

Hasina first venture

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boarding the jeep carrying national and party flags to dodge possible attacks.

Escorted by two police vans Hasina's motorcade of eight sports utility vehicles started towards Ivy's Gulshan residence at 2:00pm and returned to her Sudha Sadan residence after three hours at around 5:00pm.

The opposition leader had kept herself confine to Sudha Sadan for about 93 hours after the Saturday's grisly attack, which she but narrowly escaped.

Hikmatul Zihad, a previously unheard-of organisation, on Monday claimed responsibility for the August 21 grenade and gun attack on Hasina and the AL rally, and vowed to assassinate her in a week.

When her motorcade reached the porch of Ivy-Concord Tower, Hasina along with her sister Sheikh Rehana alighted from a red Toyota jeep. Her personal security staff, party volunteers and a large contingent of police kept her encircled until she got into the fifth floor apartment of Ivy and Zillur Rahman.

Ivy's body was brought home at

Foreign missions

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Highly placed sources said the government's credibility witnessed a sharp nosedive following the August 21 grenade and gun attack in an obvious bid to assassinate Awami League President Sheikh Hhasina, leaving at least 19 people killed and over 200 injured.

Sources at the diplomatic circle and the foreign ministry said diplomats from several countries tactfully declined to attend a meeting aimed to brief them on the government's position and steps taken after the bomb explosions at the AL rally.

A government source told The Daily Star yesterday that the foreign minister was shocked to hear the diplomats turn down his invitation to attend the briefing.

The source said the ambassadors told the foreign minister they are not ready to continue harping on the same string, as the government after each of the previous such incidents had assured them to carry out proper investigation and net the culprits involved but failed to produce any positive result.

A diplomat of a European country, on condition of anonymity, told The Daily Star the government after the arms hauls in Bogra and Chittagong, the bomb attack on the British high commissioner and some other incidents, committed to probe into the incidents and arrest the criminals immediately. But, those commitments are yet to be realised, he added.

"After each incident, the foreign minister and other government functionaries had briefed us on the government's position and expressed sincerity. But it now seems those commitments were made merely to keep us silent," the diplomat observed.

He said the ministers on every such occasion used words like 'we're firm to find out the criminals', 'we're very

Close watch

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attack that left 19 people killed and over 200 others injured.

The officials are Director (Admin) of Narcotics Control Directorate Safiq Uddin Ahmed and Senior Assistant Secretary (Security) of the Ministry of Home Affairs Md Alamgir, an official announcements said.

But the home ministry's step providing secretarial support to the judicial probe body raised further questions about the outcome of the investigation.

The AL and the Supreme Court Bar Association have already rejected the commission.

Earlier, inquiry commissions were formed to probe bomb blasts in Mymensingh cinemas, Ansars firing on people at Malibagh in the capital and police atrocities at Shamsunnahar Hall of Dhaka University, but their reports were never made public.

Officers of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), National Security Intelligence (NSI), Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), Special Branch (SB) and Detective Branch (DB) yesterday ques-

Battles rage around

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City and only a few dared venture out, sprinting for their lives to collect basic necessities such as bread.

US Sergeant Trevor Candelan said heavy tank and machine-gun fire began at around 6:30 am and was aimed at Mehdi Army positions on Medina Street, which runs parallel to the mausoleum.

A US plane fired a missile just metres (yards) to the west of Najaf's revered Imam Ali shrine on Wednesday, shaking the mausoleum and filling it with dust, said an AFP correspondent.

SISTANI RETURNS
Sistani, 73, who underwent medical treatment in London, crossed into Iraq from the Kuwaiti border, after a senior aide said he intended to "save the city" of Najaf, where rebel cleric Moqtada Sadr's militia have been pinned around the Imam Ali mausoleum by US and Iraqi government forces.

"I have had the honour to meet and accompany Sistani, who arrived at the border at 11:00 am (0700 GMT)," said Brigadier General Ali al-Mussawi, head of Iraqi border police in Basra.

The head of Sistani's London office, Hamad al-Khaffaf, said earlier, "We call on all Iraqis ... to be ready to return to Najaf. An initiative will be announced

when we arrive in Najaf."

