

‘HAMZA BRIGADE’ IN CTC

33 indicted on terror charges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cig

A Chattogram court yesterday framed charges against 33 people, including High Court lawyer Shakila Farzana, in two cases filed over their alleged involvement with Shaheed Hamza Brigade (SHB), a militant outfit busted by the Rab members in 2015.

Chattogram Anti-Terrorism Tribunal's acting Judge Abdul Halim framed the charges in the cases filed with Hathazari and Banshkhal police stations under the Anti-Terrorism Act, said Monoranjan Das, public prosecutor of the tribunal.

The tribunal also issued an arrest warrant against Shakila, daughter of the BNP's former whip Syed Wahidul Alam.

"Barrister Shakila is accused in both the cases and had been on bail," Monoranjan said, adding that the tribunal issued the warrant cancelling her bail.

The tribunal fixed September 8 for recording witnesses testimonies in the cases, he also said.

Shakila's lawyer advocate Abdus Sattar said they had sought some more time from the tribunal as his client was staying abroad for treatment.

Shakila was arrested along with two other lawyers -- Hasanuzzaman Liton and Mahfuz Chowdhury Papon -- on charges of funding terrorism on

August 18, 2015.

Rab said the trio had deposited a total of Tk 1.08 crore in the bank account of Maniruzzaman Don, a key member of the SHB.

On February 19, 2015, Rab raided a training centre of the SHB, which was being run in the guise of an Arabic learning centre, at a madrasa in Olipur area of Chattogram's Hathazari upazila and arrested 12 people.

Rab claimed the centre was used for teaching extremism to the newly recruited members of the outfit.

However, the elite force members could not arrest chief of the training centre Mohammad Fattah, who had escaped before the raid.

They are yet to trace out Maniruzzaman and Allama Libidi, a Dubai expatriate and another donor of the militant outfit.

Rab said Chattogram-based Hamza Brigade was formed in late 2013 by some former members of Jamaat-e-Islami's student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir, Qawmi madrasa-based radical platform Hefazat-e-Islam and other militant groups.

Their aim was to topple the incumbent government through an armed revolution and establish an Islamic state incorporating Chattogram, CHT, Cox's Bazar and parts of the bordering areas of Myanmar and India.

Release of Iranian tanker 'very unfortunate': Pompeo

AFP, Washington

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo expressed frustration Monday over the "very unfortunate" decision to release an Iranian tanker held off Gibraltar, in an implicit rebuke to ally Britain.

The British overseas territory rejected a US demand to seize the vessel, which has since departed Gibraltar and entered international waters.

"It's very unfortunate that that ship was released," Pompeo told Fox News when asked if the move was a mistake by the British.

Gibraltar seized the Grace 1 on July 4 on suspicion it was transporting oil to Syria in breach of European Union sanctions, triggering a sharp deterioration in relations between

Tehran and London. Iran has repeatedly denied any violations.

Its Supreme Court ordered the tanker released last Thursday, with Iranian officials saying a new crew had arrived to pilot the vessel -- now renamed the Adrian Darya -- and its 2.1 million barrels of oil.

But on Friday, the US Justice Department filed a last-minute request to detain the ship, alleging it was involved in supporting illicit shipments to Syria by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, listed as a terrorist group by Washington.

Gibraltar's government rejected that request, saying it could not seek a court order to detain the supertanker because US sanctions against Iran were not applicable in the European Union.

Yemen separatists surround two govt camps in south

AFP, Aden

Separatists surrounded two government military bases in Yemen's south and demanded elements inside surrender, sources on both sides said yesterday, ten days after the secessionists seized defacto capital Aden.

The flare-up, in Abyan province, comes after the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC) partially withdrew from key sites it occupied in Aden, and the Saudi-led military coalition -- which backs the government -- said Riyadh and Abu Dhabi had "succeeded in calming the situation".

But on Tuesday fighters from the so-called Security Belt Forces surrounded a military camp in Zinjibar, the capital

of Abyan, and another at Al-Kawd, according to government sources.

Yemeni Information Minister Moammer al-Eryani said the Zinjibar base had been surrounded, noting that it was a special forces camp.

"The Security Belt Forces... are demanding the (government) troops surrender or they will storm the camp," he said, referring to a United Arab Emirates trained force that is aligned with the separatist STC.

STC spokesman Nizar Haitham confirmed to AFP that the two pro-government camps were surrounded by separatist troops.

The Security Belt Forces are "pursuing (agents) working to destabilise security and stability and hiding in the camps belonging to the legitimate government", he told AFP.

