

## 300 blasts in 63 districts in 30 minutes

1 killed; 100 hurt; all explosives were time bombs; Jama'atul Mujahideen leaflets found



From Left: Components of a bomb that exploded near Jatiya Press Club; a bomb left in a bag and leaflets of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh found on the Judge's Court premises in Nilphamari; an injured passer-by groans with pain near Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka; and five madrasa students held by police at Zia International Airport in connection with the blasts.

### STAR REPORT

In an unprecedented scale of terror attacks, a banned Islamist militant group yesterday simultaneously blasted over 300 time bombs in 63 of 64 districts across the country.

The 30-minute mayhem killed one and injured at least 100.

Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh, the banned militant group, claimed responsibility for the blasts through leaflets that left the countrymen in shock.

Panic gripped the country at the extent of the network of the terrorists who meticulously calculated the timing of the bombings between 11:00am and 11:30am, targeting government establishments, mainly the offices of the local district administrations and courts.

Only two hours after Prime

Minister Khaleda Zia departed for China on a five-day official tour, a time bomb went off on the stairs inside Zia International Airport, showing a gaping hole in the security system. Three madrasa students and an imam of a mosque were picked up from the airport premises.

In the leaflets, in Bangla and Arabic, found with the bomb devices, Jama'atul, which was banned on February 23 this year, said: "It is time to implement Islamic law in Bangladesh. There is no future with man-made law."

Police arrested at least 45 for their suspected involvement in the attacks. Yesterday's attacks were only one in a series of blasts suspected to be carried out by Islamist militants in the last six years, all of which remain unearthed and their investigations halted midway.

Immediately after the blasts that spared only Munshiganj district, State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar told journalists that the attacks were carried out by an well-organised group.

"It is not an isolated incident and done in an organised way with an objective," Babar said, but did not give details about the group.

"We had intelligence reports of some attacks between August 14 and 16, but we had no information of attacks on August 17," he said. Later in the afternoon, he shifted from his position and said the attacks were totally unexpected and the government was in the dark. He also asked all not to panic.

In capital Dhaka, bombs exploded at 28 points including the high-security Bangladesh Secretariat, Supreme Court com-

plex, the Prime Minister's Office, Dhaka Judges Court, Dhaka University, Dhaka Sheraton Hotel and Zia International Airport, Air Port rail station, a location close to the US embassy, police headquarters at Ramna, Hotel Sonargaon, Jatiya Press Club, New Market and the Bangladesh Bank.

The bombs, sealed in tin containers with electric circuit attached, were wrapped with scotch tape. The bombs were left in public places in packets or bags.

As they went off one after another, police forces rushed from one spot to the other, people started running for shelter not knowing what would come next. Rumours spread like fire and people tried their cell phones to get to know the situation of their relatives and friends.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

## Sudden terror dims the city midday

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Only half an hour into the explosions yesterday the entire city was seized by a whirling tumult of panic and speculation. Frightened citizens had no clue to what happened, but rumours were numerous. On first impressions, some of them took the booms to be tyre blowouts. Only later they learned the sounds were of a near-simultaneous chain bombing.

People started to make frantic phone calls to their kith and kin in

Dhaka and outside, and were stunned by the knowledge that similar blasts also hit all the districts but one, Munshiganj.

"I phoned my parents at Comilla and said don't worry, I am okay, though there have been some blasts on the university campus," said a student of Dhaka University, adding, "But I was really surprised when my father said at least nine bombs had exploded there too."

Everywhere across the city, worried people gathered in front of

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

## Agencies admit their failure

### STAR REPORT

Intelligence and law enforcement agencies at a meeting with the state minister for home conceded their virtual failure to prevent the orchestrated countrywide bomb blasts yesterday, saying the incidents demonstrated the capability of the terror group.

They told the state minister that the incidents showed the group can even go for grenade attacks across the country, if they want. "It shows

that we have no intelligence. We have failed," admitted one official who attended the meeting.

Officials of these agencies did not name whom they suspect for the attacks but they appeared to make an oblique reference to the Awami League. They did not discuss evidences blaming the blasts on Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), he told The Daily Star.

State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar asked the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

## Weak bombs meant to send terror message

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The bombs that exploded yesterday across the country were not powerful and the explosions were meant to send the message of the Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh to establish Islamic rule in the country rather than hurt anyone, said bomb experts.

Leaflets of the group carrying the call to establish Islamic rule in Bangladesh were found at most of the sites of the blasts.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

### Notice

The concluding part of The Past is Never Dead by Lawrence Lifschultz could not be published today due to space constraints. We regret any inconvenience.

## How all hell broke loose

*Eyewitnesses narrate the terror strike*

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Yesterday's near-simultaneous countrywide bomb blasts left a great many people -- from beggars to lawyers -- severely injured, petrified and shocked from such a close proximity to death.

