



PHOTO: STAR

The rented house at Rasulpur in Satkhira town used by JMB as its office from where the bombs were supplied on August 17. Police have locked the house.

A day at a hotbed of JMB outfit

Militants recruited youths and trained them to raise 'Ketal Bahini' in border villages of Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

Jamaat-ul-Mujahidin (JMB) raised its armed outfit in the name of "Ketal Bahini" in border areas of Satkhira district, recruited youths and trained them to fight to establish Islamic rule in the country. The Arabic word "Ketal" means "fight".

This was gathered by this correspondent during a visit to Banshdah and Satani border villages on Saturday.

This correspondent talked to many local people of different strata of life. They said the Ketal Bahini was raised to fight to establish Islamic rule. Members of the outfit used to tell people that "rule of Allah" can not be established without armed revolution, the locals said.

They said the outfit was raised by Maulana Ashikur Rahman, Alamgir Kabir and Qudus of Satani and Banshdah areas, who are members of JMB. Maulana Ashikur Rahman and Qudus used to identify themselves to people as members of Ketal Bahini of JMB.

They also claimed that Bangla Bhai of Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) was their leader and threatened people not to oppose them.

"We did not oppose them out of fear", said a schoolteacher seeking anonymity.

Police and intelligence agencies said they have launched a manhunt to nab members of JMB and its armed wing Katal Bahini.

Besides JMB chief Shaikh Abdur Rahman, those on the list are Fakar Uddin Raji of Patharghata, Indian national Gias Uddin of Kadamtala, Nayeem of village Dhanghora in Kalaroa upazila, Qudus and Riaz of Banshdah village, Abu Khair and Wahed Mallik of Satani, Maulana Alauddin alias Ala Hujur of Kushkhali, Habibur Rahman and

Noor Ali Member of Budhata in Assassuni upazila, Abdullah of Sonadanga in Khulna, Ismail of Bejpara in Jessore and Shamim of Kharibla. They were named by the arrestees during interrogation by the Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC) in Dhaka.

Police raided the house of Fakar Uddin Raji of Patharghata village in Sadar upazila, who reportedly heads the Khulna divisional unit of banned JMB but did not find him as he went into hiding after the August 17 serial bomb blasts.

Police and intelligence agencies have stated that the divisional headquarters of JMB was in Satkhira town and said they have claimed they have unearthed the militants' network.

They also raided the house used as JMB office in the town from where the operation was conducted. They recovered materials used for packing bombs in bags and religious books and leaflets. Police locked the house, owned by one Moksed Ali. The bombs were brought to the house a few days before August 17 and then supplied to militants, police said.

Two most wanted JMB men

Sources said 'JMB divisional chief' Maulana Fakar Uddin Raji, 40, son of a schoolteacher Abdul Jalil of Patharghata village in Satkhira Sadar upazila, had started his education at Jhhowdanga Madrasa. He passed Kamil from Khulna Alia Madrasa. He was then appointed teacher at Khulna Nijkhama Madrasa, which allegedly got funds from a Middle East country. But he left the madrasa 6-7 years ago.

Locals said he used to recruit youths for JMB and its armed wing. JMB leader Gias Uddin is another most wanted person in the

book of by law enforcers. He played a vital role in the August 17 countrywide bomb blasts, police said.

Son of late Omar Ali of Swarnnagar thana under North 24 Parganas district in West Bengal, he came to Bangladesh in early 80's and resided at a rented house at Kadamtala. He was appointed Muazzin (who calls for prayer) of Kadamtala Ahle Hadith mosque.

The mosque committee removed him from the post after they found him training youths. He also used to teach children to bring them up as religious militants.

The locals said they did not know about Gias Uddin's source of income after his removal from the madrasa. He was the leader of local unit of JMB. Police suspect that Gias Uddin had connection with religious militant groups abroad.

Training centres

Police said they have identified the houses of one Wahed Mallik of Satani village in Sadar upazila and of Nur Ali Member of Kulla in Assassuni upazila and 10 to 15 madrasas in border areas in the district which were used as JMB training centres.

