

## Hawa Bhaban plot

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five years, who privately disclosed that Huji men had been used like mercenaries.

Huji made the first abortive attempt in Kotalipara way back in 2000, led by its leader Mufti Abdul Hannan. Several groups had since pressed ahead with plots to assassinate Hasina, and the August 21, 2004 attempt was apparently under the patronage of some BNP-Jamaat leaders, said several intelligence and Huji sources.

Detained Salam Pintu is also maintaining the story he told interrogators upon his arrest in 2008 that the administration and Hawa Bhaban were behind the bloodletting. "Go and interrogate Babar and beyond. You will find the truth," he was quoted as saying by different sources.

Delayed already for 17 years in an arms case, Babar was finally shown arrested in the case yesterday.

The Criminal Investigation Department will now quiz Babar to dig more into his alleged role and identify people beyond him in manipulating the administration to orchestrate the horrendous attack on Bangabandhu Avenue that missed its prime target Hasina but left 23 dead and over 300 injured for life.

However, investigators are not sure as yet if the hair-raising conspiracy was designed with or without the knowledge of the then prime minister Khaleda Zia.

The alleged conspirators next gathered at Babar's official residence on Bailey Road following several bomb and grenade attacks but the Hawa Bhaban bigwig, A friend of Babar, who was a transport businessman, was present for the first time at the meeting. He handed over Tk 50,000 to Huji leaders for petty expenses upon a review of nitty-gritty in the mission.

On August 18, Babar arrived at Abdus Salam Pintu's residence along with two black jeeps. At his instruction, BNP man Arifur Rahman Arif handed over a dozen of grenades to Huji leaders. Arif, also a Dhaka City Corporation commissioner from ward 53, is now in jail for links to two blast incidents at a CPB rally in Paltan and Narayanganj. Sources said he had been also interrogated over his involvement in the August 21 incidents while on remand.

At the time, Mufti Hannan was present along with Moulana Tajuddin, the younger brother of Salam Pintu who has strong connections with Pakistan-based extremist group Lashkar-e-Taiba.

Two boxes contained five grenades each and two more were partially wrapped. The grenades were marked with 'POF' (Pakistan Ordnance Factories), Huji sources told The Daily Star.

Though the exact number of attackers could not be confirmed, the document unearthed the presence of several groups apart from the Huji to carry out operations on the day. It also claimed that 15 people from Jamaat took part in the attack.

The assailants struck at 5:22 in the afternoon.

An influential Huji leader blamed the failure on a lack of coordination among the groups even though they were reportedly assisted by a section of policemen and intelligence officials on the spot.

None of the available documents -- the charge sheet of Fazul Kabir, the third investigation officer in the case, and the confessional statement of Mufti Hannan -- could reveal all the details of the conspiracy before.

Referring not to be named, a number of officials involved with the investigations told The Daily Star that the truth was buried deep under a heap of lies as Babar led the cover-up mission as soon as the operation fell through.

With the nation reeling from shocks, a few groups of intelligence and police officials were busy then destroying, not collecting, evidence systematically from the crime scene. The evidence that could have been invaluable in the probes was swept under the rug, with unexploded grenades being detonated within nine hours after the attack. Two bodies were reported unclaimed and buried in Azampur graveyard, without any post-mortem.

sion of Babar, a criminal investigation led to the arrest of 20 people, including a student, Shaibal Saha Partha, and AL leader and ward commissioner Mokhlesur Rahman. The arrestees had experienced a lot of harassment and torture but were not found guilty in the charge sheet.

A strange twist appeared in the mockery of probes as the government disclosed that a mere criminal gang had carried out the attacks and flashed the 'confession' of one Joj Miah as proof.

Finally, the caretaker administration found that those confessional statements had been obtained by force at the dictat of the BNP-led government. CID investigators and supervising officer Ruhul Amin involved with the probe were found to have paid Joj Miah's family Tk 2,000 a month during his detention.

Joj Miah walked out of jail recently but three CID officials were 'assigned' to mislead the investigation by their own department.

Upon arrest on October 1, 2005, Mufti Hannan blurted out the involvement of his outfit in all terror attacks including the one of August 21. He was shown arrested in all but the August 21 case during the rule of BNP-Jamaat government. His confession was made officially public in 2007 during Fakhruddin Ahmed's caretaker rule.

