



Concrete structures of the building, which was hit by a blast early yesterday, litter Road-23 of Block-B in the city's Banani. Top right, walls and beams of the building blown up by the blast. Naier Rahman, one of the apartment owners of the building, talks to journalists, bottom right.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

10 injured in gas explosion

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Others came out of the building. Several of them were injured in the process, while some fell ill after inhaling smoke.

Naved Imtiaz, son of building owner Shamshul Alam, suffered burn injuries and was admitted to the United Hospital.

The explosion and fire caused extensive damage to the entire building.

Raju Ahmed, a constable of Mirpur Public Order Management, said he was on duty in the area at that time of the explosion and that he heard a huge blast and felt the earth shaking.

Harun-or Rashid, deputy manager of Titas Zone-4, admitted that they had received complaints from the residents about the damaged pipe. He, however, didn't say why Titas didn't repair the damaged gas pipe on an urgent basis.

Requesting anonymity, a Titas official said they had a shortage of manpower as it was a holiday on Thursday.

Gas supply was shut in the area around 3:00am after the fire broke out in the building.

In a press statement, Titas said three to four inches of a gas pipe running to a house opposite the scene of the incident was torn during a digging work by Dhaka North City Corporation.

A five-member probe committee has been formed to find out the cause of the fire at the building around 20 feet off the damaged pipeline.

Locals alleged the DNCC did not take adequate measures to ensure safety after the pipe was damaged.

Mohammad Milon, a security guard of an adjacent building, said, "I was watching the work of the city corporation from in front of my house around 2:00am on Thursday. I saw a pipe got disconnected when an excavator was

digging soil. Just after the disconnection I smelt of gas."

During a visit, this corresponded found the disconnected pipe partly covered with sands, but with its mouth still open.

DNCC Mayor Annisul Huq, who visited the spot after the incident, said the DNCC was digging soil to lay a storm sewer line next to the building and found problems at a joint of a gas pipe.

The DNCC contractor immediately lodged a complaint with Titas Gas, but Titas didn't respond.

"We will be tough on Titas over the next few days. We want to know what is happening," he told reporters.

The mayor said they would take the responsibility if they found the DNCC was at fault, but if it was Titas' fault, it would have to take the responsibility.

Building owner Shamshul Alam said he called the Titas Gas authorities four

times between 10:30am and 11:30pm on Thursday, explaining the urgency of the problem. But his requests went in vain.

They told him that they would come and repair it. But they never came, said Shamshul.

When he called Titas authorities at 11:30pm for the fourth time, an official there said they would go to the spot only if he (the owner) could find labourers to dig soil at the spot.

"As it wasn't possible for me to find workers at that time, I didn't call him again. And the fire broke out early today," he told The Daily Star.

Shamsul later told reporters that he might seek to take legal action against Titas as it was to blame for the incident.

Meanwhile, Titas suspended its radio operator at the emergency section Md Alamgir Hossain for negligence in duty. It was Alamgir who had asked the building owner to find work-

ers for fixing the gas pipe, according to Titas officials.

The fire service and civil defence formed a three-member committee to find out the cause of the explosion.

Major AKM Shakil Newaz, director (operation and maintenance) of fire service, said they saw bubbles and traces of gas leak in front of the house as well as at the digging site.

They also saw that some columns and concrete beams of the building were damaged.

Eighteen units of fire service doused the flame around 4:40am.

The residents were not allowed to enter the building till 9:00pm yesterday.

Prof Syed Ishtiaq Ahmad of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, who visited the spot, told reporters that the tenants were allowed to enter the building after it was deemed safe.

Will BNP think for a change?

FROM PAGE 1
The party leaders are speaking of improving the organisation through the council. But the way they plan to conduct the council will violate its own charter as they might follow the old practice of handpicking leaders that goes against democratic practices in the party.

The central and grassroots leaders of the party have the power to elect the chairperson and the members of the standing committee and the office bearers of the national executive committees in the national council. But the party election schedule has not said anything about elections to these two important committees.

