The Haily Star

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Hannan's active role in the August 21 attack. He was being quizzed at the Task Force Intelligence (TFI) cell

after his arrest in August 2006. Mufti Hannan had been detained since October 1,

2005. Up until then, he had admitted his involvement in some other grenade and bomb attacks but had given away no information about the August 21 blasts that killed 24 leaders and workers, including now President Zillur Rahman's wife Ivy Rahman, and maimed 300 others.

Hasina, then leader of the opposition -- the target of the bloody assault -- narrowly escaped death but sustained ear injuries caused by the force of the blasts.

Bipul's information prompted investigators to quiz Hannan again at TFI cell

The cell -- formed by the home ministry after the countrywide synchronised blasts by another banned militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) on August 17, 2005 -- was comprised of officials from Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), National Security Intelligence (NSI), Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Special Branch (SB) and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab).

During grilling at the cell, Hannan spilled the beans. The information was obviously chilling for the investigators, as it was none other than their top boss's name (the then state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar) that had come up. Hannan pointed the finger at Babar. Now if Babar, whose job was to get to the bottom of the stories, was himself involved in the case, matters were indeed grim.

Abdul Aziz Sarkar was director general of the elite force Rab when the August 21 grenade attack took place. He continued in that post till October 30, 2006.

Aziz along with his colleague Col Gulzar Uddin Ahmed (later killed in the BDR mutiny in 2009) went to the TFI cell and interrogated Mufti Hannan in the presence of CID investigators Munshi Atiqur Rahman and Ruhul

Hannan confessed to his direct involvement in the plotting and staging of the attack on Hasina's rally.

Aziz in his statement to Abdul Kahar Akand, the last investigation officer of the CID for the August 21 grenade attack case, said, "I informed the additional IGP (Inspector General of Police) of the CID, the IGP and the state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar about these things and requested them to direct the investigation officer to take legal steps in this regard."

"But a positive response didn't come from the additional IGP of CID, the IGP and state minister for home in this regard," said Aziz in his state-

ment given in March last year. Hannan was, however, interrogated extensively later when he revealed that elements of Huji had been trying to kill Sheikh Hasina and other AL leaders since much earlier,

Aziz said in his statement. He added that Huji believed if Hasina remained alive and the AL came back to power it would not be possible to save Islam and hurdles would be placed in Huji's way.

Hannan devised plans to kill Hasina along with other leaders. He did all this with the support from others, among whom was Moulana

Tajuddin.

Tajuddin, brother of the then BNP deputy minister Abdus Salam Pintu, was involved with a Pakistani militant organisation and used to supply grenades, ammunition and explosives

from Pakistan to a militant group in Indian-administered Kashmir through Bangladesh. Hannan also told interro-

gators that through Tajuddin they got an assurance of allout help from the administration to execute the grenade attack plan.

Following this assurance, Hannan and others had a meeting with Pintu and state minister for home Babar at the former's Dhanmondi residence. At the meeting, plans for the attack were widely discussed, Aziz quoted Hannan as suggesting in his statement.

Babar told me and Col Gulzar in his office, 'CID was told, (now) telling youdon't take any more steps regarding the August 21 attack,'" said Aziz in his statement and continued, "I had no scope to take steps any more as my contractual appointment was over within four to five days of this (directive from Babar) and I went into retirement," said Aziz.

A test for investigators

On October 29, 2006, the BNP-Jamaat-led four-party alliance handed over power to then president Iajuddin Ahmed, who had foisted himself on the country as caretaker government chief. Aziz's contractual job as Rab DG was cancelled on October 30,2006.

Aziz also said in his statement that Babar was not happy after the arrest of Mufti Hannan.

It may be noted that following tremendous pressure from home and abroad, the BNP-Jamaat government had to launch a crackdown on Islamist militants against the backdrop of the countrywide blasts on August 17, 2005. Rab captured Mufti Hannan on staged, tried to inform the by Hannan in his statement to October 1, 2005.

