

8 AK-47s slip out of cache

Army experts suspect because of gun-magazine number mismatch

STAR REPORT

At least eight Ak-47 rifles were taken away from the arms cache seized on April 02 in Chittagong, guess army experts.

Generally the arms suppliers provide four magazines with a rifle, they said, but in the seizure list of the Friday's haul, the number of rifles are less than what should be, compared with the number of magazines. This phenomenon strongly suggests eight rifles are missing from the consignment, the experts

said.

The seizure list shows 690 AK-47 rifles and 2,792 magazines as captured by the joint forces. But, according to the normal rifle-magazine proportion, there should have been 698 rifles against those 2,792 magazines, sources pointed out.

Experts said 2,400 magazines were found in the consignment for 600 7.62mm SMG rifles, which suggests there was no mismatch between arms and ammunitions in this category. But, in case of AK-47

rifles, a mismatch appears, much to the worry of the military experts, who fear the missing arms may pose a security threat to the country.

The experts apprehend the missing sophisticated firearms are still in the hands of the smugglers. "It could create a very dangerous situation if those are sold out to criminals",

They suspect the firearms are kept concealed somewhere in the Chittagong region in the wake of security alert. "It would be a great

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AL's two-day hartal ends

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The two-day dawn-to-dusk hartal across the country called by the main opposition Awami League (AL) ended yesterday amid stray violence, disrupting life for the second consecutive day.

The hartal was part of the AL agitation to press for immediate resignation of the BNP-led coalition government and snap polls.

Hasanul Haq Inu-led Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Inu) also called a simultaneous hartal on the same demands.

The hartal shut most businesses, educational institutions and offices, hampered cargo handling at the ports and largely emptied streets of vehicles, except for pedal rickshaws and a few minibuses, in Dhaka and elsewhere, disrupting life. Authorities said train and air travels were normal.

At least 35 leaders and workers of the AL and the JSD-Inu and their

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Cop-criminal shootout kills top Shibir criminal

M-56 sub-machine gun seized, 4 policemen hurt in hour-long gunfight in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The chief of a notorious Islamist-backed gang was killed and four policemen were injured in an early morning shootout yesterday at a remote place 25 miles north of the

port city.

After the hour-long gunfight on the west bank of Haldi river in Mondakini union of Hathazari upazila, police arrested seven members of the terrorist outfit and seized an M-56 sub-machine gun, three

magazines and 61 bullets from their possession.

The notorious band, known as 'Yakub Bahini' (Yakub Force) after its dead leader Mohammad Yakub, 37, was patronised by Islami

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Police, left, search in water for illegal arms after a gunfight with an Islamist outfit that left its chief killed and four policemen injured on the bank of Haldi in Hathazari in Chittagong yesterday. They seized a sub-machine gun and bullets, right.



PHOTO: STAR

Rise of a terror

SHAHIDUL ISLAM, Ctg

The death of notorious criminal Yakub in a police-criminal shootout came as a relief for the residents of Hathazari and Fatikchhari.

Yakub, 40, son of Mohammad Hossain Kerani of Mandakini village in Hathazari, emerged as an unrivalled top terror of the district about two years back after the death of his predecessor and cousin Humayun on November 29, 2001.

The cousins entered the criminal world under the belt and guidance of Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS)-backed infamous criminal Nasir, who is now behind bars as a defendant in 36 criminal cases, in 1989-1990, sources in police said.

After Nasir's arrest in 1997, Humayun, younger to Yakub, took the position of second-in-command to Nasir, as Yakub was unable to take over for ill health. Humayun was killed in a gunfight with rival Didar Group, backed by Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), at Dhurongkul in Fatikchhari.

Yakub, an accused of at least 24 criminal charges, including eight for murders, had his first lesson of crime by snatching Tk 30,000 from a bus passenger at Nazirhat Bazar in 1989 and served four years for that.

It was the sole instance, despite

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Militiamen control parts of 3 cities

35 GIs, 459 Iraqis killed in week-long violence

AP, Fallujah

Militiamen loyal to an anti-US Shia cleric controlled large swaths of three Iraqi cities yesterday after clashes with coalition forces, while US Marines fought insurgents for the second day around a mosque in the Sunni Muslim stronghold of Fallujah.

Fighting this week has left 35 Americans and at least 459 Iraqis dead. This includes more than 280 Iraqis killed since the Marines' siege against insurgents in Fallujah, west of Baghdad, began early Monday said Taher Al-Issawi, the director of the city's hospital.

At a time when US forces had planned to try to hand more security duties over to Iraqi security forces, the intensified violence on two fronts - one Sunni, one Shia - has

forced the US military to consider sending more troops to Iraq and to postpone the removal of forces due to rotate out.

"You can be certain that if they want more troops, we will sign deployment orders so that they'll have the troops they need," Defence Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said at a Pentagon news conference Wednesday, though he insisted fighting was not spinning out of control.

The United States has about 135,000 troops in Iraq.

In Fallujah, Marines battled again around the Abdel-Aziz al-Samarrai mosque, which Marine Capt. James Edge said insurgents were again using as a base despite a six-hour battle the day before to uproot them. Helicopters were

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BDF MEET

Politics, graft, crime to top agenda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank-led donor group plans to give the government a tough time on issues like political unrest, law and order fall and corruption on May 8, the first day of the three-day Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) meeting in the city.

