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BLAST AT CTC MADRASA

Cops acted late

2 Hefajat leaders escape;

one succumbs to injury

DWAPAVAN BARUA and PRANABESH CHAKRABORTY, CTS

Two prime suspects in the Monday morning blast at a Chittagong madrasa have easily escaped arrest, thanks to an apparent late response from law enforcers.

Mufti Izzatul Islam Chowdhury, the founder and principal of Jamiatul Uloom Al-Islamia Madrasa, and his son Harun Izzatul Islam got enough time till police moved to arrest them late in the evening that day.

The explosion occurred in a second-floor room of the madrasa's four-storey dormitory around 11:30am. Both Izzatul Islam and Harun were on the madrasa premises till late afternoon amid a huge police presence and talked to the media.

Yesterday morning, police filed two cases -- one under the explosives act and the other for preserving acid in the madrasa -- against some 12 people.

Hefajat-e-Islam Nayebe-Ameer Mufti Izzatul Islam, and Harun Izzatul Islam, Izzatul Islam secretary, were named as the prime accused.

Police also recovered a handmade grenade at the madrasa compound in Lalshan Bazar area early yesterday.

Md Shahidullah, additional deputy commissioner of CMP North zone, who led Monday evening's drive, said they did not immediately arrest the duo as they

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failed to understand what actually had happened.

By the time the police found the remains of grenade-like explosives, many might have already fled from the madrasa, he said.

Mentioning the recovery of 18 bottles of picric acid from Izzatul Islam's office during the raid, the ADC said the acid was used in bomb making.

Also yesterday, Md Habibur Rahman, 24, one of the seven injured in the blast died at Chittagong Medical College Hospital around 2:30am.

Another injured, Nurun Nabi, was shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital with 90 percent burns. He had been under treatment at Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

Rabibul Karim Khan, a physician at the DMCH burn unit, said the burn was from flames and no splinter wound was seen on the victim's body.

Nabi's elder brother Md Morshed told The Daily Star that his brother had been working with a company as diploma engineer and had no connection with the madrasa.

Hailing from Ikhlaspur at Begumganj in Noakhali, Nabi used to stay in Fort Colony in Chittagong city, he added.

We were informed around 2:00pm Monday that Nabi had sustained burn injuries in a blast at the madrasa but we do not know why he had gone there.

Sanwar Hossain, chief of the Detective Branch's bomb disposal team, told The Daily Star that samples collected from the spot were being brought to Dhaka.

After examining the samples, the police would be able to say what caused the explosion.

Mufti Izzatul Islam, also suspected activist of the banned militant outfit Harkatul Jihad al Islami (HuJI), claimed that it originated from a laptop charger while Harun claimed that it was from an instant power supply (IPS).

Two platoons of police remained deployed at the madrasa, which looked deserted yesterday with a few students strolling about.

The resident students were asked by police to leave the dormitories by 10:00am, said Md Borhan, a student and also muazzin of the madrasa mosque.