"Just after the arrest of Mufti Hannan, I personally informed the then state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar and the IGP about the arrest of Mufti Hannan," said Aziz, adding, "State minster for home Lutfozzaman Babar became irritated instead of being satisfied."

Major Atiqur Rahman served as deputy director (interrogation) of the Intelligence Wing at Rab headquarters from October 2004 to June 2009. He led the Rab team that arrested Mufti Hannan on October 1, 2005.

Atiqur said at one point Bipul and Hannan were interrogated together about the August 21 grenade attack. Colonel Gulzar, who was director of the Rab Intelligence wing, and CID officials Munshi Atique and Ruhul Amin were present during the interrogation of Hannan.

Major Atiqur went abroad for training halfway through the interrogation.

"On my return, Colonel Gulzar told me that Mufti Hannan had disclosed the significant information that the perpetrators had a meeting with state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar and Tareque Zia at Hawa Bhaban in the planning stage of the August 21, 2004 attack. Babar and Tareque Zia had promised to provide security and administrative help to those who would carry out the blasts at the time of the attack," said Maj Atiqur in his statement.

Atiqur also said that the then Rab DG, Abdul Aziz Sarkar, was informed about this confession of Mufti Hannan. The DG himself interrogated Hannan and was confirmed about the confes-

He said Aziz, Col Gulzar and the CID's Munshi Atiq and Ruhul Amin went to state minister Babar's office and informed him about the information given by Hannan.

"After returning from the home ministry my director, late Col Gulzar, remarked that it did not seem that the state minister for home was satisfied at knowing of the confession of Mufti Hannan," Atiqur said in his statement.

However, according to Hannan's information, Maj Atiqur kept on trying to cap-

ture Moulana Tajuddin. At one stage, Col Gulzar asked Atiqur to stop searching for Tajuddin since Babar had told them that Tajuddin himself would appear. But it did not happen, said Maj Atiqur.

Later Atiqur came to know that Tajuddin had been sent abroad as per directive of Brig Gen Amin and under the supervision of Lt Col Saiful, who was a DGFI official at that

Saiful are not in service now. Lt Col Saiful Islam Joarder escaped from his workplace after the bomb attack on AL lawmaker and Hasina's nephew Fazle Noor Taposh in 2009. Five army officers were convicted in a military trial for this attack.

"At one point Col Gulzar also told me, state minister for home and Tareque Zia told him (Gulzar) and DG Abdul Aziz Sarkar that Joj Mia and his two other aides had already given confessional statements in the court regarding the August 21 grenade attack. So they were directed to produce Mufti Hannan before the court through CID to record his testimony under Section 164 (of CrPC) in cases linked with other bomb blasts and grenade attacks except the August 21 grenade attack," said Major Atiqur in his state-

According to this directive, the CID's investigation officer produced Hannan in court in November 2006 in connection with the case of the Ramna Batamul blast in 2001; and Hannan made a confessional statement regarding his involvement with the other bomb and grenade attacks except the August 21 attack, said Atiqur.

The BNP was not in power at the time, but the party nominated president Iajuddin was, as he had made himself chief of the caretaker government.

Major Gen (retd) Sadik Hasan Rumi, who was director general of DGFI when the August 21 grenade attack was then prime minister Khaleda Zia soon after knowing about the grenade attack on Hasina's rally.

Khaleda was at a public rally in Noakhali and so Gen Rumi could not reach her and her ADC in the afternoon of August 21, 2004. He then informed the

prime minister's political secretary Harris Chowdhury over his mobile phone and requested him to inform Khaleda about the attack as he was with the PM at that time. "Without expressing any

reaction regarding the attack, Harris Chowdhury told me that he would inform the prime minister," Gen Rumi said in his statement, adding that Harris hung up the phone before he could give him more details about the attack.

"Later, I informed the then state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar over mobile phone and he replied he was in the office and had heard about the incident and he cut the phone line," said the former DGFIDG.

"It did not seem to me that he (Babar) had given enough importance to this matter (attack)," said Gen Rumi in his statement.

