

Bomber admits

FROM PAGE 1
wing of the JMB and JMB.

The family of JMB cadre Masum, 22, who was caught while hurling bombs at Laxmipur court on Monday, is involved with Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, a key component of the ruling four-party alliance.

Masum was taken on a five-day remand after Laxmipur police had produced him before a court yesterday.

Acknowledging the family's involvement with Jamaat politics, Masum's mother told police that her husband is a rokon (full member) of Jamaat while her other sons are activists.

The family lives at Alinagar in Bandar upazila of Narayanganj.

Masum, whose father Mofazzal Hossain is a hosiery trader of Nayamati in Narayanganj town, is a student of management at Titumir College in the capital.

"We have been out of contact with him since April," Masum's mother told police, claiming that no one from her family did know anything about his involvement in militant activities.

Masum during interrogation yesterday told police that he used to stay at a rented house at Wireless Bazar in Chandpur.

A joint team of Chandpur and Laxmipur police yesterday raided the house and seized some books and booklets.

Laxmipur police suspect that Masum had a role in staging the August 17 blasts in the district.

"We're interrogating him but he has yet to give any information regarding the August 17 attacks," Laxmipur Superintendent of Police Fazlur Rahman told The Daily Star.

Police yesterday gathered that Masum's Arabic teacher Nesar Uddin, who is now on the run, had in fact persuaded him to join the militant organisation.

Police held Nesar's associates Nurul Haq, 45, and Selim, 25, in Madhabpasha area in Bandar upazila yesterday on suspicion of having links to JMB.

Officer-in-Charge of Bandar Police Station Abdus Salam told reporters that the two have confessed their role in the August 17 blasts in Narayanganj and Narsinghdi.

In another development, Bazur Rahman, nazir of Joint District Judge Abu Sufian, who was injured in Laxmipur court blast, filed a case with Sadar Police Station Monday in this connection.

Meanwhile, Chandpur police produced JMB activist Abul Kalam and his associate Sohrab Hossain alias Belal, 23, before a court yesterday with a petition for a 10-day remand. The court granted the prayer for the two.

Abul Kalam of Chandina upazila in Comilla said he had received training in martial art at different parts of the country including Bagmara in Rajshahi, Comilla, and Narayanganj.

"He has yet to give us information about his mentors. He has divulged some names but we are yet to find people by those names," Chandpur SP BM Harunur Rashid told The Daily Star last night.

Though seems to be a new recruit in the JMB, Belal has not yet given any significant information, he observed.

Our Chittagong correspondent reports: Two of the three youths apprehended during the blasts at Chittagong courts have also been learnt to be the members of Snab.

The recently assembled hit group had carried out the Monday's attacks while Dawati (recruiting) group of the banned Islamist outfit co-ordinated those.

Hannan discloses

FROM PAGE 1
the sake of investigation.

The Rab is now cross-checking the information gleaned from Hannan, now on a 10-day remand, "to ascertain whether those are true," said a top Rab official, requesting anonymity.

A day after his arrest, Hannan gave more embarrassing statement before a court, saying the law enforcers were not supposed to arrest him as some influential ministers of the government had given assurance to exempt him from the charges of attempting to kill the then prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

He also said he submitted a mercy petition to the prime minister, home minister and some other ministers soon after the coalition came to power. In reply, they assured him that they will let him off the hook.

Hannan is claiming that he has been abstaining from militant activities for the last few years.

Rab sources said Rab teams are being sent to places, particularly in Gopalganj and Faridpur districts, where Hannan used some madrasas as his strongholds.

KHULNA
Intelligence officials and Khulna Metropolitan Police continued their massive hunt for Moulana Arif, who received delivery of the cartons containing explosive substances and other materials on August 14 from the Khulna office of Continental Courier Service.

Our Khulna correspondent reports that Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) cadres Mahmud and Masum are also wanted by police in connection with the August 17 serial bomb blasts in Khulna.

Moulana Arif, ameer of Khulna district unit of JMB, Mahmud and Masum were named among the 12 JMB cadres by Shahidullah alias Lokman, now being quizzed by investigators.

Shahidullah, now on a 10-day remand, was arrested in Dhaka on September 8. He was brought to Khulna on Friday night being shown arrested in the bomb blast cases at Khulna Judges' Court and Khulna University campus.

Rab arrests 2 gunrunners after gunfight

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday arrested two after an encounter and seized two foreign-made pistols and a pipe-gun at Raichatholi Para in Bandarban.

Rab surrounded the village on Monday night to capture the criminals. Eyewitnesses said the criminals opened fire on Rab first and Rab returned fire. Mong Bra Cha was injured when he was trying to flee and the other arrestee Milon Chakma is being interrogated.

Rab, under cover, made a deal with the arms selling group earlier with the help of an informant to buy 10 AK47 assault rifles at Tk 1.5 lakh each. Milon and Mong, while trading with Rab, tried to sell some wooden fake arms. Rab, waiting for the opportunity, came out of hiding and tried to arrest the criminals when the criminals attacked Rab and opened fire. Rab's Chittagong office said one Rab officer received knife wounds in the incident.

