

## Cops target 400 militants

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activists by grilling them at the JIC in Dhaka.

So far 123 people have been arrested, the home ministry told a press briefing yesterday afternoon. According to the ministry, 434 bombs exploded on August 17 and 51 unexploded bombs were recovered.

The ministry said 26 other arrestees from Sathkira, Feni, Kushtia, Brahmanbaria, Khulna, Khagrachari, Cox's Bazar, Joypurhat, Tangail, Narsingdi and Jessore districts would also be brought to the capital to interrogate each carrier was briefed separately but it is not clear whether the same man briefed all the carriers of a region, as the carriers did not meet one another.

"A few of the 14 received the bombs on Wednesday from the same persons who had briefed them while the rest said they had to collect the bombs from a designated place at a specific time," said the source.

They were strictly instructed to plant the bombs at blast points designated earlier. Most of the bomb carriers also received JMB leaflets with direction to leave those at the sites.

The source said, "The carriers are also coming up with names and addresses of those who briefed them and handed them over the bombs, but it is not sure whether we will find them there. Some of them know only the names."

Two arrestees from Sathkira and one from Kushtia, who identified themselves as JMB activists, told the interrogators they knew Abdur Rahman was their leader but have not met him yet.

Asked how they came in contact with the men, who briefed them or supplied them the bombs, many of the arrestees said they had come to know them at various religious sessions.

After being sure that half a dozen of the 14 have no link with the bomb blasts, the investigators yesterday decided to release them after interrogation at the JIC.

"We will interrogate the rest again to verify their information," said one investigator. Quizzing of some fresh arrestees will also begin today.

He said no-one of the carriers admitted to taking payment for their tasks, adding, "They said they did it as part of their religious duties. In fact, they were totally motivated."

### HUNTING LIST

Law enforcement, intelligence and security agencies are looking for the members of the huge network of operatives of the banned Islamist militant organisation JMB and its allies involved in orchestrating the bombings across the country last Wednesday.

"As it is now quite certain that this organisation carried out the attack, we are listing all its leaders and activists and will try to trace them," said an investigator.

Sources said the investigators has already prepared a hunting list of about 400 JMB members and distributed it among the police, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and intelligence agencies in all districts.

The list was prepared based on intelligence, confessional statements of arrested Islamist militants including JMB members and press reports. It includes top militant leaders like Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai down to grassroots members.

"We will try to trace the JMB kingpins by interrogating those of the lower planes," the investigator said.

Law enforcers are keeping a strong watch on Abdur Rahman's den and madrasa in Jamalpur. "Although some intelligence officers believe Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai are now hiding abroad, we are continuing looking for them in the country," he added.

Our Barisal correspondent reports: Police yesterday rounded up at least 25 people including college and madrasa students, teachers, Imams in and around the city, suspecting their links to the blasts.

Kabir Hossain, 35, a Jubo League cadre of Jhawtalia, and Azam, 31, of Kawnia, were sent to jail as accused in the blasts cases, police sources said.

The police claimed Kabir and Azam had been arrested earlier in different criminal and arms cases.

Our Gaibandha correspondent adds: Police picked up 11 suspects in the district in the last two days and continuing hunting the masterminds including Matin Mehdi, central leader of the JMB, who went into hiding soon after the blasts.

During interrogation, some admitted to being the supporters of Ahle Hadith movement, while others claimed their innocence.

The police unearthed important information about Matin Mehdi, who used several names to identify himself

in different places. Matin's real name is Motiul Haq Mondol who introduced himself as Motiul Islam. Mahub Mehdi, Matin Mehdi and Mehdi Hasan.

He formed an extremist religious group, Allah'r Dal, a few years ago and began running organisational activities in Hashem Bazar. But he soon joined the JMB and gained a central post after locals opposed his extreme speeches.

He was accused in four cases of speeches of fatwas in Bogra, Jhenidah and Gaibandha.

