

Serial blasts spark

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The Islamist militants has left messages that they would carry out attacks on the Ahmadiyyas.

Meanwhile, the NGO activists urged the government to address the militant issue seriously to put an end to militancy for good.

BNP Chairperson and former prime minister Khaleda Zia has said that no subversive activities in the name of peaceful religion Islam can be acceptable to the people and religion.

Expressing concern in a statement yesterday, she confirmed BNP's stand against terrorism and called upon the countrymen to resist the anti-people activities. Khaleda Zia also asked for fitting punishment for the people responsible for the blasts.

In a statement yesterday, Awami League (AL) chief and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina said that the bombs were blasted by the evil forces who are against independence, democracy, communal harmony and development.

Condemning the incident, she also noted that the blasts are not separate incidents, rather these prove that those who want to make Bangladesh a save haven of terrorists are still active.

The extremist forces have been continuing their activities against the advancement of non-communal, democratic and progressive forces, president and general secretary of Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) Manzurul Ahsan Khan and Mujahid Islam Selim in a joint statement said.

The incidents prove that the root of the terrorists is in very deep, they said adding that only hanging the culprits is not enough, their political base is needed to be demolished.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) President Hasanul Haque Inu and General Secretary Syed Zafar Sajid described the incidents as dreadful and heinous as the bombs were blasted to kill innocent people.

They demanded eradication of armed terrorists from the country by accelerating the current drive against terrorism.

Expressing concern over the serial bomb blasts, Jamaat-e-Islami Amir Motiur Rahman Nizami and Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid in a joint statement said that Islam does not approve any sort of terrorism and they (terrorists) do not have any relation with Islam.

In a joint statement, Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR) Secretary General advocate Sigma Huda, Executive Director Elina Khan and all executive committee members, demanded ensuring security of the NGO workers and punishment to the people responsible for the bomb blasts.

REACTION OF AHMADIYA JAMAAT

Ahmadiya Muslim Jamaat yesterday said that their lives and security are under major threat following the simultaneous bomb blasts on Tuesday morning in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet rail stations.

Meanwhile, although the security has been beefed up in all Ahmadiya complexes following the incident, it was not considered

A medical university

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many cases, said Prof Tahir who served the BSMMU as the pro-vice chancellor during the term of Prof MA Hadi.

The master plan prepared between 1998 and 2001 that included infrastructure development for providing life saving emergency treatment facilities in a separate building, pathology building and outdoor service with day care facilities was left unattended.

Disregarding the University Ordinance, a large number of unskilled teachers were recruited through a nexus between the University authorities and Doctors Association of Bangladesh while the number of employees doubled.

"The present administration did not do anything except recruiting the incompetent employees," Rashideh Mahbub said.

The authorities have extended the time of retirement for their favorite teaching staff and officials. Even there are officials who have got their job extended for five years before retirement, which is violation to the university act.

One of the main focuses in initiating the residency programme was to encourage the teachers in institutional practice so that they could engage themselves in teaching, studying and research work whole-heartedly and work in the hospital as an alternative to private practice.

But the reality is no modern research-based work is going on at the BSMMU and nobody knows how the budget meant for research is being spent, lamented a senior teacher of the university.

The university is yet to have any internationally accepted journal and the medical education has become a theoretical one, and no alternative of private practice has been implemented yet.

Setting up standard laboratory, giving proper service to the patients and providing satellite service in different zones in Dhaka city are also demand of the time.

Committees were formed to monitor the service, education and

adequate.

"Such activities in the name of Islam cannot be acceptable," Abdul Awal, Ameer of Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Bangladesh, said.

"Members of Ahmadiyya community are scared after the bomb blasts by the Islamist militant group," Mohammad Shamsur Rahman, Ameer of the Khulna unit of Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, said.

"We were also in fear in the past about our life and security, but this time we are more concerned as the militant group has sent clear messages that they will attack us," an Ahmadiyya leader told The Daily Star.

Ahmadiyya Jamaat also urged the caretaker government to take tough actions against the Islamist militants and destroy their breeding ground.

About the security personnel deployed in different Ahmadiyya complexes, an Ahmadiyya Jamaat leader said, "This is not enough as members of our community live in different places in the city and district."

Many of them are service holders in government, semi government and financial institutions and also involved in business, he added.

REACTION OF THE NGOs

Ainul Sandika (ASK) Executive Director Sultan Kamal said that the blasts on Tuesday prove that the militant activities are not over in the country with the recent hangings of the top militant leaders.

"Now the government should take this incident seriously and take proper steps to put an end to militant activities for good," Sultan Kamal, also a former adviser to the caretaker government, said.

She also suggested that the government consults with the experts on how to address this issue.

In her reaction, Khushi Kabir, executive director of Nijera Kori, a social organisation, said that the government should show zero tolerance to the fundamentalists and militants.

