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THAT'S WHAT THEY SAID

"The confessional statement Joj Miah made during the BNP government was true. The supplementary charge sheets submitted recently are politically motivated."



BNP Joint Secretary General **Ruhul Kabir Rizvi** said this at a press briefing on August 21, 2011, protesting the supplementary charge sheet in the grenade attack case which revealed the involvement of Tarique Rahman and government machinery in the attack plot.



"This is a barbaric and unfortunate incident. Those who have done it ... are not human beings ... They are enemies of democracy, enemies of the country and enemies of the people."

Then BNP secretary general and LGRD minister **Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan** said this in a statement following the attack.

"The grenade attack was an attack on Bangladesh's sovereignty and independence, but the Awami League is unwilling to cooperate with the government in carrying out the investigation."



Then law minister **Moudud Ahmed** said this at a rally on August 30, 2004.



"They are experts in bombing. Why are they pointing the finger at the BNP?"

Then water resources minister Maj (retd) **Hafizuddin Ahmed** said this in parliament on September 15, 2004.

"What Sheikh Hasina had wanted on August 21 was more dead bodies like that of Ivy Rahman so that she can create a photo gallery of dead bodies. Like she had not executed the verdict of her father's killing during her tenure, she once again wanted to do business with the procession of these dead bodies."



Then state minister for youth and sports **Fazlur Rahman Patal** said this in parliament on September 15, 2004.



"The judicial inquiry commission is probing the August 21 grenade attack. Many more national and international probe agencies came to investigate. After all these, the government has nothing to do."

KM Obaidur Rahman, a member of the BNP standing committee, said this in parliament on September 15, 2004.

"They [AL] want to go to power by staging the bomb drama and by fooling the people. Their conspiracy has completely been foiled due to the competent leadership of the prime minister [Khaleda Zia]."



Then BNP lawmaker **Shahidul Islam** said this in parliament on September 15, 2004.

"The Awami League and Sheikh Hasina have benefited the most [from the grenade attack]. The wave of sympathy for Sheikh Hasina and the Awami League [following the attack] made her think that she had already gone to power."

Then BNP MP **Mashiur Rahman** said this in parliament on September 15, 2004.

"The BNP is being blamed for the grenade attack, as the [AL] government wants to protect the actual culprits."



BNP Acting Secretary General **Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir** said this at a discussion on August 21, 2011.



"The [AL] government is out to undermine the BNP by shifting the blame on to it for the August 21 grenade attack."

Nazrul Islam Khan, a standing committee member of the BNP, said this on August 25, 2012.

Compiled by Shakhawat Liton

It was the weirdest of all cooked-up tales

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Jobeda had gone to Kashimpur jail around two months after her son's arrest from their Senbagh home in Noakhali.

Her journey from Noakhali to Dhaka and tracing the whereabouts of her son were not an easy task for her. She was in monetary crisis. She had to sell two chickens to meet her travel expenses.

In Dhaka, she found shelter at a relative's residence in Mirpur. She then began a desperate search for Joj, finally tracing him in Kashimpur jail.

The jail officials at first did not allow her to meet Joj. They asked her to come up with a court order. She somehow managed a court order and met Joj.

During the conversation, Joj Mia tried to dampen his mother's anxiety about him.

"Ma, do not worry. You meet Ruhul Amin and Abdur Rashid at the CID office. They will give you money. With that you meet family needs," suggested Joj.

He also told his mother that three senior CID officers—Ruhul, Rashid and Munshi Atikur Rahman—had told him that he would be made a state witness in the grenade attack case.

"There will be no problem if I am made a state witness. I will be sent abroad if other accused [in the case] do any harm to me. They will bear the expenditure of our family," Joj said on the basis of the assurances given him by the CID officials.

He asked his mother to meet Rashid and Ruhul who were investigating and supervising the probe respectively.

Accompanied by her daughter, Jobeda Khatun rushed to the CID office at Malibagh the same day.

Jobeda entered Ruhul's office. She was asked to take her seat on a sofa. Rashid came to Ruhul's office.

