

Bangladesh to pass law to curb terror financing

REUTERS

DHAKA, DECEMBER 18

BANGLADESH is set to pass a law clamping down on the financing of militants suspected of planning attacks, a senior bank official said today.

The Muslim nation has suffered a wave of bombings in recent months, including suicide attacks, and police blame Islamist militants for the violence.

"The new law will empower the central bank to suspend or stop operations of any account, for 30 days, in suspicious transactions without any notice," said Nazmul Hasan, an executive director of the Central Bangladesh Bank.

"Now the central bank will be able to detect and curb international terror financing, if any, in the country as well as local terror financing," Nazmul said.

He said the law had already been approved by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman and would soon come into affect. It will be submitted to parliament through the Law Ministry, and has a strong chance of being passed because the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party holds a two-thirds majority in the legislature.

Under the law, owners of accounts used to finance militant attacks faced seven years in jail, Nazmul said.

The new law would replace existing anti-money laundering legislation, which did not have sufficient provisions to curb financing of militant activities, he said.

It would also allow the central bank to set up a Financial Intelligence Unit and a Financial Crime Investigation and Prosecution Office.

At least 30 people have been killed and 150 wounded in suicide bomb attacks across the



Thousands of madarsa students and teachers protested on Sunday against a rash of bomb blasts in the country and criticised the government for harassing them in the name of national security. Reuters

country since August 17. Authorities have blamed outlawed Islamist group Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen of being involved.

Media reports, quoting intelligence sources, said a number of Islamic Non-Government Organisations, mostly based in the Middle East, provided money.

—PTI

13 DEC 2005

INDIAN EXPRESS

Bangladesh at the crossroads

The appearance for the first time in Bangladesh of the suicide bomber, in Gazipur and in Chittagong, brings the present Bangladesh National Party government of Khaleda Zia to a day of reckoning. For the past four years her party has been in coalition with the Jamaat-e-Islami, a political group which fought on the side of Pakistan against the emergence of the independent country of Bangladesh in the liberation war of 1971. During its time in office there have been 28 bomb blasts in the country, which have killed more than a hundred people. Blame for these outrages has always been firmly placed with the Opposition or foreign (that is, Indian) interests, and the government has denied the existence of Islamic extremists in the country, responding to each new bombing by accusing others of "furnishing the image" of Bangladesh.

Now the militant Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh has claimed responsibility for recent outrages, a more realistic appraisal can no longer be avoided. Within days, a stream of revelations, arrests, discovery of caches of arms and plots was uncovered. This suggests, either that the government and security forces have long been aware of the machinations of fundamentalists, or, possibly, that they have arrested people at random, in order to be seen by the world to be doing something. Nor is the Opposition spared embarrassment. The government has invited Sheikh Hasina of the Awami League to discuss the best way to confront the fundamentalist threat in the country, but since the Opposition has refused to play the democratic game, absenting itself from parliament and using the *hartal*, (an archaic form of political strike from the struggle against the British Raj) to attack the government, it too has made its contribution to the growth of extremism. The self-avowed presence of militant Islamists in the country has at last attracted international attention which, until now, had indulgently overlooked the bombings. The USA, anxious to appear friendly to Islam in general, has praised Bangladesh as one of the rare models of a secular Muslim democracy. This, after all, is a template for those democratic freedoms it is ostensibly bringing to Afghanistan and Iraq, and to which it wishes to persuade other autocratic and repressive Muslim regimes. Events in Bangladesh present the USA in a curious light: while ostensibly establishing democracy in one part of the world, it has, by its actions, been undermining it elsewhere. The benign neglect by the Western powers has permitted the Bangladesh government to connive at the emergence of a political Islam which it can no longer contain, and certainly cannot control.

All terrorist acts over the past four years have been attributed to the machinations of the Opposition, even though most were aimed at Awami League politicians, and the rest at secular targets or those seen as un-Islamic. The assassination of prominent Opposition leaders, including Ahsanullah Master and SAMS Kibria, and even the bomb blast of August 2003 which killed veteran

Awami League politician Ivy Rahman, were dismissed by the government as internal party feuds or other devious Opposition schemes to besmirch the reputation of the country. When Islamic militants of the Jamatul Mujahideen claimed responsibility for the detonation of over 450 bombs all over the country in August 2005, Khaleda Zia's response was ambiguous: her reflex is to ascribe them to "anti-national elements". The growth of political

NEW VISTAS

JEREMY SEABROOK



Islam has developed in Bangladesh protected by the Jamaat and the BNP has not disclaimed the advantages gained by tolerating the work of extremists. The BNP is, as its name suggests, an intensely nationalistic party, but its nationalism is almost entirely configured around resentment of India, which encloses the country on three sides. Its distaste for the home of Hinduism drives it into a natural alliance with the Islamists.

The present moment is critical. Zia's invitation to the Opposition (which has crystallised into a coalition of 14 parties, including small Left groups) to work together has been resisted by Hasina, since the government neglected to take any action against those who had targeted her party. Hasina was herself wounded in an assassination attempt in 2004. The conflict between the two main parties is no ordinary democratic conflict. Hasina is the daughter of the first President of free Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujib, who, with most of his family, was assassinated in 1975. Zia is the widow of the military leader Ziaur Rahman, who had also been a leader in the liberation war, and who came to power in the chaos following the death of Sheikh Mujib. He founded the National Party, and was himself assassinated in 1981. A decade of military rule under the autocratic Ershad was followed by a return to democracy in

1992, in which the BNP came to power. The Awami League ruled between 1996 and 2001, when the BNP was elected again. The quarrel between the two leaders is based upon rival claims as to whether the father of Hasina or the husband of Khaleda were the true architects of the freedom of Bangladesh. Khaleda has also blamed India for disturbances which are wholly homegrown. In November 2005, speaking to ambassadors, she complained of the "anti-Bangladesh propaganda which continues to undermine the image of the country". She attributed the holding of seminars, symposia and conferences around the world, in which Western human rights activists are prominent, to manipulations by RAW, the Indian intelligence agency. She singled out, as examples of Western dupes of India, Lord Avebury and Lord Dholakia, speakers at a human rights conference at SOAS in June 2005.

Organisations and individuals targeted by bombers and assassins over the past six years have also included journalists, judges and courts, mosques belonging to the Ahmadiya sect, whose publications the Government itself banned three years ago as "un-Islamic", Leftist cultural organisations, Christian churches, cinema halls showing "profane" films, and, perhaps most symbolic of all, the Poila Baisakh celebrations in Ramna Park in April 2001. For, this was a traditional Bengali festival, scorned by Islamists as "Hindu": the desire to differentiate Bangladeshi nationalism from the culture of Indian West Bengal has led to a fateful congruence between Islamists, who want to re-affirm Islamic culture, and nationalists, consumed as they are by resentment of an India which they perceive as the main obstacle to their realisation of a true Bangladeshi identity. The coalition has been effective, since the design of the Jamaat was to win back for Islam a country lost to Pakistan, combined with the desire of the BNP to nourish a Bangladeshi, as opposed to a Bengali, identity. This alliance has been impaired by the disclosure of what has long been an open secret: the operations of Islamic terrorists, including the shadowy Bangla Bhai in the north of Bangladesh who has killed with impunity. The arrival of suicide bombers in a country where Bengali and Islamic identities have co-existed for centuries (within the same individuals!) marks a new turn in the global war on terror. The only winners in the intractable stand-off and implacable hatred between the two women leaders of Bangladesh are those who would eliminate a tolerant, eclectic Bengali culture, and replace it with the asperity of a militant Islam. As long as the US State Department continues to praise Bangladesh as a moderate Muslim democracy, it hastens the arrival of such a society. It is time that suicide bombings and outrages against civilians acquired the same weight wherever they occur, and not be treated as symptoms of systematic terror in Iraq, New York or London, yet as isolated and unfortunate incidents in other parts of the world. To play down atrocities in Bangladesh is to insult the suffering of its people.

Bangladesh freedom fighters' drive to "restore secularism"

Mukti Joddha Kalyan Foundation seeks to realise "their old dream"

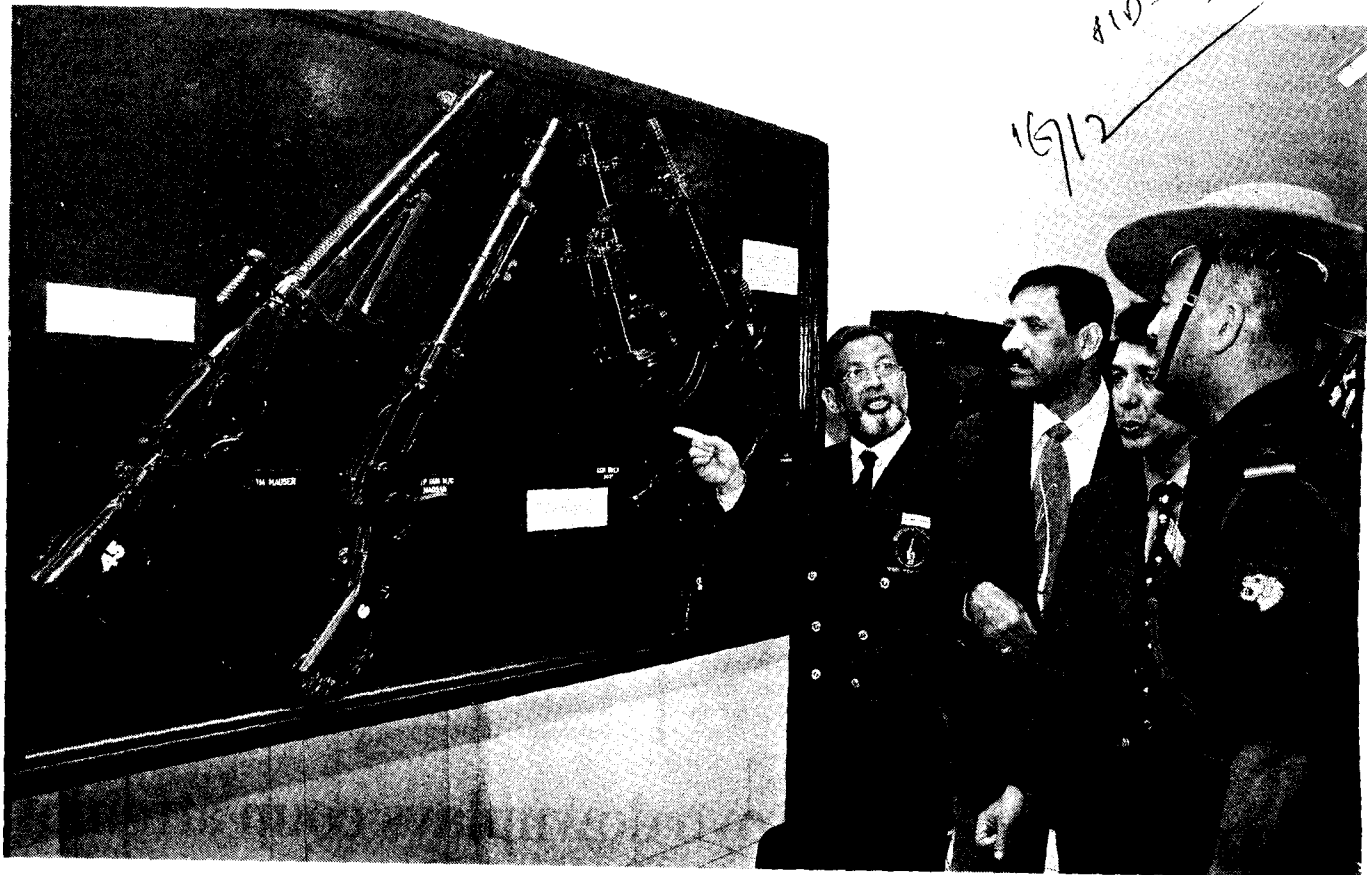
Special Correspondent

KOLKATA: This is not quite the Bangladesh where lives were sacrificed, blood was shed for. "One of the four pillars that we had helped set up with the liberation of our country - that of secularism - has toppled. A new campaign led by the same people is on to put the pillar back in place," Major General K. M. Safiullah, the first Chief of Staff of the Bangladesh Army and a Sector Commander of the erstwhile Mukti Joddha (freedom fighters' army) in that country's Liberation War, said here on the eve of the 34th anniversary of the signing of the Instrument of Surrender between the Indian and Pakistani Armies in (what was then) Dacca that led to the creation of Bangladesh.

The day will be celebrated as Vijay Diwas (Victory Day) in India on Friday. To commemorate the event senior officials of Mukti Joddha which fought alongside Indian troops in the war have congregated here under the aegis of the Eastern Command of the Indian Army for the first time since Bangladesh came into being.

Maj. Gen. Safiullah and some of his former colleagues are now on a different warpath. They have set up the Mukti Joddha Kalyan Foundation - an organisation that has opened its doors to those who belonged to the Mukti Joddha to join in the campaign "to achieve the old dream we, as freedom fighters, had shared," he told *The Hindu* here on Thursday.

The adversary has changed. It



NOSTALGIA: Senior officers of the Mukti Joddha (Freedom Fighters) that fought alongside the Indian Army in the War for the Liberation of Bangladesh visiting the Manekshaw Museum in Fort William, Kolkata, on Thursday. - PHOTO: SUSHANTA PATRONOBISH

is now the "forces of fundamentalism instrumental in the removal of the pillar of secularism we had installed." The plan is "to bring together as many of the 1,35,000-odd freedom fighters as one can under an umbrella with the aim of achieving the dream that led us to fight for the

Independence of our country," Maj. Gen. Safiullah said. "Democracy, socialism and Bengali nationalism were the other pillars we had fought to establish," he said. As part of the Vijay Diwas celebrations he and a few others among his Mukti Joddha colleagues were taken by officers

of the Eastern Command around the galleries of the Manekshaw Museum at the Command's headquarters in Fort William in what to Maj. Gen. Safiullah was "a sentimental, nostalgic journey tinged with sadness."

On display in the galleries are captured flags, rare weapons

used by the Indian forces during the war, seized official boards of the Pakistan Army and rare photographs taken in the months of the Liberation War depicting, among other events, captured Pakistani tanks and volunteers of the Mukti Joddha being imparted training.

16 DEC 2005

THE HINDU

Bangladesh arrests military head of Islamic group

Dhaka: Bangladesh's elite security force said on Wednesday it has arrested the military head of a militant group which is waging a deadly bombing campaign to impose Islamic law in the majority-Muslim country.

"We have caught Aatur Rahman Sunny, the military head of Jamayetul Mujahideen, from a hideout in Dhaka today," Lieutenant Commander Mahbubul Haq Molla, a senior officer of the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), said.

Sunny, who police say led a series of bomb attacks on behalf of the banned group, would be paraded before the media later on Wednesday, police said.

"RAB officers surrounded a dormitory of a technical institute in the city and nabbed Sunny from his hideout," Molla said. "We have information that he is the military and operation chief of Jamayetul Mujahideen."

Police have linked Jamayetul Mujahideen to a wave of nationwide bomb blasts in August and suicide bombings late last month. A total of 24 people as well as four suicide bombers have been killed since August.

The group wants to impose strict Taliban-style Islamic law in the country and has made the judiciary its prime target, with two judges and four lawyers among those killed in the suicide attacks. The RAB, created early last year, said it also seized a major arms and explosives cache in Dhaka. "Our men have seized a warehouse full of arms and explosives ... early Wednesday morning," said Squadron Leader Fazal, a spokesman for the force of police and paramilitaries. AFP

Militants in veil threat to Bangla women



A woman stands next to her Volkswagen Beetle at a rally in Dhaka. (Reuters)

Dhaka, Dec. 9 (Reuters): A banned Islamist militant group blamed for a series of bombings in Bangladesh has threatened to kill women, including non-Muslims, if they do not wear the veil, a statement said.

The statement by the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen came hours after yesterday's suicide bomb attack in a northern town that killed at least eight people, the latest of a series of blasts blamed on militant groups in their campaign for an Islamic state.

"Women will be killed if they are found to move around without wearing burqa from the first day of Jilhaj," the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen said in the statement sent to a Dhaka newspaper office. Jilhaj refers to the Arabic month beginning from early January

"Women, including non-Muslims, are hereby advised not to go out of home without burqa. Seclusion has been made compulsory for you," said the statement in Bangla, a copy of which was obtained by Reuters today.

The group, which wants the introduction of sharia laws in Bangladesh, also ordered women students at Dhaka University not to step out after sunset, prompting police to increase security around the campus.

Earlier, a police officer said 30 suspected members of the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen and another outlawed group, Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh, were arrested for involvement in a wave of bomb attacks that have rattled the nation this year.

A dozen bombs were s

in raids across the country, the official said, as police hunted for the leaders of the two outlawed groups.

Two bombs exploded on a crowded street in the northern town of Netrokona yesterday, killing eight.

A suicide bomber was believed to be among the dead, while another was found wounded with an unexploded bomb strapped to his body.

"These bombers are enemies of Islam and must be stopped," said an official at the ministry of religious affairs, adding that the government had asked clerics to spread the message from the nation's 250,000 mosques. Yesterday's deaths took the number of people killed by suspected suicide bombers to 28 in three weeks, including judges, lawyers and policemen.

10 DEC 2005

THE HILLTOPPER

Khaleda's agenda

Handing over power to Islamists

The situation in Bangladesh is fast heading towards anarchy. Close on the heels of the killing of two district judges in a bomb attack in Barisal, suicide bombers struck Gazipur, neighbouring Dhaka, and Chittagong claiming a total of 15 lives. This was the first time Bangladesh experienced home-grown fedayeen. The suicide bombers are said to be members of Jamatul Mujahideen, a jihadi group with links to Al Qaeda. They made the judiciary and the courts their principal targets. The attack is ostensibly on the Constitution and on rule of law, which they want replaced with Islamic law. But there are valid grounds to fear that jihadis working in tandem with the Islamists in the ruling coalition are creating a situation that will force a takeover by the military whose rank and file has been infiltrated by committed followers of the pro-Pakistan Jamat-e-Islami. They even favour a loose confederation with Pakistan at a future date. Already indications are that Begum Zia, unable to cope with growing violence, will soon ask the military to take charge of law and order and assume other responsibilities as well.

Ultimately, the aim is to prevent the Awami League-led 14-party alliance, composed of secular, democratic and pro-liberation forces, from coming to power in the January 2007 parliamentary election. The massive turnout at the alliance's 22 November Dhaka rally coupled with the growing disaffection among a section of the ruling BNP over the indulgence allowed to Islamists in the coalition have made Begum Zia highly uneasy. Her abject failure at governance has resulted in steep rise in prices of all essentials and helped Bangladesh earn the opprobrium for the fourth successive year of being the world's most corrupt country. Bomb blasts, killings and uncontrollable corruption have already resulted in donors tapering off their aid. The situation is becoming extremely grim for Begum Zia. The military which is friendly to her but pronouncedly anti-Hasina is her last hope. But every spell of military rule in the past only worsened Bangladesh's lot. Earlier when Begum Zia called in the military to restore order it had disastrous results.

THE STATESMAN

Bangla cops find more bombs

REUTERS
Dhaka, December 2

POLICE HUNTING for suicide bombers in Bangladesh claimed to have found five bombs and arrested 20 suspected Islamist militants on Friday after three bomb attacks killed 13 people and injured nearly 100 earlier this week.

The bombs were found on a street corner in the southwestern city of Khulna. Fifty suspected militants, mostly students of religious schools across the country, have been detained over the past four days.

Junior Home Minister Lutfuzaman Babar told reporters late on Thursday that the government was doing all it could to stop a wave of bombings by militants who are fighting to turn the mainly Muslim democracy into a Sharia-based Islamic state.

He had earlier said that the bombers were part of a 2,000-strong suicide squad set up by two outlawed militant groups — Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh.

Militants launched their violent campaign in August, detonating nearly 500 bombs within hours near court buildings and government offices. Nearly 20 people have been killed and



Bangladeshis protest in Dhaka against the Gazipur blast.

AFP

more than 200 wounded in the wave of bombings.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has called for political unity to fight the militants and sought to assure Bangladeshis they are safe. Khaleda told a rally in Kushtia late on Thursday that the militants behind the blasts would be "found, arrested and punished". But she added: "This would not be possible unless all political parties cooperated with the government and law enforcing agencies."

Khaleda's main rival, the Awami League, immediately rejected her call. "Opposition parties cannot respond to a farcical call ... while the government is sharing power with enemies of Bangladesh's independence," Abdul Jalil, general secretary of the Awami League, said on Friday, referring to the country's biggest religion-based political party, Jamaat-e-Islami, that has two ministers in Khaleda's cabinet, and which had opposed Bangladesh's independence in 1971.