Local people claimed that although JMB used these places as 'training centres', neither police nor the local administration questioned their activities.

JMB was organised in the border areas in the last four to five years, well under the nose of the administration, they said.

A senior police official in Satkhira said activities of the operatives could not have spread in the area had the previous bomb blasts in Roxy cinema and in a circus at Satkhira stadium in 2002 been properly investigated.

Three die of unknown disease in Kishoreganj

A CORRESPONDENT, *Kishoreganj*

Three persons died of an unknown disease in two days at Pundi village in Hossainpur upazila, Kishoreganj, according to official sources.

The victims are Tasnima, 15, daughter of Osman Gani, Abdul Hai, 45, and his daughter Rukhsana, 8. Kishoreganj civil surgeon (CS) Dr Saij Uddin confirmed the deaths.

Tasnima died at Jaharul Islam Medical College and Hospital in Baitpur on August 24 while Abdul Hai died at Kishoreganj Sadar Modern Hospital and Rukhsana died at home on August 25.

One hundred others have been attacked with the disease. A temporary health centre has been opened at Pundi village, the CS said.

Two virologists arrived from Dhaka yesterday afternoon to diagnose the disease.

Anniversary of Runner editor's death today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Jessore*

The 7th death anniversary of daily Runner editor RM Saiful Alam Mukul will be observed here today.

Jessore Press Club, Jessore Journalists' Union and Journalists' Union of Jessore have chalked out elaborate programme to observe the day.

The programme will begin with hoisting black flag at the press club, to be followed by discussion meeting and Miladmahfil at noon in the same venue.

Jessore Journalist Union will bring out a mourning procession, hold a discussion meeting and a Milad Mahfil at the press club and place floral wreaths at the grave of the slain journalist.

RM Saiful Alam Mukul was killed when a bomb was hurled on him by assailants when he was going to office in a rickshaw at about 10 pm on August 30, 1998.

Deceived, deprived and now they face eviction

Indigenous people were promised share of timber they grew in Netrakona hills. But after 10 years they hear a different tale

JAHANGIR ALAM, *Netrakona*

Five indigenous families have been evicted from their homesteads in border upazilas of Durgapur and Kalmakanda while many others in the area are apprehending the same fate.

This has happened due to 'deceitful behaviour' by a section of forest department officials who in connivance with some local influential Bangalees, victimised the indigenous people.

During a recent visit to the area some of the victims told this correspondent that about 900 indigenous families are now facing eviction.

The forest department launched a social afforestation programme in the two upazilas in 1994. Under the programme, about 1800 indigenous families were given specific areas to take care of timber plants on promise that they would get 40 per cent of the profit when those trees would be sold after 10 years. One indigenous family got one hectare area, according to sources at Durgapur Forest Range office said.

But the Forest Department neither made any written agreement nor gave the indigenous people any document.

Ignorant and simple hearted indigenous people also did not ask for any document.

After ten years, in December last year, when the forest sold the trees, its officials there produced written documents that showed that about where 80 per cent of the caretakers were Bangalees who were in no way involved in raising or looking after the timber trees.

Most of the indigenous people who raised the trees were deprived of their promised share of profit.

The matter did not end there. The so-called Bangalee caretakers threatened to force the indigenous families out of their homesteads. Five of the indigenous families have already been evicted from their homesteads.

The indigenous people then sent a prayer to the Forest and Environment Minister on August 11 last year to look into problem. But their prayers fell on the deaf ear of the authorities.

This correspondent talked to some of the evicted indigenous people. They are Mukta Chisim, 40, of Gopalpur village, Sahala Sangma, 50, of Gopalbari village in Durgapur upazila; Kongs Raj Hajong of Noyankandi, Hormoni Hajong of Noyankandi and Tarakashor Hajong of Noyankandi village in Kalmakanda upazila.

