

# Forensic experts ignored in bomb blast probes

MIZANUR KHAN

Forensic expertise has always been ignored in investigations into bomb blasts leading to unresolved mysteries, experts allege.

Around 140 people have been killed and over 900 injured in 16 bomb explosions that rocked political meetings, cultural functions, religious gatherings and movie

houses since March 1999. But criminals have safely remained out of the police dragnet because of lack of information.

Probes remain incomplete and masterminds safely anonymous.

"As investigation lacks cooperation between the police and forensic doctors, none of these crimes could be solved. Our expertise could play an important role in

investigation into the fatal blasts," a forensic expert.

Forensic experts can determine the time, cause and nature of deaths, whether the bombs were carried in or thrown from outside and the types of weapons used in the attacks, said Professor Dr Qamruzzaman, head of the forensic department of Dhaka Medical College (DMC).



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

A scene of carnage at the end of the bomb blasts on Bangabandhu Avenue on Saturday that killed 19 people and wounded 200 others.

Another expert alleged that police investigate crimes according to will without paying any attention to forensic findings.

"The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and Detective Branch (DB) have to follow-up postmortem reports in their investigations. But this is often not the case," Qamruzzaman remarked.

After the Ramna blast, forensic experts gave police evidence of a man who was carrying bombs in a sack tied to his belly.

Three grisly attacks shocked the capital killing at least 37 since

January 2001. The latest grenade attacks on Sheikh Hasina's rally in front of the Awami League Central Office on Bangabandhu Avenue on August 21 claimed 19, while some are still fighting for their lives at several city hospitals.

The bomb explosion at a cultural function by Udichi in Jessore that killed 10 people on March 6, 1999 could be the first blast at a public gathering. Another eight were bombed to death on October 8 the same year inside an Ahmadiyaa mosque in Khulna.

The first carnage in the capital in

consequent bomb explosions occurred on January 20, 2001 at a Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) rally that killed seven. On April 14, 2001, the Ramna Batamul mayhem claimed another 10 lives.

"These bomb attacks still remain a mystery and perpetrators go scot-free because of politicisation of the investigation," a highly placed source at the DMC alleged.

"Sometimes it is very embarrassing when one party asks us to do the postmortems quickly and the other puts pressure to delay the process," he added.

Forensic doctors said the examination of bodies sometimes reveal important clues which could be helpful into the investigation, but these clues could not proceed to any conclusion as experts are not invited to visit the spots.

The DMC forensic department found similar types of splinters in bombs used in Paltan, Narayanganj and Ramna and also preserved some of them but these were never used as clues.

"In other countries, authorities launch joint investigation where police and forensic experts work

together but in Bangladesh there is no coordination between the two parties," rQamruzzaman said.

"After bomb blasts police should invite forensic experts, collect evidence and take pictures before cleaning the area. But in our country, in most cases, common people reach the spots before police or experts and destroy available evidence," he added.

The inspector general of police and police commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) did not want to comment on the issue.

## Hartal-gripped city broods in pain



STAR PHOTO

A city road looks sombre as traffic thinned out in the first round of the two-day hartal called to protest a series of deadly grenade attacks on an Awami League rally on Saturday.

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

The city spent a tensed yesterday with most people remaining indoors. A pall of gloom descended when television news bulletins announced the death of Ivy Rahman, Awami League women's affairs secretary, who was fatally injured in grenade attacks on Sheikh Hasina's rally on August 21.

The streets were almost deserted and few shops in the alleyways were open as Dhakaites braced for the worse.

"I have come to market to stock essentials as the future looks uncertain," said Fakhruddin of Kalabagan who was shopping at Karwan Bazaar yesterday.

The situation at Maniknagar plunged into high tempers as one of the residents, Manik, was killed in the grenade attack on Bangabandhu Avenue.

"We did not go out for work in anticipation of agitation because of his death," said Sufia Begum, a housemaid.

The attacks and Ivy's death were certainly the talk of the town. Many questioned the security measures on Bangabandhu Avenue and the investigation.

"We have heard that 300 police and other law enforcers were on the spot. Then how could no-one capture the attackers?" said Selim Omran of Purana Paltan.

Parents are concerned about the prevailing political situation, which may further hamper children's education.

"We are worried about our children's education because of the uncertain political situation," said Silvy Ahmed of Purana Paltan. "Schools and colleges were closed because of floods. My child's school is now close for indefinite period because of the current situation."

People also worry about steps the Awami League will take next.

"Our businesses suffered a lot because of the floods. We have not yet recovered from it. Now we are worried about the political situation," said a wholesaler in Moulvibazar.

"In any crisis, the people become victims, our businesses suffer. The government and the opposition should sit together for peaceful coexistence," said the owner of a hardware store at Nayabazar.

## End of private car requisitions

The 103 Ka(1) authorises the police commissioner to take private vehicles for a maximum period of seven days. But alleged discriminatory and excessive use of this provision by the police has given rise to a lot of questions

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) is going to repeal the provision 103 Ka (1) of the DMP Ordinance used for requisition of private vehicles and will introduce a new act in this regard.

The DMP hopes that the fresh act will stop such requisitions and open the way for a permanent solution to the problem.

The traffic department of DMP stopped requisitioning vehicles last week following a verbal order from the higher authorities.

The High Court on August 11 asked six top government officials to explain why the provision 103 Ka

(1) should not be declared ultra vires of the constitution and fundamental rights.

The 103 Ka(1) authorises the police commissioner to take private vehicles for a maximum period of seven days. But alleged discriminatory and excessive use of this provision by the police has given rise to a lot of questions.

DMP Commissioner Ashraful Huda informed that they would not go for requisitioning private vehicles any more and will try to fulfill the need by taking cars from government and non-government organisations instead.

"We took the decision to stop harassment of the public," said

Huda. "If anyone disobeys this order we will take divisional action against him," he added.

The news comes as a relief for private vehicle owners.

"I have a microbus for family use. The traffic police took requisition of my vehicle thrice within the last six months. Every time they gave it back to me after using for four or five days, I had to send it for servicing," said A K M Zamaluddin.

Traffic sources said that they were now facing an acute problem to meet the demand of cars from different departments.

"We require 220 to 250 cars every day but can arrange only twenty-five percent of the demand

through vehicles owned by different organisations," said a source in the traffic department.

Ashraful Huda however informed that they were looking for a permanent solution. "We will discuss with the concerned governmental departments to solve this problem," said Huda.

Officials at the traffic department said that not enough cars were available as many organisations have registered their vehicles in personal names.

"We can not get the desired number of vehicles from an organisation because of this," said a police officer.



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