

JMB resumes activities in Kushtia, Tangail

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Islamist militants belonging to Jamaatul Mujahideen, Bangladesh (JMB) have resumed their activities in Kushtia and Tangail. They regrouped allegedly evading arrest due to lax vigilance by law enforcers.

A large number of JMB militants are active in Kushtia, where the zealots have strongholds in certain areas in Khoksa, Bheramara and Daulatpur upazilas.

In Tangail, leaflets were circulated recently calling upon Muslim devotees to contribute money to their funds to help establishment of 'rule of Allah'.

Our Kushtia Correspondent reports: JMB activists who were on the run immediately after the August 17 serial bomb blasts have returned to their abodes and resumed activities.

Since the August 17 serial bomb blasts, JMB threatened twice -- on September 10 and October 17 -- to blow up important government establishments in the district but police could not nab any more activist, except the two caught after the blasts on that day.

According to sources close to JMB, at least 1000 of its activists are active in Khoksa, Bheramara and Daulatpur

upazilas in Kushtia. Their activities are run from six madrasas and three mosques. They preach Islamic Jihad to youths.

JMB has about 100 trained persons, known as 'senior leaders'. They are called 'Jihadi Bhai', while the trainees are called 'Jihadi'.

A good number of teachers of colleges, schools and madrasas, students of those institutions, Imams of mosques and government employees are involved with the Islamist outfit. They recruit unemployed youths including girls, some 'Jihadi' members of JMB told this correspondent on condition of anonymity.

A good number of women are also involved with JMB. Most of them are from poor families and have little education. They move door to door and recruit women members.

The sources claimed that a good number of JMB men in the district are supporters of a ruling party.

JMB activist madrasa teacher Shamsul Haq was caught by people when he was fleeing after the August 17 bomb blast on Kushtia court premises and handed over to police. Acting on his statement, police arrested Akbar on August 25. Akbar confessed his involvement in the August 17 incident.

Quizzing the two persons, police got names of at least eight JMB activists including 'top leader' in the district. But police could not arrest any of them till now.

"We are on the move to nab the cadres and trace their dens", Kushtia Police Superintendent Masud-ul-Hassan told this correspondent when asked.

Meanwhile Janajuddho faction of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-ML) in a leaflet once again urged the people to unite to resist the Islamist zealots.

On information, police recovered the leaflets. Police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) have been put on alert in the town after recovery of the leaflets.

Last month, Chuadanga police announced Tk 20 lakh bounty for information leading to arrest of 20 top outlaws including Janajuddho leader Abdur Rashid Maliha alias Tapan alias Dada Tapan, Abir Hasan and Sumon.

Of them, Tofazzel alias Mojar was arrested from Charhogolpara in Damurhuda upazila in Chuadanga by Rab on Wednesday.

Our Tangail Correspondent reports: Leaflets were distributed at the Zila Sadar Mosque in the town recently

in the name of JMB calling upon Muslim devotees to donate money to its fund to boost its movement for establishment of 'Islamic rule' in the country. But the leaflet did not contain any address where the money should be sent.

Sources said, an unidentified person came near the mosque in a motorbike during the Esha prayers, threw the leaflets and sped away.

After the prayer, panic gripped the devotees when they found the leaflets.

Being informed a police visited the mosque.

Tangail police said they are hunting for the top ten JMB cadres in the district.

Sources said JMB men have resumed their activities in different areas of the district, particularly in remote forest areas.

Earlier, Ghatail police last week submitted charge sheet against five persons in the August 17 bomb blasts in the district. The chargesheeted persons include JMB chief Shaikh Abdur Rahman and JMJB (Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh) chief Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai.

Bombs blasted in Jessore again

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

Unidentified miscreants hurled two bombs at the house of Akbar Ali of Jhumjhum area in Jessore town Tuesday night.

The bomb explosions created panic among the people. No body was, however, hurt in the explosion.

On Monday night, Abhaynagar thana BNP secretary Farazi Motiar Rahman was injured critically in a bomb attack in Nawapara industrial town in Jessore.

The incident triggered protests by people. The local BNP held several protest rallies in Jessore and Nawapara.

The Abhaynagar upazila Awami League also protested the attack on the BNP leader. Police arrested a youth in this connection.

Police also arrested one person in connection with the Jhumjhum bomb blast.

Lawyers scuffle at protest meeting

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

A scuffle broke out between lawyers aligned with ruling BNP-Jamaat and those belonging to the opposition Awami League at a meeting called here yesterday to protest the killing of two judges in Jhalakathi on Monday.

The Nilphamari District Lawyers Association called the meeting on the judge court premises.

A pro-Awami League lawyers first protested the word 'miscreants' written on the banner and suggested it should be replaced with the words 'Islamist fundamentalists'.