In the capital the bombs went off between 11 and 11:30am, and in most cases someone brought and placed them at the target points a few minutes before the explosions, witnesses and victims, some of them lying on hospital beds with bandaged limbs, told the press.

While narrating their trauma and pains, they said, in some cases, the explosions came out of the blue when people unwittingly picked up packets of explosives from the ground, taking them to be lost or fallen objects.

"A bearded youth of around 18,

clad in a long panjabi (robe), asked me to look after a bag he was leaving beside the bus counters between the Secretariat and the press club," recalled Malek, a roadside shopkeeper. He said, "A minute after he had left the place, the bomb boomed."

All of a sudden, Malek said, the place turned into a hell, as people started to run for their lives.

Moniruzzaman Monir, 25, who works at a plastic commodities manufacturing company in Old Dhaka, said, "I was walking along a footpath at Palashi crossroads at around 11:15am, when I heard a huge explosion that made me deaf." The bomb was planted under a bench at a roadside tea-stall, said Monir, who suffered arm and leg injuries.

In another incident, private car

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

## PM condemns attack

Bss, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has strongly condemned the bomb attacks in the country, including the capital city Dhaka.

Khaleda described the incident as heinous, cowardly, conspiratorial and well planned acts of terrorism. She expressed her deep condolences to those killed in the bomb attacks and sympathy for those who were injured.

In a message sent from Beijing where she is now on an official visit, the prime minister said: "Expressing solidarity with the feelings of my dear countrymen I want to say that the attackers are enemies of the country, people, peace, humanity and democracy."

They want to create panic in people's mind for realising an evil design by destabilising the country, she said.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

## Condemnation from foreign countries

### STAR REPORT

New Delhi expressed concern over the scale and co-ordination of the bomb attacks in Bangladesh while China, the US Embassy and the British High Commission in Dhaka have strongly condemned the series of bomb blasts that rocked the country yesterday.

In a statement issued in New Delhi yesterday, the official spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs said, "We have seen reports relating to the hundreds of explosions all over Bangladesh which have injured dozens of people, some

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

## Babar changes statement on attack info

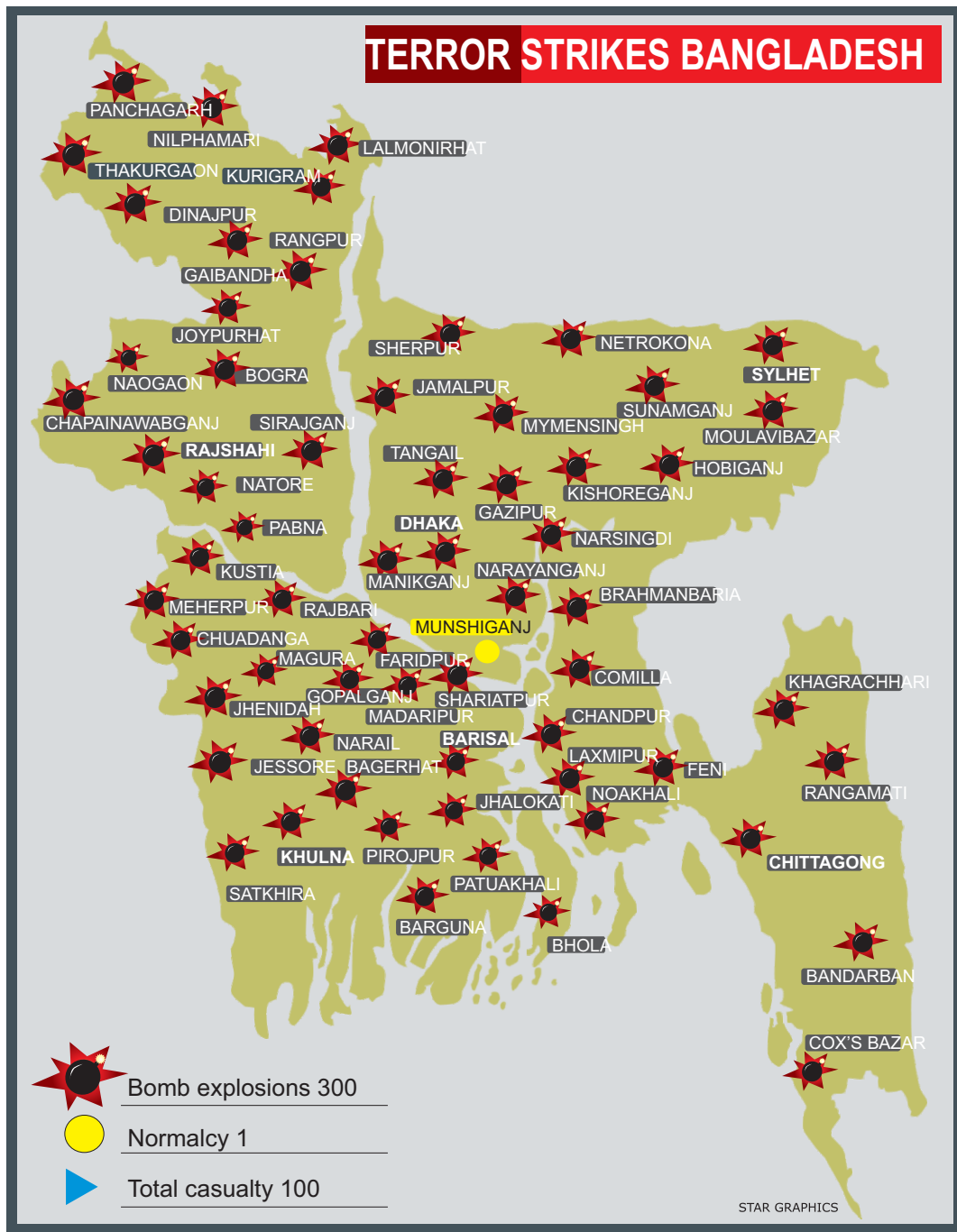
### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar has shifted from his previous statement of having prior intelligence reports about subversive activities and now says that they had no idea about such a countrywide organised attack.

