

## A grisly reminder

**FROM PAGE 1**  
boosted by the government's inaction, took another chance this time, killing former finance minister SAMS Kibria.

Major bomb blasts that left 150 people killed and about 1,000 injured in the last six years still stand unresolved as the attackers remain unpunished revelling in the politicisation of the probes.

After each attack, the authorities started probes, sometimes several simultaneous investigations, but almost all of them stalled halfway for reasons not known.

Intelligence operatives, who on several occasions voiced suspicion that Islamist militants might have links to some of the explosions, said pressure from the government high-ups did not let them go ahead with the investigations.

An explosion at a cultural function of Udichi in Jessore on March 6, 1999, which left 10 people dead and more than 100 injured, set off the series of bloody blasts across the country that would go on to date. Mostly the Awami League (AL) activists and the progressive forces have been the targets of these attacks.

Each in the long string of blasts had sent a wave of shock and anger across the country sparking strong protests and prompting the authorities to promise tough actions against the killers. But as time passed the probes sink even deeper into blame-shifting keeping the victims' relatives as well as the people on the edge.

The same old tale unfolded on all previous occasions when bomb attacks claimed human lives and inquiry committees were formed and cases were filed briskly. None of the criminals has yet been convicted and awarded punishment prescribed by law for such offences.

The political blame game over the blasts, however, continue unabated between the government and the opposition as the culprits remain out of the reach. In each incident during the last AL rule, the government blamed an 'alliance between the religious extremists and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party'. And similarly when they happened under the coalition rule, the government took no time to shift the blame onto the main opposition AL.

In most of the cases, the authorities have even failed to find out the criminals responsible for the attacks.

On October 8, 1999, eight people were killed and 30 others injured in a

## Call money

**FROM PAGE 12**  
The NCBs yesterday sold Tk 800 crore to fund-seeking private banks at a 15 percent interest rate, compared to 30 to 70 percent charged by private banks and leasing companies.

Excessive lending by certain aggressive banks has pushed up the rate, which normally hovers around only 5 percent. The situation has been prevailing for more than a month now.

The central bank's injection of Tk 350 crore through repurchase agreement yesterday could hardly cool down the market. In just four days after the Eid holidays, the Bangladesh Bank (BB) has pumped Tk 890 crore into the money market.

Yesterday the exchange rate of US dollar soared to Tk 64.40, up by 20 paisas from the previous day.

Interestingly, the dollar is being sold at an odd low of less than Tk 60 on the curb market. The rate also differs by Tk 2 to 3 between the NCBs and the private banks who are selling it at the highest price.

The exchange rate of dollar remained mercurial although Sonali and Agrani banks released 10 million dollars at a rate of Tk 61 yesterday. They had sold it at around Tk 60 the day before.

Meanwhile a four-member delegation of Bangladesh Association of Banks (BAB) led by its chairman Syed Manjur Elahi met BB Governor Fakhrudin Ahmed yesterday to discuss the situation.

Not all banks are abiding by the central bank's rules and regulations, the governor pointed out to the Bab team, adding actions will be taken against the violators, a Bab member told The Daily Star.

The call money rate has been soaring high because a number of banks are unable to manage their funds properly, Ahmed observed and urged the bankers to ensure proper fund management.

## Service rule

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Directives. Educated but visually impaired people could not take part in the previous BCS exams due to government's inaction.

The PSC had issued a circular to the visually handicapped candidates, allowing them to take part in the 26th BCS (Special) exam through shorthand writer. The PSC decision came after a candidate submitted an application on December 26.

But the PSC issued the circular on condition that it will cancel their exam if the government includes recruitment of visually impaired in its service rule.

"We allowed the visually impaired to sit for the 26th BCS exam following the PSC directives," told Rofiq, a member of the PSC, told The Daily Star.

"We'll now look into the rules and regulations regarding blind people's eligibility to be recruited in the jobs," Rofiq added.