As the meeting was in progress, some lawyers supporting BNP-Jamat in their speeches said that an 'identified quarter' was behind the killing of judges.

Though they did not mention Awami League, some pro-AL lawyers protested the statements and demanded a clarification.

Then, pro-AL lawyer Momtazul Islam said that JMB militant Mamun arrested in connection with the Jhalakathi killings confessed to that he (Mamun) was earlier a member of Islami Chhatra Shibir and then became a follower of Shaikh Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai. So, BNP-Jamat government must bear the responsibility for the killing of judges.

At this lawyers belonging to BNP-Jamat raised hue and cry and disconnected the microphone, which led to a scuffle.

The organisers hurriedly concluded the meeting to avoid deterioration of the situation.

5 of a family found HIV positive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Five members of a family at Elaipur village in Rupsha upazila have been detected as HIV positive.

They are farmer Moniruzzaman Sheikh, his wife and their three young sons.

According to Khulna Civil Surgeon (CS) Dr Hame Jamal, the victims were sent to Dhaka for another round of blood test to confirm the cases.

The CS said HIV positive was first detected in blood of Monir's one year old son on Sunday. The infant was brought to Khulna Shishu Hospital for treatment of waterborne disease.



Awami Jubo League, youth front of opposition Awami League, brought out a procession in Nilphamari town yesterday protesting the killing of two judges in Jhalakathi by a JMB suicide bomber on Monday.

Protests against killing of judges continue

Rallies, processions in Rajshahi, Kushtia and Sirajganj

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Protests by lawyers and political parties continued in districts yesterday against the killing of two judges in Jhalakathi on Monday, according to reports by our correspondents.

Senior Assistant Judges Sohel Ahmed, 35 of Nalchiti and Jagannath Oandey, 38, of Jhalakathi Sadar were killed in a suicide bombing by a JMB (Jamaatul Mujahideen, Bangladesh) activist at Jhalakathi Monday morning.

Our RU Correspondent reports: Rajshahi Advocate Bar Association yesterday morning took out a procession at the court compound to protest the killing of two judges in a bomb attack in Jhalakathi.

Earlier, on Monday, the lawyers boycotted courts and held a protest meeting on court premises protesting the attack.

Yesterday's meeting held at the Bar Association auditorium was presided over by president Zillur Rahman.

The speakers said that the BNP-led coalition government has to bear the responsibility for the attack as they patronised fundamentalist forces who have been making bomb attacks across the country.

They bitterly criticised the government for its failure to ensure security of life to judges.

The BNP-Jamaat government have no right to cling to power as it failed to protect life of citizens, they said.

The fundamentalists who are doing violence in the name of religion are tarnishing the image of the country abroad and defaming the greatest religion which never supports violence in any form, they said.

It was addressed by, among others, Entajul Haque Babu, Abdus Samad, Masum Ahmad, Newsad Ali, Israfil Hossain, Tajul Islam Faruk, Abu Raihan, Abdulwahab and Mustafizur Rahman.

Rajshahi University Teachers' Association (Ruta) yesterday condemned the killing of two judges.

The Ruta leaders urged the government to uproot the militants from the country in order to ensure security of peoples life and demanded immediate arrest and trial of the culprits.

RU Vice-chancellor Prof Altaf Hossain and pro VC Prof Mamnunul Keramat in a separate statement strongly condemned the bomb attack.

They also expressed deep concern, condemned the dastardly act in the name of religion and demanded immediate arrest and trial of the culprits.

Our Kushtia Correspondent reports: Lawyers in Kushtia will form a human chain and abstain from work today in protest against the killing two judges in Jhalakathi on Monday.

Yesterday, they brought out a pro-

cession and held a rally, where today's programme was announced.

The rally was organised under the banner of Sammilitya Ainjibi Samanya Parishad.

With its president Anup Kumar Nandi in the chair, the rally was addressed by, among others, Kushtia Bar Association secretary Nurul Islam Dulal, Mir Sanwar Hosain, Amanullah Nantu, Asmot Ali, Jahangir Alam Galib, Abdullah hel Baki.

Speakers at the rally bitterly criticised the government for what they called protecting Islamist zealots who are misinterpreting Islam and doing violence in the name of religion.

Kushtia Bar sources said that judges in Kushtia also announced their solidarity with today's programme of the lawyers.

Besides, Awami League led 14-party yesterday brought out a procession and held a rally at Kushtia town in protest against the killings.

Starting from Kushtia public library ground, the processionists paraded the main roads of the town.

At the rally held on the judge court premises with Kushtia AL vice-president Julfikar Ali Arzo in the chair, speakers bitterly criticised the BNP-Jamaat government for harboring Islamist militancy in the country since they assumed power.

The speakers included Kushtia AL secretary Ajgor Ali, organising secretary

Dr. Aminul Haq Ratan, Sadar upazila secretary Aktheruzzaman Masum and Amirul Islam.

