

# Cops charged over Beslan siege

BBC ONLINE

Russia has charged three police officials with criminal negligence over the Beslan school siege in which more than 350 hostages died.

Deputy police chiefs were charged in the North Ossetia region, where Beslan is located, and adjacent Ingushetia, where some hostage-takers came from.

A prosecutor said an inquiry into officials' poor performance is ongoing.

The charges are the first to be brought in what is likely to be a lengthy investigation.

Two police chiefs who are the direct bosses of the three men will be charged when they come out of hospital, where they are apparently being treated for complaints not linked to the siege.

Two of those already charged are based in the Ossetian Pravoberezhny district and one in the Malgobek district of Ingushetia.

Prosecutors will not give details of the charges, but a spokesman told the BBC the list was long.

It is thought to include failure to provide adequate patrols of the border area, and responsibility for the presence of a rebel camp in

Ingushetia.

The only gunman captured alive by Russian forces says the hostage-takers trained there for their attack.

Residents of Beslan welcomed the charges as a start, though they are furious that the gunmen ever made it to their town.

Many believe the gunmen bribed their way through police checkpoints.

Many local people blame the police for not preventing the militants from entering the school and for not keeping local militiamen away once the shooting started.

More than 1,000 people were taken hostage after more than 30 armed men seized the school during a ceremony to mark the first day of term on 1 September.

A siege ended in bloodshed two days later when explosives planted by the hostage-takers went off inside and special forces stormed the building. Half the victims were children.

Chechen warlord Shamil Basayev later took responsibility for the hostage-taking and other recent attacks on civilians in Russia.

The Russian parliament is conducting an investigation of its own into the events.

# BDR on high alert

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A BDR high official preferring anonymity told The Daily Star that besides alert watch on the borders, greater diplomatic efforts are required for a quick solution to the new push-in problem.

Between January and April this year, 60 Bangla speaking Indians were pushed in by the BSF in nine separate attempts. However, they were immediately pushed back by the BDR, sources say.

On July 19, three Indians, two men and one woman, were pushed in close to the Ghaghra Border Outpost in Panchagarh. The three were pushed back by the BDR on July 20 through a different outpost, sources say.

No further push-in attempts were made till October 1 when five Indians -- two men, one woman and two children -- were pushed in through the Balarhat Border Outpost (BOP) under Kurigram's Fulbari Upazila.

The BDR pushed all the five back through another BOP that evening, sources say.

On October 17 and 18, nine Indians were pushed in near Amarkanta BOP in Panchagarh, who were then pushed back between October 19 and 20. At least eight similar attempts were foiled in October, sources add.

BDR officials said the push-in attempts are being made largely at the northwest and western borders and no flag meetings between the BDR and the BSF were held on the issue.

Sources said BDR's Rangpur Sector Commander Colonel Lufur Rahman has discussed the push-in with his BSF counterpart Deputy Inspector General Harish Kumar over telephone on Monday. Col. Rahman has also proposed a sector commander-level meeting, but the BSF did not make any decision until yesterday.

When contacted over telephone last evening, Col. Rahman refused to comment on the matter and only said: "The situation is now calm."

But despite the calm, the border people are tensed by the possibility of further flare-ups.

# AI condemns

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torture, cruelty and degradation".

Amnesty's report accused Washington of stepping onto a "well-trodden path of violating basic rights in the name of national security or 'military necessity'."

"The war mentality the government has adopted has not been matched with a commitment to the laws of war and it has discarded fundamental human rights principles along the way," it said.

At best, Washington was guilty of setting conditions for torture and cruel treatment by lowering safeguards and failing to respond adequately to allegations of abuse, it said.

At worst, it had authorised interrogation techniques which flouted its international obligation to reject torture and ill-treatment under any circumstances.

**HAUNTING IMAGES**

An army general acknowledged for the first time in August that US troops tortured prisoners at Abu Ghraib jail in Iraq.

Pentagon leaders and Bush's officials had previously steered clear of describing the physical abuse and sexual humiliation of Iraqi prisoners as torture.

Photographs published in April showed US soldiers posing and smiling as naked, male Iraqi prisoners were stacked in a pyramid or positioned to simulate sex acts with one another.

One prisoner was standing on a

box with his head hooded and wires attached to his hands. He had been told he would be electrocuted if he fell off the box.

Amnesty said the US and the world would be "haunted by these and other images for years to come". They were "icons of a government's failure to put human rights at its heart".

