

JMB chief was in Dhaka

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Superintendent of Police (ASP) Delwar Hossain Saïdy nabbed Uzzal and Anisur Rahman Khokon at around 7:30pm Sunday at Itagachha in the outskirts of the town for their suspected involvement in the August 17 countrywide serial bomb blasts.

According to Uzzal's confession, the bombs used on the fatal day had been smuggled into the country from India through Sathkira and Chapainawabganj borders a few months ago.

He said a 13-member committee of hardcore JMB operatives sat in a mosque at Itagachha on August 15, where Munnar, now in police custody, briefed them on when and how to carry out the terror strikes. But the police official could not identify rest of the meeting participants.

Uzzal admitted to being in charge of planting bombs at Khulna Road intersection in the town, while Fakhruddin Razi of Kalaroa supervised the overall bombing operations in Khulna division.

The police raided the house of Razi, who reportedly heads Khulna division of the banned Islamist militant group, but did not find him. Locals said Razi went on hiding soon after the blasts.

Around 15 militants of the district received training on grenade and sophisticated firearms like AK-47 and AK-56, Uzzal, a physical trainer of the Islamist outfit, told the police.

"The training was held at dead of night in remote mosques, particularly in the border areas," the police official quoted Uzzal as saying. Pictures of grenades and firearms were used in the training, he said, with the instructors briefing the trainees how to operate those.

Khokon, the other arrestee, claimed he knew about the attack but was not directly involved in it. He also admitted to having a good relation with Munna, a JMB operative arrested soon after the attacks and now being quizzed at the Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC) in Dhaka.

"We have received some significant clues from Uzzal and Khokon but we are not in a position to disclose those for the sake of investigation," ASP Delwar told The Daily Star last night over telephone. He

said they are looking for a divisional leader of the JMB, adding, "If we can catch the man, we will be in full control of the investigations."

A magistrate court yesterday granted eight-day police remand for Uzzal and Khokon. Police sources said the two might be sent to the JIC in Dhaka for further interrogation.

A JIC source said the police conducted a massive overnight manhunt in Khulna region on Monday to nab a man, named by four arrestees to JIC interrogators as the co-ordinator of bomb attacks in two Khulna districts. But the drive failed to nab the man.

JIC sources said investigators could not glean any fresh information yesterday from 22 detainees being quizzed at the JIC.

JESSORE
Our Jessore correspondent reports: A 9-member body formed to probe the August 17 bomb attacks has yet to make any headway.

Meanwhile, 10-year-old Sagar arrested soon after the blasts made a confessional statement to Jessore Sadar upazila magistrate's court under the Section 164 of Criminal Procedure Code on Sunday. As he fell sick in the second day of a three-day remand, he was sent to a juvenile correction centre at Pulerhat.

NILPHAMARI
Our Nilphamari correspondent adds: Nilphamari district JMB commander Golam Mostafa, held in connection with the bomb blasts, came up with some important information and names yesterday, the third day of a five-day police remand.

He confessed to having direct contact with JMB chief Shaaikh Abdur Rahman. The police are now certain of his involvement in the attacks but are keeping mum for the sake of investigation.

Nilphamari SP Shoyeb Ahmed said they have prepared a list of probable Islamist militants of the district and are keeping close watch on some madrasas that reportedly provided shelter to the militants.

Locals said most of the militants have shaved off their beards and gone into hiding.

US reassures

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blasts in Bangladesh, the spokesman said, "The US works closely with Bangladesh in a number of different areas in combating terrorism, on the law enforcement front, on the financial front as well as on the political front".

Sean McCormack told a questioner, "What has happened in Bangladesh is another tragic example that there is no protection against terrorism".

Rotten foodstuff

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Fried rotten fish were served to the students in the canteens. The court also condemned the preserving of the food items.

The court sentenced the four arrestees to one month's imprisonment while two other managers fled.

"We found cockroaches walking around the canteen and even upon the food items in one canteen," said a member of the mobile court.

Another mobile court led by magistrate Mizanur Rahman raided eight restaurants and fined a total of Tk 90,000.

The court fined the popular Capsicum Chinese Restaurant at College Gate as they found rotten food there.

