



Officials of Bangladesh and India, assisted by BDR and BSF, surveying the occupied land in Ramgarh on Saturday. PHOTO: STAR

KHAGRACHHARI BORDER

50-acre land recovered from Indians

A CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) has recovered 50 acres of land illegally occupied by Indians in Ramgarh border in Khagrachhari district. BDR and local sources said tension mounted along Ramgarh and Kailer Muk border as Indian Border Security Force (BSF) tried to erect barbed-wire fence on the no-man's land, ignoring protest by BDR. The two border guards also traded fire on Thursday. To maintain peace, BDR proposed a survey to identifying the

zero line. After a response from BSF a land survey team visited the Indian portion on Saturday last. The Bangladesh survey team was led by BDR Khagrachhari Sector Commander Col Obayed and Ramgarh 11 Battalion Commander Lt Col KANeser. BSF Udaypur Sector DIG V Purna Sawami lead the Indian survey team. The survey work to identify the zero line in the area began Saturday morning. The survey team found that about 50-acre area from border

pillar No-2211/4 to 2211/6) belongs to Bangladeshi. The land was claimed by Indians as the location underwent changes over the years because of erosion by the Feni river flowing through the area, the sources said. BDR sources said BSF has agreed to hand over the land to Bangladesh but requested them to wait till the standing crops are harvested by Indians. Meanwhile BDR has erected 20 temporary pillars to demarcate the area, the sources said.

Exportable handicrafts from dry palm leaves, wheat straw

Italian NGO Rishilpi rehabilitates poor women in Satkhira

ABU AHMED, Satkhira

Dry palm leaves and wheat straw are no more useless. Instead of being used for cooking, beautiful handicrafts are made from these, thanks to the innovative ideas by Italian NGO, Rishilpi, working in the district to empower women and ensure their rights. The laudable handicrafts project for destitute women has not only changed the life of ultra poor women but also earning valuable foreign currency for the country through export. The project in Binerpota areas in Sadar upazila creates employment for poor women and promotes traditional handicrafts of Bangladesh. After training provided by the NGO, over 1150 rural women, hyave now turned artisans. They make handicraft items from palm leaves and wheat straw, supplied by the NGO. Beautiful fruit basket, rectangular basket, cozy box, round mat,

square box etc produced by the illiterate women now draw the attention of fashionable people at home and traders as well. The women draw beautiful pictures of Royal Bengal Tiger, spotted deer, monkey, indigenous birds and of traditional culture and scenic beauty of Bangladesh, which enhances country's image abroad. Their demand is increasing day by day at home and abroad. The display centre attracts people from different areas of the country and also foreign visitors. Talking to this correspondent recently, the project's supervisor Sagarika Das said their items are exported to USA, Italy, United Kingdom, Germany, France, the Netherlands and other European countries. On contact, Rishilpi Director Enso Falcone said, they first took up the project to train some destitute women. "We are very happy that about 2000 women including some disabled ones are now working here and maintaining their families properly", he added.

before joining the project. My husband became disabled three years back. I am grateful to them (Rishilpi)", said handicraft artist Anima Rani Das, wife of Gokul Das of Chhanka village in the Sadar upazila. Lina Sarkar, wife of Daniel Sardar of Senergati village in Tala uazila said, "My son and two daughters are now going to school after I stated working here". Divorced house wife Sufia Khatun of Binerpota village said the money she gets from the project is the only means for survival of her two minor children. She also feels proud that her products are exported to foreign countries. The threat was made in a letter received by him recently. The letter was written partly in Arabic and partly in Bangla, he told this correspondent yesterday. The PP said he and his family are now worried after getting the letter and has sought security from police department.



Women making baskets and other handicraft items from dry palm leaves at the Rishilpi project in Satkhira. PHOTO: STAR

BAGERHAT SP SAYS Arrested Hanif discloses names of 50 suicide bombers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

"Sir, my son Hanif is a dangerous person because he is an ehshar of JMB. I want him to be punished", said Iddris Ali Munshi on Thursday night when Bagerhat Police Superintendent Mostafa Kamal entered the DB office to interrogate the father and his two sons. Iddris Ali told the SP during interrogation that his son Hanif accompanied Shaikh Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai Siddiquil Islam on several of their trips in last one year. "I asked him time and again not to go with JMB leaders. But he did not pay heed to my instruction", Iddris Munshi told the SP. Meanwhile, Hanif Munshi confessed to his involvement with the outlawed JMB. SP Mostafa Kamal quoted Hanif Munshi as saying that he is an ehshar of JMB and his code name is 'Amor'.