US AIRSTRIKES KILL 4 IN FALLUJAH
Four people were killed and seven injured, as US planes and tanks pounded suspected insurgent positions in the flashpoint city of Fallujah, west of Baghdad, yesterday, hospital sources in the city said.

"The bodies of four people were brought here and seven injured were admitted to the hospital," Dr Adel Ahmed, from Fallujah general hospital told AFP.

US 'SPY' BEHEADED
An Islamist website posted photos yesterday of a man it said was a US "spy" beheaded in Iraq by the Army of Ansar al-Sunna, which is linked to the al-Qaeda terror network.

"A group of mujahedeen (Islamic fighters) managed to abduct a spy called Jamal Tewfik Salman, a naturalised American since 1980, who changed his name to Khaled Abdulmassih, and who confessed to having been recruited by US intelligence in Iraq to spy on the mujahedeen," the group said on its internet site.

Five photos purporting to show the beheading were posted on the site.

(REUTERS, AFP, AP)

Sramik Dal men bar gayabana janaja

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Alleged Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal cadres yesterday barred local Awami League (AL) activists to hold the gayebana janaza for opposition leader Ivy Rahman in Khulna city.

According to sources, AL leaders and activists thronged to Aswani Kumar Hall premises after Asar prayers for the service, but supporters of Sramik Dal, workers' front of the ruling BNP, prevented AL adherents to hold their pre-scheduled programme.

A large police contingent deployed in the area also chased the opposition leaders away, sources added.

AL supporters moved to Khulna AL office at Shahid Sohel Square after the incident and then to Sadar Road to perform the religious rite, but police again blocked their way and forced them to leave the areas, locals said.

Local AL leaders condemned such activities of police and ruling party cadres at a press briefing in the evening.

Alleged ruling party activists also obstructed opposition leaders and supporters to hold similar

much sincere', 'the government is committed', 'necessary steps have been taken' etc, but those phrases by now have become like playing of a broken record to us.

The diplomat quipped they have lost all interest to hear the harping on the same string, saying, "I'm sure the foreign minister will repeat the same words if we go to the briefing."

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also come under severe criticism from the rank and file of the BNP.

Majority of ministers, lawmakers and senior leaders of the BNP think the current set up at the foreign ministry as well as Bangladesh missions abroad have miserably failed to enhance the government's image both at home and abroad.

Several senior ministers while exchanging views with each other blasted the foreign minister for his failure to arrange a briefing session for the foreign diplomats.

Referring to Indian prime minister and US foreign minister's phone calls to Sheikh Hasina and the ambassadors' visits to her, the ministers said it would have been wise for the foreign minister to arrange similar phone calls to the foreign leaders and meetings with the diplomats by the prime minister.

A source at the Prime Minister's Office said the foreign minister took the initiative to arrange a telephone talk between PM Khaleda Zia and US foreign minister only after repeated instructions.

He said Bangladesh's foreign missions have yet to take any initiative to brief the administrations in their respective countries on the August 21 massacre as well as the subsequent steps taken by the government.

As a result, the international community is getting only one-sided version of the incident, he added.

Rajin to lead

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responsibility to the 21-year-old vice-captain. Another former skipper Khaled Mashud has been made Saleh's deputy.

"I never expected captaincy to come this early but I was always preparing for the job as the team's vice-captain. I believe this responsibility will help me regain my batting form," said Saleh in his instant reaction to the appointment.

Prior to the competition that begins on September 10, the Tigers will play four matches against Ireland and Scotland. Their first group game in the Champions Trophy is against South Africa on September 12 at Edgbaston and the last against the West Indies on September 15 at the Rose Bowl.

Right-hander Saleh has scored 450 runs in 19 ODIs at 23.68 and has picked up six wickets with his occasional off-spin.

TEAM
Rajin Saleh (captain), Mohammed Ashraf, Javed Omar, Nafees Iqbal, Aftab Ahmed, Faisal Hossain, Mushfiqur Rahman, Khaled Mahmud, Khaled Mashud (vice-captain), Mohammad Rafique, Manjarul Islam Rana, Tapas Baishya, Tareq Aziz Khan and Nazmul Hossain.

