

Venue aspect

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administration's not allowing Mukhtangar as the venue was part of the conspiracy.

The charge sheet fails to elaborate on several vital points like this.

It only gives a summary of a couple of meetings between Huji leaders and the then deputy minister Abdus Salam Pintu just days before the blasts.

It says Abu Taher, then president of Dhaka city Huji, met Mufti Abdul Hannan, prime accused and top leader of Huji, and Ahsanullah Kajal, organising secretary of the outfit's Dhaka city unit, near Mohammadpur Supermarket in the capital, on August 18.

There, Taher informed the other two that the decision to launch the attack had been taken "centrally". He also briefed them about a meeting with Salam Pintu.

After this meeting, Taher took Hannan and Kajal to Pintu's house in Dhanmondi for further discussions on the plot.

The charge sheet gives an obvious picture that the decision to kill Hasina was taken at a central forum of an organisation, but it does go into detail.

It does not mention who might be these "central leaders" involved in decision-making regarding the August 21 carnage.

It all means the investigators did not bother to follow up that clue that experts say is serious enough to call for further probe.

They also did not seek answers to questions like who initiated the plot and where it was decided to kill Hasina and

other AL leaders though it all are crucial to tracking down the masterminds.

Anisul Huq, a criminal law expert, told The Daily Star, "Getting to the root of this plot is important to put an end to all such conspiracies."

The investigators must haul in the conspirators if there's any still at large, he added.

ASM Shahjahan, former caretaker government adviser and ex-inspector general of police, said if there were flaws in the previous probe, the new investigation officer can seek to find and plug those.

He said since section 120(B) of the penal code has been included in the charge sheet, it is now mandatory to prove conspiracy in the case.

The third IO of the case who pressed the charges described the conspiracy by mentioning a few meetings between the accused on August 18, 19, 20 and 21.

It gives the impression that it took only a few meetings a few days before August 21 to stage such an attack.

Security experts opine that the August 21 blasts could not be an act of petty criminals. It was rather a deftly laid out plot executed.

Some analysts suspect the involvement of a clique of influential people, while the charge sheet confines itself to describing discussions among Huji leaders and Salam Pintu.

It repeatedly quotes Huji members talking about attacking the AL rally on August 21 to kill Hasina, but it does not mention if they knew about the venue.

BMA polls

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Ahmed, president of SCP of BSMU, for secretary general posts.

The BNP-backed doctors' wing Doctors Association of Bangladesh (DAB) submitted its panel in which AKM Azizul Hoq would vie for president and AZM Zahid Hossain for secretary general.

Bangladesh Chikitsak Sangsad submitted its panel where Prof Sirajul Islam will contest for president and Dr M Mushtaq Husain for secretary general.

Meanwhile, Prof Rashid-e-Mahbub has withdrawn his nomination for president post from the panel of Doctors for Health and Environment, but Dr Shakil Ahmed did not withdraw nomination for the secretary general post.

The Jamaat-back National Doctors Forum (NDF) finalised its panel with Prof NA Qamrul Islam for president and Prof Md Ruhul Amin for secretary general posts.

Lutfar Rahman, secretary to the election commission of BMA, decided to comment on the upcoming polls.

On Saturday, the supporters and activists of SCP got divided on the issue of secretary general post as there were two candidates -- SCP Secretary General Prof Iqbal Arsalan and BSMU SCP chief Sharfuddin Ahmed.

Prime Minister's Health

Adviser Sayed Modasser Ali and Health Minister AFM Ruhul Haque earlier at a meeting Friday finalised the panel while supporters of Dr Iqbal protested and walked in procession demanding him as a candidate.

Processions and counter processions continued throughout the day at different medical colleges and hospitals including BSMU and central office of SCP as the current parishad Secretary General Prof Iqbal Arsalan was dropped from the panel.

Hundreds of supporters of the secretary general gathered overnight at the residence of Health and Family Welfare Minister AFM Ruhul Haque, who is also the president of SCP.

The supporters from all districts also gathered in front of the SCP central office.

However, Prof Iqbal Arsalan told The Daily Star yesterday, "I will follow the party decision."

More than 25,000 voters will cast vote in the election of BMA, which was established in 1948 as the Pakistan Medical Association and became BMA in 1971.

The BMA is a member organisation of the Commonwealth Medical Association and World Medical Association and is affiliated to the British Medical Association.

AL culprits warned

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the ruling party also stressed the need for coordination in the activities of the government and the party.

