

## Cases shrouded in questions

**FROM PAGE 1**  
But eight leaders and activists of Harkatul Jihad (Huji) later gave statements admitting their involvement in the deadly attacks on an AL rally on Bangabandhu Avenue "to assassinate" AL chief Sheikh Hasina.

Hasina escaped death with injuries but the grisly attacks left 24 AL leaders, including Ivy Rahman, and workers killed and 300 others injured, many of them maimed forever.

Eminent jurist Dr Shahdeen Malik said, "The contradiction of the confessional statements may further complicate the prosecution case and have an impact on the trial."

The prosecution and a few legal experts, however, said the contradictions would not have any negative effect on the merit of the case as the court has the jurisdiction to accept confessional statements that corroborate other evidence.

The courts have already relieved Joj Miah, Abul Hashem alias Rana, and Shaiful Islam of the charges since evidence gathered by the investigators of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) after the end of the BNP-led alliance rule did not corroborate their statements.

CID assistant superintendents Abdur Rashid and Munshi Atiqur Rahman conducted the earlier investigation under direct guidance of the then state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar. The then CID special superintendent Ruhul Amin was the supervising officer.

The authenticity of the statements of Joj, Hashem and Shaiful was questioned all along. That it all was made up became even clearer when Joj's sister disclosed that the CID had been paying their family Tk 2,500 a month since Joj's arrest.

The present administration also found out that the confessional statements as per the then government's desire were obtained using force.

The caretaker government started fresh investigation into the cases and it was found that the Huji carried out the attacks. The confessional statements made by Huji

leaders and activists also corroborated the evidence.

The charge sheets of the cases were submitted on June 11.

Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Ehsanul Haque Samaji told The Daily Star that circumstantial evidence gathered by the present investigation officer shows that the previous investigations were not accurate.

"The previous investigation officers, influenced by a vested group, tried to divert the investigations to serve their interest," he said, adding that the trial of the case would proceed on the right track on the basis of the present investigation.

Advocate Anisul Huq said, "The confessional statements made earlier were completely forged and false as they were obtained through manipulation and by influencing the accused. Therefore, those have no bearing upon the cases."

Advocate ABM Sharfuddin Khan Mukul told The Daily Star that the court would take into cognisance the confessional statements and evidence and accept statements that strongly corroborate the evidence.

Recently Huji leader Mufti Hannan and his brother Mohibullah alias Mahfur Rahman alias Ovi, Rafiqul Islam Sabuj, Jahangir Alam and Arif Hasan Sumon separately appealed to retract their statements admitting their involvement in the attacks.

Legal experts said the petitions are immaterial and would not affect the cases' merit because confessional statements given before magistrates without being influenced will be taken into cognisance even after retraction.

**PRESENT STATUS OF THE CASES**  
The present investigation officer pressed charges against 22 persons, including top Huji leader Mufti Hannan and BNP leader and former deputy minister Abdus Salam Pintu, on June 11 in two cases—one for murder and another for blasting grenades.

Fourteen of the accused are now behind bars. They are Mufti Hannan, his brother Mohibullah, 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 Moinuddin Sheikh alias Abu Zandal alias Masum Billah, Arif Hasan Sumon, Rafiqul Islam Sabuj and Mohammad Ujjal alias Ratan.

Following the investigation officer's plea, separate courts ordered the authorities to relieve previously arrested 20 persons of the charges.

They are Joj, Hashem, Shaiful, Monjur Hossain, Shah Alam, Haji Shoyeb alias Dikon, Mokhesur Rahman, Atub Ali Khan, Shaibal Saha Partha, Habib alias Abdul Hannan, Badsha Mia, Abdur 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.

Eight of the accused have been absconding: they are Pintu's brothers Maulana Tajuddin and Maulana Liton, Anisul Mursalin and his brother Mahibul Murtakin, Iqbal, Maulana Abu Bakar alias Selim Howlader, Jahangir Alam Badar and Khalilur Rahman. Mursalin and Murtakin were arrested in India with explosives in 2006 and are now detained at Tihar jail there.

