



A window of the CCTV monitoring room at Hossaini Dalan, hours after improvised bombs exploded in front of the building at Bakshi Bazar in the capital early Saturday. Below, a shrapnel and safety pin rings of the bombs recovered from the scene.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN/SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Nothing clear

FROM PAGE 1
Sunni community in some countries, it is the first time that their gathering turned bloody in Bangladesh.

And unlike in many Muslim countries, there has not been any sectarian violence between these two groups in Bangladesh, where many Sunni Muslims and even non-Muslims also join the Ashura congregation in a sign of peaceful co-existence.

It is also evident in the fact that the 14-year-old boy who was killed and most of those wounded in the explosions are Sunnis. The Daily Star has learnt this by talking to their families.

Shias are minority in Bangladesh, with some 10 lakh of them living across the country, said MM Firoz Hossain, superintendent of Hossaini Dalan.

Though police detained three suspects over the blasts, they are yet to identify the attackers or learn about their motive.

Militant outfits and Shibir, Jamaat's student wing, are on top of their list of suspects, investigators said, adding that the attack was carried out to create unrest in the country ahead of November 2.

On the day, the Supreme Court is scheduled to hear arguments on the

review petitions by war crimes convict Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, a top BNP leader, and Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed, a Jamaat leader. The two were earlier sentenced to death for war crimes.

Some ruling party leaders claimed that local and foreign powers might be behind the blasts to destabilise the country.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal told the BBC Bangla Service last night that the attack was aimed at destabilising the country.

"The Shia community has been living here for 400 years. Nothing happened [to them] in the past. These incidents are taking place now. This points to a serious conspiracy," he said.

Police filed a case in this connection yesterday.

'FOOLPROOF SECURITY'

More than 1,500 of police members were deployed near the building and its adjoining areas to "ensure a foolproof security", said DMP Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia.

Members of other law enforcement and intelligence agencies were also present. Uniformed and plainclothes cops were in and outside the compound. Still, the perpetrators managed

to infiltrate into the premises enclosed with 20 feet high walls.

The entire area was under the surveillance of 32 CCTV cameras, owned by the building authorities. Cops were monitoring the cameras at the time.

MM Firoz said they used just four metal detectors of their own, but police did not use any such detectors or set up any metal archway at the entrances.

Police suspect the attackers took position at the nearby graveyard, just around 20 feet from the spot where two grenades went off in quick succession. The third was blasted a few feet away. Two more were found unexploded.

"We are yet to identify any attacker from the CCTV footage. It was nighttime and the footage is not clear. Also, the cameras are not that powerful," said an investigator, asking not to be named.

THE EXPLOSIVES

Each of these grenades weighed 600 grams and they were timed to go off five seconds after their pins are pulled, said Sanwar Hossain, additional deputy commissioner of Detective Branch of Police.

The casualty was low because there were no splinters or balls in the devices, added Sanwar, also head of

DB's bomb disposal team.

Investigators said the technology used in making these devices is similar to that used in making the devices that went off in Burdwan of India in October last year. But their materials are "a bit different".

The Burdwan IEDs were a combination of RDX, picric acid and cycle balls. But those used in the Hossaini Dalan attack are made of gun powders, batteries and plastic explosives. In both cases, detonators and pins were used for explosion.

A senior police official with knowledge of the Burdwan blast probe and militant activities said the explosive-making technology was first brought to Bangladesh by those who took part in the Afghan war.

"Later, they transferred it to the first generation JMB operatives, including Shakil Ahmed who died in the Burdwan blast," he told The Daily Star.

He claimed several groups of Shibir activists have been working with JMB operatives to acquire this knowledge.

Col Ziaul Ahsan, additional director general of Rab, said the materials and technology used in the Ashura blasts indicate that it might be an act of militant outfits.

MP Liton

FROM PAGE 1
October 2, Sourav Mia was shot in both legs allegedly by the lawmaker when the boy was taking a morning walk with his uncle at Gopalcharan village of Sundarganj upazila.

