

Judicial body claims

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government extended the deadline by three weeks to facilitate recording of statements of relevant people and prepare the report.

It has been mandated to unearth the motive for and the facts of the carnage, identify the perpetrators of the deadly attacks and the masterminds, make recommendations for their punishment and suggest way to prevent a repeat of such incidents.

Asked if people would be able to know about the commission's finds on the incident, Justice Abedin said, "My task is to investigate the incident and submit a report to the government, nothing more than that."

Reports of no judicial inquiry commissions formed previously to probe deadly blasts and other criminal incidents could see the light and it was never known whether these bodies reached a decision and if their recommendations were implemented. When some commissions did make recommendations, the government preferred not to make them public.

For instance, the finds of the judicial inquiry commission headed by Justice Latifur Rahman to probe the causes of damage to several aircraft by cyclone at Chittagong Air Force Base, another commission headed by Justice Tafazzal Hossain to investigate the police assault on female students of Shamsunnahar Hall of Dhaka University did not come to light.

The government also did not make public the recommendations of yet another commission headed by Justice Sultan Hossain Khan on the bomb blasts in four cinema halls at Mymensingh. Neither did it publish the report of the commission headed by Justice Habibur Rahman to investigate the death of Shamim Reza Rubel in the custody of Detective Branch of Police.

Justice Abdul Bari Sarkar, who led a similar commission to probe seven major bomb attacks including the Udichi blasts in Jessore and Ramna explosions in Dhaka, failed to unearth the motives and identify the perpetrators. The report he prepared was alleged to be more a political statement than an investigation report.

It hinges entirely on the government if the reports of the judicial commissions will be brought to light and in almost every case, the government does not make them public. It means people know little or nothing about the finds of the high-profile inquiries.

JU teacher

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The teacher gave a 20-mark homework for all the students including the Hindu students asking them to glorify the virtues of Allah, they alleged. He has also started calling some Hindu students after Muslim names.

"We are afraid thinking what we should do in such a situation," a female student of the department said seeking anonymity.

Dr Mominur Rahman, a professor of the same department and elder brother of Obaidur Rahman admitted the fact and said it was unexpected and he would look into the matter.

Dr Obaidur Rahman however refused to meet this correspondent who went to his house three times but failed to talk with him.

Samajtantrik Chhatra Front in a statement condemned the incident and demanded immediate removal of the teacher.

Blanket arrests

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defended the mass arrests, terming it a necessary measure to foil the conspiracy to unconstitutionally overthrow an elected government.

"The government has taken the measure on the basis of specific information and documents that a conspiracy is going on against the government," Khaleda told her deputies at a parliamentary party meeting of the ruling BNP on April 25. "Nobody has been mindlessly harassed."

Lawyers and rights groups, however, launched a blistering attack on the government, accusing it of trampling on human rights by ordering the mass arrests.

"Mass arrests violate the fundamental rights of people. Arresting people without charges right on their arrival in Dhaka is arbitrary," said Dr M Zahir, senior lawyer, who appeared for the petitioners before the High Court. "Fear has gripped the nation in the wake of the raids."

"The high-handedness of the authorities in making the arrests under Section 86 of the DMP Ordinance denies people their right to free movement and liberty guaranteed by the constitution," Dr Zahir said.

In doing so, the police also violated the High Court ruling that infamous Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) that empowers the law-enforcers to arrest under suspicion should be used judiciously. Even if arrested, the persons must be sent to court within 24 hours and their relatives informed of the arrests within that time.

The government on April 26 apparently stopped the blanket arrests and asked the police not to harass the innocent after more than 15,000 people were arrested in an eight-day dragnet.

Again, court does not take into cognisance the finds of the judicial commissions as evidence, which is why they have no legal value. Unless the government implements the recommendations, the reports of such commissions remain meaningless.

Asked how it is possible for the commission to come to a conclusion when Interpol, FBI and six intelligence agencies remain clueless even a month into the August 21 incident, Justice Abedin said, "I believe no matter which organisation investigates, if it is sincere and gets co-operation of all, it is possible to unravel the mystery."

"Although the mechanism the intelligence agencies use and the one I have employed are different, I can co-ordinate between the two. They won't get my finds but I will get theirs," he added.

