

Shocked Muslims

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clues yesterday and struggled to identify bodies from the 88 people killed in three bomb blasts that rocked this Red Sea resort, sending foreign tourists scrambling to catch flights home.

More than 70 people have been detained in Sharm el-Sheik and elsewhere on the Sinai Peninsula for questioning over the bombings early Saturday. But none have been accused of involvement in Egypt's deadliest-ever terror attack, said security officials, who declined to be identified because of the sensitivity of the inquiry.

The roundups appeared similar to police operations after last October's attacks at the Sinai resorts of Taba and Ras Shitan, when 3,000 people were detained and many complained of torture, according to locals and human rights groups.

Some 200 of those are believed to still be in custody, including two Egyptian suspects whose trial is set to resume yesterday.

Egypt's interior minister has said investigators are looking into whether there were links between the Taba and Sharm blasts on the Sinai, a strategically important area bordering Israel and the Gaza Strip.

Most of the 88 people killed when bombers unleashed carnage in the popular Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh were Egyptians, with some nine foreigners reported among the dead.

"The deadly bomb blasts in Sharm el-Sheikh are another despicable act of faithless and cowardly people," charged the English-language Jordan Times.

The attacks were claimed in an Internet statement by an al-Qaeda linked group which said it was a response to "the global evil powers which are spilling the blood of Muslims in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Chechnya."

But Jordan's independent newspaper Al-Ghad said: "Killing innocent people in Sharm el-Sheikh will not contribute to the liberation of Palestine, and the killing of innocent Iraqis will not accelerate the American withdrawal."

Sheikh Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah, a Lebanese authority in Shiite Islam, published a Fatwa or religious decree, saying: "We forbid barbaric acts against innocents who have nothing to do with the political

demands of terrorists." "These are not martyr operations but barbaric suicide attacks and the culprits deserve only God's punishment," he said, urging the world's Muslims to take a united stand against terrorism.

Egypt's independent daily Al-Masri al-Yom called for a war against "Islamist Salafist ideas", referring to the conservative school of Sunni Islam prevalent in Saudi Arabia more commonly known as Wahhabism.

"It is impossible to face down the globalisation of terrorism without eradicating the ideology on which it rests," said a front-page editorial.

Under the provocative headline "Don't wage war against terrorists", the article argued that "the perpetrators of the heinous Sharm el-Sheikh bombings, just like all of us, are victims of the Salafi ideology."

"We all deserve what happened in Sharm el-Sheikh because we remained silent when the Wahhabi school of thought started creeping into Egypt," it said.

Thousands of Egyptians went to the Gulf during the oil boom years of the 1970s, many returning as wealthy citizens and with Saudi's conservative way of thinking.

The Gulf press also denounced the attacks, which added to global terror fears after the strikes on London's underground system and buses on July 7 that left 56 people dead including the bombers.

"This is terrorism and we are the victims. The murderer is one. He carries a black passport and a black ideology, and victims carry one nationality -- peaceful innocent people who suddenly found themselves a fuel for evil plots," Kuwait's Al-Rai Al-Aam wrote.

The Al-Ihtihad newspaper in the United Arab Emirates challenged those who sought to find excuses for such attacks.

(AFP, AP)

Asean boost

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If its application is successful, Bangladesh would become the forum's 26th member.

Fledgling nation East Timor will be formally admitted as the ARF's 25th member this week.

The forum is Asia's biggest official platform in which the region's top diplomats discuss security issues ranging from the North Korean nuclear crisis to tensions across the Taiwan Strait and terrorism.

It gathers the Asean foreign ministers and their counterparts from such powers as the United States, the European Union, China, Japan, India, Pakistan, Russia, Canada and Australia.

35 accused

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Investigation officer (IO) Sub-inspector Kazi Abu Salek pressed charges against 35 alleged operatives of outlawed New Biplobi Communist Party (NBCP) on December 15, 2002.

The court in its verdict said there is no clear evidence that the journalist was murdered.

The FIR said BNP extremists abducted and killed Shukur for writing a report against them.

Benapole port

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Association, Exporters-Importers Association, Transport Owners Association, C&F Agents and Workers Union, and Port Handling Workers Association.

Meanwhile, Indian truckers continued the strike for the fourth consecutive day yesterday, resulting in a total deadlock in export-import activities. Hundreds of trucks with goods were stranded on both sides of the port.

The Indian truckers demanded return of four trucks, which were seized by the customs and BDR after the vehicles were illegally sold at the land port after unloading goods.

When contacted, Customs Commissioner said they were examining the ownership of the four trucks.