The two cases were transferred to the Sessions Court for trial on June 12 and 18. The Sessions Court then transferred the murder case to the Second Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court for quick disposal.

Hearings on the cases have been held five times. The next hearings on charge framing in the murder case and reports of arrest warrants against the absconding accused in the grenade attack case will be held on August 31.

Earlier, both the courts issued arrest warrants against the eight accused. Police have, however, failed to arrest them.

Sources meanwhile said the cases would be sent to the Speedy Trial Tribunal for quick disposal.

## Haunted for life



August-21 victim Rashida Akhter Ruma lies crippled in her bed with her daughter Joya to comfort her. She still has to look after her two daughters as her husband is no more.

**FROM PAGE 1**  
The nightmare of the August 21 afternoon of 2004 haunts the former women affairs secretary for ward No. 69 of the Awami League day in, day out.

"The first grenade exploded as the netri (Sheikh Hasina) ended her speech and I stood up to walk up to her car," Ruma recalled.

The 40-year-old felt a surge of pain as she tried to find a comfortable position on her bed. The grenades left six fractures in her legs, caused irreparable damage to her right ear and placed a few thousands splinters into her body. She lost three toes as well.

Ruma was relating her story at her uncle's home on Nazimuddin Road, the latest in her search for shelter since the attacks disabled her to afford a home on her own.

She became the lone bread earner of the family after her husband died of cardiac arrest in 2002, earning about Tk 5,000 per month by teaching sewing skills.

As the attacks cost her work, a pall of uncertainty descended on the family. She left her rented house on Aga Sadek Road and started a life of living off relatives.

Tears now streaked her face as The Daily Star asked Ruma about her two daughters, Joya and Pia. "Failing to find my daughters, I hopped them into a madrasa in the solace that they would not at least starve at hostels."

"Doctors said I would soon go mad if I don't treat my right ear immediately. Who'd look after my kids then?" Ruma asked.

Every August 21 adds to her nagging physical and psychological pains.

"When August 21 comes back every year, journalists like you come here to know how we are getting on. What does it bring other than fuelling the old injuries?" she said.

Not that Ruma did not get any help in treating her injuries. She underwent 13 operations home and abroad, with the Awami League bearing all the costs.

But everything came to a halt after the arrest of Sheikh Hasina on July 16 last year. Nobody enquired about her since then, she said.

A few hundred more in Dhaka City also bear the hallmark of the grenade attacks, splinters in the thousands.

"I have about 1,500 in my head, back, abdomen, waist, arms and legs," Nasima Ferdousi said at Trauma Centre at Shyamoli, pointing to the ones protruding beneath her skin.

Doctors removed a few hundred from her body in 23 operations, eight in Bangladesh and the rest in India. After an operation at Apollo Hospital in Delhi, surgeons gave her son 250 splinters.

"I have those 250 in my house now", the 47-year-old former senior

president of the city unit Awami League said.

She says sometimes she feels like a tree as the splinters formed a layer under her skin. "The splinters feel differently in different seasons".

With aging, she is developing new complications in her kidney, heart and backbone, she said.

Ruma and Nasima, who now rely on crutches for movement, yearn for better treatment abroad, but hold out little hope of it until "Hasina is freed."

"Not only that the government did little in brining the culprits behind the attacks to book, they also did nothing to help the victims like us," Nasima said.

She, like Majharul Islam Mamun, son of Ada Chacha a.k.a. Rafiqul Islam who was killed in the attacks, demanded that the authorities smoke out and expose the masterminds of the attacks designed to eliminate the Awami League leadership.

"We're happy that the caretaker government has brought the investigation back on track. But besides knowing who carried out the attacks, we want to know who plotted and financed them and who supplied the grenades," Mamun told The Daily Star.