The party Election Commission—led by Jamiruddin Sircar—had earlier announced the election schedule to only two posts—the chairperson and the senior vice-chairman.

Khaleda Zia and her elder son Tarique Rahman were elected uncontested as the chairperson and senior vice-chairman of the party.

Without an election schedule, the councilors will not be able to elect the other leaders for the national standing and the national executive committee. They will be asked in the council session to authorise Khaleda, as they had to do in 2009, to pick other office bearers at her will to form the two crucial bodies.

"BNP will follow the tradition of the last councils this time too and empower Begum Khaleda Zia to choose the office bearers," BNP spokesperson Asaduzzaman Ripon told The Daily Star.

Over the years, the party has not followed its own charter.

Many in the party believe BNP, one of the two major political parties, is paying heavily for absence of democracy in the party itself.

The BNP was supposed to hold its national council more than three years

ago to elect the party chief and other office bearers according to its charter. It did not do so, allowing those who were either elected or picked by the chairperson in 2009 to continue holding their posts for three more years equal to a fresh term.

In the past, the party also had not held national council regularly obeying its charter. Since its formation in 1978, councils were held in 1982, 1989 and 1993.

The last council was held in December 2009 after 16 years.

Holding at least one meeting of its national executive committee every six months is mandatory in the charter. But the executive committee sat only twice in the last six years after the 2009 council.

The standing committee sits almost regularly. But despite being the highest decision making body, it cannot discuss major political issues and take decisions. Only the BNP chief can take decisions and run the party as she wishes, says standing committee members.

They said sometimes sensitive issues are not even included in the agenda. BNP insiders say this practice also allows her elder son Tarique Rahman to bear influence on her decisions.

For example, Khaleda had unilaterally announced a non-stop blockade on January 5, 2015 to protest the government's refusal to allow BNP to hold a rally on the first anniversary of January 5 one-sided parliamentary election.

Her sudden announcement apparently caught BNP policymakers by surprise. They claimed to be in the dark about it. Over 100 people were killed in the violent blockade, most burnt alive in firebombing of vehicles. Though there is no effort to enforce the blockade anymore, the blockade has not been officially called off yet.

The decision to boycott and to resist the January 5, 2014 parliamentary election was also not discussed in the party's standing or national executive committee.

The election boycott has left the party outside of the parliamentary politics for the first time since the restoration of democracy after the fall of the autocratic Ershad regime in December 1990. It has been either in treasury or opposition bench until the last election.

According to some BNP leaders, Khaleda Zia's sudden refusal at the last moment to meet visiting Indian President Pranab Mukharjee was also her own decision in 2013. They believe she cancelled the scheduled meeting with Pranab to make Jamaat-e-Islami happy—a key partner of BNP-led electoral alliance.

Khaleda scrapped the scheduled meeting citing security concerns as a Jamaat enforced hartal was on to protest trial of its leader Delwar Hossain Sayedee on charges of war crimes committed during the Liberation War.

Khaleda Zia also refused to hold talks with then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to resolve the political impasse in 2013 over the mode of election time government. Hasina had made a phone call to Khaleda inviting her to talks.

Many BNP leaders believe the party is currently going through the worst crisis of its life. It is now a Herculean task to prop up the party that has been in power for around 14 years since its birth.

The BNP leaders however hope they will be able to overcome the present crisis through the national council.

Talking to The Daily Star on Thursday, BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said the party hopes BNP will make a turnaround through the council by infusing new blood in the party.

BNP spokesperson Asaduzzaman Ripon said "We shall take oath in the council to free democracy so that people can get their voting rights."

BNP played an important role during the anti-Ershad movement in the 1980s under the leadership of Khaleda Zia.

Her leadership at that time drew votes for her party to put it in power in 1991. She again led BNP to power in 2001.

