

Wife, 2 kids blown off

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first, they marked a 1.5 by 1 kilometre spread over Kaliajuri, Bishnupur and Judges Court area.

After closing off the area, they pinpointed Rowshan Villa (house No. 60 in Bishnupur, Kotwali) on information that Khaled Saifullah was held up there.

Raiding the house early yesterday, the team found a huge cache of explosives including three live bombs, hand grenades and detonator powder.

JMB cadre Mustafizur Rahman alias Rajib alias Ushaka and a woman with two children were arrested in the house. The two later admitted that Saifullah and JMB activist Salam had left the house early Sunday.

Acting on information provided by Rajib, another team raided a tin-roofed house near Thomson Bridge and arrested Abdus Samad with 3 kg gunpowder.

As the Rab men were leaving the Bishnupur house at around 9:30am, Rajib disclosed that the militants had another hideout at Kaliajuri.

A Rab team rushed to Kaliajuri and rined a two-storey house named Jannatul Shafi at around 10:30am.

As the crime busters knocked on the front door, no one responded. When the Rab men attempted to break in, someone from inside wanted to know why they would have to open the door.

"As we said we went there to make some arrests on specific information, one from within said they would not open the door and Rab will not be able to arrest them," a Rab officer who participated in the operation told The Daily Star.

PM defends

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was introduced by her government as per demand of the opposition. Three general elections were held under the caretaker administration.

Khaleda said it is also possible to conduct elections free and fair under the BNP government, citing some examples like Chittagong City Corporation election and different municipality elections.

"We believe in dialogue---but destructive activities in the name of discussion and movement will not be allowed," she said in an oblique reference to recent developments involving opposition agitation.

Criticising the past Awami League (AL) government, the prime minister said when the BNP-led alliance came to power in 2001, the entire country was in the grip of terrorists and the economic condition was fragile.

"Our first priority was to recover the huge number of illegal arms, which the past government had distributed," she told her audience, defending the necessity of "Operation Clean Heart".

She said the government has formed Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), as police force was not good enough to contain crimes.

The prime minister said people don't believe them (AL) as they didn't fulfill their promise while they were in power.

She urged the countrymen to cast their votes in favor of the BNP and its allies for continuity of her government's development work.

Chaired by Homna Upazila BNP President Sirajul Islam, the meeting was also addressed by Health Minister Khandokar Mosharrar Hossain, Agriculture Minister MK Anwar, Prime Minister's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury, Redwan

Ahmed MP, Monjurul Ahsan Munshi MP and MA Khaleq MP.

Complainant

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harboured Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai have not been mentioned even in the second charge sheet that Senior Sub-inspector Enamul Huq of Mollahat Police Station submitted to the court on February 14, complainant Tapan Poddar stated in his naraji petition.

The court had fixed March 12 for hearing on the second charge sheet. Relevant sections of Explosive Substances Act and dacoity were not also mentioned in the second charge sheet, the naraji petition said.

Siddiqui Islam Bangla Bhai and his associates attacked the house of Tarapada Poddar, president of Gaola union Awami League of Mollahat upazila, on the night of August 15, 2002. Tarapada was among the injured in bomb and armed attack launched by Bangla Bhai and his cadres.

Mollahat OC forced Tapan Poddar to lodge an FIR on August 16 accusing Bangla Bhai and his associates of theft, instead of bomb and armed attack, the complainant said.

On January 1, 2003, Sub-inspector Humayun Kabir of Bagerhat Detective Branch submitted a weak charge sheet, accusing six people while six others were left out.

The left out included Bangla Bhai whom the IO of the case described as 'saintly'.

In the wake of rise in militant activities, the home ministry ordered reinvestigation of the case in October last year.

The Rab men then asked them to open the door and surrender.

In reply, a voice said, "We'll blow up the house then."

Without exerting further pressure at this point, the Rab had reinforcements and strengthened the cordon.

They also tried to negotiate the surrender of the insiders. Speaking over a phone from an adjacent house, they told the militants that there would be no attack on them if they come out. In response, JMB bomb expert Mollah Omar alias Shakil who was on the receiving end asked the law enforcers to drop their weapons.

During the phone conversation, the Rab men learnt how many of them were hiding inside.

Shortly afterwards, the Rab men lobbed tear gas canisters and shot water on the house to flush the insiders out. In retaliation, the militants hurled a bomb through a window, injuring two of the Rab members.

The raiding team then opened fire on the house and continued firing water and teargas shells.

