

FBI finds link between 9/11, Madrid bombs

REUTERS, Madrid

The FBI has established the clearest link yet between the March 11 Madrid train bombings and the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, a Spanish newspaper reported Sunday.

The FBI has told Spanish investigators that one of three men believed to have planned the Sept. 11 attacks from Spain in the summer of 2001 also gave the order to carry out the Madrid blasts, the newspaper ABC reported.

The train bombings killed 191 people and wounded 1,900 three days before a general election. In videotapes, the bombers claimed the attacks in the name of al Qaeda in Europe and said they were in revenge for Spain sending troops to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Investigators have long concluded that the Sept. 11 attacks were partially planned in Spain in July 2001.

Hijacker Mohammed Atta, believed to have piloted one of the airliners that crashed into New York's World Trade Center, visited Spain two months before the attacks and met two men.

One was Ramzi bin al-Shaibah, who is being held by U.S. authorities, while the other was unidentified.

ABC said investigators now believe that third man was the one who in December 2003 activated the Qaeda cell that carried out the March 11 attacks, which Spaniards call "our Sept. 11."

ABC said investigators had narrowed his identity down to three candidates and believed he was a lieutenant of Mustafa Setmariam, increasingly considered to have been a leader of the Madrid train bombings and who may have held a leadership role for al Qaeda in Europe.

Setmariam, aged 45 and of Syrian origin, was already wanted as part of a separate investigation into Islamic militant activity in Spain and is the subject of a Spanish wanted notice issued through Interpol.

The State Department said on Nov. 18 it was offering a \$5 million reward for information leading to the capture of Setmariam, also

known as Mustafa Setmariam Nasar or Abu Musab al-Suri. It described him as an al Qaeda member and former trainer at "terrorist camps" in Afghanistan.

Some 30 people are in custody or under court supervision for the train bombings for which one minor has so far been convicted. Seven prime suspects are dead and two or three other suspected collaborators remain at large.

AL walks out

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He said, according to newspaper reports quoting the judicial commission chief, his report blamed a country and a party for the grenade attack but did not mention any names. So, for the same of transparency, these reports should be placed in parliament for review and discussion by all.

But, rejecting all the demands, Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar said, "As the judicial commission has already investigated the matter, I am not inclined to constitute a parliamentary committee. And forming an parliamentary committee is not an easy matter."

On AL's demand for discussing the probe reports in the House, Sircar said the matter has been discussed but the main opposition members missed it. "There can not be a fresh discussion on the issue," he ruled.

The Speaker's rejection prompted the AL lawmakers to stay out of House business for about five minutes after the Maghrib break.

On a separate point of order yesterday, AL lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta accused the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) of discriminating against opposition lawmakers in allocation of relief materials.

Showing a distribution list of shares by the PMO dated October 18, Suranjit said, as per the list, the shares were allocated to 221 lawmakers of the ruling coalition but none of the 77 opposition lawmakers received any of the relief materials.

The Jatiya Sangsad session resumed yesterday after a long Eid vacation and will continue till December 2.

Govt asked to reply

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deal with crimes and human rights through extra-judicial killings in custody and so-called crossfire.

The main opposition Awami League has also demanded of the government to disband the 'killing force'.

Over 50 people have so far been killed in Rab custody and 'crossfire'.

During hearing of the writ petition yesterday, Advocate Razvir Rahman Chowdhury said, "Rab is not operating in line with the responsibilities bestowed by the government. Rab is violating its own laws."

"Under the ordinance, Rab is to run investigations on government orders, but it is apparent that Rab is running investigations without government orders," Chowdhury added.

According to the Criminal Procedure Code, Rab is to inquire about an incident of crime in order to file FIR (first information report) before it can launch a probe. But Rab is taking action on the basis of its own investigations and then filing FIR, he added.

Chowdhury presented numerous press reports to corroborate his allegations and said, "I am not going into the question if Rab is good or bad, but these newspaper reports are proofs that Rab is not acting according to its legally-bound duties."

Assistant Attorney General Zaman Akter Bulbul, representing the state, refuted the allegations. He said the law relating to the formation of the force has been passed in parliament and the force has been formed in line with the constitution.