Former CID inspector Munshi Atiqur Rahman said he tried for long to arrest Hannan following several bomb and grenade attacks but was not successful as the BNP-Jamaat government was 'reluctant'. "They were soft on Mufti," said Atiq, adding that even a number of former ministers and lawmakers recommended relieving Hannan of different cases.

The blatant manipulation of the administration by the BNP government was nothing new, as its front-ranking leaders led by Tarique Rahman, Babar, and Aminul Haque made headlines by patronising Jama'at ul Mujahideen Bangladesh from 2004. Bangla Bhai, hanged by the caretaker government in 2007, boasted his relationship with Tarique and visits to Hawa Bhaban.

However, amid AL insistence on international probes, the government had eventually let the FBI, Interpol and Scotland Yards fly in. But none of their observations or findings was made public.

On the other hand, Tarique's trip to the US in May 2005 following FBI's several visits to Bangladesh raised a lot of questions, speculation and curiosity both at home and abroad. Strangely, Tarique visited both Pentagon and FBI along with former National Security Intelligence boss Major General (ret) Rezakul Haider Chowdhury. The outcome of the meetings is still under wraps.

Rezakul Haider is now detained and shown arrested in the 10-truck ammo haul case. Also, Tarique reportedly went to Dubai along with Rezakul for a meeting with mafia don Daud Ibrahim months before the lethal consignment smuggled into Chittagong.

Meanwhile, officials involved with the investigation appeared hopeful that more of the truth behind the attack is bound to come out in the further investigation by CID. "Point of a compass can be taken from north to south by force, but, when freed, it comes back to its right place. In a free investigation, the truth will come out like that," an investigator told The Daily Star.

But Salam Pintu quipped in May while being dizzied again during the further investigation. "What is the point in having a further probe as the charge sheet as it is doesn't represent a complete investigation? A fresh investigation will only expose the links of all influential people behind the attacks."

## Four ansar

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arrested the 12 JMB men, who introduced themselves with fake IDs, as ansars of Shariatpur barrack.

A press release issued by the ansar and VDP last night said during the preliminary investigation it has been proved that those 12 men were included in the training programme illegally.

The officials concerned have committed a crime by including those 12 in the ansar training programme, the release said. On these charges the authorities suspended two upazila ansar officials and two upazila ansar trainers while the acting district adjutant of ansar was closed to Dhaka headquarters.

## Jalil asked

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mentioned that Jalil, chairman of Mercantile Bank Limited, evaded income tax worth Tk 4,07,485 on his income of Tk 54,60,234 from the bank for the fiscal years 2003-2008. He concealed his income of Tk 54 lakh in his tax returns.

Jalil repeatedly provided false information about his real income and expenditure, alleged the NBR.

## Shops in parking

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undertaking by the police. Dhaka Metropolitan Police recently identified 198 buildings in the city that use designated car parking space commercially, forcing visitors to park their vehicles on roads.

Rajuk launched the drive on October 11 following the DMP list to reclaim car parking spaces in the buildings.

## BSF kills 1

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Maldah battalion in West Bengal opened fire when the traders reached near main pillar no. 182 at Chawpura border. Habibur died on the spot. Other cattle traders managed to escape, he added.

The BSF men took away the body. BDR strongly protested the killing sending a letter and asked its Indian counterpart to return the body.

## Quips & quotes

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to Awami League leaders without spelling out names, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, blamed them for the grisly attack, which she claimed was aimed at diverting the masses' attention from her government's successes. According to her, her government's successes made AL leaders worried about their future. She made the remark 11 days after the grenade attack on Bangabandhu Avenue.

Replying to BNP lawmakers Dildar Hossain Selim and Ilias Ali, who asked the government to take steps against the opposition, Lutfuzzaman Babar on September 15, 2004 said in the parliament, "We will take actions as per the law against the people creating disorder."

BNP's then foreign minister Morshed Khan also played the same role as Babar at the same session where Khaleda was also present. BNP lawmaker Shamsuzzoha Khan alleged that the AL itself had exploded the bombs at its rally as part of a conspiracy against the government. He demanded the then foreign minister Morshed Khan takes stern actions against the AL. Morshed Khan in reply said, "We know better who sheds crocodile tears at meetings with foreign envoys and from where the money for treatment comes."

Ruling party lawmaker Abul Khaer Bhuiyan in a parliament session asked Babar why the AL changed the rally venue. Babar said, "It is a good question and the Awami League in the afternoon of the day moved the venue to Bangabandhu Avenue after asking permission for Muktagong."

