

## Kibria, 4 AL men killed in grenade attacks

70 wounded as killers throw 2 grenades on AL rally in Habiganj; Hartal tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria and four other Awami League (AL) activists were killed in a grenade attack on an AL rally at Boidder Bazar in Habiganj yesterday evening.

About 70 others were injured in the grisly attack, similar to the August 21 carnage on Sheikh Hasina's rally in the capital last year that had claimed 23 lives and left

several hundred wounded.

The four other dead were identified as Kibria's nephew Shah Manjurul Huda, 40, and AL activists Siddique Ali, 35, and Abdur Rahim, 50, of Bongaon village and Abul Hossain of Shayestaganj.

The AL called a countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal for tomorrow protesting the attack. It blamed the BNP and the Jamaat for the carnage and planned a 'non-stop agitation' after the shutdown.



A dead Kibria is being taken to Birdem at 11.30am.

District unit AL also called for a daylong hartal today in Habiganj.

Immediately after the attack, critically wounded Kibria and Habiganj District AL General Secretary Abu Jahid were rushed to the capital by an ambulance.

Kibria died on the way to Dhaka and doctors at Birdem Hospital declared him dead at about 12.30am, soon after he was taken to the hospital.

Kibria's nephew Shah Manjurul

Huda, AL activists Siddique Ali and Abdur Rahim died on the spot. Abul Hossain who was brought to Dhaka along with three others died at Birdem about 1:00am.

An advisor to the Awami League, Kibria was elected a member of parliament from Habiganj-3 constituency in the 2001 general elections.

In instant protest, people torched a ruling BNP office and at

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### Kibria's life sketch

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

SAMS Kibria was born on May 1, 1931. He obtained BA Honours in economics from Dhaka University in 1952 and completed MA in the subsequent year. He secured first class first position in both honours and master's.

Kibria was Bangladesh's finance minister during Awami League's rule from 1996 to 2001. He got elected as a Member of Parliament for the first time in 2001 from Habiganj-3 constituency.

On completion of education life, Kibria joined the foreign service by securing first position in Pakistan Central Superior Service examinations in 1954. He was a director at Pakistan's foreign ministry and also served as Pakistan's envoy to USA, India, Egypt and Indonesia during the period between 1957 and 1970. He disassociated himself from the Pakistan government during Bangladesh's Liberation War and left Pakistani embassy in Washington on August 4, 1971. During the Liberation War he worked for mobilising public opinion in favour of Bangladesh's independence in the US. He used to edit

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### WITNESS ACCOUNT

#### Power cut before attacks

BISHAWJIT DAS

Witnesses to yesterday's grenade attacks on SAMS Kibria said the killers had switched off power at the rally venue before carrying out the carnage in the twilight.

"Sir (Kibria) was the target of the attackers," Anup Kumar Dev,

Habiganj district AL office secretary, said while describing the incident to The Daily Star.

"The grenade was thrown at them as they stepped out of the narrow school gate where the meeting was held. The blast rocked the whole area spreading hundreds of

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### Wail breaks the news

SHAMIM ASHRAF

A shrill wail broke the silence near the Birdem operating theatre (OT), heavy with only the sound of breathing, as the hospital secretary general announced Kibria's death.

The declaration virtually froze Kibria's relatives and party men who found it inevitable once they saw the mutilated body, hit by innumerable grenade splinters.

"He was brought dead here," Dr AKM Azad declared at 12.30am.

It was one of Kibria's uncles who could not control himself and screamed. Then, other relatives and party activists burst into tears. They had no hope to cling on to.

Three hospital security men were posted at the OT gate to prevent people from rushing inside where the 74-year-old bureaucrat-turned-

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Hasina wipes her tears as she gave her reaction after midnight at the death of Kibria.

### Tearful Hasina blames ruling coalition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina burst into tears on hearing the news of her long-trusted comrade SAMS Kibria's death last night.

Talking to newsmen at her Dhanmondi residence at 1:00am, Hasina, also the president of Awami League, held the ruling coalition responsible for all bomb and grenade blasts including the last night's in Habiganj.

She castigated the BNP-led ruling coalition for failing to bring the culprits in the earlier blast incidents into book and said, "This suggests they (government) had backed the attackers in all these incidents."

Referring to the August 21 grenade attack on her rally, bomb explosion at Sylhet shrine last year

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### A grisly reminder of unsolved killings

ZAYADUL AHSAN

It has the chilling similarity to the August 21 grenade attacks on Sheikh Hasina. The venue is a public rally, the speakers and participants all Awami League workers. The timing of attacks is just when the rallies ended. Even the weapon of murder is the same -- deadly hand-grenades.

But more chilling is the fact that the government remained surreptitiously silent about the previous events. Probes fizzled out leaving the killers under a safe shield even after several international inquiries. More ominous is the fact that early signs of grisly attacks were there as huge arms were seized -- in Chittagong, Bogra and the capital. Email threats were around. But everything remained

under a mysterious cover as the government refused to bring the 'plot' to light.