Head coach: Dav Whatmore
Tour Operations Manager: Lt Col (Retd) MA Latif Khan,
Physio: John Gloster
Trainer: Justin Cordy
Computer Analyst: Nasir Ahmed

McKinnon calls

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Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury quoted him as saying.

He also expressed the Commonwealth's concern over the August 21 incident, Saber added.

Australia and Japan, in separate press releases yesterday, also condemned the attack on AL rally and expressed deep sympathy towards the families of the victims.

Australia deplored and condemned the assassination attempt on the opposition leader and other AL leaders and activists.

An Australian government press release said there is no justification for this shocking act of violence. It also urged all concerned to exercise restraint and asked the authorities to bring the culprits to justice for 'this terrible crime'.

The Japanese government expressed its strong indignation at the Saturday's bloodbath in front of the AL office and extended its condolence to the bereaved families and sympathy for the injured.

Japan hoped the people would converge to overcome their difficulties and take firm and bold steps towards strengthening democracy.

Govt refuses

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anyone. It proves that the government itself let loose the assailants and did not arrest anybody willingly," she alleged.

Hasina accused the government of trying to kill her and all top leaders of her party in an attempt to cling to power as people lost their confidence in the Khaleda administration for its misrule and repression.

On the government claim that it strengthened her security in the wake of the attack, Hasina said she read it in the newspapers, but saw nothing.

About a fresh threat by Hikmatul Zihad to assassinate her in a week, Hasina said such threats were nothing new to her.

"The killers have long been threatening me with death and made a rash attempt on Saturday," she said.

Pegging the government as shameless, she said it was beyond her imagination that police would club her party leaders and activists, including women, in the wake of the rally attacks.

"Will the families of the dead and the injured will get justice?" she asked.

SC Bar asks 19 new addl judges to stand down Lawyers boycott courts across country

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court Bar Association yesterday asked the 19 newly appointed additional judges of the High Court (HC) to stand down voluntarily and protested the chief justice's swearing them into office ignoring their reservations about the fresh appointees.

The lawyers also boycotted both divisions of the Supreme Court yesterday in line with a decision of Sammlita Ainjibi Samannay Parishad, an association of lawyers, protesting the appointment of judges on what it said were political grounds. The lawyers also boycotted courts across the country.

The Bar at an emergency general meeting unanimously adopted a resolution which also asked Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassar Husain not to give the controversial appointees bench.

The appointment of 19 additional judges has triggered resentment among lawyers who described the recruitment as the worst-case example of political motives. The Bar at an emergency requisition meeting on Monday resolved that the judges whom the lawyers called unqualified should not be addressed as "My Lord" which should be replaced by a new term in consultation with the association.

Their appointment breached the principles of integrity, honesty and professional efficiency, the Bar alleged in yesterday's resolution, adding the government wants to hold sway over the judiciary, handpicking persons, including party cadres, for the court.

It observed when protests are raging across the country after the grenade attack on an Awami League (AL) rally and the attempt to assassinate Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina on Saturday that left 20 including AL's Women's

Observer editor

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Journalists, it said, "Maybe you did not know that the hand of fundamentalism reaches as far as Germany."

Iqbal lodged a general diary with Motijheel Police Station yesterday requesting police to "identify the elements who sent the 'letter of threat' and take legal action against them to ensure my security of life."

FBCCI for political talks

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parties would help improve law and order and dispel misgivings among the people in general and political activists.

While talking to The Daily Star last night, FBCCI President Abdul Awal Mintoo, who chaired the meeting, said that to stop recurrence of such incidents in future, political reform is necessary at the moment and all political parties especially the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and Awami League should sit together.

"On behalf of the business community, I think a meeting should be held between the top leaders of the two major political parties where they can raise the issue of political reform. There is no alternative to this," he said.

Vehemently condemning the grenade attack on the AL rally that killed 19 people and injured over 200, the business stalwarts observed that the culprits involved in the attack are enemies of the nation, democracy and national interest.

They said such heinous attacks tarnish the country's image abroad hindering flow of foreign direct investment (FDI). "The aftermath of the brutal grenade attack is seriously affecting economic and business activities hampering national development," the FBCCI meeting said in a resolution.

