

# Blast spree goes on in Assam

4 more killed, 40 injured

AGENCIES, Guwahati

A fresh wave of bombs ripped through streets and marketplaces in India's northeastern state of Assam yesterday, killing four people and wounding 40 in escalating violence blamed on tribal separatists.

India's insurgency-racked north-east was reeling yesterday from one of its deadliest waves of violence in years, as police reported more killings overnight that brought the death toll to 53 with 141 injured.

A string of bloody blasts and shootouts in adjoining Assam and Nagaland states on Saturday killed at least 44 people. Overnight another five victims died in hospital while four others were killed in fresh violence, police said yesterday.

The attacks came as India Saturday commemorated the birth of the country's independence leader Mahatma Gandhi, a champion of non-violence.

Fifteen people were wounded yesterday when rebels lobbed a grenade at shoppers in a teeming market in northern Assam's Sonitpur district, 180km from the main city Guwahati, a police spokesman said.

Late Saturday, one person was killed when gunmen fired on a train near Bagmari village in eastern

# Phenomenal security

**FROM PAGE 1**

The rally was one of the biggest showdowns of the AL where Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina made her first public appearance after the August 21 grenade attacks.

Party adherents from across the country joined the rally. Some of them were quite taken aback by the exceptional security measures prompted by the widespread allegations of poor security of the August 21 meeting.

Though the meeting was scheduled to start at 3pm, workers and supporters of the AL and its front organisations started to gather in the ground in processions at least two hours before chanting anti-government slogans.

The demonstrators held banners and placards with slogans like 'no more of this government', 'Khaleda and Nizami are responsible for grenade attacks' and 'days of the alliance government are numbered'.

Many of them wore headbands, badges and ribbons inscribed with similar slogans. Some of them also carried effigies of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

By 4:30pm the Maidan was flooded with multitudes of people. Many more stood in the adjacent areas including Gulistan, Bangabandhu Avenue, Noor Hossain Square and Rajuk Avenue to Dainik Bangla crossroads halting movement of all vehicles and creating a bitter traffic jam that continued into late evening.

Over a thousand police and intelligence men were posted on the podium, the adjacent ground, ways to it and surrounding buildings while a number of teams were seen patrolling in the teeming crowd. Contingents of Rapid Action Battalion were also deployed in the

## Korean shot

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taking away Jin's passport. The Korean arrived in Bangladesh on June 17 on a two-month's tourist visa and was staying in his friend's house in Uttara.

Sources said Jin met with State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar seeking his help to solve a problem set in due to his overstay in Bangladesh.

## Uttara suburb

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concerned do not pay any attention to the longstanding water crisis in Dakshinkhan because the locality stands detached from the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

"We spend most of our daytime fetching water from different areas," said Rahima Khatun, a housewife of the neighbourhood.

Dakshinkhan Union Parishad Chairman Khaili Molla said, "The union needs at least five water pumps as its population is more than six lakh."

"We've already allocated necessary land to the Wassa and installation work of a new pump station is going on," he said.

He requested the authorities concerned to ensure adequate water supply before the Ramadan.

"We need to install more water pumps to resolve the crisis in Dakshinkhan. But financial and capacity limitations do not allow us to do so," said Managing Director of Dhaka Wassa ANH Akhter Hossain.

Besides, scarcity of land is another obstacle to installing more water pumps, he added.

Akhter Hossain, however, said the present water crisis of the area will soon be over with the installation of new water pump.

He said the new water pump that will produce 40/50 lakh litres of water a day, will hopefully start operating before Ramadan.

## Mob kills 'mugger,' police informant slaughtered in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Miscreants slaughtered a police informant in Rampura area while a suspected mugger severely injured from mob beating died at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

In Mohammadpur, extortionists shot the general manager (GM) and a staff of a printing press as the GM refused to give them toll.

Police recovered the body of Qamruzzaman, 16, an informant to Khilgaon Police Station, from Aftab Nagar Project at South Badda at around 8:30am yesterday with his throat slit and bruises on different parts of the body and sent it to the DMCH for autopsies.

