

Mysteries pile

FROM PAGE 1

last few years. The way investigation officials had worked under the past BNP-led government threw into question the credibility of their findings.

Prof Imtiaz Ahmed, professor of international relations at Dhaka University, said, "The perpetrators seem to have tried to achieve many goals through the August 21 blasts. They might be some quarters at home with links abroad."

"Their motives could be keeping the country underdeveloped, destroying its secular spirit, hampering its economic growth, etc. The government should form a separate investigation organisation to unearth the whole thing including the motives and the masterminds."

He noted that a clear picture should emerge so preventive measures can be taken to stop recurrence of violence. The findings can be published.

Socio-political analyst Prof Sirajul Islam Chowdhury, historian Prof Syed Anwar Hossain and former inspector general of police ASM Shahjahan too emphasise forming a national body with experts drawn from a wide spectrum of professions to analyse an attack from varying viewpoints.

On this day in 2004, terrorists hurled grenades at the then opposition leader Sheikh Hasina on an Awami League rally on Bangabandhu Avenue.

Hasina survived the attempt on her life but saw 23 of her party leaders and workers killed and scores injured. Incumbent President Zillur Rahman's wife Ivy Rahman was among those who died.

Three former investigation officers in the August 21 blasts case now face criminal proceedings for carrying out misleading probe during the BNP-led four-party rule.

Besides politicisation, limited purview of the probe and lack of efficient investigators have kept the nation in the dark about the conspiracy behind the attack.

From a court's verdict based on charge sheet, people can at best know who executed the attack. The masterminds, motives and the entire conspiracy would still elude them.

Former caretaker government adviser ASM Shahjahan, who was CID chief twice, suggested constituting a committee to delve into the conspiracies behind the major terror attacks and assassinations since criminal investigation cannot necessarily reveal everything.

All information except those which may hamper national security should be let out in the open in the public interest, he continued.

"Uncovering of the whole truth is essential for the sake of justice and the rule of law."

Referring to the recent US revelations about Bangabandhu killing, the analysts said the criminal investigation of this case could not unearth such aspects, which are too vital for the nation to miss.

Syed Anwar observed, "In cases like August 21 blasts, trial and execution of verdict are never enough. We need to know everything about the plots behind."

"The government should constitute an enquiry commission that would bring out the truth and publish it in white papers."

Sirajul Islam Chowdhury

Wholesale

FROM PAGE 16

allow export of aromatic rice as its demand increases ahead of next month's Eid and Pooja festivals.

He said it is very difficult for a democratic government to control the retail market effectively, as the government "is to protect the interest of many people."

"We have already instructed the officials of city corporations and deputy commissioners' offices to monitor the gap between wholesale and retail prices of commodities. They would take punitive actions against the unscrupulous traders if they are found making unusual profits," Faruk said.

Jasim Uddin, president of Bangladesh Cold Storage Association, said the present stock of potato is one million tonnes in 293 cold storages, which is enough to meet demands till December.

Golam Mowla, general secretary of Moulvi Bazar Babosayee Samity, said price of edible oil in wholesale dropped by Tk 200 per maund yesterday due to the sale of essential commodities through the government appointed dealers in Dhaka.

said, "For probe into major attacks we cannot depend on police. Because they cannot track down the political elements involved, or they do not even try."

In light of these limitations, a strong and credible judicial enquiry should be carried out engaging experts from different sectors.

Prof Chowdhury said the August 21 attack was aimed at not merely an individual but the secular principle of the state. He said it was a continuation of the August 15 killings in 1975.

It has always been observed that the non-communal force has come under attack by those who oppose the secular ideology on which Bangladesh came into being, he added.

Prof Syed Anwar Hossain said if the country's political culture is studied, it becomes clear that the country's enemies, who are mostly rightists and extremists, are unwilling to deal with their political adversaries following political norms and values.

The analysts pointed out political and financial influence, lack of professionalism and inefficiency of investigators as major problems in ensuring a fair probe into the incident.

Prof Imtiaz said whoever--Huji or JMB--had carried out the August 21 attack is a non-state element.

They have network inside and outside the country and carried out the attacks efficiently dodging the intelligence agencies.

The perpetrators were well prepared and disciplined. Other well-organised forces might have been behind them. Even a part of the state machinery might have been linked to such non-state elements, he said.

