



PHOTO: TV GRAB

Three veiled women, who could not be identified immediately, come out of Rahman's den; two of Rahman's sons being taken away by police; a cop fires teargas shell into the den.

JMB chief Abdur Rahman pinned down

Wife, daughter, 3 sons, grandson, activist's wife, maid smoked out of Sylhet den; Rahman, 2 operatives threaten to commit suicide rather than giving in

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK and SHAMIM ASHRAF with IQBAL SIDDIQUE

Militant kingpin Abdur Rahman, pinned down by law enforcers at a Shaplabagh house in Sylhet City since Tuesday night, refused to surrender as on yesterday evening.

While altercating with the blockading law enforcers led by Rapid Action Battalion, the Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh supremo said at 4:00am yesterday that he would rather commit suicide than surrender.

Lashing out at the police operation, Rahman, called Shaekh (spiritual leader) by his followers, said he wanted to talk with State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar and asked the law enforcers to contact him.

Rahman's wife, daughter, three sons and a grandson came out of the house, Surya Dighal Bari, yesterday noon and surrendered to the police.

The JMB chief, who has a Tk 50 lakh bounty on his head, warned he has a large number of powerful explosives in his possession. Eight explosions were heard from the house, but it could not be known whether there was any casualty.

After her surrender, the raiding



PHOTO: TV GRAB

Members of Rapid Action Battalion set the wheels in motion to net JMB kingpin Abdur Rahman after cornering him in his Sylhet den yesterday.

Rahman's den rented in Jan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Two months ago, a 30 to 35-year-old man introducing himself as stone trader Hridoy Chowdhury rented Surya Dighal Bari, the Shaplabagh house in the city where Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh chief Abdur Rahman, his family and accomplices remained besieged as on 9:30 last night.

Hridoy, who said he hailed from Mymensingh, has been living in the house with his daughter and wife since January 2, said Mainul Haque, who looks after the house, as his brother Abdul Haque, the landlord, lives in the UK.

Hridoy also claimed to have lived in the adjacent Mirapara area previously, Mainul told The Daily Star. "When I came to the house to collect the monthly rent, Hridoy did not allow me to enter the house. But, I thought he did it to maintain Purdah."

Recently some people used to frequent the house, Mainul said, adding Hridoy claimed they were his business partners.

According to Mainul, he secured



Abdur Rahman

The front view of 'Surya Dighal Bari', the single-storey hideout of JMB chief on Road No 2 at East Shaplabagh in Sylhet, top, and the deputy commissioner of the district, below, asks the militant supremo by a loudhailer to surrender.

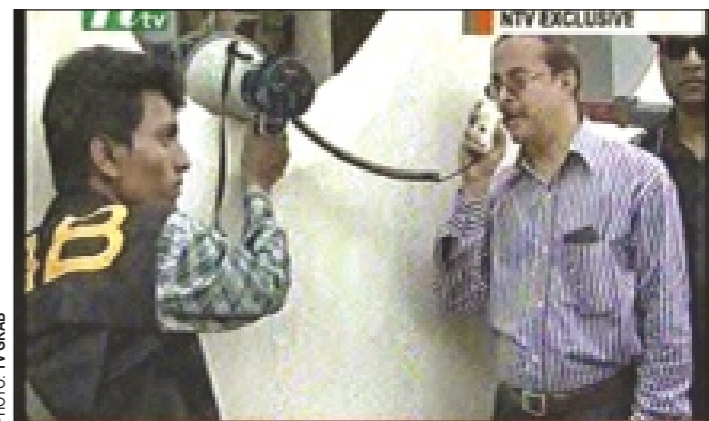


PHOTO: TV GRAB

Rahman spread vicious tentacles in only 7 years

Started politics with Shibir, Jamaat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Self-styled as shaekh (spiritual leader), Abdur Rahman is the chief of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), erstwhile Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) that has been operating in the country secretly since 1998.

Born in Charshi Khalifapara village of Jamalpur Sadar upazila, Rahman, aged around 50, joined Islami Chhatra Shibir and later Jamaat-e-Islami when he was a student.