Bandarban police said Mong was sent to Bandarban General Hospital for treatment under police custody. He admitted his involvement in the incident and claimed that this was his first attempt in such business. "I was to get Tk 5,000 only for this deal," Mong added.

Acting on the confession by Laltu, police yesterday raided Mohammad Ali's mess at Uttar Kattoli and recovered one LG, two bullets, some bomb-making materials, and a dairy, police said.

SECURITY MEASURES
With the latest trend of the militants to use camouflage and openly attack the courts, judges and magistrates, the deputy commissioners (DC) have been ordered to ensure close watch on the court premises.

"Since there is a constitutional obligation to keep the courts open to public, the law enforcers will rather go for checking people at the entrance," said a source present at a meeting on law and order held at the home ministry.

Following the instructions, police searched the body of court-goers including parties of different cases, lawyers and court officials before allowing them on the court compounds. The passers-by and vehicles were also checked.

Besides, the law enforcers at different courts did not allow people to wander aimlessly in the court areas.

Rapid Action Battalion men have been deployed at courts in Chittagong.

At yesterday's meeting, the law enforcers were asked to have people helping them with the security arrangement.

It also ordered round-the-clock surveillance on cinemas, messes and guesthouses and asked local police administrations to collect information and search people with suspicious movement.

As it is not possible for the law enforcers alone to ensure security across the country, the ministry asked owners of shopping malls in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country to install close-circuit televisions, metal detectors, archways and, if possible, explosive detectors on their own initiative.

The meeting asked the DCs to expedite the entire process.

According to police, Moulana Arif played a key role in planning the attacks and selecting the targets as told by Shahidullah during interrogation.

Shahidullah further told police that Arif every now and then monitored the activities of the JMB cadres assigned with making bombs in the house of one schoolteacher Abdul Hakim Gazi.

He said Moulana Arif, Masum and Mahmud have close connection with Bangla Bhai and Abdur Rahman.

"I am completely wedded to jihad for establishing Islamic rule in the country," the 18-year-old JMB cadre told police yesterday.

"Moulana Arif is my leader and he helped me get bail and be released from Jessore Central Jail in 1999," he told police, admitting to his involvement in carrying huge explosives, arms and other materials from Satkhira border.

"Moulana Abdur Rahim Safafi trained me to use arms and bombs," Shahidullah told the interrogators.

Police said Moulana Arif gave Shahidullah Tk 350 and the latter left Khulna on the morning of August 18 for Dhaka.

SATKHIRA
Our Satkhira correspondent adds: Ashraf Ali Master of Tengra village and Abdul Ahad of Baliadanga village, the two JMB activists placed on a three-day remand on October 2 admitted to having links to the August 17 bomb blasts, police sources said yesterday.

The two were held last week in connection with the August 17 incident.

During interrogation, Ahad admitted that he was a close associate of JMB kingpin Shaikh Abdur Rahman and had coordinated the bomb blasts in the region on orders of the JMB chief, interrogation team sources told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, Officer-in-charge (OC) Golam Mohammad of Satkhira Sadar police station on Saturday filed another case for using religion for political purposes against the 11 JMB activists detained on charges of involvement in the August 17 blasts.

When asked if the recently built up tension between Bangladesh and India would have any impact on the proposed investment of Tata in Bangladesh, Saifur told there should not be any.

"Brothers sometimes quarrel with each other, but after a while things get fixed," he commented.

Replying to another question about the status of the negotiation in the face of what appears to be a rigid stance by both sides, Saifur said, both the parties are prepared to compromise and soften their demands.

When asked about a possible timeframe for the negotiation to be completed, Saifur said it would take months because of the huge size of the proposed investment involving a lot of complex issues. Besides, Bangladesh does not even have the expertise to deal with such complex issues, he added.

GDP growth rate

FROM PAGE 16
MTMF has seen a rise in the GDP growth over that shown in the draft PRSP in January.

Last year, the government set a GDP growth target of 6 percent but due to floods the target was revised at 5.5 percent while the estimated GDP growth stands at 5.38 percent.

Zaid Bakht, research director of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) thinks the projected GDP growth is achievable but in the given scenario bringing down the inflation rate might prove very difficult.

Although the economy is under pressure, Zaid says, growth has been achieved in industry and export. Last fiscal year also saw a rise in the private sector credit and import of capital machinery. Besides, in spite of the central bank's tight monetary policy, import is rising. So, if the investments can be translated into production, a growth of 6 percent, if not 6.5, can be achieved, he pointed out.

He however mentioned a few risk factors. The situation in the political arena and the government's fiscal management will determine if this target will be achieved or not.

In the prevailing situation -- depreciation of taka, price rise of different things including oil both in the global market and local market -- Bakht believes scaling down inflation will be very difficult. Though these troubling factors were absent in the last few years, inflation rate still went up consistently. So, Bakht doubts if the projected rate of inflation can be ensured in the present context.

