire for making 'mindless delays' in the handover of the bodies to their relatives on Sunday.

Home ministry slaps limits on journos' entry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The home ministry yesterday restricted journalists' entry to the ministry and asked them to make prior appointment from now on to get in there.

The on-duty policemen on the ground floor of the ministry barred the journalists in the morning from taking the lift upstairs, where the state minister and other high officials sit, on instructions from 'the high-ups'.

The journalists exchanged heated words with the policemen and went to the Media Cell of the ministry on the same floor. Head of Media Cell Abdur Rahman told the journalists the restrictions have been put in place to get them to enter it 'in a disciplined manner', as the home ministry is a sensitive place.

Journalists from now on will have

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Prayer Timing		
August 24		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	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		

PM opens VGF scheme for flood victims today

RAFIQ HASAN

The government launches today a massive food assistance programme for over two crore people in 39 flood-hit and four monga-prone districts for three to four months under its Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) scheme, official sources said.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is due to inaugurate the programme at any of the six worst affected districts -- Netrakona, Kishoreganj, Sunamganj, Hobiganj, Brahmanbaria and Sirajganj.

Forty-three lakh VGF cards will be issued to as many families for distribution of 10 kg rice against each per month.

The World Food Programme will provide 30 kg rice for 10 lakh ultra poor families under the VGF programme. Besides the 39 flood-hit districts, the government has brought four monga-prone districts -- Dianpur, Panchagarh, Thakurgaon and Nilphamari -- under the programme this year.

The programme would continue for four months in the six worst affected districts and for three months in the rest 37 districts.

The VGF programme was finalised at

a high level-meeting on Saturday chaired by Minister for Food and Disaster Management Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf. Deputy Minister Asadul Habib Dulu was also present at the meeting.

Sources at the ministry said local members of parliament and ministers-in-charge of districts will be involved with the programme. Local VGF committees will keep them informing about the programme and they will monitor its progress, the meeting decided.

Army personnel will also be deployed in the areas to help maintain discipline and law and order during distribution of VGF cards and food.

Talking to this correspondent Asadul Habib Dulu ruled out any possibility of politicisation of the VGF programme as parliament members from all political parties including the opposition parties will monitor the situation.

The ministry has already allocated 9,038 metric tonnes of rice for distribution under the VGF programme this month and 10,500 bundles of corrugated tins for the flood victims in the six worst-hit districts, sources said.