Our correspondent from Jessore reports: Police placed Tokai Sagar, 10, and his relative Tuhi, 15, on a three-day remand.

Tuhs was arrested in Lohagara in Narail on Thursday night following the statement of Sagar held in the town just after the blasts.

Our Dinajpur Correspondent adds: The Rab released Abdul Majid, 55, an activist of Jamaat-e-Islami, half an hour into his arrest on Friday sparking off resentment in the area.

The Rab arrested Majid when he was coming out of a Jamaat programme at Lok Bhaban in the town. The elite force also seized his cellphone and some documents, but released him, Officer-in-Charge Md Abu Bakkar Siddique said.

Our Nilphamari Correspondent reports: JMB activist Golan Mostafa, 45, arrested on Thursday in Jaldhaka apazila, has revealed important information on militant activities during interrogation, police sources said.

He is a charge-sheeted accused in a case on planting bombs at Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service, an NGO, in 2002.

Locals alleged they saw many unknown youths with Mostafa on the evening of August 16.

Nilphamari police sought help from Panchagarh police for information about the four people arrested on charge of Islamist militancy on May 15, 2003 in Panchagarh.

Seven JMB cadres arrested in Bagmara on Thursday were sent to the JIC in Dhaka yesterday.

Our staff correspondent from Khulna adds: Over 200 leader and activists of the district unit of Ahab have gone into hiding to evade arrest.

Intelligence agencies are keeping watch on 11 mosques of the Ahle Hadith sect, while most of the mosques have been cordoned off by plainclothesmen since August 17.

## Agencies for banning

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Wednesday's countrywide orchestrated bomb blasts, has been enjoying foreign funding for its militant activities through Galib, now in jail, and his organisation Ahle Hadith Andolon Bangladesh (Ahab).

The Tawhid Trust and Hadith Foundation expelled their founder, Galib, in 2002 for embezzling Tk 5 crore provided by the Kuwaiti embassy and the RIHS. But, according to some documents seized by intelligence agencies, Galib, even after his expulsion, continued to receive RIHS funds, a large part of which was deposited directly into Galib's and his wife's bank accounts.

The Hadith Foundation last month issued a letter to the RIHS asking to show cause why and how it had provided some Tk 27 lakh meant for the foundation to Galib.

It was also in July that five foreign RIHS officials left the country on a government directive following specific allegations of their involvement in fuelling Islamist militancy and extremism and also in trafficking.

The five foreigners had worked with Al-Haramain Foundation (AHF) in Bangladesh before joining the RIHS. The government last year closed down the AHF on repeated requests from the US and Saudi Arabia for its link with al-Qaeda.

A Bangladesh national arrested in early 1999 with four explosive devices and five detonators in India informed the police that a senior AHF official had tasked him with keeping watch on the US missions in India for possible terrorist strikes.

After the AHF wrap-up, all of its 14 foreign officials had left the country but the five returned as tourists and joined the RIHS.

The RIHS and Ahab jointly constructed an Islamic university, 10 madrasas, four orphanages and over 1,000 mosques across the country and trained several thousand Imams and Muajjins.

Intelligence sources said the mosques and madrasas are being used as Ahab and JMB strongholds, while the trained men and women Jihadies (Islamic version of crusaders) are working underground.

The RIHS also has received huge amounts of money through hundi since February last, when the government stopped releasing its funds on allegations of funding Galib for Jihad. The RIHS has usually been receiving some Tk 25 to 30 crore a year since the inception of its activities in Bangladesh in 1996.

Sources said RIHS Bangladesh Director Abdul Aziz Mal-ullah, a Kuwaiti citizen, who seldom visits the country, came to Bangladesh on August 14, three days ahead of the August 17 serial bomb blasts, and started lobbying a few ministers and top government officials.

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**GALIB-ABDUR RAHMAN LINK**  
After his arrest on February 24, Galib told the press, "Whether we are hanged or jailed, our movement

## Jamaat blames RAW

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He however admitted questions have arisen in the public mind about the role of the country's intelligence agencies.