Family members said Qamruzzaman was missing since Saturday evening after two youths, identifying themselves as his friends, called him out of their house at Palash Bgh in Badda.

The victim's father Shamsul Islam suspects a local gang might kill his son for helping police to arrest one of their members a few days back.

He filed a case with Badda Police Station naming six locals as suspected killers. Police could not arrest anybody until last evening.

Muktar 25, a suspected mugger, admitted to the DMCH with injuries he sustained in a mob beating, died in the early hours yesterday.

A mob caught and beat him on Saturday noon after he snatched a gold chain from a female pedestrian at Dania area in Demra, police said.

At Adabor in Mohammadpur, extortionists stormed Abinash Printing Press and shot Islam Alam, 40, the GM and Farid Ahmed, 25, a staff at around 12:30pm.

"We were five people inside the GM's room when the miscreants entered and asked us not to move. As I tried to run away they shot me in the chest and moments later shot in Alam's right leg," said Farid who is undergoing treatment at the DMCH.

Alam is undergoing treatment at the Orthopaedic Hospital.

Asgori, a staff of the press said a local gang was pressing Alam for giving them tolls.

## Low over Bay

**FROM PAGE 12**

Cox's Bazar and 1,115km southwest of Mongla port at 12noon yesterday.

It is likely to intensify further and move in a northwesterly direction," said a special bulletin of the met office.

Maximum sustained wind within 44km of the depression centre is about 40kph rising up to 50kph in gust to squalls. The sea will remain moderate.

Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been asked to hoist the distant cautionary signal No. one and the fishing boats and trawlers over the north Bay and deep sea to stay close to the coast and proceed with caution.

## Sherpur journalist

**FROM PAGE 12**

They decided to keep blank space on the front page of newspapers for the next three days as a gesture of protest at the killing.

Dipankar started his career in journalism in mid 70s as a Sherpur correspondent of Daily Kartoa. He worked as an assistant editor of the daily for a long time. Besides, he worked for Daily Bangladesh and Daily Chandni Bazar before joining Durjoy Bangla.

He was the former president of Bogra Union of Journalists (BUJ) and Sherpur Press Club and convener of Sherpur Reporters' Unity.

BFUJ in a statement condemned the killing of Dipankar. They decided to hoist black flags at all the union offices and put on black badges till October 7.

## UK under-secretary

**FROM PAGE 1**

The arrival of Jay, who is accompanied by Stephen Smith, head of the South Asia Department at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), and his wife Lady Jay, follows a visit by British MP Oona King two weeks back.

At the end of her visit, King termed Bangladesh's democracy 'fragile' and expressed concern for what she said was a "daily erosion of democracy in Bangladesh."

This will be the highest level visit by a British official since the May 21 grenade attack on British High Commissioner Anwar Chowdhury.

King expressed serious concern over the grenade attack probe, which has made little headway.

Britain is the fifth largest bilateral development partner of Bangladesh and the third largest destination for export.

## Saarc officials

**FROM PAGE 1**

may come with a long negative list in the meeting. But three developing economies India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka may be flexible and accommodative to minimise the differences with the least developed economies of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) at the fifth meeting of its kind.

Presently, Bangladesh has major trade deficit with India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka as well as with least developed economies like Nepal and Bhutan within Saarc.

# Modern ships

**FROM PAGE 1**

Shibsa, two tugboats built at Khulna Shipyard.

At the function National Standard was given to the navy flotilla for its outstanding contribution to maritime defence of the country.

Earlier on her arrival at the jetty, Naval Chief Rear Admiral Shah Iqbal Muztaba received the PM and a smart contingent of marines presented guard of honour.

Addressing the function Khaleda said, "Effective steps have been taken to build Bangladesh Navy as a three-dimensional force through adding modern ships and gadgets, helicopters and submarines".