At this point, Alamgir came out and surrendered. Nabil, the JMB chief's eldest son, by this time was injured in the shooting.

At around 2:15pm, when he came near the doors, Rab men took him by the hand and brought him out. He received bullet wounds in the hands and forehead.

The men inside the house soon detonated another bomb, which, Rab claimed, killed Meem and Sayeed. No one was injured in the third explosion.

The Rab later made Nabil request Shakil to come out. "But it didn't work," said a Rab officer.

After the fourth blast, the Rab men trying to enter the house saw Shakil's wife Shahida sitting as her entire body was covered with clothes.

Sensing danger, when the Rab men backed off a few yards, another powerful bomb went off, killing Shahida on impact.

On Being sure that no one inside was alive, the entered the house at around 2:30pm and found Shakil lying dead on the first floor with bullet injuries in his body.

INJURED
Immediately after the first blast, Rab men whisked off injured Deputy Assistant Director of Rab Masuduzzaman and Constable Golam Nabil to a safer place and later to Comilla Sadar Hospital.

After having Nabil treated at a local hospital, Lieutenant Commander Shahed and Major Faruk started for Dhaka with him in an ambulance late in the evening.

Bogra court

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petition by Special Public Prosecutor (PP) Ataur Rahman to show JMB chief Abdur Rahman as arrested in the murder case of a rickshawpuller Shafiqur Rahman in the same bomb attack.

Advocates Abu Bakker and Sirajul Haque placed the petition for Galib's bail to Special District Judge Anwar Hossain on Monday morning.

Two more accused in the case, Zainal Sarker and Shafiqullah, were also produced at the court. Special PP Ataur Rahman submitted a prayer and requested the court to issue an order to produce JMB chief Abdur Rahman. The court scheduled the next date for trial of the case on April 30.

The plaintiff of the case, Habibur Rahman, appealed to the court that he is not capable of coming to the court time and again due to his acute poverty. The Special PP assured him that he will be paid for the expenditure on the next date of the trial.

Court sources said accused Zainal Sarker, Shafiqullah and their accomplices carried out a bomb attack on a theatrical stage at midnight on January 14 last year on Shah Rawshan Primary School premises. The police raided the house of Zainal Sarker in nearby Gabtoli upazila on suspicion and arrested Shafiqullah with bomb making materials in his possession.

Rab, Betar

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saw the capture of JMB (Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh) chief Abdur Rahman and second-in-command Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai as well as their continuous action against the criminals have earned them the nomination for the award.

The name of Bangladesh Betar was proposed for its glorious contribution to the country's Liberation War in 1971.

On March 5, the award committee sent a list of 11 nominees for the Independence Award for prime minister's approval that included three cabinet ministers. The committee, however, expressed its reservations about the inclusion of ministers. The list was later cancelled by the PMO.

The award committee in another meeting on March 12 chaired by Environment Minister Tariqul Islam made the revised list selecting the Rab and Bangladesh Betar.

Niko accepts

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sign a GPSA (gas purchase and sales agreement) with Petrobangla, the state-owned hydrocarbon corporation.

"I think Niko has accepted the government's offer and the gas price issue is likely to be resolved soon by signing a GPSA," he told reporters.

Rahman also said Niko has informed him about its plan to increase production at Feni gas field by another 20 million cubic feet per day (mmcf).

Under this plan, Niko will invest another \$ 15 million at Feni gas field to drill a new oil to increase output, he said.

After the increased production, the field's output will reach 50 mmcf against Niko's present production of 30-mmcf from the Feni gas field.

The energy adviser said he has advised the Niko officials to place their new plan at a meeting of the Joint Management Committee (JMC) of Niko and Bapex.

He said a JMC meeting will be convened within a week to discuss Niko's new plan and the work programme regarding the exploration work at Tengrati gas field.

Earlier, the government had approved a proposal of Niko to resume exploration work at Tengrati field on some conditions.

Eden College

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principal of the college and vowed not to leave the hall till their demands are met.

The demonstrators said the authorities tried to crush their movement using Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists and by threatening to cancel their registrations with the college. Failing to quell the movement the authorities decided to shut down the college and directed the students to vacate the residential hall, they said.

The students said they saw the notice yesterday morning.

Prof Feroza Begum, principal of the college, said the authorities took the decision at a teachers' meeting on Sunday considering the present volatile situation on the campus.

She, however, declined to comment any further.

Several hundred students have been demonstrating since March 8 demanding reassignment of the seats at the residential hall to those who had been driven out allegedly by JCD leaders.

