

Kakrail Mosque

FROM PAGE 16
and non-political. Local and foreign Tablig men gather regularly in huge numbers at Kakrail Mosque all year round for religious purposes.

Law enforcers suspect the militants had taken the advantage of the huge gathering to prepare themselves for the blasts, without being noticed by the intelligence men.

Faisal also said the chief of the militant group Abdur Rahman and his younger brother Ataur Rahman alias Sunny had briefed a group of JMB members on jihad in Kalihati of Tangail after Eid-ul Azha in last January.

A class VIII student of Balla Madrasa in Tangail, he also told Magistrate Nani Gopal Biswas that Shueb of his village had persuaded him to join JMB in 2004. Tangail district unit JMB leader Enayaf sent him to Dhaka on August 14.

"At first, I went to a mosque in Khilgaon. After a short stay there, Uzzal took me to Kakrail Mosque and showed me how to switch on a bomb," Faisal said in his statement. After the training, Uzzal gave him Tk 600, he added.

He placed a bag containing a time bomb in the northeastern corner of Rajarbagh Police Lines at 10:50am on August 17. He said JMB members Jahid and Habib accompanied him while Uzzal was the team leader.

"Now I can feel what I have done is wrong," Faisal told reporters, coming out of the court. He said he still would not dare to disobey his leaders, as the consequences would be dreadful.

He also said he was told that he would never make it to heaven if he does not take part in jihad.

Police detectives produced him before the court on completion of his seven-day remand. He is detained in a case filed under the Explosive Substances Act with Paltan Police Station.

Meanwhile, two more people arrested in connection with the serial blasts gave confessional statements before magistrates yesterday. They are AFHM Shamim, son former officer of Habiganj district Jamaat-e-Islami, and Shammi Akhter, wife of Abdus Samad. Shammi was arrested at a JMB den in South Goran on September 8.

AFHM Shamim in his confessional statement said JMB operative Hasan had brought him into contact with the militant outfit at a mosque in the capital's Sobhanbagh area in January this year.

Later the same month Hasan took him to a house at Bashabo and introduced him to Ataur Rahman alias Sunny, chief of JMB military wing. After the meeting, he had returned to Habiganj.

Shamim told the magistrate that Sunny had inspired him to join JMB. He said he (Sunny) had called him on his cellphone and asked him to immediately come to Dhaka.

Soon after he reached the Bashabo house on August 16, Ataur handed him two bags, one containing bombs and the other leaflets. He said he in turn had handed those over to JMB members Yasir and Akram.

Besides, Sunny had given him three files each containing JMB leaflets similar to those found on different blast scenes on August 17. Ataur had asked him to send those leaflets written in Bangali, English and Arabic to JMB leaders and activists across the country by email.

On the morning of August 17, Shamim dispatched those leaflets to different destinations from a cyber cafe in front of Labaid.

In another development, Shammi

WB may defer credit

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in vacating the HC stay order, sources said.

The mission came to know that on the day the HC order came, no representatives of the finance ministry, Privatisation Commission and Rupali Bank were present in court.

The hearing of the case scheduled for August 23 also could not be held as no representatives of the attorney general's (AG) office attended the hearing despite frequent reminders. Barrister Rabeya Bhuiyan was present on behalf of the commission.

A Privatisation Commission source said they did not know about the writ petition, so they could not attend the hearing.

A powerful shareholder of Rupali Bank is allegedly behind the filing of the writ petition and he is now using his influence in the government to delay the government initiatives to vacate the stay order, the source added.

The third tranche of the DSC loan was scheduled to be released by August but, since the government could not fulfil some of the 14 conditions tagged with the release of the loan, it got stuck.

The matter may be tabled at the WB board meeting scheduled for November and a WB appraisal team is expected to visit Bangladesh next month to assess how far the government has fulfilled their conditions.

AWB source said the government has already fulfilled many of the conditions while some are yet to be achieved.

The formation of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is one such contentious issue. ACC's decision to absorb about half of the staff of the now-defunct Bureau of Anti Corruption (Bac) annoyed the WB, which wanted to see appointments to the ACC through competi-

Akhter told a magistrate of Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Court that her husband used to work under the command of Ataur Rahman Sunny.

In her confessional statement, she also said JMB members Belal and Akram had supplied her husband with the bomb-making materials that were recovered from their South Goran house.

KHULNA
Our staff correspondent from Khulna reports: The six JMB cadres who had allegedly been sheltered by Khulna Saint Joseph High School teacher Abdul Hakim Gazi in his house have been identified as Shahidullah, Palash, Mehedi, Hasan, Khalid Hasan Mintu, and Mahbub.

