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## 6 YEARS AFTER AUG 21 ATTACK

# Cops identify some masterminds

### Babar to be on charge sheet; grenade source almost clear

**JULFIKAR ALI MANIK**

Investigators of the August 21 grenade attack believe they will find all masterminds of the incident making a departure from the tradition of other grievous crime probes where enquiries are finished with main culprits remaining unknown.

"We have identified some of the masterminds of this attack and we are still hopeful that we would be able to find the rest," Abdul Kahar Akand, investigation officer of the attack told The Daily Star yesterday.

Today is the sixth anniversary of the carnage in which 24 were killed and over 200 others maimed. On this day in 2004, grenades were hurled at an Awami League rally on Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, then opposition leader, was injured and President Zillur Rahman's wife Ivy Rahman was killed.

Kahar, special superintendent of Criminal Investigation Department, said BNP's former state minister for home affairs Lutfozzaman Babar, arrested in connection with the August 21 grenade attack, would be accused in the charge sheet of the case.

For the sake of investigation Kahar refused give details of his findings but he did say that they have been able to track down the source of the Arges brand grenades used in the attack.

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This grenade was left abandoned on Bangabandhu Avenue on the August 21, but the ones that had exploded left blood on the street.

## Tale of a scapegoat

**SHARIFUL ISLAM**

Joj Mia spent four years behind bars for an offence he did not commit. He had been falsely implicated in the August 21 grenade attack case.

Now a free man Joj Mia also known as Jalal Ahmed faces another ordeal -- social stigma.

He could neither marry off his 19-year-old sister nor find a bride for himself

because of the bad reputation he earned in the four years.

He tried several times in vain to get married. Guardians of brides refuse to accept him after knowing about his past, said the 29-year-old man, who now lives with his elderly mother, brother Babul and sister Khorsheda Akhter at Maispur in Gazipur.

He is yet to find a job. His younger

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## Moments of shock

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

A series of deadly grenade explosions shook downtown Dhaka just as Awami League President Sheikh Hasina was wrapping her party rally at 5:22pm on this day in 2004, in front of the party's central office on Bangabandhu Avenue.

The first grenade exploded when she was urging the 25,000 ralliers to start marching protesting a recent grenade attack in Sylhet, with a call to oust the then BNP-Jamaat four-party coalition government that "encourages bomb attacks", recalled AL leader Sultan Mohammad Mansur Ahmed, who was among the wounded on that

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## BNP quickly held AL responsible

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Within days after the deadly grenade attack on August 21 that killed 24 AL leaders and workers and injured scores more, BNP straightaway blamed Awami League (AL) leaders for the "heinous crime" and demanded their punishment.

The then prime minister Khaleda Zia's statement came 11 days after the attack, holding unnamed AL leaders responsible for it. She claimed that the attack was "aimed at diverting people's attention from her government's

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# Toxic chemicals found in fertiliser

### Zinc sulphate contaminated with cadmium, lead, chromium; organic fertilisers also tainted

**PORIMOL PALMA**

Scientists have found high concentration of toxic chemicals like cadmium, lead and chromium in fertilisers which may affect agriculture ecosystem and thereby human health through food chain.

The Soil Resources Development Institute (SRDI) has identified highest 40,258 ppm (parts per million) cadmium and 31,292 ppm lead in zinc sulphate. This amount is alarmingly higher as allowable level of cadmium and lead is only 10 ppm and 100 ppm respectively.

Zinc sulphate is made of zinc and sulphuric acid. The SRDI scientists suspect manufacturers use expired battery cells or waste of tin or steel factories as zinc for low cost. Zinc, cadmium and lead are basic ingredients of some kinds of batteries and tin.

Chromium is also found to be higher than its allowable level of 50 ppm in some organic fertilisers, said SRDI in its report without specifying the amount.

Annually, around 50,000 tonnes of zinc sulphate are used in Bangladesh. Of this, an estimated 20,000 tonnes is manufactured locally, while the rest is imported mainly from China and Iran, according to officials and traders.

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## ANTHRAX CONTAMINATED BEEF 38 fall sick in Sirajganj village

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj**

At least 38 people have fallen sick allegedly from anthrax-contaminated beef at Shahzadpur upazila in Sirajganj District, said the district civil surgeon's office.

The locals however said the number of infected is over 50.

They said a couple of weeks ago, two cows had been slaughtered at Chithulia village of the upazila and the meat was sold at a lower price among the villagers. Within two days, people who ate the meat and processed the hides started to have blisters and the blisters soon turned into lesions. The wounds are now festering.

The infected informed the civil surgeon's office of the matter after trying traditional medicine for a few days. The civil surgeon's office immediately formed a four-member probe committee led by Md Shariful Islam.

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## BNP criticises cancellation of Koko's parole

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

BNP's Senior Joint Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir has slammed the government decision of cancelling the parole of Arafat Rahman Koko terming it an act of "political vengeance".

He was addressing a discussion meeting "Democracy and Humanity: Bangladesh perspective" organised by Shikhhok-Karmachari Oikya Jote at the National Press Club yesterday.

"Arafat is ill. He cannot move. He also suffers from breathing problem. The government cancels his parole by

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## Ibrahim 'murdered'

**Doctors suspect in post-mortem report**

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Dhaka Medical College morgue in its autopsy report suspected that Awami League activist Ibrahim Ahmed was a victim of homicide.