Next day, August 22, 2004, at around 2:00pm, the DGFI DG met prime minister Khaleda Zia at her office and sought her permission to conduct an investigation to find out the persons involved with this tragic incident.

"She (PM Khaleda) told me that a committee would be formed to inquire into the matter, and that I (DGFI) needn't investigate," said Gen

Later, when there was a meeting at the home ministry about this incident, the then director (CIB) of DGFI, Brig Gen Rezzakul Haider Chowdhury, represented the DGFI.

The former DGFI DG said he could gather from Rezzakul that the government-appointed investigation committee could unearth nothing.

Gen Rumi said that a DGFI representative used to be present at the TFI cell during the interrogation of an

accused. When in August 2006, Mufti Hannan was interrogated at the TFI cell following Bipul's information, the DGFI representative came to know about Hannan's statement regarding the August 21 grenade attack where he had disclosed the names of Babar, Tareque, Pintu and others to the investigators, saying they were involved with the inci-

The DGFI representative at the TFI cell informed Brig Gen Amin and Lt Col Saiful Islam Joarder of DGFI about the statement made by Hannan on the August 21 attack.

Once he came to know of Maj Gen ATM Amin and this development, Gen Rumi met Prime Minister Khaleda

> Since Mufti Hannan had mentioned the names of two ministers in his statement on the August 21 attack, the DG, DGFI made it known, as a talking point, to the prime minister in writing as well as verbally, according to Gen

> "She (prime minister) kept the talking point with her without saying anything. She did not give me any other directive in this regard later,"

said Gen Rumi.

Meantime, the Rab DG made a phone call to Gen Rumi, seeking the help of DGFI to capture Moulana Tajuddin.

Gen Rumi told Lt Col Saiful Islam Joarder to help get Tajuddin as Rab was looking for him. At that time Lt Col Saiful

told DG, DGFI that there would be a problem if they handed over Tajuddin to Rab. "When I asked about the problem he (Lt Col Saiful) said

the government was likely to

be put in an embarrassing situation." A few days after this conversation, Gen Rumi came to know from his colleague Big Gen Amin that Tajuddin had been located through Moulana Salam (founder of

Huji) and he was at the DGFI's

safe house in Gulshan. Rumi directed Amin and Saiful to obtain every bit of information from Tajuddin. Sometime in October 2006, both officers informed DG, DGFI that Tajuddin had admitted everything revealed the interrogators.

After that, Brig Gen Amin and Lt Col Saiful informed Babar and the PM's private secretary-2 (also her nephew) Saiful Islam Duke about Moulana Tajuddin's state-Later the two DGFI officers

informed their DG that Babar and Duke had told them that the prime minister had directed sending Moulana Tajuddin abroad. Tajuddin expressed his wish to go to Pakistan. To check the authenticity

of the statement by Brig Gen Amin and Lt Col Saiful, DG DGFI went to the prime minister's office and apprised her of the statements of Moulana Tajuddin, Brig Gen Amin and Lt Col Saiful. "Listening to me, the prime

minister became angry and said with annoyance in her voice that CID already unearthed this case. She wanted to know from where I (Rumi) was coming forward with this fictitious new information," said the DG, DGFI in his statement.

"'Why are you thinking about where Tajuddin will go -- either to Pakistan or elsewhere?' She did not talk with me after saying this," said Rumi.

At that point of the conversation the DG, DGFI left the prime minister's office and three or four days after this meeting Moulana Tajuddin left Bangladesh for Pakistan. Some DGFI officials ensured safe passage for him.

The BNP-Jamaat government could not complete the investigation into the August 21 grenade attack case and Joj Mia's cooked up story did not help investigators in the end.

When Fakhruddin Ahmed's caretaker government assumed power and president Iajuddin had to step down from the post of chief adviser of the caretaker government, the CID first placed a charge sheet for the August 21 grenade attack case accusing the BNP's deputy minister Pintu and 21 other Huji men, including Hannan, of involve-

ment in the attack. Many significant links were missing in that charge sheet. When the Awami League took office in 2009, further investigations started under Abdul Kahar Akand, investigation officer of the CID. Akand placed a supplementary charge sheet last year accusing 30 more people, including Tareque, Babar, Rezzakul, Amin, Saiful and Duke of having been behind the grenade attacks of August

The trial of the accused began this year.

