

Twin JMB suicide strikes

FROM PAGE 1

state is established".

Judicial activities across the country came to a halt yesterday as panicked lawyers boycotted the courts in immediate protest and later called a dawn-to-dusk countrywide hartal for tomorrow.

Hundreds of lawyers took to the streets in Dhaka, Chittagong and other cities and town, asking the government to ensure that no further attack on the judiciary and judicial officials take place.

Since their August 17 showdown against the democracy and state machinery through 459 orchestrated bomb blasts in 63 districts, the Islamist extremists have bombed to death 15 people including two judges in Jhalakathi and Laxmipur.

BNP Secretary General LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, who is now also in-charge of the home ministry, termed the bombers enemies of humanity, the state and democracy. He said the government is fully committed to exterminate the militants at any cost and restore peace.

WHEN ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE

Activities in the entire Gazipur district came to a halt, as most of the government and non-government officials came out of their offices immediately after the suicide bombing rocked the Bhalwal Rajbari court area at around 9:45am.

The bomb exploded amid some 100 people, including 50 lawyers and their assistants and clients, busy on the ground floor of the hall building 2, the former library of the bar association. The association has nine hall buildings.

According to witnesses, the bomb went off in between 9:37am to 9:45am on the bar association premises located between the judge court in the east and the magistrate courts in the west.

Those killed in the blast are former secretary of the bar association advocate Amzad Hossain, retired army man Abdur Rab, Gachha Union Parishad former member Bashir Uddin, an unidentified woman of about 40 years and the bomber whose identity could not be confirmed immediately.

Of them three died on the spot while Amzad and the woman died later at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

The police and witnesses said the bomber, aged around 25, was wearing a black gown similar to what lawyers wear when he entered the hall building.

After the explosion, his body with wires tied around his thighs and waist was left on the floor for a couple of hours. Intelligence sources suspect the bomber might have carried the bomb in his left thigh, the flesh on which was ripped off in the blast.

The bomb was so powerful it torn away a ceiling fan and bent two others. The fire burnt all the furniture, files and other documents in the room. The shock broke all the glasses and windowpanes of the room, its upper floor and an adjacent building. Several ventilators of the room also splintered.

"I was writing a document when the bomb exploded with a huge bang, sending a wave of blaze towards me," said Nazimuddin, 42, a lawyer's assistant, adding, "And I lost my consciousness."

He was lying in a bed at Gazipur Sadar Hospital with burnt hairs and injured toes and thighs. Even two hours after the blast, he was shaking from fright.

Fazlul Haq, a trader who went to the bar association to consult a lawyer about a case, said he saw a man carrying a suitcase with wheels. "The man pulled the bag into the room and a few minutes later a powerful blast made me deaf," he described.

"All of a sudden I found myself surrounded by sparks and blazes," said advocate Anwarul Hossain Fakir, 30, who was preparing to go out of the room to the judge court. "In a flash I saw around a dozen of my colleagues collapsing on the floor," he added.

Every one rushed out of the courts and bar association buildings immediately after the blast. Fire Service and Civil Defence reached the spot after about 15 minutes and doused the fire.

"It took about 10 to 12 minutes to extinguish the fire," said a fireman, adding, "I saw severed limbs of the injured and the dead scattered all over the floor. People were groaning all around and the room was smeared with blood."

He said, "As I tried to pull out a body from under debris, one of his legs split from the waist." People with minor injuries ran and some crawled out of the room, narrated another witness.

The lawyers, the police and firefighters rushed the injured by rickshaws, vans, cars and whatever vehicles they found to the sadar hospital.

People in thousands gathered there to enquire after the injured and to take care of them. The police charged batons to control the thronging. The locals and the lawyers then took out a procession protesting the police action.

Doctors said they had to refer most of the critically injured to the DMCH.

"Lack of medicine, blood and accessories as well as the waves of visitors made our task most difficult," said orthopaedic surgeon Kamal Mahmud.