He said non-state elements carrying out subversive activities can remain untouched only if the foundation of a country's democratic structure is weak.

He suggested that the government assign think-tanks to conduct research or probe to find out facts behind such attacks and form a body like "Public Security Council".

STATUS OF AUGUST 21 CASES

Charges were pressed in two August 21 cases on June 11 last year against 22 people after years of drama over investigation during the tenure of BNP-led coalition government.

Top Harkat-ul-Jihad (Huji) leader Mufti Abdul Hannan and BNP leader and former deputy minister Abdus Salam Pintu are among the charge-sheeted accused.

A Dhaka court on August 3 issued an order for further probe into the incident as the earlier one failed to identify the collectors and suppliers of grenades used in the attacks.

Senior ASP of CID Abdul Kahar Akand was made the new investigation officer as the court had asked the police chief to submit the report within two months.

"I have just reviewed the case documents and started probe into the incident," Kahar told The Daily Star yesterday.

JS body

FROM PAGE 16

basis of which zones they are being built," he added.

"The committee will also sit with the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh to make a housing plan, especially for areas adjacent to the Zia International Airport, for safe landing and take-off of aeroplanes," said Mannan, also a lawmaker of ruling Awami League.

Member of the House body Engineer Enamul Haque said, "A survey committee headed by the housing and public works secretary was asked to submit its report to the parliamentary standing committee within one month."

About the Rajuk drive, Mannan said, "There have been many flaws in building houses and high rises constructed violating Rajuk's building codes. We cannot abolish these structures. So, Rajuk has been asked to take stern action against the violators of its codes...No one will be spared and action will be taken as per the laws."

The standing committee also asked Rajuk to begin "one-stop service" for its customers. Mannan said primarily the zoning will be applied to Dhaka city but it will be implemented across the country in phases.

He said a housing policy for the entire country is also being prepared.

The standing committee also asked Rajuk to ease the process of unification of plots. "We have asked Rajuk not to delay in giving permission if owners want to unify their land," said the state minister. He said high-rise buildings would be constructed in every district and divisional headquarters to solve housing problems.

Doomed

FROM PAGE 1

years. Repeated treatments have failed to rid her body of the innumerable splinters left in different body parts. One of her ears still bleeds regularly.

"I am just counting my days. I can't even manage the studies of my two daughters--Joya and Priya", Ruma said, shedding tears. She is dependent on well wishers for her young family's meagre meals.

Asma Zerin Jhumi, who is now an AL MP in the reserved quota, said Ruma was not officially being given anything from the party but her former colleagues were helping out whenever they could.

Still that is not enough to keep a family alive, she said.

Sheikh Hasina helped send Ruma to India four times for treatment between 2004 and 2005. At the time Awami League helped with monthly monetary assistance, also and she provided them an amount monthly. But after 1/11, the help stopped.

Many other victims of the August 21 grenade attack are doomed to a life of misery.

Jhumi herself was hurt in the attack. Doctors were able to remove only 10 splinters from her body. She lives with the pain and complication of splinters left inside her body.

Another victim Sufiya Begum's son Russel told The Daily Star that the party gave the family Tk 2 lakh after his mother died.

"I was consoled, I was given assurance that if the party comes to power, they would give me a job. I still haven't got it," Russel says.

Iran Sultana Baby, wife of Mustak Ahmed Sentu who was killed in the attack, lives in Barisal and struggles with her life.

"We would just be happy if the culprits get punished. We want to know the names of the masterminds behind the cowardly attack," Baby said.

Deceased Sentu of Muladi upazila was an assistant secretary of the relief and social welfare sub-committee of the central AL.

Jubo League leader Liton Munshi's mother Achhiya Begum lost her only son in the attack. The elderly woman still wails every time someone mentions her son's name. As August 21 approaches every year, she becomes inconsolable.

After Liton Munshi's death in the attack, his wife Mafia Khatun of Chanpatti village under Hossainpur union in Rajoir upazila eventually got remarried and moved away.

Liton's mother The Daily Star that no one came forward to help her poor family.

"I could not keep my granddaughter -- the only thing left to me after my son died -- because I am poor. Mafia took her away from me," she said crying silently.

A total of 23 people died in the grenade attack. Over 300 others were injured. Each victim's family has their own story of misery and pain.