But another member told The Daily Star that they cannot take any decision about recruiting the visually handicapped until the establishment ministry does not include provisions in the service rule.

Abdul Gafur, a visually impaired BCS candidate who graduated from Dhaka University, said they appealed to the prime minister for taking immediate steps in this regard.

"Four efficiency is proved through examination then it will be injustice if the PSC does not allow us to be recruited for the jobs," said Gafur.

bomb blast at Ahmedia Masjid in Khulna. In the same year bomb blast killed four persons at Alal Pak Darbarsharif Faridpur.

Seven people were killed in near-simultaneous bomb blasts at a rally of the Communist Party of Bangladesh at Paltan Maidan and near the Awami League (AL) headquarters on January 20, 2001.

On April 14, 2001, 10 people were killed and about 50 wounded in a blast at a cultural function at Ramna Baitul.

On June 3, 2001, 10 more were killed and 30 others injured in a bomb attack on a church at Baniarachang in Gopalganj.

On June 15, 2001, a bomb attack on the Awami League (AL) office at Narayanganj left as many as 22 people killed.

On September 23, 2001, eight people were killed and more than one hundred injured in a bomb attack on an AL public meeting at Mollahat in Bagherhat.

On September 26, 2001, four more people were killed in a blast near an AL rally in Sunamganj.

On September 28, 2002, more than 100 people were injured in a series of blasts at a cinema hall and circus pandal at Sathkira.

On December 6, 2002, bomb blasts in four cinema halls at Mymensingh town killed 27 and injured more than two hundred others.

On January 17, 2003 seven persons were killed and 20 others injured in a bomb blast at a fair in Tangail.

Three people were killed and British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Anwar Choudhury was among at least 70 injured in a powerful bomb blast at Hazrat Shahjalal Shrine in Sylhet on 21 May last year.

On August 21, 2004 grenade attacks on an AL rally in Dhaka left 21 including top AL leader Ivy Rahman dead and over 100 injured. AL President Sheikh Hasina narrowly escaped the attack believed to be an attempt on her life.

Besides, in the last two months six incidents of bomb blasts in village fairs and cultural functions in Bogra, Natore, Jamalpur, Sherpur and Pabna districts had left two people dead and 145 injured. Intelligence men probing the blasts suspect that Islamist militants might have been involved in the explosions.

In most of the probes police have made little headway. Last year the law enforcers gave the final report in the CFB blast of 2001 without yielding anything against the persons responsible for the attack. Besides, they are preparing to submit final reports in the cases of Mymensingh cinema hall blasts, Tangail Shakhipur, Sylhet Shahjalal Shrine, Bagerhat and Baniarachang church blasts and these too without any result to punish the culprits.

Hasina accuses

**FROM PAGE 12**  
addressing at an opening sharing meeting with the women committee of party's labour wing at its Dhamondipoint office.

The opposition leader also expressed dissatisfaction over the sentences given to opposition men by a Speedy Trial Tribunal on Wednesday. That day eight activists of the youth and student fronts of opposition AL were sentenced to varying jail terms for ransacking the luxurious house of businessman Giasuddin Al Mamun in a backlash against the killing of Ashanullah Master MP.

Hasina said the people of Gazipur had spontaneously protested the killing of Ashanullah Master, adding that it was a 'mass upsurge'.

She added that while no headway has been made in the case of Ashanullah Master MP, the people who protested the killing have already been punished.

Addressing the programme, the opposition leader also blamed the government for its failure to check the price hikes of essentials, unabated corruption by alliance men and the killing of people by special forces without trial.

Rowshan Jahan Sathi, Shamsunnahar Bhuiyan, Fatema Zohra and Rebeka Sultana were present at the programme.

## Criminals

**FROM PAGE 12**  
Dipak Kundu alleged Rashid and his men committed the misdeed, as the committee did not act at his will.