Yesterday's grenade attacks in Habiganj only left the nation wondering and guessing who could be the killers and what could be their ulterior motives behind such killings of opposition leaders mostly belonging to the Awami League leaders and the progressive section of the society.

Even five months after the assassination attempt on Hasina, probes were still in the wilderness and even sidetracked with the attention diverted to an unnamed country and the opposition itself both by a controversial judicial probe and government high-ups.

And the trigger-happy killers,

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### TENGRATILA GAS FIELD BLOWOUT Probe body blames Niko negligence

SHARIER KHAN

A government-formed committee to probe the Tengratila gas field blowout blames faulty and negligent operation of Canadian company Niko Resources for the disaster.

The seven-member committee set to submit its report on Sunday believes that the blowout did not cause as much 'internal damage' to the gas reserve as the Magurchara gas field explosion did.

"The damage mainly took place at a shallow depth. It seems that the tremors that accompanied the blowout were caused by pressure of gas coming out from a shallow depth with tremendous velocity from

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### SAARC SUMMIT Moratorium on Jatra to make security foolproof

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the wake of the recent spate of bomb blasts in Jatra shows, the government yesterday imposed a one-week moratorium on staging the folk theatre from February 1 to ensure a foolproof security for the February 6 to 7 Saarc summit.

State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar yesterday said it is not a ban but a temporary move to avert any possible terrorist attack on Jatra shows during the 13th Saarc summit.

"Jatra will be there after the summit," Babar told The Daily Star

yesterday. "We've instructed law enforcing agencies to remain careful and mount guard at public gatherings where criminals may carry out subversive activities," he added.

Bomb attacks on Jatra shows at two remote villages in Bogra and Natore districts on January 14 and 15 left two men dead and at least 60 people injured.

Aggrieved at the moratorium, Jatrashilpo Unnayan Parishad President Ramzan Ali Mia told The Daily Star, "Failing to ensure security, the government is infringing on

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### BILL PLACED IN US SENATE RMG exporters hope to get duty-free access to US market

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Apparel exporters are expecting a big boost in their venture as a bill proposing duty-free access to the US market on all products from 14 least developed countries (LDCs) including Bangladesh was raised in the US Senate on Wednesday.

"We are expecting that it will be placed in the US Congress soon. Two influential senators from the Republican Party and two Democrats have supported the bill," Anisul Huq, president of BGMEA, told a discussion yesterday.

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) organised the discussion on 'Post-MFA and Banking Issues' at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

"We are trying our best and making all-out efforts so that it can be executed within one year," the BGMEA president said referring to the bill titled 'Trade Relief Assistance for Developing Economies'.

A BGMEA delegation visited the US between September 20 and 24, seeking supports from the US administration, senators and congressmen for passage of the bill so that the least developed economies

can get duty-free access to the US market.

The garment sector leaders while meeting with the US policymakers explained that Bangladesh and other LDCs will have to compete with countries like China, India and Pakistan and it would be very difficult for them to survive in the quota-free regime.

They said the LDCs need the duty-free access of their products to the US market for their survival in the highly competitive era.

Once the bill is passed, the 14 countries will enjoy preferential treatment and tariff reduction on their products.

BGMEA leaders said there is huge cost involvement in the move and there is no guarantee that the bill will be passed. Some senators and congressmen involved in the process are expected to visit Bangladesh soon.

Of the total 49 LDCs, mostly from Asia and Africa, 33 now get the duty-free access to the US market and the rest 16 do not have such facility.

The bill will provide preferential treatment for the products of Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Cambodia, Kiribati, Laos, the

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### ADB okays \$180m for post-floods recovery

UNB, Dhaka

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) yesterday approved \$180 million to help restore critical social and economic activities in Bangladesh disrupted by the devastating floods of June last year.

The loan, approved following the joint damage and needs assessment undertaken in September 2004 by the ADB and the World Bank, in coordination with the government of Bangladesh, will assist in rehabilitating public and community infrastructure.

The project will rehabilitate public infrastructure in five priority areas -- rural infrastructure, roads, railways, water resources and municipal infrastructure -- to restore access to basic services and enable people to resume their normal life, said an ADB press release.

It will also strengthen the government's disaster preparedness by adopting flood-resistant infrastructure design standards and helping enhance existing early warning systems.

"Disasters such as this disproportionately affect the poor in terms of health, housing, employment, livelihood, and food security," says Hans Carlsson, an ADB principal

project implementation specialist at ADB's Resident Mission in Bangladesh.

"Given the extent of damage and needs assessment, the governments and affected communities face a high price to rehabilitate public infrastructure and facilities."

According to the joint damage and needs assessment, the combined losses to assets and output amounted to at least \$2.3 billion, constituting 3.9 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), said the ADB release.

The floods adversely affected 36 million people, or about 25 percent of the population, and caused severe damage to infrastructure and other assets. They also disrupted economic activities, inflicting heavy losses to agricultural and industrial output and slowed down expansion in services.

The flooding also set back progress achieved in poverty reduction, with the poor and the vulnerable suffering most in terms of losses to crops, livestock, property and housing, and reduced income opportunities.

The ADB immediately responded to the disaster by establishing a flood monitoring unit in

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