Morgue sources said the autopsy report was given to police and the report mentioned "homicidal" as the reason for death.

Ibrahim was left at Dhaka Medical College Hospital by

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## Pre-paid meters from next May

**For checking wastage, pilferage of gas, Titas will also install remote meters for 1,000 industries**

**SHARIER KHAN**

Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution company is set to introduce the first batch of pre-paid gas meters at homes in Dhanmondi from May next in a bid to check gas wastage and ensure fair payment by the consumers.

The company is also set to introduce 1,000 remote meters at top industries in Tongi-Gazipur area by 2012 to stop gas pilferage through meter tampering. These 1,000 industries combined consume a significant amount of gas.

A top Titas source said the company is going to install the country's first batch of pre-paid gas meters at 5,000 homes in Dhanmondi by next May, and by 2012 it would install 1.25 lakh prepaid gas meters in the entire Dhanmondi area.

The energy ministry in January had asked Titas to introduce pre-paid meters to ensure better use of gas.

Introducing these meters will ensure financial discipline for Titas, and discourage gas wastage as the billing would depend on the usage of gas, instead of the present fixed rate of Tk 450 a month for a double burner stove.

"Typically, a family of five that does not waste gas uses gas worth Tk 300 a month," said the Titas official who had installed a meter at his home to see the actual usage.

He adds, introducing the pre-paid meters might reduce the earning of Titas from domestic customers. But introducing the remote meters at top industries was likely to increase Titas' earnings.

Unlike traditional meters that are installed and monitored at the customer's premises, the remote meter will be installed at the customer's premises but monitored from the Titas office through computer network. This means, the customers who

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## 48 Bangladeshis deported from Spain

**BSS, Dhaka**

Forty-eight Bangladeshis who were recently detained in Spain for illegal stay there returned home yesterday under a deportation process, immigration officials said.

"A total of 48 Bangladeshis who were recently detained in Spain for illegal stay returned home today [yesterday]," ASP Zaman of Immigration Department of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport told BSS.

A foreign ministry statement earlier said Spanish police recently detained 51 foreign nationals initially thinking all of them to be Bangladeshis.

The foreign office in Dhaka later confirmed 49 of them to be citizens of Bangladesh after verification of their documents received from Madrid.

"This was conveyed to the Spanish government and accordingly, the 49 undocumented Bangladeshi citizens are being repatriated to Bangladesh on August 20," the statement said.

It, however, said such deportation of Bangladeshi citizens was not an isolated

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Tony Blair and Cherie Blair arrive in Dhaka yesterday. The couple were cordially received at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

## Tony Blair, Cherie in city

**UNB, Dhaka**

Former British prime minister Tony Blair and his wife Cherie Blair arrived here yesterday on a three-day private visit to Bangladesh.

Foreign Secretary Mijarul Quayes received the Blair couple at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the afternoon.

British High Commissioner in Dhaka Stephen Evans was present.

Quayes said although Tony Blair is on a private trip, he will discuss bilateral and international issues with the government leaders during his stay in Dhaka.

Blair will meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today. He will also meet Finance Minister AMA Muhiht and Foreign Minister Dipu Moni.

Blair came to Dhaka as British prime minister in 2002. He was appointed as Middle East envoy working on behalf of the US, Russia, the UN and the EU after he stood down as UK prime minister in June 2007.

Cherie Blair earlier came to Bangladesh on a four-day visit in January this year.

She has been an ardent campaigner for the Asian University for Women globally.

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## Manpower shortage cripples NHRC

**EMRAN HOSSAIN**

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) is crippling due to manpower shortage, thanks to government decision to keep it poorly staffed.

Since its reconstitution in June this year, the commission has yet to make a single field visit to inspect the current human rights situation, let alone initiating an investigation or providing legal assistance to the victims of human rights violation.

With a workforce of only six government-appointed staff members including the chairman, the commission only made statements to media and recommended necessary actions for the authorities concerned after evaluating the allegations filed with it.

"We are carrying out peripheral activities only," Prof Mizanur Rahman Khan, the NHRC chairman, told The Daily Star when asked about its current status.

Looking ahead, commission's hope for the future is slim in terms of its proper functioning as the government has recently approved appointment of 28 staff members against the commission's demand for at least 65.

"We are extremely unhappy with the current situation in which we cannot work effectively. We want to give a strong message to the government that we won't continue citing manpower shortage as an obstacle to our work like others," said the NHRC chairman.

The approved 28-member workforce includes 11 administrative staff and five complaints and investigation officers, but not a single one for research or training wing.

The immediate past caretaker government set up the country's first ever human rights

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## Truck kills doctor, bus kills school boy

**STAR REPORT**

A speeding truck ran over a doctor after his motorbike hit a human hauler from behind and skidded on to the middle of the road in the city's Konapara Bus Stand under Jatrahari Police Station yesterday night.

In another incident, a bus ran over a schoolboy from behind on Lalmonirhat-Burimari highway at Kaliganj upazila yesterday. The boy died on the spot.

Angry locals ransacked both the truck and human hauler along with several other vehicles protesting the killing of doctor Mosharrarf

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