BNP has faced several existential crises in the past resulting in splits. Khaleda, who had no experience in politics, was made vice-chairman of the party in March 1983 in this critical period for the party and was elected chairperson in May 1984. She has been leading the BNP since then.

But her party does not have a democratic culture of holding meetings of different party forums and promote debate and discussions on policy-making.

Undemocratic means and ways were taken to form the BNP by abusing state power. It was formed to support the military ruler Gen Ziaur Rahman.

Gen Zia took over less than two years after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the overthrow of his government on August 15, 1975.

The party's charter gave the military ruler absolute power to run it at will. According to Zia's plan, the Jatiya Ganatantrik Dal [National Democratic Party] was floated in February 1978, poaching leaders from different political parties.

Justice Abdus Sattar was chosen the NDP convener when he was the country's vice president, an office he got reportedly as a reward for siding with Zia in the latter's move to take over the office of CMLA and the presidency from justice Sayem.

Later, Zia formed the Jatiyatabadi Front [Nationalist Front] taking politi-

cians from different parties for support and contested the presidential election as a candidate of the front in June 1978.

Only a couple of months after his electoral victory, Gen Zia unilaterally dissolved the front and the NDP in September and floated a new party, the Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Dal -- BNP.

Criminals kill madrasa student

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Unidentified assailants have killed a madrasa student by slitting his throat in Kalai upazila of Joypurhat.

Nur Mohammad, 17, son of Mozammel Ali of Begungram village in the upazila, was a class-VI student of a local madrasa.

Nur Mohammad, who often drove a battery-run rickshaw-van to bear his educational expenses, went out of his house on Thursday afternoon with his vehicle. He did not return home since then, said Sirajul Islam, officer-in-charge of Kalai Police Station, quoting Nur's family.

Two youths hired Nur's vehicle for going to Ghaturia village from Molamgari village in the upazila, the police official added.

Locals found his body in Hazipur village yesterday morning and informed police. But Nur's rickshaw-van went missing.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Joypurhat Modern Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

The motive behind the killing could not be known immediately. A murder case was filed.

Sophisticated

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and SWIFTUAT, the attackers appear to be operating exclusively from the very beginning with local administrator accounts, according to the report.

Cyber security companies FireEye and World Informatix that have prepared the report have gathered substantive evidence to confirm that the unauthorised payments were made as part of a sophisticated and targeted attack on its system.

The malware was specifically designed to bypass certain security measures and operate on SWIFT Alliance Access servers.

SWIFT messaging system is based in Belgium and banks around the world use it for secure financial communication.

In the BB's IT infrastructure, complex malwares have been identified with advanced features of command and control communication, harvesting of credentials and to securely erase all traces of activity after the transfer orders were sent.

PATH TO BB'S SWIFT SYSTEMS
A central bank official said the linking of the BB's SWIFT operation with the central bank's whole IT operations in Dhaka and other cities in October last year through the launch of the real-time gross settlement (RTGS) system might also have given the hackers a path to break into the BB's SWIFT platform.

Earlier, the SWIFT operations and the central bank's IT operations were separate.

The RTGS was introduced to bring all banks and their branches under one umbrella. So far, only three local banks have joined the platform while others are still using an alternative one.

But the BB's SWIFT system was weakened as the linking to the RTGS was done without installing a strong firewall, said officials.

OTHER COMPUTERS HACKED
The 32 computers, which were also hacked into, were used to gain control of the SWIFT servers and related desktop computers, according to the interim report seen by The Daily Star.

The number of computers used to hack the BB system is expected to grow, as investigators are continuing to sweep all corporate assets and discovering additional information. The investigation, said to be at a critical stage, will continue for about two more weeks.

The security breach of the SWIFT environment is part of a much larger breach that is currently under investigation, according to the report.

WHO ARE THE HACKERS?
The hackers have not been identified yet but FireEye is currently tracking this cluster of activity as an "uncategorised" threat group, which is a suspected financially motivated group, also known as FIN group.

"An uncategorised group is a cluster of activity in which we have not yet formally attributed the threat to a specific advanced persistent threat (APT) or financially motivated group (FIN)," the report said.

FireEye Intelligence has observed APT groups, cyber-crime groups as well as hackers target the financial industry.

APT groups primarily collect information that can provide insight into a targeted company's operation or into its sensitive customers. Cybercriminals or FIN groups attempt to seek out account data and other data that can be monetised.

FireEye, according to the probe report, has observed these same suspected FIN threat actors within other customer networks in the financial industry, where these threat actors appear to be financially motivated, and well-organised.

The actors have not been known to be destructive in nature, but seem to follow a general APT style methodology: gain access to the network, utilising legitimate access and stolen credentials to spread malware across the network.

The group generally installs tools such as screen scrapers, keyloggers, passive backdoors, and a proxy aware backdoor to identify application processes to exploit or learn business processes that would aid the attacker in achieving their objectives.

Once the actors have completed their objectives within a victim network, FireEye has seen them securely delete tools to hide their tracks. FireEye Intelligence has seen this threat group active since at least late 2015.

FireEye has installed a separate software programme in all computers of the BB. The software is being used to find out the path the hackers used to install the malware into the BB system.

The US company is continuously monitoring all computers.

Obama to host Nordic leaders in May

AFP, Washington

President Barack Obama will welcome the leaders of five Nordic countries on May 13, with extremism and terrorism chief among the topics up for discussion, the White House said yesterday.

Also on the table at the US-Nordic Leaders Summit, which comes after a similar meeting when Obama went to Sweden in September 2013, will be the refugee crisis roiling Europe.

New Zealand tame Aussies

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McClenaghan was a surprise replacement for Nathan McCullum, one of the heroes of New Zealand's dramatic victory over the hosts India on Tuesday.

But skipper Kane Williamson's switch was vindicated in spectacular style while Australia were left to rue their decision to pick two rookie spinners, Ashton Agar and Adam Zampa.

Agar had a game to forget, carted for three sixes in what was his one and only over. His first two balls were full tosses, gratefully dispatched over the ropes by Martin Gupthill, who topped

scored with a brisk 39 off 27 balls.

Gupthill and Williamson put on 61 in the first seven overs but the Black Caps' hopes of putting on a score close to 200 soon subsided.

Poor shot selection and tight bowling from the veteran Shane Watson and all-rounders Glenn Maxwell and James Faulkner put the brakes on one of T20 cricket's biggest-hitting teams.

Gupthill was the first to go after racing to 39 off 27 balls, caught on the boundary by Maxwell off the bowling of Faulkner as he tried to go for another six at the beginning of the eighth over.

Williamson and Corey Anderson were then out in quick succession, both taken after they miscued expansive strokes.

New Zealand never recovered their momentum and no batsman ever really looked settled on what proved to be a slow pitch.

Watson's first three overs yielded just 11 runs and he took the key wicket of Ross Taylor in his final over, one ball after being hit for six by the former Kiwi captain.

Usman Khawaja and Watson got the Australian innings off to brisk start, putting on 44 before Watson

fell.

Khawaja stroked six fours in an attractive innings of 38 off just 27 balls before he was run out just as he looked poised to post a big score.

Australia seemed comfortably placed at the mid-way point in their innings, having put 66 on the board.

But David Warner perished in the first ball of the 11th over, holing out at deep mid-wicket after mistiming a pull shot off the bowling of Mitchell Santner.

Spinners Santner and Ish Sodhi, the heroes of the win over India, again bowled tidy spells.

Sodhi conceded just 14 runs in his four overs while Santner took two for 30, his figures slightly tarnished at the end when he conceded two sixes off his last three balls.

McClenaghan was handed the ball for the penultimate over and did his captain proud by taking the wickets of both Marsh and Agar, conceding just three runs in the process.

New Zealand's second win in two games makes them firm favourites to reach the semi-finals of the tournament but is a big blow to Australia's hopes of winning a trophy that has so far proven elusive.