At the meeting a number of central leaders criticised a few ministers for their rhetoric; they also questioned performance of a number of ministers.

In response, the prime minister told the meeting that she has been evaluating the performances of ministers and state ministers.

Jute and Textiles Minister and AL Presidium member Abdul Latif Siddiqui expressed frustration at the slow pace of the administration, meeting sources said.

Hasina said the BNP-led four-party alliance and the caretaker government created a horrifying situation at all levels in the last seven years. She urged her party leaders and workers to project new months' successes and progress of her government to people.

Many leaders urged the government to control price hike of essentials, resolve power crisis, generate employment and develop roads and highways. They also urged the government to resolve the maritime boundary disputes with India and Myanmar.

AL leader Abul Hasnat Abdullah called for disposal of

sensitive cases, including the Bangabandhu murder and jail killing cases, and beginning trial of war criminals soon.

STRENGTHENING THE PARTY

The ALCWC decided to strengthen the party's organisational capacity, recruit new members and update memberships, hold councils of its grassroots level units. It also decided to hold the party's extended meeting of thousands of councillors from across the country soon.

AL Presidium member Ataur Rahman Khan Kaiser said the internal conflicts in the Chittagong unit of the party must be resolved soon.

The meeting decided to launch a campaign to publicise its electoral manifesto and declaration, and success of the government in the last nine months. It will also engage party men to drum up people's support to the new national education policy.

"We will also publicise corruption and misuse of the last BNP-Jamaat-led alliance government with evidence," said Syed Ashraf.

Hasina asked party leaders inducted in the central committee for the first time to show respect to senior leaders who are not in the central committee now. "You must learn from them as they have contributed a lot to the party," she said.

Gang rape

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same day to give an "undertaking" saying he did not send any report on the incident of gang rape.

The political mentors of the culprit ruling party activists later put pressure on Dainik Sathi Editor Anwar Hossain to sack Polish threatening him with dire consequences.

Giving in to intimidation, the editor published a notice of discharge in his newspaper yesterday saying Palash has been sacked for "negligence in duty."

Moreover, a local ruling party leader told Patuakhali Press Club leaders yesterday that no fresh case would be filed against a national daily for reporting the incident if the newspaper publishes a clarification citing its earlier report on the incident was wrong.

On October 1, the victim's family was allegedly forced to file a defamation case against the publisher, editor and a reporter of the Bangla Daily.

Rakibul Ahsan, Kalapara upazila Awami League secretary, who organised the arbitration to punish the perpetrators, claimed that the incident of rape was designed to taint the ruling party's image saying the girl herself had moved to sue the journalists.

Both locals and journalists feel that the truth would not come to light unless the victim's family is freed from the grip of local ruling party men.

Son of prison

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year student of Dhaka Medical College, and Afifa Ashraf, a class VII student of Shaheed Anwar Girls' High School at Dhaka Cantonment, were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with stab injuries in different parts of their bodies, including back, hands and legs.

His wife Dr Sofia Akter of Mitford Hospital was admitted to Central Jail Hospital inside the jail compound. She received stab wounds in her hands.

DMCH sources said the IG-Prisons and his two daughters were sent to the operation theatre.

Superintendent Towhidul Islam of Dhaka Central Jail told The Daily Star, "Soon after Shafiu Islam, 14-year-old school going son of the IG-Prisons, woke up around 4:00pm, he swooped on the family members on the first floor and stabbed them indiscriminately with a sharp weapon."

Asked whether Shafiu was a mentally challenged person, the jail superintendent answered in the negative and said, "Shafiu is now staying at the IG-Prisons Bhaban at Central Jail Baganbari."

Sources said Shafiu is a class VIII student of Adamjee Cantonment School in Dhaka Cantonment. But no one of the jail authorities could confirm whether Shafiu is an addict or mentally challenged person.

Lalbagh police said, at the directives of the IG-Prisons, the jail guard did not allow any police to enter the house.

2 outlaws

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Communist Party (PBCP-ML) factions.

Our Khulna correspondent reports, police raided Ambhita School playground at Dumuria in Khulna where the outlaws were holding a meeting.

When the police reached the school ground at about 1:20am, the extremists started firing on them triggering a gunfight. Sayeed was caught in the line of fire while his associates managed to flee the scene.

Doctors declared Sayeed dead after he had been taken to Dumuria upazila health complex.

Two police constables -- Abdus Sobhan and Salauddin -- also received bullet wounds. They were admitted to upazila health complex.