Jamaat leaders at the conference categorically denied their involvement in the blasts as alleged by the main opposition Awami League (AL).

They rather pointed an accusing finger at a mid-ranking AL leader, who is a close relative of Sheikh Abdur Rahman, spiritual leader of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

"Accusing the Jamaat of any terrorist activities in the country is an Awami culture," observed Ali Hsan Mohammad Mujahheed, Jamaat secretary general and minister for social welfare.

The Jamaat leaders also slammed the AL for what they said was conducting propaganda against Bangladesh in foreign land.

"The Jama'atul Mujahideen is a baseless and name-only organisation and we don't know any of them," Nizami said when asked whether Abdur Rahman was once a follower of Jamaat as reported in some newspapers.

He said Jamaat-e-Islami is a democratic organisation and has no involvement in any sort of fanaticism. "It believes in lawful movement".

The Jamaat leaders alleged Mosad constituted a number of 'Islamic' organisations and is helping them for running terrorist activities so that Jamaat can be blamed.

The main objective of such terrorism is to create a ground and provoke international community for a crackdown on Bangladesh, they pointed out.

Nizami observed terrorism is an international problem and it should be resolved by political means.

He also criticised and condemned the statement by Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Veena Sikri in the wake of the blasts.

According to Jamaat, Veena in a statement to an Indian TV channel

## 10 die

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son Sabuj, 3; Parvin, 22, her daughter Ritu, 2, and son Al Amin, 5.

Koehnor and Roksana hailed from village Ramdebpur while Parvin from village Kaikbarchar.

Shah Alam, 32, and Sharifa, 22, of Ramdebpur village remained missing.

for Islam will continue."

Police and intelligence sources said Ahab is but a mass platform of the JMB and most of the Ahab workers are involved in JMB activities.

Some of the suspected militants arrested in Thakurgaon, Joypurhat, Bogra and Natore corroborated the information. They told the police that Galib was their leader and he used to meet them at Ahab mosques.

The spiritual master of Bangla Bhai and Jagrota Muslim Janata, Bangladesh (JMJB) Amir Abdur Rahman and Ahab Amir Galib were well known to each other. Rahman studied at the Medina University in Saudi Arabia at Galib's recommendation and after completion of the studies joined back with Galib.

Abdur Rahman formed the JMB in mid 1990s based in Dhaka. With the help of Galib, his JMB militants have been using the facilities of some 700 mosques built across the country by RIHS funds.

Talking to The Daily Star, Rezaul Karim, an expelled Ahab member, said Galib had introduced him to Abdur Rahman. "I heard them discussing whether an armed struggle to stage an Islamic revolution would be viable or not."

After a shootout in Joypurhat with JMB men in August 2003, the police arrested 38 people. Galib's name was written in the diaries of some of the arrestees. One of them named Anwar Sadat alias Aatur Rahman was later identified as a brother of Abdur Rahman. His diary too carried Galib's name, amounts of his donations and various instructions.

There are reports that between 1998 and 2003 Galib visited Afghanistan, Pakistan and India around 22 times, both legally and illegally.

Galib started his activities aimed at staging an Islamic revolution in the country in 1975 under the banner of Jomiyat-e-Ahle Hadith. Three years later, in 1978, when he was a student of the Dhaka University, he splitting from that organisation and formed Ahle Hadith Jubo Shanga (AHJS), the youth wing of Ahab.

From the AHJS platform, Galib preached a necessity of Jihad to establish an Islamic rule in the country and also to fight against the Islamic deviations including the Mazar culture.

Sources said Galib started receiving funds from the Middle East through Maulana Abdul Malin Salafi, an Indian leader of the Salafi sect, who had been working as a Muballig (religious preacher).

Galib and Salafi travelled to every corner of the country in early 1980s with a mission to launch an Islamist movement.

