

Arms cache

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not sophisticated arms, were mainly used in some of the deadly subversive activities in Dhaka, Narayanganj and Jessore in recent years.

The ex-general said he was surprised that none of the people directly involved with the arms-trafficking was arrested and wondered when the stake was so big, as the arms and ammunition were worth millions of dollars, "how could things remain so unattended with the joint forces failing to nab anyone".

Brigadier General (ret'd) Shahidul Anam Khan also thinks the consignment was not destined for Bangladesh. He reasoned there is no such organised clandestine group in the country capable of bringing in, managing and storing such a huge volume of arms and ammunition.

No terrorist group would bring such huge numbers of sophisticated offensive weapons for use inside Bangladesh, observed Khan, adding that the weapons retrieved are generally used in classical wars against regular army.

He said local terrorists are highly unlikely to use rocket launchers, which are anti-tank weapons which were hardly used, if ever, during the war between Shantibahini and the army in the CHT.

Shahidul said bombs were exploded in some of the recent deadly incidents in Bangladesh such as the ones at Udichi function in Jessore and New Year's celebrations at Ramna Green in the capital, but rockets or AK-47 rifles or Uzi sub-machine guns were never used.

The specifications and volumes of the seized arms suggest these were to be used against a regular military force and point to the involvement of a big racket, said Shahidul. He suspected the consignment might have been on its way to the Maoist rebels in Nepal or separatists in northeast India.

Shahidul argued even if the consignment was heading for a third country, it would still pose a serious threat to regional peace. "There is always a risk of certain portions of arms consignment being smuggled out in the local market."

He felt the government should seek help from international intelligence agencies to track down the arms traffickers and mount check along the porous border. He noted Chittagong-Maheshkhali range had long been used as a transit route for illegal arms business.

Major General (ret'd) Shubid Ali Bhuiyan said the retrieved arms and ammunition are almost equivalent to the ones of Comilla Division of Bangladesh Army. "A regular battle

could be fought with such amount of arms and ammunition," he said.

He suspected Bangladesh was used as a transit for supply of the arms. "... There is no big underground party in Bangladesh which could bring in such a huge consignment of arms. I am very concerned that if Bangladesh is continuously used as an illegal arms supply route, our independence will be at stake."

He dismissed the notion that Awami League's April 30 deadline for the fall of the government had something to do with the recovery of the arms cache.

Landlord's son rapes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Son of a landlord allegedly raped a housewife at Sabujbagh yesterday.

The 25-year-old, who plans to join the Ansars son, was busy in her household works at their tin-roofed house at Dakkhingon at 11:00am when Ujjal, son of her landlord Asgar Master, and his four friends forced into her room.

The victim's five-year-old son and four-year-old daughter were playing in another room of their house.

As she screamed for help, the intruders beat her up until she collapsed on the ground.

"Ujjal's friends held me tight while he battered me mercilessly," said the housewife, now undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Sobbing, she said Ujjal's friends pinned her down to the ground when he raped.

Hearing her cry, locals rushed to rescue her and the intruders left the scene.

The culprits went to her house again a few minutes later and, brandishing a firearm, threatened her of dire consequences if she disclosed the incident to others.

They, however, ran away hearing that police were coming.

Before police reached the spot, Ujjal's mother changed the victim's torn sari and asked her to wear salwar-kamij.

Police took her to the DMCH. The victim has been living in the house with her children for the last two months after her husband deserted her.

Confirming the incident, Sabujbagh police said they could not arrest anyone yet.

ATTACK ON PROF AZAD LDF demands Saidee's arrest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Left Democratic Front (LDF) yesterday demanded immediate arrest of Jamaat-e-Islami lawmaker Delwar Hossain Saidee as per what it said is the government's promise to arrest anyone blamed by writer Humayun Azad for the attack on him in February.

The front comprising eight left-leaning parties made the demand at a rally at Muktagan in the capital yesterday.

LDF leader Manzurul Hossain Khan, also president of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, mentioned that before leaving for treatment abroad recently, Humayun Azad said Islamic fundamentalist Saidee, his party Jamaat and the dailies Inquilab and Sangram were linked to the attacks on him.

The front leaders alleged that Jamaat leaders in the government are war criminals and demanded their removal to curb crimes in the country.

Speaking of Friday's Rashed Khan Menon, President of Bangladesh Worker's Party, said all know who attacked the writer and demanded their arrest.

Other leaders who addressed the rally included Shafulqu Rahman Majumdar of Bangladesh Samyabadi Dal, and Ganatantrik Mojdir Party leader Tofazzel Hossain.

No classes held at CU as PSA enforces siege

CU CORRESPONDENT

Academic activities at Chittagong University (CU) virtually stopped due to an indefinite siege on the campus yesterday enforced by Progressive Student Alliance (PSA).