Police recovered one shutter gun, three cartridges and one bullet from the spot. Two cases were filed in this connection.

Sayeed was accused in a number of cases, including one for murder, filed with Dumuria Police Station, police said.

Meanwhile, our Chuadanga correspondent reports, Abdur Rashid, son of Foyez Mollah of Alokda under Sadar upazila, was killed in an "encounter" with police in Bujroghpara in Chuadanga town.

Rashid was an aide to Janajuddho founder Abdur Rashid Malitha Tapan alias Dada Tapan, who was killed in "shoot-out" with Rapid Action Battalion in June 18, 2008.

Police earlier received information that the Janajuddho cadres were holding a meeting at a brick-kiln in Bujroghpara area.

The law enforcers cordoned off the kiln at about 4:00am and asked the outlaws to surrender. As the cadres opened fire, a gun battle erupted.

Jalil mentally

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At the meeting, chaired by Prime Minister and party chief Sheikh Hasina, most of the ALCWC members bitterly criticised Jalil for the statements which, they noted, embarrassed both the government and the AL.

They asked the party to take stern action against him to stop recurrence of such incidents.

Contacted, a number of leaders who attended the meeting, however, quoted Sheikh Hasina as saying action would be taken against Jalil at an appropriate time. They also said they think finally the former AL general secretary will have to face action.

Hasina also told the meeting that she knows who have been making anti-government and anti-party statements keeping secret links with Jalil.

She reiterated that Jalil should have resigned as a lawmaker before raising any question about the polls in which he also was elected.

Meanwhile, in an interview with London-based Bangla TV recently, Jalil said the party's landslide victory in the ninth parliamentary election came through an "understanding". He received kudos from opposition BNP for his remark.

Later on Tuesday last, Jalil said in London he still suffers from trauma due to torture by

the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) personnel while in detention during the caretaker government's tenure. And he blamed this state of mind for the remarks he made in the interview with Bangla TV.

At the ALCWC meeting, Mohammad Nasim and other leaders told the party chief that if action is not taken against Jalil, people like him would dare to follow him.

But questions have now arisen whether Jalil, also chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on commerce ministry, could remain a lawmaker and a member of the AL advisory council as the party general secretary termed him "mentally imbalanced".

Asked about this, jurist Shahdeen Malik however said Ashraf's statement does not have any legal standing. "One will be disqualified to remain a lawmaker only if a competent court declares him or her as unsound mind," he added.

Malik also said if the AL really thinks that Jalil is mentally imbalanced, then it should have relieved him of party post temporarily or permanently. "But the party did not do so. It seems to me that the party wants to suppress the Jalil issue by labelling him as a mentally imbalanced man," he said.

Stop interfering

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weakened the union parishads, the lowest tier of the local government system, though the UP representatives keep the closest contact with local people, speakers at the convention lamented.

Lawmakers, on the other hand, said they are not the 'opponents' of UP representatives rather they complement each other and will place their logical demands before the parliament.

Bangladesh Union Parishad Forum organised the National Convention 2009 at a city hotel where around one thousand UP chairmen and members were present.

Bazle Rezy Al Hasan, chairman of Haripur union under Rajshahi, said the lawmakers were elected under political banners but they were elected without any political identification.

"Why do lawmakers hold a share in the money being distributed in the food for work programmes?" questioned the Sylhet divisional representative. "Don't prevent us from serving the hungry people by taking away the allocation of test relief and food for work programmes."

Hossain Sikder, chairman of Kashipur Union in Barisal sadar, said the hundred-year-old local government system is gradually being weakened.

He also said local markets, water bodies, ferryghat and khas lands are being leased out, thus crippling the union parishads financially.

Kazi Khorsheed Alam, chairman of Purnimagati UP in Sirajganj, complained that their authority is being curbed day by day.

"We will seek legal help, if needed," he said, adding that the bureaucrats are trying to replace public representatives, which should be resisted.

He demanded the government allocate fund directly to union parishads so that they can do their development works.

Ataharul Islam Bulbul, general secretary of Bangladesh Union Parishad Forum, termed

PM wants

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measures to deal with the aftermath of earthquakes as people are concerned about the issue.

He also wanted to know about the government's preparation in this regard.

When asked about the issue, Akhtaruzzaman, also a former AL lawmaker, said the premier has taken the issue seriously and admitted that the government lacks logistic expertise to tackle the aftermath of a disaster like earthquake.

Akhtaruzzaman said he suggested sharing experience of earthquakes with Japan and Iran to develop the country's logistic expertise.