Hanif Munshi has given very important information about JMB network across the country and named fifty bombers of JMB suicide squad, the Police Superintendent said. Hanif told DB police during interrogation on Thursday night that he is an Ahle Hadith by faith and came in touch with JMB while a student of a Kawami Madrasa in Narayanjanj in 2000. They said several hundred youths aged between 15 and 30 have fled homes after the August 17 serial bombing across the country. Many of them are innocent but

This correspondent during a visit to the areas yesterday found most villagers panicked, fearing police action and retaliation by diehard JMB cadres. They said several hundred youths aged between 15 and 30 have fled homes after the August 17 serial bombing across the country. Many of them are innocent but

Bangla Bhai and Abdur Rahman frequently visited the Shantia training camp in Sharihabari union in Jamalpur district, Hanif said. "I was taught how to operate AK-47 rifle and detonate bombs and grenades in that training camp", Hanif told DB police. He also participated in the JMB mission in 2003 to kill outlaws in Bagmara in Rajshahi under the leadership of Bangla Bhai.

"I was promoted to the rank of ehshar after another operational training in the same year at a secret camp in Bogra town", Hanif said confessing to his involvement in the August 17 serial bomb blasts at Gazipur and Khilgaon under the leadership of Ataur Rahman Sani, 'operations commander' of JMB. Hanif Munshi who is being quizzed by DB police in remand for seven days will be sent to the joint Interrogation cell (JIC), the SP told this correspondent over cell phone. SP Mostafa Kamal also said that Hanif was so long hiding in a house at Uttara in Dhaka along with three other JMB ehshars Zayed, Habib and Kibria. He returned to Morelganj on January 7 along with his father and was staying at his village home since then.

JMB death threat to Barisal PP

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Advocate Majibur Rahman Nantu, Special Public Prosecutor of Barisal Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal, received a death threat from JMB (Jamaatul Mujahidina Bangladesh) for not following the 'law of Allah' in judicial system. The threat was made in a letter received by him recently. The letter was written partly in Arabic and partly in Bangla, he told this correspondent yesterday. The PP said he and his family are now worried after getting the letter and has sought security from police department.

Temporary oil depot opens at Kazirhat

A CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

To overcome the ongoing fuel shortfall in northern districts, BPC, IWTC and BIWTA jointly opened a temporary oil supply depot at Kazirhat in Pabna yesterday. At least 750 tonnes of fuel will be supplied from the depot daily, sources said. It will remain in operation till supply from Baghabari resumes, the sources said. Lawmaker from Pabna-2 constituency Salim Reza Habib, Pabna Deputy Commissioner Md Firoz Minh, BIWTC (Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation) Chairman Shamsur Rahman Shimul Biswas and BIWTA (Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority) Chairman Dr Riaz Hassan Khan were present at the simple opening function. Poor navigability in certain areas of the Brahmaputra and Jamuna has disrupted movement of fuel-carrying vessels towards Baghabari oil depot, causing a supply shortfall in 16 northern districts including Pabna. For the controlling this crises and to continue the flow of fuels supply, this temporary depot will drive till the Baghabari port be active.

JMB recruited over 200 activists from Kalihati

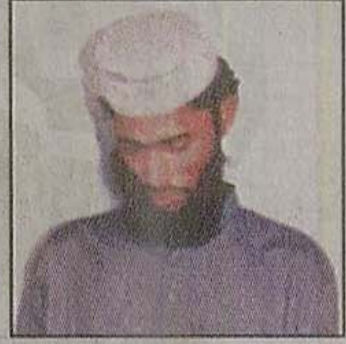
Poor but diehard activists got Tk 4000 per month: Several hundred youths flee homes in Ahle Hadith areas

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Jamaatul Mujahideen, Bangladesh (JMB) recruited over 200 activists including six suicide squad members from different areas of Kalihati upazila in Tangail district, inhabited by a large number of Ahle Hadith community people, a top police official said.

Balla, Rampur, Mominagar, Somjani, Belabari, Tenguria, Dorikhashila and Kazibari villages are known as Ahle Hadith dominated areas and JMB started its activities there in a covert way five years ago in the guise of running welfare bodies and libraries. Local people and sources in Tangail police said yesterday they knew nothing about JMB activities, recruitment of youths and arms training until DB police from Dhaka arrested JMB suicide bomber Faisal Ahmed, who blasted bombs near Rajarbagh police line in the Capital on August 17. He was arrested from Tenguria village in Balla union in Kalihati upazila on September 16.

