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People's Right to Know

Massive hunt for militants in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The law enforcers last night launched a crackdown on Islamist militants suspected to be hiding in and around the capital.

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles, police and members of different intelligence agencies started a joint combing operation and block raid to hunt down the militants around 7:00pm.

However, police did not disclose whether any militants were arrested or the number of arrests, if made, when this report was filed at 1:30am today.

Several teams of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), Armed Police

Battalion, forces from different police stations and intelligence agencies were raiding Badda, Madartek, Bashabo, Khilgaon, Mohammadpur, Paltan, Shyampur, Khilkhet and Uttara.

A top Rab official said the decision of the raid came following directives from the home ministry.

The ministry issued the directives after it received a list of activists of outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

The Rab and intelligence agencies have prepared the list in the wake of the assassination of two senior assistant judges in Jhalakathi on November 14. Intelligence reports say JMB

chief Abdur Rahman and many of his cadres are hiding in the capital and in its surrounding areas.

The law enforcers last night formed a cordon around Banastee and thoroughly searched hotels, messes and several residential houses to trap the JMB chief and his men.

Earlier in the evening, Rab, police and intelligence officials launched a similar raid on East Madartek in Sabujbagh on receiving information that militants stockpiled a huge amount of explosives in a house to make bombs.

However, the law enforcers found a wax factory at a house in East Madartek three hours into the raid around 9:30pm.



Police check the bags of rickshaw passengers on a road leading to the compound that houses Gazipur Deputy Commissioner's office, the CMM court and some government offices, the CMM court and some government offices, left, and law enforcers stand guard at the gate of the compound yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Bombs deal Marzina a double blow

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Marzina Akhter is much more worried about her marital crisis than the severe splinter injuries she received in her legs on Tuesday in the Gazipur suicide bomb attack.

The 20-year-old girl and her mother Nurjahan Begum, who too was badly hurt in the blast, are under treatment at Ward 33 of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). Doctors said Marzina's wounds will take quite some time to heal completely.

On that fateful morning, Nurjahan, Marzina and one of her uncles came from their Khalkur village to Gazipur to appear before a court for the hearing of a dowry case Marzina had filed against her husband Joyal, 24, a garment worker.

Marzina married Joyal, then a jobless youth, two years and two months ago. But the marriage turned into a nightmare for her since the very beginning, as Joyal has been torturing her brutally almost every day in demand of dowry.



Marzina is the eldest of five sisters and a brother. It was really hard for her day-labourer father to spend around Tk 20,000 for the marriage ceremony. He also paid another Tk 20,000 to his son-in-law on different occasions.

Only three days into the marriage, he told the newlywed teen age bride to leave, as he did not

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Sylhet mayor escapes grenade attack

Hartal tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Sylhet City Mayor Badruddin Ahmed Kamran narrowly escaped a grenade attack while he was speaking at the opening ceremony of Sazzadur Rahman Smriti Badminton Tournament in the city last night.

Police and witnesses said unidentified miscreants tossed the grenade targeting the mayor a few yards from the back of the stage near Tilagar Jame Mosque at about 8:15pm, but it did not explode.

Soon after the incident, the mayor was taken to the mosque. Members of the Rapid Action Battalion cordoned off the area and removed the grenade.

Contacted, Badruddin Ahmed Kamran, also president of the Awami League (AL) Sylhet city unit, said the grenade attack was a part of a quarter's continuous attempt to kill him.

On August 7 last year, a bomb

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SECOND BOMB ATTACK Gazipur turns into a town of terror

BISHAWJIT DAS

Panic and mistrust reign supreme in Gazipur following the twin suicide bomb attacks on Tuesday and Thursday killing eight people and injuring at least 90.

Everyone in the town, whether a law enforcer or a lawyer, a judge or a government official, is in the grip of constant fear of fresh terror attacks. People eye each other suspiciously, spy on every stranger, apprehending a bomber striking again anytime, anywhere.

The weekend life in the district town yesterday was entirely different from other Fridays. Shops that used to remain open on weekend kept their shutters down. And the usually busy roads were almost

deserted.

Abdus Sattar, who risked opening his shop near the court, said the terror strikes have completely choked off his earnings.

Law enforcers in bulletproof vests were frisking pedestrians and commuters on the town's main thoroughfare. The police patrolled the roads. Along with them, plainclothesmen and members of Armed Police Battalion and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) stood guard in front of the courts, the office of the deputy commissioner and other key structures.

No-one could pass by any key point without a thorough body search, leave alone any bag or anything else he was carrying.

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Death in police custody sparks protest in Rayer Bazar

DMCH CORRESPONDENT

A large number of people took to the streets yesterday in the city's Rayer Bazar area protesting the death of a man in police custody on Thursday.