1 killed, 400 hurt in cricket clash

AT LEAST one man was killed, and nearly 400 others were injured and a dozen houses were torched in a series of clashes on Thursday over a cricket match in Bangladesh, police said on Friday.

Bangladesh Rifles and police fired shots and tear-gas shells on Thursday to disperse a fighting mob in a village near the Brahmanbaria district town, 100 km east of Dhaka.

The villagers used guns, machetes and sticks in clashes that began on Tuesday following an umpire's controversial decision during a cricket match between two rural teams. TV footage on Friday showed hundreds of people carrying sticks fighting pitched battles in paddy ground at Sarail.

Reuters, Dhaka

অশনি সংকেত

আশঙ্কা ক্রমেই সত্য হইতেছে। বাংলাদেশে ইসলামি জেহাদের সন্ত্রাসবাদী তৎপরতা উত্তরোত্তর সামনে আসিতেছে। কয়েক মাস আগে সারা দেশ জুড়িয়া নানা স্থানে বিস্ফোরণ ঘটাইয়া জেহাদিরা প্রথম তাহাদের উপস্থিতি জানান দিয়াছিল। সেই সঙ্গে ছিল ব্যাপকতর ও বৃহত্তর উপলব্ধির হুশিয়ারিও। সরকার তাহাদের কথা মতো না চলিলে ভবিষ্যতে আরও ভয়ঙ্কর আঘাত হানার হুমকি ছিল সেই সুসম্বিত আক্রমণে। কিন্তু বেগম খালেদা জিয়ার সরকার বিষয়টিকে গুরুত্ব দিতে চাহে নাই। হামলাবাজরা 'বাংলাদেশের শান্তিনাশে ষড়যন্ত্রী ভারতীয় সমাজবিরোধী', এমন 'যুক্তি'ও সেখানকার বিদেশ দফতরের তরফে দেওয়া হয়। কিন্তু এ বার আর খুচরো বোমা-পটকা নয়, রীতিমত মানববোমার বিস্ফোরণ ঘটাইয়া জেহাদিরা সংকেত দিয়াছে, তাহারা সংগঠিত, প্রস্তুত। পশ্চিম এশিয়া, ইন্দোনেশিয়া, পাকিস্তান কিংবা ইউরোপের নানা শহরে জেহাদিরা যে ফির্দাইন হামলা চালাইয়া থাকে, বাংলাদেশেও সেই ধাঁচেই আঘাত হানিয়া দক্ষিণ এশিয়ায় সন্ত্রাসবাদের আন্তর্জাতিক সীমান্তকেই আরও প্রসারিত করা হইল।

লক্ষণীয়, দুইটি মানববোমাই বিস্ফোরিত হইয়াছে আদালত চক্রে এবং হতাহতদের অধিকাংশই আইনজীবী। বার্তাটি অস্পষ্ট নয়। জেহাদিরা বেশ কিছু কাল ধরিয়াই বাংলাদেশে শরিয়তি আইন চালু করার দাবি জানাইতেছে। এই দাবি বাংলাদেশের চলমান গণতান্ত্রিক পরীক্ষানিরীক্ষার পরিপন্থী। এই নবীন গণতন্ত্র এখনও সেনা ছাউনি হইতে সম্পূর্ণ রূপে মুক্ত হইতে পারে নাই। উপরন্তু পরিষদীয় গরিষ্ঠতার জন্য শাসক গোষ্ঠী মৌলবাদী জামাতপন্থীদের সঙ্গেও আপস করিয়া চলিয়াছে। এই আপস মৌলবাদের তান্ত্রিক বনিয়াদকে আক্রমণ করা হইতে নিরস্ত করে। ফলে জেহাদি ইসলামের সহিত গণতন্ত্রের সম্মুখসমরের কাজটি বকেয়া থাকিয়া যায়। আর তাহার সুযোগেই দারিদ্র, অনগ্রসরতা, নিরক্ষরতায় দীর্ঘ জনসমাজে জেহাদি সন্ত্রাসবাদের প্রতিক্রিয়াশীল মতাদর্শ ঘাঁটি গাড়িয়া বসে। বাংলাদেশের রাষ্ট্রধর্ম ইসলাম হইলেও এই নবীন প্রজাতন্ত্রটি এখনও মোটামুটি ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ, গণতান্ত্রিক আইনকানুনই অনুসরণ করার চেষ্টা করে। বিচারব্যবস্থাকে শরিয়ত-অনুসারী করাই জেহাদিদের লক্ষ্য। সে জন্যই আক্রমণের লক্ষ্যবস্ত হইয়াছেন আইনজীবী ও বিচারপতিরা। ধৃতদের আদালতে তোলার লগ্নও সম্ভাবিত। ভয় দেখাইয়া সেই বিচারপ্রক্রিয়াকে নিজেদের অনুকূলে প্রভাবিত করার চেষ্টাতেই এই হামলা।

ভারত দীর্ঘ কাল ধরিয়া বাংলাদেশে আই এস আই সহ জেহাদি জঙ্গিদের তৎপরতা সম্পর্কে সতর্ক করিয়া আসিয়াছে। উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চলে বাংলাদেশ হইতে জেহাদিদের অনুপ্রবেশ বিষয়েও অসংখ্য বার ঢাকার দৃষ্টি আকর্ষণ করা হইয়াছে। বেগম জিয়ার সরকার বরাবরই সে অভিযোগ উড়াইয়া দিয়াছে। চট্টগ্রাম ও ঢাকার কাছে মানববোমার বিস্ফোরণের পরেও যদি বাংলাদেশে জেহাদি ইসলামের উর্বর আবাদকে লঘু করিয়া দেখানোর চেষ্টা হয়, সেটা দুর্ভাগ্যজনক। ভারতের নিরাপত্তা ও সুস্থিতির জন্যই কেবল নয়, বাংলাদেশের নিজের স্থিতি, গণতন্ত্র ও ভবিষ্যতের জন্যও (বস্তুত সে জন্যই বেশি করিয়া) মৌলবাদ ও জেহাদি সন্ত্রাসের বিরুদ্ধে আশু সংগ্রামে অবতীর্ণ হওয়া জরুরি। হামলার প্রতিবাদে দেশব্যাপী আইনজীবীরা ধর্মঘট করিতেছেন। রাজনৈতিক প্রতিস্পর্ধার ঐতিহ্য অক্ষুণ্ণ রাখিতে বিরোধী দল আওয়ামী লিগও নিশ্চয় অচিরে সরকার-বিরোধী আন্দোলনে নামিবে। কিন্তু আন্দোলনের লক্ষ্য হওয়া উচিত মৌলবাদ ও জেহাদি ইসলামের মোকাবিলায় সরকারকে প্ররোচিত করা। কেবল অবিরাম ধর্মঘট-বন্ধ-বয়কটের মাধ্যমে দীর্ঘস্থায়ী অচলাবস্থা সৃষ্টিয় নেতিবাচক আন্দোলন সরকারকে কোণঠাসা করিতে সহায়ক হইতে পারে, জেহাদি নিয়ন্ত্রণে সরকারের হাত শক্ত করিতে সহায়ক হইবে না। বেগম জিয়ার সরকারকেও বুঝিতে হইবে, মৌলবাদের সহিত আপস, জামাতপন্থীদের তোষণ, মোল্লাতন্ত্র ও মোলাবদের তোয়াজ কারয়া ক্ষমতার গদি টিকাইয়া রাখার ঝুঁকি অনেক। ক্ষমতায় থাকিতে জামাতপন্থীদের ব্যবহার করিবার কৌশল আপাতদৃষ্টিতে আকর্ষণীয় হইতে পারে, কিন্তু মৌলবাদ এমন আপসের মাধ্যমে শাসনতন্ত্রে বৈধতা ও গ্রহণযোগ্যতা অর্জন করিয়া লয়, প্রস্তুত করে পা-রাখার জমি। দীর্ঘমেয়াদি বিপদ সেখানেই।

Fresh suicide blast kills 2 in Bangladesh

REUTERS

Dhaka, December 1

A SECOND suspected suicide attack in three days near a court building in the Bangladeshi town of Gazipur killed two people and wounded 25 others on Thursday during a protest march against violence in the country, police said.

Lawyers were staging a demonstration in Gazipur following a spate of attacks by Islamist militants against the judiciary this year when the bomber struck.

On Tuesday, twin suicide bombings in or near court houses in Gazipur and Chittagong killed 11 people and wounded dozens of others.

Police believe a person who died on the way to hospital after Thursday's explosion at a police checkpoint near the court building was the bomber.

A policeman later died in hospital, doctors said. Among those hurt included five policemen and three journalists, witnesses and police said.



Police stand guard at the site of Thursday's suicide blast. (Right) Khaleda Zia. AP



Time has come for the whole nation to join hands in the fight against terrorists.

"The suspected bomber ... disguised himself as a tea vendor," said Kazi Fazle Rabbi, Gazipur district commissioner. "One of his flasks exploded when police stopped him for checking."

Earlier that day, a bomber attacked a police checkpoint outside a court building in the southern port city of Chittagong.

Nearly 100 people have been

wounded in this week's blasts, which police and lawyers said were part of a campaign by Islamist militants to scare the judiciary before it puts rebels detained for other bombings on trial.

Bangladesh has been hit this year by a wave of bombings blamed on militants demanding Islamic law in the mainly Muslim democracy.

'Stand together'

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has cancelled a planned visit to the United Arab Emirates, which was to begin on Saturday, in the wake of the volatile situation in the country, foreign ministry officials said late on Thursday.

Addressing a public rally in western Kushitia town, Khaleda called "for national unity and consensus to fight the bombers and other militants". "Time has come for the whole nation to stand together and join hands in the fight against terrorists trying to destabilise our country."

the Prime Minister said.

Lawyers called a national strike on Thursday to press for greater security and immediate government action to prevent further attacks on the judiciary.

Police and witnesses said 40 people were hurt in clashes between protesters and police in Dhaka and the northern town of Bogra.

Earlier on Thursday, police said they found a bomb at an administrative building at Narayanganj town, 16 km east of the capital Dhaka.

Explosive experts from the elite Rapid Action Battalion removed the "powerful bomb" from the building, a police officer said.

Hundreds of people from two outlawed Muslim groups, Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh, have been arrested this year.

The State Minister for Home Affairs Lutufuzzaman Babar said earlier this month that there were reports that the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen had set up a 2,000-strong suicide squad.

TWIN ATTACKS | Lawyers say warned govt of threat 9 die in Bangla blasts

NIZAM AHMED
DHAKA, NOVEMBER 29

NINE people were killed and 65 wounded by suspected suicide bombings in two Bangladesh cities on Tuesday, apparently the latest in a wave of attacks by militants fighting to turn the country into a Sharia-based Islamic state.

Police said three people, including two of their colleagues, were killed and 15 wounded by blasts at a checkpoint outside a court building in the port city of Chittagong. They said the third person who died was believed to be the bomber.

Another blast, in a court complex in Gazipur—30 km north of the capital—killed six people and wounded nearly 50, police said. Local hospital sources said the wounded included lawyers.

Lawyers said the militants were apparently trying to scare legal professionals before courts began trials of hundreds of detained Islamists for suspected involvement in recent blasts.

"The bombers apparently turned more violent as we set up checkpoints trying to reinforce security at court premises," said Majedul Huq, police commissioner in Chittagong. He said the blasts were probably the work of suicide bombers, who had explosives strapped to their bodies or hidden in bags.

In an immediate protest, hundreds of lawyers took to the streets of Dhaka, Chittagong and other cities, calling for government action to prevent further attacks. They boycotted courts across the country on Tuesday and also called for a general strike on Thursday.

One of country's most senior lawyers, Dr. Kamal Hossain, said Tuesday's blasts were a "stark reminder that the suicide bombers wouldn't



After the blast at the court complex in Gazipur; (below) A woman mourns her father, one of Tuesday's victims. Reuters



rest until they they achieve their mission.

"We reminded the government repeatedly of such threats but they seemed to take it lightly," he said. "Now it is beyond doubt that they (Islamists) have pushed the country into grave danger," Hossain told reporters on Tuesday.

"The government is fully determined to crush the militants at all costs and restore peace in the country," said Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, a senior minister in charge of the home ministry.

The Islamists killed two judges in the coastal town of Jhalakathi on November 14

and threatened to kill more, including Supreme Court judges.

Bombs exploded in three district courts outside Dhaka last month, killing two people and wounding more than a dozen, while 500 small bombs went off across the country on August 17, killing two people and wounding about 100.

Bangladeshi police have acknowledged since those attacks the presence of home-grown potential suicide bombers. They say a 2,000-strong "suicide squad" has been formed from members of the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen and two other banned groups, the Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh and the Harkatul Jihad.

Opposition political parties claim radical Islamic partners of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's government were also involved in the recent bombings—pointing fingers especially to the Jamaate-Islami party.

But the Jamaat and the government have both denied the allegation, saying the opposition was spreading false charges to make political gains ahead of general elections in early 2007. —Reuters

আত্মঘাতী হানায় হাতেখড়ি বাংলাদেশের, হত ১৩

ঢাকা, ২৯ নভেম্বর: লক্ষ্য সেই বিচারবিভাগই। “যারা ইসলামের আইন মানে না, অন্য আইনে বিচার করে....”, তাদেরই নিকেশ করতে চায় জামাত উল মুজাহিদিন। চট্টগ্রামে আজ যে লিফলেট পাওয়া গিয়েছে, তার বক্তব্য অন্তত সে রকমই। আজকের বিস্ফোরণে রক্তাক্ত গাজিপুর ও চট্টগ্রামের আদালত চত্বরই এই হুমকির সাক্ষ্য বহন করছে।

তবে গাজিপুর ও চট্টগ্রামের আদালতে আলাদা হামলা করে আজ এই বার্তা পৌঁছে না দিলেও জঙ্গিদের এই দাবি নিয়ে ইতিপূর্বেই যথেষ্ট অস্বস্তিতে ছিল সরকার। বিশেষত ১৭ অগস্ট দেশজুড়ে বিস্ফোরণের পরে, যার মধ্যে বেশির ভাগই হয়েছিল আদালত চত্বরে। তার পরে ৩ অক্টোবর চাঁদপুর, লক্ষ্মীপুর ও চট্টগ্রামে ও ১৪ নভেম্বর ঝালকাঠির হামলার কথাও মনে রেখেছে বাংলাদেশের মানুষ। সে রকমই

বিস্ফোরণের সালতামামিতে যোগ হল আর একটি তারিখ, ২৯ নভেম্বর।

২৯শেও কেঁপে উঠল দু'টি

আদালত চত্বরই।

২৯শেও ঘটল

অনেক রক্তপাত।

কিন্তু ২৯শে

বাংলাদেশ নিহতের

এক নতুন হিসেব

শিখল, যা এ দেশে

জঙ্গিপনার

ইতিহাসে সূচনা

করল এক নতুন

অধ্যায়ের। আজ

দু'টি ঘটনায়

নিহতের সংখ্যা

মোট তেরো। বা,

বলা ভাল ১১ ও

২। তফাতটা কী?

আজ সকালে বাড়ি থেকে বেরনোর

সময়ে প্রথম এগারো জন জানতেন না,



বাবাকে হারিয়ে। মঙ্গলবার গাজিপুরে। — রয়টার্স

আর তাঁদের বাড়ি ফেরা হবে না, আর কখনওই তাঁরা দেখতে পাবেন না প্রিয় জনের মুখ। তা জেনেই অন্য দু'জন

বেরিয়েছিল। তারা মানববোমা।

কোনও কোনও

সূত্রের খবর, মানবী

বোমা। এটাই যে

বাংলাদেশে প্রথম

আত্মঘাতী হামলা,

তা স্বীকার করেছেন

পুলিশের আইজি

জেনারেল আব্দুল

কায়ুমও।

সকাল নটা

নাগাদ চট্টগ্রামের

আদালতের বাইরে

চেক পয়েন্টেই

সন্দেহভাজন

দিয়েছিল পুলিশ।

কথায়, দেখে

আঠেপুঠে বাঁধা বিস্ফোরক সক্রিয় করতে একটি মুহূর্তই লেগেছিল তার। তাকে আটকানোর 'ধৃষ্টতা' যারা

করেছিল, নিমেষের মধ্যে চতুর্দিকে ছিটকে পড়ে তাদের ছিন্নভিন্ন দেহাংশ।

বুলতে থাকে গাছের ডালে। সে-ও

বাঁচেনি, তবে জীবনের তোয়াক্কাও সে

করেনি। বিস্ফোরণের তীব্রতায়

মারাত্মক জখম হয়েছেন অন্তত জনা

পনেরো লোক।

গাজিপুরের ঘটনাটি অবশ্য অনেক

বড়। আইনজীবীর ভেক ধরে একেবারে

আইনজীবীদের ঘরে পৌঁছেই

বিস্ফোরণ ঘটিয়েছে জঙ্গিটি। তাই

হতাহতের সংখ্যাও অনেক বেশি।

বেসরকারি মতে, অন্তত ১০ জন মারা

গিয়েছেন গাজিপুরেই। আহতের সংখ্যা

পঞ্চাশ ছাড়িয়েছে। যাদের মধ্যে

অনেকেরই অবস্থা গুরুতর। তাই মৃতের

এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

● চিন্তায় দিল্লি...পৃঃ ৫

AM DABAZAR PATRIKA

P. T. O

আত্মঘাতী হামলা

৩০/৩৩
প্রথম পৃষ্ঠার পর

সংখ্যা বাড়বে, এমন আশঙ্কার কথাও শোনা গিয়েছে হাসপাতাল সূত্রে। সরকারি সূত্রে অবশ্য মৃতের সংখ্যা ৫।

আজকের বিস্ফোরণের পরে আইনজীবীরা বিচার বিভাগের নিরাপত্তাহীনতা নিয়ে ক্রোড়ে ফেটে পড়েন। পথে নামেন সুপ্রিম কোর্টের বার অ্যাসোসিয়েশনের আইনজীবীরা। আদালত বয়কট করা হয় দেশজুড়ে। বৃহস্পতিবার সাধারণ ধর্মঘটের ডাক দেওয়া হয়েছে। পশ্চিমী দেশগুলির দূতাবাসে হামলা চালানো হবে বলে দিনদুয়েক আগেই আল কায়দার নাম করে হুমকি আসে। সতর্কতা নেওয়াও হয়। তবে পুলিশ কর্তা আব্দুল কায়ুম এখন বলছেন, “এগুলো শক্তিশালী দেশি বোমা। জামাতের কিছু জঙ্গিকে গ্রেফতার করায় ওরা মরিয়া হয়ে এ সব হামলা করছে।”

পুলিশ বলেছে, ১৭ অগস্টের পরে ক্রমশ শক্তি বাড়িয়েছে ‘সুইসাইড স্কোয়াড’। জামাত উল মুজাহিদিন ছাড়া জাগ্রত মুসলিম জনতা বাংলাদেশ ও হরকত উল জিহাদ একজোট হয়ে প্রায় দু’হাজার জঙ্গির আত্মঘাতী বাহিনী তৈরি করেছে। আত্মঘাতী জঙ্গিদের মোকাবিলায় এখন নতুন প্রশিক্ষণ প্রয়োজন পুলিশ প্রশাসনের। বিরোধী দলগুলির ইঙ্গিত মৌলবাদের বীজ লুকিয়ে রয়েছে সরকারের মধ্যেই। জঙ্গিদের প্রশয় দিচ্ছে তারা। লক্ষ্য, সরকারের শরিক জামাত-ই-ইসলামি, বাংলাদেশের সবচেয়ে বড় ধর্মভিত্তিক রাজনৈতিক দল। এই ইঙ্গিত এসেছে শাসক জোটের প্রধান দল বিএনপি-র মধ্যে থেকেও। ক’দিন আগেই এই ইঙ্গিত করে দল থেকে বিতাড়িত হয়েছেন বিএনপি-র এক সাংসদ। ব্যর্থতার থেকে এ অভিযোগ সরকারের পক্ষে বিপজ্জনক। প্রতিবাদ করেও ঠিক জমি পাচ্ছেন না বিরোধীরা। তবে কি শেষমেশ শরিয়তের বিধান মেনে চলার দিকেই এগোচ্ছে বাংলাদেশ?

ANADU SAZAR DATEDIKA

BNP sacks outspoken MP

Daily Star/ANN & PTI

DHAKA, Nov. 25. — Bangladesh's ruling BNP has sacked one of its Members of Parliament after he accused its key ally, Jamaat-e-Islami, of fanning Islamic militancy in the country.