A day after the attack when journalist asked Babar to comment on the attack, he urged people to help the probe by providing information to the home ministry.

The following day journalists were barred from the home ministry even though the state minister denied such move by his ministry.

AL chief Sheikh Hasina on August 21 evening said, "The activities of police prove that the government masterminded the bomb attack to kill Awami League leaders and workers including myself."

The then AL general secretary Abdul Jalil on August 22 told media, "We think, it [judicial probe] is just an eye-wash. After the incident the government's behaviour seems to be heinous. We cannot trust the investigating method taken by the government. These initiatives have been taken to protect criminals."

"The government will get the investigation done by an official of the judiciary department. But based on past experience we know that it will be under the control of the government. We have no faith in the so-called judicial investigation. We reject it. The government did not take any effective steps to find the reasons behind the attack in Sylhet," Jalil said.

Harris Chowdhury, political secretary to the then prime minister Khaleda Zia had said, "The prime minister has called upon all, irrespective of party affiliation, to uproot terrorism from the country. He strongly condemned the incident. A judicial investigation commission has been formed. The commission will find out the reasons and the masterminds behind the incident to try them."

## Protector turned

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The matter remained in the dark until the army-led joint forces arrested Babar on May 28 in 2007. He was later awarded 17 years' rigorous imprisonment for possessing illegal arms and ammunition.

He was also sued for hiding wealth information worth around Tk 7.6 crore in the wealth statement.

Babar studied up to class X but succeeded in moneymaking allegedly through illicit means and established himself as a politician.

He had a Casio watch business at Uttara Bank building during HM Ershad rule and used to call Roushan Ershad "mother".

As Babar became controversial and declared incompetent by the election commission, BNP did not nominate him for the ninth parliamentary elections. He was ousted from the party as he decided to contest the polls as an independent candidate in Netrokona-4 constituency.

The grand alliance candidate Rebeka Momin routed Babar in the ninth elections.

## Counsel seeks

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Razzaque replied that Shahriar went to the radio station as ordered by the then chief of general staff of the army since he (Shahriar) was reinstated in the army on August 15, 1975.

The counsel said there were disagreements between the two High Court judges in the case. Both of them had delivered verdicts in this case, and the third HC judge in his verdict should have resolved the disagreements.

He claimed that fabricated statements were placed before the trial court for bringing charges against his client in this case. And the trial court did not review the statements and cross examinations in its judgment.

The counsel said the first information report (FIR) was filed after four months of the then Awami League government's assuming power in 1996, but there was no explanation for the delay in its filing.

## Rab captures

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Master, with four CDs and some books on jihad in their possessions.

In a near simultaneous raid Rab arrested the banned organisation's ehbar member also in charge of Bagerhat, Akbar alias Al Amin, from Mollah Hat in the district.

Abeer, a long time JMB member was inducted into majlis-e-shura in 2007 while Badal, a close aide to JMB's current coordinator Bashar, was inducted into the top forum about two months ago, Rab officials said.

The officials also said Badal was looking after financial affairs of the organisation since Bashar, son of JMB chief Maulana Saidur Rahman, had stopped looking after the matter about two months ago.

"Although we couldn't arrest the JMB chief, we arrested his two close associates. We are hopeful of capturing the Ameer," Rab Director General Hassan Mahmood Khandkar told a media briefing at the battalion's headquarters yesterday.

The Rab chief said religious militancy in Bangladesh is effectively under control, but it has not been totally uprooted yet.

"We are noticing two things in JMB now, they are trying to increase their organisational strength, and they are preparing to carry out subversive activities in the future," the Rab DG said adding that the

## Iraqi forces on high alert after carnage

AFF, AP, Baghdad

Iraqi security forces were on high alert yesterday, a day after twin suicide vehicle bombs exploded on al-Qaeda killed 155 people and blasted government offices in Baghdad.

Iraqi hospital and police officials have raised the toll from Iraq's deadliest bombing in two years to 155 people.

More than 700 people were also wounded in the near-simultaneous attacks, which the government said were carried out by al-Qaeda and supporters of ex-dictator Saddam Hussein's banned Baath Party.

US President Barack Obama led international condemnation of Sunday's attacks and offered his condolences by telephone to both Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and President Jalal Talabani.

The matter remained in the dark until the army-led joint forces arrested Babar on May 28 in 2007. He was later awarded 17 years' rigorous imprisonment for possessing illegal arms and ammunition. He was also sued for hiding wealth information worth around Tk 7.6 crore in the wealth statement.

