Govt to ensure full security to diplomats

Assures foreign secy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin yesterday said the government has taken all-out measures to ensure foolproof security to the foreign diplomats living in the capital.

Talking to diplomatic correspondents at his office, he said the diplomats in Dhaka have no reason to feel insecure in the wake of yesterday's bomb explosions. "The government is determined to ensure foolproof security to the diplomats," he added.

The foreign secretary said the government is ready to provide any sort of assistance for the diplomats in addition to the security arrangements already made for them.

Replying to a question, he said no diplomat has yet asked for extra security after the bomb blasts across the country.

Asked if the prime minister, who left for Beijing on a five-day official tour yesterday, will shorten her visit, Hemayetuddin said there is no such possibility.

PHOTO: STAR

(Left) Police intercept a procession of the Awami League at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday as the demonstrators were protesting the bomb attacks across the country. (Right) BNP Secretary General and LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan speaks at a BNP rally at Muktangan protesting the bomb attacks.

How all hell

FROM PAGE 1

driver Russel said, he was sitting idle in front of the Supreme Court building when a bomb exploded under a coconut tree, wounding another car driver, Khairul Islam Khasru, in his arms and the back.

Another victim, Masum Ahmed, 25, said he was walking along the footpath beside Dhaka Sheraton Hotel at 11:25am, when suddenly a bomb went off. "I didn't even notice the pack lying on the footpath," said Masum, who was admitted to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital with wounded arms and legs.

The police yesterday arrested Ruhul Amin after a bomb had banged in a pack he was holding in his hands at a place between Bangla Motors and Hotel Sonargaon intersection.

PORT CITY BLOWOUTS

A street urchin named Delwar, son of late Abu Bakar Siddique of Noakhali, was groaning in pain on the floor of Chittagong Medical College and Hospital's (CMCH) Casualty Unit. Both his legs were lacerated by splinters of a bomb that went off at GEC intersection in the port city at around 9:45am.

"I had been begging from passers-by standing on a traffic island at GEC intersection from 9:30am. Suddenly, there appeared another street urchin slightly older than me. He drew my attention to an object lying a few yards away on the ground and asked me to pick it up," Delwar told The Daily Star in near whispers.

"As soon as I lifted the thing wrapped with thick paper, it went off with a stunning boom. I fell to the ground and remained unconsciousness for a few seconds. When I regained consciousness, I discovered both my legs were bleeding," the unlucky boy went on.

He said the explosion also injured another man aged about 25 to 30, "who had pulled up his motorbike there and was talking over a cellphone."

An explosion at Kazir Dewri crossroads at around 10:30am wounded Abdul Hye, 32, son of Ayub Ali of Dharmapur village under Fatikchhari Upazila. He came there to see one of his friends, a shopkeeper.

Hye too was admitted to the CMCH Casualty Unit with his face and body badly cut by splinters. He said, "I was crossing the road when the bomb went off and I fell down."

Although the injuries to his body were not severe, his eyes probably have suffered a damage, said the doctor on duty, Jahid Hasan.

At around 11.15am, a bomb blew off in the ground floor corridor of Chittagong Court Building, only five-feet off the court of Metropolitan Magistrate M Akram Hossain, prompting him to postpone his court's proceedings immediately. The lawyers, litigants and visitors ran fast for safety.

"I was conducting the court. All of a sudden, I heard a big bang. I left my seat and looked through the door at the source of the blast. I saw another live bomb and some sandals lying about on the spot. The bomb went off very close to a tea-stall in the corridor, but I didn't see the stall-owner after the explosion," the magistrate described to The Daily Star.

The police later searched the entire court building and recovered three live bombs from there.

SCENES AT SAVAR, RANGAMATI

Nazmul Hassan Rubel, a third-year student of English at Jahangirnagar University, said, "I was standing some 10 to 15 feet away from the spot, where a bomb exploded at Savar, rocking the surrounding area. I saw smoke emitting from the site."

The bomb was wrapped with black tape and connected with red and black wires to a switch wrapped with red tape, Rubel described.

"From the description, it seems to be a remote-controlled bomb, exploded from a safe distance," observed Major Hasan, terrorism expert of Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI).

According to the major, "This type of explosives is called improvised explosive device, IED in short, which can be made at home using sulphuric acid, sulphur, Harpic (a toilet cleaner) and some other chemicals easily available in the retail market."

In Rangamati, 5-year-old Monir Hossain was critically injured in a bomb blast. He was burned, two fingers of his right hand were blown away, and his right leg, chest and face lacerated by splinters. Monir was admitted to the local general hospital.