They also gave a 72-hour ultimatum to arrest the attackers and threatened to go on indefinite strike if their demands including upgrading the college to a public university remain unmet.

On the other side, the transport workers, too, issued a 72-hour ultimatum demanding punishment of the attackers and compensations for the damages to their vehicles.

Police and Rab contingents were deployed in the area and other points of the city to thwart any further untoward incident.

Analogous

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should not be drawn against them and why they should not be punished for maligning the judiciary.

Judge Faizee had been withdrawn from the bench following sharp criticism of his appointment in August last.

CU committee

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Committee member and head of Computer Science Dr Md Nurul Mostafa told The Daily Star that the university authorities are yet to issue the relevant papers to the committee.

Female ward

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Kamran, however, denied the allegation of discrimination and said the matter was a result of misunderstanding.

Talking to the BBC Bangla Service last night, Kamran said he was trying to run the SCC in line with the government notification which ensures exercising equal rights by both the sexes.

"If there is any misunderstanding among male and female representatives then it should be solved through discussions," he said.

Meanwhile, female ward commissioners are planning movements including hartal to realise their demands if they don't get any positive response from the mayor by December 7.

Cancel order

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with local political leaders had started recruiting the employees in exchange for bribes.

However, the government is yet to take a decision regarding the recruitment of another 35,000 employees under different ministries.

In many ministries, the government also suspended recruitment amid allegations of irregularities and corruption.

Sources said the government has withdrawn the cancellation order not only for the political pressure but it also feared legal battle since the order sparked resentment among those who got the jobs.

The aggrieved employees appointed by the district administration threatened to sue the government against the cancellation order.

Rab members

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were beating up the driver and conductor of the bus following a ticket dispute. As the Rab tried to calm down the situation by giving their identities, the youths turned their anger on them.

They swooped on the members of Rab-3, beat them up all, took the cellphone from Rab Sergeant Ataf Hossain and fled the spot.

Sergeant Ataf filed a GD with Siddhirganj Police Station Saturday after the seven - Muslim, Pavel, Sharif, Liton, Arif, Kamal and Tariq -- were nabbed. They were sent to a magistrate's court yesterday.

RU JCD unit

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separate processions at 11:30am. They pelted bricks at each other and fought with sticks. Later, Aslam's followers captured the organisation's hangout and drove Moti and his men from the campus after the RU proctor and students' advisor rushed to the scene with police.

At 1:30pm, Rafiqul Islam, a Moti supporter led a group of processionists who paraded down the campus brandishing firearms and tried to recapture the hangout. They however left the campus seeing police.

Motiar later told reporters that he did not know of the armed procession and blamed 'some identified outsiders and non-students' for the violence.

Aslam held Moti responsible for the clash and alleged that Moti was trying to rehabilitate some expelled JCD cadres on the campus.

RU authorities called in an additional number of policemen on the campus to avert further clashes.

Rights activists

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Speaking at the first session of the conference, Sultana Kamal, executive director of Ain-O-Salish Kendra (ASK), said "We are not against the formation of Rab but we are against any sort of extra-judicial killings."

"Law enforcing agencies should be equipped with modern facilities and they must be free from all sorts of political interference," she said.

Ayesha Khanom, general secretary of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, said, "Rab is not the long-term solution to improve the country's law and order situation."

"Every citizen should have the right of access to justice but many people in Bangladesh are denied justice because of the judicial process," she observed.

She also said the constitution has to be followed while forming the Human Rights Commission (HRC).

Speaking at the inaugural session of the conference, Jorgen Lissner, resident representative of UNDP said formation of an independent HRC and ensuring the independence of judiciary could best address the problem of human rights.

Australian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Lorraine Barker urged the government to take effective steps for protection of religious minorities' rights.

Speaking at the inaugural session as chief guest, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Barrister Moudud Ahmed said the revised draft for formation of an HRC has been finalised and it will be placed before the cabinet very soon.

He also said the government is making changes in the country's judicial process so that people can have easy access to justice.

State Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Barrister Muhammad Shahjahan Omar termed the Rab action against criminals a 'need of time'.

He also said human rights is a multi-dimensional issue which varies from country to country.

Taj Mahal unveiled by full moon

AFF, Agra

Tourists thronged to the Taj Mahal as India unveiled the 17th century monument to love under a full moon for the first time in 20 years after a ban on night viewing was lifted.

Armed guards threw open the stately gates of the Taj Saturday night in this northern Indian town as visitors flocked to gaze at the architectural wonder which appeared to float in the moonlight.

"This is the ultimate Valentine's Day rendezvous," said Pooja Kumar, who was here to celebrate her first wedding anniversary with her husband, Manish, a New Delhi-based physician.

"It's the most beautiful ode to love," she said as she gazed at the onion-domed, white-marble mausoleum.

The Taj Mahal was built in the 17th century by the heartbroken Mughul emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his second wife Mumtaz Mahal.

Savitri Golcha, a poet who was visiting Agra in memory of her late husband, paid tribute to the monument.

"In this light mist, it's singing a soulful dirge," said Golcha, one of the 48 visitors who were allowed to join the first batch to enter the complex. "It also sings songs of unbounded joy," she said.

The ban on night viewing was imposed immediately after the Indian army attacked in June 1984 the Golden Temple, Sikhdom's holiest shrine, in northern India to flush out heavily-armed separatist guerrillas from the complex.

Israel wants to change Arafat death certificate

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Israel has asked French authorities to change Yasser Arafat's listed place of birth on his death certificate to Cairo from Jerusalem, an Israeli official says.

"We expect the truth to be revealed, especially in light of the fact that the formal document was published by a Western country," the official, based in Paris, told Reuters by telephone on Sunday.

Israel's ambassador to France, Nissim Zvili, made a formal request to the French Foreign Ministry to change Arafat's birthplace on the death document to Cairo, said the official who declined to be identified.

Arafat, who died at the age of 75 of an undisclosed illness in a French military hospital on November 11, always maintained he was born in Jerusalem.

Israel and leading biographers say he was born in Cairo.

"History should not be altered. The

New Delhi feared the attack could trigger a retaliatory strike on the Taj by Sikh militants.

India's Supreme Court gave permission earlier this month to allow tourists to view the Taj on full moon nights and on two evenings before and afterward from 8:30 pm to half-past midnight.

The court said night viewing would be allowed for three months to ensure proper security was in place. It said only 400 tourists would be allowed on a given night with entry allowed in batches of 50 people for security reasons.

Police stepped up security for the moonlight opening of the Taj.

"Over 200 hundred policemen have been deployed in and around the Taj and commandos will guard key access points," local police chief Alok Prasad told AFP.

Tourists will only be allowed to view the Taj Mahal from a red sandstone platform about 350 yards (318 metres) from the monument.

"This is a precaution... we do not want people to get too close to the monument at night," Prasad said.

"Tourists will also be banned from carrying video cameras and electronic gadgets like mobile phones into the Taj complex.

Agra's tourism industry was upbeat about the prospect of more visitors flocking to the famed monument, which celebrated its 350th anniversary in September, after the Supreme Court decision.

"This is certainly a welcome step and will help to boost tourism to this city," said Rakesh Chauhan, president of Hotel and Restaurant Association of Agra.

"If night viewing of Taj is made

permanent than the impact will be even greater," said Sunil Gupta, president of the local chapter for the Indian Association of Tour Operators.

But Arun Dang, president of Agra Tourism Guild called for a facelift for Agra, known for its potholed congested roads and ramshackle architecture if night viewing becomes a regular feature.

"People expect for very romantic reasons and what they find in the city is not romantic," he said. "Tourists want to cuddle up here after such a touching moment and we should be there to give them the comfort," he added.

A perennial image in tourist guides to India, the Taj Mahal last year drew 800,000 foreign and 2.2 million domestic tourists. It was given a facelift two years ago to remove decays of grime and pollution stains.

However, tourists often chafe at the daytime entrance fee for the Taj Mahal. Foreigners pay 750 rupees (16.40 dollars) each while Indians pay just 20 rupees.