The Dhaka City Corporation's mobile court led by Md Mokter Ahmed yesterday raided a biryani house and a restaurant and fined them Tk 10,800.

They also seized 160 sacks packed with rotten dates from traders in Mohakhali and fined them Tk 40,000.

Later the court fined the manager of the City Garden Chinese Restaurant Tk 30,000 and arrested the manager for failure to pay the fine. The court also issued warrant against Mizanur Rahman Swapan, the owner of the restaurant.

"Almost all restaurants in the city have been offering inedible food. They are not willing to maintain the hygiene standard even when the mobile courts are in operation in the city," said a member of the court.

HC orders

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The rule is returnable in three weeks.

A High Court division bench comprising Justice MA Matin and Justice Mamnun Rahman ordered Alam to appear in person before the court on October 25.

The bench specifically instructed the Supreme Court registrar to lodge a case under sections 124(ka), 504, and 505 of Bangladesh Penal Code for sedition and provocation with Ramna Police Station.

The same bench earlier on May 23 passed a suo moto rule banning agitation on the Supreme Court premises.

Advocate Noor Hossain in his petition said Faridul set fire to copies of the High Court order during a grand rally of Sammiito, Ainjibi Samannoy Parishad on the Supreme Court premises on July 29. Faridul, by burning the copies, showed sheer disrespect to the court, and it is an attack on the dignity of the judiciary, reads the complaint.

Advocate Abdul Mannan moved for the petitioner.

The May 23 High Court order reads: "This injunction shall particularly be binding upon all advocates practising in any courts of law in Bangladesh and further that in the event of any breach by anyone of this order, proper steps to enforce this order shall be taken including proceedings for contempt of court and in the case of advocates."

"Such steps shall include making orders prohibiting them from appearing in court as advocates so long as they shall remain in contempt," said the order.

3 Pak religious

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report of Qatari-based daily The Peninsula.

The Peninsula story published on the Internet yesterday said a top aide of Osama bin Laden was arrested in Rawalpindi from the house of a Jamaat leader two years ago. The UN Committee 1267 formed in July 2005 may recommend action on these grounds.

Renewing its global sanctions regime against the al-Qaeda network, Osama bin Laden and the Taliban for another 17 months, the UN Security Council (UNSC) had expanded the list of groups associated with terrorist networks.

The UNSC unanimously adopted a resolution last month condemning these groups for carrying out terrorist activities, which had claimed thousands of lives. It states that sanctions will be imposed on those who support the outlawed groups by participating in financing, planning, facilitating, preparing or perpetrating terrorist acts.

Talking to The Peninsula, Pakistan Jamaat Ameer Qazi Hussain Ahmed, however, termed the reports about possible UN sanctions against Jamaat-e-Islami baseless and mere propaganda.

The Jamaat has been neither involved in terrorist activity and nor accused so far in this regard, he said. "We are a responsible international organisation. The UN cannot do this on its own as there are no demands from the international community," he said.

"We must keep the record straight and should not malign it with lies," he added.

Ahmed said the Jamaat had never been alleged to have links with any terrorist organisation. "In fact, people all over the world recognise our welfare projects. The Jamaat is respected in the world due to its love for humanity and this is what Islam teaches us," he concluded.

They go free too easily

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arrested in a murder case, but I did not get the permission," he said. All seven were later freed.

According to press reports, 74 suspected militants were arrested in 1998, three in 1999, eight in 2001, five in 2002, 72 in 2003, 126 in 2004 and over 160 this year before the serial bombings.

Police headquarters on August 30, 2003 asked all top district bosses of Rajshahi police to take action against the militants and maintain a logbook of militant activities. The instructions, however, were never followed for mysterious reasons.

Jagrata Muslim Janata of Bangladesh (JMB) chief Siddiqui Islam, nicknamed Bangla Bhai, is a glaring example of how militants have repeatedly escaped police dragnets and subsequently waged a reign of terror with backing from ruling party lawmakers. He was first arrested along with five others for attacking an Awami League leader in Mollarhat in Bagerhat on August 17, 2002. As villagers chased him, he took shelter in a house from where he was later caught with arms and militant documents. But police dropped Bangla

Bhai's name from a charge sheet and no specific charges were brought against the rest. Rather, police termed him 'an Islamic scholar'. All the criminals were later freed.