They went into hiding on August 17. Abdul Hakim Gazi told police that the six had rented the ground floor of his three-storey building, identifying them as students of Khulna Alia Madrasa.

But Principal of Khulna Alia Madrasa Moulana Mohammad Saleh issued a statement to the press, saying that the JMB men were not his students.

Officer-in-Charge of Batiaghata Police Station yesterday went to Sathkira after getting information on whereabouts of one of the six wanted JMB men. Abdul Hakim Gazi was accompanying him. The school-teacher was let out from the office of Detective Branch (DB) of Khulna police few hours after his arrest on condition of not leaving his house without permission.

SATKHIRA
Our Sathkira correspondent reports: Police yesterday arrested a school-teacher, suspecting his involvement in the countrywide blasts.

Police said they arrested JMB cadre Ashraf Ali, assistant teacher of Banshadah Girls High School in Sadar upazila, while he was returning home from the school. They suspect that Ashraf had played an important role in staging the blasts in Sathkira on August 17.

Meanwhile, JMB cadre Riaz Ahmed was placed on a seven-day remand yesterday when police produced him before a Sathkira court with a 10-day remand.

He was sent to Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC) in Dhaka the same day for interrogation.

Riaz of Tengra in Sadar upazila was arrested on September 2.

BAGERHAT
BSS from Bagerhat adds: Police arrested two suspected members of JMB on Saturday night.

Of the two, Babul Sheikh, 43, was arrested in Chitalmari upazila for suspected links to blasts in Mumshiganj on the night of Shab-e-Barat, and Khairul Islam, 23, for his alleged connection with JMB.

36 fishermen

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days, said that 36 of their fellow fishermen had gone missing after the capsized. They said they fear those are already dead.

The six trawlers were missing on September 17 after they had gone out in the sea for fishing.

Meanwhile, 11 crew members of the Bangladesh FB-86 trawler, which was forced to enter the Indian waters by storm, have yet to return to Pirojpur from Indian police custody.

After arrests, the members of the Indian coast guard and the navy had handed them over to Himulganj and Digha police.

tive examinations.
"If the commission is run by the same officials who are allegedly corrupt, what is the point of forming the commission itself?" a WB official said.

However, if any former Bac official gets selected through the competitive exams, the WB said it will have no objection to such appointment.

Again, the procurement law was also supposed to be raised in parliament as another condition, which the government did not.

The source said while the WB appraisal mission may overlook these conditions, it may take a tough stance if it is not convinced about the government's sincerity to move to vacate the HC stay order.

The next review mission of the IMF is scheduled to visit Bangladesh at the end of December to finalise the release of the fifth instalment of the PRGF loan.

Bangladesh will have to fulfil three conditions to get the instalment released: setting up of an independent audit unit in National Board of Revenue, appointing financial advisor for the privatisation of Agrani Bank, and reconstituting Sonali Bank's board.

The source added that the IMF mission hinted that it might reconsider the issue of releasing the fifth instalment if it does not find the government's initiative in expediting the privatisation of Rupali Bank.

A Privatisation Commission source said the Supreme Court's vacation will end on October 17 and then the commission will move to get the stay order vacated.

However, the commission cannot do this alone. The Rupali Bank authority as well as the finance ministry will also have to be sincere in pursuing the case, the source said.

Tuesday Group

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The envoys told the adviser that the intentions behind the Group's move are good and Bangladesh would benefit from the conference if the government allows it to be held.

Reaz Rahman however told the envoys that the conference would definitely be counterproductive and tantamount to interfering in the domestic politics. It may also give a false impression that Bangladesh does not want free polls to be held, the meeting source quoted him as saying.

Rahman said the last three general elections were held in free and fair manner and were lauded both at home and abroad and the present government is determined to ensure the continuation of holding free and credible general elections.

"Bangladesh's track record in holding elections is indeed very good," the source quoted him as saying.

Rahman told the envoys that as in the past, the government will invite local and foreign observers to monitor the polls and there is no need for holding any conference on the electoral process.

Sources said Reaz Rahman further told the two of the Tuesday Group that the very essence of democracy is peaceful hand-over of power through elections and it happened very successfully for three consecutive terms. Besides, he said, Bangladesh has a unique system like the caretaker government for the conduct of free and fair elections.

He wanted to know from the envoys why they want to hold such conference only in Bangladesh when many countries in the world are seriously lacking in democracy and some of them do not even hold elections.

