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Interpol to help probe rally attack

AL not happy, wants independent int'l investigation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Interpol will assist Bangladesh in investigating Saturday's deadly grenade attacks on an Awami League (AL) rally that killed 19 people and injured 200 others, officials said yesterday.

But the decision did not satisfy the AL that demanded an independent international body to probe the incident on its own rather than assist the government or the police.

The largest international police organisation offered assistance by e-mail to the police, State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar told The Daily Star last night, adding: "We

mailed them back welcoming their help."

AL President Sheikh Hasina who survived with leg and inner ear injuries could be the target of the attacks that prompted widespread condemnation.

The decision to seek help of Interpol was first revealed to reporters by Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan at his office, who said the government intended to probe all links -- "internal or external".

Morshed said an all-out effort is required as Bangladesh's image as a moderate, tolerant and democratic nation is at stake.

The incidence of bomb and

grenade attacks has been growing since the Udichi bomb blast in 1999 and the government is sincere in its efforts to end it through a transparent investigation, the minister said.

"Today it is one political party, tomorrow it could be another and the government needs to get to the bottom of it," Morshed said.

Mentioning outlaws in the southwest, including Janajuddho, as suspects, the minister emphasised that no person or group would be spared from investigation, belonging to either religious extremists or splinter groups from the political left.

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AL turns down investigators' plea to hand bullet-hit SUV

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A personal officer of Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday turned down an appeal of the investigators to take Hasina's bullet- and splinter-riddled sports utility vehicle (SUV) into their custody.

The team went to Sudha Sadan, Hasina's Dhanmondi house, around 4:00pm and submitted a written request to the personal officer to take the vehicle into their custody for investigation.

He, however, rejected the request and said they would use the vehicle for Hasina's security after repairs. The team earlier on Tuesday visited Sudha Sadan and seized the vehicle as evidence, but returned without the vehicle.

Officials of six intelligence agencies now probing the incident continued questioning people yesterday but did not get any leads.

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Hasina rejects talks with Khaleda

Accuses the government of role in grenade attacks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday categorically rejected any dialogue with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, holding the government responsible for the grenade attack on her rally that killed 19 people and injured over 200 others.

Talking to a delegation of journalists at her Sudha Sadan residence, Hasina, also the leader of the opposition, said the government failed to tackle every incident and the onus of Saturday's rally bombing went to it.

"The blood marks are still raw. I cannot sit with them in this situation. What will I say when the families of the dead will demand explanation," she said.

She said amid national and international pressure, some quarters were trying to save Khaleda spreading the notion of national consensus through a dialogue.

"Our demand is very clear. We demand immediate resignation of Khaleda Zia and her government," she stressed.

The former prime minister accused Khaleda, her eldest son Tarique Rahman, Parliamentary Affairs Advisor Salauddin Quader Chowdhury and State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar of plotting to exterminate the entire leadership of her party.

She alleged Tarique in association with Salauddin and Babar controlled the Bangladesh under-world.

If the government had no links

with the bombing, the assailants could not escape from the scene in presence of a large number of law-enforcers.

"Law-enforcers attacked injured people and fired tear gas in the wake of the explosions to create an escape route for the attackers," she alleged.

"How can the attackers enter the rally venue dodging a large number of policemen when the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) is conducting an operation to nab criminals?" she asked.

On the bomb explosions during the AL rule, Hasina said leaders and activists of her party were also the prime targets of the attacks and brushed aside the suggestion that her party unfettered the explosions.

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Razzak flies to Delhi for better treatment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) presidium member Abdur Razzak MP who was injured in Saturday's ghastly grenade attacks flew to India for further treatment yesterday.

He will be treated at Apollo Hospital in New Delhi, sources said. Razzak received splinters in his right leg and right hand and was under treatment in Shikder Medical College Hospital here.

"His both legs below the knees were badly torn in the skin by the blast," Abdur Rashid, the personal secretary of Razzak yesterday told The Daily Star.

But his condition was not critical, the family sources said.

An AL press release urges all to pray for his quick recovery.

Other leaders and supporters of AL who were injured in the attacks have been undergoing treatment in different clinics and hospitals in the city.

Ensure transparent, quick investigation

EU presidency asks govt about grenade blasts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The presidency of the European Union has asked the government to ensure that the probe into Saturday's grenade attack on an Awami League (AL) rally is transparent and without political interference, enjoying the trust of all parties.

Condemning the attempt to assassinate the main opposition AL's President Sheikh Hasina, the EU presidency expressed its alarm at 'further escalation of political terrorism' that has taken place with the recent spate of bomb blasts in the country.

"The Presidency of the EU calls upon the government of Bangladesh to promptly investigate the attack in a fair and transparent manner," it said in a declaration yesterday.

"Failure to prevent and satisfac-

torily resolve these attacks will contribute to a climate of impunity for such acts," it added.

The declaration was handed over to Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan by Dutch Ambassador Kees Beemsterboer, who led a 10-member team of EU heads of mission in Dhaka.