Elaborating on development in the navy under the present government, Khaleda said five offshore patrol ships had been purchased from the UK for round-the-clock vigilance to protect the marine resources within the huge maritime boundary as well as ensure safe movement of commercial ships. Of the five ships, the 'Kapotakhha' and the 'Korotoa' were commissioned last May.

"We are always active for modernisation of Bangladesh Navy despite resource constraints. Adding seven ships at one go to the naval fleet reflects the present government's firm commitment to well organise the naval force," she told the function.

The prime minister said she believed that offshore patrol vessels, fast-attack crafts and gunboats would play a remarkable role in safeguarding the country's waters, sea-wealth, economic interests and, above all, national security.

She thanked the governments of the two countries for providing vessels and congratulated those officers and sailors who brought the ships sailing past a long way.

The PM also specially congratulated the engineers and all concerned of Khulna Shipyard on their constructing two new tugboats-- the

## Grenade attack suspect remanded

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A court yesterday remanded Abdur Rahim, suspected of his involvement with the August 21 carnage on an Awami League (AL) rally, for three days more.

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) yesterday produced Rahim before the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka on completion of remand for five days, seeking further five-day remand.

The investigation officer (IO) told the court that he gathered important information from Rahim during interrogation, adding, the suspect needs to be questioned further for the whereabouts of his accomplices.

After hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate Mir Ali Reza granted the remand for three days.

The CID picked up Rahim, caretaker of a public toilet at Fubaria Railway Super Market on September 26.

Earlier on Saturday, Mohammad Waliullah alias Walin, arrested from Fulbaria Railway Colony on Friday on the same charge was remanded for five days.

Rahim, Walin, Saibal Saha Partha, Abdur Rahman, Habib alias Hannan and Badsha Miah have so far been shown arrested in the August 21 grenade attack case.

# Hartal called for Oct 10

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programmes, of which some will be observed simultaneously.

Though the left-leaning 11-party alliance will observe October 10 as a black day, it did not call a general shutdown for the day. Its announcement came from a meeting of its leaders in the city.

Leader of the Opposition and AL President Sheikh Hasina proclaimed her party's agitation programme from a grand rally held in the city's Paltan Maidan.

The opposition combine has also extended support to a 24-hour countrywide shutdown on October 6 called by Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (Skop) and a grand rally of Industrial Workers' Co-ordination Council on October 8.

Under the weeklong anti-government action plan, AL, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), Workers Party and Jatiya Janata Party will organise road marches at all the upazila headquarters on October 11.

They will demonstrate on October 12 observing it as the 'anti-repression day' protesting the mass arrests and harassment of innocent people by law enforcers, law and order downside, and price spiral of essentials.

Workers Party disclosed its course of action at a rally held in Shahid Hadis Park in Khulna.

## Family flees

**FROM PAGE 1**

Efzalul said that, on July 15, at one stage of a typical husband-wife altercation he in a fit of temper uttered the word 'talak' (divorce).

Three days later when they had almost forgotten the trivial incident, local religious leadership of the village came to his house and asked him to send his wife to her parents.

He was also told that he would have to live without Anjuma unless she performs a 'hilla' (marry someone else other than his husband).

They warned him that he would have to face dire consequence if he continues to live with his wife.

"Both my wife and me outright rejected the so-called decree and continued to live together," said Efzalul.

But the religious leaders stuck to their 'judgment' and kept insisting on his sending Anjuma to her parents, he added.

On September 23, a group of people led allegedly by Hafez Mannan, Munsii Montaz, Mominul Islam, Saidul, and Sultan swooped on their house. His father Alef Uddin and mother Rezia Khatun were seriously wounded in the attack that also left the house badly damaged.

Alef Uddin was sent to Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

They repeatedly threatened to kill the family members if the couple does not comply with the fatwa.

"Since then, all my family members have been on the run," said Efzalul.

Efzalul, a day-labourer, said they were leading a happy conjugal life despite poverty. But after they were forced to flee their house with the 11-month-old son, they are passing the worst days of their lives, he continued.