While the price increases will have to be accommodated in the monetary growth in the very short-run, monetary policy of the central bank and a prudent fiscal policy that includes limiting government borrowing from banks will certainly help contain the ever-rising inflation rate.

The PRSP also marked out seven reasons which would help achieve the projected GDP growth rate. These include buoyancy in the agriculture sector especially in fishery and livestock, macro-economic stability, reforms in the state owned enterprises (SOE) and nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) as well as increasing investments.

"The programme of NCB reform will be fully implemented, leading to marked improvement in the efficiency of financial sector which in turn will help reduce real interest rates and facilitate expansion of credit to the private sector," it said.

The MTMF also projects foreign exchange reserve of \$3.7 billion for the current fiscal year although the reserve yesterday was \$2.77 billion.

He also observed if inflation cannot be contained, it is also going to hurt the growth rate.

The PRSP identified the continued high prices of commodities in the world market, high oil prices, domestic supply bottlenecks and market rigidities as the factors that pushed up last year's inflation rate. Easing of domestic supply bottlenecks and market rigidities, and reduction of monetary growth will bring down the inflation rate, it said.

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3 share Nobel in physics for optics research

AFP, Stockholm

Americans Roy J. Glauber and John L. Hall as well as German Theodor W. Haensch won the 2005 Nobel Physics Prize for groundbreaking work on the theory of light and on laser spectroscopy, the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences said yesterday.

Glauber, an 80-year-old physics professor at Harvard University, took half the Nobel prize for establishing the basis of quantum optics, which explained the fundamental difference between sources of light such as light bulbs and lasers, it said.

Hall and Haensch shared the other half for advancing the development of laser-based precision spectroscopy, a field that opens the way to the next generation of GPS navigation and ultra-precise atomic clocks.

"Lasers with extremely sharp colours can now be constructed," the Academy said of the work of Hall, 71, and Haensch, 63.

Hall works at the University of Colorado and the National Institute of Standards and Technology while Haensch is a physics professor at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universitaet in Munich, Germany.

Their work made it possible to develop "extremely accurate clocks" and improve satellite-based navigation systems (GPS) for anything from car and boat trips to distant journeys through space, the Academy said.

How light emitted by a candle differs from the beam produced by a laser in a CD player, or how the already stunning accuracy of atomic clocks could be improved, were among questions this year's laureates had tackled successfully, the Academy said.

BSF kills 2

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At 7:00pm. When they reached Khalsi, the Indian border guards fired on them, killing two, including a woman, on the spot and injuring 10 others.

The identity of the dead and injured could not be known.

When contacted, Commanding Officer of 41 Rifles Battalion Lt Col Sobhani confirmed the incident. He however said they are trying to gather information about the incident and also the identity of the victims.

30,000 marooned

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near Kazirhat in Sadar upazila.

Deputy Commissioner Rabindranath Roy Chowdhury visited the flood-affected people at the Ansar-VDP office and arranged food for them.

Galib, 18 others

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Sources said Galib and 18 others were exempted from the charges as per direction of the central monitoring cell of police.

On the night of February 10 this year, two powerful bombs exploded at Mohimaganj Brac office, injuring three persons.

Police filed charges against 21 persons, including Galib, in March.

The public prosecutor read out the chargesheet to the accused persons. The accused, however, denied the charges brought against them.

After the hearing, Galib was taken by a prison van to Bogra under tight security.

Meanwhile, the hearing for charge-framing against six persons, including Galib, in the Takir Bazar bomb blast case could not be held as three of the accused were absent from the court.

On December 20 last year, four bombs exploded at an open-stage drama in Palashbari upazila, injuring 15 persons.

Police chargesheeted against the six persons on April 23.

Of the three absentees, Harun-ur-Rashid and Rawmakul Islam are on bail while ATM Taibur Rahman is in jail in connection with the August 17 country-wide serial bomb blasts.

The next date for hearings of both the cases was fixed on November 20.

Ramadan

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the opposition gave separate messages.

President Iajuddin Ahmed termed Ramadan the month of 'abstinence' and 'self-purification' and said it's a very significant month in one's personal and social life.

"The month is a blessing for us as it's one of the ways to get close to Allah through abstinence and prayers," he said.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia congratulated the Muslims on the occasion of Ramadan and said it's a rare opportunity for every Muslim devotee to purify himself or herself through fasting and abstinence.

She urged people to keep friendly and brotherly relations with each other on the occasion.

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina also urged people to exercise restraint and abstinence in every moment of life to maintain the sanctity of Ramadan.

Meanwhile, the government has decided to sell various items like onion, chhola, and oil in the open market from today as the prices of essentials continued to rise due to short supply and hoarding by unscrupulous businesspeople ahead of Ramadan.

The government has also announced new office hours for all government, semi-government, autonomous and semi-autonomous organisations for the holy month.

State-run BRTC has introduced special bus services on the city's two busy routes so that people could return home without hazard from their workplaces during Ramadan.