"Why were you so late in coming here," Ruhul asked Jobeda.

"I knew nothing. Joj Mia asked me to meet you. So, I came," replied Jobeda.

Ruhul brought food through his office staff for Jobeda and her daughter. They took lunch. He also gave Jobeda Tk 2,000 and assured her that they would arrange her daughter's marriage.

After that, Jobeda began visiting either Ruhul or Rashid every month. Either of the men gave her Tk 2000 to Tk 2500 every month. They also asked Jobeda not to talk to anyone about the

money.

Then Divisional Inspector General of Police, Mohammad Shamsul Islam, who was in charge of the CID, however, objected to paying money to Joj Mia's mother.

"This is not lawful [paying money]," he told Ruhul when the latter spoke about providing financial assistance to Joj's mother.

In response, Ruhul said Joj Mia was a very poor man and his mother was in financial straits. "One needs to give some financial assistance to his mother."

He also said maximum secrecy would be maintained. "State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar has asked that this arrangement be made," he told Shamsul.

After Joj's arrest, Ruhul and Rashid maintained direct contact with Babar and kept him updated about the interrogation of Joj and progress in having recorded his statement confessing his involvement in carrying out the grenade attack.

Joj, who used to sell posters and cassettes in Gulistan cinema hall area and send some money to his mother every month, went to his village home early in August 2004 as he was ill.

Before beginning his work in Gulistan areas, Joj Mia along with his friend Feroz was arrested by police from a mess in Sutrapur with revolver and bombs. He was released on bail after two years in jail.

But this time around, Joj Mia initially knew nothing of the reason behind his arrest on the morning of June 10, 2005. He was first taken to Senbagh police station.

Flanked by some police personnel, Rashid arrived there in the noon. Rashid asked all to leave the room and began talking to Joj.

"You threw the grenade at the Awami League rally," CID officer Ruhul told Joj Mia.

A surprised Joj Mia told the officer he knew nothing about it. "I was at my Senbagh house on the day of the bomb explosions. I saw it on television at a tea stall," he said.

Rashid then hit Joj on the head. Then Joj was put on a microbus, taken to the CID office, where he was kept in CID custody.

At midnight, Joj was taken from custody to Rashid's office. "You threw the bombs on August 21," Rashid accused Joj.

"I did not do it. I know nothing about it," a hapless Joj replied.

"You will face crossfire if you do not confess," Rashid threatened Joj.

Justice Joynal still speaks of evidence

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several hints in the 162-page report submitted to the home secretary on October 2 the same year.

Briefing reporters on that day, Justice Joynal Abedin described the carnage as "a naked attack on the independence and sovereignty of the country".

The commission's report was widely considered as the then government's attempt to prove that "foreign enemies" had instigated the carnage, and some listed criminals holed up in India had taken part in the attack.

Some senior CID officials, who investigated the attack, had attempted to feed the public a fabricated story of Joj Mia, a petty criminal. They had Joj Mia to make a state-

ment confessing to his involvement with the attack in collusion with a band of criminals. Some of the criminals named by Joj Mia had been staying in India since long before the grenade attack.

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) even wrote to the Interpol seeking help to bring the criminals back home.

These attempts turned into a farce as the Joj Mia story was exposed by the media.

It was revealed in 2012 through a further investigation that the heinous attack was an outcome of collaboration among militant outfit Huji, influential leaders of the BNP and the Jamaat-e-Islami, and a band of senior officials of the home ministry, police, Directorate General of

Forces Intelligence (DGFI), National Security Intelligence (NSI) and Prime Minister's Office (PMO). They were indicted in the case and are now facing trial.

Asked about the judicial inquiry commission's findings in the light of the latest development, Justice Joynal on Wednesday claimed, "My report was entirely based on the evidence that was collected by the commission at that time".

Following the submission of his report, the government increased security for Justice Joynal, who was later elevated to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court on August 24, 2006 and retired on December 31, 2009.