Eid knocking

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In addition to this, two more separate Eid congregations will be held at Dhaka University sports ground and the south plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad.

A total of 361 Eid congregations will be held in 90 wards in the capital this year under the arrangement of Dhaka North and South City Corporations.

Law enforcing agencies including the Police and Rapid Action Battalion will remain on guard to ensure security at Eid congregations.

Carjacking

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Moghbazar in the capital and arrested Gias, Al Amin, Anwarul, Rubel, and Mahmudur with a car and all the arms and booty. "Following information

gleaned from them, we seized two more cars from the capital's Uttara," he said. "In another driver, we arrested Razzak, Ashraf, and

Farid with a microbus at the capital's Adabar.' Police said the recovered valuables were taken from

their owners at different parts

of the capital overtime.

They said the suspects had been arrested several times before. "But the criminals start the same activities as soon as they get out on bail," said a police source. On August 14, a team of DB

arrested eight carjackers in Dhaka and recovered six stolen motorbikes, a microbus and a car. On August 7, detectives recovered 12 stolen autorickshaws and arrested five suspected carjackers at Kadamtoli. According to detective

sources, over 30 gangs of carjackers, involving around 200 criminals, operate in Dhaka. They apply various tactics to take away cars and motorbikes.

Bangladeshi **FROM PAGE 20**

relatives at Batsha village in Maldah district of West Bengal on Wednesday, said Major Sharif Mohammad Hasan deputy commanding officer of 43 BGB battalion in Naogaon.

Some miscreants beat Asadur to death during his stay at his relatives' house on Thursday, he said quoting the family members. On receiving information from relatives at Maldah that

Asadur was beaten to death by

miscreants, his family members informed the matter to Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) officialsatRokonpurcamp. Later, BGB officials contacted BSF members and had been informed that Indian police recovered Asadur's

for an autopsy. The body has been kept at the hospital after completion of the autopsy.

body from the spot and sent it

to Maldah Hospital morgue

BGB sent a letter to the BSF vesterday protesting the killing and asking them to return the body.

Ershad

FROM PAGE 1

nearly 30-minute meeting with the Indian president at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi. The issue of Tipaimukh

dam and implementation of land boundary agreement between India and Bangladesh also figured in Ershad's talks. The JP leader said Indian

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, whom he had met on Tuesday last, is "very keen' that the Teesta accord is signed and the land boundary agreement becomes a reality. Ershad said he briefed

Mukherjee about the political situation in Bangladesh and the future of parliamentary elections in his country due next year.

Mukherjee, according to Ershad, said India wanted the coming elections in Bangladesh to be free and fair, and the country's demo cratic institutions to be strengthened further.

Ershad said the same view was echoed earlier by the Indian premier when the two had met earlier.

Ershad felicitated Mukherjee on his election as Indian president and told him that the people of Bangladesh wanted to see him occupy the country's top post.

The JP chief told Mukherjee that when he was elected president, there were celebrations in Bangladesh's Narail distric to which the Indian president's in-laws belonged. While Ershad had sought a

meeting with Congress party chief and UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi, it did not materialise, sources said. "I am not meeting Sonia Gandhi," he said in reply to a

Mathai.

question from the reporters. Soon after his arrival in New Delhi on Monday last, Ershad had also met India's suffered long traffic jams on National Security Adviser highways. Shivshankar Menon and

Foreign Secretary Ranjan India's National Defence College, where Ershad was the first Bangladeshi student in early 1970s, hosted a dinner for him yesterday. on the highway eased around Ershad had also visited 3:30pm.

Ajmer on Wednesday and Traffic on the Dhaka-Thursday, and is set to Mymensingh route remained return home this morning.