Negotiations

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said an official, who attended the meeting, as the Safta agreement is scheduled to be effective on January 1, 2006.

Saarc members exchanged their respective sensitive lists of products at the Committee of Experts (COE) meeting, with the hope of finalising the negotiations—the crucial one being the sensitive lists—in the next meeting in September in Kathmandu.

"The members will explain their respective position on the sensitive lists in the 10th meeting," the official told UNB, as the Bangladesh delegation returned home Saturday after attending the COE meeting July 18-21.

Bangladesh, at the meeting, placed a sensitive list of around 1,300 items to protect domestic industries from free flow of commodities within the trading bloc.

He said the negotiators came closer on three other outstanding issues—Safta rules of origin, compensation mechanism for the revenue losses by the least developed members and technical assistance for the LDCs within the region.

The 10th COE meeting in Kathmandu will try to finalise the Rules of Origin under which the member-states will be able to identify the actual place of manufacturing or production for offering duty concessions.

The seven South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) countries had signed the Safta agreement for the promotion of trade within the region on the occasion of the 12th Saarc Summit held in 2004 in Islamabad.

Official trade experts from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, the Maldives and Nepal are negotiating the issues in the COE meetings to minimise the differences to find a common ground on the deal.

Moudud blames

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must have opposed it," Moudud told reporters at his office yesterday.

A martial law court in 1982 sentenced Jintu to death in absentia for murdering businessmen Abdul Khaleq Rana and Firoz Al Mamun of Demra the same year.

After evading arrest for more than two decades, Jintu, who claimed himself to be the founder president of BNP's Sweden chapter, surrendered to a court on January 3 this year and managed the presidential pardon within next 12 days.

The parliamentary standing committee on law, justice and parliamentary affairs ministry at a meeting on Thursday slated the law ministry for not furnishing appropriate opinions, examining in detail documents of the double-murder case.

Moudud yesterday said, "The home ministry prepared the summary and sent it to the president through the prime minister. We did neither make a comment on it nor send any summary to the president."

It is a custom that the home ministry sends the summary to the law ministry before dispatching it to the president through Prime Minister's Office, he added.

Quoting the case summary prepared by the home ministry, Moudud said the name of the JCD leader was not in the FIR and there was no witness account against him.

"The summary mentioned Jintu as a JCD leader and said the case was filed with political motive. But nowhere was it mentioned that the other two convicts had already been executed," the law minister said about the home ministry summary.

"When they sent us the summary, asking whether the President can grant amnesty, we just replied that the president has indeed the power to do it, but it rests entirely on him whether to pardon one or not. We did not make any comment for or against the amnesty," said Moudud.

There is no room to blame the law ministry for it, he added.

Besides, he described as contradictory and baseless Awami League lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta's accusation that the amnesty has been granted in exchange for financial gains and also for the fact that Jintu is a ruling party man.

He asked, "If he is a party man, why would he spend money for the amnesty?"

He said he welcomes the LGRD minister's asking the home secretary on Saturday to probe the allegations of concealing facts in the case summary. "The initiative to probe the allegation will bring out the fact and identify the persons involved in the concealment," Moudud said adding that leading a life of fugitive is a violation of rule of law and a crime.

CEC to ask

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"It has now become a demand of the people. I also think the secretariat should be independent," he said. "I will just send the proposals and it is up to the government whether it will implement those or not."

He said the EC secretary is now accountable to the government as he is appointed by the executive.

The CEC also said the existing ceiling of election expenditure should be raised and it should be monitored strictly.

About the EC's authority to cancel candidatures and initiate contempt proceedings which was scrapped, Aziz said the provisions should be reintroduced.

The caretaker government before the 2001 parliamentary election had made the provisions to empower the EC, but later it repealed them in the face of pressure from the major political parties.

The CEC said introduction of voters' identity card is the only way to check the use of black money and muscle power in elections.

"But it has some disadvantages also. Voter identity cards may be snatched from voters before voting. In that case they will be deprived of their franchise," he said, proposing a new system of introduction of voter list with pictures of the voters.

Asked about the rejection of the EC invitation by the major opposition parties, he said it would be better if they participate in the dialogue. "Quality of the dialogue will not be different in absence of any political party," he continued.

Tk 233cr project

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and Dhaka and Narayanganj district administrations attended the meeting.

The meeting decided to form a technical committee to identify the causes of water logging and find out ways for free flow of water from inside the water.

The chief engineer of WDB will head the committee comprised of representatives from Dhaka Wasa, Rajuk, RHD, LGRD, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and Dhaka and Narayanganj district administration.