The commission, formed a day after the attack, recorded statements

of 123 people, including the injured victims and their doctors, AL leaders and activists present at the rally, explosives experts, journalists and security men.

It also sought an appointment with Sheikh Hasina to have her account of the deadly event but did not get any, as the AL questioned the neutrality of the probe body. It did not allow the commission to inspect the sports utility vehicle, which carried Hasina to safety immediately after the blasts, either.

Asked if that hindered the inquiry, Justice Abedin on October 2, 2004 said, "The commission may not have received cooperation from all, which might have somewhat hampered the investigation, but the inquiry is in no way incomplete."

Then Rashid took him to the office of his supervising officer, Ruhul.

"Did you talk to him?" Ruhul asked Rashid.

"Sir, it will be better if you talk to him," Rashid replied.

Ruhul then enquired about Joj's family.

"See, there are many cases filed against you in the city. There is an order from high-ups. You will be benefited if you work according to our instruction. We will also be saved," said Ruhul.

"What do I need to do?" Joj Mia asked at one stage.

"You imagine this is your class. You will memorise what we say and do what we teach you. Then you will tell us [from your memory]," Ruhul told Joj, who had studied only up to class II.

Joj was kept at the CID office for a week after June 10. He was then produced in court. He was placed on remand twice. While he was on remand under the CID, Ruhul, Rashid and Atiq interrogated him on several occasions. They asked him to memorise different stories on the grenade attack.

Rashid tortured Joj Mia several times and threatened to put him on crossfire and kill his mother and sister.

Under duress, Joj agreed to make a confessional statement. It was then that the CID officials instructed him every day on what to say before the magistrate. Joj tried to memorise what he was told, before repeating before them what he had memorised on their instructions.

If he made any mistake in the telling the story, they corrected him. This went on for around two weeks.

Then the day came. On June 26, 2005, Joj, a low-profile criminal, made a confessional statement before a magistrate alleging that the underworld gang -- Seven-Star Group -- led by one of the most wanted criminals, Subrata Bain Shuvro, had carried out the grenade attack.

In line with the instructions he had earlier been given by the CID officials, Joj admitted that he had been one of the attackers.

He was made to tell the magistrate that all the 14 members of the group had met at Robin's house at Maghbazar several days before the attack.

"Shuvro, Masud and Joy instructed us about the attack and assigned specific duties to each of us for the attack," he narrated what he had memorised.

The group met again on Baitul Mukarram Mosque premises on the evening of August 20, a day before the attack, said Joj. Shuvro was not present at the meeting.

"Joy and Masud grouped us into four teams and gave us the last instructions for the attack. The two then gave us Tk 5,000 each in advance, which was half the contract money," said Joj.

Munshi Atiq and several other CID officials were present in the magistrate's room during the confession in violation of the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code.

Then Joj Mia was sent to Kashimpur jail.

The CID officials kept their promise for only around six months to pay Joj's mother every month.

But Joj's sister Khorsheda Khatun made "a blunder" a few months later. She disclosed to a journalist from a private television channel that the CID officials handed out the money every month.

The story received wide coverage in the newspapers and private television channels, exposing the state machinery's sinister involvement in trying to bury the need of justice for the victims of the massacre.

After the exposure of the farce, the CID officials declined to make further monetary payments to Joj Mia's mother.

On instructions from Lutfozzaman Babar, then minister of state for home affairs, the CID officials engaged the state machinery and cooked up the Joj Mia story to derail the investigation into the grenade attack case.

The situation changed only after the rule of the BNP came to an end.

Further investigations were a revelation in that the grisly attack was not a task of petty criminal Joj Mia and the Seven Star Group.

It was rather an outcome of collaboration between the militant outfit Huji, influential leaders of the then ruling BNP and the Jamaat-e-Islami, and a band of senior officials in the government machinery, including the home ministry, police, Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), National Security Intelligence (NSI) and Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

[The report is prepared on the basis of the statements of Joj Mia, his mother and sister and other witnesses of the grenade attack case and the supplementary charge sheet on the case.]