Pollution to claim

FROM PAGE 1

How Japan's financing of highly polluting overseas coal plants endangers public health", also stated that Japanese-financed coal power plants are likely to emit up to 13 times more nitrogen oxides (NOx), 33 times more sulfur dioxide (SO2) and 40 times more dust than those plants built in Japan.

Most of those power plants located in South and Southeast Asian countries were financed by Japanese public finance agencies JBIC, JICA and NEXI. They have invested \$16.7 billion in coal plants between January 2013 to May 2019, of which Indonesia is the major recipient with 42 percent, Vietnam 20 percent and Bangladesh 18 percent.

Japan has developed technology to reduce emissions and is using that in their own coal-fired plants, but they are financing far inferior technologies in other countries, the report said, adding that the Japanese government was "exporting air pollution overseas".

Japan has a stricter guideline than WHO set recommendations for air pollution for their own country. But the power plants Japan is financing would breach the WHO guidelines, the report mentioned.

lung cancer, heart and respiratory illness in adults, as well as respiratory infections in children.

"It's unfortunate to see the gap between Japan's promises of exporting quality infrastructure and the reality of low-quality coal technology exports. Japan should honour its trading partners and citizens of those countries by promoting energy technologies that stop hurting people's health and the environment," said Senior Energy Campaigner Hanna Hakko at Greenpeace Japan.

Japan is currently the only G7 country still actively building new coal power plants at home and abroad, and is the second largest public investor in overseas coal projects among the G20 countries.

"If it's not good enough for Japan, it's not good enough for Indonesia. Governments in the host countries of Japan's coal projects must protect their citizens by setting stronger emission standards," Tata Mustasya, Greenpeace Southeast Asia's regional climate and energy campaign coordinator, said in the report.

Greenpeace demands that both Japan and countries receiving Japanese coal financing immediately shift away from coal and move toward clean renewable energy sources, the report added.



Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

In agony, they wait for justice

FROM PAGE 1

But AL leaders Suranjit Sengupta and Mohammad Hanif, who were injured in the attack, and Zillur Rahman, who lost his wife, were not fortunate enough to get justice in their lifetime.

A special court in Dhaka delivered the verdict on October 10 last year.

BNP's acting chairman Tarique Rahman and 18 others were sentenced to life in prison while former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar, and 18 others were given death penalty on charges of murder through criminal conspiracy.

All the 38 accused were also sentenced to life in prison for causing grievous injuries to the survivors.

With the code "Sheikh Hasina will be served a light breakfast", some home-grown militants with the help of international militant groups launched the attack, said the court in its verdict.

"Specialised lethal weapon Arges grenades, which are used in wars, were blasted in front of the Awami League's central office on 23 Bangabandhu Avenue in broad daylight with the help of the then state machinery," said Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 Judge Shahed Nuruddin.

PRESENT STATUS

The High Court is yet to start the hearing on the death references and

appeals in connection with the cases due to non-preparation of paper books.

A paper book contains all the details of a case, trial proceedings, statements, evidence, verdicts and other documents. It is necessary for the HC to hear and dispose of a death reference and an appeal.

Once the paper book is ready, an HC bench hears and disposes of its death reference and appeal.

According to the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), if a lower court awards death penalty, the verdict is

- Babar and 18 others given death penalty
- Tarique and 18 others given life term

examined by the HC for confirmation of the punishment.

The case documents and judgment, as the death reference, reach the HC from the lower court within seven days of the verdict.

Contacted, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam told The Daily Star on August 6 that the HC is yet to start the hearing on death reference and appeals of the grenade attack cases as the paper books are not ready.

"It cannot be specifically said now

when the High Court can start the hearing on the death references and appeals of the August 21 grenade attack cases and when the hearing will be finished and they will be disposed of," he said.

Mohammad Saifur Rahman, special officer of the HC, told this correspondent on August 7 that the official process of preparing the paper books has been started.

"But it cannot be said at this moment when the paper books will be prepared and when the High Court will start the hearing on their death references and appeals," he added.

After the death reference reached the HC, the convicts, now in jail, filed separate appeals with the HC challenging the trial court verdict.

On January 13 last year, the HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman accepted the appeals for hearing.

The bench also stayed part of the trial court verdict that fined the convicts of the cases.

The bench passed the order as the appeals filed by the convicts were included in its cause list, the then Assistant Attorney General Md Yousuf Mahmud Morshed had told The Daily Star.

He had also said the HC will hold the hearing on the appeals after relevant procedures are completed.

A Close Shave

FROM PAGE 1

down by the truck on the fateful afternoon of August 21. But that's exactly what the small table did.