MP Asma Zerin Jhumi thinks the government should take initiatives to help the victims of such a heinous attack. Many others agree with her.

(With inputs from our Barisal and Madaripur correspondents)

Special drive

FROM PAGE 1

would start operating today. "It depends on the availability of magistrates," he said, adding, he requested the government to provide him with magistrates to operate the mobile courts.

The meeting discussed ways and means to reduce the gridlock by going tough against the illegal vehicles through introducing mobile courts.

Checking illegal parking, ensuring bus stoppage at only specific stoppages, preventing people from piling of construction materials on roadsides, construction of dedicated lanes for buses and minibuses and eviction of hawkers from the streets are included in the crackdown plan.

The minister urged all concerned to work in a coordinated way and asked Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) to take actions against the drivers having fake licences and documents.

About keeping the educational institutions of the capital closed or changing their timing during Ramadan to ease the traffic jams, he said the education ministry can take measures in this regard.

Among others, Communications Secretary ASM Ali Kabir, DMP Commissioner AKM Shahidul Haq, Executive Director of BTCL ABM Shahjahan, BTRC Chairman Ehsanul Haq and DG of Railway Bayelot Hossain attended the meeting.

GP shares to hit

FROM PAGE 16

As many as 6.94 crore shares will be floated through GP's IPO to draw Tk 486.08 crore from the capital market.

After the meeting, SEC Executive Director Anwarul Kabir Bhuiyan told journalists that "The Grameenphone's IPO will widen market depth."

He also said it might have a temporary impact on the liquidity flow during the subscription period, but will not have "any major impact on the market."

The value of the approved IPO is Tk 37 crore more than the company's proposed offer of Tk 449 crore.

On July 2, the SEC also approved the increase in the volume of the company's pre-IPO to Tk 486.07 crore from Tk 420 crore with face value of each share priced at Tk 10, plus Tk 64 in premium.

In December last year, Grameenphone's Tk 420 crore pre-IPO was settled with a huge response on the local market.

Grameenphone will be the first telecom company to enjoy a corporate tax cut of 10 percentage points.

The government in the new budget announced that mobile phone operators might be given the chance to pay 35 percent corporate tax instead of the existing 45 percent if they get listed on the stock exchange.

But they must float 10 percent of the paid-up capital on the share market, of which pre-IPO cannot be more than half.

India can use

FROM PAGE 16

"The day is not far off when you will be able to use Chittagong port as your port," he told a correspondent from Tripura, giving a clear hint at positively considering by the present government the longstanding Indian plea for the port use.

"In this globalised world, one will not call it my port or your port. It is our port," the commerce minister categorically said.

He hoped that the export of brick to Tripura would help strengthen the business relations between the two neighbouring countries.

As businessmen raised problems of infrastructure, land port and banking facilities to boost the bilateral trade, Faruk said he would take up the matters with the authorities concerned of Bangladesh.

In next six months a 16-km highway with four lanes from Akhaura border to Darkhar of Dhaka-Sylhet highway will be developed.

ATK 116 crore project in this respect is now under consideration of the planning commission, the commerce minister said.

Faruk said Bilonia landport will be inaugurated shortly, sometime between Eid-ul-Fitr and Durga Puja.

He assured that the banking and customs problems would be taken up with the finance minister.

The minister said small bilateral problems that remain unresolved would be settled through discussions. He noted that the Bangladesh foreign minister will visit India when the issues will be discussed.

Tripura Commerce Minister Jitendra Choudhury, Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty, Tripura Chamber's President M.L. Debnath, Tripura Chief Secretary Shudhir Sharma, India-Bangladesh chamber president Abdul Matlub Ahmed and businessmen from Bangladesh and India attended the function.

Wasa takes

FROM PAGE 1

Due to legal tangles, the implementation of Mohora Water Supply Project of Tk 197.96 crore was delayed, he added.

The project got Ecne approval in September 2003.

The cabinet purchase committee later rejected the work order due to irregularities in the tender process of the first lowest bidder.

It asked to go for bidding again, which prompted the second lowest bidder EPI-BFEW Consortium to file a case in this connection.

The High Court ordered awarding the contract to EPI-BFEW on February 28, 2008.

There being a huge gap between the first and second lowest quoted price, Wasa filed a writ petition.