The people of Bangladesh are very conscious of their rights to vote and they will decide on their own what to do, he added.

Meeting sources said the foreign affairs adviser told the envoys to let go of the idea of holding the conference and said that there are many other things to catch up on.

Asked about the outcome of the meeting, both the envoys declined to make any comment.

Meanwhile, official sources said the Tuesday Group sensing beforehand a negative response from the foreign affairs ministry had sought support from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and reportedly got assurance.

But the move bypassing the foreign ministry angered the ministry and eventually led to rejection from the PMO as well.

Saifur

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The minister mentioned Bangladesh's dependence on foreign aid has been reducing every year and current net aid constitutes only 2 percent of the country's GDP.

"The prudent economic management, including fiscal and monetary policies, contributed to macro-economic stability and steady growth," he said.

Saifur also expressed his optimism about Bangladesh's attaining the status of "Middle-income" country in next 20 years.

The professionals, while appreciating the minister's speech, suggested government-organised campaigns abroad to project Bangladesh's achievements.

Later in the evening, the minister attended a reception hosted jointly by the chairman of the Board of Governors, World Bank president and IMF managing director.

Outlaw dies

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came under fire at about 3:30am, they added.

The police returned fire and drove away the attackers after a half-an-hour-long firefight.

They claimed Asadul fell in the line of fire when he made an attempt to flee, and died on the spot.

The police seized six bombs and seven bullets after the shooting.

Indian engr

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crime, one of the most gruesome in this conservative Gulf Arab state, the newspaper said.

Millions of expatriates, mainly from the Indian subcontinent, live and work in the energy-rich UAE, a federation of seven emirates that include Dubai and Sharjah.

Many middle-income workers, who came to the UAE seeking an affordable high standard of living, are now feeling the pinch of spiraling costs in the Gulf state, where rents have risen by about 25 percent in a year and salaries have lagged behind.

HC rule on govt

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Advocate Hasan Faize Siddiqui, counsellor for the petitioner, in his submission said ETV has got licence to resume its operation.

"Some influential and interested persons are pressing the petitioner to sell shares of the ETV to them," he submitted. "Abdus Salam, also the managing director of the ETV, understands that he could be arrested and harassed at any time if shares are not sold to those people," he added.

The government on April 12 issued licence to the closed ETV enabling the popular private channel to resume its operation.

ETV, which was shut down by a court order on August 29, 2002, was the first TV channel in the private sector with both satellite and terrestrial facilities to broadcast programmes.

Following a prolonged legal battle, the channel got back its licence and is likely to come into operation shortly.

Abdus Salam, an expatriate Bangladeshi, owns the lion's share of ETV.

OMS of rice stopped

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600 dealers in Dhaka and another 18,000 across the country would be engaged in the sale of about three lakh tonnes of rice through OMS. Each family would be eligible to purchase five kilograms of rice at Tk 14.50 per kg.

As coarse rice price soared up to Tk 18 to Tk 20 a kg in the retailer market, the government in August decided to launch OMS from September 1 to sell rice to lower-income group at the subsidised price.

However, the government rescheduled the OMS launching for September 20 and again for September 25.

Officials and market sources fear a nexus of hoarders', which has stockpiled a huge quantity of rice, will now get more time to sell off the stocks at current higher prices causing miseries to the poor consumers.

The government had earlier acknowledged that thanks to huge financing from banking channels, a section of millers and unscrupulous traders resorted to stocking rice pushing up its price.

Food Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, who chaired the September 21 FPMC meet, could not be contacted for comments on what prompted the government to rescind a decision in four days. He is now on a China visit.

Asked, Deputy Minister for Food and Disaster Management Asadul Habib Dulu however said the government deferred the OMS launching to synchronise it with another government programme - village rationing.

Under the 'village rationing' programme conceived this year, some 900 cards are to be issued to every union enabling distressed people to draw up to 12 kg of rice a month at Tk 4 a kg. This is aimed at benefiting as many as five million people.

Dulu now fears the government may not be able to start the rationing before first week of October, as cards have not yet been prepared. Local administration's engagement in card distribution for another programme -- vulnerable

group feeding (VGF) -- in the last two weeks has created this situation.

Market sources apprehend tagging the OMS with village rationing would further delay the OMS operation giving the hoarders' syndicate undue leverage.

Dulu however denied the allegations raised by certain quarters that hoarders' syndicates had created pressure for delaying the OMS drive.

He said village rationing cards, whether ready or not by October 1, "we'll start the OMS drive without making further delay."