"We (EU heads of mission) are deeply concerned over the recent attack on the Leader of the Opposition, Sheikh Hasina, and also over the increased number of violent attacks that stay unpunished," Beemsterboer said on what the delegation conveyed to Morshed.

Beemsterboer also said, "The EU heads of mission expect that the Government of Bangladesh will start a thorough investigation in the recent attacks and bring those

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Dhaka turns into sea of mourners

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka City turned into a sea of mourners yesterday as thousands of gripped people paraded through different streets to mourn the dead from Saturday's grenade attack on an Awami League (AL) rally in its heart.

The activists of the AL, 11 left parties and the Jatya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) staged three mourning processions to condole the deaths and protest the grenade attacks that left 19 people killed and over 200 injured.

The main opposition AL and its front organisations brought out the procession from its headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue, scene of Saturday's rally bombing, while the 11-party alliance and JSD from Muktangan and Zero Point, defying the hot and humid weather in the evening.

Men wearing black badges and many women in white saris with a

black ribbon formed the long processions. Some of them carried black flags and placards symbolising grief amid tight security.

Law-enforcers kept a watch from building tops on a route that took the processions to the Central Shaheed Minar. Most shops and businesses lining the roads were closed.

Traffic movement ground to a halt, triggering a jam that continued long after the processions ended.

Nineteen people, including AL Women's Affairs Secretary Ivy Rahman, were killed and over 200 injured when a series of near-simultaneous grenade explosions ripped through the rally.

Frontline AL leaders Abdul Jalil, Tofail Ahmed, Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya and Sabir Hossain Chowdhury carried a huge fessan that read 'Tributes to the deceased grenade victims'.

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PHOTO: STAR

An Awami League procession on Bangabandhu Avenue mourning the dead from the August 21 grenade attack carries yesterday a picture of Ivy Rahman, who died from her wounds three days into the massacre.

BNP defers Saturday's rallies to avoid clash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling coalition leader BNP has deferred its countrywide programme of rallies protesting bomb attacks from Saturday to Monday to avoid possible confrontation with tomorrow's countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal called by the combined opposition.

Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia put off the programme at the request of a 27-member delegation of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) that called on her

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Azad's body arrives at 1pm today

DU CORRESPONDENT

The body of Dhaka University (DU) professor and eminent writer Humayun Azad arrives on a Bangladesh Biman flight at 1:00pm today, his family said.

The body was scheduled to be flown in at 4:30 this morning but the flight has been delayed for reasons unknown to them, the family said.

University teachers, leaders of Dhaka University Teachers Association (Duta) and a representative of Vice-chancellor Prof SMA Faiz will receive the body at Zia International Airport (ZIA).

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday

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Furious Buriganga devours 14 more Basila houses

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The residents of Basila trembled in redoubled panic yesterday as an insatiable channel of Buriganga River devoured 14 more houses and continued to claw at hundreds of other buildings in the area.

Earlier, between 13 and 18 August, the diverted channel in anger gobbled up 11 houses of that area in Mohammadpur in the city after the river had been forced to change its course due to illegal construction of four brick kilns and a dyke built by the kiln owners.

Yesterday, at around seven in the morning, several houses plunged into the fierce current of the river that Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) had been trying in vain to tame and deflect by dredging an additional channel near the kilns.

The erosion continued throughout yesterday and threatened new areas. Some locals, not knowing what to do, dismantled their ancestral homes and tried to move those to safety.

A team of the BIWTA officials rushed to the spot but was clueless about what to do.

One of the team said, "The floodwaters that would flow downstream through a four kilometres wide channel are now passing through an area hardly 300 metres wide. So, it is quite natural for the current to be so ferocious."

He said the massive encroachments by the brick kilns, the one-kilometre-long Basila Road built without proper drainage and the filling up of the flood plains are causing the floodwaters to flow turbulently through the narrowed stretch of the river.

"The 250-year old Basila now stands as an obstacle on the path of the huge amount of floodwaters flowing towards the sea," he said.