Mr Abu Hena, who was elected from Bagmara constituency in western Rajshahi district, was sacked by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) chief and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday for "undermining party discipline". His dismissal came soon after a local daily published his interview in which he pointed fingers at Jamaat, a coalition partner in the government.

After he was sacked, Mr Hena, now an independent MP, said the expulsion proved that the government and the BNP wanted to establish the rule of militants in the country. "I did not hold the entire government or the party responsible for the rise of militancy. Neither did I blame

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

I only blamed a section of the government and the party for patronising the militants. The leaders who support the rise of militants have expelled me from the party," he said, pledging to start a nationwide campaign against religious extremism soon.

"I am not alone. The entire nation is with me," he told the *Daily Star* newspaper. He said he had just began to open speak out against the militants who had been first spotted in his Bagmara constituency. The infamous Siddiqur Rahman or "Bangla Bhai" had apparently been part of the group.

Mr Hena said the fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami had had a hand in his sacking. Jamaat dismissed the charges. A BNP statement said Mr Hena had been sacked for "violating party discipline and tarnishing its image". Parliament Speaker Mr Jamiruddin Sircar, however, said Mr Hena would now sit in the House as an Independent MP.

THE STATESMAN

26 NOV 2005

Killing judges

Result of Khaleda's vote-politics

The recent killing of two senior district judges in Bangladesh's Barisal district by a militant Islamic outfit is further proof that fundamentalists want to take the country where the Taliban took Afghanistan. This was the first time that functionaries of the state were killed by jihadis who have vowed to replace "man-made laws by Sharia with immediate effect". The killings were preceded by bomb attacks on judges inside and outside courts in major cities. The jihadis were members of a suicide squad and used sophisticated explosives. The killings have already brought the functioning of courts to a standstill as judges and lawyers have gone on strike demanding security. The killings have also forced Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to acknowledge the presence of Islamic jihadis. But she refuses to arrest Bangla Bhai — the mastermind of the attack — because of his close links with one of her alliance partners, the Jamat-e-Islam.

The roots of the latest attack lie in the Prime Minister's efforts at stalling the execution of Sheikh Mujib's killers, rewarding them with coveted government posts, and in not nabbing those who killed former finance minister SAMS Kibria. Attempts on the life of Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina and the British High Commissioner Anwar Chowdhury were also the result of her inaction. The Americans are no less responsible. Their successive ambassadors and state department spokesmen have called the Jamat-e-Islam Bangladesh's moderate and democratic Muslim face. That face is now showing its true colours.

THE STATESMAN

23 NOV 2005

Eight die in Bangladesh attacks

Haroon Habib

DHAKA: Suicide bombers belonging to suspected Islamist groups killed at least eight persons, including policemen and lawyers, and injured over 100 others on two court premises in Bangladesh on Tuesday. Unconfirmed reports put the death toll at 13.

In the first incident, a suicide bomber carried out an attack at the bar library of Gazipur, 30 km from Dhaka, killing six persons, including two lawyers.

Over 100 others were injured, 20 of them critically, in the blast that occurred at 9:30 a.m. The blast destroyed the library adjacent to the district court completely. The attacker, who was in lawyer's gown,



DOWN WITH TERRORISM: Lawyers raise anti-terrorist slogans during a march in Dhaka on Tuesday. - PHOTO: AFP

was also blown up.

In a simultaneous action, two suicide bombers killed two policemen after they were challenged by the law enforcers in the court buildings

in Chittagong. Reports said the two policemen and the bombers were blown to pieces in the explosion. Scores of others, including eight policemen, were injured.

Islamists threaten more attacks in Bangladesh

REUTERS

DHAKA, OCTOBER 24

ISLAMIST militants blamed for a wave of bomb attacks across Bangladesh over the past two months have threatened more attacks on government sites in the next fortnight, a government official said on Monday.

S.M. Faisal Alam, deputy commissioner of northeastern Sylhet district, 350 km from the capital Dhaka, said he had received a letter on Sunday, purportedly from the outlawed Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen group, carrying the threat of more bombings.

"More simultaneous attacks will be launched to blow off government installations in the next 15 days," Alam quoted the letter, signed by a commander of Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen.

"In the wake of the recent bombings, we have taken the latest threat seriously," a senior police officer in Sylhet said.

Police hold the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen responsible for some 500 near simultaneous small bombings across the country on August 17, which killed two people and wounded about 100.

Two more people died and 15 were hurt when militants hurled five bombs at court buildings in three districts, outside Dhaka, on October 3—also blamed on the Jamaat-ul, and suspected activists of another outlawed Islamist group, Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh.

On Sunday, a local leader of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party was killed in a bomb attack in southwestern Khulna district. No one has claimed responsibility for the killing.

INDIAN EXPRESS

Bangladesh Government bans Harkat-ul-Jihad

Haroon Habib

10-17 19/10

DHAKA: The Khaleda Zia Government has finally banned the Islamist outfit Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI), in the wake of growing militancy and countrywide bombings.

A Government announcement said, "Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami is a self-confessed terrorist organisation. Its activities are very sensitive and it is identified as a terrorist organisation."

A press note issued by the Home Affairs Ministry on Monday said "on the basis of latest information, the Bangladesh Government has declared a ban on Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami and all of its activities."

HuJI, an international terrorist organisation, has been involved in carrying out terrorist activities in Bangladesh for half a decade.

It has been behind several major bomb attacks as well as assassination attempts on former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and some leading secular intellectuals.

Intelligence agencies had recommended in 2003 that HuJI be banned for the sake of the country's security. Despite being aware of the militant outfit's activities, the Government kept denying its existence over the last few years.

The ban follows the October 1 arrest of HuJI leader Mufti Abdul Hannan in Dhaka. Mufti Hannan fought in Afghanistan against the Soviet invasion during the 1980s and was alleged to have been involved in a plot to assassinate Sheikh Hasina in

Harkat has been involved in carrying out terrorist activities in Bangladesh for half a decade

2000. He is also being questioned about the nationwide bomb blasts on August 17.

With Monday's banning of the HuJI, the number of banned jihad organisations in Bangladesh now stands at four. The other outlawed outfits are Jamaatul Mijahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) and Shahdat al-Hiqma.

Intellectuals targeted

The four outfits have been targeting intellectuals and secular politicians, who ideologically challenge the path of the radical Islamists.

The theocrats also oppose NGO activity as un-Islamic alleging that these organisations spread Western ideas of women empowerment and social transformation.

On August 17, the JMB claimed responsibility for the serial bombings across Bangladesh when nearly 500 bombs went off in all but one of the 64 districts.

Three persons were killed and 100 others injured in the blasts.

So far, about 400 suspects have been arrested from different parts of the country in connection with the August 17 bombings.

THE HINDU

'Enemy within is apparent'

In an exclusive interview with Manash Ghosh, Bangladesh's former Prime Minister and present leader of the Opposition, Sheikh Hasina, dwells on issues ranging from the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in her country to worsening Indo-Bangladeshi ties. Excerpts:

Jamatul Mujahideen, an Islamic fundamentalist outfit, has threatened to bomb the Saarc summit venue in Dhaka if the Khaleda Zia government does not immediately introduce Sharia law in Bangladesh.

This situation is of their own making. They have created this Frankenstein's monster and they have to reap the consequences. The present government has blamed India for postponing last April's Saarc summit.

A high-pitched campaign was launched by it to highlight India's perfidy. They even said that Delhi was unnecessarily making an issue of the threat posed to the security of the visiting dignitaries after the killing of SAMS Kibria in a grenade attack last January. Who will they blame for JM's threat this time? There is an enemy within this (Bangladesh) government and it is now apparent.

Don't you think that the fundamentalists are gaining ground because the anti-Liberation forces are united whereas the secular, Bengali nationalist and democratic forces, who fought in the War of Liberation, are divided?

We are aware of our strengths and weaknesses. In recent months, pro-Liberation forces have come together which is a welcome development. We have been able to build a platform on which 14 parties believing in the ideals of the liberation war have come together. We have launched a joint movement against the present government's misrule and non-governance.

Even the major Leftists parties, including the Workers' Party, have joined forces with us. Pro-Liberation forces have come to realise that they will have to unite to take on their opponents. This is a positive development.



Bangladeshi Opposition leader Hasina Wajed: Pinning her hopes on an alliance of democratic forces for next year's parliamentary poll. — AFP

But the Communist Party is playing foul and desperately trying to create disunity within the pro-Liberation camp...

Talks are on and we are trying to iron out the differences.

Would this platform be converted into a 14-party alliance for next year's parliamentary poll?

That is the objective. One thing is sure, there will be a coalition of like-minded parties believing in the ideals of the War of Liberation in next year's parliamentary poll.

What will be the basis of your seat-sharing arrangement with your partners?

Seat-sharing has to be done on the basis of the actual strength each party has in a particular constituency. Parties with winnable candidates should get nomination.

We would be helping our opponents if we, for the sake of unity, allot seats to parties and candidates who don't have a chance of winning.

So seat sharing has to be done on a realistic basis. Half the problems will be solved if this is borne in mind. No one should make unrealistic demands.

Baraka
While your opponents have undertaken this exercise, your camp is yet to start.

I have started interviewing probable candidates the Awami League will be nominating for the election. It is a gigantic task and not an easy one at that. Other like-minded parties have also begun this exercise.

Under the present regime in Dhaka, Indo-Bangladeshi relations have reached an all-time low. India has been officially accused by the present government of carrying out synchronised bombings in Bangladesh.

For two neighbours this is undesirable. Moreover, how can anyone be blamed for the bombings as investigations are still on, although perpetrators of the crime have admitted their involvement. The investigation into the 21-August grenade attack on me is also incomplete.

There is an attempt by the present government to obliterate your father's contribution to Bangladesh's liberation.

This forms the cornerstone of the present government's policy and programme. It has renamed almost all institutions and places named after my father. It desperately tried to rename Dhaka's Bangabandhu Stadium where all the international cricket matches are played. Having failed, it shifted the venue of all future cricket matches to Mirpur stadium.

There is speculation that you may boycott next year's parliamentary election if your demands for electoral reforms and appointment of an acceptable chief election commissioner are not met.

Awami League is a democratic party and believes in gaining power in a democratic manner. We are against a poll boycott. But we won't participate in sham elections. The current CEC is not acceptable to us because of his links. We have proposed certain reforms in the electoral process which have been approved by mainstream Opposition parties. These reforms have to be accepted.

(The interviewer is Editor, Dainik Statesman.)

Bangla relay blast replay

FARID HOSSAIN

space of an hour.

Dhaka, Oct. 3: Two persons were killed and more than a dozen injured as bombs ripped through court buildings in three Bangladesh towns today, police and witnesses said.

State minister for home affairs Lutfozzaman Babar said several suspects have been arrested after the blasts in Chittagong, Chandpur and Laxmipur. "I've heard about blasts occurred at three places, but I've no details," Babar said outside his office in Dhaka after six attacks in the

ing the process.

Authorities have arrested and interrogated more than 400 suspects in connection with the blasts, but no one has been formally charged.

In the latest bombing, a 60-year-old man was killed and a lawyer seriously injured in Chandpur when two bombs went off in the crowded district court building, a police official, on condition of anonymity, said.

A group of lawyers managed to catch two young men suspected of involvement in the blasts, the official added.

They were later handed over to the police.

An 80-year-old man was killed in Laxmipur, where seven people, including a policeman, were injured. One of the bombs exploded in the courtroom of joint district judge Abu Sufian who escaped with only minor injuries, United News of Bangladesh news agency said. One man was detained by the police at Laxmipur.

Another bomb exploded in the Chittagong court building, injuring several people. Police recovered two unexploded

bombs from building, officials said. Security has been tightened across the country after the blasts.

A bomb also exploded at a tea stall in Barmanbaria district, where authorities found a leaflet warning against keeping shops open during the holy month of Ramadan which begins this week.

Extra security forces have been deployed in key government buildings, diplomatic missions and courthouses.

Television reports said an unexploded bomb was found in Mymensingh district.

BANGLA OUTFIT DEMANDS SHARIA LAW

Terror cloud on Saarc summit

Manash Ghosh in Kolkata

Oct. 2. —Bangladesh's fundamentalist outfit, Jamatul Mujahideen, responsible for the recent serial blasts at about 500 odd places across the country, has warned the Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, that if Sharia laws were not introduced before next month's Saarc summit in Dhaka, it would bomb the venues of the regional summit and also where the foreign dignitaries would stay. It held out this threat in leaflets, thousands of which were openly distributed in Dhaka and in other cities and towns of Bangladesh yesterday.

The leaflet said that the outfit's threat should not be treated as an empty one since it had given ample proof of its capability by carrying out synchronised bombings all over the country on 17 August. The most interesting part of the leaflet is that Jamatul Mujahideen claims Begum

Zia and her son Tarek, who is the senior secretary general of the ruling BNP, as "one of our very own", as also the ruling Jamat-e-Islami ministers like Mr Matiur Rahman Nijami.

The leaflet says that it has got legions of supporters and activists among the senior, middle and junior level officers and also among the jawans in the military, paramilitary, police, the civil service and the judiciary. "We have infiltrated every sphere and are everywhere", claimed the leaflet.

The best proof of this, the leaflet said, was that all those arrested in connection with the serial blasts had been released. Another proof was that Banglabhai, one of the founders of Jamatul Mujahideen, was not being arrested by the government's law enforcement machinery though it knew very well his whereabouts and his hide-outs. "What better proof than this is needed to underscore the point that this government is with us?"

The leaflet claimed that the Khaleda government was in no position to ditch Banglabhai after having used him for exterminating the Left extremists called "Sarbaharas" in north-west Bangladesh. "Having once handed over guns to us to kill the Sarbaharas, the same guns can't be used to liquidate us."

The leaflet warned that the Khaleda government would have to face the consequences if, under pressure from the USA and India, it acted against the JM and other Islamic outfits which wanted Bangladesh to be turned into an Islamic state and ruled by Sharia laws.

It may be recalled that last April's Saarc summit had to be postponed following the death of a senior Awami League leader and former finance minister, SAMS Kibria, in a grenade attack in Habiganj, Sylhet.

**Hasina praises Left, page 4
Bangla militant held, page 2**

A government in denial

On 17 August, more than 450 small bombs were exploded almost simultaneously throughout Bangladesh. There were three deaths and many (mostly) minor injuries. The bombs were not very powerful, but the fact that so many detonations could be synchronised suggested a developed organisational capacity. It was more than a week before the Bangladesh National Party government (in coalition with religious parties, including Jama'at e-Islami) acknowledged that the JMB was indeed responsible. A spokesman for the Jama'at declared that RAW, the Indian Intelligence agency and the Israeli Mossad were involved; this was denied by foreign minister M Morshad Khan.

Despite many recent bomb outrages in Bangladesh, many of which have claimed senior Opposition figures and civilians (one injured the British High Commissioner who was visiting a shrine in Sylhet in May 2004), government has repeatedly denied religious extremists' presence in the country. In September 2003, Khaleda Zia said: "There are no fundamentalists or zealots in Bangladesh." She may have been quoting Intelligence officials: since they are appointed on the basis of loyalty rather than efficiency, it may be that they have told the government only what it wants to hear.

On 17 August, the Prime Minister was out of the country. She quickly returned to Dhaka, but it took three weeks before she made a statement in the Bangladeshi parliament. She said the bombs were staged by "those who want to brand Bangladesh a religiously extremist country", and cannot accept it is "a Muslim majority liberal democracy". The convoluted thinking of the government is evident in these phrases, since they had to be ambiguous, to implicate the Opposition: so deep is the animosity between the ruling BNP and the Opposition Awami League, that Begum Khaleda could not forbear to leave open the possibility that what she called "an anti-state plot" might have been engineered by her political enemies, rather than by fundamentalists, allies of those with whom she is in coalition.

She continued: "The government attaches the highest importance to national security and it will soon unearth the nucleus of the anti-state conspiracy." She assured the country that the government "would identify the masterminds behind the blasts and bring them to book by deploying all its might and resources". Despite several hundred arrests, none of the ringleaders, masterminds or kingpins has been traced. She also insisted, in another phrase of calculated vagueness, that the attackers are "active against the country's sovereignty and progress.... Those who can't stand Bangladesh's economic progress have committed these heinous acts at a time when I was on a state visit to China".

The evidence suggests that the culprits lie far

Ban-Nabih
5-7-1879

NEW VISTAS

JEREMY SEABROOK



Bangladeshi Prime Minister Khaleda Zia: Calculatingly vague. AFP

nearer at home, and have links to groups within her own government. The Prime Minister suggested that "we frame stringent laws to make it hard for the terrorists to gather bomb-making materials, make and stockpile bombs, and stage blasts".

This new urgency is astonishing, given the government's supine reaction to bombs that have killed scores of people during the past four years it has been in power. When grenades were hurled at an Opposition rally where Sheikh Hasina, was talking, in which a senior Awami League politician died, the government declared this outrage to have been the work of the Opposition itself, a plot to discredit the government or to "tarnish the image of Bangladesh abroad" ~ a *mantra* which has become an automated response from the administration. One BNP deputy minister said soon after the 17 August blasts: "Awami League must have done this, using fake leaflets, to destroy Bangladesh's image."

Begum Zia referred to three kinds of terrorism ~ social terrorism, communal terrorism and political terrorism. She said, apart from a few scattered incidents, her government had crushed all kinds of communal and religious terrorism. Nothing could be further from the truth: this is her pre-emptive strike against those who criticise her coalition with religious parties. Those in power occupy their fortresses like imperious feudal lords, concerned principally with the maintenance of their influence. In an institutionalised paranoia, they see plots and conspiracies, treachery and deceit on every hand.

Begum Zia, referring to 9/11 in the USA and the bombs in Madrid and London, insisted that the character of international terrorism is different from what happened in Bangladesh on 17 August,

although she failed to say how. These contortions were given the lie by the home minister who said Intelligence agencies had information on the involvement of the Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh and the Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh, both of which banned organisations had been involved in military training.

Some 34 Islamic groups are known to receive an annual 200 crore taka in funding from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE, ostensibly for mosques, madrasas and hospitals. One Jama'at MP Riasat Ali was quick to declare the claim that JMB and JMJB wanted to turn Bangladesh into an Islamic state was "propaganda". He said the bombs were "intended to install a puppet government in the country, which in the long term would re-establish an undivided India."

The home minister later declared that the militants of the JMB had joined forces with the outlawed Janajuddha, the extreme Left-wing Communist group, many of whose members have been victims of the "crossfire" of the Rapid Action Battalion in the last two years, which has killed hundreds of people in Bangladesh. The government offered a bounty for information leading to the arrest of Abdur Rahman, chief of the JMB, and Siddiqui Islam (known as Bangla Bhai, chief of the Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh, an organisation that has been terrorising villages in the north of Bangladesh and slaying alleged "outlaws", usually members of Far Left Parties). It displayed its capacity for a desultory urgency, by promising, on 13 September, that posters with photographs of the wanted men will be "circulated soon".

These efforts to manage the events of 17 August conceal a crisis of governance. The BNP believed that, as the dominant partner, it could control and direct the religious parties. Since 9/11 and its aftermath, the growth of militant Islam has made this more problematic. It may yet be that the BNP and the Awami League, whose hatred for each other tears Bangladesh apart, may both come to be worsted by religious formations which, during the Liberation War of 1971, fought against the very existence of Bangladesh. The day may come when they realise the damage they have done to the country which each claims to love on its own narrow partisan terms; and then they may perceive that the struggle is between secularists ~ no matter what their ideology ~ and those who wish to establish an Islamic state in Bangladesh.

(The author lives in Britain. He has written plays for the stage, TV and radio, made TV documentaries, published more than 30 books and contributed to leading journals around the world.)
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8 SEP 2004

Bomb cache found in Bangla

REUTERS

DHAKA, SEPTEMBER 9

BANGLADESH police said they had seized about 200 small bombs and a stockpile of bomb-making material from a factory in the capital as they continued hunting for suspects of last month's serial blasts.

"The Rapid Action Battalion of police also seized several weapons, masks, printed documents and money from the hideout in Dhaka's Purbo Bashabo area during a lightning raid on Thursday," a po-

lice officer said on Friday. Security forces also found 60 CDs containing militant training manuals in another hideout in South Goran in the capital.

Eight people including two women were arrested from the two raids, on suspicion of making the bombs and of links to the August 17 countrywide explosions of some 500 small bombs that killed two people and wounded about 100.

A police officer said Shayek Ataur Rahman, brother of Shayek Abdur Rahman, commander of the militant Jamaat-

ul-Mujahideen group blamed for the serial blasts, was in the area where raids were carried out, but he escaped.