"The pain inflicted on us would recede a little if we see a transparent investigation and trial."

## 9 top graft suspects

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Ali Falu, former deputy minister for land Ruhul Kuddus Talukder Dulu, Dhaka City Corporation Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, former Barisal City Corporation mayor Mojibur Rahman Sarwar, former AL lawmaker Mostafa Kamal alias Lotus Kamal, former BNP lawmaker Hafiz Ibrahim, Jamuna Group Chairman Nurul Islam Babul, Salman F Rahman, Proshika chief Kazi Faruque Ahmed and Janakantha Editor Atiq Ullah Khan Masud.

Also yesterday, former whip and reformist BNP leader Syed Ashraf Hossain was freed from Dhaka Central Jail in the evening, jail officials said he was freed following an HC order dated August 13.

The two-member HC bench granted Moudud three months' bail in the Niko graft case and a case for amassing money illegally. It gave four months' bail to Khandaker Mosharrar in a tax evasion case filed by the National Board of Revenue.

The HC stayed for two months the proceedings of the case filed against Jalil for amassing illegal wealth. It also issued a notice on the ACC and the government to show cause in four weeks why the proceedings would not be cancelled.

In the case, barrister Shaiful Ahmed appeared for Jalil who is now undergoing treatment in Singapore.

Salman F Rahman was given bail for six months in a case filed for embezzling money of the IFIC Bank. Syed Chowdhury was also given six months' bail in the money-laundering case.

The same bench gave three months' bail to former state minister Rafiqul Islam in the Niko graft case and a case filed for amassing illegal assets. Proceedings of the two cases were also stayed for three months.

Aman, Patal and Shahjahan were each given three months' bail while Shahidul Haq Jamal was granted a four-month bail. Aman got bail in four graft cases.

### Tragic death

**FROM PAGE 16**  
Witnesses said Shariful struck Alamgir's son Dulal, 6, in an alley in the slum while they were playing around 6:45pm. Hearing Dulal's cry, Alamgir went to the scene and hit Shariful twice on the face and chest.

The boy went unconscious muttering "Baba (father) save me—I am dying", a police sub-inspector said quoting a witness.

Soon Shariful's father, who was working at his tea stall nearby, went to the place and tried his best to save the life of his son, pouring water on his head. He also rushed his son to a hospital in Mirpur-2 where doctors declared Shariful dead.

As the news spread, several hundred locals surrounded the slum and helped police arrest Alamgir around 9:00pm.

Alamgir admitted to the police that he punched Shariful once on the face as he could not check his anger because Shariful struck his son with a stick. He said he is repentant for the incident.

### Truth Commission

**FROM PAGE 16**  
disclosure of ill-gotten wealth. If there is not enough response, we will consider (extending the time)," the Tac chairman told the commission's weekly briefing.

He said since the formation of the commission, some 21 corrupt individuals have applied to take the advantage of the clemency in return for the ill-gotten wealth.

Of them, he said, four have come voluntarily while the rest were referred by the Anti-Corruption Commission.

Justice Khan said the Tac will talk to the applicants August 25-28 and if satisfied with their confessions, the applicants will be provided with the prescribed forms to make the declarations.

During that time, the applicants will be informed about the dates for hearing.

About the lukewarm response, the Tac chairman said as the concept is quite new, it will take some time for the corrupt to know about it.

### MQM

**FROM PAGE 16**  
persuaded the stalwart U.S. ally to quit Monday after nine years in power.

Zardari has played down speculation that he covets the presidency, which his Pakistan People's Party and its allies have vowed to strip of its power.

However, opposition backing will strengthen his hand in a struggle with coalition partner Nawaz Sharif over a compromise candidate to fill the post and the even more urgent issue of restoring judges purged by the former army strongman.

A leader of the Muttahida Quami Movement, Haider Razi, said it wanted Zardari as president because of his past sacrifices and for his "wisdom and vision" in handling Musharraf's ouster.