Efzalul said he had filed a case with Kotwali Police Station but the police are yet to arrest anyone in this connection.

The superintendent of police in Rangpur yesterday told The Daily Star that he did not know anything about the incident. He, however, said the culprits must be nabbed, if anything such had really happened.

The legal aid and human-rights organisations in Rangpur have condemned the incident at Bouyipara and urged the administration to take action against the culprits.

The co-ordinator of Blast said they along with other human-rights organisations in Rangpur plan to bring out a procession to protest the 'inactivity' of the law enforcers regarding the fatwa incident.

## MODHUMOTI TOWN Court stops earth-filling for 4 weeks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday stayed for four weeks operations of the September 1 High Court vacation of an August 15 injunction on earth-filling of sub-flood flow zone at Amin Bazar in Savar under Modhumoti Model Town Project.

In so doing, the Vacation Bench of the Appellate Division headed by Justice Md Tafazzal Islam reinstated the August 15 High Court orders that slapped a six-month injunction against Metro Makers Limited.

The reinstatement follows an appeal petition filed by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) against the September 1 orders.

The High Court Division Bench of Justice Md Abdul Wahhab Miah and Justice Zinat Ara on August 15 also asked Metro Makers to stop running advertisements on plot sales under the project.

The Supreme Court yesterday in a rule asked the government agencies to explain why they should not be directed to protect the sub-flood flow zone being filled up by Metro Makers.

It also asked the government why Modhumoti Model Town Project, which no authorisation from city development planners Rajuk (Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha) is violation of the applicable laws, should not be declared illegal.

The High Court Division Bench of Justice Joyrul Abedin on September 1 vacated the August 15 injunction order.

Senior Advocate Khondker Mahbubuddin Ahmed, assisted by advocates Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Tanjib-ul Alam, Iqbal Kabir and Abul Kalam Azad, moved for Bela.

## Rab on alert

**FROM PAGE 12**

appears to be dead set on having his man elected. Rab plans to deploy troops across the upazila to thwart any attack by terrors on the run.

A local BNP leader said on condition of anonymity, "The deaths of Jan-e-Alam and his cohorts have broken his mentor's heart and significantly diminished his sway over the locality. That man is now desperate and would go to any lengths to get the municipality's chair."

"Raozan has really been spared a bloodbath over this municipal polls with the deaths of Jan-e-Alam and his gang, as he [Alam] was a commissioner candidate for Ward-9," he added.

Rab officials said they would continue their hunt to nab other listed criminals of Chittagong including Raozan and Fatikchhari.

Rab has already stepped up its surveillance in south Raozan to track down another top criminal, Azimuddin Mahmud, who was convicted in the sensational Srikantha Raxit Murder Case and sentenced to death. Rab officials said. They believe Azimuddin might be hiding in this area.

Gittu Nasir, Habib Khan, Sajjad, Selim alias BDR Selim, Fazal Huq, Bidhan Barua, Dulu, Babar, Sunil, Moshed Khan and Alam alias Etim Alam are among the criminals on the Rab's wanted list.

Meanwhile, sources said some of the top listed criminals including Shbir Nasir, Azizya, Azrai Delwar, Bhagina Ramjan and Jamai Faruk, now in jail, are avoiding submission of bail prayers, as they are too scared of Rab to come out of the safety of jail custody.

## Dhaka loses

**FROM PAGE 12**

Box told a seminar at the BTC conference room yesterday, calling upon businesses in the country to prepare for facing the threat of TRMs.

He cautioned that the incidence of TRMs would increase in the quota-free trade regime when, experts predict, domestic industries would suffer stiff competition from a huge inflow of imported products.

The BTC organised the seminar on "Unwarranted Trade Remedial Measures in Importing Countries: New Threat to Bangladeshi Export" aiming to make business community aware about the threat of TRMs looming closer with the passing of the year.