Four patients were admitted to the hospital, 27 were referred to the DMCH, some others were admitted to various local clinics and the rest received first aids.

SLACK SECURITY ALLEGED

Lawyers alleged there was no security at the bar association building during the attack. "If there was a check-post in front of the bar association, today's incident could have been avoided," said a lawyer.

A police team was posted only in front of the judge court located in a separate compound, but the bar association remained unguarded.

After the August 17 countrywide blasts, the lawyers sought security from the deputy commissioner. Although police forces had been deployed for a couple of days at the gate, they were withdrawn later, said a lawyer.

The local administration was scheduled to give identity cards to the lawyers and employees of the bar association today, November 30, and start screening visitors at the gate, said another lawyer, but the bomber struck before that.

Awami League (AL), BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami took out separate protest processions in the district town. District AL later held a protest rally at Gazipur Muktamancha in the afternoon.

DMCH Of the 27 injured people referred to the DMCH, 20 turned up at the hospital. The hospital authorities kept doctors and nurses ready and arranged additional beds and medication in advance on information.

One of the injured, an unidentified woman aged around 40, died on way to the DMCH, while advocate Amzad Hossain died of his wounds at the hospital.

Critically wounded advocate Golam Faruq, who was on life support, and another unidentified man aged around 35 were fighting for life as of late last night.

LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, Forest and Environment Minister Tariqul Islam and State Minister for Labour and Manpower Amanullah Aman visited the injured at the DMCH. Awami League leaders including Abdur Razzak, Suranjit Sengupta, Tofail Ahmed, Motia Chowdhury, Obaidul Kader and Asaduzzaman Noro, Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haq Inu also visited them.

Lawmakers Jahid Ahsan Russell, Fazlul Hoque Milon and Abdul Kader Siddique, former Supreme Court Bar Association president Rakanuddin Mahmud, Inspector General of Police MA Qayum, DIG (Dhaka Range) Sadequr Rahman, DIG (Special Branch) Helal Uddin Badari visited both the spot and hospital.

CHITTAGONG BLAST The suicide bomb attack took place at the entry point of Chittagong Court Building at 8:44am, our staff correspondent reports from Chittagong quoting witnesses.

The JMB suicide bomber tried to enter the court premises when some 20 policemen, mostly from Dampara Police Lines and the Special Branch, were taking briefing on their duty to ensure security at the court building.

The police stopped the JMB militant, Abul Bashar hailing from Nalua village in Tangail, in a bid to check him as he was walking past the cops.

"The militant then turned back, walked straight into the middle of the policemen and exploded the bomb," Constable Rashida of Khulshi Police Station told The Daily Star.

According to police, the powerful bomb, believed to be a plastic explosive, was strapped to his body and the bomber switched it on finding no way to enter the court.

Critically injured Constable Rajib Barua, 28, son of Shimul Barua of Aburkhill Khalifa Ghona under Raozan upazila, and leader of local Swechhha Sebak League Shahab Uddin, 35, son of Salamat Ullah of Premtala under Sitakunda upazila, were rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where doctors declared them dead.

The suicide bomber got both the legs and wrists blown off in the explosion.

The death toll in the ghastly blasts may rise as at least five others were lying unconscious in the hospital with critical injuries.

Of the total 18 injured, all admitted to the CMCH, 13 were policemen while the rest include four civilians and the suicide bomber.

The injured cops are Prakash, Sriman, Raihan, Promotosh, Rafiqul Islam, Isa Sarker, Lutfur, Shamsul Kabir, Sunny Das, Shahjahan, Rajdwp, Saiful and Mahfuz. The other injured are Nasir Uddin, Abdur Razzak, Emdad Mia and Abdul Majid.

Hospital sources said the condition of the JMB man, constables Sriman,

Prakash and Raihan, and Nasir Uddin were critical.

