

25 arrested Rohingyas

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operatives. They were identified as Abul Kalam, 55, Abu Taher, 45, Ershad Anam, 56, Kalim Ullah, 28, Saif Ullah, 29, Noor Mohammad, 55, Lokman Hakim, 52, Nurul Islam, 53, Hafiz Ullah, 40, Mohammad Sabir, 30, Mohammad Yunus, 55, Shamsul Alam, 20, Moulna Sekander Ullah, 55, Mohammad Ishaq, 55, Mozaaffar Hossain, 45, Mohammad Ibrahim, 50, Saiful Islam, 25, Mohammad Zinnah, 35, Saifur Rahman, 22, Mostafa Kamal, 43, Syed Alam, 35, Ziaul Hasan, 36, Mohammad Osman, 54, Abdul Kalam, 50, and Mohammad Rafique, 33.

Tipped off, a DB team on Friday evenning raided the office of Chittagong Research and Cultural Society (CRCS) on Jubilee Road and made the arrests. CRCS is an organisation of the Rohingya community.

After the arrest, they all were detained at DB office and interrogated by the intelligence personnel. They were shown arrested in a case filed under section 54 with Kotwali Police Station.

The DB police in the charges brought against the arrestees said they all have come from different Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar and Teknaf and belong to Myanmar-based insurgent groups.

DB inspectors Delwar and Salah Uddin defended the state while 20 lawyers led by Advocate Ibrahim Hossain Babul stood for the accused.

Babul contended that the 25 people are established businessmen of the country.

Our staff correspondent from

Rajshahi adds: Latif Kabir Anwar, the BNP activist arrested for suspected links to the August 17 blasts in Rajshahi, runs a homeopath medicine store in front of Hatim Khan Ahle Hadith mosque, said police.

Police have filed a petition seeking five days' remand for him. The chief magistrate will hear the prayer today.

Sources said Anwar might soon be sent to the Joint Interrogation Cell in Dhaka.

He was often seen with Bangla Bhai and sometimes in Bangla Bhai's vehicle during the militant leader's so-called vigilante operations last year, said locals.

Quoting Anwar, his friends said that Bangla Bhai visited him in his house on May 23 last year.

His neighbours said his medicine store remains closed during the daytime and is usually opened in the evening until midnight.

Police found that Ahle Hadith Andolok Bangladesh workers and Bangla Bhai's men had been frequenting the store for the last few weeks.

In another development, a patrol team of Gulshan police arrested a youth in IHP Staff Quarters area at about 9:45pm Friday with six homemade bombs, adds our staff correspondent.

The arrestee, Shahabuddin alias Salahuddin, 22, was wandering the roads with a paper bag containing the bombs.

Police filed a case against him under the Explosive Substances Act.

2 outlaws

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Rab-5 sources at Pabna said they had arrested Mokhtar Hossain Bachchu, 25, at C&B Bazar in Bera upazila on Friday and took him to the zonal headquarters for interrogation.

Following his statement, a Rab team took him to the Chakdarpura village early yesterday to recover hidden weapons and arrest his accomplices.

Rab officials said as they reached a nearby Dhopaghata village at about 2:00am, the outlaws opened fire on them, prompting the law enforcers to retaliate.

Mokhtar died on the spot when he was caught in the crossfire. His accomplices, however, managed to escape, the Rab officials added.

One shotgun gun, three bullets and some sharp weapons were recovered from the spot.

The body was sent to the Pabna General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Rab sources said Mokhtar was accused in a number of cases, including three for murder.

Our Magura correspondent reports: A regional leader of outlawed Gono Mukti Fouz (GMF) was killed in "crossfire" during a shootout between his accomplices and the police in Shailakupa upazila of Jhenidah district in the early hours yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, a police team of Sreepur Police Station raided Mashalai village in the upazila in Magura district and arrested Baka, 40, alias Bijoy alias Biplob around 1:30am and took him to the police station for interrogation.