Bangla Bhai was later held at Joypurhat while mobilising militants to attack another house. Again he was freed.

Others have similarly flourished while evading arrest. The home ministry took six months to give a nod to Rajshahi police to bring sedition charges against Al Hiqma chief Syed Kawsar Hossain after his arrest on November 6, 2004. Earlier, police did not bring any sedition charges against him when he was

arrested twice with evidence of anti-state activities.

Forty-one Harkat-ul Jihad (Huji) operatives, who were arrested during arms training in a Ukhia jungle in Cox's Bazar on February 19, 1996, were convicted on May 3, 1998 for keeping arms and for explosive cases. But they received bail from the High Court without strong objection from the prosecution after the BNP-led coalition came to power.

Seven foreign citizens of Al Haramaine were arrested in September 2002 on suspicion of involvement in international militant organisations and placed on remand. But they were released on bail, and later dropped by police at a city hotel in a police vehicle for mysterious reasons. Law enforcers have since lost their trace.

On February 23, 2003 banned Al Hiqma leader Azimuddin and Azhar Ali Bhuiyan were arrested but against no charges were brought against them.

Seven JMB militants were arrested at Kalai of Bogra on April 25, 2003, but police let them go without filing any case against them. One of the seven, Salahuddin, was arrested on February 23 this year for bombing a Brac office at Kalai.

Police arrested three leaders of Al Hiqma in Rajshahi for involvement in anti-state activities on February 15, 2003. A case was filed under the arms act but the name of their organisation was not mentioned in the case. They were later freed on bail.

JMB activists fought with police at Moheshpur village in Khetlal upazila of Joypurhat on August 14, 2003 and snatched three shotguns and a wireless set from the police. Some of the injured attackers who could not escape were not arrested. Later, after directives from the high command, police arrested 39 people in connection with the shootout,

but all of them were freed on bail.

In August 2003, five militants of Hizbut Towhid were arrested in Gazipur, but they were sent to jail without any case. Police arrested four other Hizbut Towhid men in Kustia for killing a woman in September 2003 but no case was filed against them either.

Nine suspected militants of JMB were arrested at Bogra in August 2003 but they were sent to court for 'suspicious activities' under section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

On September 20, 2003, police arrested 18 militants led by Abdur Rouf, who claims to have taken part in the Afghan war, in Boalmari while taking training. But that day, police released 16 of them without investigating their cases.

Rouf had informed the press that he was previously apprehended by Cox's Bazar police along with 40 Arakan rebels in 1995.

Nine JMB activists were arrested in April 2004 in Parbatipur with 25 petrol bombs. But all the evidence against them was burned in police custody. The local police super told the press a fire originating from a short circuit burned the evidence. All nine were later acquitted from charges.

Police arrested seven suspected Islamist militants from a mosque in Dinajpur on July 29 this year but later freed them following instructions from Jamaat-e-Islami leaders.

The police freed them at around 12:00 noon as Jamaat Ameer Aftabuddin Molla of Dinajpur told the police they were activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir, the student wing of Jamaata, and were walking in the area after offering Esha prayer in the mosque.

On May 31, 24 followers of Bangla Bhai were released from the Rajshahi Central Jail.

156 AL men

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Rahman granted Asaduzzaman Noor and five others anticipatory bail.

Following another petition filed by 150 accused, another HC bench comprising Justice Khademul Islam Chowdhury and Emdadul Haque Azad also granted them anticipatory bail.

The court benches also issued rules upon the government to show cause why the petitioners should not be granted regular bail in the cases.

Earlier on Sunday, some 477 leaders and workers of the Awami League and its front organisations out of about 1,500 accused in the same cases obtained anticipatory bail from the High Court.

Hundred of leaders and workers of Awami League and its front organisations led by Asaduzzaman Noor and AL Office Secretary Advocate Abdul Mannan Khan were observing mourning day on the 30th death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Dohar on August 15.

Local BNP men reportedly attacked them, leaving more than 100 people, including Noor, injured.

On August 15 and 16, Dohar police filed the two cases against about 1,500 leaders and workers of the Awami League and its front organisations, including Awami Juba League, Krishak League and Chhatra League.

