

Home ministry claims progress in probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The home ministry at a press briefing yesterday claimed progress in the probe into Wednesday's countrywide bomb blasts but failed to answer queries of journalists.

The ministry admitted arrest of 123 people across the country since yesterday but kept mum on who carried out the blasts. It also declined to give the identity or background of the arrestees.

"We cannot give you the identities (of arrestees) for the sake of investigation," said Mohammad Mohsin, joint secretary (political) at the home ministry. "The investigation is going on and we are quizzing them but we are yet to give you any names," he added.

"It is beyond my jurisdiction to answer such a question," Mohsin said when journalists referred to the ministry's earlier claim that the government was informed about some untoward incidents on August 15 and asked if the organisation supposed to be involved in the incidents made the bomb blasts.

On the steps taken by the government after the serial blasts, he said the home ministry immediately sat in emergency meetings with the intelligence and law enforcing agencies and ordered them to take prompt action.

The ministry has also formed a central committee and district and upazila level committees to investigate the blasts, the joint secretary mentioned.

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Blasts to hurt business environment: Saifur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The recent bomb explosions may hurt Bangladesh's business and overall economic environment, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman feared yesterday, a day before his scheduled meeting with the World Bank chief, who arrives in Dhaka today.

"There is no use denying...the foreign economic relationship is bound to suffer because of the spate of bomb blasts across the country on August 17," he said.

Before and after a meeting with the Planning Commission members yesterday, Saifur also told the press that the bomb blasts may feature in talks with the WB president. The WB

chief may even express concern, which is natural, the minister added.

Saifur feared the incidents may also shake the confidence of the foreign buyers, but he observed that since the bomb blasts have not resulted in large-scale casualties, it is very much within the government's ability to contain it.

He expressed hope that if the matter can be handled properly, it would be possible to bring back confidence among the international community.

Asked about the alleged patronage by a section of the government of Islamist extremists, who are suspected of carrying out the recent bomb attacks, Saifur replied, "I am not aware who among us supported

them or who did not, but I can tell you extremism of any forms, whether religious or non-religious, I am against it... in this way the country's image is destroyed."

WB President Paul Wolfowitz arrives in Dhaka today on a two-day visit, his first to Bangladesh after being elected president of the WB last June.

During his visit he will meet the prime minister, leader of the opposition in parliament and the finance minister. Besides, he may meet with the civil society members and private sector bodies to discuss governance issues.

Saifur told reporters that during his meeting with the WB boss he will

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Jamaat blames RAW, Mosad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh has blamed two foreign intelligence agencies - Israeli Mosad and Indian RAW - for "playing an important role" behind the attacks on August 17.

"They are the patrons of the serial blasts as they don't want good relations between Bangladesh and China. That's why the incident occurred when Prime Minister Khaleda Zia was on a visit to Beijing," Jamaat Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami said yesterday.

Nizami, also industries minister, was addressing a press conference at the Jamaat central office in the capital.

He declined to directly blame the government when journalists questioned about the failure of the government and intelligence agencies in averting the attacks.

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PHOTO: STAR

A policeman recovers an abandoned bomb from beneath a shop on Kalibari Road in Barisal city yesterday, two days after the August 17 blasts across the country.

BNP MP's brother plotted Jamal Uddin's abduction

Prime accused tells Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) is taking Shahidul Islam alias Shahid Chairman, the prime suspect of Chittagong magnate Jamal Uddin abduction case, into another five-

day remand from today.

A court granted the remand after Rab produced Shahid with a seven-day remand prayer yesterday, the last day of the previous five-day remand in the same case.

During the interrogation by Rab, Shahid said Maruf Nizam, brother of ruling BNP lawmaker Sarwar Jamal Nizam, orchestrated the abduction plot and had it accomplished with the help of his business partner Helal and Md Shahjahan, chairman of Hileedhar Union Parishad (UP) under Anwara upazila.

Shahidul Islam, UP chairman of Anowara headquarters where the village house of victim Jamal Uddin is located, also divulged names of all others involved and narrated the abduction.

Shahid, however, claimed that he was involved in the abduction till handing the victim (Jamal Uddin) over to another group for carrying him to the hideout under the custody of Kashem Chairman of Kanchan Nagor UP under Fatikchhari upazila.

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10 die in boat capsized in Tangail

BDNEWS, Tangail

Ten people died in a boat capsized in Chapra Beel (water body) in Ghatail upazila of the district on Friday night.

Police said the Gangair bound boat from Ramdebpur of Dhalpara under Ghatail with 16 passengers aboard was caught in the storm and sank in the water body.

Six passengers swam ashore while ten others remained missing. Police and locals, after a hectic search, recovered eight bodies as of 11:30am yesterday.

The dead are Kohinoor Begum, 28, her son Zaman, 7, daughter Roksana, 4; Rahima Begum, 30, her

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Polio free for fifth year

NAIMUL HAQ

Bangladesh holds its polio free status for the fifth consecutive year as no polio virus outbreak was reported in the last five years, official sources told The Daily Star yesterday.

The last victim of polio -- four-and-a-half-year-old Dolly of a Mirpur slum in the capital -- was reported on August 22, 2000. She is now living with her emaciated legs -- a typical outcome of poliomyelitis attack.

"We have achieved the target, but we are not yet free from the threat of polio virus from neighbour-

ing countries," said Programme Manager of Child Health Dr Luthfor Rahman.

"We will be absolutely polio free when the entire region or all 11 nations in the SEARO are free from the disease," he added.

However, Bangladesh cannot obtain the WHO (World Health Organisation) certificate as a polio free nation as long as members of the SEARO (South East Asian Regional Office) of WHO report presence of the virus.

Contacted, Dr Tajul Islam Bari, an

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Govt to conduct study on mobile tariff

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the face of widespread dissatisfaction over the high mobile call tariff, Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission

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Prayer Timing

August 21

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-30	5-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-33	6-36
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