The meeting also decided to formulate a master plan for DND with the assistance of Rajuk and Wasa and install a new pump station near the Buriganga river.

Of the total 1749 illegal structures in the DND area, only 495 have so far been evicted, the WDB sources said.

The minister also directed the authorities concerned to stop fishing in the ponds that absorb water and help to ease water logging. Salahuddin Ahmed MP of Dhaka-4 observed that the canals, most of which have been encroached and filled, should be dug and maintained with tree plantation programme involving the local people and their representatives.

"Frequent electricity snaps obstruct pumping of water during water logging," Sharif Rafiqul Islam, Director General of WDB said, adding that the Power Development Board should look into the matter urgently.

Rajuk should set a framework to build houses in the area considering the water drainage system, said Water Resources Secretary Md Abdul Aziz.

Niko skirts plan

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plan as drilling of a 'development well' in the name of a 'relief well' at the cost of insurance money, the sources added. Niko had insurance claim of 20 million dollars from an international insurer after each of the blowouts.

A relief well is drilled to seal a damaged or blown-out well, while a development well is drilled only for commercial purpose.

Following the blowout, Niko last month gave a plan of action which was verbally approved by the ministry. As per that plan, Niko had mobilised a drilling rig owned by a foreign company Century, from Unocal's Moulavibazar gas field. Niko wanted to drill a horizontal relief well.

However the joint committee under Niko and Bapex's Joint Venture Agreement (JVA) that is supposed to approve the plan in writing objected to this plan. It noted that due to two rounds of blowouts, the geological condition of Tengratila is unstable. The drilling of a horizontal well may lead to a third blowout and the best solution is to drill a vertical well.

However the Century operators refused drilling a vertical well and said that Niko should better find a new rig operator. A rig is not only costly, but it takes quite a long time to mobilise.

In this situation, Niko devised its new plan to drill a well completely out of the affected well area. The energy ministry adviser gave the company a green signal, saying that "the plan sounds good."

"In any case, we will not see any drilling pretty soon in this area," quips the ministry source.

Govt mulls life term

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several crores of taka by adulterating food, if you fine him just Tk 1 lakh, he would pay the fine and continue his evil task," said an official related with the recently formed government mobile court.

Other officials concurred with this viewpoint. "If the government really wants to do something in this field, the authorities have to strengthen the law, otherwise it will not be possible to stop," said a high official from the ministry of health affairs, requesting anonymity.

Among these laws, the BSTI (amended) ACT-2003 ensures the highest punishment, calling for Tk 1 lakh in fines along with four years imprisonment if the court finds anyone marketing his goods with fake BSTI certificates.

Another section of this law ensures Tk 50,000 in fines and two years imprisonment.

But the Pure Food ordinance-1959 is not worth applying under the present situation. Under this law the court can only fine Tk 800 or one month in jail for the first offense. For the second offense, criminals will be punished either a Tk five thousand fine or six months jail or both.

However, sources said the government has taken an initiative to amend this law, which will ensure lifetime imprisonment for food adulteration.

Aside from these provisions, the magistrate court can punish adulterators under section 151 (1) and 151(2) of City Corporation Act, fining Tk 10,000 for the first crime and Tk 25,000 for the second crime. This law mainly deals with unhygienic food and adulteration.

The magistrate courts have also

been penalising small scale adulterators under section 272 and 273 of the Bangladesh penal code, which ensures a Tk one thousand fine, or one month to six months jail.

Major improvements to the legal system are necessary to stem the tide of adulterated food, experts say. According to a lawyer, if someone falls ill after having poisonous ice cream, he can not lodge a case.

Under the current system, the local sanitary inspector will collect a sample of the product and send it to the Institute of Public Health lab, and after having the test report the inspector may file a case against the producer in favor of the consumer.

The law of Tort, a law from the British era, exists to protect consumer rights, but no one has filed a case under it, said the lawyer.

Meanwhile, the government has for years shelved a draft of a consumer protection law, which was approved in principle in the cabinet meeting.

After repeated hammering from rights group, environmentalists and civil society, the government took an initiative one decade ago to formulate a 'Consumer Protection Act'. But the government is still sitting idle on the draft of the law despite frequent public and media outcry over consumer rights violations.

"In the last week also I knocked at the Commerce ministry but they could not say anything. We do not know when they are going to place it in the cabinet for the final approval," said Quazi Faruque, the president of the Consumer Association of Bangladesh (CAB).

DMCH 'death trap'

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doctors here are forced to discharge some 20 patients a day to make way for new ones, sources say.