The deputy food minister visited poverty-stricken two northern districts, Lalmonirhat and Nilphamari, on the first day of the VGF drive yesterday. He expressed the hope this drive would help the rural poor bear the current higher prices of rice.

Under the VGF programme, 10 kg of rice is being given against each of 1,000 cards distributed among the poor in each of over 4,500 unions across the country.

About 1.2 lakh tonnes of rice is required to carry on the operation until the end of October.

Rebels kill eight Bangalees in Tripura

REUTERS, Agartala

Separatist rebels killed eight Bengali-speaking settlers in India's remote and restive Tripura state yesterday, police said.

National Liberation Front of Tripura militants, who are fighting for an independent tribal homeland, fired indiscriminately with automatic weapons when they raided several in Santinagar, some 70 km east of the state capital Agartala.

"Seven people including three women were killed at the scene. Three were critically wounded and a woman later succumbed in a hospital," Nepal Das, a police superintendent told Reuters.

Graft, inefficiency

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the public and private sectors in those countries are equally contributing to growth.

Bangladesh has come a long way in development. But it is necessary to make coordinated efforts in various fields to move forward further, he felt.

The president urged all political parties to avoid such political programmes and activities that can harm the interest of the country, damage its image abroad and have a negative impact on investment and business.

The function was also addressed by Science, Information and Communication Technology Minister Abdul Moyeen Khan, Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam and Advisor to the Commerce Ministry Barkat Ullah Bulu. DCCI President Sayeeful Islam presided.

Moyeen Khan said there cannot be sustained economic development unless the politics of confrontation ends.

About the DCCI vision for per capita income of \$1,000 by 2021, he said the income now is about \$500, as estimated by the central bank and Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. If the activities of the informal sector is taken into account, it is already

around \$1,000 now, he noted.

The existing lifestyle in the country is not possible unless per capita income is \$1,000, he said, adding it should rise to \$5,000 by 2021.

Altaf Hossain said export growth last fiscal year was \$1 billion more than that of the previous year while donors had forecast that Bangladesh would face a major setback after the phasing out of quota from January this year.

Mahfuz Anam said that the main problem of Bangladesh was bad politics, which was leading to bad economics, which in turn was creating bad social conditions.

The question to ask is not what Bangladesh has achieved, which is reasonable, but what Bangladesh could have achieved given good politics, which would have been spectacular, he added.

Sayeeful Islam said, "As a nation we should have a vision and it is a realistic vision that our per capita income should reach \$1,000 by 2021."

The DCCI president urged all political parties to forge a consensus on economic issues so that overall development of the country is not affected.

DCCI Senior Vice President Manzur-Ur-Rahman (Ruskin) also spoke at the function.

Security blanket

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like last year.

The meeting yesterday sought to ensure police patrol during 3:30am-7:30am as security remains a bit relaxed in the early morning.

Four hundred community police will work in the capital during Ramadan. Dhaka City Corporation will bear the expenses for half of them while prominent business houses will bear the rest.

The government emphasised community involvement for solving local problems.

"We've instructed deputy commissioners, superintendents of police and thana nirbahi officers (TNOs) to hold meetings with locals, imams of mosques, puja organising committees and journalists once a week to discuss their problems and work out the solutions."

The home ministry has asked the market authorities to take security measures like setting up of archways and metal detectors on their own, and also to keep first aid box for emergency situation.

"We're motivating the market authorities to install closed-circuit television (CCTV)," Babar said, adding that CCTV has already been installed at 40-50 percent such places of public gathering.

The Rapid Action battalion (Rab), meanwhile, has identified the mugging points in the capital, especially near markets. The Rab, both in uniform and plainclothes, will work to stop mugging.

"Mugging mostly takes place on the narrow lanes of different markets," Babar said, adding that police and Rab

members on motorbikes will patrol these places.

The Rab will also set up 10 checkpoints in Dhaka and work as a striking force. Besides, their mobile teams will work across the country to stop extortion on goods carrying trucks.

To ease traffic jam and facilitate commuters' movement during Ramadan and puja, the city traffic authorities will begin a traffic month from October 2.

The DMP traffic department has identified 40 congestion points in the city and will concentrate its efforts there.

MOBILE COURT IN ALL DISTRICTS
Following mobile courts' huge popularity in the metropolitan cities, the government ordered them to start operation to check food adulteration, weight manipulation, drug trade, smuggling, extortion, anti-social activities and hoarding, and evict illegal establishments, clear footpaths, identify vehicles without fitness in each district from October 2.

