

Grenade attack probe

FROM PAGE 1

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 Joyrul 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 (DGF) 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 Anjuman-e-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 Woman 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 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 Faruk.

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 Mueyed Chowdhury, executive director of Brac, Advocate Salma Ali, executive director of BNWLA, Advocate Shaheen A Munir, Maleka Begum, and special public prosecutor Arfan uddin 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, Shaibal 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 DGF 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) Shahudul 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, Shahudul 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 check 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."

RECURRENCE 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 'Congratulations 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

FROM PAGE 12

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

FROM PAGE 1

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

FROM PAGE 1

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.

Sahara in her complaint mentioned that she was present in the rally while Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina was delivering her speech at about 5:30pm. The attack left 19 people killed and 200 injured including the plaintiff, she noted.

The complainant alleged that criminals of the ruling alliance had threatened to kill Al President Sheikh Hasina when she was in Istanbul. She also received another death threat while she was staying at Sudha Sadan in Dhaka.

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 Rezaur Rahman, M Sajwar Hossain, Abdullah Abu, Jahangir Hossain Selim, Momtaz Uddin Ahmed Mehedi and Ashrafur Haq moved the petition on behalf of the complainant.

Banglar Sourav

FROM PAGE 12

Chittagong port.

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 Ahsanul Azim has prepared the report after conducting an investigation into the oil spillage in the last two weeks.

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.

The CPA has sued the BSC oil tanker on charge of spilling oil into the channel and causing massive pollution. CPA Chairman Shahadat Hossain said, "We hope the truth will come out after the investigation."

The CPA in its probe report said neglect of the master and other officers led to a leakage of about nine tonnes of crude oil into the sea.

However, the BSC probe report claimed about 800 litres of crude oil fell into the Bay due to an accidental valve leakage, not sufficient to cause massive pollution.

Relations between the CPA and BSC have been strained after the incident, sources said.

Pneumonia

FROM PAGE 12

of poor medical service despite shortage of life saving drugs.

Pneumonia, a serious disease that affects one or both lungs and makes breathing difficult, has claimed lives of 12 children in Jessore district until Thursday. Some 100 pneumonia patients are undergoing treatment in the Jessore General Hospital and Chowgacha, Sharsha, Abhoyagar, Bagharpara, Jhikergacha, Keshabpur and Monirampur upazila health complexes of the district, said hospital sources.

In Satkhira, five children died of the disease in last one week while 96 others are undergoing treatment in Sadar Hospital.

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

Market access

FROM PAGE 12

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 Pokkhirani, 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 leasing expenses.

BNP leader shot dead

UNB, Tangail

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

Abdul Khaleq, 40, member of district unit and general secretary of Bakhil union unit BNP, was going to Gala Bazar with his brother by a rickshaw.

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

His brother is receiving treatment at Tangail General Hospital.

Gulandaz gets bail

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League (AL) lawmaker Altaf Hossain Gulandaz, accused in three criminal cases, including one filed by his wife, has been granted bail for three months by the High Court.

The vacation bench comprising Justice M Abdul Wahhab Miah and Justice Shamim Hossain granted the bail on Wednesday. Earlier, the lower court had rejected his bail petition.

Gulandaz, elected thrice to parliament from Gafargaon constituency in Mymensingh, was arrested on July 15, three days after his wife Mahfuza Anam filed a case under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act.

Wife of Gulandaz's son also filed a case accusing him of torturing her mother-in-law.

Police filed the third case against Gulandaz for possessing illegal firearms.

Advocate Abdul Baset Majumder appeared for Gulandaz.

Motion placed

FROM PAGE 1

the Bangladesh parliamentary opposition leader, Sheikh Hasina, on 21st August" at a public rally in Dhaka.

She expressed concern over "the deteriorating law and order situation and the rise of terrorism, as evident in the deaths of more than 1,400 people in the last three years, and a series of bomb attacks, including the one on the British High Commissioner to Bangladesh, in May".

Sally called for an investigation into these incidents and urged the British government to offer assistance and cooperation "to help combat terrorism, and to promote, assist and reinforce the rule of law".

She also called for measures to protect the life of Sheikh Hasina and other opposition leaders and to ensure security for the citizens in this Commonwealth country.

The members of parliament who supported the notice of the motion include Piara S Khabra, Harry Barnes, Lynne Jones, Elfin Llywyd and Ronnie Campbell.

