

Blast at Ahmadiyya

FROM PAGE 1
They said the laxity encouraged the zealots to carry out repeated attacks on the Ahmadiyya in Brahmanbaria, country's first Ahmadiyya base 80 kilometres off Dhaka.

Members of the anti-Ahmadiyya group are carrying out a hate campaign for long to drive out the minor Islamic sect members from the entire district.

Brahmanbaria police arrested Hosen's two neighbours -- Khokon, 25, and Hossain, 32, -- after the explosion occurred at about 6:00am. The two were found roaming around the house about four hours before the blast.

Hosen, now being treated at Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital, had survived another attack when the anti-Ahmadiyya neighbours swooped on her house on October 29 last year.

"It was around 6:00am. Mother (Hosen) called me to say the Fazr prayers and I heard her screaming as a big bang rocked the whole area," Poly, Hosen's daughter and an HSC student of Brahmanbaria Government College, told The Daily Star.

"Rushing out of my room, I saw my mother groaning, lying in front of our toilet, with her wrist blown off. I saw the blown off fingers scattered around her," Poly said, with her eyes filled with tears.

Hosen's family rushed her to the Sadar Hospital and admitted her there. The right side of her face was burnt in the explosion. "We had to cut a few inches [of her wrist] to prevent gangrene," said Dr Rana Nuru Sham at the hospital.

During a visit, The Daily Star correspondents found bloodstains on the walls and the yard of the house, now kept cordoned off by the police.

The attackers dug holes and planted the three bombs made with torchlight cover, with batteries attached to them. One was planted in front of the toilet, another in the middle of the yard of the three-room house and another just in front of the main gate.

One of the bombs exploded when Hosen attempted to pick it up mistaking it for a torchlight. "The bombs were planted in a planned way so that those go off when anyone hits the bamboo tab coming out of those," said a local police officer.

The victim's relatives said Khokon and Hossain, who live a few yards off their house, were among Khatme Nabuwati men who attacked their house on October 29 to oust them from the area for their beliefs in Ahmadiyya.

Local police said they intercepted Khokon and Hossain when they were roaming around Hosen's house at 2:00am yesterday. Asked about their motive of roaming in the dead of night, they told police they were searching for their missing persons.

Police arrested them from the area later in the day. Asked by the police, Hosen's son Jasim identified the two as their neighbours.

Local Ahmadiyyas said the police usually patrol the area until 5:30am. The questioned how the bombs were planted despite the police patrol.

Asked about the motive of the

Father-in-law

FROM PAGE 16
student of Shaghata Girls' High School, with the false identity of a lecturer at Lathiganj College in Gatali upazila, Bogra.

The whereabouts of Bangla Bhai, his wife and their two-month-old son Saad could not be known despite strict observation, said Shaghata police.

Rab raids places

FROM PAGE 1
As per the information extracted from the criminal during the interrogation, Rab made several raids in different areas of the city and the district, particularly in Anowara and Patiya, to nab the accomplices of Shahid, sources said.

Rab members brought Shahid to the Patiya Magistrate's Court housed in Chittagong Court Building where the concerned Investigating Officer (IO) Sub-Inspector Mosharrif Hossain Bhuiyan of Rab-7 made a prayer for a 10-day remand of the accused in the arms case.

Magistrate Umme Rehana sanctioned 5-day remand of Shahid Chairman.

When Shahid was produced before the court of Metropolitan Magistrate Monwarul Islam, CID Inspector Anowar Hossain, the IO of the Jamal Uddin abduction case, made a prayer for 10-day remand of the criminal.

Defense lawyers - advocate Ranaga Bikash Chowdhury and advocate Prodeep Bhattacharya - strongly protested the remand prayer and said, "Another suspect in the same case, Amar Das, died mysteriously on the same night he was placed on remand under the custody of Detective Branch of police."

"If Shahid Chairman is placed on remand in the same case, same accident might happen once again," they added.

They mentioned that Sobhan, driver of the microbus used in the abduction, named Shahid Chairman as an accused in his confessional statement under Section 164, but later retracted the confessional statement.

The court sanctioned 5-day remand for Shahid Chairman in the abduction case filed under Section 364.

The accused was taken on the 5-day remand under Rab custody.

Rab held Shahid, the union parishad chairman of Anowara headquarters, from Patenga sea-beach at around 9:00pm on Saturday, more than two years after Jamal Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury was abducted from the city's Chandaon area.

Immediate after the abduction of

Shahid's wife goes into hiding

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

attack, ATM Tareq, Brahmanbaria Superintendent of Police (SP), told The Daily Star: "It is too early to comment, but there is strong possibility that the same group which carried out the June 24 attack are behind this one."

