

JMB, HuJi regrouping in four districts

AMANUR AMAN, Back from southwestern border areas

Militants of banned Islamist outfits JMB (Jama'atul Mujahadeen Bangladesh) and HuJi (Harkatul Jihad) are regrouping in border areas of Kushtia, Meherpur, Jhenidah and Chuadanga.

Many of the militants who had crossed the border after the government crackdown following the August 17 serial bomb blasts across the country are returning to their respective areas, it was gathered from different sources.

Three Islamist militants were arrested by BDR last month when they were returning home from across the border.

The sources claimed that there are around 1200 trained activists of HuJi in the four districts. Most of them are madrasa teachers and students and imams of mosques. They also claimed that there is a good number of college and school teachers, government employees and women activists among them.

In Kushtia JMB and HuJi are regrouping in six madrasas and about 20 mosques due to alleged lax vigilance by law enforcers.

Among around 700 JMB activists in Kushtia, at least 100 are trained in use of arms and bomb, who are called 'senior leaders'.



JMB activists Akbar Hossain (left) and Shamsul, arrested from border area.

They are known as 'jihadi bhai', a sources close to the militants said.

Several villages in border areas of Daulatpur, Bheramara and Mirpur upazilas are now used as transit points by the militants.

The militants' movement and activities came to light after confessions by two JMB activists and one HuJi man, arrested in Daulatpur and Dinajpur border point by BDR late last month. All three hailed from Kushtia.

The 18 Rifle Battalion in Dinajpur arrested Huji leader Delwar Hossain, 30, with some jihadi books when he was entering

through Bhandaro border point in Birol upazila on January 29. Hailing from Durgapara village in Mirpur upazila, Delwar fled home soon after the August 17 blasts, BDR sources said quoting him. He was returning after getting a 'green signal' from party men in Kushtia, the BDR sources said.

Delwar was an associate of Kushtia JMB leader Shamsul and Akbar. Shamsul was caught by people with JMB leaflets in Kushtia town soon after the August 17 blasts.

BDR arrested two JMB men Ziauddin, 30, son of Abdul Halim

and Nazrul Islam, 35, son of Abdul Wadud of Katlamarti village—on January 9 when they were crossing the border into Bangladesh through Munshiganj in Dulatpur upazila in Kushtia. Both madrasa students, the two told BDR that they had left homes after the August 17 blasts, BDR sources said.

Police sources also claimed that many of the militants have close links with ruling parties in their areas.

A woman activist of HuJi was killed in another clash at Jugia village on the outskirts of Kushtia town on September 13 in the same year. The outfit then circulated leaflets calling for 'Jihad' (holy war) to establish 'real Islam'.

Following this police arrested at least 50 HuJi men in Kushtia and Jhenidah but all were released.

Police are yet to arrest the eight JMB and two HuJi leaders in Kushtia, named by Kushtia JMB 'operation-in-charge' Shamsul during interrogation. Shamsul and his accomplice Akbar are now in jail.

Talking to this correspondent, Kushtia Police Superintendent Masud-ul-Hasan denied the allegation of lax police vigilance. Police teams are raiding different areas to nab the militants, he said.

Killing of RU teacher protested in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

Teachers of Khulna University of Engineering and Technology (KUET) yesterday held a rally on the campus and brought out a procession in protest against the killing of Prof Sayeed Taher Ahmed of Geology and Mining department of Rajshahi University.

Presided over by KUET Teachers' Association Prof Dr M Alamgir, speakers at the rally demanded immediate arrest and punishment of killers.

They said all professionals including teachers should launch agitation programmes to protest such killings.

Intellectuals are being killed one after another in the country because killers are not punished, they said and vowed to go for tougher agitation against such killings.

They also criticised the role of police for its failure to arrest the killers.

Firewood traders enforce hartal in Rangamati today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rangamati*

Firewood traders called a dawn-to-dusk hartal in Rangamati district for today demanding re-issuance of transit pass (TP), an official approval for transporting firewood from the district to other areas.

The government stopped issuance of TP in the wake of alleged plunder of costly timber trees from reserve forests.

The traders, earlier staged demonstration in support to their demand.

Dredging of Patuakhali river to prove useless

Sand deposited only 200 feet away to roll back into channel soon

MD. SOHRAB HOSSAIN, *Patuakhali*

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) has started dredging of Patuakhali river channel but launch operators say this will not improve navigability of the river.

The vessel operators said, during dredging, sand is deposited nearby, which will roll back into the channel in few days.

All two pontoons of the launch terminal about to unfit to use as it got stopped on silt.

BIWTA started dredging the river on Wednesday with a target to remove 50,000 CFT (cubic feet) of sand at a cost of about Tk 50 lakh. But port authorities and officials at the local BIWTA office said at least

1.25 lakh CFT sand should be removed to keep the river channel navigable.