The MQM, a strong backer of Musharraf, is the second-largest opposition group in Parliament.

It dominates Karachi, Pakistan's biggest city, and other urban areas in the southern province of Sindh and recently buried its long animosity with the People's Party.

A total of 61 cases were on the list for hearing yesterday. Of them, 54 cases are filed against the VIPs.

The 61 cases also include those against Syeda Nasima Sarwar, Tasmina Hossain, Momtaz Ahmed, Rozina Naser, Nasrin Khan, Shamim Ara Begum, Shama Shajin Khan, Shamima Begum, Shamima Akhter, Rita Ismat Ara, Sultana Hashem, Akhter Jahan Rubi, BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain's son Khandaker Akhter Hamid, and Roads and highways Department engineer Abdul Kamal Shamsuddin.

A total of 50 such cases are on the list for hearing today. The ACC has filed petitions against 35 of these cases and the government filed petitions against three.

The petitions of former ministers Abdur Mannan Bhuiyan, M Shamsul Islam, engineer Mosharraf Hossain, Redwan Ahmed, Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, Falu, MA Hashem, Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu, Mostafa Kamal, Mojibur Rahman Sarwar, Obaidul Muktadir Chowdhury, Mirza Azam and a few others are supposed to be heard today.

### Advisers okay

**FROM PAGE 1**  
headed by the commerce minister, will be set up to oversee and review the new laws and their enforcement.

The council will meet every three months with representatives from the industries, agriculture, home, food, health, local government, law, and communications ministries. Chiefs of law enforcement agencies, the head of FBCCI, the president of national press club and the head of Consumers' Association of Bangladesh (CAB) will also attend the meeting.

A national CRP Directorate will implement the law. The director general of the directorate has been given power to shut down businesses.

A 10-member committee under the CRP council will be set up in districts, upazilas and unions.

Consumers may file cases against retailers with the directorate or lodge complaint with the committee. A first-class magistrate will hold trial of the cases.

Punishable offences under the new law include failure to display retail price and expiry date on product packages, which could result in one-year jail sentence or a fine of Tk 50,000.

Sale of pharmaceuticals above retail prices would also be considered a criminal offence. Retailers could be sentenced to three years imprisonment or fined Tk 2 lakh for creating an artificial crisis of medical products through hoarding.

Retailers found guilty of deceiving consumers by manipulating weights of products will be fined Tk 50,000 or sentenced to one year in jail. They could be handed down one-year jail sentence and fined Tk 2 lakh for giving false product features in advertisements.

Hawkers might be exempted from punishment for selling adulterated products, considering their lack of knowledge.

The government approved the ordinance in principle in November last year. Later, the proposal was sent back to the law and commerce ministries. The government also put advertisements in newspapers seeking public feedback on the ordinance.

The first draft of the ordinance was sent to the cabinet in 2001 during the tenure of the BNP-led government, which did not make any further move in this regard.

### Kuwait

**FROM PAGE 16**  
300 are female cleaners and the residences of most workers have expired, the official added.

Earlier, the workers had told the Arab Times that the company had filed false cases against some of them on charges of bunking off work in a bid to deport them without paying arrears.

The workers also said they had been facing serious food shortage.

### Hasina's health

**FROM PAGE 1**  
The Awami League chief's ongoing treatment there, Hasina is currently visiting her daughter in Canada.

Prior to the grenade attack, the former prime minister did not have any of these complications, said Prof Modasser.

Hasina has little hope of regaining hearing in her left ear as the ear is damaged totally, he said quoting Dr Harry A Quigley, director of the Wilmer Eye Institute at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland. Dr Quigley gave his professional opinion after thoroughly examining all of Hasina's medical reports.

"She can hear normally with the hearing aid in her right ear, but she can't withstand it after using it for over two hours," said Prof Modasser.

Hasina has lost 20 percent of her vision in her left eye and it might need surgery soon, he said adding that her right eye is working alright, but both her eyes have compression.