The premier asked the authorities concerned to take necessary steps to develop skill in handling such a situation.

Food and Disaster Management Minister Dr Abdur Razzaque said they have a budget of Tk 70 crore to deal with such a natural disaster. Besides, they have initiated the process of purchasing several laser devices that will help rescue people trapped by natural disasters.

Hasina said if necessary, more allocation would be made to tackle natural disasters.

Referring to the fire at Bashundhara City, she said the disaster management system was in such a level that the fire fighters could not even reach the top floors where the fire broke out.

The AL leaders suggested recruiting volunteers to help salvage teams conduct rescue operations after earthquake.

Goldsmith murdered

UNB, Dhaka

A goldsmith was murdered inside a jewellery workshop in the city's old Dhaka early yesterday.

Police said the victim, Abul Kashem, 30, son of late Abdul Latif Madbar of Pachhar village in Shibchar upazila of Madaripur district, was working at New Momota Jewellery Workshop at 176 New Paltan Lane under Lalbagh Police Station.

He used to sleep inside the workshop at night. Police, quoting employees of the workshop, said Kashem was asleep inside the workshop at night alone.

One employee went to the workshop yesterday morning and tried to wake up Kashem. "As he didn't respond to the call, the employee went to backside of the workshop and found the door open. He stepped in and found Kashem lying on the floor in a pool of blood," police said.

Lalbagh police went to the spot at about 11:00am and recovered the body.

Contacted, Officer-in-Charge of the police Mohammad Ali said, "Previous enmity might be reason for the killing as the killers didn't take away a costly mobile phone of the victim."

Even Tk 1,500 was found inside the pocket of Kashem while other valuables, including earrings, were untouched, he added.

Two employees--Rubel and Shahadat--were detained for interrogation in connection with the murder. A case was filed with the police.

Dhaka to ask

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exploration and development.

However, through awarding ConocoPhillips and Tullow to explore hydro potential in the Bay by this October, Bangladesh is set to explore its exclusive economic zone for the first time through this award.

India lodged a complaint on the block-5 and 10 and Myanmar on the block-11. The block-5 was awarded to Tullow while block-10 and 11 to ConocoPhillips.

The foreign secretary admitted objections to the Bangladesh move by Myanmar and India, but hoped that the matter could be resolved at the negotiation table, which has been going since the last couple of years.

He also admitted that both Myanmar and India had already lodged their maritime boundary claim to the UN. Bangladesh is yet to submit its claim, which would have to be done within 2011.

"Bangladesh signed the UN Convention on the law of the sea called (UNCLOS) in 2001 and under the law we are obligated to lodge our claim on the maritime boundary by 2011," Commodore Khurshed Alam told BSS.

"We are taking help from some foreign countries to lodge our claims to the UN. However, we will submit our claim by the stipulated time and urge the international community to resolve it on equity basis," Khurshed said.

He also cautioned that neighbouring India and Myanmar already proceeded a long way in crisscrossing Bangladesh's legitimate territorial shoreline.

According to reports, India intends to encroach an area of 19,000 square km and Myanmar 18,000 square km of the territorial sea line of Bangladesh in the Bay.

Biman

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ahead of the initial schedule given by the Boeing, last year.

The plane maker has also eased the payment burden on the Bangladesh's flag carrier. The insiders say the PDP amount would be around \$ 117 million for taking delivery of two aircraft in 2011.

As per the previous schedule, Biman was supposed to make PDP of about \$249 million in phases before taking delivery of four aircraft in 2013.

"We have talks with a couple of banks for the finance. Now we need both the government's guarantee and the bank loan for pre-delivery payment for the two aircraft at the end of October," said Biman CEO Zakiul, also a former top air-force officer.

"Biman has not have enough funds to pay for purchasing aircraft," he said, expecting a bail out by the government.

Biman officials said the carrier has sought guarantee from the civil aviation and tourism ministry for its 10-aircraft acquisition deal.

The ministry, instead of pursuing for the whole, has requested the finance ministry to offer a payback guarantee for loans against the delivery of two Boeing 777-300 ERs.

"We have requested to the finance ministry to provide guarantee for the payment of two aircraft. Legal issues relating to the guarantee are being examined now," said Hedayatullah Al Mamoon, secretary of the civil aviation and tourism ministry.

Audit of suspected Afghan ballots to start soon

AFP, Kabul

More than 3,000 ballot boxes containing votes suspected of having been cast fraudulently in Afghanistan's presidential election have arrived in the capital Kabul for audit, officials said yesterday.