Yesterday's report -- "Human dignity denied: Torture and accountability in the 'war on terror'" -- urged Bush and Kerry to commit to opening an independent inquiry into all US interrogation and detention policies.

"The core message of this report is that the prevention of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment is primarily a matter of political will," it said.

Amnesty also criticised a tendency in the US to gloss over aspects of war and violence -- referring to torture and degrading treatment as "stress and duress" for example -- which it said threatened to promote such practices.

"The human rights violations which the US government has been so reluctant to call torture when committed by its own agents are annually described as such by the State Department when they occur in other countries," the report said.

"Doubtless standards have greatly undermined the credibility of the US's global discourse on human rights," it said.

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# Govt inertia to fight

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of the beneficiary families of Rangpur, Gaibandha, Nilphamari, Kurigram and Lalmonirhat districts will receive a combined package of loan and grant ranging from Tk 5,000 to Tk 20,000.

The number of Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) cards issued per union in the districts will also be increased from the present 2,000 to 2,500.

But opposition members of the parliamentary body including GM Quader of Jatiya Party observed people in the region are starving because of crisis of money and work. The committee suggested starting the package without delay.

"If the government's financial assistance package starts after Eid, it will take one more month to implement. By the time people of the region will have some work," Abdul Mannan said. "They need financial assistance now."

About agri-rehabilitation programmes, members of the parliamentary body asked the ministry of agriculture to raise the number of farmers who will benefit from the programmes that started after the July-August flooding.

The ministry has initiated the

## Khaleda wants

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implemented a lot of socio-economic development programmes during the last three years and it would continue to do so to maintain the process in the next two years.

Khaleda, also the chairperson of the BNP, asked the party leaders and workers to strengthen the organisation in their respective areas.

She asked them to hold more meetings in the district, upazila and unions levels after Eid and also to face the opposition's negative activities to remain army chief.

The meeting was addressed by more than 20 field-level leaders of the party. BNP Secretary General and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan also spoke.

The prime minister said the government had faced the devastating floods successfully and is now carrying out the post-flood rehabilitation programme.

She said the opposition has no issue in their hands to wage anti-government movement and all their attempts including the "trump card" has failed.

The prime minister said the opposition might try to agitate in the streets in the coming winter and asked her party leaders and workers to remain alert against their activities.

In his speech, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan urged the party leaders and workers to create public opinion against the army.

The field level leaders, in their deliberations, discussed political and organisational matters and also the development programmes of the government.

They discussed the law and order situation, prices of the essentials, terrorism, upazila elections and performance of Rab.

The grassroots level leaders called for holding such meetings between the party chairperson and the field-level leaders.

## Indian PM

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The Indian PM wanted a "neighbourhood of peace so that our neighbours and we can focus on the urgent tasks of development. However, our pursuit of peace does not imply that we will relax our vigil or compromise on our defence."

His remarks came two days after Myanmar assured India that it would not allow its territory to be used for activities directed against India.

So far India has coordinated action against Indian insurgents only with Bhutan whose Royal Army had destroyed the 'ultras' camps on its territory in December last year while the Indian army dealt with those insurgents who crossed over to India.

India has also asked Bangladesh to act against the northeastern Indian insurgents in the latter's territory but Dhaka denies their presence in its soil.

## Charge-framing

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police on August 29.

Inspector Shafiqul Islam of the CID (Criminal Investigation Department) filed a case with Dhamanpoli Police Station the same day accusing Partha of undercover destructive activities.

The e-mail sent to the Bangla daily on August 23 from the address [hikmatulzihad@yahoo.com](mailto:hikmatulzihad@yahoo.com) claimed responsibility for the August 21 carnage on an Awami League (AL) rally that left 20 people killed and 100 wounded.

It also threatened to kill AL chief and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina in a more planned way in seven days after the gory episode that shocked the nation to the core.

The investigation officer pressed charges against Partha on September 8, showing 12 people as prosecution witnesses.

On September 15, Partha was shown arrested in the August 21 grenade attack case filed by the rotating EU presidency.

Lawmakers from across the political spectrum hailed Barroso's

## HC asks govt

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alike under the section.

The bench will hear the case in full on November 24.

During the submission of the supplementary affidavit yesterday, the government side opposed the petitioners' appeal for a list of arrestees, saying it had already provided such a list. The defence was referring to a list of people incarcerated under the same section of the DMP Ordinance during the mass arrest in April that submitted to the court in July.