Police mentioned names of 102 leaders and workers, including AL's Publicity Secretary Asaduzzaman Noor and Office Secretary Advocate Abdul Mannan Khan, in the first information reports (FIR) of the cases and 1,400 unnamed.

Dr Kamal Hossain and Barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud moved for the petitioners. They were assisted by Advocate Mahbubey Alam, Advocate Abdul Matin Khasru, and Advocate MAMannan.

2 outlaws killed

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Later a team of police took Azad to the village to retrieve the firearms. Police said as they reached the village at around 3:30am, the GB cadres opened fire on them. Police fired in return that resulted in a half an hour long gunfight.

Azad died on the spot when he was caught in crossfire, police said.

Police retrieved a light gun (LG) and four bullets from the spot.

Police sent the body of Azad, who was accused in eight cases including four for murder, to Kustia General Hospital for autopsy.

Our staff correspondent from Khulna says: Abid Hasan Milon alias Akash, 24, a regional leader of Janajuddho faction of outlawed Purbo Bangla Communist Party (PBCP), was killed in "crossfire" between his accomplices and Rab early yesterday.

Rab (Rapid Action Battalion) arrested him on Monday night at Boyra in Khulna city.

According to a press release issued by Rab, a foreign revolver, six bullets, three cartridges, and some handbills of Janajuddho were recovered from the spot.

Rab said one of its members was injured in the shootout.

The press release further said that Akash was wanted in several criminal cases including murder and he was directly involved in the murder of Sonadanga thana Awami League leader Manzur Morshed Labu and bomb attack on police Sergeant Ashraf.

PEPZ to meet Sunday

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reaching 6-7 billion dollars a year. Presently, the six running EPZs, dominated mainly by Dhaka and Chittagong EPZs, fetch \$1.5 billion.

The KEPZ led by Korean company Youngone could already have contributed an extra chunk to this earning.

It has remained stuck in limbo for four years as the BNP government has not issued it a licence. But by 2001, the KEPZ was handed 2500 acres of land where Youngone spent about Tk 100 crore for the purchase and infrastructure development.

The Sunday meeting will also approve a regulation framed as per the Private EPZ Act, 1996 and decide on applying the EPZ Labour Union and Industrial Relation Law, 2004 in the private EPZ and other labour related issues, the sources pointed out.

The last meeting--the 11th--of the PEPZ Board held on April 10, 2003 had formed a committee headed by the principal secretary to the PM to amend the Private EPZ Act, 1996 in line with the laws of the land. It decided that after this amendment, the government will consider awarding licence to the KEPZ.

The committee on July 17, 2003 filed its report saying that there was no need to amend the Act as it is framed in line with the Bangladesh EPZ Act, 1980 and does not contradict the existing laws.

The committee also noted that since the government already awarded licence to a private EPZ at Rangunia in December 2000 under the existing law, amending the law will create new legal complications.

It pointed out that the KEPZ has already been given land, which has been declared a special zone. Except for giving it the licence to run it, the government has allowed the KEPZ to proceed towards the final stage as per the Private EPZ Act. If the law is amended at such a level, it will also create complication in the investment scenario.

"Above all, this will create an adverse impact on future foreign investment," the committee noted and recommended, "In the interest of foreign investment and to protect the image of the country internationally, the government may award the licence to KEPZ."

It added, "The Private EPZ Act, 1996 may be amended after awarding the licence to KEPZ considering the current situation."

But after this report, the government sat on the issue without any reason.

Sources said the KEPZ has become a victim of politicisation. After coming to power in October 2001, the BNP-led four-party alliance government started favouring the KEPZ as a "political beneficiary" of the previous Awami League government because it was given a big land area.

Youngone has been present in Bangladesh as a small partner company since 1978, but over the years it has grown into a massive multinational corporation. In the government-run EPZs, Youngone dominates 25 percent investment with 16 industrial units employing more than 30,000 people and exporting goods worth over \$220 million.

Since the stagnation has affected Youngone's expansion, it diverted around \$40 million investment to Vietnam, China and India in the last three years.