"Today's incident was totally unexpected. None of us had any idea about such an incident," Babar told reporters yesterday afternoon.

But while talking to reporters before noon, Babar had said he had intelligence reports that subversive

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



## Leaflets ridicule democracy, ask for Islamic rule

UNB, Dhaka

Bombers under the letterhead of outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) spread leaflets during serial bombings across the country yesterday with a demand for establishing Islamic rule, failing of which they will go for counter-offensive against the authorities.

"We're the soldiers of Allah. We've taken up arms for the implementation of Allah's law the way Prophet, Sahabis and heroic Mujahideen have done for centuries," the so-called Islamist outfit said in the leaflets circulated at the bombing sites.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

## Govt press note assures people of protection

UNB, Dhaka

The government, in a press note yesterday, assured the people that it was determined to protect their lives and property and urged them not to panic.

"There have been a series of bomb blasts in almost all districts of the country, including capital Dhaka, from 10:00am to 11:30am yesterday," the press note said, adding there is, however, no report of death or massive losses in these incidents.

In most of the cases, the targets of

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

## Patrons still defend Jama'atul



Asadullah Al Galib

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

BNP leaders of the North Bengal, who allegedly brought infamous Bangla Bhai in the limelight last year for their personal protection, refuse to admit that Bangla Bhai and Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) have gained a lot of strength as the government deliberately overlooked their existence.

Instead, these BNP leaders are as usual blaming the Awami League

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



Bangla Bhai

## Series of blasts poses lasting security threat

*Say analysts, blame govt inaction in punishing previous attackers*

### SHAKHAWAT LITON

Simultaneous bomb blasts across the country yesterday pose a long-term threat to the country's security system, said security analysts, adding that the incidents once again proved the incompetence of intelligence agencies to detect any threat to security.

The attack that rocked the entire

country was launched four days into the home ministry's directives to build a foolproof security measure across the country ahead of the Saarc summit slated for November 12-13. The summit was earlier scheduled for last February, but postponed following Indian Prime Minister's refusal to join on security grounds.

Security analysts observed that

criminal activities are not being stopped as the mastermind of the well-orchestrated attacks are yet to be brought to book. They also pinpointed the absence of rule of law, the lack of the government's political will and the lack of commitment of the law enforcement agencies to curb such crimes as reasons for the recurrence of such attacks.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

## Blasts prove govt denials wrong

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Yesterday's countrywide organised bomb attacks once again proved futile the government's persistent denial of the existence of Islamist militant in the country and claim that it would not allow unlawful and anti-social activities in the name of religion.

Although leaflets of banned Islamist militant organisation Jama'atul Mujahideen, Bangladesh

(JMB) were found at all the explosion sites yesterday, State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar refrained from putting blame on the militant organisation for the act that sent a chill of horror through the bones of the countrymen.

Talking to reporters, Babar just said the JMB might be involved or 'there might be some other matters. Many things might have happened.'

But experts said the bombings were carried out to send a message

of establishing Islamic rule through the leaflets, not to create carnage. The nature of the bombs, their capacity and area of incidences show the attack was meant to make a showdown of their capacity to do harm, not harming.

"There is no reason now to think that it is not the act of Islamist fundamentalists once they've distributed their leaflets with the bombs," said a security expert.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

## AL, allies call hartal for Saturday

*Blame govt for blasts*

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) and its allies have called a countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal on Saturday, blaming the government for yesterday's bomb blasts across the country.

The decision was taken at an emergency meeting of senior leaders of the parties -- the AL, components of the left-leaning 11-party alliance, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) and National Awami Party (NAP) -- held at AL's Dhanmondi office.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6