"The doctors in USA told me that her blood pressure complications have also been caused by the attack" and her pressure is still fluctuating as a result of the late consequence of the grenade attack, he said.

"Her allergic complications developed from the grenade splinters still in her body. Splinters contain various chemicals and these can trigger different sorts of complications," Prof Modasser quoted the US doctors as saying.

The doctors there also speculated that the grenade attack might have caused permanent psychological damage to the former premier, but following thorough examination, they found her to be in a strong mental state, he added.

## Missing masterminds

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Huji was involved, they could not trace those who were behind Pintu and Hannan to carry out such a well-planned attack.

"It's not possible to reveal the mysteries of an unreachable place. I've submitted my investigation report on the area within my reach. If I could go further, more mysteries of the attack might have been revealed," current investigation officer (IO) of the cases CID Assistant Superintendent Fazlul Kabir told The Daily Star.

Kabir finds Hannan as the main accused of the cases based on his and seven other Huji men's confessional statements.

Intriguingly, a former investigator who quizzed the Huji leader said Hannan revealed that at least one BNP-Jamaat-led alliance government's lawmaker had financed the attack.

"But following submission of charge sheets I saw the lawmaker's name was not among the 22 accused. I think if we could go after that lawmaker at that time, we could advance much to trace those who were behind him," the investigator added.

He also said he could not go after the lawmaker as he was not involved with the investigation anymore.

Former CID ASP Munshi Atiqur Rahman, who was IO of the cases before Kabir, said he got hints from Hannan about Huji's involvement but couldn't go till the end as he went on retirement.

He said he tried for long to arrest Hannan in the aftermath of several bomb and grenade attacks but was not successful as the BNP-Jamaat-led government was "reluctant".

"They were soft to Mufti Hannan," Atiq said, adding, even a number of former ministers and lawmakers recommended relieving Hannan of different cases.

Before getting the hints from Hannan, the investigators had no clue regarding Huji members' involvement.

Rather, Abdur Rashid who was IO before Munshi Atiq had concentrated on a different criminal group based on confessional statement by one Joj Miah. However, Rashid said he could not trace any mastermind during his investigation.

"I was at primary stage of the investigation. To find out the masterminds and link them with the attack was a huge task, but I was not in a position to accomplish the task," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

From his experience, he however, said, "It was an extensively pre-planned attack and a huge amount of money was involved. It's not like that if anyone wants grenades, the bombs will automatically be available," he said.

Rashid obtained confessional statements from Joj Miah and two others—Abul Hashem alias Rana and Shaiful Islam—which completely contradicted with that by Mufti Hannan and seven other Huji leaders and activists.

Authenticity of the identical confessional statements of Joj Miah

and two others during the BNP-Jamaat rule raised questions and controversy as those stories were weakly woven.

Following huge controversy and media flak the government had to hold back submission of the charge sheets based on Joj Miah's story.

Allegations were rife that the government was trying its best to divert the investigation to save the main culprits of the gruesome attack on Hasina's rally on Bangabandhu Avenue that left 24 AL leaders and workers killed and scores others injured, many of them maimed forever.

Less than a month into the attack, the then ruling BNP lawmakers in parliament in presence of the erstwhile prime minister Khaleda Zia blamed AL for perpetrating the grisly attack on its own rally.

More interestingly, the one-member judicial probe committee of Justice Joydul Abedin pinned the blame on an "enemy" country, but the investigators have so far found nothing to substantiate the findings.

That perception of diverting the investigation to save the culprits got intensified when the investigators at least pointed their finger to a BNP leader and former deputy minister and the Huji.

A number of investigators say after they became sure of Pintu's involvement, they were trying to find out whether there were links between the attack and any people of "Hawa Bhaban" or other bigwigs as Pintu had connection with the then alternative powerhouse.

However, the charge sheets submitted in June do not contain any finding regarding that matter.