The commission, constituted on August 22, has six days to submit a report and it has recorded statements of 127 people.

"We are still taking statements of various persons who are connected with the August 21 carnage. Moreover, we are also interviewing and taking statements of various intellectuals, journalists and columnists concerning the incident."

Justice Abedin said the statements and evidence he has on hand are enough to prepare a report. He, however, said enough time is still there before the submission of the report and hoped that all would come forward with information to reveal the truth.

BTTB limits

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will examine the average bill and withdraw call limit if it is justified.

In case of an organisation or subscriber with special importance, the general manager (GM) concerned should consider withdrawal of call limit on receipt of application.

Newly installed ISD telephone subscribers should communicate with the GM for withdrawal of call limit, the official said.

Earlier in an abrupt move, the BTTB barred outgoing call facilities of several hundred ISD telephones under various exchanges in the capital without any notification.

Six student

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The university authorities hope today's meeting will bring about an end to the strike.

Vice-chancellor (VC) Prof SMA Faiz said yesterday, "Logical demands of the six student organisations have been considered and some measures taken to this end. I think the problem will be resolved at today's discussions."

Leaders of the six student organisations at a rally on the campus yesterday urged the university authorities to meet their demands immediately.

Meanwhile, the university authorities yesterday postponed all scheduled examinations till September 30, except third year and MSS examinations of biochemistry and microbiology departments, in view of the strike. Examinations scheduled from October 3 will be held as usual. Fresh dates for the examinations postponed will be announced soon, said a DU press release.

Essentials

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so that the prices of essentials cannot increase further under any circumstances, although there are shortages in production of some items this year," said a standing committee member who attended the meeting.

The committee also directed the ministry to pep up its market monitoring. If necessary, the parliamentary committee would convene urgent meetings to discuss any anomaly in essentials' prices, the source added.

In yesterday's meeting presided over by committee Chairman Redwan Ahmed MP, a sub-committee submitted a report on life and general insurance companies that are allegedly flouting existing rules and regulation. The committee agreed to discuss the report in its next meeting.

As per existing rules, insurance companies have to go public within a stipulated time, failing to do which they are liable to fines. But, "Many companies are not following the rules and we have recommended stern action against them," the meeting source said.

The meeting reviewed the ministry's decision of reconstituting the Tariff Commission and decided to send the matter to the secretary level committee for its opinion.

HSC exams

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The management has taken sufficient preventive measures to protect the website, which collapsed after launching the results of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) in the wake of excessive hits by result seekers, officials said.

Examinees have been asked to collect results from their respective educational institutions at 4:00pm. No results will be made available at the education boards, education ministry or newspaper offices, the release said.

Unabated political unrest

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Professor Muzaffer Ahmad moderated the roundtable titled 'Political Reform in Bangladesh' co-organised by Shujan, a civic body, and The Daily Star at the latter's conference room.

The speakers shared a common doubt about the next general elections being conducted under a fair process, and said to build public confidence in elections a more credible electoral process has to be institutionalised.

Election watchdogs, political scientists and politicians brought up the error-ridden voters' list as a major concern, with figures showing that in this year's parliamentary by-elections the errors in voters' lists ranged from 35 to 65 per cent.

The roundtable stressed strengthening the Election Commission (EC) by giving it financial and administrative independence to secure fairer elections.

Emphasising the voters' right to know the financial and criminal backgrounds of election candidates they urged the political parties to nominate honest people and encouraged bottom-up nominations of candidates.

In this regard, speakers referred to a recent High Court order in India that obliges candidates to submit an affidavit to the EC giving all vital and relevant information about them.

The ruling also has a provision that if any information given in the affidavit were found incorrect then their membership in parliament would be automatically revoked.

SPEAKERS' VIEWS

Taking part in the discussion, eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain said, "People are fundamentally united for their rights. What the political forces should do now is to get united."

Dr Kamal, also the president of Gono Forum, urged the political forces, civil society members and media to mobilise the people to form a 'Grand Alliance' in order to overcome the present political crisis.

Now is the time to think of some amendments to the constitution, he added, specially Article 70 which bars lawmakers to vote independently.

Jatiya Party lawmaker GM Quader was sceptical as to whether the next general elections will reflect people's wishes, as muscle power and black money may determine the result.