The government of HM Ershad expelled Salafi in 1988 for his Islamic revolutionary ideas and activities. Galib inherited the huge Saudi Arabian fund left behind by Salafi.

said, "Those who wanted to establish Islamic rule conducted the bomb attacks in Bangladesh."

"The Indian high commissioner assumed responsibility for the bomb blasts by issuing such a statement," Nizami alleged.

The Jamaat leaders said five reasons behind the August 17 attacks — to destroy the constitutional and democratic system in Bangladesh; topple the alliance government and break the unity among Islamic groups; foil the upcoming Saarc summit; present Bangladesh as a terrorist country to create grounds for outside intervention; and destroy economic prosperity and foreign investment in the country.

Jamaat also demanded proper investigation into the blasts, identification of the culprits and exemplary punishment of them.

## Polio free

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immunologist under the EPI, said, "SEARO members including India and Indonesia have recently reported 25 and 219 polio cases.

"Polio virus presence in Indian State of Bihar is particularly of great concern where two cases of wild polio have been reported in Punai and Araria districts, about 15km off Panchagarh in Bangladesh," he said.

As many as 14 countries still report polio cases. These 14 countries have recorded 1,053 cases of polio with Yemen being on top with 415 instances.

According to the WHO, 2008 has been set as a target year to declare the world free from polio.

It requires five crore doses of poliomyelitis vaccines to be given to each child under five years on every National Immunisation Day (NID).

Bangladesh joined the polio eradication campaign on April 16, 1995 and the last (12th) NID was conducted in January last year.

But the surveillance for Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP) for the children under 15 is still on along with routine Extended Programme of Immunisation (EPI).

Polio virus invades local lymphoid (defence) tissue, enters the blood stream, and may infect cells of the central nervous system. Up to 95 percent of all polio infections are inapparent or not felt of its presence.

## Trained in foreign lands

**FROM PAGE 1**

Many of their activists are Afghanistan and Palestinian war veterans who fought there after receiving training in Pakistan, Libya and Palestine. After returning to Bangladesh, these militants scattered over the country and started militant activities since the early 1990s.

According to intelligence agencies, about 7,000 members from different organisations including the Freedom Party were trained in Libya in the early 1980s and 1990s.

Sources said over 200 Bangladeshis Jihadis were killed and 500 wounded in battles in Afghanistan, Lebanon and Palestine.

When they returned from foreign frontiers, a number of them set up madrasas as cover, mainly toing the Qwami line, which is the more orthodox system of Islamic education and needs no government registration. They chose the forests of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, mosques and the Qwami madrasas mainly in the north to train their activists.

They also set up their network in Dhaka, starting from Kamrangirchar, and later spreading to Kafur, Adabar, Shekhertek, Basila and Demra.

Operating under different names, the groups maintain close contact with each other.

Although the intelligence agencies had made various reports on these militant groups and recommended their bans, the government remained mysteriously silent since 2002. Rather, some militants arrested at various places with evidence of subversive activities got free as the cases against them were not properly pursued.

Although the government did not admit the existence of any extremist organisations, it banned Shahadat Al Hiqma on February 9, 2003, and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) and Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) on February 23 this year.

A press note issued on February

23 said: "These groups are engaged in murders, robberies and bombings ... by capitalising on religious sentiments."

But Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on July 1, 2003, told parliament that no al Qaeda men exist in Bangladesh.

"There is no fundamentalists or zealots in the country," she told Ulemas (Islamic scholars) on September 6, 2003.

On the contrary, however, ruling coalition partner Islami Oikya Jote Chairman Fazlul Haq Amin on March 8, 1999 told a public meeting, "We are for Osama [bin Laden]. We are for the Taliban and we will be in government in 2000 through an Islamic revolution."

"An Islamic revolution will take place by Qwami madrasas," Amini said at an Islamic conference in Comilla on March 13 this year.

