

Ex-BNP MP Salam, Huji leader

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minister for home at that time, and 20 persons including a student, Shaibal Saha Partha, and AL leader and ward commissioner Mokhesur Rahman were arrested.

Interestingly, none of these arrestees who had to undergo a lot of harassment and tortures were found guilty in the latest investigation.

The drama got a twist with the government's claim about the "confessions" of Joj Miah, Abul Hashem alias Rana and Shaiful Islam that a criminal gang carried out the attack.

The present administration later found that as per the then government's desire those confessional statements were obtained using force. The CID investigators and the supervising officer involved were found to have paid Joj Miah's family a few thousand taka monthly.

The one-member judicial probe committee of Justice Joylun Abedin even pointed out a foreign "enemy" country's involvement in the incident.

The charge sheet submitted yesterday has nothing in this regard.

Disclosing the content of the charge sheet at a press briefing yesterday, CID Chief Additional Inspector General Jabed Patwari said Huji top leaders planned and carried out the attacks to kill Hasina as a few arrested attackers said in their confessional statements that Hasina would harm Islam if she was alive and came to power again.

BNP leader Pintu is not involved with Huji but he has been charged since the attackers had held two meetings at his residence to take decision about the attack.

"Pintu admitted that he heard about the meetings and saw the persons who went to his house for the meetings," the CID chief told the press at his office.

Apart from Pintu all other attackers on the charge sheet are Huji leaders and activists.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate AKM Enamul Haque accepted the charge sheet submitted at noon and issued arrest warrants against the fugitives.

The court also ordered the authorities to discharge the arrested 20 persons made accused in the case earlier as investigators said they did not find their involvement and prayed to the court for clearing them of the charges.

Apart from Joj, Hashem and Shaiful, 17 other arrestees are Monjur Hossain, Shah Alam, Haji Shoyeb alias Dikon, Mokhesur Rahman, Aisub Ali Khan, Shaibal Saha Partha, Habib alias Abdul Haman, Badsha Mia, Abdul Rahman,

Mohammad Hasan alias Tushar, Zahir Hossain alias Liton, Akhteruzzaman alias Ata, Abdur Rahim, Waliullah alias Ali, Mohammad Hossain, Monir Hossain alias Pichchi Monir, and Akash Sarkar alias Jiten.

CID Chief Jabed Patwari said although Joj Miah, Hashem and Shaiful gave confessional statements, those had no basis and no corroborative evidence was found to support their statements.

Asked if any legal action would be taken against those who obtained the statements, he said the court would decide the matter.

Investigation officers CID ASPs Munshi Atiqur Rahman and Abdur Rashid and supervising officer CID Special Superintendent Ruhul Amin have retired from the service, so the police cannot take any departmental action against them, he said.

THE CASE
A day after the grenade attack the police filed two cases—one for murder and another under the Explosive Substances Act—with Motijheel Police Station.

On June 5 last year, Badar Aziz Uddin of Cox's Bazar filed another case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka charging former premier Khaleda Zia, her son Tarique Rahman, Jamaat Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami and 25 others with murder.

However, the present investigation officer of the case, CID Assistant Superintendent Fazlul Kabir, did not find any links of them to the incident.

He yesterday submitted the charge sheets of the cases filed by the police, accusing the 22 persons in each case.

The charge sheets contain 42 pages each while the case dockets have more than 3,000 pages. A total of 408 persons, including Hasina and other top AL leaders, have been made prosecution witnesses in the case.

Besides, 69 types of evidence including Hasina's sports utility vehicle, the truck that was used as the makeshift podium at the rally, grenade splinters and blood stained clothes have been submitted.

The investigators also submitted to the court the Interpol report containing details of the incident and submitted earlier to the government, the CID chief said, adding that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), which had taken some evidence for test and returned later, did not submit any report.