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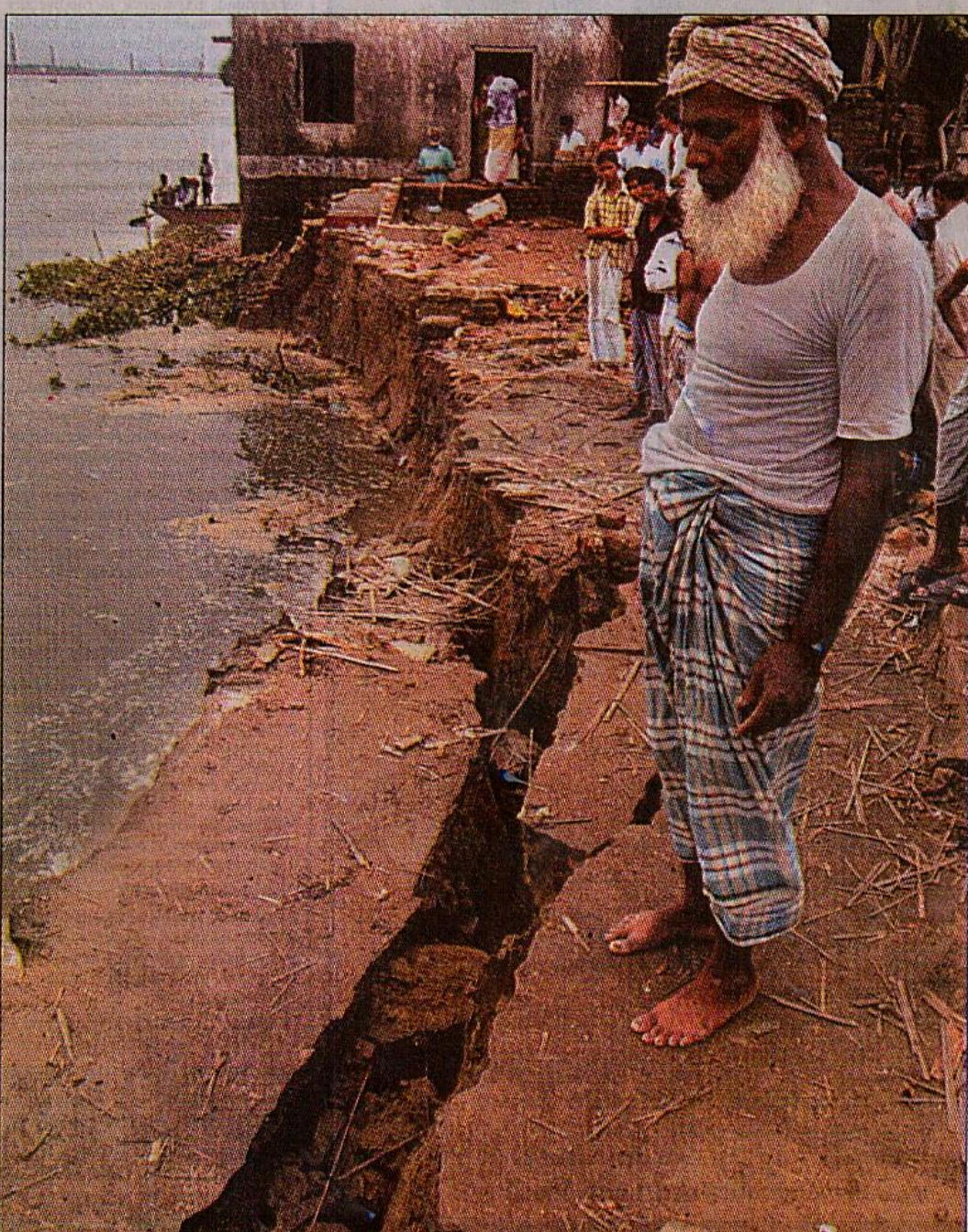


PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

An elderly resident of Basila looks on helplessly as a raging Buriganga channel diverted by a dyke threatens his ancestral home.

19 diplomats meet Hasina, condemn attack

UNB, Dhaka

Nineteen foreign diplomats yesterday called on opposition leader and Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina at her Sudha Sadan residence and said Saturday's attack was against Bangladesh's independence, sovereignty and democracy.

The diplomats, led by Dean of Diplomatic Corps and Palestine Ambassador Mohammad Shahata Zarab, went to the AL president's residence at about 3:30pm and spent nearly 40 minutes with her.

After the meeting, Shahata Zarab

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Bomb threats to schools

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In Mohammadpur in the capital an anonymous caller threatened to blow up a school and another claimed a bomb was planted in a university building there yesterday.

Teachers, students and other staff of Bangladesh University, a private university, rushed out of the building about 10:20am when a team from Mohammadpur Police Station came to the campus and told them that a powerful bomb had been planted inside the building.

The police said an anonymous caller informed them of the bomb. An extensive police search, however, found the bomb threat to be a hoax. Tight security has been clamped on the university campus.

In another incident, an anonymous caller yesterday threatened to blow up Foundation School in Mohammadpur. School authorities said they received a telephone call about 10:00am regarding the bomb threat.

The school was closed and the parents took their wards home.

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Notice
for change of date for distribution of Allotment letter and refund warrant

Due to unavoidable circumstances it is hereby notified that the date for distribution of Allotment letter and Refund warrant will be on Sunday, August 29, 2004 instead of August 28, 2004. Bank wise venue for delivery will be as follows:

Venue	
Ananda Bhaban, 55, Purana Paltan Line, VIP Road, Dhaka.	White House Hotel 155, Shantinagar, Dhaka.
Export Import Bank of Bangladesh Ltd.	Prime Bank Limited National Credit &
Investment Corporation of Bangladesh	Commerce Bank Limited Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited

Delivery time will be from 9:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. at above mentioned venue and schedule. The valued applicants are requested to collect their Allotment letter and Refund warrant on production of the original Banker's acknowledgement receipt. Uncollected Allotment letter and Refund warrant will be sent through courier to the respective addresses of the applicants at their own risk.