Lying in the stretcher at the emergency unit of the CMCH, injured policeman Saiful Sarker told The Daily Star: "Immediately after the bomber got inside our crowd, there was a bang and thick smoke covered the whole area."

"Some of us rushed to the spot and found eight policemen and another person (the attacker) lying in a pool of blood," said Advocate Jahangir Alam, a witness.

Visiting the spot soon after the blast, this correspondent found it stained with blood. A severed leg (believed to be of the suicide bomber), blown up pieces of human limbs and bloodstained boots and caps of the policemen were littering all around.

The police, meantime, recovered two hand-written notes from the trousers' pockets of the bomber, containing same texts written in Bengali and English in the name of JMB.

In the note, the attacker identified himself as a Fedayee (one who dedicated his life) for JMB mission for establishing the rule of Islam.

The note says it was a 'primary warning message from a dedicated Mujahideen' for the forces deployed for the judges' security. "We will continue our Jihadi mission until establishing an Islamic welfare state," it reads.

Top Chittagong police officers including Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) Commissioner Majedul Haq visited the spot and the injured at hospital.

"The attacker carried the bombs hidden under his clothes and exploded them with the help of detonator," the CMP commissioner told reporters, identifying the attack as similar to that in Jhalakathi that killed two judges on November 14.

"We stepped up the security measures at the court and there was no lack in the arrangements. There was nothing to do to stop today's attack as the attacker appeared as a human-bomb to kill the policemen," he said.

Referring to the hand-written notes of the JMB, Majedul said suicide bombers seem to have targeted the police now.

Govt mulls

FROM PAGE 1

Besides, the issue of initiating dialogues with all quarters, including the opposition, to face the militants was raised in the meeting. The BNP was asked to use its organisational capability to mobilise public support against militancy.

The PM held two meetings with her senior colleagues in the last two days.

Sources in the Prime Minister's Office said the PM asked for all intelligence reports on militant activities. She also asked the intelligence agencies to submit to her the complete report on the Gazipur and Chittagong bomb blasts that killed at least eight persons, including a police constable and two lawyers, in one or two days.

Following yesterday's attacks in Chittagong and Gazipur, Mannan Bhuiyan, who is at present in charge of the home ministry, talked to his senior cabinet colleagues, including Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, Environment Minister Tariqul Islam, Agriculture Minister MK Anwar, Housing Minister Mirza Abbas, State Minister for Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Maj (rt) Quamrul Islam and Dhaka City Corporation Mayor Sadeq Hossain Khoka.

Bhuiyan also talked to the high officials of the police, intelligence agencies and Rab.

2 killed

FROM PAGE 16

One double barrel gun, two large daggers, three live cartridges and two used shells were recovered from the spot.

Rab said the outlaw was wanted in five murder and several other criminal cases filed with Rupsha Police Station.

Meanwhile, another notorious criminal, caught between the 'crossfire' of his accomplices and Rab members, was killed in Fatikhari upazila in Chittagong yesterday, our Chittagong University correspondent reports.

Mohammad Nasir alias Fata Nasir, arrested at Khilkhet in Dhaka on Sunday, was brought to Rab-7 office in Chittagong the following evening for interrogation.

Rab claims Nasir confessed to Rab officials that his three accomplices -- Golap, Belal and Azam -- were hiding near Lelang Bazar in Fatikhari. Acting on this information, a Rab team set out around 1:00am yesterday for Lelang with Nasir to capture the three.

Sources said, as the team reached the west bank of Shahnaagar Dighi around 4:00am the accomplices of Nasir opened fire on Rab resulting a 10-minute gunfight that left Nasir bullet-hit. He succumbed to his injuries on his way to the local health complex.

Nasir, accused in a dozen criminal cases including five for murder, was absconding. He was also a top cadre of the notorious Shipan-Babul group, sources said.

Rab handed the body over to the Fatikhari Police Station. The elite force also recovered three homemade guns and nine cartridges from the spot.