Moving on behalf of the petitioners Dr M Zahir argued if the list is not provided, the people arrested would be unaccounted for. He said the list is a must to know the condition of the arrestees and secure justice for them, specially the poor victims.

Barrister Sara Hossain and Barrister Tanvir Ahmed assisted Dr Zahir, while Additional Attorney General AJ Mohammad Ali and Assistant Attorney General Adilur Rahman Shuvro represented the government side.

Sultana Kamal, executive director of Ain O Salish Kendra, a legal aid and rights organisation, lodged the supplementary affidavit on behalf of the petitioners.

Leading organisations of the petitioning groups include the HRLAC of Bangladesh Bar Council, Ain O Salish Kendra, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, Bangladesh National Lawyers' Association, Centre for Development Studies, Hotline Bangladesh, Kormojibi Nari, Odhikar, Shomilmo Nari, Somaj, Somilmo Samajik Andolan and Samajtantrik Mohila Front.

He proposed distribution of adequate fertilisers and seeds among farmers at a fixed rate.

The agriculture ministry is providing 25 kg fertiliser and 3 kg seeds for each of the 3 lakh marginal farmers in the first phase.

Awami League lawmaker Dr Abdur Razzak alleged the government is distributing substandard, mixed fertilisers among the farmers. "Quality of the mixed fertiliser is questionable," he told the meeting.

# Parliament in uproar over Musharraf's army role

AFP, Islamabad

Several plots to attack American targets in Jordan have been foiled but US citizens remain under threat, the US State Department has said.

Speaking through the US embassy in the Jordanian capital, Amman, it urged its citizens to take extra precautions.

The embassy's notice warns of extremists who "continue to call for violence against Americans".

It gives no details of the alleged plots but links them to "groups loyal to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and al-Qaeda".

Jordanian-born Zarqawi is thought to be behind a series of kidnappings, killings and attacks in Iraq.

The US has offered a \$25m reward for his death or capture.

Security in Jordan was tightened in April after the authorities said they had prevented plans to set off a huge chemical explosion in Amman.

The US embassy said it had "received credible reports that several plots to attack American interests in Jordan have been disrupted over the past six months".

It warns that extremists currently present in Jordan are "intent on harming Americans" and do not distinguish between civilian and official targets.

US companies and individuals are urged to increase their security measures in light of the threat.

Jordan's army already protects all major government buildings, with numerous roadblocks in place.

He says the US embassy's warning is a reminder that pro-Western Jordan is a prime target for attack by extremists.

Earlier this month, Jordan charged 13 suspected Muslim militants, including Zarqawi, over alleged plots to attack targets in the kingdom.

**EU in turmoil over commission team**

REUTERS, France

The incoming head of the European Commission has withdrawn his proposed EU executive team to avoid an unprecedented European Parliament defeat, plunging the 25-nation bloc into turmoil.

Jose Manuel Barroso's last-minute retreat created political uncertainty yesterday just two days before EU leaders are to sign the proposed Commission to replace the 25-nation bloc's first constitution in Rome.

"I have come to the conclusion that if a vote is taken today, the outcome will not be positive for EU institutions or for the European project," Jose Manuel Barroso told the assembly an hour before the investiture vote had been due.

"In these circumstances, I have decided not to submit the new European Commission for your approval today," he said. "I need more time to look at this issue."

Barroso's team faced rejection after he refused to replace his nominated justice and security chief, Italy's Rocco Buttiglione, who outraged many lawmakers with his conservative Roman Catholic views on homosexuality and marriage.

The president-elect declined to say if he would now replace individuals or just reshuffle the 25-member team's portfolios.

"My intention is to change what is necessary and sufficient," the former Portuguese prime minister said to stay on at the request of Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende, whose country holds the EU presidency.

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Parliament cannot veto individual members but can vote down the whole team.

## India to retain act

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Union against 'foreigners', an euphemism for migrants from Bangladesh.

The BJP-led NDA government viewed the IMDT Act as a major hurdle in detecting and deporting illegal migrants. Former Assam Governor Lt Gen (Retd) S K Sinha had in a report two years ago warned against demographic change in the state in the wake of migration from Bangladesh and recommended repeal of the Act.

The NDA government had also introduced a bill in the last session of the previous parliament to repeal the Act but it was promptly referred to a select committee headed by senior Congress leader Pranab Mukherjee who is now defence minister.