This correspondent during a visit to the areas yesterday found most villagers panicked, fearing police action and retaliation by diehard JMB cadres. They said several hundred youths aged between 15 and 30 have fled homes after the August 17 serial bombing across the country. Many of them are innocent but



Four of the JMB activists (clockwise) - Monwar, Kashem, Enayetullah and Alim, all hailing from Kalihati in Tangail district. PHOTO: STAR

fleeing homes to avoid alleged harassment by police. It was gathered that out of over 200 recruits, around 50 'dedicated' activists, recruited from very poor families, were given Tk 4000 per month. The allowance was stopped

after the August 17 incident, two recipients from their hideouts said seeking anonymity. They said they were misled in the name of Islam and lured with money. Police so far arrested only four militants including two suicidal

Aug 17 blast trial in Khulna begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Trial of August 17 serial bomb explosion cases filed separately with Khulna and Daulatpur police stations in Khulna city began yesterday in the court of District and Sessions Judge AKM Ishtiaque Hossain amid tight security. Sub Inspector Shafiqul Islam submitted charge sheet to the court on November 8 last year as IO of the case, accusing nine cadres of JMB for detonating bombs in four spots in the city.

The chargesheeted accused include JMB chief Shaikh Abdur Rahman and JMB chief Siddiquil Islam Bangla Bhai. The case was filed with Khulna thana on the night of August 17 by SI Shafiqul Islam as complainant. On the other hand, Sub Inspector Ajit Kumar submitted the charge sheet to court on November

8 last year as IO of the case accusing 10 cadres of JMB for exploding bombs at three spots in Daulatpur. The chargesheeted accused include Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai. This case was filed with the Daulatpur police station, also on the night of August 17 by SI Ajit Kumar as complainant. SI Ajit submitted a supplementary charge sheet in this case on January 15, adding the name of another JMB cadre Arifuzzaman Babu.

JMB ehshar Shahidullah alias Lokman and cadre Mahbubur Rahman Palash who are among the chargesheeted accused were produced before the District and Sessions Judges court when the trial began at noon yesterday. Escorted by a platoon of armed police, they were brought to court from Khulna district jail.

Shahidullah alias Lokman was arrested on September 8 last year from Dhaka while Mahbubur Rahman Palash was arrested on October 22 from Satkhira town. Both made statements to Khulna Metropolitan Magistrate court under Section 164 of CrPc, confessing their involvement in the August 17 serial bomb explosions in the city. The explosions were made on orders from JMB chief Abdur Rahman, he said.

The defendants had no lawyer. The state was represented by PP Akram Hossain. Next hearing of the Khulna thana bomb blast case will be held on February 26 and that of Daulatpur thana bomb blast case on February 28. A large number of security personnel were deployed in and around the court compound yesterday.



Shops built by encroaching on the Pankhaya canal (left) and a multi-storied building being built by filling the Kalabagan lake in Khagrachhari town. PHOTO: STAR

Lakes, other water bodies in Khagrachhari disappearing

Most land grabbers belong to a ruling party

JASIM MAJUMDER, Khagrachhari

Natural lakes, canals and other water bodies in picturesque Khagrachhari town are disappearing fast as land grabbers are illegally filling up those and constructing buildings and makeshift structures. Neither the district administration nor the pourasabha take any effective step to stop the land grabbing as most of the grabbers belong to ruling parties, sources told this correspondent. They are building houses, shops and slums, without caring the authorities as they seldom take any legal action against encroachers. During a recent spot survey this correspondent found illegal structures encroaching on Kalabagan

lake, Master Para lake, Pankhiyapara lake, Muslim Para canal, Narikel Bagan canal and Golabari canal. Most of those mushroomed in last four years, locals said. Investigation by this correspondent revealed that most of the encroachers are leaders of ruling parties. In some of the cases, the encroachers have procured papers showing some sort of 'lease' from the authorities. But the authorities, when contacted later, denied having leased the spots. The largest lake in the town, the Kalabagan lake, has lost its beauty as land grabbers have built structures on all its banks. The lake, once an attractive place for townspeople and tourists for its scenic beauty, is

now virtually off-limits to them because of encroachment and pollution. "We have lost a nice recreation spot", Siraj Mia, a local resident lamented while talking to this correspondent. The pourasabha authorities on December 27 took some 'face-saving' steps in Shantinagar area in the town by evicting some illegal structures, leaving those on banks of water bodies untouched. Some sources alleged that the Pourasabha Chairman, being a BNP leader, can not take any effective step as most of the encroachers are men of ruling parties. There are at least 30 illegal shops on the side of Pankhayaapara lake. The pourasabha issued notices on

their owners several months ago, only to be ignored by the encroachers, sources said. The most luxurious hotel in the town Ziranwas built illegally on the bank of Chengi river by a former Jatiya Party (Ershed) lawmaker during their rule. A member of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council also built his houses illegally on the bank of the canal. As the authorities did not take any step to demolish the two massive illegal structures, others are now building slums on the Chengi river and renting those, locals said. Seeking anonymity, a high official of the pourasabha said the authorities are helpless as most of the land grabbers are ruling party leaders.