Our Sirajganj Correspondent reports: Judges and lawyers in Sirajganj observed "a pen down strike" yesterday to protest the killing of the two judge in Jhalakathi on Monday by JMB cadres. They also boycotted courts till yesterday.

The 14-party alliance led by Awami League brought out a procession and held a rally demanding arrest of the killers and security for judges.

Leader of Sirajganj Bar Association said, they will hood a protest meeting and bring pout a procession in the town today.

A Correspondent reports from Gopalganj: Gopalganj district Sechhasebak League brought out a procession in the town and held a rally yesterday demanding punishment to the killers of two judges in Jhalakathi and security of judges.

The rally was held in front of Awami League office with Md. Akramuzzaman Akram, convener of district Sechhasebak League, in the chair.

The speakers bitterly condemned the violence and held the government responsible for this, saying it is protecting Islamic zealots who are killing innocent people in the name of religion.

They also demanded punishment to the killers.

Rail tracks in bad shape, journey becoming risky in 8 N dists

RAFIQUE SARKER, back from Lalmonirhat

About 200 km rail tracks on different routes in eight northern districts have become vulnerable, causing frequent accidents and seriously affecting train communication.

Hardly a month goes without at least one train accident. At least 72 incidents of derailment took place in Lalmonirhat-Burimari, Teesta-Ramna and Parbotipur-Thakurgoan routes in the last

11 months, according to sources at Lalmonirhat Divisional Office of Bangladesh Railway (BR).

Goods trains derail more frequently than passenger trains.

The tracks are now so weak that they cannot bear the weight of bogies let alone passengers and goods, the sources said.

As train journey in the routes has become tedious, risky and time-consuming, the number of passengers is decreasing alarmingly, they said.

Though bus journey is more risky and costlier than train journey, people now prefer the former.

Passengers often ridicule the service because of very low speed of trains. "The highest speed of any train in the routes now is 25 km per hour and the lowest 15," said train driver Abdus Salam while talking to this correspondent.

Often, people in areas near tracks instead of going to stations just walk from

homes and hop into a compartment of a running train, he said jokingly.

Salam said they are supposed to drive trains at least at 45 km per hour but even an experienced driver cannot do so due to the miserable condition of tracks.

In most areas, there are no boulders and slippers can not bear the load of trains. At several points signal lights are either defective or absent.

In the wake of continuous loss, BR leased out several passenger trains, both local and mail, on Lalmonirhat-Pathgram and Parbotipur-Thakurgoan routes to Islam Ship Builders and Heavy Engineering, a private company, some years ago.

BR agreed to provide the company with all logistics and technical support to run leased passenger trains under its management.

BR earned a good profit from the private company, but it paid less attention to repair of tracks or signaling system. Manjural Islam, proprietor of the company alleged.

A highly placed BR official seeking unanimity said proposals were sent to the BR headquarters and to the communication ministry from Lalmonirhat Divisional Office several times for repair of the damaged parts of tracks but to no effect.

At least Tk 50 crore is needed to repair the rail lines on the routes, he added.

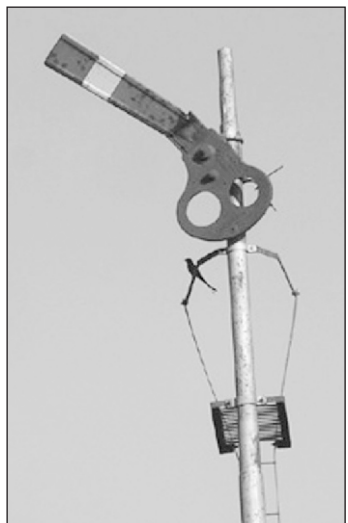


PHOTO: STAR

A portion of a railway track without boulders and slippers and a signal without light in the Lalmonirhat-Burimari route.

7X4

8X2

Patuakhali Polytech closed sine die

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The Patuakhali Polytechnic Institute was closed sine die yesterday as students of 'Civil Department' ransacked classrooms and damaged furniture protesting selection of the head of the department.

Campus sources said that before the Eid, Muhi Hossain, Head of Civil Department, had gone leave till November 22, handing over the charge to Shamsar Ali, a teacher of Electronics Department.

On Saturday, as the institute reopened after the Eid vacation, students of Civil Department demanded to the principal to select Rezaul Bahar, a

teacher of the same department, as its head.

But the principal rejected their demand, saying the decision was already taken by the Academic Council, the highest decision making body of the institute.

Agitated students of the civil department brought out a procession at the campus yesterday and ransacked classrooms and damaged furniture in office rooms.

Failing to calm down the students, the principal declared the institution close sine die and asked to all residential students to leave their dormitories within 24 hours, the sources said.