The CID said 14 of the accused are now behind bars. They are Mufti Hannan, his brother Mohibullah alias Mafizur Rahman alias Ovi,

Sharif Shahidul Islam alias Bipul, Maulana Abu Sayeed alias Dr Abu Zafar, Abul Kalam Azad alias Bulbul, Jahangir Alam, Maulana Abu Taher, Shahadatullah Jewel, Hossain Ahmed Tamim, Abdus Salam Pintu, Mufti Moindudin Sheikh alias Abu Zandal alias Masum Billah, Arif Hasan Sunon, Rafiqul Islam Sabuj and Mohammad Ujjal alias Ratan.

The eight absconding accused are Pintu's brothers Maulana Tajuddin and Maulana Liton, Anisul Mursalin and his brother Mahibul Muttakin, Iqbal, Maulana Abu Bakar alias Selim Howlader, Jahangir Alam Badar and Khalilur Rahman. Mursalin and Muttakin were arrested in India with explosives in 2006 and are now detained at Tihar jail there.

The investigators said Tajuddin supplied the grenades.

The CID chief said they have found involvement of six others in the attacks but did not include their names in the charge sheets as Ahsanullah Kjol did in an encounter in India and Mohammad Masud died of illness while details of Subho alias Towfiq, Babu, Ferdous and Omar Faruq could not be known.

"Once we arrest the four, we will submit a supplementary charge sheet against them," said Jabed.

Eight of the arrestees—Hannan, Bipul, Ovi, Abu Sayeed, Bulbul, Arif Hossain, Jahangir and Sabuj—gave statements under section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code confessing their involvement with the incident.

Investigation officer Fazlul Kabir said apart from the August 21 attacks, Huji also tried to carry out attacks on Hasina at Kotalipara on July 20, 2000 and during her election campaign in Sylhet for what they said arresting and harassing several Islamic scholars during her government's tenure.

Mustafiz

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Hasina's counsel advocate Sahara Khatun represented her while the other accused in the case were produced before the court.

Mustafiz's counsel Syed Rezaur Rahman filed the permanent bail petition to the court, saying that his client is incapable of attending court proceedings as he is seriously ill and currently undergoing treatment at Combined Military Hospital.

The counsel also sought permission for sending Mustafiz abroad for treatment.

Upon hearing arguments from both sides, the court granted permanent bail to Mustafiz. However, the court did not give any order regarding Mustafiz's treatment overseas.

ABM Sharfuddin Khan Mukul represented the prosecution in the hearing.

On December 11, 2001, the now defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption filed the case against Hasina and four others with Tejaon Police Station, accusing them of causing a loss of Tk 700 crore to the state exchequer by purchasing eight MiG-29 fighter jets while Hasina was in power as the prime minister.

The names of Brig Gen (ret'd) Iftekhar-Ul-Bashar and former deputy secretary Hasan Mahmood Delwar were dropped from the case due to insufficient evidence while former army chief Mustafizur Rahman, Air Commodore (ret'd) Mirza Akhter Maruf, former joint secretary Hossain Serriabat and businessman Nur Ali were implicated in the case after investigators found their involvement in the scam.

The government has always been conscious about the health complications of physical fitness of both former premiers," the Press Information Department (PID) release said, adding that the government has ensured the country's "best medical facilities" for their treatment.

The requisite legal process is now over, and following the medical board's recommendations, the government has decided to allow Sheikh Hasina go abroad for better treatment "at her own will", the PID release said.

Tarique, Koko

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any individual or party, but for the sake of the nation's future," Rab told reporters after the talks with the government.

The commerce adviser meanwhile said, "We need to create a climate of trust as fast as we can, and try to ensure that every stakeholder's demand is considered," said Zillur.

The adviser said that invitation to both parties for talks still stands and added that the government wants to move forward on basis of a consensus with all political parties. Zillur also dismissed doubts over whether Sheikh Hasina would return from her medical trip abroad, saying, "We are working on mutual trust, so there is no question of her not returning."