He proposed to give all chairmanships of the parliamentary standing committees to the opposition bench to ensure government's accountability.

Referring to the recent death of Chittagong top terror and politician Ahmadya, he said, "We have a number of people like him in parliament as well as in the cabinet."

Awami League lawmaker Faruk Khan said, "We need a greater alliance of like-minded parties to free the country from the present crisis, as people are fed up and want an immediate change."

But, "Awami League alone cannot do it; we have to do it all together," he said, adding, "Unfortunately the civil society is not that active as a pressure group in this regard."

As an indication of the government's reluctance to make the EC stronger, Faruk said, "The budget for current fiscal has downsized the allocation for the Election Commission to Tk 25 crore from Tk 95 crore of the previous fiscal."

Former law minister and AL leader Abdul Matin Khosru said, "We are trapped in such a circle where the political system is criminalised and the criminalisation is being politicised. To some, politics is a very good business for making fast bucks."

Referring to the August 21 assassination attempt on the Opposition Leader, Khosru said, "After the incident, which was a well planned design to eliminate us, we have lost all respect for our opponents."

"It is a very dangerous psyche of some national leaders which wants to eliminate their rivals," he remarked.

AL leader AMA Muhit urged the civil society to formulate some agendas and initiate public mobilisation to realise those, saying, "Move with the agendas and ask the political parties to join hands with you."

Former cabinet secretary Mujibur Huq termed the Constitution inadequate and said, as it has proved unsuitable for the nation, it needs thorough changes.

He suggested forming a college with representatives from union, upazila and district parishads along with members of parliament to elect the President. "Such a process will bring a chance to get a President even from an opposition party," he hoped.

Eminent journalist Ataus Samad said, "Given the present circumstances, we cannot expect that the next parliamentary elections would be a turning point," adding even the changes that may occur in the next election may be lost if the tide of rising political violence is not brought to a halt.

Social Development Foundation Bangladesh Managing Director M

PM opens Novo Theatre

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feet. A four-storey administrative building is located at the back of the theatre.

There are at present 1,200 planetariums in the world, facilitating star research in different countries.

The prime minister in her speech announced various steps of the government for promotion of science and technology. The steps already taken include reorganising of the Science and Technology Ministry according to need of the time, and measures for encouraging children in science from the school level, considering every secondary school as the focal center for practising science.

She mentioned that the government upgraded the BITs to full-fledged universities and introduced computer science and technology in the curricula of colleges and universities.

JS sub-body

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soon to prepare a report on the alleged irregularities.

"We received some allegations of financial anomalies against the project director and we want to probe it soon," committee chairman Shahidul Islam told reporters after the meeting.

The allegations had been sent to the Prime Minister's Office as well for investigation.

The meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban discussed the reserves of natural gas in the country.

Petrobangla officials apprised the meeting that gas crisis will end by the next January. And from then on, adequate supply will be continued till 2014.

Rab nabs

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lane area at around 2:00am. Manik stands accused in businessman Abul Kashem abduction case.

A gang led by Manik allegedly abducted Kashem from Dhaka on July 19 this year. They took him to Chakaria in Cox's Bazar, from where the businessman reportedly managed to escape from captivity.

Following a lead from Manik, the Rab team the same day raided village Dhaloi under Hathazari upazila and arrested Kamrul Azam, 26. They also recovered an SMG, an empty magazine and a hockey stick from Kamrul's house.

Sources said Kamrul is a close aide to Manik.

The Rab members raided Chakaria again yesterday morning to recover more arms but to no effect.

Manik Khan while talking to journalists at the Rab headquarters in Patenga yesterday noon denied his links with the abduction of businessman Kashem. He said he is involved in Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) politics.

Both the arrestees were later handed over to Hathazari Police Station.

The prime minister noted that computers are being given to the secondary schools in rural areas and there are plans to provide 10,000 computers with internet connection.

She mentioned a plan for setting up high-tech park near the capital that will attract local and foreign investment in the ICT sector.

"Our steps in development of ICT have been acclaimed internationally," Khaleda told her audience.

The prime minister noted that these government steps are not enough. Private and individual initiatives are needed for expansion of the science and ICT sector.

Earlier, the prime minister unveiled the plaque of Bhasani Novo Theatre. Marking the occasion, she released a commemorative stamp and first-day cover published by Bangladesh Post Office.