Mukta Chisim said she and her family took care of planted trees in their designated one hectare plot from 1994 to 2004. But when those trees were sold, she did not get any money.

One Abul Hossen of the same village got the money and evicted her family from their homestead, she alleged.

Abul Hossen allegedly told Mukta that the plot of hilly land was allotted

him by the forest department to take care of the trees. He also showed the documents. Mukta's house was also in the plot. So he evicted her family. Mukta and her family now lives in a thatched house erected near her sister's house.

Sahala Hajong, another victim at Gopalpur village, said one Siru Mia drove her away from her homestead on the same plea. He now lives in her brother's house. Siru Mia now threatens him to oust from the area, he claimed.

Kongs Raj, Hormoni Hajong and Tarakashor Hajong of Noyan Kandi village have been evicted from their homesteads in the same way. This correspondent contacted Sawpon Hajong, an indigenous leader in Durgapur and Kalmakanda

upazilas. Sawpon alleged that this is a conspiracy by a section of forest officials and some local influential Bangalees against the indigenous people to evict them from their ancestral homes.

The indigenous people are living in bordering hillocks in the two upazilas for several hundred years.

Abdul Gani, a lawyer in Durgapur, said that as per law people living permanently in the hills should get plots under the government's social afforestation programme. He said the forest department has violated the law by giving afforestation plots to Bangalees.

When contacted, Shamsul Huda, Range Officer at Durgapur Forest Range, said he took charge a year ago. He said he is aware that some

Bangalees obtained documents showing themselves enlisted in the social afforestation programme in the hills. They used political influence. He said he has nothing to do.

Akbar Hossen, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of Mymensingh Forest Division, said he does not know anything about this. But he said he will take necessary action if anything wrong has been done to the indigenous people.

MA Karim Abbasi, lawmaker from the area, said he has no knowledge about indigenous people being deprived of their shares under the afforestation programme and whether they are being evicted from their homesteads.



PHOTO: STAR

A deprived and dejected Mukta in the timber forest she raised.

PROTESTING SERIAL BLASTS

BNP factions in Satkhira hold separate rallies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

Internal feud in Satkhira district BNP has further intensified as the two rival factions brought out separate processions and held rallies in the town on Sunday protesting the August 17 bomb blasts across the country.

As part of the ruling BNP's countrywide agitation program, leaders and activists of a faction of Satkhira district BNP led by its general secretary Rahmatullah Palash brought out a procession and held a rally at Shahid Alauddin square.

Satkhira town BNP President Imamul Islam Sharif presided over the rally. It was addressed by, among others, Rahmatullah Palash, Kamrul Islam Farooq, Sheikh Nizam Uddin, Abdur Rouf, Abdul Alim, Rafiqul Islam Babu, Abul Hasan Hadi, Nasim Farooq Khan Mithu, Prof. Modasserul Haque Huda, Tariqul Hasan, Sher Ali and Taskin Ahmed.

The other faction led by district BNP President Habibur Islam Habib MP and its former general secretary Advocate Syed Iftekhar Ali brought

out a separate procession and held a rally in front of district BNP office.

With Sadar upazila BNP general secretary Shahidul Islam in the chair, it was addressed by, among others, Advocate Syed Iftekhar Ali, SM Akbar Hossain, Samsuzzoha Bablu, Satkhira town BNP general secretary Habibur Rahman Habib, Abdul Mazid, Sirajul Islam, Abdus Samad, Mohammad Ali, Abu Zahid Dablu, Kazi Kamruzzaman, Advocate Syed Ekhesar Ali Prof. Mizanur Rahman and Asadur Rahman Asad.

Speakers at both the rallies protested the bomb blasts and blamed opposition Awami League (AL) for this.

They said, by blasting bombs, a vested quarter is trying to portray Bangladesh abroad as a fundamentalist country. It was also aimed at creating chaos in the country to dislodge the four-party alliance government, they said.

They demanded arrest and punishment to the culprits involved in the heinous incidents.

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