

Probe into Sylhet blasts in cold storage?

ASP's contract appointment after retirement to investigate 5 incidents raises questions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Investigation into the five bomb attacks in the city since January has apparently slowed down as no specific clue to any of the incidents could be found.

Ten people were killed and over 100 including the British High Commissioner to Bangladesh were injured in the attacks.

Although some officials at times claimed "success" in investigation, in fact no real progress has been made, it was gathered from different sources.

Meanwhile, questions are being raised by the quarters about the persons involved in the probe.

CID ASP Munshi Atiqur Rahman, now on contract appointment after retirement, is the investigation officer (IO) of all the five cases.

Munshi had gone on LPR (leave preparatory to retirement) in the first week of July, when he was investigating the January 12 and the May 21 incidents at the shrine of Hazrat Shaha Jalal.

The probe responsibility then went to ASP Nausher Ali of CID (Criminal Investigation Department) Sylhet Zone. But, within a week, Munshi managed a contract appointment for two years and again became the IO of the cases.

This had raised questions among police officials also. Contractual appointment at ASP level is rare, a number of officials told his correspondent seeking anonymity. Have those been sent to clod storage? Many pose the ques-

tion now.

Why contract appointment of a man who could not even "achieve a little in months", they said.

Munshi Atique failed to get any clue to the January 12 blast that killed five people and injured 50 and the June 21 blast that killed three and injured about 70 people including British High Commissioner.

On August 5, twin blasts in cinema halls left a boy killed and seven men injured.

Just 47 hours after this, the Gulshan Centre blast left Awami League leader Ibrahim killed and 30 others injured.

The cases regarding the twin blast in cinema halls and the Gulshan Centre blast were transferred to CID and Munshi was made IO of the three cases.

However, talking to the The Daily Star, Additional IG (in charge) of CID Farrukh Ahmed Chowdhury claimed that it would be easy for one official to investigate the cases as those are of same nature.

Asked about the nature of blasts, Chowdhury said, evidences clearly show that powerful grenades exploded at the shrine of Hazrat Shah Jalal and at the the Gulshan Centre. Evidences including 'levers' were found around the places of occurrence. "These are sophisticated and foreign-made", he added.

On other hand, two persons were caught immediately after the twin cinema hall blasts. They are believed to be the carriers, he said.

Asked about the progress in investigation, he said time is yet to

come to make any comment.

Although CID is doing the investigations, four other agencies--DGFI, NSI, Rab and SB--are also involved under the supervision of senior officials, top police officials said.

However, 24 people are in jail now while at least 100 others were quizzed in connection with the incidents. Most of them are leaders and activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Juba league, opposition Awami League's student and youth front respectively.

Besides, SM Nunu Miah, an expatriate and AL leader had also been in jail hajjat. Police also nabbed three activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir, student front of Jamaat-e-Islami, five days ago as suspects. BCL central leader Bidhan Chandra Shahna, its Sylhet city unit Joint Convener Ranjit Sarker and the three ICS activists were remanded and are being interrogated by a Joint Investigation Cell (JIC) in Dhaka.

The CID officials failed to extract any important clue from any of the people remanded and quizzed in Dhaka, sources claimed.

A probe body headed by the then Sylhet Police Superintendent Shahadat Hossain was formed after the January 12 shrine blast. The body got extension thrice and at last submitted a 40-page report to the authorities. But, it has not yet been made public. "The report is with us. Things in it are not that much important", a high police official said.

He however declined to elabo-

rate.

Police had arrested 26 people after the January 12 blast but failed to get any clue.

After six weeks, the case was transferred to the CID and ASP Siddiqur Rahman was made the Investigation Officer. Later, it was handed over to ASP Munshi Atique of CID Dhaka Zone.

After the second blast at the shrine on May 21, police arrested 14 people including four BCL leaders. But no specific charge could be brought against any of them.

After then May 21 blast, several agencies brought serious allegation of lax security arrangements for the British High Commissioner's visit to the shrine. SP Shahadat Hossain was suspended and strand-released within 72 hours, followed by transfer of ASP Siddiqi Tanjilur Rahman.