He said that the government has always considered the health concerns of political detainees and it is "reflected in the decision" to temporarily release Hasina.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, during the talks with UPR, said that there needs to be a separation of power between the centralised government and a more powerful decentralised local government.

The UPR has proposed two-year term for a national unity government, balance of the powers of the prime minister and the president, and decentralisation as the cornerstone of future democracy.

UPR also demanded trial of war criminals and asked the government to investigate why they have not been tried for the last 37 years.

They also asked the government to initiate the qualitative changes to democracy, which UPR says, is also the demand of the "silent majority" of people.

Hasina freed

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as the precondition for its participation in the dialogues.

Hasina placed a wreath at the portrait of her father at Bangabandhu Memorial Museum, where she made her first stop after being released. Visibly emotional Hasina spent about 20 minutes in front of her father's portrait and finally broke into tears, surrounded by hundreds of party leaders and workers who were showering her with flower petals while chanting slogans of greetings.

She offered the zohar prayer and a special prayer there for salvation of the departed souls of her father, mother, brother, and other family members and relatives who had been brutally killed in that house in an armed coup on August 15, 1975.

Hasina, the eldest daughter of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, then started towards her Sudha Sadan residence, also in Dhanmondi. Several thousand of her party leaders, workers and supporters stood in long queues on both sides of the roads stretching from road no 5 in Dhanmondi to Sudha Sadan, many were holding bouquets for their leader.

As the AL chief's motorcade entered Dhanmondi, cheerful supporters began chanting slogans including one that translates, "No fear Sheikh Hasina, we are still on the street. We broke the lock and brought you home".

Hasina's US educated son Sajeeb Wazed Joy expressed deep gratitude to Allah, AL leaders, workers, and supporters, and to the people of the country. "I'm now very relaxed... very happy. All of our family members are feeling happy after 11 months. I express my deep gratitude to the almighty Allah, Awami League family, and to the government for releasing my mother," he told The Daily Star over the phone from the US in an immediate reaction.

The crowd through road no 5 in Dhanmondi was so thick that Hasina's motorcade could barely move, taking more than half an hour to reach Sudha Sadan, which is less than a quarter kilometre from there.

At the main entrance to her residence Hasina remained stuck for several minutes as security personnel struggled to manage the crowd.

Around 2:30pm Hasina entered her residence, from where she had been arrested by the army-led joint forces on July 16 last year.

Entering her home, the AL president went straight to the first floor patio from where she waved to the crowd on the street. She then moved to a balcony on the second floor and waved again to her supporters who were jamming the street as far as eyes could see, repeatedly breaking into tears.

In response, the crowd waved back chanting slogans. A large num-

Govt pledges

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formed a medical board for a needs assessment in order to provide her with better treatment.

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Des Moines lawyer and Republican National Committee member Stephen Roberts was equally candid.

Brac not 'NGO-nising'

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"We want to assure the teachers that we are not conspiring to privatise primary education."

"Brac strongly believes that it is the responsibility of the state to ensure quality primary education for all and it does not believe in privatisation or commercialisation of the primary education," added the chief of the largest NGO in the country.

The authority vested in Brac by the government does not approve Brac of interfering in administrative affairs of primary schools in the 20 upazilas under the pilot project, he said adding that Brac will train teachers on public holidays and during vacations only so that it does not affect their training programmes conducted by directorate of primary education.

"This caretaker government gave us the permission to improve quality [of education] in the 20 upazilas after we performed well in improving the quality of education in five upazilas in Sherpur district during the BNP-Jamaat alliance government," he said describing the background of the permission.

The primary schools that fall under the pilot project are in 20 upazilas in Sylhet, Habiganj, Cox's Bazar, Chittagong, Sirajganj, Patuakhali, Bagerhat, Munshiganj and Gazipur districts.

The quality of primary education has fallen drastically as "many substandard teachers were recruited during the governments of Awami League and the BNP-Jamaat alliance... Thirty percent

ber of party leaders and workers entered Sudha Sadan to have a glimpse of their party chief.