BIWTA Technical Engineer and supervisor of the dragging programme, Iqbal Hasan, told to this correspondent that they would dredge the 2500 feet long channel. After dredging, the channel will be 240 wide and 8 feet deep, which will allow smooth plying of vessels.

"The channel will remain navigable for one year," he added.

This correspondent saw that the dredged sand is deposited only about 200 feet away, which will fall back into the channel during high and low tides.

BIWTA Assistant Director here, Shahidullah, said they requested the dredging authorities to deposit

the sand at least 1200 feet away from the main channel, but they did not pay any heed to it. "They said they do not have adequate number of pipes for this", Shahidullah said.

MA Salam, Master of Sundarban-6, a double decker launch plying the Patuakhali Dhaka route claimed that the dragging will not improve the situation as the lifted sand will drop into the channel soon.

Salam and many other vessel operators this correspondent talked to demanded dredging of the whole river to keep it navigable.

Vessels including passenger launches often run aground and remain stranded for days as the water level falls during the dry season.



A BIWTA dredger depositing the lifted silt only about 200 feet away from the dredging spot in Patuakhali river.

PHOTO: STAR



A RAVAGED RIVER... The Surma near Sylhet city is being silted up due to dumping of garbage and deposit of soil. Dredging of the river was discussed by government high-ups several times but nothing has been done.

PHOTO: STAR

Salt output may cross target

Thanks to fair weather, BSCIC steps and its new method

MUAZZEM HOSSAIN SHAKIL, *Cox's Bazar*

Salt production may exceed the target this year and bring more benefit to farmers, thanks to the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) initiative and its newly introduced 'polythene method' of cultivation.

Due to fair weather so far, over six lakh metric tons of salt have been produced, which is two lakh tonnes higher than that in the corresponding period last year. Farmers are hopeful of exceeding the current season's production target of 10.5 lakh tonnes, if fair weather continues.

They also hope good profits with the current price.

Salt is cultivated on around 68,000 acres of land in coastal areas of Cox's Bazar to meet the annual demand of around 9.5 lakh tonnes. Most of the farmers are now producing salt using the polythene method of cultivation, farmers and sources in BSCIC said.

The Cox's Bazar Sadar, Ramu, Chakoria, Pekua, Maheshkhali, Kutubdia and Teknaf upazilas are salt growing areas. Some 50,000 farmers are engaged in salts cultivation.

Salt is produced here from drying salty seawater on lands close to the sea. This is done mostly through cutting forests and raising

embankments. Influentials own most of the salt growing lands and lease those to landless salt farmers, who grow salt on contract basis.

This year, salt farmers are expecting satisfactory production following adoption of "polythene method" of cultivation and fair weather till now. Earlier the farmers hardly earned profit due to poor output in traditional method and

inclement weather in most of the years.

In the new method salty water from the sea is collected on polythene-covered salt-beds. The salt thus produced is clean and white, as they do not get mixed with sand or mud, farmers in Chakoria told this correspondent.

BSCIC sources and farmers said the production in the new method is

at least 30 per cent higher than in the traditional method.

The farmers said the higher rate of production also encouraged them to adopt the modern method.

BSCIC officials said they started research on the new method in 1999 to increase production and develop the industry to avoid import. UNICEF provided assistance in the project.



Salt being produced through 'polythene method' in a bed near the beach in Cox's Bazar.

PHOTO: STAR

Food must come first

Schoolgirls in Mymensingh learning nutrition needs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Mymensingh*

Schoolgirls in some remote areas in Mymensingh are now aware of nutrition needs, thanks to the authorities of the institutions and the government's Horticulture and Nutrition Development.

The Renaissance Girl High School at Anandipur village and Gaghra Union High School at Parail village in the Sadar upazila have been running 'school nutrition programme' for the last two years with cooperation from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The programme covers students of class eight, nine and ten because girls start attaining maturity at this age and they need proper knowledge on nutrition to be prepared for life, said ABM Zahidul Islam, Horticulture Development officer at Kewathkhal Horticulture Centre (KHC) here. If a girl student can learn how to

make nutritious food items using cheap and easily available vegetables, rice and flour, it makes a lasting impact on her and her family. This changes the life of all in the family, he said.

More than 300 students of the two schools have learnt the needed for nutrition and how to make nutritious food from commonly available items. They have been trained preparation of various food items like vegetable bread (mixing flour with leafy vegetables), mixed vegetables and egg soup, green rice (vegetables mixing with rice), pakura (snacks of Sajna leaf) and cake of esculent root leaf.

After training by, the girls were also given book-lets titled "School Nutrition Book" which are very helpful for them, said Abu Md Enayetullah, Assistant Horticulturist of KHC. Two agriculture teachers of the schools were also trained in Dhaka on the school nutrition programme under

an Integrated Horticulture and Nutrition Development Project (IHNDP) to teach students, especially girls, Enayetullah said. The project has been replicated in many schools in 15 districts under the supervision of IHNDP.