"Such cowardly act is an attempt to obstruct national development and create instability. Everybody should join hands to uproot terrorism and help law enforcers to bring the culprits to book," it added.

The apex trade body stressed national unity sinking all sorts of political difference to overcome the difficult situation the nation is now passing through. The vicious circle that is reigning supreme to turn the country into a dysfunctional one must be identified, its leaders said.

The FBCCI that represents all business sectors of the country also urged the business community to play their due role to overcome the situation.

Appreciating the prompt formation of a judicial body to probe the incident, the business leaders urged the government to leave no stone unturned to track down the culprits and ensure quick justice so that no-one could dare to repeat such nefarious acts.

They also appreciated that the main opposition party AL showed patience after suffering such an attack that left over 200 party men including frontline leaders injured. They underscored practising healthy politics which, they noted, is a catalyst to keeping the economy running and eliminating poverty.

The country has suffered huge losses due to this year's floods. The deluge and its aftermath have brought lethargy in business and economic activities, the business leaders mentioned. They however said the economy is recovering from the devastating impact of the floods and will move ahead steadily if a healthy environment persists.

Earlier this year, the apex trade body had put forward proposals for reforms in national politics, which also called for dialogues between the top leaders of political parties to usher in a new era of healthy politics devoid of violence.

Rangpur arson victims

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BNP vice president Abdul Mannan, his nephews BNP activists Raju and Sajju, and one Pakistani citizen named Abdul Kaleque.

Police have arrested none of the accused except Abdul Rouf, Tajju and Abdul Khaleque whom locals of nearby Powtna village caught Monday night with seven of the looted cows and handed over to them.

They were produced before a magistrate court in Rangpur yesterday, where the arrestees applied for an interim bail. But the magistrate rejected the appeal and sent them to Rangpur Central Jail.

Khaleque came back from Pakistan about one month ago. His father Abdul Aziz, also a Pakistani citizen, came and settled in the village three years ago leaving his family members in Pakistan.

Rangpur Superintendent of Police (SP) Abdus Samad said the rest of the accusedes would surely be nabbed very soon. "They have been absconding since the incident. Police are working round the clock to trace and arrest them," the SP added.

Rangpur Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rafiqul Islam visited the victims at Sarkerpara yesterday morning. He expressed shock over the plunder and assured the affected families that "those involved in the deplorable crime

would surely be arrested and punished."

The DC also distributed 500kgs of rice, Tk 8,000 in cash and 25 saris among the victims and assured them of further rehabilitation aid from the government.

After returning from the spot, Islam told The Daily Star, "The situation at Sarkerpara is quite normal, as both Hindu and Muslim communities are committed to keep the situation peaceful."

"The people who committed this heinous act are neither religious nor political. They are just vicious," he added.

The condition of the injured meanwhile has improved, except of Sachhin, Abdur Rahman and Ripon whose condition remained unchanged. They were admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital (RMCH) on Monday night.

Five policemen have been posted at the village following the incident. But members of the raid-affected families said they were yet to feel secure as they were still being threatened.

A police source said they would seek the three arrestees on a seven-day remand to find out motives of the carnage.

BTV DG made OSD

BSS, Dhaka

Director General of Bangladesh Betar Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury has been transferred to Bangladesh Television (BTV) as its Director General (DG), while BTV Director General Mostafizur Rahman was made Officer on Special Duty (OSD) at the Ministry of Establishment, official sources told the news agency.

The sources said Deputy Commissioner of Khulna (Joint Secretary) Aftab Hassan has been made Director General of Bangla-desh Betar.

E-MAIL THREAT TO HASINA Intelligence agencies activated

BSS, Dhaka

Intelligence agencies have been activated to identify the source of an e-mail sent to the Prothom Alo threatening to kill Awami League (AL) Chief Sheikh Hasina, who narrowly escaped Saturday's grenade attack on a party rally, officials said yesterday.

State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar told the news agency that the government was considering the threat with "utmost importance" and ordered police and intelligence agencies to find out its source along with intensifying the Leader of the Opposition's personal security.

"Extra security measures have been taken for her residence and movement," Babar said.