Their demands also include punishment for the JCD leaders involved in an illegal practice of arranging residential seats for new students in exchange of money.

Demonstrating students on Sunday threatened to paralyse the college administration by calling an indefinite strike if their demands are not met by March 18.

Meanwhile, different political parties and student organisations, including Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal, Progotishil Chhatra Jote and Samajtantrik Chhatra Front, yesterday condemned the authorities' decision to vacate the campus and suspend the classes.

3 kids hurt

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All of them were admitted to Meherpur General Hospital.

A team of Rab-6 (Rapid Action Battalion) visited the spot and the hospital. There might be two bombs in the bag.

On February 25, three children were wounded in a similar explosion at Isannagar village in the upazila.

Police suspect that outlawed party cadres might have kept the bombs there in an act of sabotage.

Capture of JMB

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country's image abroad," said the US congressman.

Joseph Crowley, also the Chairman of Bangladesh Caucus in US Congress, said this while speaking at a function organised by the World Human Rights and Development, an organisation to raise fund for his election here yesterday.

Referring to his recent visit to Bangladesh, he said democracy in Bangladesh is progressing towards right direction. He identified corruption as the main impediment to achieving development of the country.

"During my visit to Bangladesh, I requested the prime minister to form an independent human rights commission along with strengthening the Anti-Corruption Commissions to curb corruption," he added.

The US influential congressman, however, said Bangladesh is being deprived of US Millennium Challenge Fund due to corruption in the country. The amount of GDP in Bangladesh will increase remarkably if the government is able to contain corruption, he observed.

About the next general elections in Bangladesh, he said this election will be the most important election in the history of the country. The whole world is looking forward to this election, he added.

Expressing his hope for a free, fair and peaceful election in Bangladesh, Crowley said all political parties will have to play their due role in holding the election free, fair and neutral.

"I was taken to Sadhanpur Bazar

Sedition cases

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inter-ministerial meeting on jail reform held at the home ministry yesterday.

"An ordinance can be promulgated now under Article 93 of the Constitution and it can be approved later at next session in parliament."

But if the government thinks the law needs to be passed in parliament first, participation of the opposition and discussions are needed for it, he said.

The proposed law provides for death penalty as the highest punishment for militant activities if the charge is proved against anyone.

The existing law only provides punishment for crimes relating to bomb and explosives substances, he said. "But the new law will be a complete one which will bring to consideration those who patronise, train up, provide funds, encourage and work behind the militants."

Currently, nine courts of Speedy Trial Tribunal are dealing with the cases filed for militant bomb attacks since the serial blasts across the country on August 17 last year.

If it is found that these tribunals are not enough to try the militants, the government will set up new tribunals, Moudud added.

MILITANT NETWORK WEAKENED
Babar believes the militant network

in Bangladesh is not very active now after the arrests of their top leaders including JMB supremo Abdur Rahman and his deputy Bangla Bhai.

"I don't think they are very active now. Two to four (top leaders) may be active. But it's not that much a big issue," he told the reporters.

The minister however emphasised continuous attempts to eradicate the militancy.

"We'll have to stick to the issues so that all the arrested militants can be awarded punishment. New militants may rise if we don't stick to it."

Asked about interrogation of Bangla Bhai, Babar said he is yet to come round and be fit for interrogation. Although his health condition has improved, he is still undergoing treatment, the minister said.

"We'll have to get a court order for Bangla Bhai's interrogation and need to produce him before a court for remand first.

"He is not in a safe physical condition now to be taken to the court," Babar said without specifying a time in this regard.

Entertainment bill

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integrity.

Reportedly, he had been taking a substantial amount of daily essentials like rice, sugar, and oil from the parliament cafeteria for his family. The Parliament Secretariat had to cover the cost from the entertainment fund earmarked for the offices of the whips, sources said.

Delwar Hossain however sees nothing wrong in this 'unusual' expenditure financed by the Parliament Secretariat.

"I haven't done anything illegal. What I have taken are very much covered by my privileges," he told The Daily Star at his office yesterday, responding to the allegation of making an unusual expenditure.

Sources at the Parliament Secretariat said the chief whip had taken over Tk 8 lakh in last eight months during the current fiscal year (05-06) as entertainment cost. During the same period, the other six whips had taken Tk 1 lakh to 1.5 lakh each.

About Tk 27 lakh was allocated as entertainment cost for the offices of the whips in the last fiscal (04-05). The chief whip alone has spent over half of the allocation.