## CHT accord

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will do everything to implement the CHT treaty signed on December 2, 1997," she told a press briefing at the Jatiya Sangsad Media Centre after the second meeting of the committee at her office in Parliament.

Replying to a query, Sajeda said the government has already pulled out the unnecessary and temporary army camps from the CHT areas and would withdraw other temporary camps in phases, but could not say anything about a specific deadline in this regard. "But the permanent six army camps will be there."

The deputy leader of the House mentioned that a peaceful situation is prevailing in the CHT area now even after the withdrawal of the temporary army camps.

She said the resources and the natural beauty of the CHT region are a great asset for the country, and the utilisation is very much active to utilise these resources for the welfare of the country.

Santu Larma, answering to a question, said they have discussed ways for strengthening the Land Commission in the CHT and would provide all-out cooperation to the government in this connection.

After the briefing, Larma told reporters that he had proposed the government for reviewing the CHT peace treaty.

Committee member Jyotindra Lal Tripura, CHT Regional Parishad Chairman Jyotindra Bodhipriya Larma (Santu Larma), State Minister for CHT Affairs Ministry Dipankar Talukder, CHT Land Commission Chairman Justice Khadur Islam and Bir Bahadur MP were, among others, present at the meeting.

## ODI series

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Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur with state-run Bangladesh Television (BTV) beaming live coverage.

The recent record speaks in favour of the home side and the Tigers won the last series 4-1 in August after their historic triumphs in West Indies and it would be another opportunity for Shakib Al Hasan's men to improve their winning tally against their southern African opponents.

Like the previous series, Bangladesh will miss the services of the country's leading pacesman Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who has yet to recover from his knee injury, while another experienced pacer Syed Rasel was also unavailable for the game due to injury.

Dollar Mahmud will share the new ball with quickie Rubel Hossain and the good news is that the one-day specialist bowler Abdur Razzak will be back after he missed the last series due to injury.

## Traders clash

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the area for over an hour and kept the market closed for the day. At least five traders and security guards were injured in the fight.

Witnesses said around 300 men hired by Al Hasan development Ltd gathered in Islamia Market Bonik Bahumukhi Samabai Samiti market area around 5:30am and pulled off its signboard.

According to witnesses, when the market's security guards tried to resist them, the cadres beat them and snatched the keys of the market office.

## 200m more people

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She said while prices had tumbled on global commodities markets due to the financial crisis, the prices of most food staples in the developing world have soared.

"The food crisis is not over. We have an anomaly happening where on globally, big markets, the prices are down, but for 80 percent of commodities in the developing world, prices are higher today than they were a year ago, and the prices a year ago were double what they were the year before that," she said.

"What it means is for about 80 percent of the developing world, people can afford one third as much food today as they could two or three years ago," she said.

Sheeran signed Monday a 140 million Australian dollar (\$130 million) four-year aid agreement with the Australian government. The agreement includes AU\$40 million to provide school meals in Southeast Asia, Africa and possibly South America and will add to the WFP's overall

budget for global food aid. Sheeran, who flew to Canberra from Manila on Sunday, said the Philippines could lose up to 1.1 million tons (one million metric tons) of rice because of the recent typhoons.

Africa and India were also losing crops due to drought and floods. She said the two back-to-back typhoons in late September and early October that killed nearly 1,000 people in the Philippines, coupled with the Indonesia earthquake that killed more than 1,000 on western Sumatra and the recent tsunami that killed 183, mostly in Samoa, were examples of natural disasters becoming more frequent and ferocious in recent decades.

"All we know is that the world is facing increasingly frequent and ferocious natural disasters and the most vulnerable people and nations are getting hit hard and we better prepare now," she said.

## Qatar pledges

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delegation comprising all groups of business community to Bangladesh in the first quarter of next year to observe the situation of Bangladesh.

Sheikh Hasina welcomed the move and also invited the Qatari prime minister to visit Bangladesh.

Accepting the invitation, the Qatari prime minister said he would visit Bangladesh at a time convenient to him.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, after attending the three-day European Development Days 2009 in Stockholm, Sweden, arrived in Doha on Sunday evening on a two-day official visit.

Soon after her arrival in Doha, Sheikh Hasina was driven to the Qatari prime minister's residence in a colourful motorcade. The host prime minister welcomed Sheikh Hasina.

The Qatari prime minister also arranged a royal dinner in honour of Sheikh Hasina.

