

RAB-BDR JOINT DRIVE IN NAIKHANCHHARI FOREST

20 AK47 rifles, about 8000 bullets recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) in a joint drive recovered 20 AK47 rifles and 7,716 bullets from a deep forest of Naikhangchhari in Bandarban on Thursday.

On information that indigenous criminals have hoarded sophisticated arms and ammunition in Naikhangchhari, two Rab squads led by Lt Col Hasinur Rahman, commanding officer of Rajshahi Rab-5, arrived in Chittagong in the early hours Thursday.

Lt Col Hasinur held a meeting with officials of the Rab-7 of Chittagong at their Patenga Headquarters and set out for Jaraliyachhari in Naikhangchhari with one more Rab squad at around 5:00am.

The elite force reached Naikhangchhari in the afternoon and was reinforced by a team of paramilitary BDR. The joint team raided the remote and hilly Jaraliyachhari – almost an inaccessible place surrounded by rivers and canals – against continued down-pour.

After a long and thorough search, members of the team hunted out the

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PHOTO: STAR

Twenty AK47 rifles recovered by a joint team of Rapid Action Battalion and Bangladesh Rifles in Naikhangchhari in Bandarban on Thursday.

Arms flow in, but no clues

67 weapons seized in Bandarban in a week

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

The security forces and intelligence agencies are clueless about arms cache in Naikhangchhari from where they are repeatedly recovering huge number of sophisticated arms, ammunition and explosives.

In one week until Thursday, paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and the army have seized 67 modern weapons and at least 30,000 bullets from the upazila near the Myanmar border.

The forces in at least 30 incidents have seized huge arms and

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Harrowing tales of Azad's 10 years as camel jockey

PORIMOL PALMA



The horrifying memories of life as a camel jockey for the last 10 years in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) still haunt Azad Alam.

"I often have nightmares that I am on the back of a camel and fall on the ground," says 20-year-old Azad, who returned to Bangladesh recently. "...The employer beats me and then I wake up and see...no, I am now in my own country," he says in Bangla mixed

with an accent of Arabic and Urdu, languages he speaks fluently.

Azad is now staying at a home of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) in the city with 65 other camel jockeys who returned home on August 11 and 23.

Azad along with his fake parents—Nurunnabi and Ratna Nabi of Noakhali—and their son went to the UAE in 1995 via India as transit.

Azad does not know if his real

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IMF team due in city today

UNB, Dhaka

A six-member IMF (International Monetary Fund) mission arrives in Dhaka today to review progress on the lending agency-set conditions before releasing another instalment of credit under Poverty Reduction Growth Facility (PRGF).

IMF Advisor for the Asia-Pacific Tomas Rumbaugh is leading the team on their nine-day mission to Bangladesh, officials said.

"It's a regular mission of the IMF that carries out reviews on Bangladesh economy before the disbursement of loan instalment," said an official.

Decision for the disbursement of the loan instalment, amounting to \$ 72 million, will depend on the progress in meeting the conditions, including divestment of the state-run Rupali Bank that now lies under court's jurisdiction.

The total loan under the programme amounting to \$ 520 million is scheduled to be disbursed in seven equal half-yearly instalments.

JCD cadres at JU attack opponents

JU CORRESPONDENT

Jatityatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) cadres severely injured the convener of Jahangirnagar University (JU) unit of Bangladesh Chhatra Union (BCU), attempted to cut his foot tendons and beat up four general students at Shaheed Salam Barkat hall of the university on Thursday night.

The group led by JU JCD Assistant General Secretary Ehsanul Huque Ashish, Maruf, Swapnil, Sagar and Sumon along with four or five outsiders, believed to be Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) activists, stormed room no 243 of the hall at

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'Serial blasts planned in April, had foreign funding'

JMB to change colour, plans suicide squads

SHARIFUL ISLAM

The August 17 countrywide blasts were planned in mid-April while Kuwait-based organisation Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS) and an imam of a UK mosque funded the terrorist operation.

A top official of the Special Branch (SB) of police seeking anonymity said some important meetings preparatory to the explosions were held in Naogaon, Joypurhat, Gaibandha, Kurigram,

Lalmonirhat, Chittagong, Barisal, Satkhira, and Dhaka at different times between mid-April and mid-August.

The official tasked with probing the blast incident also said the decision on the blasts was finalised after Moulana Ataur Rahman, imam of a mosque in the UK and also the director of Ahle Hadith Library and Information Centre at Nagheshwari in Kurigram, came to the country on April 17. He left the country on

August 20, he said.

Soon after returning home, Ataur had had meetings with Abdur Rahman, chief of banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), and Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai, operations commander of Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB).

The investigators have obtained the information from Noor Mohammad, Hafez Habibullah, and Shamsul Huda. The three were held

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

Born over 15 years ago, still unknown, ineffective

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The National Security Council (NSC), the highest consulting body on security affairs, remains ineffective and to some extent unknown since its inception over 15 years ago, though national security is facing repeated threats.

In a latest development, policymakers of the government at a meeting with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in the chair discussed the status of the NSC and maintained it remains ineffective. This

observation came while discussing a proposal to form a national defence committee earlier this year.

The meeting emphasised that the NSC should be made effective and decided to sit again in three months to discuss the proposition for a defence committee to coordinate the armed forces, highly placed sources said.

But the policymakers neither sat to discuss the issue nor took further steps after the January meet to make the NSC effective.

"When I was in office I heard

some talks for convening a meeting of the National Security Council, but ultimately no meeting was held," immediate past defence secretary KM Ehsanul Haque told The Daily Star.

The former defence secretary said he does not know more than this about the NSC.

Echoing the same view, former chief of army staff Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman, who was an NSC member, said, "The council as far I know has never convened a

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IFJ concerned at death threats to journalists

UNB, Dhaka

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has expressed deep concern at the threats being made against Bangladeshi journalists for reporting politically sensitive issues.

"Continued threats of attacks on journalists and their families to forestall independent reporting on incidents involving government officials and community leaders cannot be tolerated," said Christopher Warren, president of the IFJ that represents over 500,000 journalists worldwide.

He also said the ongoing hostility towards journalists by political parties deprive them of their right to report independently which is completely unacceptable, said a press release.

"Those in positions of authority

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Sri Lanka clinch ODI series

AL MUSABBIR SADI from Colombo

Opener Upul Tharanga made the most of an early life to score a maiden one-day century as Sri Lanka took an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series against Bangladesh with a comfortable 75-run victory here on Friday.

Tharanga's magnificent 105 off 110 balls helped the home side amass 295 for five in 50 overs at the Premadasa Stadium after being put into bat for the second time by Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar.

It surpassed their second best total against the Tigers, 269-9 in the first match, and just one run short of their previous highest score against the same team, 296-4 in the 1997 Asia Cup at the Sinhalese Sports Club ground.

Bangladesh, who managed to reduce the margin of defeat by reaching 211-6 in reply.

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