The OC of Sylhet Kotwali thana and the IO of the case --SANEwazi-- were also transferred to Sardah Police Academy after weeks.

The case was transferred to CID and ASP Munshi Atique was made the IO.

The IO along with a NSI official went to Singapore to interrogate expatriate Shamim at a hospital there. Shamim, who was on a short trip to Bangladesh, was injured in the May 21 blast and was sent to Singapore for treatment.

JCD man caught with pistol after gunfight

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kusthia

Police arrested a JCD (Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal) activist with arms after exchange of shots in Kotchadpur rail station area in Jhenidah Thursday night.

Police said they raided the area in an information that 10 to 12 alleged criminals were holding a meeting there.

Sensing police presence, the gang opened fire. Police also returned the fire and caught JCD activist Afjur Rahman Mafum, 22 along with a foreign-made pistol with two bullets. The rest escaped.

Bomb hoax at CU

CU CORRESPONDENT

A bomb hoax panicked teachers, students and officials of Chittagong University (CU) on Thursday.

All left their classes and offices when an anonymous caller identifying himself as a member of 'Mujahedin group' informed that a number of bombs were planted on the campus.

"A person called me at around 10:30pm and warned that some bombs were planted at different buildings and those will explode within 8 to 10 minutes," said Md. Harunur Rashid, Deputy Registrar at the Vice Chancellor's office.

Being informed, a police team led by ASP Hasib Aziz rushed and searched all buildings including the administrative building and the nine students' dormitories with metal detectors. But nothing was found in the three-hour search.

Trader rescued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kusthia

Police rescued an abducted person after a gunfight with the abductors at Damosh village in Alamdanga upazila in Chuadanga district on Wednesday night.

Police also arrested three bullet-hit abductors and recovered four firearms.

Grocer Moula Box, 30, son of Lalchan Box of Shishirdari village, was abducted on Sunday for Tk 4 lakh ransom.

Acting on a tip, off, police raided the house of one Mubas Ali and rescued Moula after an hour-long gunfight.

The injured and arrested abductors are Ainal, 35, Thandui, 28 and Khoda Box, 36. Some others in the gang escaped during the raid, police said.

UP chairman held on criminal charge

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Khaled Hussein Swapan, 38, chairman of Agorpur Union Parishad in Babuganj and an alleged member of an outlawed party was arrested from the UP office Thursday.

Swapan is secretary of Babuganj upazila Awmi League and allegedly belongs to Kamrul group of outlawed Sarbahara party, police said.

He was on top of a lost 37 criminals wanted by police.

Abdus Salehin, OC of Babuganj thana, said Swapan faces at least four cases including one for gouging out eyes of Khasru and Rashedul. Khasru was the son

OIL SPILLAGE

'Irregularity' by BSC tanker found

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Crude sipping through a faulty hydraulic valve in the supply line of state-owned oil tanker MT Bangler Sourav caused the oil spillage in the Bay on the night of August 27.

This has been stated in the draft report of the two-member committee formed by Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) to probe the oil spillage, it was learnt from official sources.

The committee completed its draft report on Thursday but did not submit it to the authorities.

The oil tanker belonging to Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC) was carrying some 990.3 tonnes of crude.

The report said the crude was loaded in ballast tanks instead of cargo tanks, where this was supposed to be kept. This is an irregularity, the committee said.

The head of the probe body, Captain Faridul Alam, who is also the Assistant Harbour Master of CPA, unofficially informed Shipping Secretary Ismail Jabiullah of the findings at a meeting at Chittagong Port rest house on Thursday.

CPA Chairman AMM Shahadat Hossain, BSC MD Captain Azizul Haq and other high officials concerned were also present.

The probe body also made six recommendations to stop such oil spillage in future. These are precau-

tionary measures while carrying oil in such tankers and replacement of the hydraulic valves of the supply lines.

The oil spillage spread over some 15 kilometre area in the Bay and in the port channel of Kamaphuli river, causing a massive pollution.

Scores of dead fishes started surfacing on the sea, creating concern in different quarters.

The spillage also prompted formation of two other probe bodies, one by the Marine Fisheries Department and the other by the Bangladesh Forest Research Institute in Cox's Bazar.