After the public appearance, Hasina went inside and first hugged AL Presidium Member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury breaking into tears again, then she embraced another Presidium Member Motia Chowdhury again breaking down into tears.

"How are you?" she asked her colleagues, and when they inquired about her well being, she said she was fine. The AL chief then thanked her party leaders.

After the exchange of greetings, Hasina started talking about more serious issues with senior AL leaders including Acting President Zillur Rahman and Acting General Secretary Syed Ashraful Islam, who had been waiting there for a couple of hours for her arrival. During their conversations the AL chief was repeatedly bursting into tears.

Later talking to reporters, Zillur thanked Allah and the people of the country for "standing beside his party chief" and sought public blessings for Hasina's long life.

Hundreds of party activists began thronging Sudha Sadan and the special jail gate from early morning as the news spread that their leader would be released soon. A good number of grassroots level leaders from adjacent districts rushed to Sudha Sadan immediately after Hasina arrived there.

Many professionals including teachers of Dhaka University also rushed to Sudha Sadan to greet Hasina.

JOY'S REACTION

Saying that his mother was kept detained for 11 months on 'false charges', Joy told The Daily Star last night that his family is happy that she will now get better treatment. Joy, who is a software engineer also a businessman residing in the US, also said Sheikh Hasina has been released in the face of a popular demand, and likened his mother's release to the historic release of his late grandfather Bangabandhu after he had been framed in Agartala conspiracy case many years ago when the country was part of Pakistan.

"My gratitude to the government is for releasing my mother in the interest of the country. They have heeded the popular demand, I hope the government will continue moving forward, being reasonable for the greater interest of the country and its people," Joy added.

Obama starts campaign as favorite in Iowa

AP, Des Moines, Iowa

A political infrastructure that pushed Barack Obama to victory in the Iowa caucuses and an increase in Democratic voter registration make him the favorite in the state in November, but an intense catch-up effort could put Republican John McCain in the game, veteran political strategists in both parties say.

"John McCain's problem in Iowa is Obama already has an infrastructure here and McCain doesn't. He pulled his staff out, he pulled his people out," said Iowa House Minority Leader Chris Rants, a Republican. "He has to decide if Iowa is part of his strategy, is Iowa going to be a battleground or not."

Des Moines lawyer and Republican National Committee member Stephen Roberts was equally candid.

Tigers face India

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each other 18 times, 15 of which have been won by India. Bangladesh shocked them twice, once at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in 2004 and then in Port-of-Spain during World Cup 2007. On the other occasion, the match was abandoned due to heavy rain in Chittagong last year.

It will be their third meeting in the Mirpur venue after the two sides faced each other here last year when India won the one-day series 2-0.

Sheikh Hasina

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AL's acting president Zillur Rahman intimately.

The AL chief however seemed to ignore Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzak and Suranjit Sengupta, AL sources said.

"Our leader seemed to be ignoring some party leaders known as reformists within the party," an AL leader present at the scene told The Daily Star.

AL senior presidium member Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzak, Suranjit Sengupta, Tofail Ahmed espoused reforms in the party following the imposition of a state of emergency in the country on January 11 last year.

Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta and some other AL leader placed reform proposals after Sheikh Hasina was sent to jail.

Zillur Rahman, Sajeda Chowdhury, Matia Chowdhury and Syed Ashraful Islam has criticised those leaders saying that the reform proposals are aimed to disassociate the AL chief from the party helm.

Militants

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In recent months, militants have attempted to spark revolts in jails or made numerous breakout attempts.

In the last ten months, 245 militants have been arrested; 145 of them were 'Islamist militants' - 45 were members of the Hizbut Towhid, 35 belonged to the JMB, 25 were from the Harkatul Jihad (Huji) and 23 from the Allah'r Dal.

Seventeen militants were sentenced to death in the same period, seven of them belonging to the JMB. Eighty-six others were sentenced to varying prison terms by speedy trial tribunals.