"By terming us gunrunners and terrorists, Qwami madrasa movement cannot be stopped," he added.

But as late as August 27 this year, Jane's Intelligence Review, the leading defence magazine of the world, reported: "Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries on earth, on the brink of being a failed state, and that makes it a perfect target for al-Qaeda and its ever-expanding network of Islamist extremist organisations. Virtually unnoticed by the world at large, Bangladesh is being dragged into the global war on terrorists by becoming a sanctuary for them."

**CHANGING FACES**  
In the wake of the recent bomb blasts, The Daily Star investigation found most JMB and JMJB leaders were in the past members of the Islami Chharta Shibir (ICS), the student front of ruling coalition partner Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh.

Sources said the militants hide their identity by using the names of different organisations. Many have joined the Tablig Jamaat, the religious movement supposed to be non-violent and non-political.

Whenever the militant groups

come under police suspicion, they quickly change name to continue their activities. The JMB is a case in point that has so far changed names 18 times, intelligence sources said.

**ACTIVISTS**  
By their own claims, the militant groups have some 10 lakh members across the country. An intelligence report says about 80,000 of them took training in arms and explosives.

Only the JMB has 10,000 full-timers, 1 lakh part-timers and 10 lakh trainees.

JMJB leader Bangla Bhai on May 12 last year claimed in an interview with The Daily Star that he has over 30,000 activists working in 57 districts.

Hizbut Towhid boasts of 1 lakh members while Al Hiqma Chairman Syed Kawsar Hossain Siddiki on February 8, 2003 claimed he has over 36,000 trained members.

Harkat-ul Jihad (Huji) has over 25,000 trained activists, according to some Huji men. But intelligence source says the claim is exaggerated and the organisation has around 15,000 members who are now working for different Islamic parties after crackdown on the group in 1999.

The militant members come from a varied spectrum — several teachers of Dhaka University, Rajshahi University, Chittagong University, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), Kushtia Islamic University, North South University, and Victoria University are involved with these militant groups, mainly looking after finances, public relations, and foreign connections.

Each group has various wings — the largest looking after publicity and recruitment, the wing that takes armed training is comparatively small. Another branch works as 'intelligence wing', mixing up with the common people and activists of other parties and attending political and cultural programmes.

## Changes in agencies on the cards

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the country."

Later the same day, she called State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar and wanted to know why the law enforcement agencies had failed to check such incidents. She said she was surprised how could the explosions take place in almost all districts, keeping in the dark the intelligence agencies and law enforcers.

She also blasted Babar for speaking to the media immediately after the blast, making the government's failure seem even bigger.

The PMO sources said Khaleda Zia also had a meeting with her Advisor for Parliamentary Affairs Saaluddin Qader Chowdhury.

Her main meeting however was with three top policymakers—Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, and Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain. It

lasted for nearly two hours.

In the evening, Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan and Foreign Ministry Advisor Reaz Rahman met the PM. They briefed her about the global concern stemmed from the August 17 blasts and took her advises on how to handle the affair with the foreign countries.

The blasts and subsequent incidents, their political implications, and prospective course of action were discussed at the PM's meeting with the three senior ministers.

Reliable sources said the three policymakers stressed the need for bringing changes in the intelligence and law enforcement agencies as they said, those had failed time and time again to contain the bombing incidents.

They also questioned the efficacy of the agencies who are neither getting prior information nor being able to find out the criminals after incidents, including the August 21 grenade

attacks on Awami League rally, killing of SAMS Kibria, and other blasts incidents in the past.

Sources said the three ministers told the PM that preliminary investigations found religious fundamentalists' links to the August 17 blasts, but they opined that it would not be wise to go for a wholesale crackdown on them, given the next general election.

They said that it might have a negative impact if the government opts to clamp down on all the Islamist groups. They suggested the situation rather should be handled tactfully so that the sentiment of the religious people does not go against the BNP government.