Lawyers stay off court

FROM PAGE 1

meeting announced the general strike programme that has won the support of Awami League (AL)-led 14-party allied opposition, different fronts of the AL and Sammilita Ainjibi Samannay Parishad (SASP), a forum of pro-opposition lawyers.

Leader of the opposition and AL President Sheikh Hasina, after an emergency meeting of the 14-party alliance, said, "We have decided to extend support to Thursday's hartal called by lawyers to protest the heinous attacks."

All proceedings at district courts and the High Court (HC) Division of the Supreme Court (SC), meanwhile, screamed to a halt in the immediate aftermath of the twin bomb attacks. Lawyers stayed off courts while judges did not administer justice at most of the courts, including the Supreme Court.

Supreme Court lawyers under the umbrella of SCBA streamed out of the court and staged demonstrations and protest rallies on the court premises. They also decided to stage demonstrations, hold meetings, wear black badges and hoist black flags on all Bar premises in the country today.

SCBA held an impromptu protest meeting at the South Hall of the Association with its President Advocate Mahbubey Alam in the chair. The meeting was addressed, among others, by Bangladesh Bar Council Vice Chairman Barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud, Barrister M Amir-ul Islam, former SCBA president advocates Ozair Farooq, Rahmat Ali, MP, Dr M Zahir and Subrata Chowdhury.

The speakers said the masterminds of the suicide bombers are sitting pretty within the government and asked Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's government to immediately step down on its failure to protect the judiciary.

The demonstrators called for forging a 1971-like unity to annihilate the bombers and their godfathers.

Earlier, a team of senior Supreme Court lawyers led by Dr Kamal Hossain met Acting Chief Justice Mohammad Ruhul Amin at his chamber and demanded that he summon the home minister, home secretary and police chief to the court to explain the bomb attacks on the court premises.

The SCBA president and Secretary M Eanyetur Rahim, and SASP Convenor Barrister M Amir-ul Islam and Member Secretary Advocate Subrata Chowdhury were also present at the meeting.

Meanwhile, a faction of government-backed lawyers led by BNB's Law Affairs Secretary Advocate Zainul Abedin also held a protest meeting under the banner of Bangladesh Jatiyatbadi Ainjibi Oikya Parishad at the North Hall of the SCBA building.

Deputy attorneys general Golam Kibria, Golam Mohammad Chowdhury Alal and Zaman Akhter Bulbul, and assistant attorneys general Giasuddin Mithu and Barrister Mahbubuddin Khokon spoke, among others.

The Bangladesh Judicial Service Association (BJS), an organisation of judges, at an emergency meeting at its conference room on the premises of the Court of Dhaka District and Sessions Judge expressed deep concern at the bomb attacks. It asked the government to ensure adequate security for the judges.

Dhaka District and Sessions Judge Rafiqul Islam presided over the meeting attended by its Secretary General Rezaul Karim Khan and all the judges.

All proceedings at the District and Sessions Judge's Court, Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, District Magistrate's Court and Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka were suspended in the wake of the bomb attacks.

Lawyers of Dhaka Bar Association (DBA) took out processions in protest and later at an emergency meeting expressed concern at the attacks and

asked the government to arrest and bring the perpetrators to justice. They also sympathised with the bereaved families.

The also DBA decided to boycott all court proceedings until noon tomorrow.

Soon after the bomb blasts, additional police manned the Dhaka court building premises while people left the courts fearing further attacks.

14-PARTY PROGRAMME

The 14-party alliance will take out mourning processions in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country to mourn the deaths in yesterday's twin suicide bomb blasts in Gazipur and Chittagong.

The opposition alliance will meet different professional bodies on December 7 to find ways to gear up the anti-militant movement. The opposition will also hold anti-militant rallies across the country on December 11.

The programmes were taken at the emergency meeting of the opposition combine with Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

Our Madaripur correspondent reported that Madaripur District Bar Association at an urgent meeting suspended court proceedings protesting the bomb attacks. Our staff correspondent in Rajshahi said that lawyers of Rajshahi restrained from attending courts and brought out a procession. Our Barisal correspondent said all court proceedings were also put on hold.