Ministers, MPs, diplomats, and civil and high military officials attended the opening ceremony.

Rolling waters

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Recession of floodwater is being delayed due to unplanned building of roads and embankments.

About 50,000 marooned people are in urgent need of relief.

Scarcity of drinking water has worsened sufferings of the flood-hit as most tube-wells have gone under water. Officials apprehended outbreak of water-borne diseases.

When contacted, Kalaroa upazila Nirbahi Officer Laxman Chandra Debnath said 12 tonnes of rice have been distributed among flood affected people.

Our Jessore correspondent said flood situation in Monirampur and Jhikorgachha upazilas has deteriorated to further swelling of the river Kapotakkha.

More than 300 families of Uzzalpur, Dumurkhali and Gangpara villages have taken shelter in different educational institutions and on highways as their houses went under water.

Reports from Noakhali said flash floods due to heavy downpour have affected over 1.5 lakh in nine unions of Senbagh upazila. The flooding has damaged planted aman crops on about 9,000 hectares.

US-led forces

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which holds British hostage Kenneth Bigley and has already beheaded the 62-year-old's two US colleagues.

Another US statement explained that the other overnight attacks were aimed at destroying an "offensive obstacle belt...consisting of a series of concrete jersey barriers, earthen barriers and roadblocks, interlaced with improvised explosive devices."

Seven Iraqis were killed yesterday when attackers sprayed gunfire on a group of Iraqi national guard recruits west of Baghdad, hospital sources said.

Hafizuddin Khan said only the political parties can change the situation and ensure a better one if they want it sincerely.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haq Inu identified conspiracy, communalism and dynastic rule in the political parties as major threats to the functioning of democracy.

"Here lawmakers are lawbreakers," Inu said. According to him, people and ideas that were thrown in the 'dustbin of history' are now being rehabilitated in the political parties.

Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad Chairman Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad said, "The lopsided state existing now should not be let to continue in the country."

Pointing out that currently there is no mechanism to know what the general population wants he emphasised gearing the political process towards a stage where politicians and parties articulate people's intentions out of 'enlightened self-interests'.

Professor Tofael Ahmed doubted any political reforms being made in what he termed 'the chaotic present situation' and suggested reforms on three levels - the state, political parties and civil society.

Islamic Bank Ltd Chairman Shah Abdul Hannan expressed disappointment at the lack of patience of political parties and discouraged the opposition party's boycotting parliament.

He said foreign involvement in solving domestic issues should be avoided and more concentration should be put towards the elimination of criminal elements.

Brotee Chief Executive Officer Sharmeen Murshid said, "We don't need to hold the national election under a caretaker government if we have a strong Election Commission."

Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh leader Firoz M Hassan demanded to introduce voter identity cards and voting machine, regardless of cost, to ensure more authentic and fairer polls.

England

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half-chances at 83 and 94, was run out for 104 after he and Ashley Giles (31), Trescothick's only significant support, put on 63 for the seventh wicket.

It was Trescothick's eighth one-day century, off 122 balls. He hit 14 fours in all.

Lara, who ran him out after some neat work in the field, also provided the other highlight of the innings.

He pulled off a breathtaking catch, somehow getting his left hand under the ball at short midwicket, to hold a tracer-like pull from Andrew Flintoff off a Wavell Hinds long hop.

All-rounder Flintoff, with three centuries and a 99 in his last seven one-dayers, looked stunned as Lara was mobbed by his teammates.

The grass-level catch was all the more remarkable coming in poor light on a glacial day. It was Lara's 100th catch in one-dayers. He finished the innings with three catches.

West Indies are seeking their first major international one-day title since winning the 1975 and 1979 World Cups, England are the world's only leading side yet to win a major international trophy.

They began full of confidence after beating world champions Australia but struggled as Corey Collymore and Ian Bradshaw cut the ball past the bat regularly.

Partha

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The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) on September 8 pressed charges against Partha, showing 12 people as prosecution witnesses.

The investigation officer (IO) gathering statements of the witnesses said in the charge sheet that Partha read the news published in the Prothom Alo on the email threat at Hard.net Cyber Café on August 24, a 'link' which indicates his involvement.