"Strong punishment has been introduced through the recent amendment to the Pure Food Ordinance. It suggests strong punishment for those who will commit the crimes for the second or third time; it even suggests cancellation of licence for such act," Babar told reporters.

Thirty-five mobile courts will be active in Dhaka during Ramadan. Of them, 30 will work against food adulteration, two will perform different official work while three others will remain standby for emergency situation, said the state minister.

Rita destruction

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across the hurricane zone and swamped Louisiana shoreline towns with a 15-foot storm surge that required daring boat and helicopter rescues of hundreds of people.

Adam Suire, 77, said he climbed into an oak tree Friday night with his wife, daughter and son-in-law when Rita flooded his house south of Erath, La. A Coast Guard helicopter plucked the battered family from the tree Saturday afternoon.

Rita clobbered Louisiana and Texas coastlines dotted with key oil refineries and chemical plants with howling 195km an hour (125 miles) winds and sheeting rain, in the early hours of Saturday leaving a trail of wreckage.

Authorities in central Mississippi reported the first known casualty, as one unidentified person was killed by a tornado spun off the remnants of Rita.

No deaths were reported in Louisiana and Texas, though 24 elderly evacuees were killed in an explosion in a bus on Friday as they joined a mass exodus out of the danger zone. An elderly woman also succumbed to heat exhaustion in a traffic jam.

The town of Port Arthur, Texas, close to where Rita's swirling eye came ashore, was awash in waist high floods, downed power lines and uprooted trees. Cars lay smashed on the streets and the main refinery was out of reach after the storm struck.

"It was pretty scary," said John Harrison, whose wooden home was ringed by a foot (33 centimetres) of water as dawn revealed damage wrought during a wild night.

Real estate agent Brandon Allen, 32, said he expected the storm to be "a heck of a lot worse" after Katrina trashed New Orleans and much of the Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama coastline on August 29 killing more than 1,000 people.

Authorities held nine people for looting in the town and ordered a curfew to prevent an escalation of lawlessness, mayor Oscar Ortiz told CNN.

In nearby Lake Charles, police and fire crews went on a house-to-house hunt looking for bodies -- but found none.

There was widespread damage, the waters of Lake Charles were rising and a fierce wind blew off the lake, but the town was counting its blessings.

"It's not as bad as I feared... We were fortunate," said the town's police chief, Don Dixon.

In Louisiana, coast guard said they had rescued 40 people in heavily flooded areas, despite battling tropical storm force winds.

In Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi 1.14 million customers were without power and the number was expected to rise.

In Houston, frazzled evacuees started to trek home despite calls from Bush for people to wait for emergency response teams to do their jobs.

Evacuee Carlos Garcia, 18, spent 12 hours on a freeway Thursday but only got as far as the edge of Houston. It took him just 30 minutes to get back into the city on Saturday.

"We have a business, a mechanic's shop to protect," he said. "We also wanted to beat everyone else coming back from Dallas, because we didn't want to get stuck in traffic again."

Some evacuees complained that the authorities did not do enough to prepare for the mass evacuation, even though troops, helicopters and trucks were on standby, and extra supplies of food and water were prepared.

Hasina

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from Manikganj to the AL.

Former bureaucrat Abdul Mannan, JP Doulatiia thana unit president Abdul Kader, leader Masudul Hasan Masud and about 100 workers joined the AL yesterday.

Mannan lost the recent Sunamganj-3 by-polls as an independent candidate to the government-backed candidate. The parliamentary seat fell vacant after the death of AL lawmaker Abdus Samad Azad.

Hasina alleged the CEC and the secretary of the EC Secretariat are working under the "election engineering" plan of the government.

She welcomed the newly joined leaders and urged all to stage a strong fightback against the ruling coalition.

On the August 17 serial blasts across the country, the former prime minister again voiced her accusation against BNP's ruling partner Jamaat-e-Islami. She also asked the government to interrogate the Jamaat high command to find the real culprits behind the bombings.

"This government has failed to deliver anything but grenade attacks, bomb blasts, murders, repression, unabated corruption and price hike of essentials," Hasina said.

"The government did nothing for the welfare of the people; so it has no confidence in getting their votes and this has prompted it to prepare for rigging the election again," she added.

If the people have the chance to cast their votes in a free and fair election, the AL will get their verdict, she said.

"How have the prime minister's family become the richest in only four years?" she asked, accusing the premier's family of involvement in corruption.

"We'll bring all the culprits including those who siphoned off the country's resources to other countries if voted to power," Hasina told her party leaders and workers.