Police later took him to Thakur Malithia village in Shailakupa to recover arms. As they reached a field in the village around 3:45am, the GMF operators opened fire on them. Police retaliated with shots, causing an hour-long gunfight.

Baka, caught in the crossfire, died on the spot while he attempted to flee, police claimed.

Two police constables, Firoz and Monir, were also injured during the shootout.

Police retrieved two country-made guns, two shotgun guns and six bullets from the spot.

Baka, hailed from village Borobari Bogra in Shailakupa upazila, was accused in 12 criminal cases including eight for murder.

50 students

FROM PAGE 16

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman were torn up.

Eleven critically injured were admitted to local hospitals.

A large number of police were deployed while the college authorities directed the students to leave the dormitories and declared the college closed for an indefinite period to bring the situation under control.

Ziaur Rahman, a first year honours student and Shibir activist, last Friday tore up a poster of Bangabandhu that had been attached to the wall of the Muslim Hall on the occasion of August 15.

The BCL activists attacked Shibir activists when they gathered in front of the Bangla Department at about 10:00am yesterday, prompting them to counter attack, leaving at least 10 Shibir activists injured.

The Shibir leaders then regrouped before attacking BCL men, which left BCL Dinajpur Government College Unit President Irfat Latif Iran and another activist, Sabir Ahmed, seriously injured.

Initially, the free trade agreement will cover only products, but services and investment are expected to be included after 2007.

Bimstec to keep

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During the meeting, several sub-groups discussed issues like linguistic and textual improvement of the draft agreement, rules of origin, sensitive lists, anti-dumping measures, safeguard measures and revenue loss compensation as sidelines of the negotiation.

"We have satisfactorily advanced in the process and hope that all other remaining issues could be settled during the next two scheduled meetings," Fazlur Raham, the Bangladeshi delegation leader and a deputy secretary of the commerce ministry, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The representatives from all the member countries have shown much enthusiasm to complete the negotiation within the timeframe to make the forum a meaningful regional platform for economic cooperation, he said.

Delegates also discussed some priority sectors such as trade and investment, technology, tourism, transport and communication, energy and fisheries.

They agreed to expand cooperation to a number of new areas -- culture, education, public health (including HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, and polio), protection of biodiversity and traditional knowledge, rural community development, small and medium-scale enterprise, construction, environment, information and communications technology, bio-

technology, weather and climate research, natural disaster mitigation and management.

The meeting decided to form a joint committee to monitor the advancement of the forum and to establish its own rules of procedure to run the forthcoming meetings.

A decision was taken about how a member country will solve any problem created in relation to any state or region of another member.

Among some 40 representatives of the Bimstec countries, the majority came from Thailand and India, who noticeably attempted to protect their own interests by inserting or deleting paragraphs or articles from the draft agreement.

Following the next round of Bimstec meetings in New Delhi in November this year, the final meeting will be held in Kathmandu, Nepal in December the same year.

The agreement, with provisions for reducing tariffs in two phases till 2012, will enable the least developed member countries -- Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan to reap special benefits, sources said.

The member countries, however, differed on possible changes in customs tariff.

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Hasina asks Khaleda

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Dharmonti office to an audience of leaders and activists of the BNP and the Jatiya Party from Chapainawabganj when they called on her and joined the Awami League.

Citing official statements that some criminals came from India for the August 17 serial bombings, Hasina questioned where the intelligence agencies like NSI, SB and CID were when foreign criminals entered Bangladesh and blasted hundreds of bombs.

"Were the intelligence agencies sleeping during the bomb attacks? Some foreign criminals came, exploded bombs and returned home... Is it believable? None believes such falsehoods," the opposition leader said in a pungent criticism of her political foes.

In fact, she said, the government has no headache for the people who are passing days amid immense sufferings due to price hike of essentials, "communal terrorism", and "corruption".