Afghans went to the polls on August 20 to elect their president for the next five years, but allegations of widespread fraud -- mainly directed against President Hamid Karzai -- have delayed the announcement of a winner.

Karzai leads the preliminary results with around 55 percent of the vote. He needs 50 percent plus one vote to be declared the winner.

His main rival Abdullah Abdullah has around 28 percent, and has been at the forefront of vote-rigging accusations against Karzai.

Pivotal to the outcome -- which could be announced later this week -- is the result of the audit of 3,063 ballot boxes that have been returned to Kabul from polling stations across the country for a sample audit.

Noor Mohammad Noor, a spokesman for the Independent Election Commission (IEC), told AFP the audit "will start within the next couple of days".

Around ten percent of the 600-700 ballots in each box

will be audited, another official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"A sample will be extrapolated to the larger population of ballot boxes -- it is not a recount as such, but an audit," she said.

"The process is supposed to start tomorrow (Sunday)," she said, adding that observers and candidates' agents were being trained on Saturday in preparation.

"If procedures are finalised tonight they will start tomorrow, otherwise the following day," she said.

The fraud accusations that have dogged the Afghan vote have dismayed leaders of the international community that has supported the process as a step forward on Afghanistan's road to democracy.

Vote-rigging allegations have been accompanied by controversy, as this week Peter Galbraith, deputy to the UN's special envoy to Afghanistan, was sacked over disagreements with his boss, Kai Eide, over how to deal with the fraud.

Galbraith later said that Eide had been biased in favour of Karzai.

Abdullah told reporters on Saturday that "serious questions" about Eide's role in the elections had emerged from the affair, and the UN's reputation among Afghans had been damaged.

4,000 still trapped

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sending in helicopters with medical teams," he told AFP.

In Padang, where hardly a single building has been left undamaged, rescuers were racing against time to haul any survivors from schools, hotels and homes that have been reduced to tangles of concrete and rubble.

Specialist teams from Australia, Britain, Estonia, Japan, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, the United States and the United Arab Emirates have arrived or are travelling to the scene to help overwhelmed and exhausted local teams.

Hope was raised for survivors on Saturday when police said they had received an SMS text message from inside the ruined Dutch colonial-era Ambacang hotel, which has become a focal point for operations, drawing a crowd of hundreds.

"I think there could still be survivors," said Yoshiaki Shimazu, the leader of a specialist team from Japan with rescue dogs at the scene. "The way the building fell, there could be voids."

David Lange, a doctor for the SurfAid medical organisation, was inside the building as it caved in and he sent colleagues a dramatic description of his escape that was passed on to AFP.

After escaping the building, he came to the aid of a woman in labour who was stuck in chaotic traffic on Saturday, and delivered her baby on the front seat of the vehicle.

"I just can't believe I'm alive. The people right behind me didn't make it out. The

blocks from the hotel were falling all around me," he wrote in his email, adding that many westerners remained inside.

The UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Indonesia El-Mostafa Benlamlih said between 3,000 and 4,000 people were trapped or buried in the rubble left by the quake.

Increasingly, the main task for emergency teams has been to pull bodies from the debris, many of which are beginning to decompose in the blazing sun.

The United Nations last estimated the death toll at 1,100 people while the government told, which has not been revised since Thursday, stands at around 770.

"I think the death toll is going to rise dramatically. The current figure is going to be very low from listening to people working at the scene. There will certainly be more than 2,000," McKerrow told AFP.

One lucky survivor was 20-year-old Ratna Kurnia Sari, who was pulled limp and covered in dust from the ruins of a college on Friday after spending 48 hours buried beneath rubble.

"I was telling myself I must survive. I've got to see my 14-month-old boy grow up. I want to see him get big and become a good person," she told AFP from hospital.

The quake struck off Sumatra's west coast northwest of Padang on Wednesday on a major faultline on the volatile "Ring of Fire" that scientists have long warned was a disaster waiting to happen.

Ctg ammo haul

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The journalists could talk to Omar Faruk when he emerged from the room of the Investigation Officer (IO) at around 7:10pm.

Asked if his committee had to investigate the case following direction and under pressure from any other quarter or if they could investigate freely, Omar Faruk said he had told the investigators whatever he had to say.

IO Muniruzzaman Chowdhury, a senior ASP of CID, Chittagong, said Faruk had told them that the high-level committee could work freely.