But Rashid claims his investigation was not influenced by any government high-ups and he still believes Joj Miah's statement is "correct".

"The attack was launched following a massive plan where Joj Miah was involved in a small part. I believe many others were involved like Joj Miah in different parts of the plan. If someone holds anyone of them, they will not get the entire picture, rather a small part," Joj Miah here represents a small part," Rashid argues.

However, like the present IO of the cases, Munshi Atiq also believes Joj Miah's statement is not accurate.

Interestingly, when the investigation was proceeding based on Joj Miah's statements, all intelligence agencies gave positive nod to advance.

On the other hand, when the incumbent IO sensed Huji's involvement, the same intelligence agencies again gave a green light to go ahead.

Inspector General of Police Nur Mohammad yesterday said police will not file any case against the investigators who made concocted story involving Joj Miah.

"We'll however assist the family members of Joj Miah and others who were implicated in the cases falsely if they come forward to file case against those investigators," the IGP told The Daily Star.

Apart from Joj Miah, 19 others

including a ward-level AL leader were arrested after the grenade attack and tortured severely. Finally, a Dhaka court ordered their release as the charges brought against them by the erstwhile investigators were baseless.

One of the then investigators admitted severe torture of the arrestees, saying they did it to find at least some clues and ways to make a headway.

Besides local investigation, the government allowed Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Interpol to probe the attack, but people are still in dark about their findings.

The Interpol report with details of the attack was attached to the charge sheets and was also submitted to the government, say CID officials. They add the FBI, which had taken some pieces of evidence for test and returned later, did not submit any report.

### RU closed

**FROM PAGE 1**  
agitated when he returned to Rajshahi and told them about his ordeal. A large number of students then attacked a Rajshahi-Dhaka bus ticket booth at Binodpur Bazar, triggering workers of transport services and other local businesses to retaliate.

Chase and counter chase continued for hours when a number of students pelted stones at the VC's residence and the locals assaulted the proctor.

Vehicular movement on Dhaka-Rajshahi highway came to a halt as both the clashing groups barricaded the highway.

At one stage, as Shah Mokhdum and Sher-e-Bangla halls and the residences of hall provosts came under attack of outsiders, police fired blank shots and lobbed tear gas shells to get the situations under control, said Mahbubur Rahman, deputy commissioner of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police.

No one was arrested till filing of this report.

Meanwhile, AHM Khairuzzaman Liton, the mayor-elect of Rajshahi City Corporation, blamed the RU authorities for not taking necessary steps to avert the incident that ensued over a trivial matter.

He also urged the authorities concerned to investigate into the matter and take stern action against responsible persons.

**PROBE COMMITTEE FORMED**  
The RU syndicate yesterday formed a seven-member committee headed by Prof Dr Delwar Hossain of Applied Physics Department to probe into the incident.

Other members of the committee are Prof Entajul Haque, syndicate member

Siddik Hossain, Dean of Social Sciences Faculty Prof Sadekul Islam, former

RU proctor Prof Shamsul Alam Sarker, Prof Abdul Latif and Shahabuddin Sarker.

## Khaleda, Tarique

**FROM PAGE 16**  
that it had no jurisdiction to entertain the bail petition.

Earlier on May 13, Khaleda was shown arrested in the case.

On February 26 this year, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed the case with Shahbagh police against Khaleda and 15 others including 10 former ministers from BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami for graft in awarding Barapukuria coal mine operation contract to a Chinese company.

The accused former ministers from BNP are M Saifur Rahman, Abdur Mannan Bhuiyan, Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, M Shamsul Islam, MK Anwar, barrister Aminul Haque, Altaf Hossain Choudhury, and AKM Mosharraf Hossain.

Motaur Rahman Nizami and Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojibid are the accused ex-ministers from Jamaat.

**CASE AGAINST TARIQUE**  
The Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court rejected Tarique's bail petition in a case for embezz