"Rashid asked the committee to remove the temple from the place five days ago. He went on rampage inside the temple for not complying with his orders," Kundu said.

When asked, Rashid told The Daily Star that he did not damage any idol, but admitted he snapped the temple's electricity connection.

He also admitted he asked the temple committee to shift the temple, as it is on khas land (government land). He added that he wants to get lease of the land.

Kundu refuted Rashid's claim and said the temple stands on its own land. He said they did not call the police first as they tried to settle it themselves.

"Rashid never wanted to minimise it. Rather he has continued threatening the Hindu families," he alleged.

A huge number of police were deployed in the temple area yesterday.

## RMG

**FROM PAGE 12**  
Maldives, Nepal, Samoa, Solomon Islands, East Timor, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Yemen.

Of these countries, only Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos and Nepal have apparel manufacturing base and the rest have interest in the bill for exporting other products.

Sri Lanka, a developing country in Asia, has also been included in the bill as it has been severely hit by recent tsunami.

## EXISTENCE OF BANGLA BHAI US embassy refutes foreign ministry views

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The US embassy yesterday refuted a foreign ministry official's comment that US embassy officials had reported that Bangla Bhai has no organised existence in Rajshahi.

Private News Agency UNB yesterday quoting a US Embassy source said that the embassy officials had visited the Rajshahi area only as part of routine visits. The officials periodically visit different parts of Bangladesh including Rajshahi division to "assess at first hand local issues and circumstances", it continued.

UNB adds, the embassy source said, "This is a normal diplomatic practice. We do not, however, provide any reports on these visits to anyone other than the US government, which is also a normal diplomatic practice."

## Kibria's life

**FROM PAGE 1**  
a news bulletin depicting the war news.

After independence, Kibria was called back home and given the responsibility of director general of political wing of the foreign ministry. He became Bangladesh's foreign secretary on March 11, 1972. He was appointed Bangladesh's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations in 1976. He discharged the responsibility of foreign secretary for the second stint in 1978 and in the same year he also took over as the executive secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (Escap).

SAMS Kibria joined AL as a member of its advisory council in 1992. He became political advisor to Sheikh Hasina in 1994. Besides, he served as the head of the central election conducting committee of AL.

He has left behind a son and a daughter. His wife Asma Kibria is a noted painter.

## Wail breaks

**FROM PAGE 1**  
politician was lying dead.

Top AL leaders who sat at Sudha Sadan to decide the next course of action appeared at the hospital on information of Kibria's death. They tried to console the shell-shocked relatives in vain.

"We have no place to go, people have no security in this country... this country has been pushed into destruction," AL Presidium Member Tofail Ahmed said.

The former minister failed to hold tears, shattered at the grisly incident that came only five months after another cruel grenade attacks on AL rally on August 21 when 23 people including AL's Women Affairs Secretary Ivy Rahman were killed.

Wiping his cheeks, Tofail said, "This incident could never have happened if the government punished the people behind the Bangabandhu Avenue attack."

Police were guarding Birdem Hospital's main entrance since news came at 9:30pm that Kibria was being brought to the hospital.

Apart from journalists, Kibria's relatives and AL adherents started thronging to the hospital after TV channels aired the news.

While local AL activists were taking Kibria and other two grenade hit AL men, party leaders Abdus Samad Azad, Tofail Ahmed, Amir Hossain Amu, Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Abdur Razzak, Asaduzzaman Noor, leaders of Bangladesh Chhatra League, Jubo League, Svecchhasebak League, Sramik League kept waiting at the hospital gate to receive him.

AL GS Abdul Jalil and JSD President Hasanul Haq Inu also joined them later.

As soon as the ambulance reached there at 11:22pm, relatives and party men's wailing filled the whole area.

On three trolleys kept ready at the entrance, they were rushed to the third floor operating theatre.

Failing to stop the rush of visitors, the hospital staff closed the gates. But many forced open the gate and gathered in front of the OT.