The expenditure on entertainment rose because of his taking essentials from the Parliament Secretariat.

"Tk 8 lakh is not too much for a chief whip's office to spend," said Delwar, also chairman of the House Committee that is commissioned to oversee the accommodation and other facilities for the lawmakers.

Besides, there is no ceiling on expenditure of the chief whip's office. "The Parliament Secretariat could have withheld the bills if the expenditure was really excessive," he said.

The chief whip directed the officials at his office to look into the situation about the expenditure and essential taken from the Parliament Secretariat and the cafeteria. "I personally don't submit any requisition or bill, it is the job of my office staff."

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid said there should be some kind of limits on the expenditure of any office. "Question has already been raised whether the expenditure

Even police not spared

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Superintendent of Police (SP) Masud Mia on phone and left hurling abuses at the OC.

Earlier on the day, Mostafa took interviews of Bangla Bhai and his 'spiritual' leader JMB chief Abdur Rahman at Bhawaniganj Women's College.

Bangla Bhai was a 'unproclaimed ruler' at Bagmara of Rajshahi and Atrai and Raninagar upazilas of Naogaon, Mostafa, also the president of Rajshahi Press Club, said, adding that the militant leader, who virtually got the command over police, imposed a jungle rule in the area in 2004.

Bangla Bhai's command also stretched to Naldanga of Natore, Durgapur and Puthia of Rajshahi and Naogaon Sadar upazilas, he said.

Mostafa said he could sense that a big political power was behind Bangla Bhai who would ask his followers, "Don't get afraid. Slaughter the outlaws whenever you see them. Police will be bound to help you."

Meanwhile, Bangla Bhai banned entrance of journalists and newcomers to those areas since April 1. A large number of Bangla Bhai's workers wearing green turban used to stand like sentinels at all entry points and intersections.

Mostafa, who managed to meet Bangla Bhai three times, said, "We visited the areas with police help upon Bangla Bhai's consent."

"It was the night of May 20. The home minister had already ordered arrest of Bangla Bhai. SP Masud Mia took me to Bagmara by a vehicle of ASP Alamgir Kabir. Detective Branch Inspector Shamim Azad Chowdhury and Sub-inspector Obaidul were accompanying us.

was excessive," he observed.

In accordance with the laws pertaining to the remuneration, allowances and other facilities of the ministers, the chief whip is entitled to have at least Tk 12 lakh a year. He is entitled to have Tk 29,000 a month in salary, Tk 25,000 in house rent, Tk 750 in daily allowance and a yearly optional fund of Tk 3 lakh. Besides, he has the right to allowances for travel, medical, telephone and an amount for maintenance of an office in his constituency.

But Khandakar Delwar, sources at the parliament cafeteria said, had taken essentials from the cafeteria for about two years. The cafeteria would send the commodities to his residence at the beginning of each month. But for the last two or three months, they did not supply those to the residence of the chief whip.

A national daily on Monday published a news story on the matter and it was the talk of parliament secretariat yesterday.

Khandakar Delwar denied taking any illegal benefits and said the news was aimed to malign him before the next parliamentary election.

He said it is true that he has taken essentials for the use of his residence. "My residence is a part of my office. I can entertain guests there."

About taking cash from the cafeteria and submitting bill to the Parliament Secretariat through the cafeteria, he said, "My office took cash to buy goods only when the cafeteria failed to supply those."

Whip Zahed Ali Chowdhury who was present at that time echoed the view. Both the lawmakers blasted the cafeteria for hiking the prices of different items.

Sources said the office of the speaker, the custodian of the Jatiya Sangsad, has no plans to probe the allegation of excessive expenditure by any office.

100 injured

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At about 7:00am Jubo League brought out a procession in front of their central office on the Bangabandhu Avenue. Police later arrested Jubo League leader Ameer Hossain Gazi at Bangabandhu Avenue as angry activists pelted bricks towards them.

Police in retaliation lobbed teargas shells and chased the Jubo League activists into their office. Police also charged batons on the opposition workers at the main entrance of the central office. At least 12 people including three police constables and two journalists were injured.

Police action on pro-hartal processions left five injured in Mohakhali area, seven on Panthapath, five on Green Road area, 15 at Russel Square and one in Dhaka University campus in the city. As police dispersed a Jubo League procession in Fakirapool angry activists damaged five vehicles in the area.

Protesting the attacks Jubo League will stage demonstrations today in the capital and across the country.