Talking to this correspondent, Suborna Mustafa Shathi, a student of Renaissance Girls High School said she now prepares various nutritious food items for her family after training under the programme.

Reaz Uddin Ahmed, president of the governing body of this school said such programmes should continue at every school to make girl students aware of nutrition as they are future mothers. To encourage students, the school authorities have raised two vegetable gardens on the school compound.

KHC sources said they are planning to spread the programme to all schools in the district.

Six bombs recovered in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kushtia*

Six bombs were recovered from a rice mill at Shomespur bazaar in Khoksa upazila Sunday night.

Rab (Rapid Action Battalion) recovered the bombs wrapped up in a bag at about 11 pm from Rahim Uddin Rice Mills. The mill is being run by one Fazul Huq of the village who took lease of it about two years ago from Alhaj Rahim Uddin, an Awami League (AL) leader, also elder brother of Khoksa upazila AL president Alhaj Sadar Uddin Khan.

Rab experts defused the bomb in presence of villagers and Khoksa police who rushed to the spot later on.

Khoksa AL president Alhaj Sadar Uddin is now staying in Dhaka.

When this correspondent contacted him over cell phone last evening, he told that he had no knowledge about the incident as he did not run the mill. "It may be a conspiracy to implicate me in false case, he said.

One crushed under wheels of police van

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

Movement of vehicles was interrupted for over three hours on the Satkhira-Kaliganj road from about 2 pm yesterday as angry people barricaded it after a rickshaw van driver was killed when his three-wheeler was hit by a police vehicle.

Abdul Mazed, 32, son of Harez Ullah of Shakhipur village in Debhata upazila, was killed on the spot in the accident at Bhara Shimla in Kaliganj upazila.

Witnesses said the local people became angry when the policemen tried to take away the body. They barricaded the road, which created a long snarl-up of vehicles on both sides.

An additional police force led by Kaliganj thana OC Ansar Ali rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control. The OC however denied that the three-wheeler was hit by a police vehicle. He said an autorickshaw hit the van and sped away.

Persuaded by him, the people withdrew the barricade. A case has been recorded.



Students at Renaissance Girl High School at Anandipur village having nutritious food prepared by them.

PHOTO: STAR

It's all how you look at it

Waste water can be turned into resources, workshop told

AMINUL ISLAM, *Mymensingh*

Waste waters released from factories and urban areas, particularly cities and towns, can be turned into resources by treatment, which will benefit the eco-system and could be used for producing sustainable energy.

This was stated at an international workshop, held at Bangladesh Agriculture University (BAU) here on Saturday.

Speakers from home and abroad said that Bangladesh and most others South Asian countries now face environmental degradation, pollution of water resources and shortage of drinking water. Treatment of the polluted waters now released will bring a ten-fold

benefit: protecting the environment and the ecology on the one hand and supplying safe water to the people on the other hand, they said.

BAU Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr. Muhammed Amirul Islam inaugurated the workshop titled "Integrated Approach for Sustainable Waste Water Management and Bio-mass Production in Bangladesh" (INAWAB), chaired by Prof Dr. Rafiqul Islam Sarker, Director of BAU Research System (BAURES).

It was jointly organised by INAWAB, an international research project and the Department of Farm Power and Machinery of BAU.

Dr. Gerhad Schories, Technical Director of Technology Transfer Centre in Bremerhaven in Germany

presented the key-note paper.

The participants included Prof Dr. Wernete Fuchs of Austria; Dr Md. Dulat Hossain, team leader of the INAWAB project; SM Hasan Iqbal, Manager of International Development Enterprises, Bangladesh (IDEB); Dr. MS Islam, technical advisor of Bangladesh Fertiliser Association; Dhaka WASA engineer Siraj Uddin; Prof Dr. Muhammed Mozaffar Hossain and Prof Dr. Johirul Haque Khandaker of BAU; Dr. Md. Shahidul Islam, former Deputy Director General of Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute (BARI) and Dr. Junayed Kabir, former Chief Conservator of Forest.

Over 200 people including scientists, teachers, researchers from

BAU, BARI and BINA (Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture), public representatives, farmers' representatives and journalists took part in the workshop.

The speakers said polluted waters released from factories also decrease soil fertility.

At a first step to check the pollution and environmental degradation, they suggested planting of fast growing indigenous trees immediately near factories and polluted areas. The roots of trees would act as bio-filters, which would contain pollutants.

The government should make setting up of treatment plants compulsory for mills and factories, they said.



BAU Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr. Muhammed Amirul Islam addressing the international workshop on "Integrated Approach for Sustainable Waste Water Management and Bio-mass Production in Bangladesh", held at BAU on Saturday.

PHOTO: STAR