He studied at Madina Islami University in Saudi Arabia in the early 1980s and later worked at the Saudi Embassy in Dhaka for five years from 1985. He has travelled to many countries including India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and

Malaysia.

Rahman's father, late Moulana Abdullah Ibne Fazal, was a member of Jama'atul Ahle Hadith, lately led by arrested Rajshahi University teacher Asadullah Al Galib. Fazal was accused of collaborating with the Pakistani occupation forces during the Liberation War in 1971.

Rahman runs Al-Madina Islamic Cadet Madrasa and a mosque in Jamalpur. Saudi NGO Rabeta-e-Islam and Kuwait-based NGO Revival of Islamic Heritage Society provided him with the financial assistance to establish those institutions.

Rahman's existence as a militant lynchpin came to light when he came forward in 2004 in support of JMJB operations commander

SEE PAGE 19 COL 2

26 JMB men caught in Gaibandha

Aug 17 blast accused surrenders

STAR REPORT

Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) and police in a drive yesterday arrested 26 militants of the banned Islamist outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen (JMB) from a Gaibandha village.

Tipped off, the law enforcers raided a house of Saidur Rahman at the Uttar Dhangraha village where the cadres were holding a secret meeting, reports our correspondent in Gaibandha.

They met there to finalise some major operations in and around Gaibandha, police sources said.

Meanwhile, our correspondent in Dinajpur reports that a fugitive JMB member wanted in connection with the August 17 blasts

SEE PAGE 19 COL 6

Secret lies with Rahman

Believe agencies, investigators; 3 out of 7 Shura members caught so far



Ataur Rahman Sunny



Salahuddin



Abdul Awal



Hafez Mahmud



Khaled Saifullah

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

Intelligence agencies and investigators believe the mystery behind the rise of militancy, spreading of its network and links both in and outside the country could be revealed only after JMB kingpin Abdur Rahman's arrest.

So far, three of the seven-member Majlis-e-Shura (top decision making body) of the JMB - Abdul Awal Sarker, Ataur Rahman Sunny and Hafez Mahmud - have been arrested, but none of them could reveal a total picture of the banned militant group or their external and internal links.

Following the ban on Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), the law enforcers primarily concentrated on arresting JMJB operations chief Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai. They did not focus on Shaekh Abdur Rahman until the August 17 countrywide bombings although he organised both the JMB and JMJB networks across the country quite openly.

Following the August 17 attack, the investigators said the mystery would be revealed once they can arrest some of the seven members of Majlis-e-Shura, top decision making body of the JMB.

However, after arresting three Shura members, the investigators claimed the three failed to provide the expected information saying they did not know much about the JMB network and its functioning.



Siddiqui Islam Bangla Bhai

The arrested referred Rahman as controlling the network.

Two Shura members-Rahman's son-in-law Abdul Awal Sarker alias Ashiq alias Adil alias Arafat, and his younger brother Ataur Rahman alias Sunny alias Sajid--were arrested at the end of 2005. The law enforcers held the other-Rakib Hasan alias Hafez Mahmud--last Tuesday.

Acting on intelligence information and Hafez's confession, the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) on Tuesday night cordoned off the JMB chief's house at East Shaplabagh in Sylhet and has been trying to convince Rahman to surrender.

Nine family members of Rahman, including his wife Nurjahan Begum alias Rupa, daughter Afifa Rahman and sons Fuad and Ahmed, surrendered yesterday, but Rahman told the law enforcers that he would rather commit suicide than surrendering.

Lieutenant Colonel Gulzar Uddin Ahmed, Rab intelligence wing chief leading the Sylhet operation, yesterday afternoon told The Daily Star over telephone that they were taking time before breaking into the house because they want to arrest Rahman alive. "We don't want him to get injured in any way since he has threatened to commit suicide," he said.

Investigators had earlier expected that the arrest of Awal and Sunny would greatly help them to dig into the militant issue, but the two Shura members did not disclose any information beyond their responsibilities and roles in the August 17 bomb attack.