Witnesses said Monir belongs to an utterly poor family. Like every other day, he was rummaging through a dustbin at Chowmohani looking for things of some worth, when the bomb went off.

The police later recovered another bomb, live, from the spot.

Bomb panic stops cultural activities in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cultural activities in the city came to a standstill yesterday evening as a series of bomb blasts earlier in the morning sent a wave of panic across the country.

The situation prompted the organisers of various cultural events to postpone all the shows scheduled for yesterday evening.

Only a few theatregoers turned up at the Mahila Samity Auditorium to enjoy a drama titled 'Bhuboner Ghate', a production of Nattyajan, but they had to return without watching the play.

Tabibul Islam Babu, the chief of Nattyajan, said, "We have postponed our anniversary programme, including the performance of the play, because of the bomb panic. However, we will arrange it later."

Jionkathi, a cultural organisation, also cancelled a solo performance by Ferdausi Abedin Leena, which was due to take place at the Experimental Theatre Stage at the Shilpakala Academy.

"We don't like to take any risk at such a moment. We had received bomb threats in February when several bomb attacks on cultural activities at the district level took place. That is why we are discouraging the theatre groups to host any show today," said an official of the Academy, seeking anonymity.

The Nritya Nandan was due to hold a discussion programme and dance show at the WVA Auditorium at Dhanmondi, but the bomb panic led to the postponement of the show.

Sharmila Bandapadhyaya, director of Nrittya Nandan, said, "We have stopped the programme in view of the security situation."

A photo exhibition titled 'Russia: Country and People' was going on at the Russian Cultural Centre in the city, but no visitors turned up yesterday.

However, the cultural activists are determined to carry on their activities amidst all odds.

Mamunur Rashid, chairman of Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation, said, "We will not quit theatre activities. Rather, we will be more careful about security during the show."

"The Federation has its own metal detectors and we will instruct the member groups to search the audience with metal detector at the gate of the auditorium. In addition, we will urge the government to provide security for the audience as well as the cultural activists."

Husband throws acid on wife in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A husband threw acid on his second wife early hours of yesterday in the city over altercation with money.

She was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) in a critical condition.

Bibi Kulsum, 25, of city's Fatulla Chowdhury Para, said she went to her second husband Alam Mollah's shop at Patuatuli on Tuesday afternoon to collect Tk 62,000 she had kept with him.

Alam first refused to give the money and was locked into altercation with Kulsum, whom he visits occasionally. At one stage, he proposed her to go with him to his friend's house for bringing money.

Alam along with Kulsum and another man took a rickshaw to go to Babu Bazar to his friend's house. On the way he threw acid on Kulsum's back and neck through syringe when they reached the Babu Bazar Bridge at almost late night and fled away with his accomplice.

Kulsum went to DMCH by her own yesterday noon. She is now at the hospital in a critical condition.

No case was filed in this connection.

Patrons still defend Jama'atul

FROM PAGE 1

(AL) for yesterday's countrywide bomb blasts.

Even though the police recovered identical JMB leaflets from the different sites of bomb blasts in the country, these BNP leaders describe the incident as a "conspiracy" hatched in the name of JMB. They refuse to link the JMB with the terrorist activities on the basis of their own theories.

Despite overwhelming evidence of the JMB's subversive activities, the reactions of the ruling party MPs are no different from those made during different bomb blasts in the past. The confessions of a good number of arrested JMB cadres led every attack to Bangla Bhai, JMB chief Abdur Rahman and jailed Rajshahi University teacher Asadullah Al Galib. However, every time the government mysteriously shrugged off the links, released the arrested militants and brushed aside the evidences.

Advocate Nadim Mostafa, an MP from Natore, told The Daily Star yesterday evening, "I believe this was done to sabotage the upcoming Saarc summit. Those who did it, did it to prove Bangladesh as a den of militants to the foreign countries. But I don't believe there is any extreme militant force in the country."

"If the Bangla Bhais were so strong, those who are involved in politics could not have carried on with politics anymore," Mostafa said.

Denying his role in bringing Bangla Bhai in the forefront, Mostafa reiterated, "I don't know Bangla Bhai. I have learnt about him from the newspapers. In Bagmara or Atrai areas, the people were compelled to bring him in the scene due to unbearable oppression of the Sarbaharas."

Then why did the government ban the Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), another name for the JMB which is also banned? Mostafa replies, "Banning does not mean that it has so powerful a network to orchestrate a country-wide bomb attack."