No one has claimed responsibility for the bombings, which were apparently aimed more at creating panic than taking lives. Jamaat-ul-Mujahidee leaflets found at most bomb sites called for the introduction of Islamic rule in Bangladesh.

State Minister for Home (Interior) Affairs, Lutfuzzaman Babar, said he believed the Leftist radical group Janajuddha was also involved.

2000-09-09 10:00 AM

Landmark judgment

Makes Begum Zia nervous

The fact that Begum Khaleda Zia had the judge of the appellate division of the Dhaka High Court woken up from his sleep for a temporary stay on the path-breaking judgment of Judges Khairul Haque and Fazle Kabir declaring the fifth amendment to Bangladesh's Constitution illegal indicates her government's nervousness about the verdict's far-reaching implications. The judges held that all developments flowing from the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 15 August 1975 including assumption of power first by Khondokar Mushtaq, followed by Chief Justice Sayem and Lieutenant-General Ziaur Rahman were not only unconstitutional but also that the edicts, martial law orders and regulations issued in their name were null and void. The judgment thus seems to say that until restoration of the democratic process in 1991, the five dispensations succeeding Mujib, including that of Ershad, were illegal. Any unconstitutional takeover, the judgment holds, amounts to treason. The judgment holds that all tampering with the Constitution, including its basic structure and tenets through martial law regulations, is illegal. This will be a damper to those in the military and in politics seeking extra-constitutional routes to power. And it ought to induce a rethink among jihadis who want to usher in a Taliban-type revolution.

The judgment has an ominous message. It compromises her husband General Ziaur Rahman's "good nationalist image" and most of his actions to stay in power. By lifting the constitutional ban on religious fundamentalist parties, which enabled them to take part in the country's politics, he had struck at the secular root of the country's 1972 constitution. Begum Zia's husband was the principal beneficiary of Mujib's assassination. Having carried on the legacy, Begum Zia must be shocked by the boldness of the judgment. No wonder her aides are desperately trying to get it set aside.

THE STATESMAN

'Indian' arrested for Bangla blasts

DHAKA, Aug. 30. — Bangladesh has claimed to have arrested an Indian national for his alleged involvement in serial bombings across the country earlier this month, and that at least eight Bangladeshi workers were shot and two of them may have been killed by BSF jawans in a fresh flare-up on the border today.

According to Dhaka, Giasuddin (35), an Indian national from West Bengal, was arrested from the western Satkhira district and was believed to be a member of the banned militant group, Jamaat Mujaheedin Bangladesh (JMB), police were quoted as saying in the media today. Media reports claimed that he had confessed to planning and planting bombs in Satkhira district on 17 August. He also reportedly confessed to setting off bombs in an area of the district.

Police claimed that Giasuddin was from North 24-Parganas, West Bengal. They alleged that he was involved in extremist activities and left India for Bangladesh where he became a member of the JMB. The nationwide serial blasts left three persons dead and some 150 injured.

Earlier, Colonel Nesar Ahmed, commanding officer of the Bangladesh Rifles, claimed that "eight labourers were lifting sand on to a boat from the Shalda River close to the Indian border when the BSF men opened fire". Six escaped with bullet wounds, while the soldiers "took away" the apparently lifeless bodies of the other two, Col Ahmed said. "We assume the two workers are dead," he said, adding his unit was trying to set up a meeting with the Indian force to discuss the incident. — PTI & AFP

Bangla coup 'illegal'

Dhaka, Aug. 29 (PTI): A Bangladesh high court today declared "illegal" and "void" the 1975 military takeover that killed the country's first President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Judges A.B.M. Khairul Huq and A.T.M. Fazle Kabir

made the observations in a dispute over an abandoned property in a writ challenging the validity of a martial regulation.

The rule was incorporated in the country's fifth constitutional amendment ratifying all martial law actions taken

between August 15, 1975 and 1979.

"Taking over the powers of the People's Republic of Bangladesh with effect from the morning of 15th August, 1975, by Khondoker Mosh-taque Ahmed, the usurper, placing Bangladesh under martial law and his assumption of the office of the President of Bangladesh by proclamation of 20-8-75 were in clear violation of the constitution and as such illegal without lawful authority, and without jurisdiction," the judges said.

"Consequently, all his subsequent actions as the President of Bangladesh were illegitimate and void," they added.

The judges also referred to taking over of the presidency by Major General Ziaur Rahman, who later founded the now ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), on April 21, 1977.

They observed it was also "beyond the ambit of the constitution and as such illegal".

Zia's widow Begum Khale-da Zia now heads the BNP and the party-led coalition government in Bangladesh. Zia was assassinated in a coup in May 1981.

30 AUG 2005

Bangla militants threaten strikes

Dhaka, Aug. 23 (Reuters): A banned Islamic militant group blamed for hundreds of bomb blasts last week across Bangladesh has threatened to strike again unless the government introduces Islamic rule in the impoverished country.

If Dhaka authorities failed to establish Islamic law or tried to arrest any member of the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen, "(we) will take direct action," the group said in a statement on the website

jihadunspun.com.

"Everybody is the enemy of Islam who wants to launch democracy as an institutional form," said the English-language statement seen by Reuters on Tuesday.

"Therefore we invite the ruling party and also the opposition to initiate the rule of Islam within a short time in Bangladesh."

Two people were killed and about 100 injured when hundreds of home-made bombs

exploded simultaneously across the country last Wednesday, triggering an unprecedented security alarm among Bangladesh's 140 million people, most of whom are Muslims.

No individual or group has so far claimed responsibility for the bombings but copies of a leaflet found at most of the blast sites carried a call by the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen to impose Islamic rule on democratic secular

Bangladesh.

The leaflet also warned the US and Britain against occupation of Muslim nations.

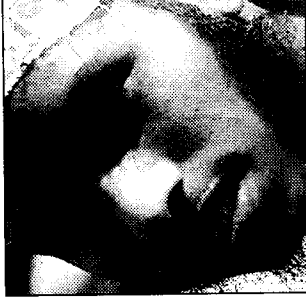
There was no immediate government comment on the latest threat by Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen, which it banned in February.

Security forces launched a nationwide hunt after the serial blasts, detaining more than 150 suspects.

But the widely circulated *Dainik Ittefaq* and *Dainik*

Sangbad newspapers quoted police sources as saying that Shayek Abdur Rahman, the spiritual leader of Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen — who they said masterminded the bombings — had since fled the country along with 16 associates.

Bangladesh's top police officer, inspector-general M. Abdul Quayyum, was unavailable for comment on the newspaper reports, despite several calls to his office.



A man at an anti-terror rally in Dhaka. (AFP)

24 AUG 2009 THE TELEGRAPH

..... League III a Hussie with a pounce... coming a demonstration in Dhaka on Saturday.

Opposition strike paralyses Bangla

Reuters
Dhaka, August 20

A COUNTRYWIDE general strike paralysed Bangladesh on Saturday even as Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia cut short a visit much-publicised visit to China because of hundreds of simultaneous bomb blasts across the country on Wednesday.

Opposition parties in the country had called for the strike to protest the blasts that killed two people and injured about 100. Islamic militants are believed to be responsible for the explosions.

Traffic was sparse on the streets in the capital, Dhaka, on Saturday and businesses, shops and schools remained closed.

Work at Chittagong port was also disrupted. Trains, however, ran on schedule. The police and security forces personnel were patrolling Dhaka and other cities in strength, but said there were no reports of violence from anywhere.

"We are trying to make sure that people and property are safe," said one police officer.

The Opposition, led by former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League, has blamed the government for not cracking down on militancy earlier.

Hasina escaped unhurt a bomb attack last August in which 23 of her party members were killed.

Khaleda, who returned to Dhaka late on Friday night, has

condemned the bombings as "heinous, cowardly, conspiratorial and well-planned act of terrorism". She has appealed for calm and ordered security agencies to crack down on suspects.

International organisations, governments and the media have long warned that Islamic extremists could gain a foothold in impoverished Bangladesh, a democracy that subscribes to moderate Islam. But the government has always denied the rise of Islamic militancy.

No one has claimed responsibility for Wednesday's simultaneous explosions in 60 cities and towns, which caused little damage and appeared to be aimed at spreading panic. But copies of a leaflet found at the bomb sites

carried a call by Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen, a banned group, for Islamic rule in Bangladesh — the world's third most populous Muslim nation. The police have since detained scores of suspects, and on Friday announced that two of them had confessed to being members of the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen.

"Nearly 20 out of some 150 suspects arrested following the bombings claimed they were militants of Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen and said they acted under the instructions of their mentors," a senior police officer said on Saturday. At least 10 of them were being questioned by an interrogation cell manned jointly by the police and the armed forces, he said.

Opposition strike peaceful in Bangladesh

Haron Habib

89-12-218
Bangladesh

DHAKA: A general strike called by the Bangladesh Opposition to protest Wednesday's serial bombings by suspected Islamist militants affected life in the country on Saturday though peaceful by and large.

Police arrested and baton-charged the protesters who were demanding the resignation of the Khaleda Zia Government. The nationwide dawn-to-dusk strike was enforced in Dhaka as elsewhere in the country amid tight security. The strike was called by the 14-party alliance led by former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia returned home on Friday, cutting short her visit to China to take stock of the situation.

Riot police clashed with Opposition activists in Dhaka, leaving scores injured. Police also swooped down on marches taken out by activists of Awami Mahila League, causing serious injuries to a number of women. Some 20 women workers were arrested.

The strike disrupted normal life and businesses across the country. The authorities deployed more than 10,000 police personnel, armed battalion and para-military BDR in the capital as hundreds of Opposition activists took to the streets demanding that the Government step down.

Schools, private offices, shops and business centres remained closed while most of the buses,



AT THE RECEIVING END: Opposition Awami League activists scuffle with a policewoman during a nationwide general strike in Dhaka on Saturday. - PHOTO: AP

lorries and private cars were off the road.

Suspects held

However, rickshaws, allowed to ply by the strike enforcers, operated in large numbers. Meanwhile, police rounded up 152 suspects in connection with the serial bombings, including 100 alleged Islamist militants. Some de-

mentalist-allied Government's claim that it has religious extremists under control. "The Government has been saying that things are all right here, but after the attacks, nobody will believe that any more," remarked Abdul Awal Mintoo, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

tens are learnt to have confessed that they had carried out the attacks at the behest of Jaamatul Mujahideen organisation. Police also picked up a few madrassa students and seized a video of speeches by Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

The nationwide wave of bombings has shaken Bangladesh and challenged the Islamic funda-

THE HINDU

Bangla blasts

Challenge to Khaleda's rule

It is too much of a coincidence that synchronised blasts of almost 500 explosive devices could occur all over Bangladesh within one and a half hours of Begum Khaleda Zia's departure on a state visit to Beijing. That a banned jihadi outfit, Jamatul Mujahideen, of Begum Zia's coalition partner, the Jamat-e-Islam, is responsible for the blasts, killing three and injuring over 100, is now an established fact and even the government has blamed the fundamentalist militant group. The most disturbing aspect of the serial blasts in 63 of Bangladesh's 64 districts is that it reveals the breadth of the network this jihadi group has been able to set up. It clearly can not only spread terror and mayhem in every nook and corner of Bangladesh but also work towards its objective of an Islamic state. Already the outfit has decreed that Bangladesh's current judicial system and the Constitution are in conflict with divine dictate. It has told Bangladeshis that until Sharia laws are enforced they should go to khatib of mosques and mohaddis of the *madrasas* and also to scholars of Islamic law for adjudication. It has warned that if the government refuses to promulgate Islamic law, the soldiers of Allah will teach the enemies of Islam "appropriate lessons of their life".

Undoubtedly all these pronouncements are an open challenge to Khaleda's government and seek to undermine its authority. But this should not surprise her. When she embraced the Jamat-e-Islam and the Islamic Oikya Jote as her coalition partners in 2001 to defeat the Awami League, she had been warned this would be politically suicidal. She also ignored suggestions to distance herself from pro-Pakistan elements who wanted to implement the Pakistani Jamat-e-Islami agenda through the government. In the past four years, these elements have infiltrated not only various layers of government but also built a vast network of operatives who last Wednesday bared their fangs. Bangladesh is paying a heavy price for allowing 8,000 Afghanistan-returned, Taliban-trained mujahideen to operate from heavily armed camps in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and also for refusing to arrest the Islamic terrorist Bangla Bhai who since May last year has spread terror and mayhem in north-western Bangladesh. Under pressure from the Jamat, Begum Zia ordered the release of even middle eastern terrorist groups. Now, the signs are extremely ominous for her. But she must realise she is largely to blame for this state of affairs.

20 AUG 2005

THE STATESMAN

জামাতুলের

সঙ্গে জঙ্গি

যোগসূত্র

স্পষ্ট হচ্ছে

ঢাকা, ১৯ অগস্ট: কুড়ি মিনিটের মধ্যে চারশো বোমা ফটার পরে দেশকে জঙ্গি কার্যকলাপমুক্ত বলে ঘোষণা করা প্রায় অসম্ভব হয়ে উঠতে চলেছে বাংলাদেশ সরকারের পক্ষে। বিরোধী নেত্রী শেখ হাসিনা কালই বিস্ফোরণে বিদেশি জঙ্গিদের হাত থাকার সম্ভাবনার কথা বলেছিলেন। এ বার দেশের প্রধান সংবাদপত্রগুলোও একযোগে জঙ্গিদের উপস্থিতি মেনে নেওয়ার জন্য সরকারকে চাপ দিচ্ছে।

বিস্ফোরণের জায়গাগুলি থেকে পাওয়া জামাতুল মুজাহিদিনের প্রচারপত্র ইসলামি মৌলবাদের চড়া সুর স্পষ্ট করেছে। যে শতাধিক লোককে জিজ্ঞাসাবাদের জন্য আটক করেছে পুলিশ, তাদের মধ্যে বেশ কয়েক জন স্বীকার করেছে, তারা জামাতের লোক। সারা দেশে বোমা ফটানোর পরিকল্পনা তাদের নেতাদেরই মস্তিষ্কপ্রসূত। সাতক্ষীরায় ধৃত দুই ব্যক্তি এ প্রসঙ্গে শেখ আব্দুর রহমানের নাম জানিয়েছে। রহমান সৌদি আরবে পড়াশোনা করেছে। আশির দশকে সে সোভিয়েত বাহিনীর বিরুদ্ধে লড়াতে আফগান মুজাহিদদের সঙ্গে হাত মেলায়। খুলনা থেকে ধৃত এক ১৮ বছরের যুবকের কাছ থেকে ওসামা বিন লাদেনের বক্তৃতার কিছু ভিডিও টেপ মিলেছে।

বস্তৃত মৌলবাদীদের প্রশ্রয় দেওয়া নিয়ে দীর্ঘদিনই সরকারের সমালোচনা করছে আওয়ামি লিগ। কিন্তু খালেদা সরকার তা অস্বীকার করেছে। ফেব্রুয়ারিতে জামাতুল-সহ দু'টি সংগঠনকে যখন নিষিদ্ধ করা হয়, সরকারের নীতি বদলাচ্ছে বলে মনে করেছিলেন অনেকেই। তবে জঙ্গি-কার্যকলাপের কথা সরকার তখনও স্বীকার করেনি। কিন্তু বুধবারের অভিজ্ঞতার পরে খবরের কাগজগুলো সাক্ষর বলেছে, “ধর্মীয় সন্ত্রাসবাদীরা এ দেশে সক্রিয় নয় বা তাদের থেকে বিপদের আশঙ্কা নেই, এমন কথা আর গুনতে চাই না।” — রয়টার্স, এএফপি

20 AUG 2005

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS
DHAKA

Suspect owns up to role in Bangla blasts

PRESS Trust of India
Dhaka, August 18

AN ARRESTED Islamic extremist has admitted to his involvement in the bombings that rocked Bangladesh on Wednesday, the police said. Over 400 explosions had ripped through the nation, hitting all but one of its 64 districts, and killing two people besides injuring 140.

Bangladesh police interrogated about 50 people arrested in connection with the blasts and said they expected a breakthrough shortly.

Police in western Satkhira district arrested Muniruzzaman Munna, a senior leader of Jamaat-ul-Mujaheedin, which is believed to be behind the explosions. He has reportedly confessed that he had organised the bomb attack in Satkhira district.

Police arrested Munna from Itagachha area of the district after another Mujaheedin activist, Nasiruddin, disclosed his name to the police.

Nasiruddin confessed that he carried the bomb, which exploded at judges' court area in Satkhira. Police also arrested 13 others in this connection.

Leaflets from the Jamaat-ul-Mujaheedin appeared at the site

1918
of some of the blasts. Officials said timing devices were found at the scene of the blasts but most of the bombs were small, homemade devices wrapped in tape or paper.

In Chapainawabganj, hundreds of villagers chanting verses from the Quran gathered for the funeral of one of the two victims. Rabiul Alam, 40, was a rickshaw driver.

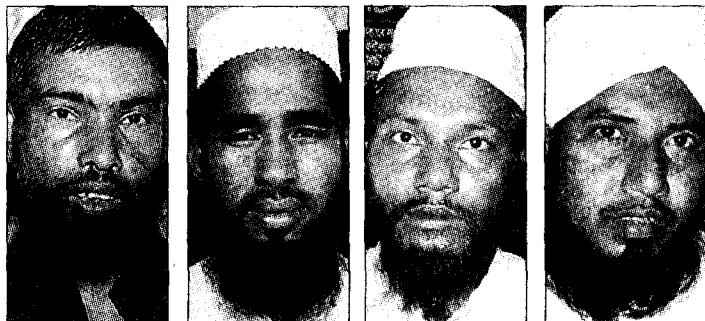
"My son was not involved in any (political) party, why did he have to lose his life like this?" lamented his elderly mother, Saifura Begum.

She and her daughter waited inside their tin-roofed brick home as male relatives and neighbours buried their beloved son and brother in the village graveyard.

A divorced father of a teenage son, Alam lived with his elderly mother in a village on the outskirts of Chapainawabganj.

"He used to provide for me. Who'll look after me now?" said Begum. "I want justice."

Khairul, Alam's 17-year-old son who lives with his mother in a neighbouring village, stood quietly outside his father's house after returning from the funeral. "I'll now be deprived of my father's love and care."



Suspects Neu Uddin, Ushub, Abul Hossain and Saiful Islam.

AFP

19 AUG 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Bangla dazed

✓
NR-6 1918

BANGLADESH AND its well-wishers will probably thank those responsible for the near-simultaneous detonation of crude time-bombs in 63 of the country's 64 districts on Wednesday. We say 'thank' not out of perversity, but because only such a dramatic attack will be able to convince the country's two major political forces — the Awami League and the Bangladesh National Party — that their self-destructive struggle against each other has allowed extremist forces to grow to this frightening size. That 400 or so devices would have had to be prepared, despatched to the various destinations, set to a particular time and emplaced at various points, certainly speaks of the logistical skills and reach of the organisation responsible. The panache — if we may call it that — of the operation recalls the ghastly style of al-Qaeda and its various offshoots. The Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh, an organisation banned in February, has been blamed. But there are some questions as to whether it had the capacity to perpetrate an outrage of this scale.

According to one calculation, at least

134 people have been killed and over 1,000 injured across the country in bomb and grenade attacks in the last six years. Of these, 12 of the deadliest have taken place in the last couple of years in the tenure of the present four-party alliance government led by the BNP. The worst of these was the attack on the AL meeting on August 21 last year that killed 23 people, including the party's women affairs secretary, Ivy Rahman, and injured Sheikh Hasina and some 300 party activists. Coming as they do some three months before the twice-postponed Saarc summit in Dhaka, the blasts are a matter of concern for the region as well as India.

New Delhi has long complained to Dhaka about the sanctuary that is being provided to several insurgent groups in its territory. Privately, India and other friends of Bangladesh have been warning Dhaka about the consequences of allowing radical Islamist groups to function unchecked. But the BNP has done little on either score, in part because of the Jamaat-e-Islami ally. Wednesday's event will hopefully convince the Bangladesh ruling elite that its best choice is to swim together, or drown separately.

10 16 10

TERROR ATTACK AFTERMATH

Bangla agencies admit failure



Patrolling on the streets of Dhaka on Thursday. — AFP

The Daily Star/ANN

DHAKA, Aug. 18. — Bangladesh's Intelligence and law-enforcement agencies admitted their failure to prevent the orchestrated nationwide terrorist attacks yesterday, saying the incidents demonstrated the capability of the terror group. At an emergency meeting with the state home minister, they conceded that terror groups could implement grenade attacks across the country if they wanted to. "It shows that we have no Intelligence. We have failed," admitted an official who attended the meeting. Intelligence and law-enforcement officials at the emergency meeting did not name any suspect, but did make oblique references to the Awami League. They did not discuss evidence blaming the blasts on banned hardline Muslim group Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh. Leaflets found at the bombing sites were purportedly from the group, proclaiming: "We're the soldiers of Allah. We've taken up arms for the implementation of Allah's law the way Prophet, Sahabis and heroic Mujahi-

deen have done for centuries."