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

Meanwhile, British MP Unna King, who arrived here yesterday, called on Advisor to the Foreign Ministry Reaz Rahman and discussed, among other issues, the grenade attacks on Sheikh Hasina in Dhaka and the bomb attacks on the British High Commissioner in Sylhet.

Elders, elected people's representatives and elite of the locality selected the most vulnerable women as beneficiaries of the programme. The selected ones received training in business management and provided with functional literacy.

To sustain them as successful entrepreneurs at the markets, various tools of community mobilisation were used. Guardian groups were formed to ensure their security and watchdog groups consisting of local elite and elected people's representatives their social recognition and acceptability.

"The NGO men also built a storage for our stocks, gave two rickshaw-vans for commuting and transporting goods, and developed a day-care centre for toddlers and children of women going to market as buyers or sellers. We also have our separate toilet," Maloti, another shop-owner, said.

A female market management committee (FMMC) manages the day-care centre, rickshaw-vans and income from them. The FMMC members also liaise with the guardian and watchdog groups.

Asked whether they face negative criticism of their position in the market from the common people, Maloti, head of a FMMC, said, "It's just the opposite. Once that we've become economically solvent, people now respect our opinion and even call us to participate in salish."

At first, Care and LGED officials doubted whether locals would accept the women sellers. But they found locals rather welcomed them. "People don't discriminate against them, as all of them are from the same area and neighbours."

"This initiative has successfully challenged the age-old social attitude that doesn't allow women in marketplace either as buyers or sellers," said Saleha, a woman buyer in veil.

"Previously, I used to hesitate to come to bazaar. But now I feel easy as the sellers are women too," she said, adding the introduction of female sellers has encouraged to bring female buyers to market.

"The initiative to bring women to markets, encouraging them to buy and sell directly is a ground-breaking one," said Israfil Hossain Dewan, chairman of Sabgram Union Parishad. "And they are doing very well as breadwinners."

Ershad blames govt for failure to check crimes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad yesterday said the BNP-led coalition government has failed to check the downward slide in law and order.

"The government's indifference to maintaining law and order worries the countrymen who desperately want to get rid of the situation," said the JP chairman while addressing a press conference yesterday in the city.

Ershad, also a former president, accused both the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Awami League (AL) governments of failing to nab the masterminds behind the bomb attacks.

After handing over power in 1990, JP leaders and workers had been the prime targets of violence instigated by the then BNP government and as a result, crimes in the country over the years have culminated in a breakdown of law and order, he observed.

Referring to the August 21 grenade attacks on AL rally, Ershad said responsibility for hunting down the culprits squarely rests on the government.

On AL's demand for international probe into the grenade attacks, he said, "Awami League's demand is not only illogical but unrealistic."

"A country like Bangladesh should have the capacity to probe the grenade attack. Then why should we call for international investigators," he added.

Ershad referring to allying with BNP or AL said, "Till now Jatiya Party has not yet received any proposal to coalesce either from BNP or Awami League. And I can't say precisely what will happen in future."

Urging the countrymen to unite in opposition to crimes, he declared a month-long programme against the upsurge in violent crimes.

As part of the programme, JP will run a mass contact campaign across the country from September 19 to September 30 and will hold a grand rally on October 10 in Dhaka.

The JP chairman, however, said the month-long programme has no connection with some of the opposition parties' anti-government movement.

He said the BNP-led coalition government should be given a chance to run its term for the sake of democracy.

JP Presidium Member Bidisha Ershad and senior party leaders, among others, attended the press conference.

2 abducted in Bandarban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Cadres of Democratic Party of Arakan (DPA) yesterday allegedly abducted two people for not giving them toll in Roangchhari in Saingapara.

Locals said a group of armed indigenous men picked up Abdul Khaleq and Siddiqui Rahman from fish project areas at around 11:00am.

Relatives of the victims said no-one has contacted them. They accused the DPA of the abduction, as the party demanded a huge amount of money from the two a few days back.

Locals alleged law enforcers did not take any action against the criminals, who have been involved in abduction, murder and extortion in the area for long. They said criminals of a neighbouring country in association with local criminals have taken refuge in the country.

However, government officials ruled out the possibility of existence of expatriate criminals in the country.

Graft cases against Ctg mayor stayed

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday stayed for six months the proceedings of eight corruption cases against ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, mayor of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC).

The court also issued rule asking the government to show cause why the cases filed against the petitioner should not be quashed.

The vacation bench comprising Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Justice Mohammad Miftah Uddin Chowdhury passed the orders upon separate petitions filed by Mohiuddin Chowdhury.