The investigators came to learn that the JMB chief was responsible for the entire operation while Sunny was in charge of Dhaka region, Awal of greater Rajshahi, Bangla Bhai of Chittagong, Hafez Mahmud of Khulna, Salahuddin alias Salehin of Sylhet, and Faruq Hossain alias Khaled Saifullah alias Shaikh Tariq of Rangpur-Dinajpur regions.

Quoting Sunny, an intelligence officer who interrogated him said he only disclosed the JMB's organisational structure and details of the bomb attacks since August 17. Sunny also told that the seven-member Majlis-e-Shura decided to carry out the countrywide bomb attacks at a meeting in Rajshahi in March last year. He disclosed how

SEE PAGE 19 COL 7

North faces worst outage of season

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The entire North Bengal witnessed the season's worst load shedding yesterday as the lone operational 125 MW Bara Pukuria power unit tripped while six other power stations failed to resume operation.

Power sub stations in 16 districts of the region received 5 to 7 MW power each from Eastern sources, Power Development Board (PDB) officials said.

"In the evening, we set a private Westmont power unit at Baghabari on production of 40 MW electricity, partially resuming the supply," said Rajshahi zonal PBD chief engineer MollaAKMAhKab.

Among other six units - 100 MW and 71 MW PDB units and a 45 MW Westmont unit at Baghabari are still

to be operational after these units were shut down on February 26.

The 18MW diesel-run Sayedpur, 20MW Rangpur, 2MW Thakurgaon units were usually run during peak hours at night.

The load shedding led to severe water crisis and disturbance to normal life, and problem in operating power-run irrigation machines.

Our correspondent adds from Rangpur: Unprecedented electricity crisis in the national grid paralysed lives in Rangpur and its adjoining districts yesterday. The SSC examinees and farmers using power-run tube wells for irrigation in IRR-boro fields are the worst victims of the power crisis.

PM's response to reforms unclear

Hasina tells Ctg rally, announces siege programme for CEC's office March 12

UNB, Ctg

Dismissing the Tuesday's proposal by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia for forming a committee to discuss electoral reforms, Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday said there is no need to constitute such committee.

"Our reform proposals are quite clear, but the prime minister's remark was not clear. Please don't try to deceive people," she said and warned of an 'oust-government movement' if the prime minister ignored the reform proposals. Hasina, also the president of

Awami League (AL), was addressing a grand rally at the local Open Stadium organised by the AL-led 14-party combine as part of their anti-government movement.

The opposition leader alleged that the BNP-Jamaat alliance government was conspiring to rig the upcoming national elections. "The government has appointed the chief election commissioner (CEC), two election commissioners and election officers at the district and upazila level aiming to rig the polls," she said.

Hasina said voter list is the first

SEE PAGE 19 COL 7

TEJGAON BUILDING COLLAPSE

Debris to be cleared by tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rescuers have sped up their operation to clear the debris of the collapsed Phoenix building in Tejgaon with the target to finish the job by tomorrow as they believe there is no one dead or alive under the rubble.

"Nobody turned up today with information about anybody missing from the disaster. Moreover, if anyone body is trapped inside, there must be stench," Brigadier General Nizam Ahmed told The Daily Star yesterday.

Nizam who is leading the army contingent engaged in rescue operation, claimed that the rescuers have been able to remove 60

SEE PAGE 19 COL 6

Dhaka to ask Delhi about power plant plan at Farakka

REAZ AHMAD

Worried about the due share of Ganges waters during lean period, Bangladesh will enquire about its upper-riparian neighbour India's plan to set up a 500MW power generation plant harnessing the river at Farakka.

"We're not getting our share as per the Ganges Water Treaty between Bangladesh and India [signed in 1996] and our water resources secretary officially informed this to his Indian counterpart a few weeks ago. India now cannot unilaterally withdraw Ganges water for power plant at

Farakka," State Minister for Water Resources Goutam Chakraborty told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said, "We saw in the media reports Indian Power Minister Shushil Kumar Shinde told Kolkata press recently about power plant at Farakka in West Bengal. We'll officially ask India to inform us about the plant that will harness Ganges water."

As per Indian plan, the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) would add 500MW to the existing 1,600MW Farakka super thermal power plant, a move that would meet growing demands of

SEE PAGE 19 COL 7