The KEPZ, by its size and investment profile, stands out from all other EPZs in the country. It plans to install 500 industrial units with an investment of \$1 billion. KEPZ sources said they plan to set up a whole range of garments and textiles units as well as electronics, software, scientific and optical tools, machine tools, automotive parts and other units. To set up its infrastructure, Youngone will separately invest \$200 million.

BNP to choose

FROM PAGE 16
Jahanara Begum and technocrat State Minister for Cultural Affairs Selima Rahman, many a wife, sister, relative and protege of BNP ministers and senior leaders are among the ticket seekers.

BNP's party coffers will get over Tk 1.93 crore as proceeds from the nomination process for the reserved seats.

The aspirant candidates submitted nomination forms costing Tk 30,000 each, which was deposited in the party funds. And each of the 30 ticket winners will have to donate Tk 3 lakh to the party funds as promised by the aspirants in black and white while drawing the forms.

The BNP will be allocated six more seats as the main opposition Awami League has decided not to accept the nine seats allocated to it by the Election Commission.

A fresh schedule for election to those nine seats will be announced within 21 working days after the September 6 election.

Interview of the aspirants for BNP ticket will be held at the Prime Minister's Bhaban at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar.

A total of 144 aspirants from Dhaka and Khulna divisions will face the party parliamentary

board today and the remaining 142 from Rajshahi, Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions tomorrow.

Meanwhile, the Jatiya Party (Ershad) has already nominated Marina Rahman, younger sister of party chief HM Ershad, and presidium member Syeda Razia Fayez as candidates for the two women's reserved seats allotted to it.

Jamaat-e-Islami sources said the party has finalised its candidates for its three reserved seats but they did not disclose the names.

As per the election schedule, nomination papers are to be submitted on August 27 while scrutiny will take place the following day. The date for withdrawal of nomination papers is September 1.

According to proportionate distribution of the seats, the BNP gets 30 seats, AL 9, Jamaat 3, JP (Ershad) 2, and other political parties, BJP (Nazir) and Islami Oikya Jote, 1 seat.

Those elected to the reserved seats will join the next session of parliament. Their tenure will however be brief as the House has already completed nearly four years of its tenure, and they will not be allowed to import duty-free vehicles.

UK top Muslim group

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weekend, and an earlier front page report in the Observer newspaper, have pointed an accusing finger at the council for harbouring militants and sympathising with Palestinian suicide bombers.

The BBC programme recalled the presence of MCB secretary general Iqbal Sacranie at a memorial service last year in London for Sheikh Yassin, the spiritual leader of the radical Palestinian group Hamas.

It also made an issue of the fact that Sacranie failed to attend a ceremony, also in London, last January to mark the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Jews from the Auschwitz concentration camp.

Journalists have also taken MCB spokesman Inayat Bunglawala -- invited to sit on Home Office panel on confronting the spread of radicalism among Muslim youth in Britain -- for his own radical past.

Speaking to AFP, Bunglawala said: "There is no doubt that is part of a Zionist campaign to prevent British Muslims taking part in the mainstream political institutions of our country."

"It is designed to put pressure on the government to withdraw the position offered to me. Let's wait and see. It is our hope that the government will stand firm because it is important never to give in to this kind of bullying."

A spokesman for the Home Office, the government department in charge of public security, said Bunglawala was a respected member of the Muslim community who for four years has spoken out against radicals and extremists.

In an article this month, "Satanic Verses" author Salman Rushie questioned Blair's decision in the wake of July 7, and a failed attempt

Arrested moulana

FROM PAGE 1
fired with Airport Police Station.

In the forwarding report placed before the court, they said a bomb was detonated near a dustbin adjacent to ZIA Concourse Hall at around 11:25am August 17. A reliable and secret investigation reveals Masud's links to the blast.

He is a central leader of banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and under his leadership the bomb was blasted, said the report.

Accusing Masud of providing funds for the countrywide blitz of handmade bombs, police said they need to quiz him further to obtain leads about the incident and the whereabouts of his cohorts.

Advocates Mojibul Haq Chunnu and Abdul Majid submitted a petition for Masud's bail and cancellation of the remand prayer.