They say, as Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University and Hospital, Mitford and other public hospitals in the city do not admit emergency neurosurgical patients beyond their capacity, the DMCH has to bear the major bulk of the load. So, obviously, the service standard slides.

"On an average 21 patients are admitted to the ward a day. In 2004 a total of 7,004 patients were treated here. It is real tough for only three neurosurgeons and a dozen of interns, without any medical officer, to tend so many," says Neurosurgery Department Head Prof Mainul Haque Sarker.

"We cannot even examine them properly. Sometimes we have to kneel on the floor to examine them," he adds.

According to Sarker, the department urgently needs more doctors and anaesthesiologists to operate on the patients with complicated head and neurological injuries. But no steps have been there to fill the gap.

Among the 24 operation theatres of the hospital, one remains permanently locked and one occasionally for lack of anaesthesiologists. The Daily Star found an unconscious patient aged around 60 turned away from an operation theatre three, though the doctor had prescribed operation within an hour.

When asked whether they had applied to the authorities to shift the ward to a more hygienic place, Sarker answered in the negative.

Neurosurgery deals with disorders of or injuries to the brain, spinal cord or peripheral nerves. Patients with head injuries, brain tumours and internal haemorrhage from

across the country are brought to the DMCH, as full-fledged neurosurgery department exists only here and in Chittagong, Sylhet and Rajshahi medical colleges and hospitals.

Former head of the department Prof Shafiquddin Ahmed says, "Emergency patients usually with unnecessarily large numbers of attendants are brought to the DMCH from every place in the country. Hordes of relatives come at every hour to see them, resulting in overcrowding and raising the infection risks. We must end such unwanted visits and free the ward from outsiders first."

Ahmed also suggests turning the ward into an intensive care unit, as is the norm at hospitals abroad. When the patients improve to a certain extent, they would be transferred to general wards. He says, "It is one way to reduce the death rate."

There are also allegations that as soon as a ward becomes vacant, the general surgery and medicine departments capture it, as they are more influential and the authorities are careless.

But the DMCH director brushes off the allegation saying every ward at the hospital is overcrowded. Though it has only 1,700 seats, he says, it is the only hospital which does not bother about seats and time. Its only mission is to serve the patients, any way it can, he adds.

The director says when the neuroscience institute under construction at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar comes into operation within the next two years the crisis will be solved.

However, only the foundation stone of a building has been laid but no construction work has commenced yet for the institute.

Dhaka tries hard

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Chargé d'Affaires Chamas on July 6 met Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan and apprised him of the looming crisis.

However Bepza sources said Bangladesh parliament in May 2004 passed a law ensuring freedom to form workers' representation and welfare committee (WRWC) at every factory in the EPZs.

High officials of Bepza that runs the country's six EPZs had a two-hour meeting yesterday with AFL-CIO representative in Bangladesh Rob Wayss to convince him about the existence of labour rights regime in the EPZs.

"I tried to convince him about our position, while he came up with their arguments. We had differences of opinion," Bepza Executive Chairman M Zakir Hossain, a retired brigadier general, told The Daily Star last night.

"Tomorrow [Monday] we'll meet US Chargé d'Affaires Judith Chamas and apprise her of our position. Four leading foreign investors, who have big financial stakes in Bangladesh EPZs, will also visit the US mission tomorrow to make their points," added the brigadier.

He refuted the AFL-CIO allegation that labour rights were curtailed in the EPZs, saying, "Out of some 200 industrial units at the six EPZs, we've elected WRWCs at as many as 175 and their [AFL-CIO] representatives have even witnessed some of their elections."

Despite repeated attempts, Rob Wayss could not be reached yesterday for comments. However, sources in the local labour rights groups having links with the AFL-CIO told

Teletalk, GP

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after the telecommunications regulator Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) had directed them to sign it by Saturday.

Teletalk has gradually been emerging as a rival to private cellular operators, sources in the industry observe.

It has already signed interconnection agreements with Telekom Malaysia International Bangladesh, the brand operator of AKTEL, and Pacific Bangladesh Telecom Limited, the service provider of CityCell.

The company has a plan to cover all 61 administrative districts by December, Teletalk officials said.

They said the company will launch GPRS (general packet radio service) and MMS (multi-media messaging) by next month.

It will also introduce lower call tariff "Friends and family" packages like other private operators within a month or two, they added.

The company has a plan to reach 2.5 lakh subscribers by this year and introduce electronic refill system.

Rejoinder

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since 1955 generating a total of 85 million kw.

OUR REPLY

Our report was against the decision of the PDB and it did mention that TPE provided the staffs in accordance with the PDB's request.

