

IGP HOPEFUL OF EVIDENCES AGAINST MILITANT KINGPIN Interrogators tight-lipped, seek some more time



Shaekh Abdul Rahman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A day after the cowed surrender of Abdur Rahman, a taskforce of combined intelligence officials continued interrogating him yesterday at the Uttara headquarters of Rapid Action Battalion expecting leads to untie the country's militant activities.

But tight-lipped interrogators declined to divulge any details of the quizzing with Inspector General of Police (IGP) Abdul Quaiyum telling newsmen, "Everything relevant is being asked."

Director General of Rapid Action

Battalion (Rab) Abdul Aziz Sarker echoed him without detailing. "We're asking him all sorts of things he has done so far and cross-checking the information he is providing," he told The Daily Star last night over phone.

"Rahman is the supremo of an organisation that threatened the entire country," he said, adding, they need some time to get every thing out of him.

Clues to many killings in the country could be found out after quizzing the chief of outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), said the IGP yesterday in an

interview with BBC Bangla Service.

Referring to a number of cases filed with different police stations across the country since the August 17 blasts, he said, Rahman's complicity was learnt during investigations. "We also need hard pieces of evidence to prove those."

Asked if any murder case will be filed against Rahman, the IGP said, "Rahman was not physically present on the spots, but evidence showed that everything was done at his diktat."

"His [Rahman's] name also

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US State Dept praises JMB chief's capture

UNB, Dhaka

A US State Department official has said Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) chief Shaekh Abdur Rahman's arrest is a sign of the fruits of cooperation between the United States and Bangladesh in the fight against terror, saying his capture is an important step in combating extremism in the country.

Adam Erel, deputy spokesman, said US will continue to work with Bangladesh to address the threat of extremism and to strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation.

"The United States applauds the arrest by Bangladesh security forces of Abdur Rahman. His capture is an important step in confronting extremism in Bangladesh," Erel

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A FORGOTTEN ELECTION PLEDGE

No move yet to disclose wealth of ministers, MPs

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The BNP-led coalition government has taken no move in the last four years of its rule to come out with wealth statements of all the public representatives including the prime minister and ministers in line with its election pledge to curb corruption.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and her cabinet colleagues are repeatedly claiming success in forming the Anti-Corruption Commission to fight graft. But all of them remained silent on the crucial wealth statements of public representatives as promised in the election manifesto.

Despite allegations of corruption

against some ministers and lawmakers in the last four years, the government has not initiated any step to probe those. But before the general election in 2001, the BNP had committed to root out corruption.

"No effort for development and people's welfare will be successful unless unabated corruption is rooted out from the state and social life," BNP's election manifesto said.

"For this, BNP will emphasise rooting out corruption," it declared, promising to collect and disclose wealth statements of public representatives including the prime minister, ministers and others

enjoying the status of ministers.

The prime minister on Tuesday in parliament apparently confessed to her government's failure to combat corruption. "It is not possible to curb corruption overnight since it has spread as an epidemic in the society. We will succeed in curbing corruption if we are voted to power again," Khaleda told the House.

Describing her government's efforts to combat graft, she

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Police seize more items from Shaplabagh house in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

In another search, police yesterday collected some more items including vouchers, schoolbooks, and a blood stained shirt from the Shaplabagh house Surya Dighal Bari, from where outlawed JMB chief Shaekh Abdur Rahman came out to surrender on Thursday morning.

Intelligence agencies are collecting information about the Sylhet JMB operatives including the two arrested companions of Shaekh Abdur Rahman and their local accomplices.

Sylhet Kotwali police arrested Local Union Parishad Member Nurunnabi Deshi yesterday morning from his house at Shaplabagh.

Hridoy Chowdhury, who rented Surya Dighal Bari, had been in Sylhet for long and apparently he was engaged in stone trading, sources said.

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Hunt down JMB patrons in Rajshahi, Naogaon

Victims of brutality demand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Locals in Bagmara of Rajshahi and Atrai, Raninagar of Naogaon demand the government trace and hunt down those who aided and abetted militant kingpins Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai in killing at least 22 people and maiming hundreds in 2004.

In reaction to the high profile capture of Rahman, a number of victims of brutal violence by Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Jagrata Muslim Janata, Bangladesh (JMJB) yesterday said the ones who backed Abdur Rahman and JMJB operations commander Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai in carrying out a reign of terror in the region must not be allowed to get off scot-free.