He said it was not possible to make any comment on the e-mail threat until a detailed investigation report was available.

A senior official of an intelligence agency later said they achieved "significant progress" in their investigation and a report was expected to be prepared in next two days.

"Due to security reasons, we cannot elaborate anymore," he told the BSS.

Several national dailies yesterday published a report on the threat quoting the e-mail sent from the address, hikmatulzihad@yahoo.com, to Prothom Alo. Internet inquiries revealed that the e-mail address was opened on August 23.

Twin plane

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"Around 11 p.m. (1500 EDT), give or take five minutes, there was this strange noise in the sky, then this torn-up book fell onto our garage," a local man told NTV television, holding up the book with its tattered pages.

News agencies quoted security officials saying they could not rule out a terrorist act, while Rostov prosecutors opened a criminal probe into the crash of the Sibir Airlines Tu-154 en route to the Black Sea resort of Sochi.

"A minute before the plane disappeared from the radar screens the interior ministry received a report from an air traffic controller that there had been an attack on the crew," Interfax quoted an Interior Ministry official as saying.

A Sibir spokesman said: "We are considering an act of terror as one possibility, especially after we received an automatically generated telegram from the Sochi air control center that the plane had been hijacked."

Ivy laid

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looking on from behind police barricades, paying their own respects to the veteran women's leader.

While her body was being placed into the grave at 6:45pm, AL President Sheikh Hasina and AL central committee members standing beside her broke down in uncontrollable tears. At the same time, Bangladesh Rifles and police kept thousands waiting on Airport Road and even swooped on some groups with wielding batons.

HASINA, LEADERS VISIT IVY'S HOME
Earlier, Hasina joined Ivy's family, hundreds of relatives and well-wishers from across the country including Bhairab, her ancestral home, waiting for Ivy's body at Ivy Concord, a home they said had been always enlivened by Ivy's artistic and majestic touch and care.

Hasina and her sister Sheikh Rehana waited along with AL leader and Ivy's husband Zillur Rahman and his two daughters and a son until Ivy's body reached them at 2.30pm.

A close associate since childhood, Hasina described her relationship with Ivy as not one of between party colleagues but of family members, as she sat next to Ivy's body alongside a stone-faced Zillur overwhelmed with grief.

Moyna, Ivy's youngest daughter, collapsed as she went to see the lifeless face of her mother, triggering another surge of tears among the crammed apartment building.

Besides Hasina, AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, senior leaders Tufail Ahmed, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Asaduzzaman Noor, former president Hussain Mohammad Ershad, various women's rights activists, and US Ambassador Harry K Thomas visited Ivy Concord to console Zillur and his bereaved family.

Ahmadiyyas ask govt

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"A group of political mollahs and their assistants are trying to turn the country into a Taliban state with resort to violence," Meer Mobashwer Ali, Ahmadiyya Nayebe Amir, said referring to the extremist activities.

"They're making outrageous accusations against the founder of Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat and trying to incite the peace-loving pious Muslims to violence against us," he said.

Mobashwer described the Khatme Nabuat Andolon Parishad Bangladesh's claim that the High Court declared Ahmadiyyas non-Muslims in 1993 as a distortion of the facts.

"The truth is Justice MD Abdul Jalil and Justice Mohammad Fazlul Karim, on April 15, 1993, summarily rejected a writ petition that called for the government to declare the Kadianis (Ahmadiyyas) non-Muslims," he said, Jamaat-e-Islami lawmaker Delwar Hossain Saidee made the false claim in his book titled 'Why Ahmadiyyas are not Muslim', he added.

The Ahmadiyya leaders referring to the bigots' demand of declaring Ahmadiyyas or any group non-Muslims, said it does not conform with Islamic rules that refuse to authorise any person, government or organisation to declare someone non-Muslim.

The High Court in its order on April 15, 1993 said, "..... We are of the opinion that the Government has no obligation nor power to decide or declare any person or group of persons as non-Muslim in order to safeguard sanctity of State religion and as such this application is not maintainable."

Fanatics under the banner of Aamra Dhakabashi recently announced that will invade the Ahmadiyya Complex at Bakhshibazar on August 27 and say Juma prayers there to press the government to declare the Ahmadiyyas non-Muslims.

