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Key JMB den busted

Hit-list, bomb materials, phone number of 50 cops, clippings on Humayun Azad killing attempt found in Rangpur hideout; 2 more judges threatened with death

STAR REPORT

The police Tuesday busted the Rangpur den of arrested Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) Kingpin Abdul Awal and recovered bomb-making materials, combat training books and equipment, a list of future attack targets and cellphone numbers of some 50 police officials.

A joint team of Nilphamari and Rangpur police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) launched the overnight raid on the second-floor den in a three-storey house at Noorpur under Mohadevpur upazila at 10:00pm. However, no arrest was made during the raid.

The law enforcement agencies suspect Awal, son-in-law of JMB chief Shaikh Abdul Rahman and third top gun of the banned Islamist outfit, was stationed in Rangpur to carry out bomb strikes on local judges, journalists and pro-liberation political leaders. He was arrested on November 18.

Also on Tuesday, JMB operatives sent letters to two more judges in Munshiganj, threatening to kill them and their families.

RECOVERIES FROM

JMB DEN

Our Rangpur correspondent reports: Among the materials recovered from Awal's lair were a JMB hit-list, letters from detained JMB men, laminated newspaper clippings on the assassination attempt on Humayun Azad and news clippings on various militant activities.

The police seized a number of books on Jihad or Islamic holy war, training manuals on armed combat and bomb making, and a map

showing the strategic points in the northern region from the flat. They found chequebooks of two banks, legal documents of Awal's property, passports of the JMB chief's brother Ataur Rahman and one Aminul Islam, son of Abdullah of Tangail, and passport-size photographs of three unknown militants.

A letter of Abdul Rahman addressed to Awal was also recovered from the floor. In it Abdul Rahman informed his son-in-law that he was safe and asked his followers to fight against all odds

along the way to establishing Islamic rule in the country.

Among the explosive materials, the police recovered one kilogram of gunpowder, a large number of detonators and splinters, timers, circuit diagrams, capacitors and a switch. Besides, two walky-talkies, 25 flashlights, cellphones, a computer, swords, one 6-volt lead-acid and 50 dry cell batteries, a radio frequency signal detector, a bomb-making dice, video footages of Afghan war and manuals on various devices were also recovered.

The law enforcers found three dummy AK47 rifles, two dummy pistols, televisions, audiocassettes, some compact discs (CDs) of Abdul Rahman and mobile phone numbers of around 50 police officials.

The police said it appears from the chequebooks that the Islamist outfit has recently withdrawn some Tk 9,00,000 from three accounts with two banks—Al Arafah Islami Bank, Dhaka and Bogra Bazar Branch of Sonali Bank.

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PHOTO: STAR

Bomb-making materials, books, CDs and other documents seized by police during a raid on a den of banned Islamist militant outfit JMB in Rangpur on Tuesday.

Dawn-to-dusk hartal today

Fresh transport strike called

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 14-party opposition combine enforces a countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal today protesting the alliance government's alleged attempt to foil the opposition's 'grand' rally through planned obstacles and harassment and sponsored transport strike.

Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation (BRTWF) simultaneously enforces an indefinite transport strike across the country beginning today. The strike came hot on the heels of a two-day strike called by a section of the pro-BNP transport workers leaders.

The top leaders of the 14-party comprising the main opposition Awami League (AL), Jatiya

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High-ups want to go tough on the press

Suggest adding punitive provision to Press Council Act, says council report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The president, prime minister and information minister have expressed their willingness to amend the provision of the Press Council Act related to the power to warn, admonish and censure the press, said chairman of the press council.

"I am in favour of adding a punitive provision to the act to make it effective and to strengthen the council," Justice Abu Sayeed

Ahmed, chairman of the council, said in the council's annual report 2004 placed in parliament yesterday.

Justice Ahmed, who was appointed the chairman of Bangladesh Press Council on May 26 this year, said amending the law is an urgent matter.

"I discussed the issue with the president, prime minister and information minister. They expressed their willingness to amend the provision," the chair-

man said. Justice Ahmed also said the Press Council Act 1974 should also have some "executive force" so that the council can force any one to comply with the law and ensure punishment to the law violators.

The press council report was placed yesterday amid the ruling alliance lawmakers' blistering attack on the media and demand for the enactment of tough laws to punish journalists for what they

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CEC Aziz pledges again to work for electoral reforms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz has once again pledged that the Election Commission (EC) would take initiative for electoral reforms.