They told the court that their client was framed as part of a conspiracy to harass him politically. The government arrested him for narrow political gains and to satisfy ruling coalition partner Jamaat-e-Islami. He was held also to distract people's attention from the real culprits in the blasts.

On hearing both the sides, Metropolitan Magistrate Shafiq Anwar rejected the bail petition and granted a five-day remand.

Saying the investigation is at primary stage, the court directed the investigation officer (IO) to interrogate Masud with caution. The IO will take necessary steps for his treatment if he falls sick.

Masud at that time told the court that he has always worked for peace and prosperity of the country. "I've taken part in an anti-terrorism conference in England and delivered a speech on the issue on several occasions. I've also written several books against terrorism."

He said the police, abetted by Nizami, arrested him to divert people's attention from the August 17 blasts. Vital clues to the blasts will come out if Nizami is interrogated well, he observed.

"Nizami was directly involved in the explosions," Masud told the court.

Meanwhile, the ministry of home affairs yesterday said police have arrested Masud to find out foreign links, if any, to the August 17 attacks.

"Reports have it that he had brought funds from some foreign countries last year and in years before. Police will quiz him to know where he has spent the money," Joint Home Secretary (political) Mohammad Mohsin said yesterday while briefing reporters about the developments in the blasts probe.

Meanwhile, while visiting Masud-established Malibagh Madarasa, madrasa-cum-cadet school Ikra Bangladesh, and NGO Islahul Muslimin Parishad Bangladesh in Rampura, The Daily Star correspondent talked to some of his close associates. They said they fear Masud might have been arrested for his anti-Jamaat stance and statements.

"He took an ideological stance against Jamaat and used to make statements openly against the way the party interprets Islam. He always strives to make an exact interpretation of Islam," Abul Fatah Mohammad Yahya, vice principal of Malibagh Madrasa, told The Daily Star.

Masud has always opposed the interpretation of Islam by Moulana Abul Ala Moududi, the founder of

Jamaat-e-Islami. Masud also penned books against Jamaat and Moududi, he said.

"He opposed Jamaat in an organised way and pointed out to his followers the flaws in Jamaat's interpretation of Islam," Fatah added.

Visiting Ikra Bangladesh and Islahul Muslimin, this correspondent found all the officials to have fled. Panicked, a few students who have yet to leave declined to speak with The Daily Star.

Some hand-written and printed posters highlighting quotes from Masud's speech were found posted on the walls. Besides, there were posters of Islahul Muslimin and Lainatut Talaba Bangladesh, but nothing could be known about the latter.

Meanwhile, newspaper reports that Masud was an advisor of Ulama League, a platform of the main opposition Awami League (AL), were found to be wrong.

"It is totally baseless. In fact, there is no legal formation of Ulama League," AL's Secretary of Religious Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah said yesterday.

"We don't have any front by the name of Ulama League. We've heard about a number of organisations having the name, but Awami League does not own or approve [of] any of those," he said, adding that Masud has no relation or connection with the AL.

Meanwhile, the home ministry yesterday said so far 150 people have been arrested in connection with the August 17 blasts.

Of them, Dhaka Metropolitan Police arrested eight, Chittagong Metropolitan Police 12, Khulna Metropolitan Police three, Rajshahi Metropolitan Police nine, Dhaka Range Police 13, Chittagong Range Police 16, Rajshahi Range Police 62, Khulna Range Police eight, Barisal Range Police eight and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) 11.

A team of experts (meant for those in Joint Interrogation Cell) have so far quizzed 29 people in Dhaka. Seven of them have been released after it was learnt that they did not have any links to the blasts," Joint Secretary Mohammad Mohsin said.

Another arrestee was brought to Dhaka yesterday while two others from Sathkira will be brought today, he said.

He described the progress in the blasts investigation as 'good'.

PM stresses

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The prime minister said when Bangladesh is continuously advancing in all sectors, such an incident is being carried out to stall the march on the path of development and progress.

She called for a national unity to "foil any evil attempt against the country".

Expressing concern over the serial bombings across the country, the BJP leaders extended support to and expressed solidarity with the government steps to find out the perpetrators.

They BJP leaders appreciated the prime minister's call for a broad-based national unity. They also emphasised strengthening the unity of the four-party alliance.