The place at the heart of the capital turned out to be a scene of chaos, smokes, screams, and confusion, resembling a set for a war movie. Disjointed limbs and bloody bodies littered everywhere, with sobs of people and mayhem echoing the place.

The grisly grenade attack left 24 people, including Ivy Rahman, wife of late president Zillur Rahman, dead and more than 300 others injured.

Hasina, then Leader of the Opposition, narrowly escaped the attack, but suffered damage in her right ear. The attackers left the spot without a problem, reportedly with the help of the law enforcement agencies.

The BNP-led four-party coalition was in power. After the attack, Hasina held the government responsible, saying it was a government-sponsored attempt to kill her. She demanded an investigation involving the international community.

Moments before the attack, the scene at the AL central office on Bangabandhu Avenue was different. The place was teeming with party leaders, activists, workers and supporters in the sultry and humid August afternoon.

Clattered with sweat, they were all listening to Hasina speaking from the truck, holding a microphone. Senior leaders and security personnel were also on the truck, which was used as a makeshift dais.

As Hasina was about to close her speech, an explosion occurred at 5:22pm, turning the venue into a ghastly scene of bloody carnage in seconds.

"There was a loud boom all of a sudden. We heard two more explosions in quick successions," said AL leader Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, as he recounted the fateful evening and the events leading to and following the day to The Daily Star in 2016.

"Apa [Hasina] took two steps backward. We ducked her beneath the table as a cover," he recalled.

Mohammad Hanif, late Dhaka mayor; Squadron Leader (ret'd) Abdullah Al Mamun, a member of Hasina's personal security team; Nazib Ahmed, a cousin of Hasina; and Maya, the then general secretary of Dhaka City Unit AL created a human shield to save Hasina.

"It [creating the shield] was nobody's decision in particular. We just followed our instinct to save Apa. So that the bullets hit us, not her," said Maya.


WHAT THEY SAY



"As investigations are on, I won't name anyone. But I do know for sure that there was a plot, which is still being nursed. The attack was part of a conspiracy to tarnish my government's image."
PM KHALEDA ZIA TOLD A PARTY MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 2, 2004.



"We know better who sheds crocodile tears at meetings with foreign envoys and from where the money for treatment comes."
FOREIGN MINISTER MORSHED KHAN TOLD PARLIAMENT AFTER THE ATTACK.



"It's a good question. The Awami League had sought permission for Muktangan, but in the afternoon they moved the venue to Bangabandhu Avenue."
STATE MINISTER FOR HOME LUTFOZZAMAN BABAR TOLD PARLIAMENT.

Echoing him, Nazib Ahmed said the human shield had been in place for three-four minutes.

"When it appeared that she [Hasina] was the target, we encircled her. Nobody gave any instructions about this to anyone. What we had in our mind was to save her at the cost of our lives," said Nazib, a cousin of Hasina.

Hasina was praying herself and asked them all to do the same, he

recalled.

"If we are to die, we'll die here; if we are to survive, we'll survive this way," said Nazib, quoting Hasina.

Both Maya and Nazib said moving the AL chief to safety was the only thing on their mind. They started getting off the truck as the place went quiet for a while, they said.

Maj (ret'd) Shoyeb Mohammad Tariqullah, another security staff member, and Maj Gen (ret'd) Tarique Ahmed Siddique, the then chief of Hasina's personal security wing, were also there.

Together, they decided to get Hasina in her bulletproof sports utility vehicle (SUV), parked around 50 yards from the truck, at any cost. As they took only a few steps, another grenade went off near the truck. They moved back a little, said Nazib.

Just then Shoyeb asked others to leave the truck immediately as the fuel tank got leaked and fuel was dripping.

Immediately, they got down from the truck and managed to take Hasina to the SUV. Maj Mamun ran to the vehicle and opened its left door. Hasina huddled inside it. Nazib, Tarique, Shoyeb, Mamun and Maya followed.

Just then Hasina saw the ghastly scenes.

Some of the injured lay on the street bleeding profusely while some groaned sitting on congealed blood and some motionless bodies lay scattered.

Seeing the grisly scenes, Hasina wanted to get off her vehicle, said Maya. "My party activists are lying around this way. Where are you taking me in this situation?" he quoted the AL chief as saying.

"We replied: Let us take you to safety first. Then we will take care of the matter," said Maya.

They asked Hasina's personal driver Abdul Matin to start the vehicle. But the SUV came under a gun attack. Two bullets hit the left window, by which Hasina was sitting. The front and rear wheels on the left side got punctured by bullets. Still the vehicle moved on, took a left turn to Zero Point and sped away.