She also urged the government to ban religious based politics to tackle the crisis.

"Government should find out how we all can work together to address this issue," Khushi Kabir added.

Dhanmondi

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Via Russell Square, from Bijoy Sarani to Mohammadpur Traffic Office, from Hotel Sheraton to Kakrail intersection, from Matsya Bhaban to Rainbow crossing, from Science Laboratory to Matsya Bhaban and from Matsya Bhaban to Golapshah Mazar via Old High Court intersection.

"Our main aim is to have roads free from noise pollution by making them horn-free and also eliminate traffic jam from Dhaka streets," said DMP Commissioner Nayeem Ahmed at the press conference in his office.

Two deputy commissioners of traffic and a number of other senior police officers were also present at the press conference.

22pc bigger

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designing a less ambitious and more "realistic" budget to strike a balance between revenue and expenditure, sources said.

The government also does not plan on bringing any significant changes to the Annual Development Programme (ADP) by restricting the FY08 original allocation for ADP within Tk 26,000 crore. The original ADP budget for the current budget is Tk 26,000 crore, which was revised down to Tk 21,600 crore.

The government will also raise expenditure to service local and foreign debts in its revenue budget, while expenditure will be increased to finance reforms in several sectors.

Preliminary estimates project Tk 10,900 crore to service local and foreign debt in the FY08 budget. In the current budget, Tk 7,640 crore has been allocated for this purpose.

The government is also looking at ways of financing its reform programmes through foreign aid, sources said.

The JMB mission was to establish the rule of Islamic law through jihad and their targets included the court, NGOs, jatra (traditional theatre) and cinemas. Tuesday's attackers expressed their vengeance on the NGOs and Kadiyanis (Ahmadiyyas).

The one-foot radius aluminium plates found near the scene bore a message inscribed on it: "The Kadiyanis and NGOs prepare for death. It is haram [prohibited] to work in NGOs and having relation with the Kadiyanis. All must quit NGO jobs by May 10, all Kadiyanis must recognise Prophet Muhammad (P) as the last and best prophet and if you fail to do it before the aforesaid time, your death is a must." Below the message was inscribed: "Zadid al Qaeda, Bangladesh."

Rab Director General Hasan Mahmud Khandaker at the press briefing said they are investigating the matter seriously and are hopeful to find out those involved in the incident.

Sources said the FY08 NBR revenue target is only 16 percent higher than the revised FY07 target because it is more "realistic" as the FY07 earnings were targeted 20 percent higher than the FY06 even though the earnings are expected to rise by only 12-13 percent.

Heat wave

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Meanwhile, sale of juicy and sour fruits has increased in Dhaka and other areas of the country as is usual in summer.

"Actually this is the peak period for sale of watermelons. We are having more and more customers," said a watermelon seller at Karwan Bazar market.

Sources said the heat wave is causing an outbreak of fever in different areas.

Asked about this, two specialist physicians at Dhaka Medical College Hospital however said they are yet to find any patient attacked with fever due to the heat spell.

"May be, such patients are yet to come to hospital," said Dr Abdul Khashem Khandaker.

Dr MA Fayed also expressed similar views.

Met office said a well-marked low has formed in South Andaman Sea and adjoining areas, which may move towards Bangladesh and nearby Indian coast.

Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been advised to hoist distant cautionary signal number one. All fishing boats and trawlers in North Bay and deep sea have been asked to come closer to the coast and proceed with caution till further notice. The ports will be asked to hoist bigger signals if the sea becomes more rough, Met office sources said.

The highest temperature in the country yesterday --38 degree Celsius-- was recorded in Jessor and Ishwardi. In the capital, temperature was 37.5 degree Celsius.

Hasina

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Bangladesh "at School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS) as chief guest last night with Professor Werner Menski in the chair. Centre for Ethnic Minority Studies at SOAS organised the event.

The AL chief will meet Commonwealth Secretary-General Don McKinnon today (May 3) at 11:00pm Bangladesh time.

Hasina was scheduled to return home on April 26 or 27. But the caretaker government on April 18 imposed a ban on Hasina's return, saying that her presence in the country might jeopardise political stability and public security.

Following the ban, the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) promptly requested all airlines operating to Dhaka not to carry the former prime minister.

The government later withdrew the restriction on April 25. Hasina left the country for USA on March 15 on a private visit to meet her son and daughter.

Prof Yunus

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however contradicts the statement of Tareq, another accused held in connection with the murder case. Tareq previously told police that Shahidullah was present while the professor was being murdered. Tareq also said that the professor was killed by order of JMB chief Shaikh Abdur Rahman.

During interrogation, Shahidullah said that after the JMB high command directed the activists to kill Prof Yunus for his affiliation with outlawed communists, he along with Tareq, Ibrahim, Mostafa, Abul Kashem, Arif and Abdur Rashid held a meeting at Tareq's house at Banipara in Rajshahi town.