No classes were held at the university but scheduled tests of some departments were held despite the programme of the PSA, a forum of pro-left Bangladesh Chhatra Union, Samajtantrik Chhatra Front and Bangladesh Chhatra Federation.

Protesting Thursday's attack on its leaders by Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal activists, the PSA enforced the siege while Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) ran a parallel programme to support the PSA.

Meanwhile, Chittagong University Teachers Association (CUTA) at an emergency meeting announced an indefinite work abstention programme from yesterday. It also demanded expulsion of Islamic Chhatra Shibir (ICS) cadres who assaulted finance department Lecturer Akhter Hossain Piaru near the central playground Friday afternoon.

The Cuta meets again today to sketch out their next course of action. Students of the Institute of Forestry and Environmental Science (IFES) meanwhile started a three-day class and examination boycott programme yesterday to protest Thursday's attack on their six students by the ICS activists.

The CU authorities formed two committees to probe the attack on the IFES students and Akhter. Fearing further clashes, resident students of different halls have started leaving dormitories.

JP alleges pressure

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"The government is threatening us with the arrest of party chief HM Ershad in graft cases he is now facing if we join hands with the agitating opposition," said a presidium member of the party, requesting anonymity.

"The government wants the Jatiya Party in parliament to show that the Jatiya Sangsad is functioning with the participation of opposition amid boycott by the Awami League."

At a press briefing yesterday, JP chief Ershad alleged that the government distorted information about its parliamentary delegation's meeting with the prime minister under the leadership of Raushan Ershad on Thursday.

After the meeting a government spokesman claimed that the JP legislators assured the government of their "full cooperation" in consolidating parliamentary democracy.

"The government version on Thursday's meeting is nothing but distortion of facts. The government described the meeting as it wished," Ershad, a former military ruler, said.

JP lawmakers said they met the premier to air their grievances on the basis of an understanding reached with BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan before they withdrew their parliament boycott in February.

Ershad said: "The Jatiya Party will not allow any organisation to use it as their launch pad to form government."

He accused the ruling coalition of failing to deliver, adding, "The situation is not good, people are not happy with this government."

He demanded an immediate investigation into the country's largest ever arms seizure on the Kharnaphuli coast in Chittagong early Friday.

Hasina seeks

FROM PAGE 1
issuing licence for producing alcoholic drinks. Besides, women and children repression has increased in the organisations under the Ministry of Social Welfare, which is also being run by the secretary general of Jamaat, she alleged.

The prices of kerosene have gone up from Tk 17 to Tk 25 a litre and rice from Tk 13 to Tk 17 a kg and people no more want to see this government in office beyond April 30, Hasina said referring to the deadline the AL has set for pulling down the four-party alliance government.

"The alliance government is trying its best to wipe out Awami League through oppression and conspiracies. But no-one would be able to hold us back from the one point of demand of overthrowing this autocratic BNP-led alliance government," she warned.

Hasina, also the main opposition Awami League (AL) president, addressed wayside gatherings and public meetings in Baufal, Dasmina, Galachipa, Dumki and Kuakata of Patakhali district and Amtali of Barguna district on the second day of her five-day tour of the five districts of Barisal division.

Referring to the retrieval of huge ammunition in Bogra in June last year, the opposition leader said she had made a similar demand for international inquiry into that incident to trace the origin and destination of the arms and hunt down the culprits involved.

"But the prime minister didn't say anything about my suggestion fearful that her son and the state minister for home affairs might be caught..." Hasina told the rally.

Turning to other issues, AL chief said salaries of police and government officials have not been increased, but those of MPs and ministers have already been raised in phases on the ground of price spiral of essential commodities.

Besides, Vat and other taxes were increased and new ones imposed on the businessmen and common people.

She said Jamaat-e-Islami came to power through negotiations with the BNP and now its ameer runs the Ministry of Industries that is

B Chy asks PM to quit on failure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former president and national committee convener of the alternative political stream AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday asked Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to step down admitting failure of her cabinet to run the country.

Referring to the resignation of Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury as commerce minister reportedly due to the price spiral, he criticised the prime minister for what he said was the government's absolute failure to check the law and order slide and price hike offensentials.

Badruddoza was addressing Jatiya Party leaders of Madaripur district unit and a number of labour leaders, who joined the alternative stream at its Baridhara office in the capital.

The leaders included acting President of Madaripur district unit of Jatiya Party Sheikh Salahuddin Ahmed, its Labour and Industry Affairs Secretary Mohammad Selim Miah and Youth Affairs Secretary Sheikh Rezaul Karim.

Meanwhile, Badruddoza yesterday visited city unit leader of his platform Nasir Uddin Sarker at Holy Family Hospital. Nasir alleged atrocities on him by Ramna police recently.

Japan to recruit

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made the proposals when it met State Minister for Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment Mohammad Quamrul Islam and leaders of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI).

The FBCCI and Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry will work as selection bodies for the workers, sources said.

