

# Day of joy turns into day of grief

HELEMUL ALAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

The parents of the beautiful baby girl were just getting prepared to rejoice her first day in this world, but what the parents were not prepared to do was to go through 14 hours of harrowing ordeal with the newborn.

Awlad Hossain's wife had just given birth to their third child at Gulshan's Lake View Clinic on Friday at 4:30 in the afternoon -- hours before gunmen took control of Holey Artisan Bakery, located on the same compound, and took dozens of people hostage.

"Our lives hung by a thread from 8:30pm on Friday till 11:00am yesterday -- nearly for fourteen hours. We did not experience the tumultuous times during the Liberation War of 1971, but being caught in the middle of the standoff has made me realise how dangerous the situation was back then," observed Awlad.

"We heard gunshots around the time of Sahri and everyone in the cabin took cover underneath the beds," he said adding that even the newborn had to be put on the floor under the bed for safety.

"My wife, mother-in-law, aunt-in-law and two of my friends were in the cabin when it all started and all of us got down on the floor for our lives," said Awlad. "A few members of Rapid

Action Battalion came to our cabin on Friday night, asking us not to panic and stay inside the cabin. We heard continuous gun shots, bullets banging on the walls and windowpanes getting shattered. We prayed for our lives while lying on the floor."

Awlad's friends were in the canteen of the hospital while the hostage situation started to unfold in the evening. Soon after hearing gunshots they came running inside the cabin and stayed there till the end of the drama.

All the doors of cabins and the main doors were locked by law enforcing agencies. There were around ten families in the three-storey hospital at the time in the evening and a to-be mother was just taken inside the operation room. The newborn and the mother had to spend the night inside the operation room till the next morning, said Awlad.

"When a commando member on Saturday morning came and informed us that we were safe to come out of our room, we felt like being reborn," he said while getting ready to go home at Natun Bazar.

Army commandoes brought an end to the situation 12 hours later, rescuing at least 13 people. As many as 20 people were found dead inside. Six attackers were killed and one was captured.



Firemen carry a new mother on a stretcher while the father carries the newborn on a Gulshan street yesterday. They were stuck inside the nearby Lake View Clinic after all hell broke loose Friday night at the Holey Artisan Bakery.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## TIMELINE

### FRIDAY NIGHT

9:50pm

Police and Rab cordon off the area

10:30pm

Two police officials, injured in the intermittent firing by the gunmen from inside the cafe, die

11:00pm

Attackers are said to have turned off lights at the restaurant

11:30pm

Rab DG Benazir Ahmed requests TV channels to stop live telecast

### EARLY SATURDAY DEVELOPMENTS

1:30am

IS claims responsibility for the attack, claimed SITE Intelligence

4:00am

Police detain a youth, who was shot in the leg while trying to escape

4:20am

Italian state TV claims 7 Italians among the hostages

### EARLY SATURDAY DEVELOPMENTS

5:00am

Commandoes of army, navy, air force, police, BGB, Rab and Swat prepare to begin massive operation

7:40am

Security forces begin "Operation Thunderbolt" and barge in the restaurant

7:48am

Heavy firing and explosions

8:15am

In the first phase of the operation, six, including women and children, were rescued alive

8:30am

Operation ends successfully

8:55am

Commando forces take control of the building. A search operation begins

9:15am

The hostage standoff ends almost after 12 hours

12:45pm

ISPR briefs media about the operation. 20 people are found dead inside the restaurant. Six attackers killed, one arrested,

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## Lively, jolly human being

FROM PAGE 1

people, even if you know them for long. Stay blessed, stay happy."

The same day she shared a post that read: "Be a lover, not a fighter. But always fight for what you love."

In another post on June 29, she wrote "Happiness for all ... be blessed, be happy".

She was keen on art.

"Ishrat was very affectionate towards arts and culture," her friend Bishawjit Goswami told The Daily Star.

She was involved in the Institute of Asian Creatives, Institute of Art and Culture, Dhaka Art Centre and a number of other cultural organisations, said her uncle Saif Hasan.

"When we first heard the news of her death, we could not believe it. Not

only family members, everyone who knew Ishrat were saddened by the news," Saif told The Daily Star.

Ishrat was working as the human resource director of ZXY International FZCO. She previously worked with Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), Grameen Phone, BracNet and Westin Hotels and Resorts.

## In shock, in solidarity

FROM PAGE 1

20 people killed by armed militants at Holey Artisan Bakery in Gulshan.

"Today, the whole of Italy joined together to give a message of pain and compassion, but we have a duty to respond with even more determination to defend our values," said Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi.

Renzi yesterday cancelled all appointments of the day to follow the situation from his office, Palazzo Chigi in Rome.

"Our values are stronger than their [militants] follies," he said, according to a report of Italian newspaper Il Fatto Quotidiano.

At a press conference, Renzi said, "We have no intention to give in to those who want the destruction of our values -- Italy did not retreat."

"We are stronger, and from this point of living together with the other countries of the international community who have been affected, we will continue our struggle because all together we can affirm an idea of civilisation that is different from the one that unfortunately we have seen tonight in Bangladesh," Il Fatto Quotidiano quotes Renzi as saying.

Meanwhile, Italian and Japanese foreign ministers called their Bangladesh counterpart AH Mahmood Ali and expressed deep concern over the brutal murders of their citizens in the terrorist attack.

Paolo Gentiloni, minister of foreign affairs and international cooperation, talked to Mahmood over the phone, according to a press release of Italy's foreign affairs ministry.

During his conversation with Mahmood, Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida expressed condolences for the victims and also voiced concern over the incident, said diplomatic sources.

Both the Italian and Japanese foreign ministers said they stand by Bangladesh in this hour of grief.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe spoke with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina over the phone yesterday afternoon.

Earlier, at a news conference in Tokyo in the morning, Yoshihide Suga, a top government spokesperson, said the Japanese Embassy in Dhaka opened a response centre at 2:45am yesterday.

The seven Japanese victims, including two women, were employees of private firms engaged in a construction project of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), reports The Japan Times.

JICA President Shinichi Kitaoka expressed strong indignation toward the attackers, saying the Japanese taken hostage were working hard for the development of the South Asian country, it adds.

He said his agency would strengthen security precautions while continuing to contribute to the development of Bangladesh.

Pope Francis sent a message of condolence to Bangladesh, con-

demning the "barbarous acts" that were "offences against God and humanity," said the Vatican, according to AFP.

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon also condemned the attack and hoped that those behind this crime would be identified and brought to justice.

In a statement, spokesperson for the UN chief said, "He [the secretary-general] stands firmly by Bangladesh as it confronts this threat and stresses the need to intensify regional and international efforts to prevent and combat terrorism."

Ban Ki-moon assured the Bangladesh government that the UN "is prepared to assist in efforts to prevent violent extremism in all its forms."

European Union High Representative Federica Mogherini said the Dhaka attack "is a direct challenge to the global community."

"In this dark hour, we stand in solidarity with the people and the government of Bangladesh, as well as with the authorities and populations of countries who have also suffered in this attack."

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to his Bangladesh counterpart and strongly condemned the attack.

In three separate tweets, Modi also conveyed India's "firm solidarity with our sisters and brothers of Bangladesh in this hour of grief."

Modi said the attack in Dhaka "has pained us beyond words."

Indian President Pranab Mukherjee phoned Hasina and strongly condemned the terrorist attack.

In a message to Bangladesh President Abdul Hamid, Pranab said, "India condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We believe that there can be no justification for such senseless acts of violence."

Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said she was extremely pained by the terrorist attack that has also killed an Indian girl, Tarishi Jain.

India's main opposition leader and Congress President Sonia Gandhi called for immediate collective and decisive action against those who are behind these attacks, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

Expressing solidarity with Bangladesh, French foreign ministry in a statement said, "Terrorism is a global scourge. France is determined to strengthen international cooperation to combat terrorism everywhere."

Hugo Swire, British minister of state at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, said he strongly condemns the appalling and senseless attack.

A White House official said US President Barack Obama was briefed on the attack by his chief counterterrorism adviser Lisa Monaco, according to a statement by the US State Department.

## PM blames

FROM PAGE 1

gunpoint, they want to portray the country as a dysfunctional state ... They have resorted to terrorism after failing to win the hearts of the people democratically. They are misleading the soft-hearted youths in the name of religion and killing people by giving them arms."

The national flag would be hoisted at half-mast, people would wear black badges and prayers would be offered in mosques, temples, churches and all other places of worship during the two days of mourning.

Taking a firm stance against terrorism, Hasina said the peace-loving people of Bangladesh would not let the conspirators be successful.

"Together with the countrymen, we will resist their conspiracy at any cost."

Everyone has to be united in resisting "the limited number of terrorists" the prime minister said, urging people at the grassroots levels to stand firm against terrorism.

"What do they want to gain by killing people? ... Islam is the religion of peace. Stop killing people in the name of Islam," she said.

Hasina also called upon the guardians to give their children proper education and watch them closely so that they do not get derailed. "I urge those who have already gone astray: Come back to the right path. Uphold Islam's dignity."

Promising to root out terrorism from Bangladesh, she said, "No conspiracy will be able to hamper our progress. Let's forget all differences and work together for establishing a secure and golden Bangla as dreamt by the Father of the Nation."

Hasina said Friday's attack demeaned the religion and the humanity. This barbaric and cowardice attack is unprecedented in a country of religious harmony like Bangladesh.

She said her government was quick to react to the attack. Members of police, Rab, and BGB along with other law enforcement agencies rushed to the spot and began the rescue operation immediately. Later, commandos from army, navy and air forces joined in and rescued hostages.

Six attackers were killed on the spot, she said, adding, "We have been able to rescue 13 people, including three foreigners, unhurt."

The PM thanked the members of police, Rab, BGB, army, navy, air force, and fire fighters for taking part in the operation. She also expressed her gratitude to the world leaders for expressing solidarity with her government during the crisis.

Hasina then prayed for the salvation of the departed souls and offered her sympathy to the victim families.

Earlier in the morning, the premier while inaugurating two four-lane highways from a programme at the capital's Bangabandhu International Conference Centre, described the terrorist attack as a "very dastardly act".

She said those who carried out the attack during the month of Ramadan did not believe in any religion.

PM TAKES SWIPE AT TV CHANNELS  
Taking a swipe at private TV channels for broadcasting live the rescue operation, the PM said through this the terrorists inside the restaurant were able to know everything about the preparations, BSS reports.

"That's why we told the TV channels to stop live broadcast. We also stopped cable and internet services in Gulshan area," she said at the programme in the morning.

The premier said some TV channels did not pay heed to the call and continued to broadcast the operation live. Such incidents also happened during the BDR carnage, she said.

"Those TV channels which violated the decisions are under our watch," she added.

## Political parties condemn Gulshan terror attack

Khaleda calls on govt to initiate all-party effort to fight extremism

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different political parties and organisations yesterday condemned the heinous attack at Holey Artisan Bakery in Dhaka's diplomatic zone of Gulshan on Friday night.

Condemning the terror attack, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia called on the government to initiate an all-party effort to crush the 'extremist forces.'

In a statement, she thanked the security forces for neutralising the attack, the first of its kind in Bangladesh where foreigners were held hostage.

Khaleda described the murderous attack by gunmen at the Gulshan eatery as 'blind violence and animal cruelty.'

She put the blame on the government of not responding to her party's urge to wipe out the extremists and alleged that the government had rather strengthened the hands of the militants being remained silent and inac-

tive to take severe actions against them.

"We have repeatedly urged the government to take steps beyond their partisan stance to fight against the militants' inhuman terrorism. But the government rejected our urge and remained busy to blame the opposition parties including BNP," the statement reads.

Khaleda also condemned the recently concluded crackdown across the country and alleged that the government failed to detain militants and rather arrested BNP men and common people.

Expressing concern over the recent killings of the Hindus, she alleged that the militants have established their dens due to "dictatorship" and lack of rule of law in the country.

She also expressed her deep shock over the tragic deaths of Bangladeshis and foreigners in the attack and praised the role of the law enforcers to accomplish the operation.

SEE PAGE 13 COL 1

## Latifur Rahman's grandson

FROM PAGE 1

Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, and came to Dhaka on May 18 to spend his summer holidays.

He along with two of his friends went to Holey Restaurant for dinner when the terrorist attack took the lives of these budding young schol-

ars.

Faraaz was the younger of two sons of Simeen and Waqer. His elder brother is Zarif Hossain.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held tomorrow (Monday, July 4) after Zohr prayers at Gulshan Azad Mosque.