The reference of TPE being inefficient or corrupt stemmed from an inter-ministerial investigation on the rehabilitation of Ghorashal units 1 and 2 after 2000. The investigation led to a suspension of the project due to corruption; the suspension was later withdrawn but the contract was never made effective.

Most areas

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told The Daily Star yesterday evening that it would take three to five hours to restart the other transformer to restore normalcy in power supply.

A five-member committee headed by Chief Engineer of PSC (Power Stations Construction) Monzil-e Morshed Khan was formed yesterday to probe the accident. The committee has been asked to submit its report in seven days.

The port city suffered the unprecedented power outage on Saturday after two transformers at Khulshi substation tripped due to technical glitch, leaving 60 percent of city areas under five substations without electricity.

Make loan

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the poor countries like ours.

BB Governor Dr Salehuddin Ahmed said the council has directed the central bank to lend necessary supports to the commercial banks in importing essentials, fertilisers and oils, but at the same time to avoid unnecessary imports.

The meeting tasked the commerce ministry with taking necessary steps to make sure that the imported essential goods reach the market smoothly so as to bring the prices under control, Ahmed added.

The council was formed on March 10, 2003 by amending the Bangladesh Bank Order, 1972. The amended order gave limited autonomy to the BB and assigned the council with co-ordinating fiscal issues between the central bank and the government so that corrective measures could be taken whenever needed.

Headed by the finance minister, the council is manned by the commerce minister, BB governor, secretaries of the finance ministry and the Internal Resources Division, and the member (Programming) of the Planning Commission.

But, although exchange rate of dollar against taka has been rising steadily and inflation marking a crazy upward trend, the council failed to find time to sit and devise measures to address the issues. On this point, Saifur said, though the council did not hold any meeting before yesterday, its members did sit unofficially on various occasions to discuss outstanding issues.

Rotten meat

FROM PAGE 16
caused by bacteria built up in the freezer.

"We have built our reputation over the last 15 years. Several ministers, diplomats and high officials come here on a regular basis for dining as we maintain quality and have a good reputation," Khan told The Daily Star over the telephone last night.

Afterward, the mobile court went to Wimp's, the popular fast food shop in Gulshan, where they found sauce that does not have BSTI labels. The court fined them Tk 10,000.

The representative from Sajna came to The Daily Star office and acknowledged that the court seized Kikkoma soya sauce, Hunts' Barbecue sauce and Rose water of Rigard Chemical industry. Those products do not have any approval from the BSTI. But they showed another sauce which had the BSTI label.

"We don't make the sauce but buy it from the market," said the representative of Sajna. The government should not allow the importers and the sellers to sell those products here without the certification of the BSTI, he added.

"We alone should not be punished," he said.

London cops killed

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death of the man at the Stockwell subway station, identified Saturday as Jean Charles de Menezes, 27.

But British police yesterday defended a policy of shooting to kill suspected suicide bombers despite chances of blunders.

Brazil has demanded an explanation from Britain after police searching for four men suspected of trying to bomb London's transport system last Thursday shot the Brazilian at an underground railway station in south London.

"I think we are quite comfortable that the policy is right, but of course these are fantastically difficult times," Metropolitan Police Commissioner Ian Blair told Sky Television.

Asked if the instructions were to shoot to kill if police believed a suspect was a suicide bomber, he said: "Correct. They have to be that."

Witnesses said he was wearing a heavy, padded coat when plainclothes police chased him into a subway car, pinned him to the ground and shot him about five times in the head and torso.

Hours after the shooting, Police Commissioner Ian Blair said the victim was "directly linked" to the investigations into attacks Thursday and July 7. In the latter, suicide bombings on trains and a bus killed 56 people, including four attackers.

Police initially said the victim attracted police attention because he left a house that was under surveillance after Thursday's bungled bombings, in which devices planted on three subway trains and a double-decker bus failed to detonate properly. Stockwell is near Oval station, one of those targeted.

"He was then followed by surveillance officers to the station. His clothing and his behaviour at the station added to their suspicions," police said Friday.

But Saturday, a police official said on condition of anonymity that Menezes was "not believed to be connected in any way to any of the London bombings."

"For somebody to lose their life in such circumstances is a tragedy and one that the Metropolitan Police Service regrets," a spokesman said on condition of anonymity, which is police policy.

However, police did not explain what went wrong or say whether Menezes had done anything illegal.

In Brazil, the Foreign Ministry said it was "shocked and perplexed" by the

death of Menezes, whom it did not name but described as "apparently the victim of a lamentable mistake."

The ministry said it expected British authorities to explain the circumstances of the shooting