There were also reports of court boycotts in Lakshmipur, Chitta-gong, Chuadanga, Nilphamari, Bagerhat, Chandpur, Khulna, Rajbari, Brahmanbaria, Naogaon, Sirajganj, Jessore, Manikganj, Comilla, Satkhira, Rangpur and Narsingdi.

80-year old

FROM PAGE 16

bomber exploded the bomb. "Suddenly I heard a loud sound and I don't remember anything else," Ramizuddin recollected during one of his returns to consciousness.

Both of his legs and his right arm are riddled with splinters and he has burn injuries all over the body. "Could you please inform my family members? I have come all alone," he was urging anybody who was passing by his bed.

Nobody from his family came to the hospital till filing of this report last night. A ward attendant said his wounds were not too deep. Initial medication was provided by the hospital but he will need more medication that may need to be bought from the market.

PM warns

FROM PAGE 16

addressed, among others, by Health Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Commu-nications Minister Nazmul Huda, Water Resources Minister Hafizuddin Ahmed, State Minister for Finance Shah Md. Abul Hossain and Prime Minister's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury.

Earlier, the prime minister inaugurated the newly built 485-meter-long Patuakhali Bridge over the Patuakhali-Barisal highway in Sadar upazila.

She opened the bridge over the river Laukathi for traffic through unveiling the plaque.

Roads and Highways Department implemented the project financed by the government.

JMB attacks

FROM PAGE 1

JMB suicide bombers on Gazipur Bar Association building and a police check-post at Chittagong court building yesterday, seven people including two lawyers and a police constable were killed and 78 others injured. Two suicide bombers also blew themselves up.

Another attack by JMB on November 14 killed two senior assistant judges and wounded three people in Jhalakathi.

The banned outfit carried out attacks on the courtrooms in Chandpur, Laxmipur and Chittagong districts, killing four people and injuring 38 including a judge on October 3.

On October 18, militants hurled a bomb at the vehicle of judge Biplop Goswami in Sylhet, leaving him injured.

The militants' August 17 simultaneous serial blasts at 459 spots in 63 districts across the country killed two people and injured many others.

Canadian gov

FROM PAGE 16

Martin is expected to dissolve the House of Commons on Tuesday and set a firm date for the elections. Under Canadian law, elections must be held on a Monday unless it falls on a holiday and the campaign period is sharply restricted.

"The vote in the House of Commons did not go our way," Martin said. "But the decision of the future of our government will be made by Canadians. They will judge us."

Political will the key

FROM PAGE 1

even to lay down their lives," said a top intelligence officer seeking anonymity.

The government should trace the masterminds behind the militant activities and take all-out measures to root out extremism, the official suggested.

Another intelligence official told The Daily Star that the government high-ups would better take into account the allegations that the patronisers of militants exist very much within the ruling alliance.

A high official of a law enforcement agency said, "The situation has turned quite grave and if the government does not act immediately, things could spiral out of our [the law enforcers] control."

"The problem can never be solved merely through vigilance or drives by law enforcers," he observed.

Yesterday's blasts in Gazipur and Chittagong compelled the government high-ups to believe that there are suicidal squad in militant groups although one and half month ago explosive experts cautioned the home ministry about such attacks.

"It is a clear alarm for everyone that the terrorists have a plan for suicide bomb attacks. The terrorists can attack at their desired time with desired devastation as it is evident in preparations of the bombs that they poses as expertise," a report of the explosives experts submitted to the home ministry on October 20 reads.

Referring to the report, an intelligence official said, "On analysing the nature of some previous attacks, we had anticipated that suicide squads might be operative in the country. Now after the attacks in Gazipur and Chittagong it is crystal clear that those were carried out by suicide bombers."

"Explosives being strapped to the body of the suspected suicide bomber in Gazipur suggests the same," he added.