Every minute the visitors waiting for doctors' statement of their health appeared too long before one doctor made unofficial announcement of Kibria's death before reporters.

After undergoing surgery, Abdullah was shifted to a cabin while Jahid was kept in the OT till 12:30am.

Talking to The Daily Star, senior AL leader Abdur Razzak came down heavily on the coalition government for not bringing to book the people behind repeated bomb and grenade attacks.

"The government's indifference to these incidents encouraged the perpetrators to carry out more attacks. How many more deaths it (government) wants to see to move to take action?" the former water resources minister asked.

"They (government) have no right to stay in power anymore because their attitude proves best that they had hands in the incidents," he said.

## Insurgents

**FROM PAGE 12**  
Ramadi, west of Baghdad, left one dead.

In Mahmudiya, a Sunni town in the Triangle of Death south of Baghdad, a roadside bomb exploded as another Iraqi military convoy passed local people selling cattle on a main road.

A doctor at the main Mahmudiya hospital said five people had been killed and 15 wounded, including four soldiers.

## Govt slated for sitting

**FROM PAGE 12**  
Following the latest price hike of diesel that made irrigation costlier, the agriculture ministry had sought Tk 381 crore as subsidy for diesel but the finance ministry have not yet released the money, sources said.

Besides, the government is yet to channel the Tk 271 crore subsidy for fertiliser to the farmers. Officials of the agriculture ministry however told yesterday's meeting that necessary steps have been taken in this regard.

In a recent development, the finance ministry has agreed in principle to give subsidy for diesel but it asked the agriculture ministry to inform the finance ministry about the mechanism of reaching the subsidy to the farmers.

The parliamentary body yesterday asked the ministry to finalise the mechanism in seven days and submit a report to the committee and the finance ministry. The parliamentary body will then pursue the matter and review the situation.

"We are also thinking about how the subsidy could be provided for the farmers. In absence of a proper mechanism, the middlemen may take the benefit depriving the farmers," committee member GM Quader told reporters after the meeting.

The government has targeted boro cultivation on 40,20,000 hectares this season that would need about 12 lakh tonnes of diesel to run the irrigation pumps. Thirty percent of the diesel will be needed in

February, 25 percent in March and 20 percent in April.

If the government decides to give the farmers diesel at subsidised rate, the farmers will get low-cost irrigation facilities as 85 percent of the irrigation pumps are run by diesel.

Economists are in favour of the agriculture ministry proposal for subsidy. They say irrigation costs must be lowered for upcoming boro crops and the farmers can offset the aman crop losses through massive production of boro.

Members of the parliamentary body also said irrigation cost is much higher in Bangladesh than that of any other country in the region.

They also discussed the high prices of fertiliser and asked the ministry to provide the subsidy immediately so that the farmers can buy fertiliser at lower prices.

"Farmers are facing a serious crisis due to high prices of fertiliser," committee member and Awami League lawmaker Dr Abdur Razzak said.

When the committee members asked the agriculture minister and ministry officials about the possible mechanism of providing fertiliser subsidy, they said that a national steering committee headed by the state minister for agriculture would determine the mechanism.

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, the state minister, was however absent at the meeting.

## Meghna devouring Bhola

**FROM PAGE 12**  
idea as that would significantly cut the cost and at the same time make the structure more durable.

The latest IWM report too recommends construction of bank revetment with geo-bag and CCB all along the vulnerable bank-line.

While the government attempts to minimise the erosion prove futile, the river has eaten up miles of farmland on the eastern part of Bhola and affected a part of the north changing the shape of the island. Some 15 densely populated unions have completely and many others partially disappeared in the Meghna.

Besides the river has eroded the coastal steamer jetty at Chaikrighat (Barisal), once widely used for the Chittagong-Chandpur water route, the launch jetty for the Dawlatkhan-Alexander route and many markets including Radaballab, Saiberhat, Talukdarhat, Talpata, Kajor Mian Hat, Sarajaj and Chairman Hat.