The JMB is one of the two extremist organisations recently banned by the government. The other is the Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh. State minister for home Mr Lutfozzaman Babar, however, cautioned agencies not to raid madrasas and mosques unless there was specific information that they were linked to the terror attacks.

Intelligence officials believed that the terrorists might have been "inspired" by the 7 July bombings in London. They said that Bangladesh has 33 small Islamic political parties which do not recognise each other and which do not have any nationwide network. They suspect a "certain quarter" that wanted to create a rift in the BNP-Jamaat alliance, which could have been why the JMB name of was being used.

Foreign analysts believe the attacks were motivated more by domestic issues than international politics, but said that the government could no longer deny that there was an issue with the fundamentalists. Ms Jennifer Harbison,

research director of information services at the Control Risks Group, a London-based security consultancy, said "the attack was definitely out of the ordinary and indicates a much more developed and coordinated effort than previously thought to be possible". The government can no longer deny there is an issue with fundamentalists, she said. She said the attackers may have intended to "flex their muscles," discredit the government and recruit new members, rather than kill. The near-simultaneous nationwide blasts left a great many people — from beggars to lawyers — severely injured and petrified.

In the capital, bombs went off between 11 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. and in most cases someone brought and placed them at the target points a few minutes before the explosions, witnesses and victims, some of them lying in hospital beds with bandaged limbs, said. In some cases, the explosions took place when people unwittingly picked up packets of explosives from the ground, taking them to be lost or fallen objects.

DHAKA ■ Sheikh Hasina demands an international inquiry

Bangladesh

Day after, Bangladesh launches hunt, nabs 100



Bangladeshi security personnel guard a street in Dhaka on Thursday. Reuters

NIZAM AHMED

DHAKA, AUGUST 18

SECURITY forces detained dozens of suspects in an intense hunt on Thursday for Islamic militants who set off hundreds of crude bombs across Bangladesh, killing two people and injuring more than 100.

Roughly 200 homemade bombs exploded on the streets, at courts and near key government buildings in at least 60 cities and towns across the Islamic nation shortly after Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia left Dhaka on Wednesday on a five-day visit to China.

No one claimed responsibility for the blasts, which caused

little damage and appeared to be aimed at spreading panic.

But copies of a leaflet found at the bomb sites carried a call by a banned Islamic group, Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen, for Islamic rule in Bangladesh.

Security was beefed up throughout the country on Thursday. In Dhaka, an elite security force used sniffer dogs searching for suspects and bombs in key areas, including hotels, and in diplomatic areas, witnesses said.

Police detained nearly 100 people suspected of connection with the bombings, said a senior police officer who asked not to be named.

Security officials said they seized several live bombs from detained suspects and found

others in various places. "We have defused the bombs, which had time devices," said a police officer at Narayanganj, 16 km east of Dhaka.

The Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen leaflets were found at most of the blast sites. Besides calling for Islamic rule in Bangladesh, they also warned the United States and Britain against occupation of Muslim nations.

Police in eastern India said on Thursday, they were questioning two suspected Bangladeshi nationals arrested in connection with distributing leaflets and raising money for an organisation, which had Al Qaeda as part of its name.

The flyers explained in Urdu the money would be used by mujahideen (holy

warriors) fighting in support of Muslims around the world.

They were being distributed in some Muslim-dominated neighbourhoods in Kolkata.

In a message from Beijing, Khaleda condemned the bombings as a "heinous, cowardly, conspiratorial and well-planned act of terrorism".

Sheikh Hasina of the main Opposition party, the Awami League, demanded an international investigation into the blasts. Bangladesh has a long history of political violence and feuds, particularly between the parties of Khaleda and Hasina.

But authorities steadfastly deny any suggestion of a rise of Islamic militancy in the country, although the government banned Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen and another Islamic group, Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh, in February.

"The chilling scope of attacks that swept the length and breadth of the country yesterday should have no one in doubt as to the intent, organisation, and capability of the terrorists that were behind it," a leading English newspaper, the *Daily Star*, said in an editorial.

About 90 pc of Bangladesh's 140 million people are Muslim and the ruling coalition includes several Islamic parties. Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Hasina's Awami League are secular. Bangladeshis are worried that Islamic militant groups could gain a foothold in impoverished Bangladesh. —Reuters

Bangladesh Opposition demands reform of electoral structure

Haroon Habib

DHAKA: The Opposition parties of Bangladesh have announced a package of proposals for reform of the electoral process, including the caretaker government and the Election Commission.

Sheikh Hasina, leader of the main Opposition party Awami League and top leaders of the 11-party Left alliance announced the proposals "for ensuring a free, fair and impartial national election". The 32-point list is

likely to put the Government and the Opposition at loggerheads.

The Opposition put forward the proposals after accusing the Khaleda Zia Government of taking several unethical steps to ensure that the chief of the next caretaker government and the Chief Election Commissioner are its supporters.

The proposals included cutting the power of the President, the titular head of state, at the time of the caretaker Govern-

ment which supervises national polls.

Impartial person

It was also suggested that the chief of the interim authority should be an impartial person acceptable to all parties.

"The reform proposals are made aimed conducting at a free, fair and credible poll so that the people's mandate is guaranteed", said Sheikh Hasina, flanked by leaders of the 14-party alliance, at a press conference

in Dhaka.

Significantly, while the central leaders of all other Opposition parties were present at the joint press conference, the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) stayed away owing to "some differences" with the combine.

The Opposition combine has decided to issue an ultimatum to the Government to accept its demands, failing which it would launch a programme of agitation.

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed said his Government was ready to discuss the Opposition proposals, "but only inside Parliament".

Against this backdrop, envoys of the European Union nations have jointly urged the Government and the Opposition to sit across the negotiating table to resolve the issue amicably.

The United States is also keen to see the next election being "free, fair and credible", its ambassador said.

বাংলাদেশে বিস্ফোরণ

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18 AUG 2005

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Awami wins mayoral polls

Press Trust of India

DHAKA, May 10. — In a boost to Bangladesh's main Opposition Awami League, its candidate Mr Mohiuddin Chowdhury today won the crucial mayoral elections in Chittagong, touted as the battle of prestige between the two main parties.

Mr Chowdhury defeated Mir Md Nasiruddin, state minister for civil aviation who is backed by the ruling four-party alliance, by nearly 90,000 votes, the EC announced.

The result will be officially declared after almost a week in the Government Gazette.

Mr Chowdhury won his third consecutive term by bagging 3,50,891 votes while his rival secured 259,410 votes.

Victory marches were staged amid tight security in the Chittagong port city.

The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party led by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has accepted the result.

"We welcome the results... BNP believes in democracy and in an election somebody will win and someone will lose," Mr Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, a senior party MP told reporters in Chittagong.

THE STATESMAN

11 MAY 1987

Deaf fears dog Hasina, says daily

Dhaka, March 17 (PTI): Former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed has gone deaf in her right ear after being injured in a grenade attack at a rally last year, a media report said.

Hasina, who is undergoing treatment at a Florida hospital, told the *Prothom Alo* daily that she has lost all hearing powers in her right ear.

At least 23 people were killed and 300 others were injured in a grenade attack on August 21 last year at an Awami League rally in Dhaka.

Threat to donors

Lashing out at donor states, Bangladesh's finance minister Saifur Rahman has told them to leave the aid-dependent country if they cannot adjust to its domestic policies.

Awami plans shutdown during Saarc

Press Trust of India

DHAKA, Jan. 31. — Stray incidents of violence that left 30 people injured today marked the end of a three-day nationwide strike called by Bangladesh's main Opposition to protest a deadly grenade attack on its rally, but the Awami League announced three more shutdowns, including one coinciding with the Saarc summit.

"Our movement against this failed government will continue," former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed, who heads the Awami League, told reporters here. She said protest demonstrations would continue with dawn to dusk nationwide strikes on Thursday, Saturday and Sunday. "On 4 February there will be mourning rallies across the country, while on 7 and 8 February there will be protest rallies."

When pointed out that one of the strike days would coincide with the second day of the Saarc summit, Ms Hasina said: "This government could not provide security to Kibria and can they provide security to the guests coming for the summit."

A three-day non-stop shut down ended today

across Bangladesh to protest the grenade attack on an Awami League rally in northeastern Habiganj district in which an Awami MP and former finance minister SAMS Kibria and four others were killed.

On the final day of the strike, former Bangladeshi President Mr Badruddoza Chowdhury, who was forced to quit office by the ruling party, staged a token hunger strike along with his son Mr Mahi B Chowdhury, MP, and party supporters at the office of his Bikalpadhara Bangladesh political party here.

"A government which cannot provide security to the country's people should go," he said while criticising the Khaleda Zia government for failing to track down the perpetrators of the grenade attack.

During the day a group of Awami lawmakers waving black flags marched to the parliament building and announced the decision to boycott President Iajuddin Ahmed new year's speech to the House.

The Opposition had demanded that the President's address be put back by a day after adopting a condolence resolution on Kibria, which Speaker Mr Jamiruddin Sircar said violated the Constitution.

THE STATESMAN

01 FEB 2005

কুড়ি মিনিটেই কেঁপে গেল বাংলাদেশ

সংগঠনের
জোর কতটা,
বুঝিয়ে
দিল জামাত

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, ঢাকা, ১৭ অগস্ট: বাংলাদেশ সরকার তাদের নিষিদ্ধ ঘোষণা করেছে ছ'মাস আগে। দলের মূল মস্তিষ্ক অধ্যাপক আসাদুজ্জামান গালিব দীর্ঘ দিন হাজতে। কিন্তু একটুও টোল খায়নি জামাত-উল-মুজাহিদিনের শক্তি। বরং, কুড়ি মিনিটে চারশোর বেশি জায়গায় বিস্ফোরণ ঘটিয়ে তারা দেখাল, এত সব সত্ত্বেও কতটা ক্ষমতা ধরে তাদের সংগঠন। দেশের ৬৩টির মধ্যে ৬৩টি জেলায় প্রায় একযোগে এই কাণ্ড ঘটিয়ে তারা আরও বুঝিয়ে দিল, চাইলেই বড় মাপের নাশকতা ঘটাতে পারে। এটা তার একটা ছোট উদাহরণ।

জামাতের এই শক্তির পিছনে রয়েছে দীর্ঘ দিন ধরে একটু একটু করে গড়ে তোলা সাংগঠনিক জোর। ছাত্রাবস্থায় 'জামিয়াত-ই-আহলে হাদিত' ডেভে বেরিয়ে এসে গালিবই জামাত গঠনের পথ প্রশস্ত করেন। তাঁকে এই কাজে অবশ্য সর্বদা সাহায্য করে গিয়েছেন মৌলানা আবদুল মতিন সাল্লাল্লাহু আলাইহি ওয়াসাল্লাম।

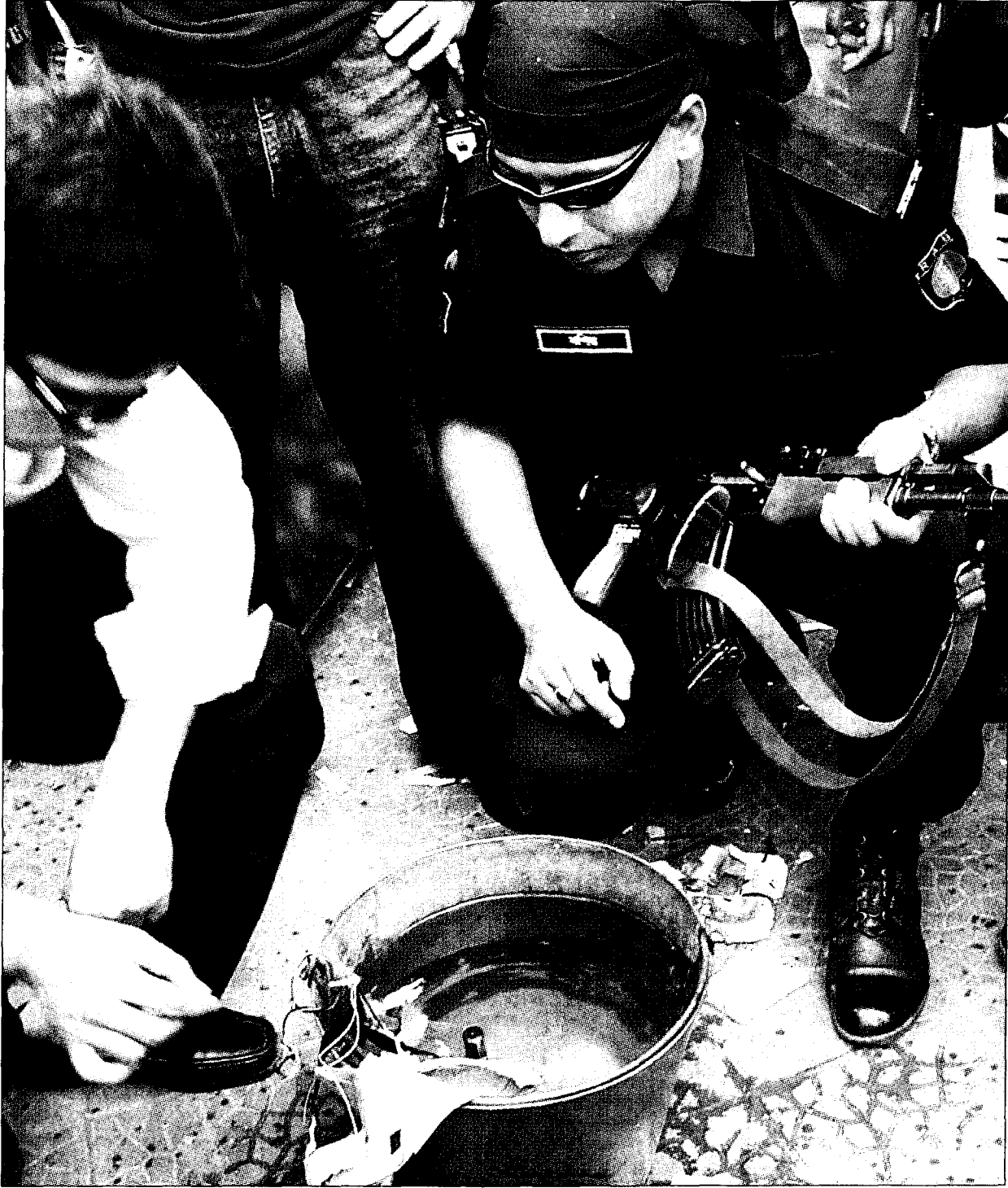
১৯৮৮ সালে এরশাদের আমলে সাল্লাল্লাহু আলাইহি ওয়াসাল্লাম দেশ থেকে বহিষ্কার করে। কিন্তু তত দিনে তিনি গালিবকে দেখিয়ে দিয়েছেন পশ্চিম এশিয়ার পথ। সেখান থেকে অর্থ আসা শুরু হতেই জামাত শাখাপ্রশাখা বিস্তার আরম্ভ হয়। সন্ত্রাসবাদী কার্যকলাপকে পিছনে রেখে গালিব রাজশাহিতে বিসিআই ছাত্র সংগঠন ও জনকল্যাণমূলক কর্মকাণ্ড গড়ে তোলেন। সে জন্য অর্থ সংগ্রহে তিনি পরিচয় ভাড়িয়ে ভারত, পাকিস্তান এবং আফগানিস্তানে গিয়েছেন বহু বার।

গালিব 'তাওহিদ ট্রাস্ট' গড়েন ১৯৯৪ সালে। আর সে বছরই তাঁর ঘনিষ্ঠ আবদুর রহমান ঢাকায় খোলেন জামাতের দফতর। একই সময় গড়ে ওঠে 'জাগ্রত মুসলিম জনতা বাংলাদেশ'। গালিবকে গ্রেফতার করলেও 'জাগ্রত মুসলিম জনতা' প্রধান 'বাংলা ভাই' এবং আমির মৌলানা আবদুর রহমানের সন্ধান আজও পায়নি বাংলাদেশ সরকার। সেই বার্থতা স্বীকারও করেছে প্রশাসন। জামাতের সঙ্গে ওই সংগঠনের যোগের কথা জানলেও আজকের ঘটনায় 'বাংলা ভাই'য়ের মাথা কাজ করেছে কি না, তা নিয়ে নিশ্চিত নয় প্রশাসন।

এ বছরের গোড়ায় খালেদা জিয়া সরকার এই দুই সংগঠনকে নিষিদ্ধ ঘোষণা করেও সমালোচনার মুখে পড়ে। দেশে ইসলামি আইন চালুর পক্ষে দীর্ঘ দিন ধরেই সওয়াল করছে জামাত ও 'জাগ্রত মুসলিম'। তাই সরকারের শরিকদের মধ্যেও তাদের প্রতি সহানুভূতিশীলের সংখ্যা কম নয়। এই নিয়ে বিরোধী আওয়ামী লীগ অভিযোগের আড়াল তোলে জামাত-ই-ইসলামি এবং ইসলামি একা জোটের দিকে। দুই দলই অবশ্য অভিযোগ অস্বীকার করেছে।

আজকের ঘটনায় কোনও গোষ্ঠী সরাসরি দায় স্বীকার করেনি। তবে বেশ কয়েকটি বিস্ফোরণস্থল থেকে জামাত-উল-মুজাহিদিনের প্রচারপত্র পাওয়া গিয়েছে। প্রচারপত্রের প্রতি ছত্রে রয়েছে জামাতের হুকুম: "বাংলাদেশে ইসলামি আইন বলবৎ করতে হবে, এই নিয়ে তৃতীয় বার সরকারকে মনে করিয়ে দিচ্ছি আমরা। কথা না-শুনলে দেশজুড়ে শুরু হবে সশস্ত্র সংগ্রাম।"

সেই 'সংগ্রাম' যে কতটা ভয়াবহ হবে, আজ তারই ইঙ্গিত রইল চার শতাধিক বিস্ফোরণে।



ততক্ষণে গোটা কুড়ি বিস্ফোরণ ঘটে গিয়েছে চট্টগ্রামেই। তার পরে বিস্ফোরক নিষ্ক্রিয় করতে নেমেছে সেনা। বুধবার। — এ এফ পি

চারশো বিস্ফোরণে
হত ২, জখম তিনশো

রহমান জাহাঙ্গির • ঢাকা

১৭ অগস্ট: কুড়ি মিনিটে ৪০০ বিস্ফোরণ। গোটা দেশ জুড়ে। একেবারে আক্ষরিক অর্থেই।

আজ বেলা ১১টা থেকে ১১টা ২০ মিনিটের মধ্যে বিস্ফোরণের কবলে পড়ল বাংলাদেশের ৬৩টি জেলা। মোট জেলার সংখ্যা ৬৪। ভারতের মিজোরাম-সংলগ্ন রাঙামাটি অঞ্চল ছাড়া গোটা দেশেই ছিল হামলাকারীদের হাত।

শুধু রাজধানীতেই আজ ৩৬টি স্থানে বিস্ফোরণ হয়। ঢাকা-সহ সর্বত্রই বিভিন্ন প্রশাসনিক ভবনের সামনে বোমাগুলি ফাটে। সব মিলিয়ে এখনও পর্যন্ত ২ জন নিহত এবং প্রায় ৩০০ জন আহত বলে খবর।

স্বল্প সময়ের ব্যবধানে এই বিপুল সংখ্যক বিস্ফোরণ ঘটতে মূলত টাইমবোমা ব্যবহার করা হয়েছে বলে পুলিশের সন্দেহ। তবে বোমাগুলি ছোট ও মামুলি ধরনের হওয়ায় তেমন বড় ক্ষয়ক্ষতি বা প্রাণহানি ঘটেনি। কিন্তু সে জন্য ঘটনাতিকে আদৌ লঘু করে দেখছেন না পুলিশ-কর্তারা। কেননা বাংলাদেশে নানা প্রান্তে বিস্ফোরণ কোনও নতুন ঘটনা না-হলেও একই সময়ে সংগঠিত ভাবে এতগুলি বিস্ফোরণ এই প্রথম। স্বরাষ্ট্র প্রতিমন্ত্রী লুৎফুজ্জামান বাবর জানাচ্ছেন, বিস্ফোরণ হতে পারে একটা খবর গোয়েন্দাদের কাছে ছিল। প্রতি বছর ১৫ অগস্ট বঙ্গবন্ধু মুজিবর রহমানের মৃত্যুবার্ষিকীতে শোকদিবস পালন করে আওয়ামী লীগ। এ বছর ১৪ থেকে ১৬ তারিখের মধ্যেই হামলার আশঙ্কা ছিল। কিন্তু ১৬ তারিখ পেরিয়ে গেলে ওই আশঙ্কার মেয়াদ ফুরিয়েছে বলে ধরে নিয়েছিল সরকার।