"It was a suicide bombing and the first of its kind in our country," Inspector General of Police (IGP) MA Qaiyum told The Daily Star last night about yesterday's blast in Gazipur.

The police chief said constant vigilance is the most important in facing the new wave of terrorism in the country, and urged all to be on the alert for such attacks.

"We are trying our best, pooling all our resources," he said adding, "Alongside the government efforts, the people should take security measures on their own."

Replying to a query about the measures by the police to detect the brains of

Bombs

FROM PAGE 1

those blasted on the Chittagong court premises on October 3, while the Gazipur bomb resembled the one used at Jhalakathi on November 14.

Besides, the bomb-makers of the October 3 attacks and yesterday's were also same, the bomb experts believe.

Our Chittagong correspondent quoting police and army experts said the bomb contained highly powerful plastic explosives. Deputy Commander of Rapid Action Battalion-Chittagong Major Sharif told The Daily Star that he believed the bomb was lightweight for easy transportation yet capable of wrecking a havoc.

"However, it is too early to comment on its type. Something specific about its composition and ingredients can only be said after we complete examination of the samples collected from the spot," he said.

The explosives experts, meanwhile, told The Daily Star that powerful homemade explosives have most probably been used in the bomb that went off in Gazipur.

Electronic detonator and circuit were used to detonate the bomb as was done in the August 17 bomb blasts and in Jhalakathi.

Pieces of iron used in fishing nets have been used as splinters in the Gazipur bomb. Shrapnel collected from the spot weigh about 3 kg, with each piece weighing about 20-25 grams.

Nizami sees

FROM PAGE 16

to break up the ruling alliance, discredit the government and create a situation so that BNP considers Jamaat as liability... The beneficiary of these blasts is the Awami League, not the alliance," he said talking to the UNB.

In reply to a question, Nizami said those who are exploding bombs and killing people in the name of religion are basically derailed and acting as puppets in the hands of the enemies of Islam.

Asked about the strength of the misguided Islamist militants, he said, "I don't have any idea about that, but I don't think they are that powerful to make the country collapse."

He said the way some newspapers have been saying that the JMB has 50,000 to one lakh activists may not be correct. The arrested son-in-law of Shaikh Abdur Rahman said they have 1,500 operatives.

the militancy, Qaiyum said. "We know the top leaders [of militants] and drives are on to nab them. We will have to get to the root of the militancy," he said.

Another investigator tasked with probing the recent spate of militant attacks said besides the stepping up of security, motivational measures are needed to make the militants withdraw themselves from resorting to violence.

"The people who are members of suicide squads are of the most extreme nature as their shrewd leaders had motivated them to do these in the name of establishing Islamic rule in the country," said the official.

He observed that along with a united political move, the true religious practitioners have a scope to bring the militants back to the right track.

"The government should investigate the ins and outs of the entire militancy to gauge the strength of the militants and know their future plans," another intelligence officer said.

"The situation in Bangladesh is not similar to those in Iraq or Israel. It is not even like the those in the US or the UK who are in war in Iraq," he analysed.

Email sender

FROM PAGE 16

manpower agent. He said Shahnewaz had used his name to get him into trouble, as there was a feud between them over money dealing. He said he paid Shahnewaz Tk 7.50 lakh to find him a job abroad but he neither sent him nor paid the money back.

Police said Shahnewaz is a tout by his occupation.

According to sources, soon after the arrest by DB, Rab members took Manik and Shahnewaz Chowdhury into their custody. Later, DB police took them into their custody.

Contacted, Shahidul Islam, deputy commissioner (DC) of detective police (DB), told the BDNEWS that Shahnewaz Chowdhury is being quizzed in the DB custody.

Saifur upset

FROM PAGE 1

Manufacturers' and Exporters' Association (BGMEA) yesterday.

"It's unfortunate; it's a frustrating situation," the minister said, replying to a question on the consequences of such attacks on the courts.