During the meeting, the two prime ministers discussed various issues of bilateral development.

Sheikh Hasina also urged the government of Qatar to help Bangladesh in setting up multipurpose cyclone shelter centres in the coastal areas of Bangladesh.

Regarding investment, Hasina said people of Bangladesh have successfully restored democracy through the last December 29 parliamentary polls and added that

now a congenial atmosphere is prevailing in the country.

Hamad bin Jassem highly praised Bangladeshi people's performances in Qatar in various jobs, as "they are very disciplined and hard working."

In reply, the prime minister requested her Qatari counterpart to recruit more Bangladeshi workers for his country and take maximum possible care of the Bangladeshi people now living in Qatar.

Development assistances in constructing the Padma Bridge and gas exploration in Bangladesh were also discussed in the meeting.

The host prime minister said Qatar attaches high importance to its bilateral relation with Bangladesh.

He lauded Hasina's leadership in the fight against the threats of global climate change and hoped that her government will be able to ensure economic emancipation of the people of Bangladesh.

Hamad bin Jassem said Qatar will give all necessary assistance to Bangladesh for attaining its development targets including gas exploration and setting up a quality health system.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, State Minister for Environment and Forests Hasan Mahmud, Ambassador Ziauddin, Foreign Secretary Mijarul Quayes and Bangladesh Ambassador to Qatar Shahadat Hossain were present.

## 14 Americans killed

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which Nato's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) said killed four American soldiers.

Taliban spokesman Qari Yusuf Ahmadi told AFP the helicopters had "shot down" the helicopter in Badghis, adding that 24 foreign soldiers were killed.

US forces also reported the death of two other American troops a day earlier, one in a bomb attack in the east, and another who died of wounds sustained in an insurgent attack in the same region. The deaths bring to at least 46 the number of US troops who have been killed in October.

Earlier this month, insurgents killed eight American troops in an attack on a pair of isolated US outposts in the eastern village of Kamdesh near the Pakistan border. That was the heaviest US loss of life in a single battle since July 2008, when nine American soldiers were killed in a raid on an outpost in Wanat in the same province.

"These separate tragedies today underscore the risks our forces and our partners face every day," Col. Wayne Shanks, a spokesman for the Nato-led coalition, said Monday. "Each and every death is a tremendous loss for the family and friends of each service member and civilian. Our grief is compounded when we have such a significant loss on one day."

This has been the deadliest year for international and US forces since the 2001 invasion to oust the Taliban. Fighting spiked around the presidential vote in August, and 51 US soldiers died that month the deadliest for American forces in the eight-year war.

The deaths come as US officials debate whether to send tens of thousands more troops to the country and the Afghan government scrambles to organise a Nov. 7 runoff election between President Hamid Karzai and his top challenger from an August vote that was nullified by massive ballot-rigging. President Barack Obama's administration is hoping the runoff will produce a legitimate government.

Another flawed election would cast doubt on the wisdom of

sending more troops to support a weak government tainted by fraud.

US military spokeswoman Elizabeth Mathias said coalition forces had launched an operation to recover the wreckage of the helicopter that was downed in the west.

She said the aircraft was leaving the site of a joint operation with Afghan forces when it went down.

The joint force had "searched a suspected compound believed to harbour insurgents conducting activities related to narcotics trafficking in western Afghanistan," Nato said in a statement. "During the operation, insurgent forces engaged the joint force and more than a dozen enemy fighters were killed in the ensuing firefight."

Afghanistan is the world's largest producer of opium the raw ingredient in heroin and the illicit drug trade is a major source of funding for Taliban and other insurgent groups.

On Sunday, Karzai and his rival, former Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah, both ruled out a power-sharing deal before the runoff, saying the second round of balloting must be held as planned to bolster democracy in this war-ravaged country.

Meanwhile, security forces in Kabul fired automatic rifles into the air for a second day Monday to contain hundreds of stone-throwing university students angered over the alleged desecration of a Muslim holy book, the Quran, by US troops during an operation two weeks ago in Wardak province. Firetrucks were also brought in to push back protesters with water cannons. Police said several officers were injured in the mayhem.

US and Afghan authorities have denied any such desecration and insist that the Taliban are spreading the rumour to stir up public anger. The rumour has sparked similar protests in Wardak and Khost provinces.

On Sunday, the Obama in effect chanted slogans such as "down with Americans, down with Israel" as they marched from Kabul University to the parliament building, where riot police turned them back.