The policymakers underscore hunting down of the masterminds as well as their godfathers and disowning the foreign links if they had any. They said that the August 17 incidents are definitely a part of a deep-rooted conspiracy to provoke the government into going after the Islamic parties, which are widely considered as "vote bank" of BNP.

The leaders also proposed some changes in cabinet and civil administration by getting rid of the incompetent ones.

At the meetings with the PM, some people talked about the possibility of involvement of foreign intelligence agencies in the blasts.

## BNP MP's brother

**FROM PAGE 16**  
Kashem Chairman knew better about the fate of the victim afterwards, he said.

Our Narayanganj correspondent reports that police charged batons on a pro-hartal procession of the 14-party that left at least 20 people injured, including district AL Convenor SM Akram.

Police swooped on the procession as it reached Ukilpara area. Anwar Hossain, president of district town unit of the AL, district Gono Forum leader Delwar Hossain Chumnu and Jubo Mahila League leader Ishrat Jaham were among the injured.

Another 14-party procession came under police action in rail gate area at about 11:00 am and around 10 people were injured.

Anti-hartal processions however got police protection.

Our staff correspondent in Sylhet reports: At least 10 AL activists suffered minor injuries in police charge on a procession in Court Point area, led by city Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran.

Our Barisal correspondent reports that the hartal was observed peacefully in the city and other parts of the district.

There was no picketing for or against the hartal and industrial units at the BSCIC and Rupatali industrial areas operated smoothly. Hartal supporters brought out a procession in the city.

Our Rangpur correspondent added that the hartal passed off peacefully in the district. Police intercepted processions of the 14-party and Bangladesh Chharta League.

Our Netrakona correspondent reports: Six people were arrested from a pro-hartal procession.

Our correspondents in Nilphamari, Khulna and Comilla also reported peaceful observance of the shutdown, affecting life.

## Hartal passes

**FROM PAGE 1**  
A small number of minibuses came out on the city roads despite the hartal. Rickshaws plied as usual.

The AL, left-leaning 11-party alliance, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Inu) and National Awami Party enforced the shutdown, protesting the August 17 serial bomb blasts across the country.

The Communist Party of Bangladesh had separately called hartal yesterday on the same issue.

In the capital, police charged batons on pro-hartal pickets in different areas, leaving about a dozen injured, and rounded up about 30 hartal supporters.

Pickets faced police action in Bangabandhu Avenue, Baitul Mukarram, Russell Squire, Mirpur, Kalabagan, Hossaini Dalan and some other areas.

The law enforcers cordoned off the AL central office at Bangabandhu Avenue and did not allow party workers to enter the office. Senior party leaders were however allowed to enter it.

Early in the morning, police intercepted a procession of the Workers Party of Bangladesh led by its General Secretary Bimal Biswas near the Stadium Gate.

Police swooped on a procession of Mahila Awami League near Dhanmondi roads 5 and 9-A and picked up 15 activists. An injured activist Sadia Tarek Britti, was admitted to Bangladesh Medical College Hospital.

In Mirpur, police baton-charged a procession of the AL and its youth front Jubo League, leaving at least 12 leaders and workers injured, including local AL leader Lias Mollah. Police also arrested 10 people including city Jubo League (north) President Mainul Hossain Khan.

A procession led by AL leaders Abdur Razzak, Mohammad Nasim, Abdul Matin Khasru and Mirza Abdul Jalil paraded different roads in Dhanmondi and stopped at Russell Squire at about 11:00am to hold a briefly.

Another procession of the AL parliamentary party led by Chief Whip of the Opposition Abdu S. Talukder, Abdul Khalek, Shahjahan Khan, Dr Abdur Razzak, Col (ret'd) Faruk Khan, Col (ret'd) Shawkat Ali

## Blasts to hurt business

**FROM PAGE 16**  
convey to the WB president that Bangladesh is not receiving aid under the Millennium Development Goals the way it was promised. Sometimes aids are not released over trivial issues, he added.