PHOTO: STAR

An inoperative beacon light in Chhotobaishdia in Galachipa upazila in Patuakhali. Lots of beacon lights along different river routes in coastal districts are now useless due to unabated theft of solar chargers, resulting in frequent launch accidents.

GMG opens int'l routes Sept 8

Ctg-Kolkata flights from Shah Amanat Airport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

GMG Airlines will fly beyond Bangladesh sky on September 8, beginning with flights on the Chittagong-Kolkata-Chittagong route from Shah Amanat International Airport here.

GMG (Global Marketing Group) would be the first private airlines of Bangladesh to go beyond the country's boundary.

However, commercial operation of the flight would start from September 11. Its airliner will fly to Kolkata three days a week - Monday, Wednesday and Saturday. Facilities and fare in GMG flights will be similar to other operators, its officials said at a press conference, held at a local hotel here on Thursday.

The flights to and from Kolkata have been schedules so that passengers can avail flights in other routes, they said.

The GMG flights would depart Chittagong Shah Amanat International Airport at 11AM to reach Kolkata at 12.15 PM (11.45 AM India standard time) on every scheduled day.

The same flight will leave Kolkata at 12.15 PM (12.45 PM in Bangladesh) and land in Chittagong at 2 PM, they said.

The fare would be US\$ 89 and US\$178 per head (adult) for one way and return journey respectively.

The fare for children would be US\$ 67 and US\$ 134 (per head) and for infant it would be US\$ 9 and US\$ 18 respectively.

As a special offer only for September 11,13 and 15, one adult ticket would be free for every two tickets for Kolkata, they said.

Its Manager (marketing-support and public relations) Bijoy al Reza, Deputy General Manager (business and development) Erfan Haque, Assistant General Manager (sales) Shubhra Kanti Sama and Station Manager (Chittagong) Emran Ahmed were present, among others, at the press conference.

4 criminals held by Rab from Ctg, Cox's Bazar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Rab (Rapid Action Battalion) on Wednesday arrested four criminals and recovered two fire arms in two separate raids conducted here and Cox's Bazar.

In a raid conducted in Billapara (Fakir Mazhir Bari) area of Agrabad in Double Mooring thana, a criminal named Md Sabui, 28, was arrested with a foreign made pistol and a dagger. The word, "USA" was inscribed on the pistol.

Acting on a confession, his two accomplices, Md Shamim, 30, of Golebag and Md Monir Hossain of Nimtola were nabbed.

In another raid at a criminal's den at Hotaliaghona of Hoyanak union in Moheshkhali upazila, Cox's Bazar, one person named Md Chowdhury of Kalania Kata was held with a locally made LG.

Meanwhile, a team of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) arrested an accused in three criminal cases, Iftekhar Uddin alias Rubel, 30, from Mogattuli area in Double Mooring thana.

PHOTO: STAR

SNAPS

17 vessels penalised by CPA

CU CORRESPONDENT

Seventeen vessels including a Cambodian flag carrier, MV Green Wave, were penalised for various reasons. The penalty was charged by the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) after a weeklong drive conducted from August 26-31. Each ship was fined Tk 1.37 lakh. Seven vessels were fined for tax evasion, one for environmental pollution by emitting black smoke, one for violation of berthing rules, six for taking berth on the channel and one for movement into the sea without legal permission. A Clearing and Forwarding (C& F) agent was also fined for irregularities in unloading goods. CPA magistrate- Mohammed Munir Chowdhury conducted the drive.

Freshers' reception

CU CORRESPONDENT

A freshers' reception was arranged on Thursday for the newly-admitted students of first year Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) classes by the authorities of Hazi Mohammed Mohsin College here. Principal Dr Fatima Nargis Chowdhury was in the chair. An orientation programme was also held at the college auditorium. Among others, Vice Principal Md Abul Kashem, General Secretary of Teachers' Council Shawkat Alam, Chairman of Economics Department Professor Dr M Liakwat Ali Khan, Chairman of Accounting Department Professor Samarendra Kumar Dey and Chairman of English Department Shukla Iftekhar were present.