Fazlullah said, "If the verdict favours us, the first lowest bidder will get the contract. Otherwise, the second one will get it."

Regarding the Tk 164.85 crore Madunaghat project, the chairman said, "We are looking forward to implementing it with the financial assistance of World Bank or other alternative sources."

Besides, Wasa submitted a proposal for installing 20 more deep tube-wells at the cost of Tk 27 crore under an emergency water supply project in June this year.

The price of each share has been increased to Tk 10 from the company's proposed Tk 1 following demands from market stakeholders.

Citigroup Global Markets Bangladesh Private Ltd is the issue manager of the IPO.

Norway's telecom giant Telenor owns 62 percent of Grameenphone, launched in 1997, while local Grameen Telecom owns the rest. The share offloading will be split between the two shareholders proportionately.

RMG units

FROM PAGE 16

set up in the country's south-western regions like Khulna and Kushtia while a small power plant might be set up at Madanjan under Narayanganj district.

The PDB is also planning to produce additional 500MW electricity soon to meet the growing demand in the country, he added.

The adviser further said he would again ask the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) to reconsider charging Tk 5 lakh to the captive power plant users for annual licence renewal as the provision was dropped in the 2009-10 national budget.

BKMEA President Fazlul Hoque said production declined by at least 30 percent due to disruptions in the supply of gas and power in the industry.

He said they would submit an assessment report on diesel consumption in apparel industries to the ministry by next week.

"We are worried because the government has increased gas price from this month although the gas supplied is not enough to run an industry," Hoque said.

In the meeting, he urged the government not to realise the minimum gas bill from the entrepreneurs, as many of them do not use gas burners for various reasons.

He also called upon the government to reduce the price of furnace oil.

Govt to appeal

FROM PAGE 1

the same cases against a rejection order by a lower court.

Earlier on August 12, Judge Masdar Hossain of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 of Dhaka granted bail to Munshi Mohibullah, brother of Huji chief Mufti Abdul Hannan and one of his accomplices Arif Hassan Sumon.

Senior assistant superintendent of police (ASP) of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Abdul Khar Akond yesterday submitted the two petitions to Advocate Syed Rezaur Rahman, chief prosecution counsel, for action.

The cases were earlier sent back from speedy trial tribunal to the previous courts on August 18, as the trial of the cases would not be completed in 135 workdays under the Speedy Trial Tribunal Act.

Blockade halts

FROM PAGE 1

In Bandarban, BPCP held a rally on the Bazaar Mosque premises of the district supporting the blockade, reports our correspondent.

Bandarban Engine Boat Owners Association sources said all types of transportation in Bandarban-Ruma-Thanchi and Bandarban-Roangchari river routes were suspended to support the blockade.

HM Samrat, BPCP president of Bandarban district unit warned of a tougher programme after observing the government's decision in this regard.

In Rangamati, BPCP activists brought out a procession at Banarupa supporting the blockade. They demanded the government take alternative security arrangement for safeguarding the settlers.

The Bangalee settlers in CHT districts would be insecure if army camps were dismantled, BPCP activists said.

In Khagrachhari, pickets staged demonstration at 40 spots of eight upazilas of the district allowing no rickshaw or bicycle on the roads, our correspondent reports. They vandalised at least four vehicles at Dighinala, Panchhari, Mohalchhari and Manikchhari during the blockade, sources said.

Fewer officials and students turned up low while day labourers became the innocent victims of the blockade, locals said.

Abdullah Al Masud, BPCP president of Khagrachhari district unit told our correspondent that the blockade had turned into a strike as mass people supported us.

Additional Superintendent of Police Mohammad Ameer Jafar said additional police were deployed no less than 50 points in the district.

Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Abdullah said no untoward incident was reported, as security forces were present at several places in the district.

Toxic liquor claims 3 lives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three slum dwellers died and three others fell sick Wednesday and yesterday after taking poisonous alcohol at Zahuri Mahalla in the capital's Mohammadpur area.

The deceased were identified as Mohammad Hossain, 35, Abu Kalam, 45, and Palash Miah, 22, while Zakir Hossain, 24, and Abul Hossain, 32, are sick.

On Wednesday, rickshaw-puller Palash died at his shanty and the shanty owner Mohammad Hossain died at a private hospital. Roadside fruit vendor Kalam suffered the same fate yesterday.