Graft case

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case, she said. They also threatened to take her in their custody and implicate her in a dozen of cases if she did not pay them Tk 2 lakh for recovering the car, she alleged.

The plaintiff said fearing police harassment she paid the sum on June 27.

Meantime, the court ordered the OC to submit a report regarding return of the car to its real owner. As Shirin went to the cops, they again demanded Tk 20,000 for submission of the report, she said, adding, she paid the amount on July 30.

She went to the police station on September 2 when the accused demanded Tk 1.50 lakh for submission of the report. As they again threatened her, she paid the sum, Shirin alleged.

Kin, associate

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joint team of CID and police raided several hideouts of Mokbul at Keshempur, Kuch Pukur and Debnagar villages at dead of the night. It was then they arrested Mizan.

Locals said Mokbul's mother is Turi Begum of Keshempur and father is her former husband Islam Ali of Nalkura village. Turi is the leader of a gang of shoplifters known as 'Tana Party'. Members of Tana Party posing as buyers steal garments and clothes from shops in the capital and sell their booties to the locals in Sakhira.

So, they said Mokbul inherited a criminal psyche from Turi and when he grew up formed a criminal gang of his own in the capital.

According to locals, Mokbul, who had for long been residing in Dhaka, returned to his village home soon after the grenade attacks, and some time later he and his brother Haroon with their family members went on hiding to avoid arrest.

Sakhira SP Abdur Rahim said early yesterday police are still interrogating the arrestees to extract more information about Mokbul and his whereabouts, adding once Mokbul is arrested important clues to the grenade attack are expected to come out.

But, later in the day, police placed the arrestees in custody of two local union parishad chairmen.

Skin thin

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aphrodisiac, can fetch as much as \$25,000.

"It is believed that about 100 years back, the global population of wild tigers was about 100,000," Dey said. "However, the population dwindled to 8,000 by 1960. Today it stands at around 5,000 to 7,000."

The forum is an inter-governmental body set up to save the surviving tigers in the wild in 14 countries including Bangladesh, Vietnam, Myanmar, India, Russia, Nepal, China and North Korea.

Dey said three out of the eight sub-species of tigers were already extinct - the Bali tiger in 1940, the Caspian tiger in the 1970s and Javan tiger in the 1980s.

Another sub-species, the South China tiger, could also soon disappear.

"Whether tigers still exist in North Korea is doubtful and debatable," he said, noting that statistics were not available.

Officials said illegal poaching of wildlife, especially in large parts of south and southeast Asia, is to blame for the reduction in the wild tiger population.

"Illegal hunting of wildlife has not been strictly controlled resulting in the severely decreased population of tigers in Vietnam," said Vietnam Agriculture Minister Cao Due Phat.

The number of wild tigers in Vietnam does not exceed 150, he said.

Vietnam had clinched several agreements with neighboring countries, including China, Laos and Cambodia, to halt trans-border tiger poaching, he said.

Iran apparently agrees to stop enrichment

AP, Vienna, Austria

Backing down before a Monday deadline, Iran apparently has given up its demand to exempt some equipment from a deal freezing uranium enrichment programs that can make nuclear weapons, diplomats said yesterday.

Diplomats from the European Union and elsewhere said on condition of anonymity that the International Atomic Energy Agency received a letter from Iran containing a pledge not to test some centrifuges during the freeze it agreed to November 7 during negotiations with Britain, France and Germany on behalf of the European Union.

The pledge appeared to resolve a dispute that threatened to escalate into possible referral of Iran to the UN Security Council for defying the IAEA board. The Security Council could then impose sanctions against Iran.

On Sunday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said Tehran was maintaining a demand made Thursday at the start of the IAEA meeting to use the 20 centrifuges. The centrifuges spin gas into enriched uranium.

Tehran had insisted the November 7 deal allowed it to use those centrifuges purely for research, but the EU disagreed.

The diplomats told The Associated Press on Sunday that the letter still needed close examination to determine what exactly the Iranians had agreed to.

Earlier Asefi had said Iran was not worried about being referred to the Security Council.

"What is important is the legitimate right of our country and we won't give that up," he said.