Saju Mia, Sourav's father, filed a case the next day.

The other case was filed on October 6 against Liton and nine of "his men" on charges of vandalising a house and looting furniture and corrugated iron sheets from its roof in a Gaibandha village soon after the shooting.

Meanwhile, Saju said the condition of Sourav, undergoing treatment at Rangpur Medical College Hospital, was improving.

Bablu Kumar Shah, a physician at the hospital, said the victim was able to walk on his feet. He expressed hope that the school-goer would be released soon.

Most of the injured leave hospitals

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autopsy. He was buried at the capital's Azimpur graveyard in the afternoon.

The blasts took place around 1:30am on Saturday when Shia Muslims were gathering at Hossaini Dalan about half an hour before the traditional Tazia procession was to be brought out from there to mark the holy Ashura.

The day marks the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA), and the Shia community around the world has been observing the day for centuries. In Bangladesh, many Sunni Muslims too participate in the Ashura programmes.

Feroz Hossain, superintendent of Hossaini Dalan, told The Daily Star that to his knowledge, about a hundred people were injured in the blasts and all but three to four of them are

Sunnis.

The Daily Star talked to 12 of the 16, still at the DMCH, and learned that all are Sunnis. They were deeply troubled by the "unprecedented" attack.

Sazzad Hossain too was a Sunni.

In a sign of sectarian harmony, Sazzad's family has been taking part in the Tazia procession for generations.

"We belong to a Sunni family. But we never felt that the holy Ashura was not our occasion," said Rashed, Sazzad's elder brother.

"Our grandmother used to take me and Sazzad to the procession when we were much younger."

Rashed's daughter Sajia Sultana, 11; wife Sumi, 28; aunt Ayesha, 55; and nephew Rajon, 20, were among the injured in the blasts.

"Seven of us were holding each others' hands and walking slowly to

where the procession was supposed to start from. But most of us fell on the ground when the first explosion took place," Rashed, who luckily remained unscathed, recalled yesterday while talking this correspondent at the DMCH. The injured members of his family were under treatment there.

He then saw Sazzad lying motionless on the ground and took him inside Hossaini Dalan where many of the injured had already been brought.

"It took me a while to notice that my brother was profusely bleeding and needed immediate medical care," Rashed said, adding that Sazzad was declared dead when taken to the hospital.

"Those who want to create a rift among people should be brought to justice," he demanded.

Against all odds

FROM PAGE 1
of joy. He began giving tuition to the disadvantaged children studying at different schools for free.

"It was difficult for my father to manage even two square meals a day for us. There was no way my six siblings or I could demand of him any educational expense. So, I had to drop out [of school]. But I didn't want to let that happen to anyone else around me," Gamir says.

His school now has 50 students of different grades. Gamir helps them with English, Maths, Science and other subjects. The students attend his classes before or after their school hours.

"[Gamir] Sir has helped build our basic knowledge. He makes learning easy. So we are confident that we can do well in the exams," seventh grader Falguni Khatun says enthusiastically. She has been attending Ananda Pathshala for the past five years.

With no tertiary qualification and external financial support, it was not easy for Gamir to bear the expenses of his school.

To support himself, Gamir cultivates 38 decimals of land leased from his neighbours and spends a good deal of his meagre earnings to purchase chalks, dusters and other school supplies.

"Around 400-500 students have taken private tuition from me in the past 30 years," says Gamir who is so lovingly called Gram Bondhu (friend of the village) by the locals for his contribution to education there.

"Some of my students have grown up now to become bankers and other big jobs. Some have even got government jobs," he boasts.

"It's such a pleasure when former students visit me and I find out what they have been able to achieve."

As for his personal life, Gamir was

married to Ayesha Khatun when he was just 18, his wife a year younger. Sadly, after three years of a happy life together, his wife died. For his love for her and teaching, he decided to remain single thereafter. "If I'd remarried, I would not have been able to give best efforts to the school," he explains.

