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HABIGANJ GRENADE ATTACK

Govt asks Interpol, Scotland Yard, FBI to probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday formally requested Interpol, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the British Scotland Yard to join the local investigation into the January 27 grenade attack in Habiganj that killed former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria and four others.

The government has requested these agencies to also become a part of the investigating team, unlike previous assistance in the August 21

and May 21 grenade attacks investigations where their role was limited to providing forensic expertise, Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan told reporters yesterday.

"No efforts will be spared to nab the criminals involved and bring them to justice," he said.

"We make this commitment out of our obligation to the electorates, and the actions of the government of a sovereign state are based on this principle, not on statements made by foreign diplomats," said

Morshed, referring to a statement issued by foreign envoys and foreign ministry spokespersons of numerous countries.

Meanwhile, with the previous assistance from Interpol and the FBI into the August 21, 2004 grenade attacks on an Awami League rally, no conclusive report has been made.

Scotland's Yard's forensic expertise has also failed to bring any substantive progress in the investigation of the May 21, 2004 grenade

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Saarc Summit to go ahead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday said the upcoming 13th Saarc Summit would go ahead as scheduled on February 6-7, unaffected by Thursday's carnage in Habiganj.

"There has not been any affect on the Saarc Summit. Participants for the agenda-setting meetings have already started to arrive in the city," said Morshed while speaking to reporters at his office.

The preparatory summit agenda-setting meetings will start on February 1 at Hotel Sheraton.

The 26th two-day meeting of the Saarc Programming Committee comprising officials from the seven Saarc states will be held during February 1-2.

The 31st meeting of the Standing committee comprising Saarc foreign secretaries will take place on February 3 and 4, while the 26th Council of Ministers comprising Saarc foreign ministers will sit on February 5.

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60-HOUR HARTAL

Over 100 hurt in clashes, cop beatings on day one

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A sitting and two former AL lawmakers along with more than a hundred others were wounded as the opposition activists fought pitched battles with the police at different places across the country yesterday, the first day of the 60-hour hartal.

The shutdown that started at 6:00am yesterday virtually crippled life and economic activities disrupting road and rail communication and domestic flights.

The major opposition Awami League (AL) and its left-leaning allies enforced the hartal in protest at the killings of former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria and four

others in a grenade attack on an AL rally in Habiganj on Thursday.

The police picked up around 100 people from different parts of the country, 44 of them from the capital where the law-enforcers were in an aggressive mood. They clubbed the opposition leaders and activists at several places.

In Dhaka, former state minister and Acting General Secretary of the AL Obaidul Kader and the party's former lawmaker Haji Selim were injured in the police action. The police beat them up during the demonstrations.

In Hatia, Awami League lawmaker Mohammad Ali, Upazila Nirbahi Officer Imam Uddin Kabir

and 50 others were injured in a series of clashes between the AL and BNP activists in the island in Noakhali district.

In Gaibandha, the police fired blank shots and lobbed teargas shells injuring 15 people when the protestors barricaded two trains at Bonapara Railway Station.

Four express trains-- Jalalabad, Parabat, Jayontika and Paharika --got stranded at different stations until 5:00pm as a portion of rail tracks in Rashidpur-Shatgaon section was uprooted, our Brahmanbaria correspondent says quoting railway sources.

Long-route vehicles did not operate across the country.

Flights from Barisal Airport were not operated.

Of a few city service buses in operation in Dhaka and Chittagong, one was set ablaze by unruly people in Agrabad in the port city. They forced the passengers to get down before setting the bus on fire in the evening.

The protestors set fire to another bus at Mirpur section-10 and damaged more than a dozen buses in Paltan and Motijheel areas in the capital. A CNG autorickshaw of Channel-i also came under attack at Arambagh.

All the educational institutions and most of the business and other

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Kibria laid to rest in state honour

Party workers, diplomats, intellectuals pay their last respects to the slain leader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former finance minister and frontline Awami League (AL) leader Shah AMS Kibria was laid to eternal rest at Banani graveyard in the capital yesterday afternoon with state honour.

In a sombre atmosphere, the body of the slain leader was lowered into the grave at 4:45pm.