The Japanese team did not mention the number of workers to be recruited but government officials said the number might be around 1,000.

The main objective of the programme is to improve a worker's skill in a particular field so that he can train other workers after coming home.

Selected workers or factories employing them will bear the cost of their travel to Japan and they will get allowances as apprentice during the training period.

Earlier, China offered such opportunities to Bangladeshi workers.

Murder case

FROM PAGE 12
sional probationary sub-inspector, and three constables Shakhawat, Ali Reza and Jalal Uddin of killing her son Mamun on March 16.

In the complaint, she said, Mamun went out at 4:40pm to a nearby tea-stall

and several minutes later, an unknown boy came to inform her that police gunned down her son and took him away with them.

The complainant and her husband Gias Uddin Molla went to Shyampur Police Station to learn that police had taken their son to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for treatment. Shortly afterwards, the parents found Mamun lying dead in a pool of blood at the emergency section of the hospital.

On their return home at 8:00pm, they learnt from the locals that as the policemen entered the tea-stall, Mamun and several others started running. The police chased them for about 100 yards and fired at them and Mamun was shot. Anwar, the probationary sub-inspector, fired once again at Mamun to be sure of his death and took him away on a police van, said the complainant.

She alleged Shyampur police refused to register the case and threatened her with implicating her other sons in false cases. Meanwhile, accusing Mamun and several others, police filed a robbery case in which they stated Mamun died in a gunfight with the police, added the complainant.

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Govt to run full term

FROM PAGE 1
politics on the streets instead of attending parliament, she cautioned that they would not be able to retain the present position in opposition.

People will again vote BNP and its allies to power for development works across the country, she hoped.

The leader of the four-party alliance said there is no alternative to BNP and four-party alliance government for development and progress of the country.

Chaired by Comilla (north) BNP president Redwan Ahmed MP, the rally was addressed by Health Minister Dr Khondokar Mosharraf Hossain, Agriculture Minister MK Anwar, BNP leader Begum Rabeya Chowdhury, Manjurul Ahsan Munshi MP and Kazi Shah Mofazzel Hossain Kaikobad MP.

Earlier, the prime minister laid the foundation of 500-seat Chandina upazila auditorium and distributed black Bengal goats to a number of destitute women.

Listing her government's various development works and projects, the prime minister said her political opponents have gone mad seeing the present wave of development. "So,

they are unleashing terrorism on the streets instead of returning to parliament. This vandalism is unlikely to yield any thing good," she observed.

She said when her government is leading the country towards progress with development programmes, the opposition is out to create instability by enforcing hartals, resorting to terrorism, killings and destroying public property.

The BNP chief said people voted BNP to power again and again taking into account their development works and rejected Awami League being dismayed by their vandalism, corruption, famine, misrule and misdeeds.

Responding to the demands of local MP, she informed the local people about various ongoing development works and assured that a full-fledged university would be set up in Comilla.

The prime minister also promised to expand rural electrification at Chandina and set up a 20-bed hospital at Mohichalia.

She later inaugurated the newly constructed building of Redwan Ahmed Degree College.

Foreign intelligence

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The junior minister's suggestion was reaffirmed by Shahudul Haque, inspector general of police, who said: "If the weapons were not meant for use in Bangladesh, they would have left the country by now."

SECURITY BEEFED UP
Babar held a meeting with top home ministry and police officers yesterday to beef up national security.

A team led by Criminal Investigation Department's deputy inspector general for Chittagong was formed bringing member of other intelligence agencies to strengthen security in the port city.

Four police teams were dispatched to Chittagong and a joint drive was being considered in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

The arms and ammunition seized by the police and coastguard were handed over to the army after preparation of a seizure list yesterday.

INVESTIGATION ON
Chittagong police said they were not sure whether a ship offloaded the arms to trawlers at sea.

They were trying to hunt down the owners of the trucks and trawlers engaged in the transport of the haul.

Intelligence agents hinted at the direct involvement of the workers of Chittagong Urea Fertilizer Limited jetty were the arms were unloaded into trucks from two trawlers.

PUBLIC OUTCRY
The arms seizure in Chittagong sparked a torrent of criticism of security measures and triggered widespread speculation.

In Chittagong, wild speculations ran on the origin of the arms, their destination and objectives of the operatives and outfits collecting the cache.

Panic-stricken locals asked how the weapons reached the jetty evading naval force and coastguard watch.

Babar told newsmen on Friday that fishing and cargo vessels carried the cache, hidden under sacks of salt, rice and husk.

The fertiliser factory authorities said the jetty of the key point installation long remained quite unprotected.

Authorities constructed the jetty to smoothly run the factory's transport through waterways.

But vested quarters were mooring their vessels to the jetty and along the bank without approval from the authorities concerned, they said.

Loading and unloading of cargo continued there without any supervi-

sion of the port or customs