She alleged the government-sponsored criminals are attacking the minority people and anti-government leaders and activists.

Welcoming the newcomers, Hasina urged the countrymen to wage a tough movement and topple the present "undemocratic government".

Among others, AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, presidium members Motia Chowdhury, Suranjit Sengupta, Tofail Ahmed and Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Abdul wadud were present.

The government has initiated all measures to control the prices of the essentials, he said, adding, "The price hike of some vegetables is just temporary. It will lower dramatically after 15 days when the winter vegetables are available in the market."

He asked the party leaders to launch campaigns highlighting the government's success.

Echoing the same voice, Abdul

Wadud

Mannan Bhuiyan, also secretary general of the BNP, said, "The newspapers have been writing against the BNP for last 15 years. But by this time we have been successful in movement and won in the election twice. This type of writings will do nothing to the BNP."

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The chase and counter-chase continued as of the filing of this report yesterday evening.

Lawyers and judges have been

18 killed

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Fifteen of the victims were identified as Badsha Miah, 35, of Pirkachha village; Sudev Chandra, 35, son of Sunil Chandra of Bisa village; Parul Rani, 21, wife of Milon of Balai village; Smriti, 25, wife of Rabul of Bharia village; Nirab, 1, of Balai; Khudeja Bibi, 55; Hasan, 25, of Kalai village; Pulok Chowdhury, son of Shailendra Chowdhury of Kalai; Mani, 8; Alok, 12; Ballab, 8; and Gitali Rani, 36, wife of Amal Chandra, of Bogra; Fatema Bibi, 60, wife of Sattar of Sonadanga village; Rehana, 25, wife of Babu Miah of Joypurhat; Abdur Razzak, student of Joypurhat Government College, and Bulbuli, 26, of Sonakandi village.

New dates for the meetings will be announced after consultations with the Saarc Secretariat and other Saarc countries - India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka, the statement said.

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Moudud's pledges remain elusive

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were the politically motivated appointment of judges at the country's highest seat of justice.

Allegations have also been rife that the two-year extension of the service age of judges introduced by the 14th constitutional amendment had the ulterior motive to secure the immediate past chief justice, KM Hassan, as the chief adviser of the next caretaker government. The suspicion gave rise to a wide and nasty dustup that still clouds the country's political and judicial planes.

The scandalised lawyers have recently declared to boycott the annual get-together of the Supreme Court tomorrow, if the 'politically appointed' 19 judges attend the function.

Moudud, the barrister turned politician, also displayed complete indifference and took no initiative to dispose of the long drawn-out Bangabandhu murder case. He ruled out the option of appointing ad hoc judges at the Appellate Division to enable it in hearing the case.

FORGOTTEN PLEDGETO SEPARATE JUDICIARY

Though Moudud, who has the distinction of serving both the military rulers of the country -- Zia and Ershad, has the ready rhetoric that he has achieved a significant improvement in the judiciary, the facts sketch a difference scene.

To begin with, in violation of his party's 2001 electoral pledges, Moudud did nothing to separate the judiciary and to form a human rights commission to enable it in hearing the case.

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FUROR OVER APPOINTMENTS

The ruling coalition during the last four years recruited 55 additional judges for the High Court, but it did not confirm the service of another 15 additional judges appointed by the previous Awami League government, resulting in termination of their job.

The authorities deployed police on the college campus to quell tension, but Shibir activists, ignoring the police presence, threw bricks at the BCL activists, prompting them to retaliate.

Following the violence, the college principal, Masuma Khatun, directed the students to leave dormitories and declared the college closed for an indefinite time.

But the Shibir activists ignored the order and went on attacking and ransacking the Muslim Hall and harassing the hall super, Mokbul Hossain.

At about 4:00pm, BCL activists beat up a Shibir man in front of the PTI near the college, but the police brought the situation under control.

The BCL activists first attacked the common students and they resisted the attacks with the help of the BCL activists, he added.