By law, the programme must expand to the 50 busiest border crossings by the end of the year, and to all 165 crossings by the end of 2005.

The additional checks, which authorities said take only seconds, are not expected to slow traffic at the northern border, since most of the travellers are visa-exempt Canadians, who would not be subjected to them.

At the southern border, most Mexican citizens with certain visas allowing regular entry into the United States also would skip the checks. The exceptions would be those staying longer than a month or those who planned to travel more than 40km from the border in Texas, California and New Mexico or 120km from the border in Arizona.

Arrests, cop actions

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Paltan where party President Manjurul Ahsan Khan accused the government of harbouring terrorists and criminals.

He demanded the arrest of Jamaat-e-Islami lawmaker Delwar Hossain Saidee, accusing him of masterminding the knife attack on prominent writer Humayun Azad and bomb attacks on Hazrat Shahjalal Shrine in Sylhet.

He called upon all left and pro-liberation organisations to join hands and launch a movement against anti-liberation and fundamentalist forces.

The CPB also brought out a procession from the party headquarters and paraded through different city roads braving police resistance.

The JSD brought out a procession from its Bangabandhu Avenue office and paraded through different city areas.

In the prime port city of Chittagong, the hartal until 6:00pm passed off almost peacefully.

The Chittagong unit of the AL stuck to the earlier hartal schedule saying five-hour relaxation was meant for Dhaka only.

In Rajshahi, pro-hartal pickets attacked railway's Western Zone office in the morning and ransacked several rooms for working during hartal.

In Satkhira, at least 15 people including district AL convener Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Sadar upazila AL president Shawkat Hossain were injured in a clash with police near the AL office.

In Narayanganj, police used baton on a procession of Bangladesh Chhatra League, student front of the AL, at Terminal Ghat and picked up five from the scene.

The AL and 11-party held separate rallies on No. 2 Rail Gate, but police resisted them from bringing out a procession.

In Khulna, police picked up 125 opposition leaders and workers including president and secretaries of different ward units of the AL and resisted all attempts of opposition activists to bring out procession.

In Brahmanbaria, angry AL pickets attacked the district information office, ransacked some rooms and tore down the portrait of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia during the hartal. They also swooped on the municipal building and ransacked some rooms.

UNB adds: Police picked up 50 hartal activists from different parts of Feni and did not allow AL and its front organisations to hold any programme. Witnesses said the law-enforcers dispersed pro-hartal activists when they tried to bring out processions at Master Para and on the College Road and Station Road.

Dr Kamal, B Chy ask

FROM PAGE 1
The two leaders said they would take necessary and appropriate steps after discussion with like-minded parties and social forces to achieve the objectives.

In a significant political move against the backdrop of Saturday's grenade attacks on Awami League's rally, they issued the joint statement after 90 minutes' talks at the Bailey Road residence of Dr Kamal Hossain in the afternoon. Dr Kamal, flanked by B Chowdhury and Dr Kamal held the government responsible for its inaction to punish the perpetrators of bomb explosions, particularly the ones that took place since September 2002.

In Chowdhury and Dr Kamal condemned the "heinous attack" on the peaceful rally of Awami League and on its leaders that left 20 dead and hundreds injured.

They expressed surprise at the breach of security in spite of the presence of police and security personnel and demanded action against the officials responsible.

Demanding reconstitution of the judicial probe committee, they suggested constituting a three-member commission headed by a former chief justice. The members of the commission should be appointed in consultation with the opposition parties.

They also demanded that all resources, including expertise, such as forensic experts, where necessary, should be made available to the commission.

They observed that around 140 people have been killed and over 1000 injured in 16 bomb explosions at political meetings, cultural functions, religious gatherings and other public places since March 1999.

"It is unfortunate that all the probes remained incomplete and criminals remained unpunished," said the statement.

They expressed the opinion that "the four-party alliance government has lost moral right to govern the country and they must step down".

In reply to a question, the two leaders said they would be with all peaceful anti-government movements.

Gonoforum General Secretary Saifuddin Ahmed Manik and Bikalpa Dhara Member-Secretary Major (Rtd) Abdul Mannan were present.