হামলা সেই হলই, ২৪ ঘণ্টা পরে। বাবরের কথায়, "পরিকল্পিত ভাবেই বিস্ফোরণগুলি ঘটানো হয়েছে। বোমাই যাচ্ছে, নির্দিষ্ট উদ্দেশ্য নিয়ে কেউ এ কাজ করেছে।" এখনও পর্যন্ত মোট ৫২ জনকে আটক করা হয়েছে। গোটা দেশে জারি হয়েছে 'রেড অ্যালার্ট'।

কোনও সংগঠন হামলার দায় না-নিলেও একাধিক বিস্ফোরণস্থল থেকে নিষিদ্ধ মৌলবাদী সংগঠন 'জামা' আতুল মুজাহিদিন'-এর প্রচারপত্র মিলেছে। ফলে প্রাথমিক সন্দেহ তাদের দিকেই। অবিলম্বে ইসলামি আইন প্রতিষ্ঠার দাবি জানিয়ে সশস্ত্র সংগ্রামের ডাক দিয়েছে জামাত। আল কায়দা জঙ্গিদের কায়দায় বুশ-ব্রেকারকে ইসলামি দুনিয়ার দখলদারি ছাড়তে হুমকি দিয়েছে। মার্কিন দূতাবাসও এই ঘটনাকে 'সন্ত্রাসবাদের বর্বরতা' বলেই নিন্দা করছে। আন্তর্জাতিক সন্ত্রাস আর তার বিরুদ্ধে পশ্চিমী দুনিয়ার অভিযান এই ভাবেই ছাপ ফেলাছে বাংলাদেশের মাটিতেও।

আজ প্রথম বিস্ফোরণটি ঘটে ঢাকার শেরাটন হোটেল। এ বছরের গোড়ায় এই হোটেলের কাছেই বিস্ফোরণের জেরে নিরাপত্তার প্রশ্নে সার্ক সম্মেলন থেকে নাম তুলে নিয়েছিল ভারত। পিছিয়ে গিয়েছিল সম্মেলন। আজ শেরাটনে বোমা ফাটার পরপরই ঢাকা সূপ্রিম কোর্ট, জর্জ কোর্ট, জিয়া আন্তর্জাতিক বিমানবন্দর, প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয়, ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, মার্কিন দূতাবাস, প্রেস ক্লাব-সহ বিভিন্ন স্থান থেকে বিস্ফোরণের খবর আসতে থাকে।

এ ছাড়াও বিস্ফোরণ ঘটে— চট্টগ্রাম, শ্রীহট্ট, ময়মনসিংহ, খুলনা, যশোর, বরিশাল, ফরিদপুর, নেত্রকোনা, মৌলভীবাজার, কুমিল্লা, মুন্সিগঞ্জ, নারায়ণগঞ্জ, মানিকগঞ্জ, সিরাজগঞ্জ, রাজশাহি, নওগাঁ, বাদারন, চুয়াচাঙ্গা, ভোলা, শেরপুর, কিশোরগঞ্জ, গাজীপুর, নড়াইল, সাতক্ষীরা, কুষ্টিয়া, টাঙ্গাইল, নাটোর, ব্রাহ্মণবাড়ি এবং লক্ষ্মীপুর-সহ আরও কয়েকটি জায়গায়। এ সব ক্ষেত্রেও মূলত বেছে বেছে জর্জকোর্ট, থানা, পুলিশের সদর, প্রেস ক্লাবের মতো জায়গায় বোমা ফটানো হয়। প্রায় প্রতিটি বড় শহরই আক্রান্ত হওয়ায় যান চলাচল বিপর্যস্ত হয় সব ঢেয়ে বেশি।

নিহত দু'জনের এক জন রাজশাহির রিকশাচালক রবিউল আলম (৩৮)। আর একটি শিশু। রাজশাহির শাহ নিয়ামতউল্লাহ কলেজের সামনে বিস্ফোরণে রবিউলের সঙ্গে আহত হন মতি রবিবাস, রবি সাহা এবং অশোক বড়ুয়া। অশোক জানান, বেলা ১১টা নাগাদ একটি অপরিচিত লোক মতির হাতে একটা ব্যাগ রাখতে দেয়। বলে, সামনের বৃথ থেকে ফোন করে সে ফিরে আসবে। দু-তিন মিনিটের মধ্যেই ব্যাগের মধ্যে বোমাটি ফাটে।

ঢাকায় সূপ্রিম কোর্ট আর প্রেস ক্লাবের মাঝামাঝি আলখাল্লা পরা একটি লোককে বোমা রেখে যেতে দেখেন প্রত্যক্ষদর্শীরা। বাংলাদেশের ডেপুটি অ্যাটর্নি-জেনারেল আমিনুল রহিম চন্দনের গাড়ির চালক সেই বোমায় আহত হন। তবে রাজধানীতে এতগুলি বিস্ফোরণে বিদেশিদের কারও ক্ষতি হয়নি। ভারতীয় কূটনৈতিক প্রতিনিধিরাও সকলে নিরাপদ। আজই সকাল ন'টায় পাঁচ দিনের চিন সফরে গিয়েছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী খালেদা জিয়া। তার দু'ঘণ্টা পরেই বিস্ফোরণের ঢেউ। দেশের প্রাক্তন সেনাপ্রধান ইব্রাহিম গোয়েন্দা-বার্থতার অভিযোগ এনে বলছেন, হামলাকারীরা সম্ভবত ডেবেচিচ্ছেই খালেদার অনুস্থিতিকে বাবহার করেছে। তারা জানে এখানকার প্রশাসন বড় প্রধানমন্ত্রী-নির্ভর।

এমনিতে মৌলবাদীদের প্রশ্রয় দেওয়া নিয়ে শাসক বিএনপি জোটের বিরুদ্ধে একটা অভিযোগ আছেই। কটরপন্থী জামাত-ই-ইসলামি এই জোটের শরিক। তবে ফেব্রুয়ারি মাসে জামাত উল মুজাহিদিন এবং 'জাগ্রত মুসলিম জনতা বাংলাদেশ' নামে দু'টি সংগঠনকে নিষিদ্ধ করে সরকার। এর আগে জামাত-উল-মুজাহিদিনের নামে দু'টি স্বেচ্ছাসেবী সংস্থা— গ্রামীণ এবং ব্রাক-এর উপরে হামলার অভিযোগ আছে। আজকের পরে অবশ্য বিএনপি-র মধ্যে থেকেই মৌলবাদীদের আরও কড়া হাতে দমনের দাবি উঠতে শুরু করেছে। প্রচারপত্রের স্পষ্ট বলে দিয়েছে, 'যারা গণতন্ত্রকে প্রাতিষ্ঠানিক রূপ দিতে চায়, তারা ইসলামের শত্রু।' এই নিয়ে তৃতীয় ও শেষ বারের জন্য তারা ইসলামি আইন বাস্তবায়নের দাবি করছে।

তাদের হুমকি, নইলে "জামা" আতুল মুজাহিদিন বাংলাদেশে সংশ্লিষ্টদের বিরুদ্ধে পাল্টা এককদম নিবে ইশা-আল্লাহ।"

ANADARAZAR PARIKA

JIHAD IN BANGLADESH

India Has To Adopt Both Tough And Conciliatory Postures

By SANKAR SEN

The recent killing of Awami League leader Khorshed Alam Bacchu followed by a strike and violence in Dhaka reflects the atmosphere of terror and lawlessness which has gripped Bangladesh. For nearly three years, bombings, assassinations and religious violence have swept the country. On 27 January 2005 a grenade attack on an Awami League rally in Habiganj district killed four people, including the former finance minister and triggered violence all over the country.

The Awami League, the main opposition party, held the government of Khaleda Zia responsible for the lawlessness. Though politics in Bangladesh has always been marked by violence, the situation has worsened since BNP came to power in October 2001.

Hindus attacked

In the October 2001 general election the fundamentalist Jamat-e-Islami emerged as the third largest party. The elections were followed by largescale attacks on Hindus and activists of the Awami League. A number of people were killed. Hindu-dominated areas in Barisal, Bhola, Satkhira, Jessore, Khulna, Kushtia and Bogra, were the worst hit. Amnesty International reported in December 2001 that Hindus who make up less than 10 per cent of the Bangladesh population of 130 million came under attack and more than 100 Hindu women were reportedly raped.

While Jamat may not be directly behind these attacks, its inclusion in the government is a signal to more radical groups enjoying protection of the authorities. The most militant group — Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI), which is reported to have more than 15,000 members, was held responsible by many for attacks against the religious minorities, secular intellectuals and journalists.

Western intelligence agencies have expressed the fear that Bangladesh is turning into a haven where jihadis can move freely and train and organise themselves. The Canadian Security Intelligence Service prepared a report in July 2003 which expressed the concern that the Bangladesh government was not doing enough to prevent the country from becoming a hotbed for the Islamic terrorists in South Asia and stated that some of the extremists operating in Bangladesh had links with Al Qaida. It said that the Bangladesh government is unwilling to crack down on terrorists. Coinciding with the CSIS report in the press, the US state department issued a warning in which it said that it had received information about threats to its

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embassy in Dhaka, and cautioned Americans in Bangladesh to remain vigilant.

Earlier in an article titled "Religious extremism, their rise in Bangladesh", published in Jane's Intelligence Review, May 2002, Bertil Leimtner, a well known columnist on South East Asia, referred to the worrying developments in Bangladesh coinciding with the ascendancy of organisations such as HUJI, the spread of the jihadi movement, the unfettered activities of the Jamat-e-Islami, the Islamic

Islam for leadership legitimisation gathered momentum during the military regimes of General Ziaur Rahman (1975-1981) and General HM Ershad (1982-1990). During the Zia regime, the Constitution was amended to delete secularism as one of the four principles. The eighth amendment to the Constitution declared Islam as a state religion. Even some radical and Left politicians shifted from their traditional progressive doctrine and turned into champions of Islamic politics.



Chhatra Sibir (ICS), student wing of the Jamat-e-Islami, and the proliferation of madrasas in Bangladesh. It stated that extremist influence is growing in Bangladesh, specially in the countryside.

The Islamic movement in Bangladesh has prospered for several reasons. Many people in Bangladesh have a nostalgic attachment to Pakistan and a distrust for India. Because of the deepening socio-economic crisis in Bangladesh, Islamic fundamentalism is not only attractive to the religious poor but also to educated people who see in it their political future. Poor governance, mounting corruption and lack of confidence in the bureaucracy have made the concept of a pure corruption-free society ruled by Islam a very attractive alternative option.

Islamisation

In a paper on, "State of minorities in Bangladesh: From secular to Islamic hegemony", Saleem Samad, a perceptive analyst, points out that though the new state of Bangladesh emerged as a secular polity with a constitutional embargo on religion in politics, the process of Islamisation started even under Shiekh Mujibur Rahman who revived the Islamic Academy (banned in 1972) and upgraded it to a Foundation (in March 1975) and increasingly attracted Islamic gatherings.

However, the process of using

hammad Asadulla-al-Galib who has been accused of maintaining ties with suspected militants in the Middle East and Western Asia.

The Bangladesh government has also banned Jamtul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and accused it of creating "social unrest by misleading a group of youths and abusing their religious sentiments". The police also are trying to nab Aziz-ur-Rehman, popularly known as Banglabhai who, with his followers of about 10,000 is trying for an Islamic revolution in several districts bordering India.

This crackdown followed the strong displeasure expressed at a meeting of the donor countries in Washington where representatives from the USA, UN, World Bank, European Union expressed displeasure at the rising tide of violence and militancy in Bangladesh and threatened to stop funds. The Bangladesh government has reportedly launched action against some of the terrorist outfits. This will be a matter of some satisfaction for India.

Bangla angle

However, the harsh fact is that there are as many, if not more, terrorist camps in Bangladesh than in Pakistan and more Indian fugitives have been given shelter in Bangladesh than in Pakistan. Nevertheless, many observers feel that these are cosmetic exercises. It would be difficult for the Khaleda government, dependent on support of the fundamentalists, to rein in the jihadis. There is a lack of strong political will to firmly tackle extremism. Further, this is not going to be an easy job. The urban middle class may resent the fundamentalists and dismiss them as reactionaries. But their influence is growing in the countryside. The role model for many young men in rural areas, as a foreign diplomat puts it, is "a dedicated Islamic cleric with his scull cap, flowing robes and beard".

India has to adopt both tough and conciliatory postures. There is realisation even in the BNP circles that the party has to repair relations with New Delhi. Befriending Pakistan and bashing India will be counter-productive.

It may serve the interest of the small elite but it could be disastrous for Bangladesh. India also has to take note of concerns and sensitivities of Bangladesh and live down its image as a regional bully. The suspicion that India prefers Awami League is still very strong. The movement in Assam to starve out immigrants is also creating fresh resentment. Issuing work permits for Bangladeshis should be considered. It will not only help immigrants to find jobs in India but also help stop illegal entry.

বাংলাদেশে
দেশদ্রোহিতায়
অভিযুক্ত ১৫

ইসলামি জাহাঙ্গির সেকি

২৮ ফেব্রুয়ারি: বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের
এক অধ্যাপক-সহ বিভিন্ন ইসলামি
গোষ্ঠীর ১৫ জন সদস্যের বিরুদ্ধে
দেশদ্রোহিতার অভিযোগ আনল
বাংলাদেশ। গত সপ্তাহেই তাঁদের
গ্রেফতার করা হয়েছিল।

তাঁদের বিরুদ্ধে বিভিন্ন
নাশকতামূলক কাজের অভিযোগ আনা
হলেও শেখ হাসিনার সভায় হামলার
ঘটনার সঙ্গে তাঁদের কারও যোগ নেই
বলে জানিয়েছে পুলিশ। অভিযুক্তদের
মধ্যে রয়েছেন রাজশাহি
বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের অধ্যাপক আসাদুল্লা
আল গালিব।

নিষিদ্ধ ইসলামি গোষ্ঠী জামাতুল
মুজাহিদিনের সদস্য গালিবকে দশ দিন
পুলিশি হেফাজতে রাখার নির্দেশ
দিয়েছে আদালত। গোয়েন্দারা তাঁকে
জেরা করেছে।

পুলিশ জানিয়েছে, 'খুন, ডাকাতি,
বোমাবাজি ও হুমকি দেওয়ার' মতো
বিভিন্ন দুরূহে ধৃতেরা জড়িত।

Muzzling Press

Khaleda's way of taking revenge

The recent staging of a silent march in Dhaka by editors of all national dailies of Bangladesh to protest against the killing of a senior Khulna journalist by militants underscores the concern that the country's fourth estate conveys over insecurity. This is the first time that editors ignoring their differences decided to lodge a united protest. In the last three years, five reputed journalists are killed in circumstances that leave large questions unanswered. In no case has anything approaching justice been attempted.

The Prime Minister herself withdrew charges against a minister who was chargesheeted for murdering a Jessore journalist. Among those murdered, was the president of Khulna Press Club and a BBC correspondent, respected for gutsy reporting. Three killings have taken place inside Khulna Press club.

Khulna has earned the distinction of being a killing field for journalists. During the last decade, 15 of them were killed, with two bodies yet to be recovered. Khulna journalists out of disgust, "no longer demand justice as we have been denied justice". What is worrying the country's Press fraternity is Khaleda's attitude towards a free press which prompted her to put behind bars and severely torture men like Muntasir Mamoon, Shahriar Kabir and Salim Samad, without framing specific charges against them.

All charges were dismissed later by courts as "frivolous". Earlier two British TV journalists were imprisoned for a month and their films confiscated for "trying to show Bangladesh in poor light". No wonder the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists last year said Bangladesh was "the most risky country for journalists to work in". The Brussels-based Reporters Sans Frontier too, has labelled Bangladesh as "too dangerous for journalists to perform their duty".

Khaleda's reaction is to describe "these attempts at tarnishing the government's image as a conspiracy to destabilise our country". What causes serious concern is that ruling Islamic fundamentalists are sending shrouds and written death threats to those who are exposing elements working to Talibanise the country. The result is that many terror-struck journalists have abandoned the profession.

Begum Zia and her son Tarek Rahman, the country's most powerful extra-constitutional authority, following the old Pakistani tradition, have also been deriding the Press in numerous ways. They have cut power lines of dailies, critical of misdeeds, but also denied them government and even private advertisements. Dailies are being pressurised to close down. Their coalition partners target "unfriendly" journalists and dailies not toeing their line. Unfortunately what is not realised is the price they will have to pay one day for this.

THE STATESMAN

07 MAR 2005

Violence in strike-gripped Bangladesh

Dhaka: Riot police on Saturday used tear gas and rubber bullets to quell violence in strike-gripped Bangladesh leaving several protesters injured even as the government flayed the opposition for organising the shutdown at a time when students examinations were on

Violence erupted in old parts of capital Dhaka when the police tried to chase pro-strike marchers of the main opposition Awami League party.

In retaliation the protestors smashed stones at security forces and bricks at riot police, ATN Bangla Television said.

Several people were injured. One such incident was also reported from another part of the old Dhaka area. Many were also arrested during the clashes, police said.

Minor scuffles and incidents of police using batons was reported from elsewhere in Dhaka and in northeastern Sylhet district. There were no reports of violence from rest of the country.

Schools were shut and important examinations were either put back or rescheduled. Most private offices were shut. Inter-district buses did not oper-



Bangladesh policewomen arrest activists of the Awami League during a day-long strike in Dhaka on Saturday

ate, but a large number of rickshaws and other vehicles were seen on the streets of Dhaka.

The strike, the second in four days, was called by the opposition Awami League to protest the killing of its activist Khorshed Alam Bacchu on Tuesday in Dhaka's Tejgaon area. He was the party's Dhaka unit law secretary and joint general secretary of the Dhaka District Bar Council.

Police were grilling five suspects arrested since the killing. The shutdown forced the second cancellation of crucial college leaving tests making parents as well as students angry.

"It only proves that the opposition party is not concerned about the fate of students and general masses," local government minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, also the secretary general of ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) told reporters.

However, Awami League chief and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed Warned of more such action unless the killings of her party people stopped.

"Why won't we call hartal (strike)? If we don't get justice, hartal is a must," she told a ceremony organised by the party yesterday. PTI

22 MAY 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

22 on death row for Awami leader killing

Dhaka, April 16 (Reuters): A Bangladesh court has sentenced 22 people to death and six others to life in jail for killing an Opposition lawmaker last year, officials said.

The lawmaker, Ahsanullah Master, a senior member of Bangladesh's main Opposition Awami League, and a young man were killed when a group of armed men opened fire on a rally being addressed by the politician on May 7, 2004.

"I sentence 22 people to death by hanging as their direct involvement in the killing has been proved undoubtedly," Judge Shahed Nuruddin told a packed court.

Of the 22 people facing the gallows, seven belong to ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), five to the Awami League and the rest to BNP's ally Jatitya Party," special public prosecutor advocate Latif Talukdar said.

Three months after his



Ahsanullah Master

death, Ahsanullah's son Mohammad Zahid Ahsan Russel took his father's seat in parliament. Eighteen of the accused were tried and sentenced in absentia.

"Out of 30 accused, police could arrest only 12, while others were absconding," said lawyer Mohammad Alamgir.

Former Prime Minister

Sheikh Hasina, chief of the Awami League, said the mastermind of the murder remained at large.

"The probe and the subsequent verdict were incomplete as police failed to expose the real mastermind of the murder in their investigation due to interference of the government," Hasina said.

Hasina escaped an assassination attempt in August 2004 when grenades exploded at a Dhaka rally she was addressing. Over 30 party leaders and workers were killed in the attack.

Former finance minister Shah Abu Mohammad Shamsul Kibria, a senior leader of Awami League and a lawmaker, and four others were killed and 70 wounded in a grenade attack at a rally in northeastern Hobiganj district in January. Bangladesh police have charged 10 people in connection with Kibria's death, including local BNP activists.

Bangladesh's ruling coalition party splits

Press Trust of India

DHAKA, April 14.— The Bangladesh Jatiya Party, one of the four parties of Bangladesh's ruling alliance led by Mrs Khaleda Zia of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, split today, with Mr MA Matin, a presidium member announcing that the party chairman Mr Naziur Rahman Monjur was being "relieved" of his responsibility for "anti-party" and "anti-alliance" comments.