Commerce Secretary Mohammed Aminur Rahman also spoke on the occasion, stressing the need for preparation to face the TRM challenges.

The seminar was told that 1,511 antidumping measures (ADMs) had so far been imposed worldwide. India, USA, EU, Argentina and South Africa are top five to court the curbs by way of slapping ADMs.

The top five target sectors of ADMs were base metals and articles of base metals, chemical products, plastic and rubber articles, machinery and mechanical appliances and electrical equipment, and textile and textile articles.

Meanwhile, the total number of countervailing measures (CVMs), as of December 31, 2003, stood at 100.

The top four target sectors of CVMs were base metals and articles of base metals, prepared foodstuff, beverages, spirits and vinegar, tobacco, vegetable products and plastic and rubber articles.

The total number of safeguard measures was 62, as of December 31, 2003.

# Hasina vows

**FROM PAGE 1**

Hasina, also president of the main opposition AL, demanded fresh election and announced a weeklong agitation that include a dawn-to-dusk hartal across the country on October 10, the day the alliance government will celebrate its three years in office.

The main opposition's grand rally was held peacefully with unprecedented security measures taken by the government to ward off any untoward incident in the wake of the August 21 carnage that killed 20 people and wounded over 200.

Tens of thousands of people joined the rally from different parts of the capital, adjacent districts and elsewhere carrying banners, placards, posters with antigovernment slogans braving the ongoing crack-down on opposition activists.

"Resignation of the BNP-Jamaat coalition government is now the only demand of the people," Hasina said. "The government has already proved its inability to govern the country and ensure security to people in last three years."

"There is no security of public life...People don't want to see such failed rulers anymore," said the opposition leader amid thunderous response from the audience. "We want democracy to continue and people to get back their rights to vote."

"What the BNP-Jamaat led coalition has given to countrymen in last three years?" she asked her political opponents. "Only deaths," she herself replied, accusing the alliance of releasing 70,000 criminals from jail to snatch peace and security of public life.

The AL chief reached the rally venue at 4:45pm in a jeep and slowly proceeded to the podium through the human sea in the Paltan maidan and surrounding areas. Personal security men and party leaders created a human shield to save her from any attack.

In a pin-drop silence, she began her speech paying homage to the victims of August 21 grenade attacks and said, "Tens of thousands of people are here, but some are not whom we lost forever in the deadly attack".

"I am ready for death to save the life of a single worker of my party," said a grateful Hasina who in her 33-minute speech stopped several times to wipe tears.

The AL chief specially recalled her slain party colleague Ivy Rahman who was killed in the August carnage. "She was one who used to sit here in the midst of crowd at any rally," Hasina said. "Now she is now more with us."

Referring to the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman along with most of his family in 1975, Hasina expressed her pain of losing near and dears and also her party comrades. "I have no words to express sympathy to the victims' families."

"Losing all in my family I stood beside the people only to work for their betterment ...I didn't want to see anymore deaths and bodies," Hasina said presenting a grim picture of the deadly bomb blasts taking place frequently in the country.

About the August 21 grenade attacks she claimed at least 23 were killed and over 400 wounded. Most of the injured will have to carry grenade splinters in their bodies until death, she said blaming the government-backed religious extremists for it.

On the just-released report of the judicial commission on the grenade attacks, Hasina said the report reflected the views of the government only.

Hasina said it's the responsibility of the armed forces to identify the criminals who brought the grenades to the country. "As protectors of the country and its sovereignty the armed forces have to do this."

Referring to the killing of a number of criminals reportedly by the Rab which was passed off as deaths in 'crossfire', Hasina said even the notorious criminals have the right to justice. "But custodial death has now become a commonplace."

The AL chief said the criminals were being killed as the government wanted to save their godfathers "who are ministers and lawmakers of the ruling alliance".

The criminals would have revealed the names of godfathers had they been interrogated instead of being killed in such a manner, she said.

The leader of the opposition observed that Parliament has become totally non-functional and alleged her party lawmakers were deprived of the right to discuss the August 21 grenade attacks while ruling party MPs allowed to speak against the opposition.