The vehicle reached Sudha Sadan, Hasina's personal residence at Dhanmondi-5, around 6:00pm.

"Inside the vehicle, she cried and prayed. But she again wanted to know about the party leaders and activists," Maya recalled.

"She even demanded that we take her back to Bangabandhu Avenue," he said.

[This article was originally published in this paper on August 21, 2016.]

Let's find

FROM PAGE 1

On May 30, 2015, the then Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said there would be no Teesta deal without the West Bengal government on board.

Against this backdrop, officials of the two neighbouring countries believe they can work on sharing water of the other common rivers. A secretary-level meeting in early August decided to work on water-sharing and basin management of seven rivers -- the Manu, Muhuri, Khawai, Feni, Gumti, Dharla, and the Dudhkumar.

They also decided to have a feasibility study on the proposed Ganges Barrage project, especially its impact on the environment and people's livelihoods in both the countries.

Asked about concerns that some four million Bangla-speaking people are at the risk of losing Indian citizenship as they were left out of the National Register of Citizens in Assam, Jaishankar said, "This is an internal matter of India."

However, Foreign Minister Momen later told reporters that India asked Bangladesh not to worry about the NRC issue.

"We said we are already in serious trouble with 1.1 million Rohingyas ... They [Jaishankar] said 'you don't worry at all about it,' Momen told some reporters at his ministry office.

The NRC is aimed at identifying illegal immigrants in Assam, which shares a border with Bangladesh. It is the only Indian state where people are being registered under the NRC.

When the draft NRC was published on July 30, 2018, there was a controversy over the exclusion of 40.7 lakh people.

This is Jaishankar's maiden visit to Dhaka since he became a minister of the BJP-led government in May.

The three-day visit, which began on Monday, comes ahead of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's state visit to New Delhi in the first week of October.

Jaishankar handed Hasina Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's invitation for the visit when he met her at the Gono Bhaban later in the day, reports UNB.

Hasina thanked Modi for the invitation.

PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed reporters after the meeting. He said Jaishankar laid stress on simplifying the process for people's visits to the countries.

During the meeting with Hasina, Jaishankar expressed interest in enhancing cooperation in the energy sector, especially hydroelectricity project.

The hydroelectric project can be implemented effectively as the cost of this project is lower, he told the PM.

At the meeting at Jamuna, Jaishankar and Momen discussed preparations for the PM's visit to India. Dhaka and Delhi are likely to sign a number of MoUs then.

Details were not disclosed but the ministers discussed border management, reducing untoward incidents at the border, trade and investment, power and energy, river water-sharing, connectivity, culture, and consular issues.

They reviewed progress of projects under the Indian Lines of Credit (LOC). Sources said Momen sought fast disbursement of funds.

The ministers also discussed the Rohingya crisis that has put immense strain on the economy, environment, and security of Bangladesh.

"We agreed that safe, speedy, and sustainable return of the displaced people from Myanmar is important in the national interest of all the three countries -- Bangladesh, Myanmar, and India," said Jaishankar.

He also reaffirmed India's readiness to provide more assistance to the Rohingyas in Bangladesh and improve socio-economic conditions in Rakhine State.

Jaishankar said Bangladesh and India are enjoying the best of relations. Over 100 agreements have been signed in the last 10 years and 68 of them were inked in the last three years. The decades-old land boundary and maritime issues have been resolved.

It's now the golden age of Dhaka-Delhi ties thanks to the visionary statesmanship of Modi and Hasina, he said, terming it "a model in South Asia".

"Our ties have transcended into a strategic partnership," he said, adding that India would like to extend all possible support to Bangladesh to realise its development agenda.

The Indian minister said Dhaka and Delhi agreed to be partners against crime, extremism, and terrorist groups.

The two countries agreed to increase connectivity via air and waterways, which would generate income and growth for the countries.

"We've many energy-sharing projects, which we're discussing, including private and public sector partnership, and we hope to take those forward," Jaishankar added.

He said they were ready to move to the next stage of economic partnership as Bangladesh's economy develops and matures. "We'll make progress at a pace that is comfortable for Bangladesh."

Jaishankar said India was ready to make travel as seamless as possible for Bangladeshis wishing to visit India.

Momen said they had a very fruitful discussion. While talking to journalists at his office, he said Bangladesh raised the issue of killings along the border. "We want zero deaths."

He said despite repeated commitments made by India, border killings remain a problem. The Indian side yesterday assured Bangladesh of looking into the matter.

Before the meeting with Momen, Jaishankar visited Bangabandhu Memorial Museum on Dhanmondi Road-32 and paid tributes to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

He is scheduled to leave for Nepal today.