Admission seekers

FROM PAGE 1

activities on July 7, teachers led by Buet Teachers' Association staged demonstrations on the campus demanding removal of its Vice-chancellor (VC) Prof SM Nazrul Islam and Pro VC Prof M Habibur Rahman over 16 allegations against

engineering university plunged into crisis when its authorities on July 11 shut the institution for 44 days, virtually to ward off the protest. After hearing a petition filed by a lawyer, the High

Court (HC) on Tuesday

directed the Buet authorities

to immediately start its

The country's premier

admission process for the 2012-13 sessions. Contacted, Buet VC Prof Nazrul said, "We will try to start the admission process in October. If it is not possible, we will do it in

Admission to medical and dental colleges suffered a setback after the government recently announced that there will be no admission tests from this year. It said the students will be picked based on the overall GPA achieved by them in the SSC and HSC examinations.

The decision sparked protests by a section of the admission-seekers. They staged demonstrations last week and declared a protest programme for August 27 if the previous admission system is not restored. The issue was taken to the

HC, which on Tuesday questioned the legality of the government's decision to enrol students without holding any admission tests. The court also asked the government to explain

decision should not be 5. declared illegal. Following the court ruling, the government said it will enrol the students in the medical and dental colleges in line with the court's deci-

Twenty-two government medical colleges can admit around 2,811 students while 53 private medical colleges have 4,245 seats.

Last year, around 40,000 students applied for admission in medical colleges, while around 8,000 students took the entrance exams in Buet against around 900 seats.

The authorities of Dhaka, Jahangirnagar, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, and Jagannath universities have already announced the dates for distribution of forms and holding admission tests. More than 7.21 lakh stu-

dents passed this year's Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) exams, with 61,162 obtaining GPAwithin four weeks why its The admission-seekers

will face tough competition from many candidates to get admitted to their desired institutions as the seats in the public universities are limited.

tance, UN agencies say.

Sewage-contaminated

water has led to a diarrhoea

outbreak in the countryside

around Damascus, with 103

are uprooted within Syria,

many staying in schools or

other public buildings, UN

officials say. UN humanitar-

ian chief Valerie Amos, end-

Some 1.2 million people

suspected cases.

Violence flares

sion.

FROM PAGE 20

November."

militarisation of the conflict had hindered his peace plan. More than 23,000 people

have died since the revolt against Assad's iron-fisted rule broke out in March 2011, according to activists, while the UN puts the toll at around 17,000. In Syria, the army clashed

with rebels near the main military airport in Damascus and shelled southern parts of the capital as well as districts in the northern hub of Aleppo, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. The fresh violence was

reported after a day which saw 180 people killed across the country, the majority of them civilians, according to the Observatory, which has a network of activists on the ground. It also reported that the

bodies of 65 unidentified

people were found in

Qatana, a town southwest of Damascus, without providing any further details.

Meanwhile, UN agencies

vesterday said as the conflict between President Bashar al-Assad's forces and rebels intensifies, refugees are fleeing Syria in ever greater numbers. Rights groups accused the

Syrian regime of another atrocity Wednesday when around 40 people, including women and children, were killed in a massive air strike on civilians in the rebel bastion of Aazaz north of Aleppo. More than 170,000 Syrian

refugees have been registered in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq, the UN refugee agency said. "There has been a further sharp rise in the number of

Syrians fleeing to Turkey," spokesman Adrian Edwards of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said in Geneva. Forty percent of those in Turkey had arrived this month, he added. Humanitarian conditions

in Syria have deteriorated as

fighting worsens, cutting off

civilians from food supplies,

health care and other assis-

Islamic Cooperation on Thursday suspended Syria after a similar move by the Arab League last year, saying it can no longer accept a regime that "massacres its people.

including Saudi Arabia.

Tailbacks on highways

Bus passengers also suffered long tailbacks on highways while launches left overcrowded with many passengers taking the top deck defying government prohibition. Against such backdrop,

allegation of overcharging has

also been brought against Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTC). Although, rail communication between Rajshahi and the capital was restored around Thursday noon, 19 hours after the derailment, all

trains for the northern route

got stuck at the station caus-

ing immense suffering to passengers. Railway officials claimed that a total of 28 trains departed from Kamalapur Railway Station of the capital until 6:00pm. Of those, six delayed for 30 minutes to four hours while nine started five minutes to half-an-hour late

while 14 left platform on time. Most of the trains from the west zone also reached the capital late affecting the departure time from Dhaka. Railway officials think this situation will prevail until the Eid day.