The worst affected villages include Tulatuli, Shibpur, Dhoimna, Bangachar, Nadir Mazhi and Elisha unions under the sadar thana, Saidpur, Madanpur and Kaliya unions under Dowlotkhan thana, Mirzakalu and Hakimuddin under Borhanuddin thana, Mongalsikdar, Lord Hardin, Gurindia, Keyamullah and Char Piarimohan under Lalimohan thana, main Tajumuddin thana and Char Neuton, Hamidpur, Kanganiganj, Keramatgonj and Baribhanga under the Charfason thana.

Lately the water resources ministry has tabled a Tk 85 crore proposal to set up a permanent embankment inclusive of road infrastructure. It now waits for the Planning Commission to forward it to the Executive Committee for National Economic Council's (Ecne) approval, said Abdur Rahman Akon, executive engineer of the Bhola District Water Development Board.

December is the perfect month to begin the project. But delay in the approval of the project might eventually lead to the work being taken up during the rainy season. "We will need at least two months for the preparation of the project," Akon said.

Back in 1992-93, a WDB project failed due to lack of funds. Soon afterwards, another project funded by the Netherlands government failed as the embankment was built during the rainy season. In 1997-98, the WDB pushed a pilot project to save a few areas but it did not continue.

## Top criminal

**FROM PAGE 12**  
returned fire, said the superintendent of police of Jhenidah.

Asad attempted to flee the police van but was killed in the shootout that continued for about half an hour, police claimed.

Assistant Sub-inspector Tahajuddin and constables Mansur Ali, Abdul Malek and Ariful Islam were wounded in the crossfire. A gun and three bullets were seized from the spot, police added.

## NYTIMES REPORT

### Govt looking for local aides to reporter

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is looking for local sources, who assisted the New York Times journalist Eliza Griswold for her report titled 'The Next Islamist Revolution?' published in the NYT magazine Sunday.

Intelligence agencies have already been assigned to trace the sources in and outside of Dhaka. The wanted include those who worked for the NYT reporter and gave her interviews and information, said sources.

The government refuted the "baseless, partial and misleading" report that Bangladesh is becoming the safest place for Islamist militants and raising fundamentalism and said it will not be able to destroy the country's image.

The sources said the report angered the government so much that it has assigned intelligence officials to identify its local sources.

"We're looking for the report's sources who provided information and gave interviews to the US journalist," said an intelligence source.

To make a list of suspects, intelligence officials are tracking past records of those who helped foreign journalists earlier, he added.

The intelligence men are trying to track down those who were arrested in November 2002 for helping two foreign journalists of British television Channel Four. The agencies are also examining their past records including those of journalist Saleem Samad, who was confined in prison then.

## ADB okays

**FROM PAGE 1**  
mid July to collect key information and liaise with other development partners. After the joint needs assessment mission in September, the government asked the ADB and the World Bank to finance \$250 million each for emergency rehabilitation of damaged infrastructure.

## Kibria, 4 AL men

**FROM PAGE 1**  
least 15 other establishments, vandalising some of them, in the northeast district town, 15km off the spot.

Additional police forces were called in to quell the tense situation prevailing in the district.

Habiganj Superintendent of Police Abu Musa Fakhrul Islam said primarily they were suspecting it to be a grenade attack. But an investigation could confirm whether those were grenades, he added.

Kibria went to Habiganj on Wednesday on an organisational tour. His elder brother Shah Shamsul Huda and nephew Shah Manjurul Huda accompanied him.

He spoke as the chief guest at the meeting organised by Laskarpur Union unit of AL.

The namaj-e-janaza of the late AL leader will be held today after Juma prayers at the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque. A decision on his burial will be taken on arrival of his son from abroad.

**THEATITACKS**  
Witnesses said the first grenade was hurled at the end of the rally at Boilder Bazar Primary School playground when Kibria was about to board his car after speaking at the rally.