The cases are now pending with the Metropolitan Special Judge's Court, Chittagong.

Advocate Abdul Baset Majumder appeared for Mohiuddin.

AL yet to decide

FROM PAGE 1

before the prorogation of the 13th session without giving it any committee chairmanship and lowering its membership to only one to some vital bodies.

The committees were reconstructed to include AL lawmakers on the last day of the last session, boycotted by the main opposition in protest against Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar's refusal to accept an adjournment motion on the deadly grenade attack on its rally in Dhaka on October 21.

The inclusion of the AL lawmakers gave the parliamentary bodies full shape about one and a half years after their formation and about three years into the parliament's five-year tenure.

Without representation of the main opposition, the parliamentary bodies have so far faced difficulties in discharging their duties, as the treasury bench lawmakers are reluctant to discuss alleged corruption and irregularities at different ministries. Most standing committees even do not hold meetings regularly in line with the rules of procedure.

A number of sub-committees were formed to probe alleged irregularities at different ministries, but they failed to come up with reports because of alleged pressure of the top ruling alliance leaders who head the ministries as ministers.

"I don't know whether I am on any committee or not. We will have to take a decision in view of the latest political developments," AL lawmaker Kazi Zafarullah said.

BTTB

FROM PAGE 1 accounts with overseas operators in foreign currency.

The fixed phone monopoly earned Tk 15.35 billion in operating profit in fiscal 2003-04, which is the lowest in the past three years, and Tk 1.65 billion less than the last fiscal's target. It had earned Tk 15.44 billion in fiscal 2003-02 and Tk 15.83 billion in 2002-01.

A major objective of the present move is also to save subscribers from unwanted use of their telephones. Sometimes unscrupulous people abuse ISD telephones by calling abroad without the knowledge of subscribers, BTTB officials said.

Subscribers could know the move only after the exchanges barred the outgoing calls. "It is ridiculous, every subscriber should be notified before call barring," said an angry subscriber at Lalmitia.

The BTTB will introduce call limit for every ISD telephone in phases after upgrading the software. Currently, the system exists only at NEC exchanges.

Call limit will be determined as desired by a subscriber by evaluating previous bill amounts, an official said.

Until recently, there was no call limit for BTTB subscribers, who are not required to pay money as deposit unlike private cellular phone subscribers.

The BTTB will soon notify its subscribers about the introduction of call limit system, officials said.

Protest as JCD man

FROM PAGE 1

a resident of Jahurul Haque Hall, was fatally injured as rival JCD activists swooped on him with iron rods, hockey sticks and chapati on Wednesday.

Khokon's body was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morgue for autopsy yesterday morning.

Over 100 fellow JCD leaders and activists instantly staged a demonstration near the morgue demanding stern action against the killers of Khokon.

Top leaders of the JCD including General Secretary Azizul Bari Helal, Sultan Salauddin Tuku, Safiul Bari Babu and Selimuzzaman Selim rushed to the spot. Helal assured the agitating leaders and activists of proper action against the culprits.

The demonstrators also demanded that Khokon's body be taken to the DU campus for namaj-e-janaza. They left the DMCH on assurance from top leaders that Khokon's body would be taken to the DU central mosque for Janaza.

Asked by JCD leaders, Khokon's brothers then took his body straight to their village home at Azoil in Khoksha upazila of Kushtia under tight security.

Student Affairs Secretary of the ruling BNP Fazlul Haque Milon later visited the DMCH and discussed the situation with top JCD leaders. They also demanded of him to ensure trial of influential JCD leaders' who were behind the killing of Khokon.

One of the JCD leaders responsible for the killing was roaming the DU campus happily on hearing the news of Khokon's death, they told

Milon.

The BNP leader promised them proper action against the persons responsible.

Khokon's brother Rabiul Islam filed a murder case with Ramna Police Station accusing 20 JCD leaders and activists including Syeed Iqbal Mahmud Tito, Asaduzzaman Palash, Shobeb Khondoker, Black Mintu, Abbas, Shuvo, Jewel, Sumon, Helal and Ripon.

Police arrested Ripon and Helal.

Officer-in-Charge of Ramna Police Station Mahbubur Rahman said Ripon was placed on a one-day remand for interrogation.

JCD President Laltu told journalists on the campus, "I demand trial of the culprits in speedy trial tribunal to give them exemplary punishment."

Meanwhile, the five-member committee headed by DU Treasurer Prof Syed Rashidul Hasan to probe the attack on Khokon is yet