He had been assigned with high profile assignments after marrying the niece of Bangla Bhai. He accompanied Bangla Bhai in operations against outlaws in Chapainawabganj, Rajshahi, Natore and Naogaon, Shahidullah admitted to police.

Blasts in 3 cities

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"Zadid al Qaeda, Bangladesh" (meaning new al Qaeda or an establishment of Qaeda).

Police, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and other intelligence agencies are suspecting the attack was a militant one but they are yet to be sure about the identity of the group behind it. They also could not arrest anyone as fast evening.

"We are investigating whether the third-fourth now leaders-activists of JMB have reorganised and orchestrated the bomb blasts or another new militant group is behind it," Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Naeem Ahmed said at a press briefing yesterday.

The government will also raise expenditure to service local and foreign debts in its revenue budget, while expenditure will be increased to finance reforms in several sectors.

He also said security personnel at the station rushed to the place and cordoned off the area. Later, explosives experts from the Rab and Criminal Investigation Department visited the spot and collected evidence.

The explosion occurred when Communications Secretary Dr Mahbubur Rahman was attending the opening ceremony of Rail Service Week 2007 at the Kamalapur Railway Station auditorium.

Law enforcers said they did not find any splinter. Explosives experts seized two pencil batteries, pieces of a bag in which the bomb was probably kept and pieces of papers from the spot.

CHITTAGONG

Our correspondent in Chittagong reports: A bomb set off on the Chittagong Railway Station platform at 7:10am injuring rickshaw-puller Munir Hossain, 35.

Witnesses said an unidentified person came to the place with a bag, gave the bag to a woman beggar, and left hastily saying it contains some breakfast.

The woman then called another beggar to share the breakfast and requested Munir to help them open the bag. As Munir tried to open the bag, the bomb inside went off leaving him injured.

Police recovered some Scotch tape, broken remains of a clock and torn papers from the scene.

Munir is undergoing treatment at Chittagong Medical College and Hospital.

Abu Bakar Siddique, assistant commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (Kotwali Zone), said they have already interrogated 15 suspects.

A case was filed with the Kotwali Police Station under explosives act.

SYLHET

Our Sylhet correspondent reports: Sylhet Railway Station Manager Abdul Ghani said the bomb exploded at 7:20am with a huge bang near some fixed chairs on the platform.

"We thought something fell on the floor from upstairs," he told The Daily Star, adding that as the chairs were empty, none was hurt. Some one might have kept the bag under the chairs.

He said three separate cases were filed and the intelligence agencies have started investigating the incidents.

The Rab DG also sought cooperation from people to root out militants.

KAMALAPUR

The explosion took place at 6:50am in front of the ticket counters at the Kamalapur Railway Station in the capital.

"Hearing a bang I turned around and found a smoke and a large number of small pieces of papers blown in the air," said a boy of the station cafeteria. He said no one was around the spot at that time.

The police picked up four persons from the slum but released three upon preliminary interrogation.

Asia Energy

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was anti-state. Sources said a few days before he became energy adviser in mid-2005, Mahmudur Rahman had visited Phulbari mine site and was informed in details about the deal, long before he took a public position against it. The deal was originally signed by the then BNP government in 1994, and modified in 1998 by the Awami League government.

The other issues include provision of performance guarantee to be provided by the coal developer to the government. This guarantee may range between \$10 million and 15 million to ensure that a developer does not abandon a mine all of a sudden without compensating for environmental or resource damage.

The draft policy seeks export of 60 percent of the country's coal, leaving 40 percent for domestic consumption.

The policy would also propose setting up a Coal Development Authority, which will be manned by coal sector professionals to monitor and deal with mining issues like environment, land use, ash or other hazardous elements.

The government has been working on the coal policy for nearly two years now. The draft policy has undergone many revisions on the basis of discussions with various stakeholders and experts.

"Besides, we are separately planning to strengthen the Bureau of Mineral Development (BMD), which is not equipped enough to act as the regulatory body," said the ministry source. Run with a few officials, the BMD under the energy ministry issues all licences for mines and minerals.

The new policy will not allow any more unsolicited coal deals like that with Hosaf group. The immediate past BNPL-led alliance government in 2004 had awarded the contract for Khaslaspur coal mine area to Hosaf, owned by the brother of a BNP lawmaker, Hosaf, which played a major role in making the government swallow the corruption-plagued and highly faulty Barapukuria coal mine deal, made a sketchy study in Khaslaspur. It is now seeking government approval for development of Khaslaspur mine which has a coal reserve worth billions of dollars.

Following the ban, the government has submitted applications for exploring other prospective coal zones. Most of these applications however lack merit.

As some others, not being active enough in party activities, might not have acceptability to the party leaders and workers, Khaleda made Sayeede Iskandar a vice president who might take charge of the party