

STRING OF BOMB BLASTS

Kingpins remain out of dragnet

Arrestees to be quizzed at JIC today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Intelligence agencies start quizzing the arrestees today in connection with the August 17 nationwide explosions at the Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC) in Dhaka to identify the mastermind and the motive of the attacks, investigators said.

Members of different law

enforcement and intelligence agencies are continuing massive hunts across the country to arrest the suspects. But no kingpins of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), which claimed responsibility for the attacks, could be trapped.

Intelligence officials said they have started gathering the suspects arrested in the last two days in

Dhaka where they will be interrogated intensively at JIC.

The officials said they are trying to find out if other Islamist militant groups including Harkatul Jihad were involved in the attacks.

"We've already started quizzing those who have already been brought to Dhaka. We'll intensively

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Border shootout over riverbank protection

1 civilian injured in C'nawabganj, red alert along 10km border

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Border guards of India and Bangladesh yesterday traded some 600 bullets across the Gilabari border in the northwestern district of Chapainawabganj, injuring at least one Bangladeshi civilian and sparking off panic among the locals.

To avoid any further civilian casualty, Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) yesterday evening issued a red alert along some 10 kilometre border span in Chapainawabganj and Noagaon districts bordering Indian Malda district and asked villagers to evacu-

ate to safer places.

The shootout began with the Border Security Force (BSF) of India starting firing at around 10 in the morning as a sequel to a BSF-BDR dispute over the protection of their respective riverbanks from erosion by the Mahananda, BDR sources said. The Bangladeshi side retaliated immediately and the skirmishes continued intermittently into the evening.

The injured, Basiruddin, son of Belaluddin of Char Kharampur of Bholahat, received a bullet in his

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PHOTO: PID

BGMEA President Annisul Huq and Chinese Linmark Group Chairman LY Wang sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in Beijing yesterday as Prime Minister Khaleda Zia looks on.

PM for Sino-Bangla 'strategic' trade ties

BGMEA signs MoU with Chinese co

UNB, Beijing

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday assured the Chinese investors of all-out co-operation in their business endeavours as top Chinese companies expressed intent to invest in various sectors, particularly in chemical, mining, and power plants in Bangladesh.

The assurance came when chief executives of some renowned Chinese companies met the prime minister at Kerry Centre in Beijing.

The China Metallurgical Construction Corporation President

Shen Heting, China National Machinery Import and Export Corporation Vice-president Oin Ruijuan, Sinosteel Corporation Vice-president He Lin, China Huan Construction & Engineering Corporation Vice-president Wan Zhuovan, China Eastern Airlines Vice-president Liu Jiangbo and China Electronics Technology of Group Corporation Vice-president Guo Yadong were in the select group of Chinese entrepreneurs that called on Khaleda Zia.

The Chinese business leaders

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AL youth front leader killed during 'police action'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An Awami Swechchhasebok League leader in the city was electrocuted allegedly during police action in the early hours yesterday.

The victim was Md Sumon Hossain, 24, general secretary of ward 60 unit of the Awami League's youth wing.

Sumon was an accused in several criminal cases including one for murder, police said.

According to family sources, police raided their house at

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PHOTO: STAR

Law enforcers bar traffic from plying the thoroughfares around the Paltan intersection in the city yesterday afternoon as several political organisations hold rallies protesting the Wednesday's serial bomb blasts across the country.

DR KAMAL ON WEDNESDAY'S BLASTS

Summon special JS session, form nat'l probe commission

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday suggested that the government should summon a special session in parliament to discuss the grievous issue of bomb blasts in the country and form a national enquiry commission.

"The government should treat the serial bomb attacks as an incident of national importance and let the people know calling a special parliamentary session," Dr Kamal said.

He also suggested that the opposition join parliament to force the government reveal what information it has gathered from investigations into the recent grenade and bomb attacks.

He blamed the government's failure, inefficiency and weakness for repeated incidents of bomb attacks in the country.

Talking to the news agency, Dr Kamal, also Gono Forum president,

termed the series of bomb and grenade attacks an ominous sign and warning and an assault on national security.

He said assistance from international level, even from the United Nations, should be sought to investigate the series of bomb and grenade attacks.

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Highest ever hits at thedailystar.net

Over half a million people from across the globe clicked on The Daily Star's website <thedailystar.net> to know details of Wednesday's country-wide orchestrated bomb blasts. The website hit-count reached 528,521 Thursday, the highest ever in any 24 hours. On average, <thedailystar.net> has been getting 300,000 hits in a day in the last one year.

DAWN TO DUSK HARTAL TODAY

'Bombs blasted to divert attention from demands'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL), left-leaning 11-party alliance, and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Inu) enforce a countrywide dawn to dusk hartal today, protesting the August 17 blasts.

Leaders of AL and its allies yesterday called upon the countrymen to observe the shutdown programme.

Addressing a rally in city's Muktagong, they blasted the government for its 'failure' to crack down on the Islamist militants.

The opposition combine comprising AL, components of the left 11-party alliance, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), and National Awami Party (NAP) organised the rally to mobilise public support in favour of today's hartal.

The opposition leaders alleged that the government had masterminded Wednesday's near-simultaneous blasts across the country to divert the attention of the

people from the issue of reforms in caretaker government and electoral systems.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jaill said the militants would not have succeeded in executing such co-ordinated explosions, had there been no backing of the government.

He called on the people to unite in opposition to the alliance government and make today's hartal successful.

Workers Party of Bangladesh President Rashed Khan Menon said the constitution, rule of law, and the judiciary are under threat as the extremist forces in the country have been continuing to thrive with the government organs on their side for the last three years.

Menon said through Wednesday's bomb blasts the Islamist militant groups have in fact flexed their muscles.

JSD President Hasanul Haque Inu told the rally that the AL-led

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THE PAST IS NEVER DEAD

Fearing a Leftist challenge, Rightists struck

LAWRENCE LIFSCHULTZ

(Concluding instalment of a four-part series. Earlier sections were published on 15, 16 and 17 August)

Thus, Cherry may have followed Boster's instructions and yet contacts could have continued outside of pre-January channels. It is conceivable that one of Mustaque's aides may have travelled to the US or to another meeting point to discuss

plans for the coup. It is also possible that military attaches or officers of the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) which has had history of strong historical links with Pakistan's military might have been involved in monitoring plans for the coup.

Only a Congressional inquiry with subpoena power at its disposal could sort through these conflicting claims. Despite some efforts on the part of

Congressman Stephen Solarz and his staff associate, Stanley Roth, an inquiry into the Bangladesh coup never happened. In a detailed report in Prothom Alo and The Daily Star published on 24 August 2000 I described how Solarz's efforts were systematically derailed.

Additional evidence from the Bangladesh side exists that American officials were in contact with those planning the coup and

were monitoring plans for the coup before it occurred. In 1997, I met an authoritative source with intimate and direct knowledge of the planning which took place for the August coup. This individual, a retired Bangladesh military officer, was the consummate "insider" to the events of August 1975 and the step-by-step planning that preceded it. I had met this individual briefly in 1975 and

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