Earlier, mourners stood in silence beside the coffin of the lawmaker covered with national flag and party flag in front of the graveyard as bugles played the last post in tribute to him as a freedom fighter. Melancholy gripped family members, party colleagues and admirers attending his burial, and many of them wept.

The late leader's son Dr Reza

Kibria broke down.

A police contingent presented a guard of honour in reverence for his contributions to the Liberation War.

The leader's body was earlier brought to his Dhamondi residence from the Birdem hospital mortuary by an ambulance at 12:25 pm. His daughter Dr Nazli Kibria, who arrived from London in the early hours yesterday, and others wept as they saw the body.

Diplomats, AL leaders, university teachers, lawyers, academics and others crowded the house to pay their respects to the former finance minister amid a 60-hour hartal called by the opposition parties to protest Thursday's carnage in Habiganj that left Kibria and four AL activists killed and over 70 others injured.

Janaza of the leader was held for

the third time at his residence -- Malancha. An ambulance carrying the late leader in his last journey left the house at about 4:10 pm.

Tight security was ensured at and around Banani graveyard for the hour-long funeral ceremony.

Apart from AL leaders and relatives of Kibria, Abdul Mannan, secretary general of Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh and lawmaker Mahi B Chowdhury were present at the burial.

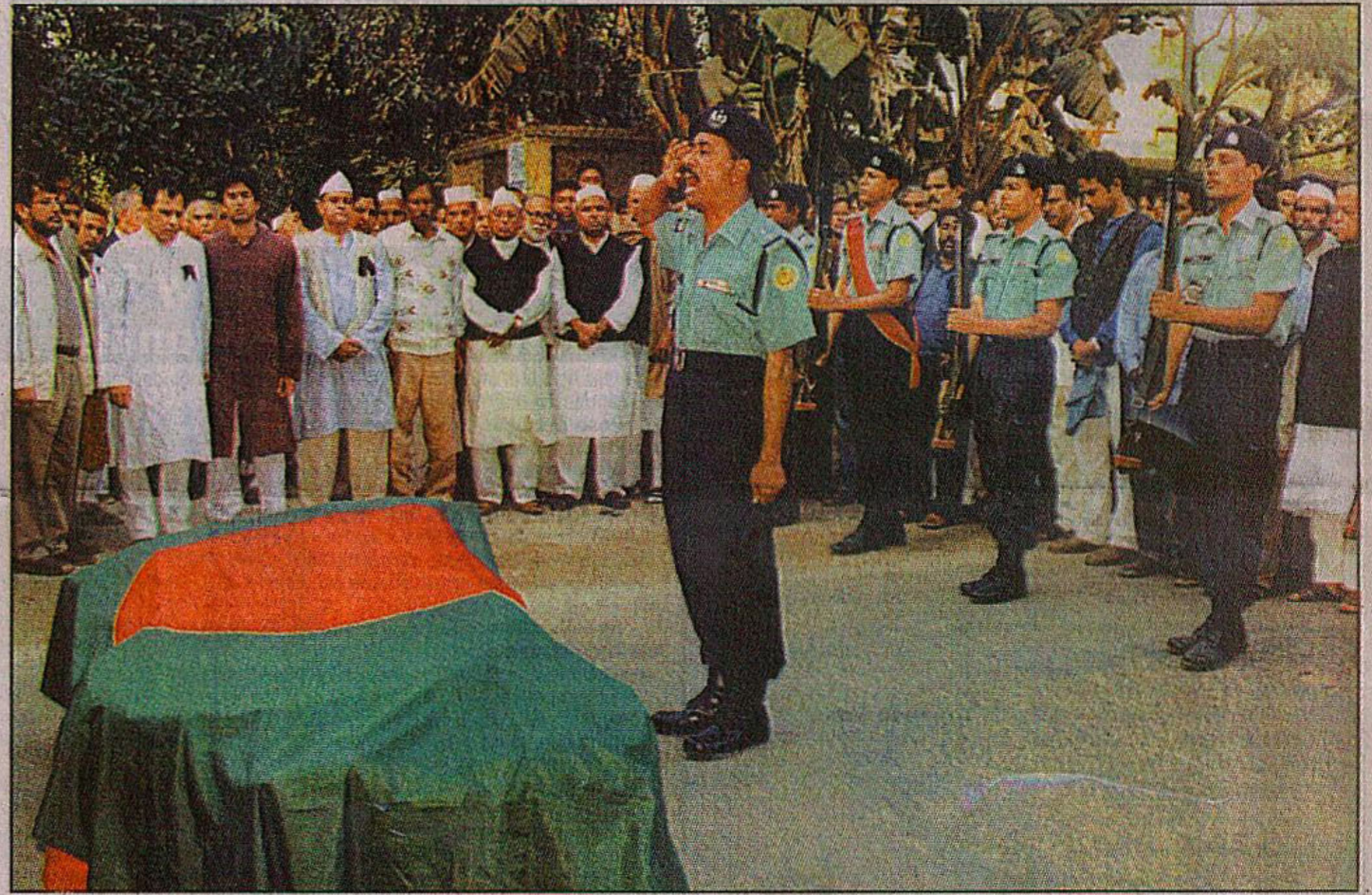
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY SHOCKED