The donors will also ask Dhaka to clarify its position on implementation of the conditions of the Poverty Reduction Growth Facility (PRGF) credit, according to a draft programme schedule of the crucial meeting.

The government has also taken preparations to cop the flak of donors involving the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Asian Development Bank (ADB), European Union, Japan, USA and others.

A 60-page memorandum report has already been prepared explaining the government's position on

sensitive issues at the meeting, in which Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will deliver the inaugural address, sources said.

Donors will hold a preparatory meeting with the finance minister next week to discuss the draft schedule.

As per the schedule, WB's South Asia Region Vice President Prof. Patel will speak on various challenges ahead of Bangladesh on the first day.

Though Bangladesh has done well since the early 1990s, it still needs to speed up growth and development efforts further to improve the living standard of its 60 million poor people more quickly, observes the WB in its draft agenda.

Disruptive politics, poor law and order and corruption are development issues as those deter investors and affect the poor particularly harshly, it says.

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Commentary

POST-HARTAL QUESTION TO SK HASINA

So, what have you proved?

MAHFUZ ANAM

After keeping the whole nation confined to their homes for two consecutive days, after preventing ordinary people from pursuing their daily life (which is the fundamental right of every citizen anywhere in the world, especially in countries that believe in democracy, a political system that you profess to believe in), after forcing factories, shops and all forms of business from operating, after depriving this poor nation of

two days of productivity and after taking the livelihood from day labourers whose only source of income is what they earn each day what, can we ask the Honourable Leader of the Opposition what you have proved?

If you wanted to prove that your party has enough public support to implement any protest activity it chooses, that it can defy the government and have its own way in any activity it wants and that no amount of threat or intimidation by the

government will deter the AL from doing what it wants, there was no need for it. This we all knew. Nobody -- with a modicum of political acumen -- can doubt the extent of AL's grassroots organisation and the appeal this grand old party has among our people.

If the intention was to prove that the present government has failed miserably to control crimes, this is proven by what happens every day. If you wanted to prove that the

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INDO-PAK SERIES

Hosts draw level

REUTERS, Lahore

Pakistan crushed India by nine wickets to register an emphatic series-levelling victory with more than a day to spare in the second Test here on Thursday.

Chasing 40 to win after India's second innings ended on 241, the hosts raced to the target in just seven overs, 25 minutes after lunch on the fourth day, for the loss of opener Imran Farhat.

Taufeeq Umar scored the winning runs, glancing seamer Irfan Pathan for four. He raised his bat and hugged non-striker Yasir Hameed in

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PHOTO: STAR

Members of paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles guard state-owned Bangladesh Television headquarters at Rampura in Dhaka during opposition-sponsored daylong hartal yesterday.

Life reels from power outages

Four grids trip in Dhaka, Chittagong; Rural areas still dogged by frequent blackouts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Large parts of the capital and the prime port city of Chittagong reeled under hours of power cuts yesterday after four major grids tripped amid a dogging countryside crisis, making life miserable.

The grid glitch shut Ulan and Dhanmondi substations in Dhaka, leaving the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Bangladesh Secretariat and Karwan Bazar, Maghbazar, Indira Road, Paltan and Segunbagicha without power.

Hathazari grid failure in Chittagong shut a 50-megawatt (mw) plant in Kaptai and a 60mw plant in Shikabaha, plunging many

areas in blackout.

Rampura-Ulan, Haripur-Ulan and Ulan-Maghbazar grids under Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority (Desa) broke down at about 1:00pm because of a fault at Maghbazar substation.

Of the grids, Haripur-Ulan was restored in 18 minutes and Rampura-Ulan in 130 minutes, but the fault in Ulan-Maghbazar line could not be corrected until evening. In Chittagong, the grid was mended in the afternoon.

Crisis still dogged Maghbazar as the substation, hobbled by the technical glitch, was failing to meet the demands.

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26 Indian cops killed in Naxal ambush

AFP, REUTERS, Ranchi

At least 26 policemen were killed when landmines planted by suspected Maoists blew up four vehicles in their patrol in the eastern Indian state of Jharkhand, police said yesterday.

The attack came less than 24 hours before a rally scheduled in the Jharkhand city of Hazaribagh by Deputy Prime Minister Lal Krishna Advani ahead of national elections.

The police were killed late Wednesday when their cars hit a "string of mines" as they passed near Chaibasa in the Saranda forest, a popular tourist retreat 150km south of the state capital Ranchi, inspector general of police G.S. Rath said.

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Killers of Old Dhaka trader to be tried in fast track court: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said the trial of the gruesome killings of Shamsul Huq and his son Russell Sheikh will be held under the Speedy Trial Act for quick and exemplary punishment to the criminals.

She gave the assurance when the family members of the slain businessmen of old Dhaka met her at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

Shahmsul Huq and his son Russell Sheikh were killed on March 26 and their bodies, chopped into pieces, were recovered on March 28.

The prime minister told Huq's family members that the government had instantly taken steps to investigate the killings and hunt down the assailants. "Two people have already been arrested in

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