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"Treasury bench lawmakers accused the Awami League itself of the attack saying that we had done it to tarnish the image of the government," said Hasina posing a question, "Is there any image of Bangladesh under the rule of Khaleda Zia to the foreigners?"

She said Bangladesh is now considered as champion in corruption. "Prime minister, her family members, ministers and lawmakers of the alliance government have damaged the country's image," she alleged.

She accused the government of killing prospective leaders of her party with the help of criminals in a planned way.

Hasina thanked the world leaders who expressed sympathy to her after the grenade attacks.

The AL chief also narrated how the alliance government has crippled the economy, made parliament dysfunctional, politicised administration, harboured criminals and their godfathers and amassed wealth.

Chaired by Zillur Rahman, the rally was also addressed by Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Abdul Jalil, Suranjit Sengupta, Motia Chowdhury, Sheikh Fazul Karim Selim, Mohammad Nasim, Mohammad Hanif, Syed Ashraful Islam, Abdul Mannan, Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury and Badruddin Ahmed Kamran.

# Foreign country

**FROM PAGE 1**

name the local agents of the foreign enemies blamed for the carnage, saying it is impossible for the judicial commission to identify the perpetrators.

It is the responsibility of the intelligence agencies to trace them. The commission conducted the inquiry at a macro level and hinted only at the operatives and the masterminds," the source said.

The report termed the deadly incident a naked attack on the independence and sovereignty of the country and recommended the intelligence agencies be immediately revamped for foiling a repeat of such incidents.

"No recommendation was made for the defence forces since they have the mandate to protect the country from the external forces. The report rather asked for making the intelligence agencies efficient so that they can trace such plots much earlier and foil them," the source said.

The commission conceived the idea of foreign link to the incident after discussions with former officials of the police and intelligence agencies, sources said. The officials gave the commission a picture of the operations of foreign intelligence agencies in Bangladesh.

Taking advantage of confrontational politics at home, a foreign intelligence agency has been working for long to have a stronghold in Bangladesh, the sources said.

The commission observed local intelligence and security agencies are incompetent and their officers are frustrated with contractual appointments and authorities' neglect of the competent investigators.

It recommended promotion of efficient officials in the agencies, which it believes, will make them more sincere in their job, the sources said.

The report made 22 recommendations including one for increased security for the leader of the opposition.

Apart from recommending filming of rallies and meetings by intelligence agencies for identifying perpetrators of such attacks in future, the commission suggested cordon off the rally venue to facilitate an immediate search for and arrest of the attackers.

All buildings near the venue must be checked properly before a rally or meeting begins, the commission recommended.

The commission also suggested a forensic laboratory be set up at the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and a bomb disposal squad of the police.

**GRENADES, NO BULLET**

The commission said only grenades were used in the attack, but it failed to specify the how many grenades were hurled during the attack. It said one grenade might have been thrown from above and the rest from the ground.

The commission did not find any evidence of bullets said to have been fired at Leader of the Opposition and AL President Sheikh Hasina's bullet-proof vehicle that carried her to her residence after the attack.

It said grenade shrapnel left the marks in the vehicle.

**BABAR MUM**

State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar yesterday declined to comment on the judicial commission's report.

"I'll not talk about this matter," Babar told The Daily Star last night by phone when asked if they would go public with the report.

The commission submitted the report to the home ministry Saturday after six weeks of investigation.

**'MAKE REPORT PUBLIC'**

Senior Supreme Court lawyer Dr M Zahir, who is also a member of Supreme Court Bar Association team probing the incident, said, "The report should be made public as people have the right to know its content."

The government also has the right to decide otherwise if the report contains sensitive and secret information, he told The Daily Star last night by phone.

Dr Zahir declined to comment on the foreign link to the incident, saying that he did not know the content of the report and that if it has named any country.

He however doubted if that information is true and said the government might think disclosure of that country's name would not be wise.