US Ambassador in Dhaka Harry K Thomas and Australian High Commissioner Lorraine Barker placed floral wreaths on the coffin of Kibria at his residence. Dean of Diplomatic Corps Shahta Jarab and SC Sinha, an official of Indian High

Commission, were present during the funeral ceremony at the graveyard.

"The international community is very sad at the killing of Mr Kibria, and his family told us they are angry and disappointed," Thomas told reporters in Bangla after sympathising with the bereaved family. Terming Kibria a "wonderful person" and "an efficient diplomat and political leader", the envoy said the US as well as the international community are sorry for the heinous incident.

Barker said, "We are looking forward that Bangladesh government will conduct full investigation into the killing. We will follow what the government does after such a heinous crime," she said. Kibria was a wonderful citizen of Bangladesh, she added.



A police team presents guard of honour to the slain Awami League leader Shah AMS Kibria lying in a flag-draped coffin before his burial at Banani Graveyard in the capital yesterday.



A policeman beats up a female Awami League worker at Paltan in the capital during yesterday's hartal called to protest the killing of former finance minister Kibria and four others in a grenade attack in Habiganj.

HABIGANJ CARNAGE

SP, OC suspended for slack security

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The chiefs of district and Sadar upazila police of Habiganj were suspended yesterday for negligence in providing security to Thursday's fatal meeting of Awami League at Boidder Bazar.

The negligence in duty led to security lapses that helped assailants slipping away after hurling two grenades that killed five people including former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria.

The suspended officials are Habiganj Superintendent of Police (SP) AMM Fakhru Islam Khan and Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Sadar Police Station Inam Ahmed Chowdhury.

"I have OC Chowdhury's suspension order at my hand at the moment. I have heard about my suspension but have not received the order yet," SP Khan told The Daily Star last night.

Sources last night said Mostofa Kamal, deputy commissioner (Traffic) of Chittagong Metropolitan Police, has been appointed new SP of Habiganj. He is likely to take over today.

The probe into the carnage meantime remains focused on tracking two young motorbike riders that fled the scene after the attack on Thursday evening, as police have no other clue.

One of them was waiting with a

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Speaker, AL at loggerheads over first day's JS business

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The speaker and the main opposition Awami League (AL) are at loggerheads over tomorrow's business of parliament when it goes into the 15th session.

The AL wants the sitting to be adjourned immediately after the adoption of an obituary reference on its lawmaker, Shah AMS Kibria, who was assassinated in a grenade attack on a party rally in Habiganj on Thursday evening.

The speaker, on the other hand, said the obituary reference should be followed by the president's speech as it is a constitutional obligation that the president will deliver his address at the commencement of the first session of a new year.

President Iajuddin Ahmed is scheduled to address the Jatiya

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Tigers square series

SPORTS REPORTER

Manzarul Islam and Mohammad Rafique sent Zimbabwe on a spin as Bangladesh came back from 2-nill down to square the five-match one-day series 2-2 yesterday.