Before the report was released, Health Adviser Shawkat Ali launched a BEI-published book titled Countering Terrorism in Bangladesh at the BEI auditorium in the capital.

Speaking to reporters afterwards, he said the next government must not tolerate terrorism or terrorist groups, adding that the rise of militancy in the country over the last decade was due to political shelter provided by the then ruling parties.

"Political parties must include in their election manifestoes that they would not patronise any terrorist activities," he said.

Release viewed

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"Once a big party like the AL comes to the dialogue table, it will be easy for the government to bring BNP to the talks," he said, adding that Khaleda Zia also might be released the way Hasina has been freed.

"The government's main objective is to hold the national election. The dialogue was initiated as part of it. But the process became stagnant when none of the major parties joined it," he said.

"The arrest of both Hasina and Khaleda had created instability in the political environment. Day by day, the situation was becoming more and more unstable. If this trend continues, it will be difficult for this government to hold the election for transfer of power. Again, we don't want the nation to go back to the pre-January 11, 2007 scenario," said another official.

"The government wants to see a healthy and lasting democratic order after the next election."

The official went on, "This is why we have taken into consideration that although in detention, both the leaders have popularity. It is not possible for a government to reduce one's popularity just by putting him or her in detention. So, we want dialogues for creating a congenial atmosphere for election."

"Since the government wants to handover power after the election, it wants to do so with reputation. It does not want to give any scope of blaming it with not trying sincerely or not doing enough," he said.

Meanwhile, Hasina's release however was not welcomed by all within the government. A section of officials involved in the anti-corruption drive raised the question that since Hasina was released for treatment purposes, why she was being allowed to meet her party men. They also asked if Hasina returns to detention after eight weeks of parole, how would that resolve the political crisis?

Power plant graft

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He also said when the records are submitted to the HC, the case will not go on in the special judge's court.

ACC Deputy Director SM Sabir Hasan had filed the Tk 3 crore graft case with Tejaon Police Station against the former premier and six others on September 2 last year under the Emergency Power Rules. ACC Deputy Director Moshed Alam, also investigation officer (IO) of the case, pressed charges in the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, on January 10 this year.

Hasina filed a petition with the HC on June 2 for quashing the trial proceedings. In the petition, she also sought bail in the case.

The HC heard submissions from Hasina's counsels last week.

US airstrike

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supporting the coalition in the war against terror," it said.

Pakistan had lodged a strong protest with the coalition, it said.

The US-led coalition in Afghanistan referred queries to the US embassy in Islamabad, which in turn said that the Pentagon was dealing with the matter. The Afghan military made no immediate comment.

Security officials said the deaths came after Afghan troops crossed the porous frontier and tried to occupy the strategic Pakistani post in the troubled tribal belt, which borders eastern Afghanistan.

The post was in an area that has long been disputed between the two countries.

Pakistani troops repulsed the Afghan soldiers and the coalition then bombed the area. Coalition aircraft also killed around 15 Taliban militants about a kilometre (half a mile) away, the officials said.

A spokesman for Pakistani Taliban militants, Maulvi Omar, said eight "mujahideen (holy warriors)" were killed in an air strike by coalition helicopters.

He also said the rebels had shot down a coalition helicopter and captured seven Afghan soldiers when they were returning from "attacking" the post. There was no confirmation of either claim.

Pakistan has protested over a series of missile strikes attributed to US-led forces in Afghanistan in recent months, including one in the tribal region of Bajaur in May that killed more than a dozen

people. Several Pakistani soldiers have also been killed by stray shells but it appears to be the first time that any have been killed by a targeted air strike by US forces.

Disputes over the porous, 1,500-mile (2,500-kilometre) frontier between Pakistan and Afghanistan, both key allies in the US-led "war on terror," have flared up several times in recent years.

Pakistan's new government, which ousted allies of President Pervez Musharraf in elections in February, has entered peace talks with pro-Taliban militants in the tribal belt, causing concerns among its Western allies.