Among the sick, Zakir was admitted to Suhrawardi Hospital while two others at a local clinic.

Car driver Rabiul Islam, son-in-law of deceased Zakir Hossain, told The Daily Star, "Palash managed the alcohol from nearby Geneva Camp at Mohammadpur on Monday."

Mohammadpur police said none of them were admitted to any government hospital and all three deceased were buried without informing police in a bid to avoid further probe by the law enforcement authority.

Swine flu

FROM PAGE 1

Management Committee have already been trained and separate units have been opened in the medical college hospitals and district level hospitals. Besides, screening is going on at 16 entry points of the country.

"People should strictly maintain personal hygiene and inform health professionals if they suffer from any kind of flu," he added.

Asked about laboratory facilities in district level hospitals the minister said it is not possible to extend lab facilities there right now. However, specimens from the infected can easily be sent to the laboratory in Dhaka for testing.

But health experts stressed the need for interventions in the affected areas and to strengthen awareness programme there.

Representatives from civil aviation, home affairs, commerce, agriculture and defence ministries and World Health Organisation and Unicef were present at the meeting.

Meanwhile, talking to The Daily Star Prof Nazrul Islam of the Department of Virology of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University said the government should reveal the names of swine flu affected districts and the imams, scouts of the community and the mass media need to be involved to increase awareness in the society.

The first swine flu case in the country was detected on June 18 and the last two months saw the number rise to 87.

The A(H1N1) virus, mostly known as swine flu, has spread over 180 countries infecting 1,07,000 people.

WHO alerts

FROM PAGE 1

Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR).

It is one of the three main forms of plague and its incubation period is one to seven days, he added.

Primary pneumonic plague results from inhalation of fine infective droplets and can be transmitted from human to human without involvement of fleas or animals. Untreated pneumonic plague has a very high fatality rate, the experts said.

"It is caused by bacterium Yersinia pestis. The difference between the versions of plague is simply the location of the infection. Pneumonic plague is an infection in the lung," said Prof Nazrul Islam, department of Virology of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

The most apparent symptom of pneumonic plague is coughing. With pneumonic plague, the first signs of illness are fever, headache, weakness, and rapidly developing pneumonia with shortness of breath, chest pain, cough, and sometimes bloody or watery sputum, he added.

According to the Wikipedia, since 2001 WHO has reported six plague outbreaks. Between 1998 and 2008, nearly 24,000 cases were reported, including about 2,000 deaths, in Africa, Asia, America and Eastern Europe. The vast majority of the world's cases (98%) are in Africa.

Afghan polls

FROM PAGE 16

"I request my dear countrymen to come out and cast their vote to decide their future," the western-backed Karzai said as he cast his ballot in a Kabul boys' school near his heavily fortified palace.

After the voting, Karzai praised Afghans for defying insurgent threats to vote in landmark elections on Thursday, saying it had been a "good day" for the country.

Asked if a low turnout in the presidential and provincial council elections would undermine the legitimacy of the elections, Karzai said: "No."

Minor attacks were reported elsewhere, including in Kandahar in the south, which was the capital of the 1996-2001 Taliban regime. But cautiously optimistic Afghan and UN officials said violence could have been far worse.

Nato chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen said early reports on turnout were "a clear demonstration that the Afghan people want democracy, they want freedom and reject terrorism."

"Hopefully we can conclude the elections have been credible and reflect the will of the Afghan people," added the head of the military alliance, which has deployed 64,500 troops in Afghanistan.

Voting centres allowed those still in queues to cast their ballots after the official close of polls, guarded by a huge deployment of 300,000 Afghan and foreign forces, and election officers began counting ballots late Thursday.

The election commission says partial results could emerge as early as Saturday, but that a full result is not expected before next month.

After ten hours of voting, including a last-minute, one-hour extension, election workers began to count the millions of ballots cast across the country. Initial results weren't expected until Saturday.

"The counting has started in the stations where the voting has finished but if they have people in the queue they are not going to start counting," said a spokeswoman for the Independent Election Commission.

Taliban militants set ablaze three polling stations in restive western Afghanistan Thursday, destroying all votes cast and other materials, a district governor said.

The militants in the western province of Herat's volatile Shindand district stormed the polling stations as people were still casting their ballots in landmark presidential and provincial council elections, the governor said.