Only if the Iranians agreed to totally suspend enrichment including all use of the centrifuges would the dispute be resolved, they said.

The Iranian promise came a day before the IAEA the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency was scheduled to reconvene in Vienna amid a building crisis on the issue of enrichment suspension. Iran's program can produce both low-grade nuclear fuel and weapons-grade material for the core of nuclear warheads.

Iran says its program is for generating electricity, but the United States insists Iran is trying to make nuclear weapons. President Bush (news - web sites) called Iran part of an "axis of evil" with North Korea and prewar Iraq.

The IAEA meeting adjourned Friday with the intention of giving Tehran until Monday to approve a total freeze of its enrichment program. Delegates also were to decide on further steps in policing Tehran's nuclear activities.

France, Britain and Germany say a November 7 deal they worked out with Iran includes all equipment as part of the freeze but Tehran had insisted it had a right to run some centrifuges for research and development purposes.

Iranian officials had suggested the issue of using 20 centrifuges for research was not up for debate only hours before the revelations that they had apparently dropped their demands.

"Referral to the U.N. Security Council would not be the end of the world," Asefi said in Tehran earlier

Tk 3,000cr umbrella

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and that it may be revised upwards through inclusion of additional components, meeting sources told The Daily Star.

Donors other than the WB and ADB have also promised additional funds for the post-flood rehabilitation. Once the project is finalised, the Planning Commission and the Economic Relations Division will meet donors about funding and the project components.

166 feared dead

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explosion, rescuers were struggling to make progress, local officials said.

"The rescuers can't go any further because the gas density is too high," an official surnamed Wang from the Tongchuan city mining bureau told AFP.

The gas explosion happened in a pit some eight km from the entrance to the shaft, Xinhua said.

Those who escaped were mainly miners working near the entrance, although some of them were reportedly poisoned by carbon monoxide.

The official from the Shaanxi mining bureau refused to speculate on the miners' chances of survival.

"We cannot say yet. We cannot give up," said Duan.

He said the mine was state-owned and produced 1.6 million tons of coal last year. "It's one of the large mines in China," he said.

Officials at the site refused to comment and the exact cause of the accident was under investigation.

Shaanxi's communist party secretary Li Jianguo and acting governor Chen Deming had rushed to the site to oversee rescue work, Xinhua said.

This year's deadliest mining accident occurred on October 20 when 148 workers were killed after

Sunday.

The Europeans say the deal committed Iran to full suspension of enrichment and all related activities at least while the two sides discuss a pact meant to provide Iran with EU technical and economic aid and other concessions.

EU delegates to the Vienna meeting said British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw spoke this weekend with Hassan Rowhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council and his country's point man on nuclear matters, in an effort to resolve the dispute.

As the clock ticked down to Monday, EU officials and delegates spoke of the growing likelihood of tough action at the board meeting if Iran remained defiant including the start of work on a harsh resolution that could include the threat of U.N. Security Council action.

Hinting at the possibility of such a draft, one of the EU delegates said Iran was "fully aware" of the consequences of not accepting a full freeze.

That would mean withdrawing a draft resolution written last week by Britain, France and Germany containing intentionally weak language on how any freeze would be monitored by the agency in an attempt to entice Tehran to sign on to total suspension.

That confidential draft, made available to the AP, authorized IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei to "pursue his investigations" into remaining suspicious aspects of Iran's nuclear activities over the past two decades.

RU law exams

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chancellor (VC) and raise their demands.

Meanwhile, law faculty dean Prof AFM Mohin said, "If RU authorities ensure security, then we will hold examinations any time."

Another mass suicide in Japan suspected

AP, Tokyo

Four men were found dead yesterday in a sealed Tokyo apartment littered with charcoal stoves, a scene police said appeared to be Japan's latest suicide pact.

It appeared the four died of carbon monoxide poisoning, police said.

Suicides in Japan hit a record high last year, exceeding 32,000.

Last week in two separate incidents, six people were discovered dead in deserted cars also strewn with charcoal stoves. In October, seven people killed themselves in what police said was Japan's largest-ever mass suicide.