"You will find at least one victim a house in Bagmara and Atrai. So

many people have been maimed for nothing," a college teacher had said, describing the situation after JMJB operations in 2004.

A host of policemen were guarding Abdur Rahman when he first came out in public in Naogaon and Rajshahi in late April, 2004 said sources. Bangla Bhai had already burst onto the scene earlier on April 1 the same year.

On May 4, 2004, Rahman held a press conference at Bhawaniganj Women's College in Bagmara. JMB Majlish-e-Sura Members Abdul Awal, Salaudin, Atau Rahman Sunny and Khalid Saifullah were accompanying him at that time.

Bangla Bhai had introduced Rahman as his spiritual leader and chief of this organisation.

Over a dozen policemen and a huge number of cadres were surrounding him throughout the confer-

ence. Rahman claimed that his outfit was on a mission to cleanse sarbaharas in the region.

"I had talks with some local lawmakers and politicians as well as some government officials. They were assisting us," he told the gathering recorded on videotapes.

After the press meet, he stayed in Bagmara for a few more days at the house of Ramjan Kaya. During the stay, he met local BNP and Jamaat leaders and addressed a women's gathering.

Rahman had been in control of the vigilante operations that left a trail of horror in less than two months. Bangla Bhai and his men were operating, following his instructions.

He was also in charge of the main JMJB concentration camp in

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26 arrested in Gaibandha linked to Allahr Dal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Most of the 26 arrested militants of outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen of Bangladesh (JMB) have links with Allahr Dal, police interrogating the arrestees said yesterday.

A magistrate's court on March 2 remanded them for seven days each after Rapid Action Battalion and police arrested them at Uttar Dhangharah in Gaibandha the previous day.

The arrestees told the police the owner of the house where they were holding a meeting before arrest, Saidur Rahman, is their leader, who arranged regular meetings with Allahr Dal.

"We don't believe in democracy,

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Going for more urea plants would have been wiser

Only six years' import subsidy enough to set up two new units to meet current domestic demands

REAZ AHMAD

Bangladesh could fully meet its requirement of urea fertiliser from domestic production if two more factories were set up with the money the government spent on subsidising imported urea in the last six years, highly placed sources said.

The country has six government-owned factories to produce this major fertiliser but no other factory has been set up in the last 16 years to put an end to the highly expensive import.

The demand for urea has risen sharply due to rapid expansion of irrigated boro cultivation over the

last one decade, resulting in a huge government spending on the subsidy.

"Government has to spend Tk 1,200 to 1,300 crore a year to meet the gap between the import price of urea and the price at which it sells this fertiliser. But setting up of two more urea factories could save up to Tk 1,500 crore a year. The amount spent on subsidy for three years is enough to set up a urea factory in the country", Chairman of Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) Major General (ret'd) Imaam-Uz Zaman told The Daily Star.

The BCIC-run six urea factories

can produce up to 19 lakh tonnes of urea a year while the demand for it stands at 28 lakh tonnes.

This year the government is importing up to nine lakh tonnes of urea at the international market price of Tk 18,000 per tonne as against BCIC's production cost of Tk 6,000 per tonne. The government sells urea at a subsidised price of Tk 4,800 a tonne.

The subsidy spending is Tk 13,200 for each tonne of imported urea (import cost Tk 18,000 and sale price Tk 4,800) but the government does not compensate the

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'Form independent nat'l commission to probe case of JMB kingpin'

UNB, Dhaka

Eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday suggested formation of an independent national commission comprising retired chief justices and experts to make a comprehensive, credible and transparent inquiry into the case of JMB kingpin Shaekh Abdur Rahman.

"Since it involves the question of national security, it is essential to dig out all information and evidence about sources of fund, inspiration and linkages within the state apparatus," he told the news agency.

Dr Kamal said at least three retired chief justices can sit and take views of the government and opposition parties and experts

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PERENNIAL ENERGY CRISIS

Poor planning, theft and demurrage blamed

SHARIEF KHAN

Lack of government vision to expand capacity and upgrade loading and unloading operations of crude oil, and improper planning by Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) have pushed the nation towards a perennial energy crisis, sources said.

While the global prices of crude and refined oil are already very high, the government's makeshift arrangements for importing oil has made cash-strapped BPC's purchase costlier.

For instance, due to delayed 'discharging' operations of crude oil from mother vessel using 'lighter-

age' (a mode of unloading oil), the BPC is forced to bear a staggering extra cost of \$ 8.22 per tonne. This causes the BPC to incur an unnecessary loss of \$10.68 million in importing 13 lakh tonnes of crude oil every year.