Deputy Minister for Land Ruhul Quddus Talukder, another ruling party MP from Natore, told The Daily Star, "I don't think they [JMB] have such a strong network. Awami League must have done this using fake leaflets to destroy Bangladesh's image internationally."

Talukder also denied having any connection with Bangla Bhai and said, "The Bangla Bhai group or JMB may have some hold in Bagmara, Atrai or Natore areas, but they are not so strong. Those who are doing this aim to go to power through creating an anarchy."

State Minister for Housing Alamgir Kabir, another BNP MP from Naogaon, refused to make any comment on the JMB or Bangla Bhai, saying, "I do not know anything about them."

The ruling party MPs are accused of bringing the Bangla Bhai group in the public to fight the Sarbaharas who had started killing relatives of these MPs and announced to kill the MPs as well. The government has so far made no attempt to arrest Bangla Bhai and his gang who killed around 20 people and tortured many more.

When the government arrested Galib in February 2005 and banned the JMB and JMJB, a government press note read, "The government notices with concern that two organisations called Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh and Jama'atul Mujahideen have been carrying out a series of murders, robberies, bomb attacks, threats and various kinds of terrorist acts causing deaths to peace-loving people and destruction of property."

In February 13, 2003, a JMB militant named Badal was killed in an explosion while making bombs in a house in Dinajpur town. Two arms and explosives cases were filed and seven were arrested. But all of them were released later.

In August 2003, the JMB, Bangla Bhai and JMB's top leader Shaikh Abdur Rahman were locked in a clash at a secret training camp with the police at Khetlal of Joypurhat. Most of the militants managed to escape leaving behind huge documents showing their subversive plans. Eighteen militants were arrested, including Rahman's brother. But a few days later, they were not only released, but the government transferred several police officials involved in the Khetlal operation.

"We don't believe in the present political trend. We want to build a society based on the Islamic model laid out in the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith," Bangla Bhai told The Daily Star in an interview in May last year. The leaflets found yesterday at the blast sites echoed the same message.

Bangla Bhai also said he wanted to establish a Taliban-like rule. His party has been active underground since 1998 and had three tiers of workers until last year. The party spent Tk 7 lakh per month for 10,000 full-time JMB workers across the country, while the total number of its activists is no less than a lakh, he claimed.

At different times, all the confessions made by the arrested militants spelt out the names of Bangla Bhai, Abdur Rahman, Asadullah Al Galib and some other leaders. Earlier this year, they also stated that an explosion in Jamalpur was orchestrated by Abdur Rahman himself.

Abdur Rahman's father late Moulana Abdullah Ibne Fazal was a member of Jamiatul Ahle Hadith which is now led by Galib. Moulana Fazal is accused of collaborating with the Pakistani forces in 1971.

Shafiqullah, nabbed on January 17 for bombing a folk-drama programme in Lakkhikhola village, said the JMB has its separate bombing squads spread across the country.

It has its separate working forces in the bomb squads and the tasks of every group are well defined, he said during his remand.

Brac University NBCC-2005 on Aug 19-20

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brac University will organise the National Business Case Competition- 2005 (NBCC-2005), first of its kind in the country, on its residential campus at Savar on August 19 to 20.

Prof Abdur Rab, Chairman of Management and Business Department of Brac University, said this at a press conference at the university yesterday.

The objective of the competition is to pull together bright business students from all over the country, he said.

The participating teams will be given a business case and asked to analyse situation, give recommendation and suggestion within 24 hours in front of the judges comprising a banker and a multi-national company executive and an entrepreneur.

Each team will be comprised with four students of business studies department, he said. A total of eight teams from seven universities will participate in the competition, he added.

Teams are Institute of Business Administration of Dhaka University, Dhaka University, Independent University, Islamic University, Jahangirnagar University, North South University, University of Asia Pacific and Brac University.

The champion team will get Tk 10,000 in cash, certificates and a crest.

Md Shawkat Kamal, lecturer of the department and co-ordinator of the event, Julias Gomez, Ferdous Nayeem and Nurus Samad were present at the press conference.

Agencies admit their failure

FROM PAGE 1

agencies to launch countrywide raids to nab the terrorists. He asked them not to raid madrasas and mosques unless there are specific information.

Many officials of the law enforcing agencies said a 'certain quarter' seeking political benefit from chaos and anarchy organised the bomb attacks. The recent London attacks might have inspired the quarter, they thought.

In line with the ruling BNP's political stance every time an explosion takes place in the country, the officials said this quarter wants to destroy Bangladesh's image abroad.