"The Election Commission itself has taken steps for reforms of election laws. The draft of the reform proposal will be placed to all the political parties after calling them," the CEC told journalists yesterday at his office.

Taking office as the CEC on May 23 this year, Aziz had told newsmen that he would take measures for establishing an independent EC free from government control.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

PM urges people to help nab militants

Warns against killing people in the name of Islam

UNB, Bhola

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has urged people to help catch the militants who are manufacturing bombs and killing people in the name of Islam.

"Don't give them shelter...One can't become martyr and cannot go to heaven by killing people," she told a public meeting at Hafiz Ibrahim College ground at Borhanuddin in Bhola yesterday.

The prime minister held the Islamist militants responsible for

the recent bombings at places across the country.

Incidentally, the latest militant strike killed two judges in the neighbouring district of Jhalakati a few days back.

"Islamic laws cannot be established by killing people...Islam does not allow terrorism and killing," the prime minister said.

Presided over by BNP MP Hafiz Ibrahim, the meeting was also addressed by Water Resources Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmed,

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Move to claim compensation for blowouts

Rumour over Niko's winding up operations

UNB, Dhaka

The energy ministry is likely to send a letter next week to Niko Resources, the Canadian operator of Tangrila gas field, claiming compensation for two blowouts in the gas field.

Official sources said the ministry will place the compensation claim for burning out 8.0 billion cubic feet (bcf) of natural gas from the field and also the environmental damages worth Tk 84 crore in the field area by the two blowouts.

The first blowout took place on

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IMF for another fuel, gas, power price hike

Govt may act on the line if essentials' prices come down

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

International Monetary Fund (IMF) yesterday asked the government to go for another round of price hike in fuel, gas, electricity and fertiliser to ease an increasing pressure on the budget and foreign exchange reserve.

A visiting IMF mission led by its Adviser Thomas Rumbaugh conveyed the prescription to Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman at a wrap-up meeting on a \$75 million fifth instalment of Poverty Reduction Growth Facility (PRGF) and a \$25 million second tranche of Trade Integration Mechanism (TIM) loan.

After the meeting, Saifur told the press, "I told them we have but recently raised their prices. So, right now it's not possible to increase the prices of all these items at a time."

He said, "I informed the IMF team that the rice harvesting is now on. Winter vegetables are also coming in a downward trend in the price level (of essentials), then we may consider adjusting the prices of these items."

The IMF mission arrived in Dhaka on November 13 to review the status of fulfilment of the conditions for the fifth PRGF tranche

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BNP offers talks on all but caretaker issue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling BNP has proposed to sit with the 14-party opposition combine on its 23-point demand excepting reforms in caretaker government.

BNP Secretary General and Local Government and Rural Government (LGRD) Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan thanked the parties for announcing a 'protection' programme after long while offering the proposal.

He also invited the opposition to come to parliament and raise its demands.

Dialogue on the demands could be held both in parliament as well as outside, Bhuiyan told a group of journalists at his Secretariat office yesterday.

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Speaker rejects talks on opposition demands

Turns down all notices

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) Jamiruddin Sircar yesterday rejected all the opposition lawmakers' demands for discussion in parliament on different issues, including rise of militants and price hike of essentials.

The speaker categorically said the government is trying hard to control the price hike of essentials and improve the power and gas crises situation.

"So, there is no need for holding any discussion on these issues, adjourning other businesses of the House," he told the House, disposing of the opposition lawmakers' notices.

The Awami League (AL) and

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Agree to reforms in caretaker, we will go to JS

Says 14-party coordinator Jalil

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Coordinator of the 14-party opposition alliance and Awami League (AL) General Secretary Abdul Jalil yesterday said the opposition will join parliament if the government sits for discussion outside parliament and agrees to meet the demand of reforms in the caretaker government and the Election Commission (EC).

"We will join parliament to complete necessary process for bringing the electoral reforms and give it a constitutional shape," Jalil told the 14-party alliance's Muktagong rally organised as part of their countrywide demonstration to protest government's

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Bangladesh Shines in Colors

368 Thanas of 61 Districts

NEW THANAS

- Bakshiganj, Jamalpur
- Islampur, Jamalpur
- Haluaghat, Mymensingh
- Nalitabari, Sherpur



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