Mr Matin claimed all four MPs of the party and majority of the presidium members were on his side.

"We were with the alliance, we are with the alliance and we will remain with the alliance," he said.

Mr Monjur, now in a hospital, refused to make any comment, only saying Mr Matin could not undertake such a decision legally.

Hasina's son comes to her aid

Mr Sajib Wajed Joy, the only son of Bangladesh's Opposition leader Mrs Hasina Wajed, today returned to the country to help his mother in fulfilling her political ambitions. This is the second time in a year that the US-educated Mr Joy has come back to Dhaka but he denied having any intention of joining politics. "I am not thinking of joining politics," he told reporters soon after arriving in the capital, adding: "I will try to help my mother by remaining on her side."

15 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

Khaleda alleges plot against Bangladesh

Handwritten: Dhaka
H1) - 16

By Haroon Habib *19/2*

DHAKA, FEBRUARY. 18. The Bangladesh Prime Minister, Khaleda Zia, has urged the people to resist a "deep-rooted conspiracy" being executed against Bangladesh by certain political parties in league with "foreign allies" to create unrest and halt the country's forward march.

"A deep-rooted conspiracy is going on against Bangladesh. This conspiracy is against development, democracy and the religion of the country," reported the state-run news agency BSS, quoting the Prime Minister as saying at a public rally in southern Barguna's Pathorghata upazila on Thursday.

The private UNB news agency quoted her as saying, "Today, a deep conspiracy is going on against the country. Certain political parties are involved in the conspiracy. They, along with their lackeys, want to create unrest in the country and don't want its development." Without naming anyone, the Prime Minister said, "They' want to make Bangladesh a vassal state and install a puppet government here, which will abide by their guidance."

THE HINDU

19 FEB 2005

NETWORK OF TERROR

Green Menace Stalks Bangladesh

By BIBHUTI BHUSAN NANDY

Bangladesh
Bangladesh has become a breeding ground of Islamic terror. In the six years since 1999, 28 major bomb and grenade attacks by jihadi fanatics have killed 139 people and maimed more than a thousand others. Besides a cross-section of centre-left political activists, those killed included members of ethnic and religious minority communities, secular intellectuals, progressive writers and journalists. At the receiving end of Islamist attacks are icons of pluralist Bengali culture — musical concerts, opera shows, cinema houses, mazzars of Sufi divines and Ahmediya shrines. The latest trend is to take on NGOs active in the socio-economic sector like the BRAC and Graeme Bank.

Bomb attacks

The hardest hit is the Awami League having lost in the last one year two of its sitting MPs including former finance minister A S M S Kibria, and scores of other activists. A fierce grenade attack on a party rally (Dhaka 21 August 2004) aimed at killing Sheikh Hasina, the opposition leader and former prime minister, missed the target, but killed 24 other people including Ivy Rehman, president of the party's women wing. Two separate bomb attacks at the historic Shah Jalal shrine in Sylhet last year killed eight persons and seriously wounded the British High Commissioner to Bangladesh.

The BNP-Jamaat-e-Islami coalition government has betrayed incredible lack of concern at the sharply rising trajectory of politically motivated Islamist mayhems. Instead of bringing the real culprits to book, the regime has imprisoned opposition leaders, university professors, journalists and human rights activists for long spells without trial under the notorious Special Powers Act. Scotland Yard, FBI and Interpol teams that had come to assist in the investigation of the attacks on the British High Commissioner and the Awami League rally, withdrew when they realized that the Khaleda government had no interest in getting to the bottom of the savage crimes.

In the last two years, the police had arrested from different places many Islamic terrorists with incriminatory documents and weapons, but for want of follow-up the courts concerned have let them off. They had all been recruited from mosques run by the Jamaat-e-Islami. Police officers investigating terrorist bomb attacks in Sylhet have alleged that orders from "higher-ups"

The author is former Additional Secretary, Research and Analysis Wing

have jettisoned arrest and interrogation of suspects; even mentioning their names in case records is prohibited.

International media — *Time*, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Guardian* and *New York Times* — have published many insightful repor-

SFB 12/19
The government panicked when the World Bank and western donor countries threatened to stop aid, citing unmitigated terror and wanton human rights violation as the reason, and banned two jihadi organizations — Jamatul Mujahideen (JuM) and Jagrata Muslim Janata, Bangla-



ts on the spiralling Islamic terror networks, their foreign links and financial support, as well as presence of Al Qaeda and Taliban fugitives in the country. But Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and other ministers have pooohooed these wake up calls as a vilification campaign to tarnish the image of Bangladesh.

Though the J-e-I is a partner of the BNP-led coalition government, some Jamaat leaders, notably the arch communal MP Delwar Hossain Saidi, and top leaders of the Islami Oikya Jote, another fundamentalist constituent of the ruling four-party alliance, are members of the supreme advisory councils of the Harkat-ul Jihad-e-Islam (HuJI) and the Islami Manch. HuJI was set up in 1989 by leading Bangladeshi mujahideens who had joined the jihad against the Soviet occupation army in Afghanistan. The Manch is a co-ordinating umbrella organization of lead Islamic terrorist groups that want to establish an Islamic state comprising Bangladesh, Assam, Tripura, Muslim-majority districts of West Bengal, and the Rohingya Muslim-dominated Arakan Hills of Burma.

Human rights abuse

The militant Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO), a component of the Islami Manch, is a creation of the Jamaat and operates entirely under its leadership and control. The administration of Rajsahi district and two BNP ministers had actively supported the JMJB for eliminating leading local cadres of the Awami League on the pretext of curbing left-wing extremism.

ernment deported and blacklisted him, but he is still a conduit of funds from the Middle East for the Islamists in the country. The Bangladesh police have estimated that four Islamist organizations — JMJB, JuM, Sahadat Al Hikma and Ahl-e-Al Hadis — together have 2000-strong armed cadres operating in 17 of the country's 64 districts, and 80,000 supporters throughout Bangladesh.

Danger ahead

Though they tactically operate under different names, the jihadi groups complement one another. The JuM and JMJB function under the joint command of Dr Ghalib, Banglabhai and the JMJB spiritual guru Abdur Rahman Salafi. Of the 87 terrorists arrested in the latest drive as many as 39 have been identified as cadres of the Jamaat-e-Islami and the pro-Jamaat Islami Chhatra Shibir.

A recent publication in Dhaka has exposed a long-term Jamaat game plan to launch at a suitable time an armed struggle for capturing power. In such an eventuality, the Islamist outfits will no doubt rally forces with the J-e-I to turn Bangladesh into an Islamic theocracy. Clearly, the J-e-I has been nurturing Islamic terror, but the BNP is averse to reining in the Jamaat, let alone severing its alliance with the fundamentalist party. In the 2001 election, the BNP polled 37+ percent votes against the Awami League score of 41 percent, but the Jamaat's share of eight per cent votes and 18 seats secured for the ruling alliance 46 percent of votes and more than two-thirds majority in the parliament. On the other hand, by contesting the elections separately in 1996, the BNP had lost power to the Awami League and the Jamaat could win only three parliamentary seats. The obvious mutual electoral advantage is a strong inducement for the continuance of the BNP-Jamaat marriage of convenience.

The rise of radical political Islam in Bangladesh portends trouble for the whole region. Of immediate concern is its spillover into India's eastern and northeastern peripheries that already face a demographic peril due to unrestrained illegal immigration from across the border. Undeterred circulation of inflammatory Islamist literature and video-cassettes smuggled from Bangladesh into Assam and West Bengal has been stoking Talibani extremism among sections of the minority community. The fact that obeying mullahs' fatwa, Muslims in parts of Mushidabad district have socially and economically ostracised local bauls who sing paeans of humanism is a pointer to the looming danger.

VOLATILE BANGLADESH

100-10
11/2 ✓

BANGLADESH'S CONFRONTATIONIST POLITICS has given rise to an intolerance in public life that is alarming. The recent killing of S.A.M.S. Kibria, a former Finance Minister and a prominent member of the Opposition Awami League, in a grenade attack at a public meeting, is a case in point. This was followed by other bombings, one of which killed a journalist. These are bloody reminders of the steady deterioration of political discourse. It was only six months ago that the Awami League leader, Sheikh Hasina, narrowly escaped an assassination attempt. The grenade attack on her sparked countrywide protests and expressions of concern by the international community, prompting Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to promise a swift investigation to track down the perpetrators. However, that case appears set to join the long list of unsolved bombings and grenade attacks over the past year. It explains why a similar promise by the Bangladesh Prime Minister in the Kibria murder case has little credibility. The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party has alleged that some of the attacks were engineered by the Opposition to make the Government look bad. If that were true, it should have been all the more in the Government's interests to identify the culprits and get them punished. Its failure to do so has created a climate of impunity and given credence to the charge that it is shielding the elements behind such violence.

The Opposition alleges that extremist groups with links to two Islamist parties in the ruling coalition — the Islamic Oikiya Jote and the Jamaat-e-Islami — are responsible for the violence. It has not helped the Zia Government's image at home or abroad that from about the same time the United States launched its "war on terror" in Afghanistan, Bangladesh has found frequent mention in the annals of international security as a haven for Islamist extremism.

While Dhaka vehemently denies reports that link it to extremist groups, its case has not been strengthened by a spate of attacks on religious minorities, especially on members of the Ahamadiyya Muslim sect. The Government's decision in 2004 to ban Ahamadiyya publications seemed only to reinforce the growing influence of the religious Right. It was perhaps to dispel the impression that has gained ground of Bangladesh as a hotbed of religious extremism that two days after the killing of Mr. Kibria, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia formally requested the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation to assist in the investigation. In return, the U.S. is said to have asked for a "clear commitment" from the Government that it wants to solve the case.

New Delhi found the situation in Bangladesh bad enough to cite it as one of the two principal reasons for cancelling Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's participation in the Dhaka summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation scheduled for February 6 and 7. But by raising the issue at the last minute and tagging it along with the other, more important reason for the decision — King Gyanendra's February 1 coup in Nepal — India has opened itself to questions about its motives for mentioning it at all. It can be argued that security in the Bangladesh capital became a cause for concern only after the January 27 incident that killed Mr. Kibria, and that the decision not to participate in the summit was guided by the Indian Government's assessment of the situation thereafter. The interesting question is whether Mr. Singh would have called off his Dhaka visit had there been no crisis in Nepal. The developments in Bangladesh certainly have implications for India's security and foreign policy. At the same time, New Delhi should be aware that it must handle relations with Dhaka deftly so as not to give any room for accusations that it is taking sides in Bangladesh's volatile politics.

Demonised Other

In Bangladesh, for instance, there are about 200,000 illegal firearms, almost all in the hands of (local) terrorists, popularly known as the *mastans*.

Some reports indicate that about 600 to 700 illegal firearms enter the country everyday through its borders, indicating the existence of an informal arms bazaar in the region. Small arms are also manufactured locally in illegal factories within the country.

During 2001-2002, the use of illegal weapons became so rampant that the Bangladeshi government had to launch a military operation named, "Operation Clean Heart" to bring the perpetrators to book. Indeed, one of the major tasks of the joint forces in this operation was to recover illegal firearms.

In this operation 2,016 firearms of different categories were recovered, including six AK-47s, two M-16 rifles and few sub-machine guns (SMG). There were also many local guns in that cache, these were either smuggled in or produced within the country. But that is not all.

On the night of 1-2 April 2004, police and Coast Guard forces seized illegal arms from a government-owned jetty in the Anwara coast of Chittagong. The seizure has been described as the "largest single" arms consignment to have been intercepted by law enforcement officials in Bangladesh.

See table for a detailed inventory of arms and ammunition seized in Chittagong. There are different schools of thought about the latest arms seizure. Some believe that it was meant for the United Liberation Front of Asom, others thought that the weapons were meant for the Tripura rebels. Some even included the Nepalese Maoists and the Kashmiri militants as possible buyers.

One plausible theory, however, is that the consignment was shipped from Hong Kong and was destined for the Tamil Tigers, but after a chase from the Indian or Sri Lankan Navy, the suppliers decided to hide the weapons in a safe warehouse in Bangladesh until time permitted for the consignment to be shipped back to its original customers.

Looking at the composition of the weaponry this could indeed be true. What is however more frightening is the existence of a sophisticated network of illegal

The Other is sometimes Indian, sometimes Bangladeshi, sometimes beyond Indian and Bangladeshi. It manipulates its own demand and supply, writes IMTIAZ AHMED



In Bangladesh there are about 200,000 illegal firearms, almost all in the hands of (local) terrorists, popularly known as the *mastans*.

arms stretching from Hong Kong to South Asia and even beyond.

There is, moreover, no guarantee that some of these weapons would not slip into the local market and reach the hands of *mastans* and subaltern dissenters of South Asia.

The Other world of dubious and shadowy labour has taken over what seemed at first the remorse and longings of the territorialised Other interested only in making a living out of the state's generosity.

Now funded by smuggled goods, from human to narcotics, and armed with AK-47s, SMGs and explosives, apart from the creative but shadowy banking facilities, the dubious Other is an empowered entity ready to wreak havoc on life and the living.

In the backdrop of subaltern globalisation, this Other is sometimes Indian, sometimes

Bangladeshi, sometimes both, sometimes beyond Indian and Bangladeshi. It knows how to creatively manipulate its own demand and supply.

Indeed, it makes a rowdy presence and a hefty profit wherever

rest of the South Asian countries, to contain the dubious Other ought to be enough reason for a coordinated and collective response, albeit rooted in the ethos of indigenous wisdom and imagination.

Weapons seized in Chittagong

Item	Quantity
7.62 mm T-56-I SMGs	690
7.62 mm T- 56 - SMGs	600
40 mm Rocket Launchers T- 69	150
40 mm Rockets	850
9 mm Semi Automatic Spot Rifle	400
Tommy Guns	100
Grenade Launcher	2000
T-82- 2 Hand Grenade	25,020
7.62 mm Bullets	739,680
7.62 mm Pistol Bullets	4,00,000

the state has lost its hold or has failed to deliver, both of which are in abundance in Bangladesh, India and the rest of South Asia.

The police, the lower courts, the administration, the politicians, whether in position or in opposition, the financial sector, and a host of other institutions, all have over the years while trying to reproduce themselves have unwittingly strengthened the power of the dubious Other.

The collective failure of both Bangladesh and India, and the

failed state in them.

Jaffna, Karachi, Gujarat, the Northwest Frontier, Kashmir, the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, northwest Nepal, parts of Bihar, southern Bhutan, are the more known ones.

If we include the power of the "underworld" then there are even greater numbers of pockets of failed state throughout South Asia. The urgency lies in the fact that such pockets, while reproducing the power of the coercive machineries of the state, particularly the police and the military, tend to create lucrative business for the dubious and shadowy Other.

And when the latter becomes empowered it is as much a failure of the targeted state as it is of the state that sponsors the campaign of the failed state.

Sometimes the campaign itself is shortsighted, if not based upon apriori knowledge of things. Take the case of the ISI (Inter-Service Intelligence of Pakistan) factor in Bangladesh, repeatedly hammered by the Indian state, including the organic intellectuals and a section of the media.

The allegation fails to take note of the fact that it was not the Indians but the Bangladeshis who had the experience of living under Pakistan in a state of semi-colonialism for nearly twenty-five years, and more importantly got their freedom following a genocide committed by the military of the latter.

To tell Bangladeshis that now they are being run by the ISI is not only insulting but also shows the lack of seriousness on the part of the Indian state to tackle thorny issues that are complex and multi-dimensional, and increasingly beyond the reach of one single state, whether India or Bangladesh.

Similarly, when Bangladesh rejoices at the failure of the Indian state to tackle its sub-nationalist movements in Kashmir, Nagaland or elsewhere, it fails to understand that at times the power of the Indian dissenters may well come to benefit the non-state elements (via trading in small arms, narcotics or money laundering) within its own territorial boundaries.

(The author is a professor at the Department of International Relations at Dhaka University. He was also a Mukti Bahini fighter during the Liberation War against Pakistan)

It must not be overlooked that such coordination is demanded from a region which is known more for its spectacular underdevelopment, indeed, in marked contrast to the coordina-

tion efforts of the European states, which have joined forces at the time of their spectacular development.

The state ought to desist from making the "Other state" a failed state. This is the minimum policy that is required from the state.

There is some urgency in this because all the South Asian states, with the possible exception of the Maldives, unless we take its issue with the environment seriously, have pockets of

Bangla erupts as bandh begins

Day after India's Saarc pullout, Dhaka turns into battlefield

Agencies
Dhaka, February 3

AT LEAST 25 people were injured when Bangladesh police used tear gas and batons to disperse protesters who tried to stage marches and torched vehicles on the first day of a three day dawn-to-dusk strike called by the main Opposition Awami League, less than a week after a similar shutdown.

Schools, shops and most private offices were shut or operated with skeleton staff during the strike and a large number of police and paramilitary forces were deployed in the capital to prevent violence.

Police said pickets were out in different parts of Dhaka and some were detained for creating lawlessness. In the old parts of Dhaka, police fired tear gas and used batons to disperse activists who set ablaze vehicles.

Besides Awami League, left-wing parties which backed the strike, also staged brief rallies before being dispersed by baton-wielding police.

The strike has been called by the League and its allies to protest the killing of five people, including a former finance minister, in a grenade attack at a rally last week.

The strike came under attack by the business community who said it was hurting the economy.

According to media reports, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia held talks with several senior



Police floor Awami League senior leader and former minister Motia Chowdhury in Dhaka on Thursday.

AFP

Cabinet colleagues on the overall situation as her ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) along with three allies planned counter offensive to the Opposition strikes.

Finance minister Saifur Rahman slammed the strikes, saying it was one of the reasons for the slow pace in imple-

menting the Annual Development Programme.

The new round of three days of dawn to dusk general strike on Thursday, Saturday and Sunday has been called just after a similar strike last week by the Opposition parties.

The Awami League has warned of tougher action un-

less the government tracked down those behind the grenade attack and brought to justice.

The Bangladesh government has vowed to deal with the perpetrators of the attack and sought the help of Interpol, United States and Britain. A two-member Interpol team is already in the country.

Dhaka denies rise of Islamist militancy

By Haroon Habib

DHAKA, JAN. 30. The Bangladesh Government has dismissed as "unfortunate and politically motivated" a report titled, "The Next Islamic Revolution", in the *New York Times* magazine on the country's growing Islamic militancy. A spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, "The report does not reflect the real picture of Bangladesh."

The magazine said in its January 23 issue that 10,000 Islamists had regrouped in northern Bangladesh under the banner of Jagrata Muslim Janata for a Taliban-type revolution under the leadership of a self-styled commander named "Bangla Bhai", who was reportedly trained in Afghanistan.

"Official patronage"

The report also said the BNP-led alliance Government headed by the Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, was patronising various groups operating in the country. "There is no scope for an Islamist revolution here," said the spokesman, as local media reproduced the magazine report, putting the blame for the situation largely on the Government, which includes two fundamentalist parties. About the rise of Bangla Bhai, the self-proclaimed commander of Jagrata Muslim Janata, Bangladesh (JMJB), the Ministry spokesman claimed that the Government was determined to tackle the situation and the police had arrested 66 persons believed to be Bangla Bhai's followers.

The Opposition Leader in Parliament, Sheikh Hasina, however, accused the Government of "letting loose communal extremist forces" to eliminate secular forces. "The country is witnessing the rise of extreme communal outfits one after another as the Government was formed with the elements that had opposed the war of independence," she said in a press statement.

Ms. Hasina alleged that the Islamist outfit had become stronger because of Government patronage. She alleged that Bangla Bhai had contact with Ministers and had held a secret meeting with the Rajshahi police superintendent.

