

Grenade attack probe

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arrestees in the case.

As the shock-still people waited eagerly to see the assailants brought to justice, the government on the night of the incident formed a one-member judicial commission headed by Justice Joyul Abedin to probe the terrorist attack apparently aimed to wipe out the entire leadership of the main opposition party.

Thrusting the main responsibility of the probe on the CID (Criminal Investigation Department), the government also asked a joint team of Special Branch (SB), Detective Branch (DB), National Security Intelligence (NSI), Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) to assist the CID.

The investigators failed to make any headway into the incident in the first week and later became busy escorting Interpol experts after the first two of them arrived in Dhaka on August 29.

The government and international experts said the experts would only assist local investigators, but in reality the local investigators became totally dependent on the international experts for the probe.

EVIDENCE LOST

The blast site was kept unprotected for the time needed to gather evidence and the truck on which the AL leaders were sitting was taken away before proper examination.

The investigators are also alleged to have not collected the evidence, even the unexploded grenades, which are vital for investigation. Army explosives experts detonated two unexploded grenades—one found near the spot and the other in the adjacent Gulistan Hawkers' Market—at dead of night without taking fingerprints from them.

They also took a grenade found in the same market the following morning and a similar one found in Dhaka Central Jail into their custody.

The government did not issue a statement about the grenades, which could again have been crucial for the investigators. "It might be easier for us to track down the perpetrators behind the incident if we could know the origin, how they (grenades) were smuggled into the country and the people who handled those," said an investigator, preferring to remain unnamed.

The authorities hurriedly buried two unidentified, dead victims at Azimpur Graveyard on August 22 night although unclaimed bodies are supposed to be kept at the mortuary at least for 72 hours for identification. The police took the two bodies away in an ambulance of Anjumane-Mofidul Islam and buried those after their autopsy was done hurriedly during the night. Sources said at least one of the two was primary suspect.

LACK OF SUPPORT BY LOCAL INVESTIGATORS

The FBI investigators who flew in Dhaka 10 days into the incident found the blast scene had been open to the public and the truck taken somewhere else.

The government did not invite the foreign experts immediately after the incident and they did not find all the evidence at the spot, which might have greatly helped them.

The style of work of the foreign experts and local investigators was different. The Interpol experts asked for information about criminal activities, criminals and their records, but the local agencies failed to provide these as they hardly preserve them.

The foreign experts asked the local investigators for detailed information about 13 suspects but the local investigators failed to even identify most of them. The experts identified them from video footages taken before and after the attack.

The Bangladesh Rifles were also alerted about the 13 but they too failed

Violence against women spirals Says study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All forms of violence against women in educational institutions and workplaces increased in the last year, according to a study report by Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association.

It said 5,207 incidents of violence took place in 2003 but police recorded only 2,671 incidents. Most victims are aged between 13 and 18.

The association released the report titled 'Violence against Women in Bangladesh' at a Bilia auditorium in the city yesterday.

In most cases, victims do not protest such acts and try to avoid them. As there is no guideline to resist 'sexual harassment' in the educational institutions, the authorities also try to conceal such incidents, said Advocate Sharmeen A Farouk.

Among 1550 rape incidents, only 966 incidents were recorded last year. The number of dowry-related violence was 426 and 262 women were killed because of dowry, she said, adding that obscene films and posters also incite young boys to be violent against women.

Omar Farooq, secretary of home ministry, said resistance to violence should come from the family within.

He also called for raising awareness to stop such heinous acts.

Abdul Muyeed Chowdhury, executive director of Brac, Advocate Salma Ali, executive director of BNWLA, Advocate Shaheen A Munir, Maleka Begum, and special public prosecutor Arfanuddin Khan also spoke.

to provide any information.

ATTEMPT TO DIVERT FOCUS

The investigators failed to find any clue even 28 days into the incident, yet the government blamed it on the AL, many of whose leaders and activists were killed and injured, without producing any proof.

"This type of political pressure pushes us to a difficult situation. It did hamper our probe of the previous incidents too," said an investigator, seeking anonymity.

The investigators said they did not arrest anyone in connection with the grenade attack, but the CID showed Abdur Rahman, Shaibah Saha Partha, Hannan and Badshah, who were arrested for their alleged links to different incidents earlier, as arrestees in this case on September 14.

Rahman was arrested with a firearm at Uttara and Partha on Elephant Road for threatening in an email to kill Hasina and Hannan and Badshah at Moghbazar for suspected links to Mukul, a chargesheeted accused in the Badda arms and grenade seizure case.

The law-enforcers earlier denied to have arrested them in connection with the grenade attack, but are now linking them to it to prove wrong the general notion that they sat on their hands.

JUDICIAL PROBE COMMISSION

The commission failed to submit its report by September 11 and got 21 more days. It so far has recorded deposition of 117 people including DB, SB and CID men and the policemen who were present at the AL rally on August 21. They failed to collect deposition of DGFI and NSI men, as they are yet to get the list.

OFFICIAL VERSION

State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar declined to talk about the probe when reached by phone yesterday.

Declining to divulge details about the investigation, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Shahidul Haque told The Daily Star yesterday, "Interpol are yet to submit its report."

Asked if the local investigators have found anything, he said, "I'll not say they've found nothing and also not say if they've found anything."

Asked how long it will take to hunt down the perpetrators, the IGP said, "It cannot be specified." He also denied that evidence had been lost.

About the Tk 1 crore bounty, Shahidul said, "We've not heard anything from anyone."

CID Special Superintendent Ruhul Amin, who led the local investigators, also would not say anything about the probe. "It is obvious that there is some development in the probe but I cannot disclose it."