The attack came two days after a US think-tank said in a report that members of Pakistan's intelligence services and its paramilitaries were supporting Taliban insurgents who enter Afghanistan to attack US and Nato forces.

The study by the RAND corporation, funded by the US Department of Defence, said that if Taliban bases in Pakistan were not eliminated, the forces supporting the government of Afghan President Hamid Karzai "will face crippling long-term consequences in their effort to stabilise and rebuild Afghanistan."

Pakistan's military denounced the claims in a statement as "yet another smear campaign maligning Pakistan armed forces and creating differences as well as misunderstanding amongst the coalition partners."

28 dead

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Airways has already been opened to probe the cause of the accident, amid contradictory reports that either weather or a technical failure were to blame.

The airport was due to reopen at 12:00 noon (0900 GMT), the official MENA news agency reported.

Airport authorities said an engine caught fire, spreading to the fuselage, while survivors said weather conditions at the time of the landing were poor, with the capital hit by a sandstorm and then heavy showers.

The plane had flown from Amman via Damascus but been turned back once from Khartoum by bad weather and forced to land in Port Sudan, before being allowed to return to Khartoum, the official SUNA news agency said.

"There was an explosion in one of the engines and the plane caught fire," airport director Youssef Ibrahim said in a television interview.

TV pictures showed flames tearing through the upper section of the fuselage hours after the fire broke out. An emergency escape slide could be seen attached to one of the central doors of the plane.

"The plane landed at 8:45," civil aviation official El-Sheikh el-Faki told AFP. "It landed okay and then it skidded and caught fire."

State Transport Minister Mabruk Mubarak Salim said "today's weather is one of the main reasons for what happened."

A security official, who asked not to be named, said he had taken part in the rescue operation and seen at least four people trapped because they were strapped to stretchers inside the burning wreckage.

Amman is a popular destination for wealthier Sudanese to go and seek medical treatment.

"I've been travelling a lot, I know when a landing is rough," survivor Awad Mohamed Idris, a retired Sudan Airways employee, told AFP. "This landing was very rough."

"When it came to a stop, fire was burning the right side of the plane and was beginning to burn the inside of the plane."

After landing, the cabin filled with smoke and he jumped onto an escape chute, Idris said. "After I left the plane I was still coughing."

Idris managed to find his relatives in the arrivals hall, but another man who gave his name as Aman said he was looking for the one-year-old child of a couple who had been hospitalised.

Police official Mohammed Naguib al-Tayyeb had earlier told the broadcaster that most passengers had managed to escape the aircraft without injury but some had suffered burns.

Ibrahim Saleh, one of the passengers at the back of the plane, told AFP he had not seen many bodies but that there had been "many injured" on the tarmac.

He had first helped children off the plane before he himself had left.

"When I got out there were still many people on board," he said.

The disaster is the latest in a long line of fatal air crashes and mishaps in Sudan.

In May, south Sudan's defence minister was killed in a plane crash along with at least 22 other people, most of them senior members of the southern former rebel leadership.

In July 2003, 115 people were killed when a Sudan Airways Boeing 737 was destroyed in a ball of fire as it attempted to land at the Red Sea resort of Port Sudan after apparently suffering an engine problem soon after take-off.

to buy spare parts for its US-made aircraft due to economic sanctions imposed by Washington, which has placed Sudan on its list of countries supporting terrorism.

Washington maintains that the sanctions do not prevent the delivery of spare parts for planes if these are requested.

Ex-Nepal king

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The decision to abolish the monarchy was taken by a constitutional assembly formed as part of a peace deal between Maoist insurgents and mainstream parties who joined forces when Gyanendra tried to assume dictatorial powers.

Gyanendra ascended the throne in June 2001 after a palace massacre in which the then-crown prince -- who was drunk and on drugs and furious at being prevented from marrying the woman he loved -- killed most of the royal family including himself.

During his 14-minute speech, the former king hit back at accusations that he was linked to