Library opens

CU CORRESPONDENT

A new library titled 'Shaheed Shahadat-Sanjoy Memorial Library' to commemorate two former Bangladesh Chhatra Union (BCU) activists Shahadat and Sanjoy Talagatra was opened here on Wednesday. President of Chittagong district unit of Udichi Shilpi Goshthi and Professor of Fine Arts Department Abul Monsur formally opened the library at the district unit office of Chhatra Union. Among others, student leaders Monti Boishnab, Mintu Chowdhury, Uzzal Shikder, Sujan Nandi, Sanjoy Mitra Chowdhury, Suchanda Chowdhury and Julfikar Rahaman were present.

Girl's 'suicide' triggers protest in Naogaon

ANWAR ALI, BACK FROM Manda (Naogaon)

RAJSHAHI: Suicide of a girl at Kashopara village in Manda upazila, Naogaon has triggered violent demonstrations by several hundreds villagers on Wednesday and Thursday.

The demonstrators demanded immediate arrest of three vagabonds including a ruling BNP leader's son.

The commotion followed a court order for judicial probe into suicide of Selina Akhtar Banu, 22.

The 'three culprits' are Ruhul Amin Shipu, 23, son of Omar Ali, Vice President of Manda Upazila BNP, Rezaul Karim, 26, son of late Abdur Rahman and Shajahan Ali Mondol, 24, son of Asir Uddin.

A first class magistrate of the Court of Women and Children Repression Prevention, Naogaon ordered the investigation after a case filed with the court by the victim's father.

In a big procession, the villagers also demanded arrest to culprits' relatives who gave an eviction threat to the victim's family. They threatened a tougher movement if justice is denied to the family.

It was widely alleged, police let the three aforesaid youths flee away

according to instructions of local BNP leaders.

The trios, having previous records of rape at the village, used to tease everyday ill-fated Selina, a teacher of Legend Pre Cadet and Kindergarten School at Shingihat village and daughter of freedom fighter Solaiman Ali Dewan while she was on way to school.

At one stage, her father settled her marriage at Govindapur village in the same upazila. Being annoyed at the decision, they waylaid Selina at 12pm on August 19 while she was on coming back home from school. They threatened to burn her by acid if she does not agree to marry Rezaul.

On August 20, they made a futile attempt by offering Rezaul's marriage proposal to Selina's uncle Kafil Uddin, a village doctor, at his Shingihat Drug Store.

Being rejected they went to Selina's house where they found her alone and attempted to rape her. Hearing screams, villagers rushed there to witness Selina crying after being stripped off by the culprits. Sensing danger, the three 'culprits' fled away.

Selina became very upset and drank poison in the morning on August 21. The following day she died at Naogaon hospital.

Sea rough again

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

The Bay has become rough again, making fishing impossible.

The situation will continue three or four days, weathermen at Kalapara Meteorological Office said yesterday.

Reports received from Kuakata, Sonatala, Kalapara and Patharghata in Patuakhali and Barguna districts, and Mohipur and Alipur in Barisal said most of the fishermen have anchored their trawlers in safe places. Fishermen said strong wind

has whipped up 8 to 10 waves in the sea.

The news has created panic among relatives of the fishermen who are yet to reach shores.

Some fishermen feared that the trawlers yet to return from deep sea might have sunk.

Supply of fishes including hilsha to wholesale markets in Barisal declined sharply due to the rough sea, traders said.

BNWLA workshop on Islam, women's rights

RU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) on Thursday organised a workshop on "Ensuring Women's Rights within Islamic Framework" at Rajshahi Parjatan hotel conference room.

Rajshahi University Law and Justice Department Chairman Prof Asma Sidikka moderated the workshop.

Salma Ali, Executive Director of BNWLA, was present as the chief guest while its Vice-president Sayeda Afser Jahan was the special guest.

Leaders of different women's organisation, political parties, Imams of mosques, Islamic Foundation officials, Rajshahi University teachers, lawyers, local government leaders, civil society members and journalists also took part in the workshop.

Awami League protests in districts against the grenade attack on its rally in Dhaka. From left: Human chain in Sylhet city, at Gaibandha and in Chittagong on Thursday.