"The cocktails [bombs] used in June 24 incidents were a bit more sophisticated than the two recovered today, but the nature of the attack suggests the group behind both the incidents may be the same," he said.

Asked whether the explosions have any link to the bomb attack at Kharampur shrine in Akhaura in the district last Friday, the SP said: "We are probing it."

The SP expressed hope to arrest the group soon, saying, "We are determined to find the root of the attacks. We have significant information about the masterminds."

Local police officials and central Ahmadiyya leaders visited the panicked Ahmadiyyas in Bhalughar yesterday. Six policemen have been deployed at Hosen's house.

US embassy

FROM PAGE 1

topsury, reopened the wounds.

However, Foreign Minister M Moshref Khan said those who were in charge of the foreign ministry and state power at that time should know who were involved in the killing.

"Because, Awami League was replaced by Awami League. The speaker was there, the cabinet was there, BNP was not there, he told diplomatic correspondents whom they sought his comments.

Asked about the killing of the country's first president, he said, "All killings are heinous--we don't suppose any killing."

About opposition allegation that the alliance government is patronising the killers of Bangabandhu, Moshref said, "Opposition is entitled to make any opinion; we believe in democracy, we believe in freedom of press."

Asked about the previous Awami League government's initiative to sign an extradition treaty with the US government to bring back some absconding convicts of the Bangabandhu murder case, who are believed to be hiding in America, he said, "We've not abandoned any more information."

"They have tried for five years...We're a successive government, not a revolutionary government. This question has to be addressed to the nation," the foreign minister replied when a correspondent asked if being a successive government, they are pursuing the initiative for extradition treaty.

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Panic

FROM PAGE 16

the Urs of Hazrat Shah Syed Ahammad Gechu Daraj alias Shah Kolla Shahid shrine, said they had heard a huge bang and seen smoke rising slowly into the air, 250 metres of the shrine.

Mazar committee members and locals say the bomb might have been planted with the bombs that went off on Friday but somehow did not explode. A series of blasts on Friday killed one and injured more than 50 in the shrine.

Assistant Superintendent of Police (Nabinagar) said, "We are informed that locals had heard a loud bang but we did not find any evidence while inspecting the spot."

Meanwhile, the weeklong Urs ended with the final prayer being held at midnight Sunday, but the fair would continue for the month.

Cloud over economy

FROM PAGE 1

Corporation (BPC). The BPC owes Tk 1,800 crore to Sonali alone. The corporation is now at a staggering loss of Tk 2,700 crore incurred last year.

Sonali has been paying around \$200 million a month for petroleum imports, which was around \$150 million before the oil run. It is now buying dollar from the Bangladesh Bank to meet the import bills.

The BPC annually imports 3.7 million tonnes of petroleum products -- 2.3 million tonnes in diesel. Its overall annual import bills has jumped to around \$2 billion from the earlier \$1.5 billion.

There is now market perception that taka will get even weaker and both remitters and exporters are waiting to see how the situation evolves. A recent a chunk of the funds is not flowing in.

With the situation turning grave, the Bangladesh Employers' Federation (BEF) in a statement yesterday said the increasing global prices of petroleum pose a serious challenge to the country's economy.

"The rising import bills for petroleum and shrinking demand for exports not only threaten the balance of payment, but are also due to dislocate the overall economic development programmes," the BEF stated. "The threat underlines the need for drastic measures. At the same time, the government along with the people in all strata of the society need to promote austerity measures."

As the first step, the BEF suggested weekend-holidays might be observed for two days in the government Secretariat as well as in all government offices at the district levels except those offices which are connected with infrastructures and other services needed by trade and industry on a continuous basis. Banks, insurance and other offices should also remain outside of such extended holidays.

Former energy minister M Syeduzzaman also stressed the

need for austerity measures.

"We don't find any sign of reducing fuel consumption," said M Syeduzzaman. "Roadside lights are on and billboards blinking. The government should immediately lead some austerity measures for the private sector to follow."

While supporting price hike of petroleum products, he said sudden price adjustment is a politically difficult option, rather gradual adjustment is more realistic.

"In that case, the government has to be ready to subsidise the price and the money has to come by slashing non-essential public expenditure," Syeduzzaman said.

Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said the government is still not recognising as a whole the problems posed by the oil price spiral.

"We haven't developed any energy conservation plan," he pointed out. "We need to line up oil on more concessionary finances, we have to put a brake on fuel use too."

Bebapriya named a number of measures that need to be taken immediately -- saving day light by either reversing the clock or advancing office hours, switching off billboards at night and augmenting gas supply to substitute fuel. In a critical situation, filling stations can ration fuel.

He also said the 'anti-poor' energy pricing policy has to be changed by making octane costlier.