The twin left-arm tweakers shared eight wickets between them as the Tigers recorded a 58-run victory in the fourth match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, setting up tomorrow's fifth game at the same venue for a grand finale.

Chasing Bangladesh's fighting 247-9 in 50 overs, the visitors started in the best possible way under lights with Stuart Matsikenyaeri (50 off 69 balls) and left-handed Barney Rogers (49) putting on a century stand for the first wicket.

But once Manzarul Islam bowled Matsikenyaeri with a gem of a delivery, the match irrevocably swung Bangladesh's way. The tourists, who were cruising at 102 for no loss, suddenly found themselves in deep trouble at 117-5, losing five wickets in 28 deliveries. The Zimbabwe

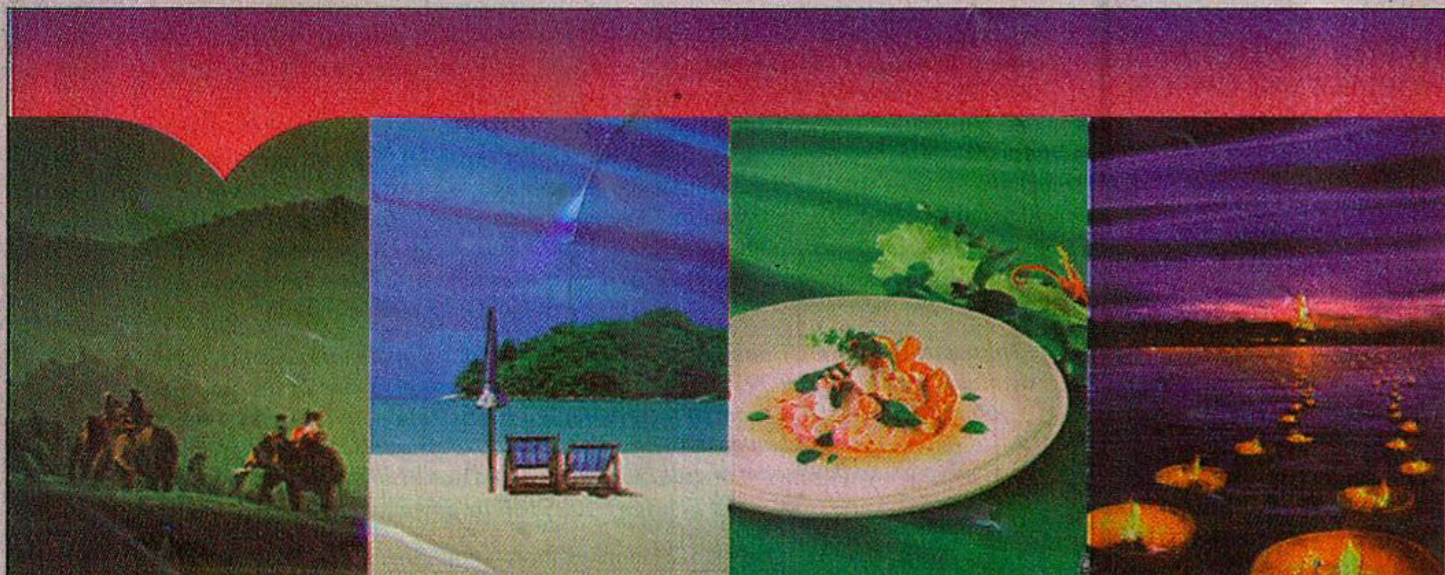
innings eventually folded at 189 in 47.2 overs.

Manzarul, fresh from his career-best 4-34 in the last match in Chittagong which the home side won by 40 runs, was again the tormentor when he had one-down Dion Ebrahim spectacularly caught by Khaled Mahmud at short square-leg for a four-ball duck after getting rid of the dangerous Matsikenyaeri.

He then removed Brendan Taylor setting up tomorrow's fifth game at the same venue for a grand finale.

Chasing Bangladesh's fighting 247-9 in 50 overs, the visitors started in the best possible way under lights with Stuart Matsikenyaeri (50 off 69 balls) and left-handed Barney Rogers (49) putting on a century stand for the first wicket.

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