Communications and Railways Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday visited Kamalapur station. There he told journalists that the railway authorities had been trying their best to minimise the suffering of passengers.

Meanwhile, a man about

the age of 40 years died yester-

day falling from the overcrowded roof of a train near Although most of the buses left the city on time, thousands of home-bound people

A 40-kilometre tailback from Chandina upazila to Meghna bridge was created as a lorry broke down at Daudkandi in Comilla early Friday. Vehicular movement

this route said it took them twice the time to reach

The home rush also cre-

ated long tailback on Dhaka-Tangail highway. A Mawa-bound passenger alleged that the staffs at BRTC bus counter at the capital's Phulbaria charged him Tk 100

whereas the fare was written

Tk 67 on the ticket. Visiting the BRTC terminal in Phulbaria, it was seen that BRTC staffs were charging Tk 140 in place of the usual Tk 90 for travelling up to Paturia ferry terminal in Manikganj. One had to pay in full even if they got off midway, in Savar

or Manikganj city. A resident of Dashora area in Manikganj municipality alleged that the BRTC staffs had charged him Tk 200 although it was written Tk 140 on the ticket.

However, neither the BRTC chairman nor any spokesperson could be contacted over the phone for their comment on the matter. Meanwhile, all the

launches departed the

Sadarghat terminal overloaded with passengers almost three times more than their capacity. Asked about it, Rafigul Islam, senior deputy director of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA),

may be occurring but it has not reached the danger level." He expected that around 110 launches would depart from the capital by midnight.

said: "We are facing excessive

pressure today. Overloading

Thousands of launch passengers thronged the terminal since early morning to secure a space in the vessel. The cabin tickets were sold out at least two weeks ago, but people were seen struggling for their booked space.

The last-moment passengers were found travelling precariously on the decks and in front of the master bridges. Like previous days, many were seen boarding on

route were charging more fare

from passengers ahead of Eid. Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan yesterday visited the terminal and urged the launch owners to keep from overcharging passengers and overloading, and comply with the safety rules. He also asked passengers to be aware of their own safety.

police said. Mashiur Rahman, additional deputy commissioner of DB (north), said, "Acting on a tip-off, we arrested them from near Fatema CNG filling

pieces of Tk 500 bills and 12 of Tk 1,000 ", he told The Daily

The fake notes include 17

them with Jatrabari Police

ness for the last one year. Of them, Apel was arrested last year with fake notes worth Tk 60,000, but he resumed business soon after coming out of jail on bail," said the ADC, who led the drive yesterday.

materials and machinery from them. Mashiur said he could detect at least 12 such gangs

cials said they identified 11 other gangs. Rab and police sources said

cheat people.

ing a visit to Syria, said on Thursday up to 2.5 million people needed aid in the country, scene of a 17month-old revolt against The Organisation for

Assad, whose regime was also hit by a bomb attack that killed his top security chiefs last month, insists he is fighting a "terrorist" plot aided by the West and rival Sunni Muslim powers

slow all day. A bus owner of launches in mid-river by

Our Madaripur correspon-Mymensingh from the capi- dent reported that water and road transport operators at Mawa-Kewrakandi ferry

3 more

FROM PAGE 20 different spots of the city,

[vesterday].

station on Bir Uttam ATM Haider Sarak early today

A case was filed against

Station. "The detainees had been carrying out the illegal busi-

Asked, he said in separate drives in the last one month, he arrested 13 members of three such gangs when fake notes worth over Tk 1.5 crore were recovered with huge raw

active in the capital while Rapid Action Battalion offi-

as monitory transactions go high centring Eid, criminals involved in fake-note business also intensify their activities to

"One day Lutfozzaman