The investigation officer of the case, CID Assistant Superintendent Abdur Rashid, also refused to say anything. As local investigators denied to give information, a correspondent of The Daily Star emailed the Interpol to know the status of the probe. The Interpol officials advised him: "We would advise you to contact the local and national police authorities for any updates."

RECURRANCE OF FAILURE

The local investigators have failed to find clues to five bomb and grenade blasts in northeastern Sylhet this year, let alone hunt down the perpetrators of the deadly blasts.

Local investigators could not even dig out a single lead to the May 21 grenade attack on British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury in Sylhet although they had the expertise of the Scotland Yards on hand.

GD filed after threat on Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, political secretary of Awami League chief and Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina, yesterday filed a GD after Hasina received an anonymous death threat by post Thursday.

The general diary (GD) filed with Dhanmondi Police Station said the letter was marked with 'Congratulation Letter,' which read in English, "An international killer group equipped with bombs is watching Sheikh Hasina's movement. She'll be assassinated shortly at Sudha Sadan or any of her meeting venues. After Hasina, other members of her party will also be killed."

The letter also threatened not to pin the blame on the government.

The GD referred August 21 grenade attacks on the opposition leader and her rally that left 20 killed and wounded 200 others. The August 21 carnage happened after Hasina received a similar threat on July 5, it added.

Mysterious

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containers owned by MM Proportion of Purana Paltan and found tablecloths in one and crockery in the other. The containers were kept at the depot on September 12 after they were brought from Chittagong under guard.

"We searched two containers yesterday, but found nothing illegal. We will search more containers today," Lt Col Guljar Uddin Ahmed, commanding officer of Rab-3, told The Daily Star.

City suffers

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the capital and the surrounding districts until 6:00pm today, forecast met office.

While 10 lakh people continue to suffer flash floods in Laxmipur, flood situation in several districts further deteriorated yesterday. Water-borne diseases have broken out in the areas caused by an acute scarcity of pure drinking water.

AL leader

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The Officer-in-Charge of Motijheel police station to register it as a first information report and submit a report by October 18.

In the case, 30 people including AL leader Zillur Rahman, MP, were shown as prosecution witnesses.

Earlier, AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil on September 7 filed a case with the same court accusing the same persons on same charges. Political Secretary to the AL president Saber Hossain Chowdhury also filed a general diary after the attack.

Rahman was arrested with a firearm at Uttara and Partha on Elephant Road for threatening in an email to kill Hasina and Hannan and Badshah at Moghbazar for suspected links to Mukul, a chargesheeted accused in the Badda arms and grenade seizure case.

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His brother is receiving treatment at Tangail General Hospital.

The committee will soon submit its report to the shipping secretary, said a key member of the committee asking not to be named.

"Neglect of the officers on board led to a leakage of crude oil into the sea, enough to cause pollution in the port channel," the member said.

"We've checked chemical analysis reports on crude oil-mixed ballast water of Banglar Sourav by Eastern Refinery Ltd. The ballast water contains 38 percent water, 30 percent sludge and the rest crude oil," he added.

The committee headed by Director General of Shipping Justice M Abdul Wahhab Miah and Justice Shamim Hasnain granted the bail on Wednesday. Earlier, the lower court had rejected his bail petition.

A reported "cold war" between the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) and the BSC over the oil spillage had prompted the ministry to form the committee, sources said.

Earlier, both the CPA and BSC gave contradictory reports after launching probe separately.

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However, the day has not yet been fixed for discussion on the motion in the House of Commons.

Till Friday evening, 48 children, who have contracted the disease, were admitted to Khulna Shishu Hospital. Administrative Officer of the hospital Mokhlesur Rahman Bablu said they are running short of medicines and beds to accommodate the growing number of pneumonia patients.

Market access

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joint programme in 2002 to develop markets, allot capital and shops to hardcore poor women to empower them economically.

"Women who use micro-credit for raising poultry and livestock or for producing other goods have to rely on their male family members to market those and purchase raw materials for production," Rebecca, one of the female shopkeepers, said. "These women are completely at their men's mercy for the sales proceeds and purchase of raw materials at a fair price," she noted.

As women were not supposed to go to markets either as buyers or sellers, particularly the female-headed households would face a difficult situation. They had to rely completely on men even for buying their daily supply of groceries, she said, adding women's traditional place being confined to the homesteads deprived half the population from access to market.

"As I heard it, I ran to the NGO office," said Pokhkhani, a woman of 50 whom her husband had abandoned 10 years ago. To survive she had to do all sorts of menial jobs after her husband had left her marrying another woman and her father, who runs a small restaurant, had refused to give her shelter.

Six permanent shops and 20 percent of the open space of every market under the programme were allocated to destitute women. The land ministry leased out the open plots and shops of 146 markets across the country for five years to 2,682 ultra-poor women and Care Bangladesh, an NGO, is bearing the population.

After the incident Hasina asked the government for ensuring her security but the alliance government ignored the matter, the complainant said.

The comments of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and her party leaders in parliament about Hasina's security proved that they were involved in the attack and encouraged the criminals to commit such carnage, Sahara noted in the petition.

Advocates Syed Rezaul Rahman, M Saifur Hossain, Abdullah Abu, Jahangir Hossain Selim, Momtaj Uddin Ahmed Mehedi and Ashraful Haq moved to Galia Bazar with his brother by a rickshaw.

Up to 12 criminals swooped on them as they reached the bazaar and stabbed them, shot Khaled and left him dead on the spot at 2:00pm, police said.

His brother is receiving treatment at Tangail General Hospital.

BNP leader shot dead

UNB, Tangail

Outlaws yesterday stabbed and shot a BNP leader to death in Galia Bazar in sadar upazila.

Abdul Khaled, 40, member of BNP's district unit and general secretary of