District AL Joint Secretary Alamgir said the grenade was hurled at Kibria at about 7:05pm. "It was a close call," he said as Kibria sustained serious injuries all over his body.

Former chairman of Habiganj Pourashava Shahid Uddin Chowdhury, a witness to the grisly incident, told newsmen later that when leaders were getting down from the dais after the meeting, the first grenade was thrown at them and then the second one came when they ran for cover.

Hit by splinters, the former finance minister and others fell to the ground. Kibria became unconscious sustaining injuries on different parts of his body with his two legs fatally wounded.

He was first rushed to Habiganj Sadar Hospital where resident medical officer Dr Abdullah gave primary treatment to an unconscious Kibria. After consultation with party President Sheikh Hasina, local leaders decided to send him to Dhaka by an ambulance as they failed to manage a helicopter.

The conditions of district AL Joint Secretary Alamgir, Organising Secretary Rajan Chowdhury and General Secretary of district Awami Ainjibi Parishad advocate Abdul Ahad Faruq were also reported critical. They along with scores of other wounded AL leaders and workers were admitted to Habiganj Sadar Hospital.

At Habiganj Sadar Hospital, where 37 people with splinter injuries were rushed in, was overcrowded with the friends and relations of the victims.

Relatives alleged of lack of proper treatment and absence of doctors at the hospital.

**PROTESTS**  
Hearing the news, AL's student, youth and volunteer wings -- Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), Jubo league and Svecchhasebak League -- took out a joint protest procession from the party central office on Bangabandhu Avenue in Dhaka.

The protesters later held a rally on the avenue. Svecchhasebak League General Secretary Pankaj Debnath, Dhaka City AL Joint Secretary Hazi Selim and BCL President Liakat Sikder addressed the rally, with Jubo League Chairman Jahangir Kabir Nanak in the chair.

At last night's emergency meeting of AL working committee, the opposition party called for a hartal tomorrow and accused the BNP-Jamaat government for the attack.

The meeting, chaired by AL chief Sheikh Hasina, deplored the grenade attack and said it was pre-planned to annihilate the political adversaries.

The main opposition party leaders said the attack on Habiganj public meeting was part of a blueprint to kill its leaders and activists.

The August 21 grenade attack in Dhaka and yesterday's one at Habiganj proved that there was no security of life of the opposition leaders, activists and the people in general, they said.

The AL will also stage demonstrations in the capital this afternoon. The party also sent a delegation led by opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid from Dhaka to visit the place of occurrence.

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) and Jatiya Party (Manju) condemned the grenade attack and killing of Kibria and three others.

## Tearful Hasina

**FROM PAGE 1**  
and another blast at Mohila AL meeting, she said that none of the masterminds behind those attacks was brought to justice.

She announced demonstration programmes across the country for today, a daylong hartal across the country for tomorrow. She said a series of programmes would follow Saturday's hartal.

Shocked at the death of Kibria and others, Hasina sobbed as she recalled the memories with her former political advisor. She described Kibria as polite and a person of international stature.

She called upon the countrymen to get united and intensify the movement till the fall of the government.

AL president said that in last three years the government had killed many grass-roots level opposition workers and now they (government) have started to aim at the senior leaders.

Hinting at Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, the opposition chief wondered as to 'how much blood would it take to fulfil the list of the mother and the son.'

She said there hardly any sense of security prevail among the people under the coalition regime and alleged that many opposition activists could not even visit their own constituencies in last three years because of political persecution.

## Moratorium on Jatra

**FROM PAGE 1**  
the rights of some 10 lakh people involved in the Jatra industry.

"This is not a logical solution. The government is prohibiting us instead of addressing the real issue (by arresting the people responsible for the bomb attacks)," he added.

Excepting a few amendments, the security measures for the 13th South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation Summit rescheduled for February 6-7 will remain the same as decided before the Tsunami.