3 1 JAN 2005

THE HINDU

বাংলাদেশে ফের ধর্মঘটের ডাক

নিজস্ব সংবাদসূত্র, ঢাকা, ৮
ফেব্রুয়ারি: ফের ধর্মঘটের ডাক
বাংলাদেশে। ২৯ জানুয়ারি থেকে এই
নিয়ে সপ্তম বার। প্রাক্তন অর্থমন্ত্রী তথা
আওয়ামি লিগ নেতা শাহ কিব্রিয়ার
খুনের প্রতিবাদে সরকারের ইস্তফা
চেয়ে ১৪ ফেব্রুয়ারি থেকে ৩৬ ঘণ্টার
বাংলাদেশ ধর্মঘটের ডাক দিয়েছে
আওয়ামি লিগ ও তার সহযোগীরা।

পরপর ধর্মঘটের জেরে দেশে
বাণিজ্যিক ও আর্থিক ক্ষতির পরিমাণ
লাগামছাড়া হওয়ায় বাণিজ্যিক
সংগঠনগুলি শঙ্কিত। তাদের হিসাব
অনুযায়ী, জানুয়ারি থেকে একের পর
এক বনধে বাংলাদেশে আর্থিক ক্ষতি
দাঁড়িয়েছে প্রায় ৫০০ কোটি টাকা।
অর্ডার পাওয়া সত্ত্বেও প্রায় ৬০০ কোটি
টাকার জিনিস রফতানি করা যায়নি।

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

09 FEB 2005

Bangla bandh turns bloody

Agencies
Dhaka, February 6

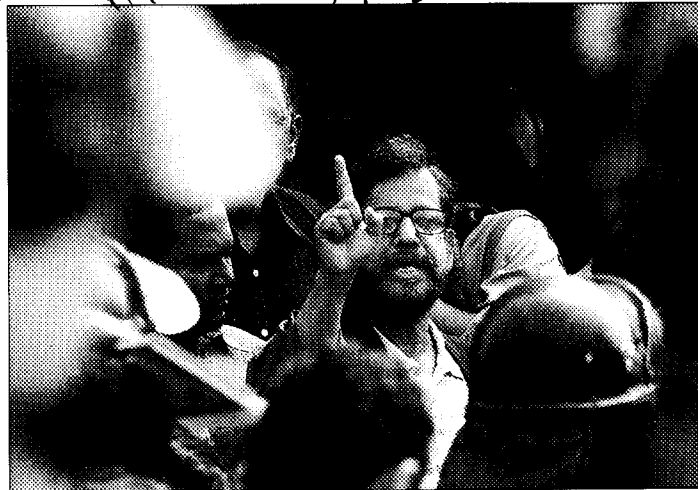
A POLICEMAN was killed and around 50 other people were injured on the last day of a three-day general strike in Bangladesh protesting the grenade attack on a rally that killed five Opposition members, even as the fresh call for a shutdown in Chittagong port city was withdrawn on Sunday.

Constable Ashraf Siddiqui was killed in a clash with strike supporters in the northern Sherpur district, the NTV private network said, adding two other policemen and three Opposition activists were injured in the incident.

Ashraf fell down after being hit by a brick hurled by strikers, who then beat him up, the report said. He was rushed to hospital but succumbed to his injuries.

Crude bombs were set off in some parts of Dhaka and baton-wielding police fired tear gas shells as they clashed with strike supporters, witnesses said. The incidents left at least 20 people, including a policeman injured.

At least 25 others were injured



AP
Bangladeshi Opposition lawmaker Asaduzamman Noor, surrounded by riot police, addresses a gathering during the strike in Dhaka on Sunday.

in similar incidents in north-eastern Sylhet, northern Sirajganj and northwestern Pabna districts. Dozens of people have been arrested, police said.

Meanwhile, a fresh three-day strike called in the southeastern port of Chittagong from tomor-

row by Awami League was called off following appeals from the business community who warned about its economic impact.

Former finance minister SA MS Kibria and four Awami League supporters were killed in a grenade attack a week ago

BNP to confront Awami League on the streets

Daily Star/ANN

DHAKA, Feb. 4. — Blaming the Opposition Awami League for foiling the Saarc Summit, the BNP-led ruling alliance has decided to take to the streets to face the Opposition agitation.

The ruling alliance yesterday castigated the Opposition for calling frequent strikes and "damaging the image" of the country. To face the situation, the BNP will hold rallies across the country on 7 February. Then they will jointly

hold public meetings in different parts of the country, BNP sources said.

The coalition also decided that its component parties — BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh Jatiya Party and Islami Oikya Jote — will announce and observe their political programmes separately.

"We have decided to observe programmes individually first and then go for united programmes," said BNP secretary general Mr Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan at a press briefing after a meeting of top leaders of the four parties.



FACE-OFF: Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia.

Chaired by BNP chief and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, the meeting regretted the postponement of the Saarc summit, and blamed the Awami League for launching a campaign against holding

of the summit in Bangladesh and calling a shut-down coinciding with it.

Most of the alliance leaders attending the meeting held at the Prime Minister's Office accused the Awami League of per-

suading the Indian leadership into not attending the Saarc summit in Dhaka.

They expressed dissatisfaction at the Indian refusal to attend the summit and said Delhi apparently gave importance to a particular political party instead of regional cooperation.

ter SAMS Kibria and four others dead, Daily Star/ANN adds from Baider-bazar in Habiganj.

Police has declined to divulge political identity of the three accused, but family members said they are involved with the BNP and its affiliates.

Two of the arrestees — Shah Alam and Jainal Abedin Jalal — have been placed on an eight-day remand and are being questioned in the custody of the local detective branch. The other, Abdul Wahed Sohel, was sent to jail on Wednesday.

Three arrested for blast

Three BNP workers were arrested and 18 people were detained for questioning from Habiganj and Sylhet in connection with the Habiganj carnage that left former finance minis-

Ruthless Khaleda

Strategy to eliminate Opposition

The assassination of SAMS Kibria, Bangladesh's former finance minister and a sitting Awami League MP, in a grenade attack by Islamic fundamentalists of prime minister Begum Khaleda Zia's coalition, lends credence to the widely levelled charge that she has turned Bangladesh into a terrorist state. He was the second Awami League MP in seven months to be assassinated by her supporters. His killing is a shock to Bangladeshis since Kibria was one of the country's most respected intellectuals and career diplomats, having served as Secretary-General of the UN's ESCAP and also as Bangladesh's Foreign Secretary with distinction.

A non-controversial man and part of Sheikh Hasina's think tank he will be remembered as the country's most successful finance minister who made a courageous bid to restore order to the country's messy financial scene, and also kept inflation under control. During his tenure the poor were happy as essentials were within their reach. No one thought that he would become Begum Zia's target. But then under her dispensation anyone with an Awami League background has been targeted. Attempts have been made to kill a presidium member and senior MP, Suranjit Sengupta and the Mayor of Sylhet, Badruddin Kamran.

Countless grassroots party leaders have been brutally assassinated with no attempt visible to arrest the assassins. Khaleda has let loose a highly trained and armed militant Islamic group called Jagrata Muslim Janata, whose only job is to eliminate Opposition supporters, specially Awami League members. She has also raised a special terror force called Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) which indulges in extra judicial killings of Awami League and other Opposition workers. RAB has eliminated over 200 Opposition supporters in the last two months in what it calls "cross-fire" and "armed encounter", provoking an outcry from international human rights groups and the US state department. What is curious is that no ruling coalition MP, supporter or sympathiser has so far been hurt, let alone killed.

Begum Zia's purpose is elimination of Opposition leaders and trying to create a fear psychosis ahead of the 2006 parliamentary elections. Her message is that any "misplaced sympathy" for the Opposition will invite serious reprisals from her.

Many world leaders including those of the European Union, besides the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, have expressed "serious dismay" over Kibria's assassination. Her security agencies are not making arrests despite the investigations, by Interpol, FBI and the Scotland Yard, yielding enough clues about involvement of Islamic terrorists of her coalition. While fundamentalists and anti-liberation forces are wholly united under Begum Zia, the Awami League-led pro-liberation forces are badly fragmented.

The Communist Party of Bangladesh is helping the ruling coalition to divide the pro-liberation forces by refusing to join Awami League's movement against Begum Zia. Unfortunately, the Bangladeshi Communists are now doing what the Indian Communists did during the freedom movement.

THE STATESMAN

02 FEB 2005

Blast at Bangla Opp rally kills 3

Agencies

Dhaka, January 27

AT LEAST three people were killed and 150 others, including a former minister, injured in an explosion on Thursday at a rally organised by the main Opposition party, Awami League, in north-eastern Bangladesh, media reports said.

The loud explosion came as a rally of the Opposition party — headed by former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed — ended in a school ground at Laskarpur village, in Habiganj district, witnesses said.

Several people lay in a pool of blood, they said.

Three people were killed, including the nephew of injured former finance minister SAMS Kibria, who was hurt in the leg, the reports said. ATN Bangla television channel put the number of injured at 150.

Television reports identified three people killed in the incident as Shah Monjur, nephew of the former minister, and two others as Awami League activists.

Awami League leader Obaidul Quader said a grenade was thrown as the Opposition rally ended. The injured were rushed to hospitals. Some were being brought to Dhaka.

The attack came as Bangladesh went on a security alert from Thursday for the high-profile seven-nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) summit scheduled for February 6 and 7.

A string of severe explosions has hit this politically volatile country over the recent years, including one last August — in which Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina narrowly escaped unhurt when at least three grenades exploded at a rally she was addressing in Dhaka on August 21 last year.

Twenty-three people were killed in the attack and hundreds were wounded.

Meanwhile, 15 Bangladesh Opposition parties, including the Awami League of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed, have demanded a ban on a militant outfit and the arrest of its leader, Bangla Bhai.



Sheikh Hasina
Embattled

“The Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) should be banned since it has carried out extra-judicial killings, many of them in the Opposition, in the name of fighting crime.

Its leader, Bangla Bhai, or Azizur Rahman, should be arrested”, the Opposition leaders said at a rally on Wednesday in north-western Rajshahi district, where the group reportedly has a stronghold.

Media reports here also said the US wants Bangla Bhai to be tried for murders.

“We’re determined to arrest him, but he’s in hiding and we’re trying to find him. Anyone can inform us about his whereabouts”, state minister for home affairs Lufuzzaman Babar said.

“We don’t know any Bangla Bhai or English Bhai, we want to ensure law and order”, he added. Babar has denied the existence of the JMJB even as the police arrested about 70 followers of the group.

Since the latest clashes between JMJB followers and villagers in Rajshahi, a large number of followers of the group have gone into hiding, the reports said.

28 JAN 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Your neighbour is under siege: Bangla intellectuals

Kolkata: Those with any concern for democracy should be alarmed by the condition in Bangladesh. For the country which once fought famously to preserve its language is fast turning into a hub for fundamentalist, Islamic groups in South Asia. India has a major role to play in helping democratic institutions flourish in Bangladesh. This was the clear message from authors and academics from the beleaguered state at a

seminar in Kolkata on Saturday. The conference on "Civil society, human rights and minorities in Bangladesh" was organised by Campaign Against Atrocities on Minorities in Bangladesh in association with Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council (BHBCUC).

According to noted Bangladesh author Salam Azad, there is an effort at Talibanizing Bangladesh. "Given Bangladesh's social organi-

sation, it would be easy to do so. A close associate of Osama bin Laden had recently been to Cox's Bazar where there are hundreds of fundamentalist camps."

Azad clearly stated that the democratic sections in the Bangladesh society which safeguarded Bengali nationalism were now in peril and the fundamentalist organisations were emerging as a major political force, so much so that the next election

might be between the Awami League and Jamaat-e-Islami. India should, in priority basis, help democratic institutions to grow in Bangladesh. "There is no place for democracy in Islam," he said.

Blaming the politically conscious sections in Kolkata and Bengal of being blind to the threat posed by fundamentalists in Bangladesh, Azad said that in a fortnight after the October 2001 election in Bangladesh, 1.5 million Hindus had fled to Bengal and

Tripura. Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party should not be treated in the same footing in India because minorities had been more secure under Awami League rule, he said.

Author Taslima Nasreen likened the atrocities on religious minorities in Bangladesh to the genocide in Gujarat. She read out three of her poems, condemning rapes of Hindu women in Bangladesh, attacks on Muslims in Gujarat and seeking religious tolerance.



Salam Azad which safeguarded Bengali nationalism were now in peril and the fundamentalist organisations were emerging as a major political force, so much so that the next election

PHOTO: A. S. KHAN

Not acceptable!

Bangla 19/1
Threatening Bangla's intellectuals

It is worrying that Khatme Nabuat, a Muslim fundamentalist outfit of Bangladesh, should be threatening constitutional and legal expert Dr Kamal Hossain and poet Shamsur Rahman with "dire consequences" for daring to defend publicly the country's small Ahmadiya community which has already been declared non-Muslim by Khaleda Zia's coalition partner Jamat-i-Islam. Khatme Nabuat is a front organisation of the fundamentalist Jamat which has influenced Khaleda to ban all Ahmadiya publications. Dr Hossain has incurred the wrath of fundamentalists by his constant defence in the Bangladesh high court of the Ahmadiyas' right to preach and practice their faith, as guaranteed by the Bangladesh constitution. As the main architect of the Constitution, he knows better than anyone else that responsibilities extend to all communities, including the Ahmadiyas, equally. Not only did Dr Hossain fearlessly articulate this in court; he has demanded immediate lifting of the ban. Such courage has invited a threat to his life. It is no wonder that the fundamentalists have called Dr Hossain a *Murtad* (infidel) and set a fortnight's deadline to prove that he is a Muslim. Worse, the Jamat has demanded that Ahmadiyas be treated as "untouchable minorities like the Hindus and Christians". This has unleashed a fierce outcry from intellectuals and secular parties. They have rightly accused Khaleda of taking Bangladesh to the middle ages. Instead of condemning the threat, she decries attempts by secularists to "harm Islam".

There can be no doubt that Khaleda is playing the fundamentalist card with an eye on retaining power in 2006 parliamentary poll. She will do nothing to alienate fundamentalists within her own BNP as well as the religious outfits of her coalition like Jamat and Islamic Oikya Jote. So when the Islamists persecute Ahmadiyas and attack and burn down their mosques she prefers inaction. She did the same to *jihadis* of Jamat, responsible for the grenade attack on the British High Commissioner in Sylhet eight months ago. The British Government is peeved that no arrests have been made despite her government being told about the Jamat's involvement. The threat to Dr Kamal and Shamsur Rahman will not be taken lightly. Khaleda Zia will learn that victory in elections is not the end of the battle.

THE STATESMAN

19 JAN 2005

দৈনিক ইত্তেফাক

THE DAILY ITTEFAQ
প্রতিষ্ঠাতা : তফাজ্জল হোসেন মানিক মিয়া

ডিসেম্বর ০৯, ২০০৫, শুক্রবার : অগ্রহায়ণ ২৫, ১৪১২

নিরীহ মানুষ জীবন দিয়ে সরকারের জঙ্গি লালন নীতির মাশুল দিচ্ছে

-----শেখ হাসিনা

।। ইত্তেফাক রিপোর্ট ।।

জাতীয় সংসদের বিরোধী দলীয় নেতা ও আওয়ামী লীগ সভানেত্রী শেখ হাসিনা বলেছেন, জঙ্গিদের বিরুদ্ধে কার্যকর ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণে জোট সরকারের ইচ্ছাকৃত অনীহার কারণেই দেশজুড়ে প্রতিদিন নিরীহ মানুষ বোমা হামলার শিকার হচ্ছে। তিনি গতকাল বৃহস্পতিবার এক বিবৃতিতে নেত্রকোনার উদীচী কার্যালয়ে বোমা হামলা চালিয়ে আটজনকে হত্যার ঘটনাকে ঘৃণ্য, মানবতা ও ইসলাম বিরোধী বলে অভিহিত করে বলেন, জোট সরকারের ভিতরে থাকা জঙ্গিবাদের মদদদাতাদের বিচারের সম্মুখীন না করলে এই বর্বরতার শেষ হবে না। শেখ হাসিনা বলেন, সরকারের দায়িত্বই হচ্ছে জনগণের জানমালের নিরাপত্তা দেয়া, সন্ত্রাস-বোমা হামলা বন্ধ করা। কিন্তু দেশে পুলিশ, প্রশাসন, র‍্যাভ, চিতা, কোবরা সবকিছু থাকার পরেও শুধু সরকারের সদিচ্ছা ও আন্তরিকতার অভাবে দেশ জঙ্গি সন্ত্রাসীদের কসাইখানায় পরিণত হয়েছে। তিনি বলেন, বুধবার স্বরাষ্ট্র প্রতিমন্ত্রী 'অতীতের যেকোন সময়ের চাইতে বর্তমান পরিস্থিতি অনেক ভালো' বলে আশ্বাসন করার ১২ ঘণ্টার মধ্যে তিনি নিজে যে জেলার দায়িত্বপ্রাপ্ত মন্ত্রী সেই নেত্রকোনায় বোমা হামলাই কি তাদের কথিত ভালো পরিস্থিতি নাকি তারা দেশকে এই ভয়াবহ পরিস্থিতির মধ্যেই রাখতে চায়? তিনি বলেন, বিএনপি মহাসচিব দুই মাসের মধ্যে জঙ্গি-সন্ত্রাস থেমে যাবে বলে বক্তব্য দিয়েছেন। তার মানে, তিনি এই সমস্যা সমাধানের পথ জানেন। তাহলে সরকার আজই কেন বোমা হামলা বন্ধ করছে না? তার বেঁধে দেয়া দুই মাসে আর কতো মায়ের বুক খালি হলে, কতো সন্তান এতিম হলে, কতো নারী বিধবা হলে, মান্নান ভুঁইয়া সাহেবরা বোমাবাজি বন্ধ করবেন? বিরোধী দলীয় নেত্রী বলেন, বিএনপি-জামায়াত জোট রাজনীতিতে ধর্মকে ব্যবহার করার মাধ্যমে দেশে উগ্র সাম্প্রদায়িক সন্ত্রাসের ফ্রাংকেনষ্টাইনের জন্ম দিয়েছে। এর কবল থেকে বিচারক, পুলিশ, আইনজীবী, সরকারি কর্মকর্তা, সংস্কৃতিসেবীসহ কেউই রেহাই পাচ্ছে না। রাষ্ট্র, সংবিধান ও বিচার ব্যবস্থার বিরুদ্ধে এরা যুদ্ধ ঘোষণা করার দুঃসাহস দেখাচ্ছে।

তিনি বলেন, মহান বিজয়ের মাস ডিসেম্বরে উগ্র সাম্প্রদায়িক সন্ত্রাসীরা বিজয় দিবস উদযাপনের বিরুদ্ধে হুমকি দিয়েছে। এদের সাথে অভিন্ন সুরে জামায়াত নেতারা বলছেন, দেশে নাকি একান্তরের মতো অবস্থা নেই। এটি আজ দেশবাসীর কাছে পরিষ্কার যে, মুক্তিযুদ্ধের পরাজিত শক্তি জামায়াত ও বিএনপির ভিতরে লুকিয়ে থাকা আলবদর-রাজাকাররাই জঙ্গিদের ভিন্ন নামে মাঠে নামিয়েছে। তিনি বলেন, নিরীহ মানুষকে জীবন দিয়ে জোট সরকারের জঙ্গি লালন নীতির মাশুল দিতে হচ্ছে। অথচ সরকারী দলের মন্ত্রী-এমপিদের গায়ে আঁচড়ও পড়ছে না। মানুষের জিজ্ঞাসা, জঙ্গিদের সাথে আঁতাতের কারণেই কি বিএনপি-জামায়াত জোটের নেতারা রেহাই পাচ্ছে, বিরোধী দলের নেতা-কর্মীসহ সাধারণ মানুষ এদের আক্রমণের লক্ষ্যবস্তু হচ্ছে? তিনি বলেন, জঙ্গিদের দমনে যখন প্রয়োজন সরকারের জোর তৎপরতা তখন এরা সংলাপ ও আলোচনার নাটক করে কালক্ষেপণ করছে, এই অশুভ শক্তিকে আরো সংগঠিত হওয়ার সুযোগ দিচ্ছে। শেখ হাসিনা বলেন, জোট সরকারের মন্ত্রী ও এমপিরা একে অন্যকে জঙ্গিবাদের মদদদাতা হিসাবে অভিহিত করে প্রকাশ্যে বক্তব্য রাখছেন। সরকারের সংসাহস থাকলে, জঙ্গিদের সাথে সংশ্লিষ্টতা না থাকলে মন্ত্রিসভার যে সকল মন্ত্রী ও জোটের শরীক যে দলের বিরুদ্ধে জঙ্গি কানেকশনের অভিযোগ এসেছে, তাদের মন্ত্রিসভা থেকে বহিষ্কার করতো। তা না করে যারা অভিযোগ করছে তাদের বিরুদ্ধে ব্যবস্থা নেয়া হচ্ছে। এর মাধ্যমে প্রমাণ হয়, সরকার নিজেই জঙ্গিদের উৎসাহ দিচ্ছে। তিনি বলেন, সরকার আন্তরিকভাবে ইচ্ছা করলেই বোমা হামলা বন্ধ করতে পারে। তিনি সরকারের প্রতি অবিলম্বে বোমা-গ্রেনেড হামলা ও জঙ্গি কার্যক্রম বন্ধ করে দেশবাসীকে শান্তি দেয়ার আহবান জানান। বিরোধী দলীয়