Gamir also has a passion for music and literature. He has composed over 400 poems and rhymes, and 100 folk songs, which have earned him many accolades locally and nationally, he says.

He hopes to publish his writings some day; but a far greater hope is to spend his remaining days teaching his students with zeal and sincerity.

And due to his undeterred commitment, students from different villages around Gamir's now come to his school.

Intajul Islam, lecturer of a local college, sends his son to the school. "My son is improving every day ... Gamir's

teaching methods attract many."

Local physician Abdur Rahim too spoke highly of Gamir's teaching style. "He never tires of labouring for these remote area students ... He is an inspiration, an ideal human being."

Man killed

FROM PAGE 1
Dulal Biswas, younger brother of Ananta, said their parents were numbed by the shock of their eldest son's death.

"It was a joyous Puja for our family as our brother came from Dhaka after a year," he added.

Ananta, 30, son of Anil Kumar Biswas of College Para area in Gaibandha, used to send money home, said Bimal Chandra Das, a neighbour of the family. "The poor family was dependent on Ananta's earnings," he added.

[Our Gaibandha correspondent contributed to the report.]

ASI KILLING

6 suspects remanded

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Six people who were arrested for their alleged involvement in the killing of a police officer in the city's Gabtoli area have been placed on different terms of remand.

Of them, one was placed on seven-day remand on Saturday, while five were put on six-day remand each yesterday.

Metropolitan Magistrate Md Imdadul Haque yesterday passed the order in response to a 10-day remand prayer moved by Detectives Branch (DB) Inspector Selim Hossain.

Dr Yunus Ali Akanda, 57, Sheikh Rafi Ahmed, 65, Khandaker Mehedi Hasan, 52, Dr Toufique Rahman Nawab, 65, and Masud Rana Rifit, 20, were placed on remand yesterday.

Earlier on Saturday, Metropolitan Magistrate Zakir Hossain Tipu placed Masud Rana alias Sujon, 24, on seven-day remand in response to a 10-day remand prayer moved by the same DB inspector.

In the remand prayers, Inspector Selim, also the investigation officer, said the accused were trying to create anarchy in the country through subversive activities and allegedly killed the police officer as part of that plan. So, they needed to be remanded to trace the masterminds and other fugitives involved in the killing, the IO said.

Defence lawyers submitted petitions seeking bail and cancellation of

the remand prayers. They claimed their clients were accused of the killing as part of a conspiracy to harass them.

Assistant Sub-Inspector Ibrahim Mollah was stabbed to death by a youth on October 22 at a checkpoint when a police team was frisking his bag.

In a massive drive, police detained 31 people on October 23, including some BNP and Jamaat men, in Dhaka and Bogra over the incident.

Police claimed the detainees were members of a large gang that was planning to carry out subversive activities in the capital and elsewhere.

Investigators also claimed the youth who had stabbed Ibrahim was a member of that "gang" that assembled in the city to implement its plan.

The assailant, identified as 24-year-old Kamal, travelled to the capital from Bogra several times in the last few months, they said, quoting his detained friend Masud Rana, who also accompanied him.

Masud used to stay in the Masjid Chhatrabas, student mess in Bogra, from where police detained 21 students.

Earlier, police stopped Kamal and Masud at a checkpoint in front of Parbat Cinema Hall at Gabtoli after they got down from a bus from Bogra around 9:00pm on Thursday.

As Ibrahim was checking Kamal's bag, he stabbed the police officer and fled. Masud tried to escape but failed.

'Gun-runner' killed in 'gunfight'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

An alleged arms smuggler was killed in a "gunfight" with detectives in Faridpur town on Friday night.

The dead, Habibur Rahman Habib, 32, was the son of late Abdul Khaleq of Khabashpur in the town.

According to police, Habib was involved in firearms smuggling through different borders in the south-western region.

He stood accused in nine criminal cases, including arms smuggling, murder and robbery.