Zia family behind attack

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Recalling the horrifying day, an emotion-choked Hasina said, "After the attack, I lost my glasses and I couldn't see.

"I was the target, only Allah saved me from the attack."

She said she wished Allah had taken her life instead, and spared the ones who died.

It was an irony that the Awami League's anti-terrorism rally in 2004 was attacked with grenades, Hasina said.

Branding the family of Ziaur Rahman "a killer and corrupt family", Hasina yesterday said there would be no room for them in Bangladesh.

"As Zia was involved in the killing of Bangabandhu on August 15, 1975, the then prime minister [Khaleda Zia], her son [Tarique Rahman], her cabinet members and leaders were directly involved in the August 21 grenade

attack. There is no question about this," she said.

"Before August 21, Tarique Rahman was at his father-in-law's house in Dhanmondi. Why was he there instead of his cantonment home?" she said.

Recalling August 15, 1975, when Father of the Nation Bangabandhu and most of his family members were assassinated, the Awami League president said, "Major Dalim, Rashid, those who were directly involved in the heinous killing had later said that they discussed their plan with Zia and Zia was aware of everything. They also said Zia encouraged and assured them of all assistance but did not want to come to the forefront."

Those who had not accepted the country's independence and wanted to make Bangladesh a province of Pakistan were still hatching conspira-

cies, Hasina said, asking people to be alert about their plots.

She also urged all to be careful about those who harm people, the party, and the country for their personal gain.

Awami League presidium member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury presided over the rally attended by almost all the central leaders of the party.

Only Hasina spoke yesterday.

Before addressing the rally, she placed a wreath at the makeshift memorial on Bangabandhu Avenue. The party observed a one-minute silence at 5:22pm, the time the first grenade exploded.

After her address, she enquired about the families of the party leaders killed and talked to the ones who were injured.

After Hasina left, Bangabandhu Avenue was open to all. People placed wreaths at the memorial.

The grief of the victims' family members moved travelers and staff of the airport to tears when they were sobbing over the bodies.

"I talked to my son the day before his death. He asked me not to worry about him," Hajera said, trying to hold back tears. Faruk was married, but had no children. He used to speak of his dream about living a happy life together with his family members after returning home,

Wage Earners' Welfare Board of the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry, handed the bodies over to the families.

He gave each family Tk 35,000 as burial costs. The ministry will give Tk 3 lakh to each family as financial assistance, he said.

A representative of the Malaysian employer also came and handed \$ 5,900 each victim.

3 MONTHS INTO ABDUCTION Mujibur, driver give statements to police

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

BNP leader Mujibur Rahman, a Bangladeshi expatriate in the UK, and his driver Rezaul Haque yesterday gave separate statements to Sunamganj police, describing their abductions over three months back.

Police found some dissimilarity between the two statements, said Harun-ur-Rashid, superintendent of police in Sunamganj.

He, however, declined to give any details for the sake of investigation, adding that police will thoroughly scrutinise their statements.

"If needed, they will be produced before court," said the SP.

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Back home dead

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Faruk was the one who arranged the job for him. Being employed at the company five months back, he tried to get his younger brother there as well. Immediately after he could confirm Rubel's employment at the construction firm, he asked him to get a ticket for Malaysia.

The changed situation, however, will not have much impact on upcoming events.

The family was hoping for happy days with the responsibility shared by the brothers, but now Rubel is left alone to do the struggle.

"My family members will not want me to work for the company now. But I have no other choice but to do the job to support them," the 27-year-old from Munshiganj told The Daily Star.

He along with his mother Hajera Khatun came to Hazrat Shahjalal

International Airport in the capital yesterday to receive Faruk's body.

A flight of Bangladesh Biman carried the bodies of three Bangladeshis Faruk, Elahi Hossain and Alauddin Mollick, who were killed in the same incident on Monday night.

Milon Hossain, elder brother of Elahi, and Jalal Mollick, younger brother of Alauddin, received their bodies.

Mohsin Chowdhury, director of the