Movement of motor vehicles was comparatively low while rickshaws plied as usual on the city streets. Long distant vehicles remained halted. Educational institutions, business houses, shopping centres remained closed while attendance at private offices, government offices were usual.

The clash at Savar Bazar took place when police intercepted an AL procession around 9:30am. Police dispersed the procession by charging batons while the picketers pelted stones at police and damaged eight buses and two trucks.

Meanwhile 10 people were injured during clashes between Jubo League and police in the Sylhet city, reports our Sylhet correspondent.

The Jubo League enforced hartal was observed partially in Chittagong city yesterday, reports our Chittagong correspondent. Vehicles remained off the streets in the early hours of hartal but transports including some long distant buses plied after 10:00am.

New JMB den

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a safe place, JMB chief Abdur Rahman's son Nabil also took shelter there. So did Khaled Saifullah, a member of Majlis-e-Sura, the highest decision taking body of JMB.

Several JMB operatives had rented flats in the town couple of months back and had been living there without having any problem, law enforcers revealed yesterday.

Mollah Omar was learnt to have sent a big cache of explosives from Bogra to Comilla recently, reports our Bogra correspondent.

Omar stored the explosives in Comilla as part of the plans to conduct attacks in several districts including the divisional headquarters, said a source.

Chief whip

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Star that BNP is ready to discuss any issue for the sake of a free and fair election. The PM also favours discussion. He hoped the process of formation of a committee would begin shortly.

Sunny, Awal

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the explosion near Dhaka Sheraton Hotel on August 17 last year.

On expiry of their seven-day remand Sunny and Awal were produced before the court of Metropolitan Magistrate Shamsul Alam yesterday and sought for another eight days of remand for further interrogation.

The DB of police accompanied by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) produced them before the court under tight security blanket. The two were wearing helmets and bullet proof vests.

The court granted the prayed remand. The magistrate also asked them whether they would appoint any lawyers to defend them. But they remained silent.

Earlier, JMB chief Abdur Rahman, operations commander of banned Harkatul Jihad (HuJI) Bangladesh chapter Mufti Abdul Hannan and regional commander of Gazipur Enayet Ullah were placed on remand for interrogation.

Myanmar border

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"All district and upazila livestock officials have been asked to remain alert against entry of poultry birds and products from Myanmar into the country," Dr Salehuddin Mahmud, director general of the Livestock Services, told the news agency.

He said though Bangladesh does not import any poultry birds or products from Myanmar, the frontier vigilance has been intensified as an extra-precaution against entry of birds by chance.

Myanmar reported that it found strains of H5N1 virus in dead poultry around its central city of Mandalaya. Veterinarians said the flu had killed at least 112 birds around the city.

The government prohibited imports of chicks from several countries, including Thailand, India and Malaysia, as part of its vigilance against bird flu to save Bangladesh's growing poultry industry.

Strict compliance

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the workers and their safety. He said a large number of workers are losing their lives just in pursuit of livelihoods. Nobody even keeps appropriate data of the accidents and casualties, he said. He raised different issues including causes of accidents, ways to prevent them, and the existing laws related to the industrial sector.

"This discussion is not for any big investment to ensure safety for workers but to change the existing attitude of the owners and government officials and to start a good practice," he said.

Citing a study, Dr Bhattacharya said in the last 10 years only 4.8 percent of the income from export went to the workers and 7.8 percent went into the pockets of garment factory owners while the net wage of a worker was reduced.

After Dr Bhattacharya's speech, the chair opened the session for other speakers who came from a wide range of specialised disciplines.

Suggesting for an industrial commission, Professor Nasrin Khandakar of Dhaka University said workers safety is in a very vulnerable situation in our country. She also suggested for a management committee at every factory with representation from the workers to improve the situation.

Kabir Ahmed Chowdhury, deputy director of the labour directorate, said workers do not even know their rights. They should be made more aware of their rights and legitimate claims they could make, he said.

"If we can just implement the existing laws, number of accidents will be reduced."

Annisul Huq, immediate past president of Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said they had formed 10 vigilance committees to inspect the main and emergency gates of factories.

"No body wants such accidents.

But the buildings within the city are not up to the mark for setting up factories. But we cannot move from the city to establish factories as we do not get good supply of gas and electricity there," he said.

Shirin Akhter from Karmojibi Nari said everybody should be conscious about implementation of the existing laws that could reduce the rate of accidents.

Fazlul Haque, president of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), said following an accident the owner loses property. "So no owner wants any accident to take place but we should be more serious," he added.</