Acting on a tip-off that Habib was making a deal with his buyers to sell firearms, a team of Detective Branch (DB) of police raided East Khaspur Launch ghat area around 11:30pm, said Mohammad Kamruzzaman, additional superintendent of Faridpur police.

Sensing the law enforcers' presence, Habib and his aides attacked police with sharp weapons. Police then opened fire on them, triggering a "gunfight" between police and criminals.

At one stage, the criminals fled the scene, and police found the bullet-hit body of Habib on the spot.

Habib was rushed to Faridpur Medical College Hospital where he

died later, police said.

A police constable was injured in the incident. He received treatment from a local private clinic, the police official added.

'Jubo League man beats up cop'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

A local Jubo League leader yesterday allegedly roughed up an inspector inside a police station during an arbitration to settle a land dispute.

Nahid Khan, member of Tongibari Jubo League, assaulted Mehedi Hasan at Tongibari Police Station and fled, taking advantage of a gathering, said Alamgir Hossain, officer-in-charge of the police station.

Police were raiding places to arrest Nahid, said police sources.

However, Nahid's uncle Kamrul Hasan Muktar, also a local Awami League leader, alleged that Mehedi had tried to help a particular side during the arbitration between two other people.

The police officer had beaten up Nahid as he protested a decision, he claimed.

Hail government

FROM PAGE 1

the Jatiya Party, failed to play its due role in the present parliament formed through the one-sided election on January 5, 2014 amid boycott by the BNP-led alliance.

Terming the JP so-called opposition, the TIB said the party was working as "B-team of the government".

Citing an instance, it said the MPs of the main opposition and some parties moved motions opposing some segments of the Constitution (16th amendment) Bill 2014. But later they voted in favour of the bill, going against their own motions.

The study says though proposals for eliciting public opinion over various bills were placed in the House, those were turned down by voice votes.

QUORUM CRISIS

According to the study, quorum crisis ate up 48 hours and 41 minutes from the second to sixth session, causing a waste of around Tk 32.42 crore in 112 working days of the five sessions.

When parliament is in session, about Tk 111,000 is spent a minute for running it.

POSITIVE SIDES

This parliament has some accomplishments that include an increase of average time for passage of bills and ease of quorum crisis.

The main opposition staged fewer walkouts from parliament than in the cases of the eighth and ninth parliaments. This, however, doesn't mean that the opposition in the 10th parliament is playing a positive role in parliamentary activities, says the TIB.

12 RECOMMENDATIONS

The TIB said the Speaker didn't take action to stop use of unparliamentary language in the House. The Speaker will have to play a stronger role in this regard.

It put forward a 12-point recommendation for making parliament effective and accountable, and strengthening democracy.

The TIB suggested passing a bill on lawmakers' conduct and urged the opposition to play its due role in the House.

TIB FOR INCLUSIVE POLLS

Replying to a question at the press conference, TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman put stress on the holding of an inclusive and credible election to make parliament effective, saying the last national election was a "controversial one".

"Definitely, the January-5 election was a controversial one. When a fresh election is held without controversy, nobody will term it controversial."

The TIB hopes an inclusive election will be held with the participation of all parties, but it depends on the country's top politicians, he said.

REACTION FROM PARTIES

Asked about the TIB study, AL Joint Secretary General Mahbubul Alam Hanif said the current opposition is playing its due role in making parliament effective.

"If an effective parliament means the use of abusive words and frequent boycott of parliament like the BNP did [in the ninth parliament], we have nothing to say about the TIB observations on the current opposition," he said.

Jatiya Party Secretary General Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu rejected the TIB report, saying it is nothing but a "false report".

"We have been playing the role of real opposition in parliament."

The opposition staged walkouts over a number of issues, including price hike of power and gas, he said.

"Is it our fault that we did not use slang words like BNP MPs did in the past?" he asked.

However, BNP Spokesperson Asaduzzaman Ripon said the TIB study was a reflection of public sentiment about the opposition. "The TIB has proved that the BNP's claims about the opposition are true."