They said the country has 33 small Islamic political parties which do not recognise each other. These parties do not have countrywide network. The 'certain quarter' wants to create a rift in the BNP-Jamaat alliance and that is why the name of JMB has been used, they added.

Babar told the meeting that such attacks affect not only the BNP but all political parties. All parties, even those who will come to power in future, are harmed, he said.

Earlier in the day, the state minister told the press that the agencies had information about terror attacks on August 14, 15 and 16. He however changed his contention later.

Explaining this terror alert, a security official told The Daily Star, "We were told that there might be attacks on Awami League rallies and meetings. This was not a specific warning, but we stepped up security across the country on August 14, 15 and 16."

Asked whether yesterdy's meeting discussed that the AL was planning to attack its own rallies and kill its own activists to embarrass the government on these three days, the official said, "This was not discussed and Awami League was not named."

Qulkhwani

Qulkhwani of Prof Hamida Rahman will be held at her Dhanmondi residence after Asr prayers today, says a press release.

Admirers have been requested to attend the qulkhwani and pray for the departed soul.

Ruta concerned over continued death threat

RU CORRESPONDENT

Rajshahi University Teacher Association (Ruta) yesterday in an executive committee meeting expressed concern over continued death threats to the teachers through telephones and letters.

They said unknown callers recently threatened former proctor and science faculty dean Prof Nurul Abser, Lecturer GM Shafiur Rahman of materials science department and Lecturer Ataur Rahman of language department.

As a result of threats, many teachers cannot move freely on the campus, they said.

They demanded immediate arrest of and exemplary punishment to the criminals.

Ruta General Secretary Prof Dr Abdul Hai Talukder conducted the meeting.

48m euros to tackle global climate change

Bangladesh to be affected most by climate change in future: EC envoy

BDNEWS, *Dhaka*

The European Commission (EC) will provide a total of 48 million euros for the global Environment call for proposals which will tackle climate change amongst a range of global environment issues.

Bangladesh will be affected more than any other country in the world by climate in the years ahead. Sea levels are expected to rise along with temperatures. Total rainfall is likely to increase, but droughts in the dry season will become more severe.

Ambassador Esko Kentrschynskyj, Head of Delegation of the EC announced this new initiative yesterday while launching the EC funded project titled `Environmental initiatives, waste management and technology dissemination in Bangladesh'.

The EC has made Climate Change Adaptation a key development issue to be addressed under this new call for proposals under the global Environment and Tropical Forests programme.

The issues include: Trade and environments, Multilateral Environment Agreements on Biodiversity, Climate Change and Desertification, Forests and Governance, Small-scale and community-based forest enterprise, Forests, Wood and Energy, Sustainable use of forest biodiversity, Forests in economic planning and poverty reduction strategies. Proposals can range in size from 250,000 to 3.5 million euros with a maximum 80 per cent funding from the EC, according to EC sources.

The EC is currently supporting 7 environmental projects in Bangladesh. The focus is towards urban environmental problems of water quality, effluent disposal and waste management, but also land planning and disaster preparedness. The emphasis is the impact on the poor, who suffer most from a polluted environment and are the least able to protect themselves, while everyone benefits from a clean environment.

Dhaka-Islamabad meet begins tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A two-day foreign secretary-level consultation between Bangladesh and Pakistan begins in Islamabad tomorrow with an aim to enhance bilateral trade, investment and other economic cooperation in potential sectors.

Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin will lead the Bangladesh side at the meeting on August 19-20. It is considered as an important event in the context of the upcoming Saarc summit in Dhaka, resolving bilateral issues and increasing export from Bangladesh.

Hemayetuddin leaves today for Islamabad to attend the foreign office consultation, said foreign ministry sources.

Officials said Bangladesh at the meeting will review the entire range of bilateral issues, particularly trade and economic cooperation. The issue of repatriation of the stranded Pakistanis will also dominate the talks.

The two sides are expected to put special emphasis on increasing people-to-people contact to further strengthen the existing excellent ties.

Dhaka will also push the issue of duty-free access for 102 products to Pakistan at the meeting with the country's Foreign Secretary Riaz Mohammad Khan.

The officials said Pakistan has already given duty-free access for raw jute and tea, while Dhaka is pursuing Islamabad to include ceramics, pharmaceuticals, leather goods and garments, among other products.

Bangladesh currently enjoys duty-free access for 10,000 tonnes of tea to the Pakistani market. Dhaka wants to increase this volume and other exports, as it suffered a $149.44 million trade gap with Pakistan in 2003-04.