On the other hand, the macroeconomic issues such as exchange rate, interest rate, inflation, import regulation and public expenditures have to be realigned.

"There is a sense of denial of the reality and the emerging problem by the policymakers," Debapriya said. "There is no contingency plan. The government has to give a transparent signal so that the market actors can get confidence."

Peaceful hartal

FROM PAGE 1

execution of the verdict of the Bangabandhu murder case passed off peacefully yesterday.

Reinstatement of public holiday on August 15, the day father of the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members were assassinated, was another issue of the shutdown.

The BNP-led coalition government after coming to power in 2001 decreed the status of the day as a national holiday.

"We told the minister that prime suspect Shahid disclosed the names of lawmaker Sarwar Jamal Nizam and his brother Maruf Nizam as masterminds behind our father's kidnapping but the minister disagreed on this," Liton told journalists after the telephone conversation.

He went on: "The minister said A w a m i L e a g u e l e a d e r Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury Babu's name came up in Shahid's statement. But we strongly objected to this and told him we didn't have any enemy or feud with the AL leader and that any indication involving him is intended to divert attention from the case."

Nazma Akhtar said, "We sought his (state minister) help to find out the culprits and told him that we won't get justice unless he takes up the matter sincerely. The minister assured us of proper investigation and justice."

Earlier on Sunday night, Liton and his mother talked over the phone with Haris Chowdhury about the latest development in the case.

"He (Haris) also assured us that we would get justice, and the culprits would be given exemplary punishment," Liton told journalists.

Liton, his mother Nazma Akhtar and grandmother Almas Khatun, who brushed aside Shahid Chairman's statement about Jamal Uddin's 'killing', demanded that his body be produced if he was murdered.

"Most of Shahid Chairman's remarks are misleading and devoid of truth. And we suspect that he (Shahid) made the statement as part of a plot to save the lawmaker (Sarwar) and his brother," Liton said.

After staying there for about six months, Shahid Chairman returned to Anowara and had been staying alternately at three houses at Boalgaon, Dumuria and Junglekhine in Patiya.

During this he got out of house only to change his staying place and only in the night when he used CNG-run autorickshaw, they said, adding that he came out of his hiding only one week back, sources said.

Meanwhile, Saifuzzaman Chowdhury Jabed, president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CCCC), yesterday protested Shahid Chairman's statement implicating him and his family in the abduction.

WB sources said he is coming to the country to gather experiences about World Bank's activities in Bangladesh.

Wolfsowitz is now in Pakistan and will fly into India before his Bangladesh visit.

500mw

FROM PAGE 16

The first unit of 210 mw Raozan power plant is generating 150 mw of power, instead of 210 mw, due to a technical glitch.

Similarly, technical problems have reduced power production at the Haripur 100 mw plant down to a mere 27 mw.

"These shutdowns and technical problems are inevitable because these plants are running without any respite. Our power generation capacity, if all plants are running, is now 4100 mw which is close to the demand. We need more power plants to avoid this kind of load shedding," says a PDB official.

But there is no power plant project in the pipeline that is set to go online within the next one year.

In the last four years, the BNP government so far added only the Tongi 80 mw plant, built by Chinese company Harbin. That too is malfunctioning most of the time due to the flawed design of the plant, PDB sources say.

People from all walks of life, including children and women, who came to pay their respect to Bangabandhu, carried black banners inscribed with demand to execute the killers of Bangabandhu.

The Awami Shechchhasebok League organised a blood-donation

400 hurt

FROM PAGE 1

The police fired rubber bullets and teargas shells to bring the situation under control.

The situation of the local officer-in-charge (OC) along with three other cops, AL leaders Asaduzzaman Noor, Advocate Abdul Mannan Khan, Asim Kumar Ukil and Mahbubur Rahman were stated to be critical.

In protest of the BNP attack, angry people set ablaze four motor vehicles of the UNO and the police and damaged several public vehicles.

During the incidents, local MP and Communication Minister Nazmul Huda was present at Dohar to celebrate the birth anniversary of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

"No najat [salvation] day can be observed on the birthday of the prime minister," Huda said while addressing a public gathering.

Our Barisal correspondent adds: The National Mourning Day yesterday was observed at Hizla in Barisal and Dumki in Patuakhali amid attacks and obstacles created by ruling BNP activists.

The Barisal local administration yesterday imposed Section 144 on the Upazila Complex premises as the AL announced a programme to observe the death anniversary of Bangabandhu and the BNP declared another to celebrate the birth anniversary of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at the same venue.

Following the imposition of Section 144, the mourning programme was shifted from the Upazila Complex to Harinathpur. But at Harinathpur also the programme came under a series of attacks by BNP cadres led by Ali Qari, upazila member-secretary of BNP, and Manir Dewan, upazila secretary of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD).