

IN TEARS, WE REMEMBER

9 Italians, 7 Japanese, 1 Indian and 5 Bangladeshis who lost their lives in July 1 attack



Faraaz Ayaaz Hossain



Abinta Kabir



Tarishi Jain



Ishrat Akhond



Rabiul Karim



Salahuddin Khan



Marco Tondat



Vincenzo D'allestro



Maria Rivoli



Nadia Benedetti



Adele Puglisi



Claudio Cappelli



Cristian Rossi



Claudia Maria D'antona



Simona Monti

THE 7 JAPANESE VICTIMS : Ogasawara, Tanaka Hiroshi, Shakai Yuku, Kurusaki Nubuhiri, Okamura Makato, Shimudhuira Rui and Hashimoto Hideiko.

Not lullabies, gunshots

FROM PAGE 1

Holey Artisan Bakery, which shared its premises with the clinic, shook the entire neighbourhood.

Shakhawat and his brother were trying to figure out what happened when Shakhawat's friend, who was at the reception of the clinic, came running and asked them to duck and come inside immediately.

Meanwhile, explosions and gunshots started again and went on for 10 minutes. It was around 8:35pm and they had no clue as to what was happening outside.

"Almost about half-an-hour later we learnt from the TV that the Bakery was under a terrorist attack. Someone from the clinic asked us to lie still on the floor and switched off the lights of the room. All seven of us, including the baby and Shaila's

mother, were on the floor," Shakhawat recalled the night.

The baby boy named Ahmed Raahmat Vee was born on June 29. Since there were some difficulties in breastfeeding, he was being fed formula milk.

"There was not enough drinking water in the room. There was also no scope of boiling the water. Moreover, the baby could not sleep amidst the sounds of gun shots," he said.

There were two beds in the hospital room. They used one of the mattresses to cover the window and were lying on the floor under the other bed.

"Besides gunshots, sometimes we heard the sounds of boots and muffled voices. Relatives, friends and family members were repeatedly calling us," he said.

Around 7:30am, someone from the clinic's reception called and told them to cover their ears as the rescue operation to end the terror siege was about to begin.

"Powerful explosions started and continued for about 30 minutes. We came out of the hospital at 11:15 am and found our car parked outside completely damaged," Shakhawat said, adding, "The horror of that night still haunts us. We avoid going to crowded places and often get startled at loud noises."

After returning home, Shakhawat and Shaila named the baby Ahmed Raahmat Vee.

Shaila said, "We gave him the name because we were saved by the grace of the Almighty. Vee stands for victory. That we lived was a sign of victory against terrorism."

Successful crackdowns

FROM PAGE 1

Two out of four killed in Chittagong's Sitakunda, two out of three in Moulvibazar's Borohat and all four in Sylhet's Shibbari in March this year also remain unidentified.

Investigators are still trying to know the identities of three out of four killed in Chapainawabganj in April 26.

The Gulshan café probe also needs more time as some of the accused in the case were killed or arrested during those raids. Besides, some other accused are still at large.

"Investigations into some of the cases have progressed, but some are taking time because of delays in getting autopsy reports of militants and ascertaining their [militants'] identities," Monirul Islam, chief of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of DMP, who is monitoring the investigations, said recently.

Mahmud Hassan, inspector (operation) of Joydebpur Police Station, who is investigating the Patartek case, echoed Monirul's views.

1 YEAR OF CAFÉ PROBE

On July 1 last year, five armed militants stormed the upscale eatery in Gulshan diplomatic zone and murdered 20 hostages, including three Bangladeshis, seven Japanese, nine Italians and one Indian.

Two police officials were killed and 29 others injured when law enforcers in groups attempted to close in on the place.

The standoff ended through a commando operation in which the five militants and a café chef got killed. Another Artisan staff died in police custody later.

Gulshan police filed a case under the Anti-Terrorism Act against the five gunmen and chef Saiful Chowkidar, 34.

The dead militants are Nibras Islam, 20, Rohan Imtiaz, 20, Meer Sabeh Mubasheer, 19, Khairul Islam Payel, 22, Shafiqul Islam Uzzal, 26.

Police are still investigating the role of Saiful. His family members repeatedly claimed he was innocent.

Law enforcers say "Neo JMB", an offshoot of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), was behind the attack. Inspired by Islamic State, the group had been carrying out targeted killings since 2015.

Counterterrorism officials are now looking for five suspects who played vital roles in the café attack. "We would

be able to wrap up our investigation after the arrest of at least three of them," Monirul said.

These five include Sohel Mahfuz, Mizanur Rahman alias Chhoto Mizan and Hasidur Rahman Sagor alias Joypurhat Sagor, who supplied grenade and firearms for the café attack.

Two others are "Neo JMB" fund collector Basharuzzaman Chocolate



Tamim



Marjan

and organiser Rashed alias Rash.

The investigators have already found that the arms and explosives, hidden in fruit baskets, were smuggled into Bangladesh from India through Chapainawabganj and Jessore borders.

Monirul also said they need the autopsy reports of the victims and attackers to complete the probe.

So far, the investigators have received autopsy reports of 20 victims.

Sohel Mahmud, chief of forensic medicine at Dhaka Medical College, told The Daily Star on Wednesday that they were expecting to submit autopsy reports of the attackers by July 1.

KEY MILITANTS DEAD

Tamim Ahmed Chowdhury, chief coordinator of the café attack; Sarwar Jahan, top "Neo JMB" leader, and Major (ret'd) Jahid, chief trainer of the Holey Artisan gunmen, were killed in Narayanganj, Ashulia and Rupnagar raids.

Tanvir Kaderi, who rented a flat at Bashundhara for the attackers; Abdullah and Raihan Kabir alias Tareq, who also trained the militants, and Faridul Islam Akash, operational head of "Neo JMB" Dhaka division, died during drives in Azimpur, Kalyanpur and Gazipur.

Nurul Islam Marjan, one of the masterminds, was killed in "crossfire" in the capital's Mohammadpur area.

Four people are behind bars in connection with the case. They are Jahangir Alam alias Rajib Gandhi, allegedly one of the planners; suspected arms supplier Mizanur Rahman

alias Boro Mizan; Rakibul Hasan, a suspect arrested in the Kalyanpur raid, and Hasnat Karim, a former teacher of North South University (NSU).

All but Hasnat gave confessional statements, admitting their involvement in the Holey Artisan attack.

Asked about Hasnat's role, Monirul said they will be able to make it clear after the investigation.

Hasnat and Tahmid Hasib, a Canadian university student, were arrested on August 3 after a video clip and some photographs published in the media showed them with the attackers at the rooftop of the restaurant.

Tahmid was released after cops found no evidence of his links to the Gulshan gunmen.

Monirul said, "Militants planned to do something big in Dhaka in April last year to draw the attention of national and international media."

They chose three operatives who knew the capital's streets quite well and two others from Bogra who would be able to commit brutalities until the end, the CTTC chief said.

Then Major (ret'd) Jahid trained up the five in a char area in Gaibandha as the chief trainer.

On completion of their training, they were brought to Dhaka and kept at the Bashundhara flat.

The militants fixed Holey Artisan Bakery, a popular hangout for foreigners, as their target just four days before the attack. On the day of attack, the five came to the spot, first on rickshaw and then on foot.

During the attack, the militants used cell phones and iPads of victims and sent pictures and videos of their brutality to Tamim and Marjan, who were staying at a den in the capital's Shewrapara.

"We, however, could not find out where Tamim and Marjan sent those images," said Monirul, adding that they also could not know whether the attackers and planners had any international links as the key militants are all dead.

Global terror outfit Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack through its Amaq news agency, according to the US-based SITE Intelligence Group.

Monirul said "Neo JMB" from its fund spent Tk 8 to 9 lakh for arms, dresses, explosives and other purposes during the café attack.

FIGHTING RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

Experts for multi-pronged approach

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Four security experts have elaborated on the pre-Holey Artisan attack militancy situation and the government's response to tackle the menace following the attack. Talking to The Daily Star, they gave accounts as to why a religiously motivated ideology can't be fought only by using force and why a multi-pronged approach involving different stakeholders is required to fight religious extremism.

MAJ GEN ANM MUNIRUZZAMAN (RETD)

President, Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies

Following the Holey Artisan attack, there was a marked increase in the government's response to the issues of violent extremism and terrorism. But those were mostly limited to tactical responses. We didn't see the much needed national strategic approach to counter violent extremism. The national strategic approach should include a national counterterrorism architecture with active measures in the areas of counter-radicalisation and deradicalisation. All these activities should be governed by the rule of law.

There is also an urgent need for a dynamic counter-narrative strategy with a strategic communication platform. Violent extremism cannot be countered by the law enforcement agencies alone. The most important thing is to build social resilience against extremism and to achieve that we should have a multi-stakeholder engagement in countering the menace. Our goal should be to have a "whole of government" and "whole of society" approach to counter violent extremism.



BRIG GEN M SHAKHAWAT HOSSAIN (RETD)

Former election commissioner

The government and the law enforcement agencies didn't take the militancy issue seriously before the Holey Artisan attack. They rather gave political colour to some militant activities and described some others as acts of war criminals. For example, Japanese and Italian citizens were killed and the IS claimed the murders, but we saw that political colour was given to the incidents. The government's attitude towards militancy has changed after the Gulshan attack as it has partially admitted that there are militants in the country. Later, we have seen increased international intelligence cooperation. The capacity of law enforcement agencies has increased and people are now aware of militancy, but not up to expectation.

We have seen a new dimension in militancy -- involvement of all family members, including kids, use of suicidal vests and people going missing. We saw social mobilisation programmes after the Gulshan incident, but the move stopped suddenly and the government became dependent on the law enforcement agencies. Law enforcers can only check the problem temporarily. Recruitment of militants has not stopped yet. The government didn't carry out any detailed research on militants, how they were motivated, recruited and so on. Instead of taking a long-term approach to solve the problem, the government was going for short term solutions.



NUR MOHAMMAD

Former IGP

The law enforcement agencies usually plan a security arrangement based on intelligence reports.

Therefore the reports are very important for security purposes. But the intelligence reports in Bangladesh are very ordinary. The reports should be based on facts and proper information. Besides, there should be a better coordination between various intelligence forces. The regional and global intelligence coordination should be expanded and stepped up as militancy is a global and regional problem. The government should adopt deradicalisation programmes as law enforcers alone cannot solve the problem. It is alarming that incidents of "crossfire" and forced disappearance have been on the rise. It is not possible to counter terrorism in such a way. The government should think of it seriously.



AIR COMMODORE

ISHFAQ ILAHI CHOUDHURY (RETD)

Security expert

Before the Holey Artisan incident, we had been swayed by the self-satisfaction that we have eliminated the roots of Islamic extremism in Bangladesh. But the July 1 attack reminded us that militants strike back whenever we think that we have been able to eliminate the threat. This has been proved not only in Bangladesh, but also in other countries. The US forces were actually getting into a bigger trouble when George Bush declared that the Iraq mission had been "accomplished". Our counterterrorism efforts have seen more success since the Holey Artisan incident, but it is evident that we have not been able to eliminate the roots of terror.

It's a matter of grave concern that young people, although small in numbers, are still joining various terrorist groups. Our efforts have been mostly dependent on police actions whereas we need to address the issues politically, socially, regionally and internationally. We still have a long way to go before we can say "mission accomplished".



Living in the memories of loved ones

FROM PAGE 1

His wife Umme Salma and other family members miss every little thing about him. The family now live at a rented home in Ambagan area near Jahangirnagar University.

Salma said Rabiul was a good husband, father, brother and a responsible son.

"People knew him as an amiable and selfless man. I hope my children would follow their father's ideals."

The DB official managed some time from his busy schedule to take his son with him on pleasure trips.

Shams said his elder brother was not only an honest police official, but also a patriot and dedicated social worker.

In 2011, he founded a school, Beaconing Light Organisation of Mankind and Society (BLOOMS), for special children in Katigram village of Manikganj. It has 41 students now.

The DMP official used to bear all the school expenses, including for uniform, tiffin, books, stationery and a school van.

The school is now run with financial support from his well wishers. However, guardians, teachers and students are worried about its future.

Shams said the school managing committee and his family members would make sure that it is operated smoothly as per his brother's plan. Many people have pledged to support the school, he added.

In 2007, Rabiul had set up Nazrul Bidiyasiri, a kindergarten school, in the village aiming to realise his father's dream. The school has 175 students of up to class V.

"My brother wanted to construct a residential building and a hospital on the BLOOMS campus for the students and the poor. He dreamt of setting up an old home for the destitute. He also planned to run an agricultural project to fund these institutions," Shams told The Daily Star.

Rabiul's family has already started implementing the project by planting



Rabiul's widow and kids.

PHOTO: STAR

a banana orchard on 137 decimals of land of his uncle. It has also started farming fish in a pond.

His mother Karimon Nesa still cannot hold back her tears while speaking of her son. The heartbroken mother takes pride in thinking that her son sacrificed his life for the country.

"I had no worries when my son was alive. After the death of my husband in 2006, Rabiul took the responsibility of our family," she lamented.

But the sudden demise of the family's lone breadwinner has left it in the dark.

Although the family received some government assistance, it has no permanent income now.

Karimon Nesa said the amount received from the government was deposited with a bank. "We could survive well if my younger son and Rabiul's wife get jobs as per their qualifications."

A Masters degree holder from Jahangirnagar University, Shams is serving a private company now while Salma, who completed Masters degree at National University, is still unemployed.

Salma said the Jahangirnagar University authorities had assured her of a first-class job.

"One year has passed, but the authorities are yet to deliver on their pledge," she added.