Besides, Pakistan's investment might be sought for setting composite textile mills in Bangladesh.

Business another casualty

FROM PAGE 16

China's growth in this sector. But this incident will have a serious impact over the possible re-growth of the garment industry, he said.

"So far we have trying to make them realise that Bangladesh is a moderate Muslim country, but after this series of bomb blasts that ripped through the country at the same time, how can we now make them believe that there is no fundamentalist elements in the country. The nature of the bomb explosions apparently shows that these so-called fundamentalist groups has a nation wide network," Chowdhury explained.

FBCCI President Abdul Awal Mintoo said, "The government has been claiming that there is no fundamentalist terrorists in the country and we also have believed the government claim. But today's incidents have shown that they not only exist - they exist very strongly," he reacted.

He urged the government to investigate into the bomb blast incidents and to make their findings public, he demanded. "If the government still fails to act and tackle the situation our economy will be in a great fiasco," he feared.

Research director of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) Dr Zaid Bakht, said "The government so far has been claiming that there is no fundamentalists in the country and even if there is any like Bangla bhai or someone else they are very much under the government's control. But the way bombs exploded all over the country at a certain period of time clearly shows they have got a very organised and strong network."

"Bangladesh has already had an image problem in the international arena. This incident will further dent the country's image overseas. The incident will have a long-term and far reaching effect in every sector of our economy, including foreign investment, exports, and remittances. The government must wake up and catch the culprits," he said.

Managing Director of Pubali Bank, Khondkar Ibrahim Khaled, observed that, from what he has heard so far, it seems the spate of bomb explosions was meant to create panic among the general people in a very pre-planned way. "They clearly have a strong network across the country. The foreign buyers will certainly feel frightened by these events and our exports will suffer greatly,' he feared.

The Dhaka Stock Exchange's Chief Executive, Salahuddin Ahmed Khan, said bomb blasts saw a sharp fall in share prices around noon, but things settled down after a while. The government must do the needful so that the public has a sense of security.

Following the bomb explosions all over the country, share prices began to fall drastically in both the Dhaka and Chittagong share markets. Prices of each share fell by Tk 20 to 25. However, sanity soon returned in the share market.

BGMEA, in a press release, expressed great worry over the incidents and asked the government to identify the masterminds behind these acts of terrorism so that such incidents do not occur again in the future. Mentioning the extremely bad impact the incidents will have on the garment industry, the press release said foreign buyers have already started to make queries about the happenings.

The Bangladesh Chamber of Industries, in a meeting titled, "Exchange of views on trade and Economy" said the leading businessmen said it will be difficult to find buyers for Bangladeshi products and that orders will go to neighbouring countries.

DHAKA TODAY

Conference

Indian Institute of Packaging organises a conference on ' Increasing market share by using value-added technologies in packages production'. Venue: Hotel Purbani International. Time: 9:30am.

Inaugural function

An inaugural function of the workshop 'Safe food: where do we stand' organised by Consumers Association of Bangladesh will be held with Food and Disaster Management Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf as chief guest. Venue: Biam auditorium, New Eskaton. Time: 9:00am.

Children's human chain

Bhashani Shishu Kishor Sangathan, a children's organisation, will form a human chain protesting food adulteration in restaurants. Venue: Muktangon. Time: 4:00pm.

Preparatory meeting

Alumni Association of Rajshahi University will hold preparatory meeting to its 'Triennial conference and election'. Venue: Swanirbhar Bangladesh office, Lalmatia. Time: 5:00pm.

Human chain

Forward Party will form human chain demanding reform of governance and electoral systems. Venue: Muktangon. Time: 4:00pm.

WEATHER TODAY

Moderately heavy falls likely

UNB, *Dhaka*

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at many places over the country till 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy falls are also expected at places during the period, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 34.6 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rajshahi and lowest 25.4 degree Celsius at Sandwip.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:29pm today and rises at 5:35am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	32.7	27.0	75	69
Chittagong	31.7	26.3	80	87
Rajshahi	34.6	27.2	82	74
Khulna	32.2	27.2	84	69
Barisal	31.5	26.8	97	86
Sylhet	32.6	26.3	83	78
Cox's Bazar	31.5	25.8	76	88

Obituary

BSS, *Dhaka*

Historian Prof Mohammad Ishaque died at a private hospital in the city yesterday due to old age complications at the age of 95.

Prof Ishaque was a teacher of Dhaka College and Bogra Azizul Huq College.

He left behind his wife, sons, daughters and a host of admirers to mourn his death.