It means if the BPC buys crude oil at \$60 per tonne (up to clearing and forwarding at Chittagong), it actually spends \$ 68.22 per tonne including demurrage, lighterage cost and the cost resulting from transit loss.

More over, the BPC incurs such losses from import of finished petroleum products. It now imports the finished products in bulk-- 30,000 tonnes. But it cannot bring the

mother vessel to jetty for discharging the products due to poor draught. As a result, the BPC is forced to lighter 5000-7000 tonnes, incurring a cost of \$ 5000-7000 due to lighterage and transit loss.

At the distribution level of refined petroleum, the BPC loses one percent of it due to pilferage while being transported by coastal tankers.

The globally acceptable transit loss during oil transportation is only 0.1 percent.

Thus, out of 2.2 million tonnes of finished petroleum, over two lakh tonnes are stolen by a nexus of staffs of the coastal tankers and

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PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Paribesh Adolon forms a human chain at Shahbagh in the capital yesterday to press home their 12-point demand that includes hygienic environment and safety in mills and factories.

Two more KTS fire victims die

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two more workers of KTS Textile and Garments factory succumbed to their burn injuries at intensive care unit (ICU) of Chittagong Medical College and Hospital (CMCH) yesterday and on Thursday night, raising the death toll in the worst-ever factory fire in the country to 58.

The dead were identified as Kamrun Nahar, 34, and Monir, 24. Kamrun Nahar died 12:30pm yesterday while Monir at 9:30pm on Thursday, sources said.

Twenty-three workers of the factory are now undergoing treatment at CMCH. Of them, eight are at ICU and the remaining 15 at ward no 27 (surgery).

A total of 49 KTS fire victims were admitted to CMCH. Four of them-- Monir, Hannan, Monir and Kamrun Nahar--died so far.

Six of the fire injured--Noor Jahan Abdus Salam, Farzana, Sima Barua, Luvly and Marzina--were shifted to Dhaka for better treatment and the others admitted to the hospital with fractures or other minor injuries were released.

Govt created militants and using them as pawns: Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 14-party opposition yesterday said the government has stage-managed the arrest of Shaekh Abdur Rahman to distract public attention from the opposition's reforms agenda, crises of power and fuel, and the ruling alliance's 'failure' to run the country.

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina made the observation, addressing a press briefing at Awami League's (AL) Dhanmondi office. The briefing followed a meeting of the 14-party line-up.

Hasina, also president of AL, said the prime minister's address to the nation after the 'arrest drama' was a brazen attempt to shield the patrons of the militants.

She said the alliance government itself has created the militants and been using them as a political pawn.

Earlier the AL chief presided over the opposition alliance's meeting attended by among others Abdur Razzak, Rashed Khan Menon,

Tofail Ahmed, Hasanul Haque Inu, Abdur Jalil, Bimal Biswas, Dilip Barua, Obaidul Quader, Zakir Hossain, and Abdus Samad.

The former prime minister accused some of the cabinet members and ruling party lawmakers of providing administrative, financial, and logistic aid to the militants and alleged that such support from the government high-ups still continues.

She said when the people were clamouring for immediate action against Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), the government claimed that Bangla Bhai was merely a creation of the media and a propaganda by the opposition to tarnish the country's image.

Hasina said before the August 17 blasts across the country, Jamaat Ameer Nizami and some other ministers and lawmakers ridiculed the countrymen's worry over the rise of militancy.

"Had the government had a

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Easy sailing for Lanka

BISHWAJIT ROY from Chittagong

Sri Lanka maintained their hundred per cent winning record against Bangladesh when the visitors stormed to an eight-wicket victory before lunch on the fourth day of the first Test here at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

Sri Lanka now head for the second and the final Test of the series, which starts at Bogra on Wednesday, with a 1-0 lead.

Bangladesh, who suffered their sixth defeat to the islanders in as many meetings, have lost 36 of their 41 Tests. However, Habibur Bashar's men had some solace after avoiding their fifth innings defeat against the Lankans who resumed the fourth day on 25 without loss.

Needing further 138 runs to reach the target, Sri Lanka coasted to 166-2 just before the end of the first session with Michael Vandort making an unbeaten 64. The casualties were Upul Tharanga (19) and Kumar Sangakkara, who made 46.

Left-arm pacer Syed Raseel hit early inroads like the first innings when he had Upul Tharanga caught at second slip without any

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