Intelligence agents took Partha into their custody on August 25, two days after the email was sent to the Prothom Alo. They handed him over to Dhanmondi police on August 29.

CID Inspector Shafiqul Islam filed a case with Dhanmondi Police Station the same day on charge of undercover destructive activity.

The email, sent from hikmatulzihad@yahoo.com, claimed the responsibility for the August 21 carnage on an AL rally that left 20 people killed and over 200 hurt. It also threatened to kill Hasina in a more planned way in seven days.

4 family

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with his family members, was travelling in another car in the motorcade.

The car carrying the APS and his family members rammed a roadside tree as its driver tried to give side to another vehicle coming from opposite direction on the highway at 3:30am.

Abu's sister Halima Khatun Champa, 30, her husband Mazharul Islam Bullet, 35, Abu's sister-in-law Farida Begum, 30, and niece Tias, 6, died instantly.

APS Abu and his driver Rafiqul Islam were admitted to Rangpur hospital and later shifted to Dhaka.

Halima's one-year-old daughter, Maisa, who was in her mother's lap during the mishap, was miraculously safe and unharmed.

Meanwhile, the state minister expressed his deep shock at the loss of lives and cancelled his all programmes in Thakurgaon yesterday.

Bhutto

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small thatched hut in Kalapani area at Pallabi at 3:10am yesterday.

As the joint force went to road No. 9 to seize arms and nab his associates, the criminals launched a sudden attack on the team at 3:30am, claimed a police press release. The police retaliated in self-defence, the release added.

Bhutto tried to run away during the shootout and was fatally wounded as he took bullets 'fired by his aides', the press release said.

Pallabi police Sub-inspector (SI) Ashtaq rushed Bhutto to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) and he was declared dead on arrival there.

AC Khan, Sis Mahabub Alam and SI Shafi Uddin and Constable Anisur Rahman were injured in the shootout and are undergoing treatment at Rajarbagh Police Lines Hospital, according to the press release.

Meanwhile, Bhutto's wife Bilkis Begum told reporters at the DMCH that her husband lived at Pachnakhali of Dhanbari in Tangail for the last one and a half years after his release from jail.

The police arrested him when he was sleeping in that house at 4:00am on Friday, took away around Tk 25,000 and seized his motorbike, she alleged.

"My son was not involved with crime after he came out of jail," said Bhutto's mother Mabiya Khatun. His wife added, "He became a farmer leaving behind his chequered past and the police did not find any arms or illegal things in his possession."

"I want punishment of the killers of my son and want the seized goods and money back," his mother said.

Residents of the area where the shootout took place, meanwhile, said they only heard yells 'dhar', 'dhar' (catch, catch) and a couple of gunshots but did see nothing.

Joint assessment

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ported by the government. But an independent think-tank, the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) estimated the loss at between \$1.9 and \$2.5 billion that immediately drew flak from the UN organisation and the finance minister.

The joint assessment mission scrutinised the estimates of the UNDP, CPD and the government. It also talked to experts and the government departments before making field visits during the two-week exercise at arrival at its loss figure.

Saifur urged the donors for immediate assistance and observed that more should come in the form of fresh loans in addition to the pipeline commitment.

He said the government has to pay 'commitment charge' to donors for the idle money in the pipeline. He said the donors agreed to finance the government's ongoing rehabilitation programme from this pipeline with retrospective effect.

"The assessment the donors made is of the floods that ravaged the country during July-August period," Saifur told newsmen after the meeting. "But there has been fresh deluge because of sudden rain after the first floods petered out. We have urged the donors to take into account the damage wrought by the new floods."

In the meeting, the donors showed interest in assisting the rehabilitation of roads, water supply, sanitation, schools and other infrastructures. But they also questioned the government's implementation capacity.

The finance minister sought their assistance in the power sector too.

1,300 more detained

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and its front organisations across the country have fled their homes fearing arrest in the face of rampant raids.

Jails and police lock-ups are already crammed with prisoners. The police are producing the arrestees in courts and most of them are being sent to jail on various fake charges.

Court sources said the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka yesterday sent as many as 300 of the 321 people hauled up in the capital on Friday to Dhaka Central Jail, and released 21 others after fining them.

Of them, 21 were shown arrested under Section 54 (for suspicious movement) of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) and 179 under sections 74