The demonstrators claimed Shafiqul Islam Shafi, 35, was innocent and died from police torture. They demanded a proper investigation into the incident.

Mohammadpur police arrested Shafi, a night guard at Sobhanbagh New Super Market, suspecting his connection with a robbery of a shop at the market on November 30 and took him to Mohammadpur Police Station on a 3-day remand. He died at Suhrawardi Hospital Thursday night following alleged torture.

His body was then sent to the Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) morgue for autopsy.

His family came to know of his death from some reporters when they went to his Rayer Bazar home

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AL rejects dialogue offer, asks govt to step down

BNP's call for reconsidering decision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rejecting outright the government's proposal for a dialogue on how to combat rising militancy, Awami League (AL) yesterday asked the ruling coalition to relinquish power immediately, paving the way for an early election under a consensus caretaker government.

The rejection of the prime minister's offer to sit in a dialogue came from a daylong meeting of AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC). The highest decision-making body of the main opposition met at the party's Dhanmondi office with AL President Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

The ALCWC, in a resolution, also cautioned that in a last-ditch attempt to hold onto power, the

ruling alliance might even try to hinder the constitutional and democratic process in the country.

Within hours of the ALCWC meeting, the ruling BNP Secretary General and LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan made a call for the opposition to reconsider its decision. On Bhuiyan's call, AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil told The Daily Star last night that he could not say anything yet in this regard.

Blaming the BNP-Jamaat coalition for the rise of militancy, AL had already rejected the proposal for dialogue that Prime Minister Khaleda Zia made in a public speech after repeated suicide bombings in Gazipur and Chittagong last week.

Talking to the reporters at the

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A policeman stands guard at the closed gate of Bangladesh Shishu Academy near the Supreme Court yesterday while the authorities postponed all their training classes through an urgent notice, left, and police search food containers and bags taken for patients at an entrance to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

9 powerful bombs found in Khulna, Sirajganj

31 more suspected militants rounded up

STAR REPORT

Police have recovered nine powerful bombs, five from the premises of a government office in Khulna and four in Sirajganj.

Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) experts after primary examination said each of the bombs recovered from the livestock department office premises in West Baniakhamar could cause huge casualties and damage to property.

Police across the country arrested 31 suspected militants including madrasa teachers and students since Thursday night.

Besides, banned Islamic outfits including Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) continue to issue threats to government offices and institutions.

Militants on Thursday threatened to blow up Khulna Zilla School and kill its teachers and students, while three militant outfits in a joint letter on Wednesday threatened to blow up a Union Parishad office in Bogra.

KHULNA BOMB RECOVERY
Sonadanga police recovered the homemade bombs around 9:00am, reports our Staff Correspondent in Khulna.

As the news spread, locals got panicked and marched in a procession, demanding arrest of those who kept the bombs there.

Police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) have so far recovered 11 bombs in the districts in the last three weeks.

KMP Commissioner Khan Sayeed Hasan told The Daily Star

last night criminals might kept the bomb to carry out attacks on the police. "We have already alerted our forces," he said.

Meanwhile, police arrested a youth last night during a Siratunnabi Mahfil on the Circuit House premises. Delwar Hossain Saidee, MP attended the Mahfil as the chief guest.

The police seized a bomb-like substance and two pencil batteries from the detainee, Ziad Ali, 25, of Rampal upazila in Bagerhat.

Besides, police arrested Abdul Kader Mia, 42, an activist of 'Allahr Dal', in city on Thursday night.

SIRAJGANJ
Enayetpur police recovered four powerful bombs from Betil Kharipatti in Belkuchi upazila on

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ASIAN HIGHWAY Bangladesh set to be left out of network

Fails to get support for its ambitious route change plan, sits on ratification as deadline ticks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh may be left out of the Asian Highway network, a giant international road link, as it is unlikely to ratify the UN-Escap convention on the highway following a dispute over a change in the route.

The government needs an approval from the cabinet before ratifying the convention, and there is no sign yet of a likely approval though the deadline for the ratification is December 31 of this year,

according to sources in the ministry of communications.

The Asian Highway network would connect 32 Asian countries with Europe. All the countries concerned except five are yet to ratify the convention.

Bangladesh tried to bring a change in the proposed route of the highway, but there is no sign of any development in this regard. China, which Dhaka had approached for backing its proposal, expressed reluctance to do so showing a time constraint, the source said.

Both the entry and exit points on the existing Asian Highway linking Bangladesh with India fall into Indian territory, and Bangladesh fears that it would turn into a transit route for India, which would go against the official position of the BNP-led four party ruling alliance.

As a result, Dhaka is pursuing the neighbouring countries to bring a change in the proposed route and to open up another road through Myanmar, which would

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DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT CREDIT WB finally okays \$200m tranche

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank (WB) yesterday approved the \$200 million third tranche of Development Support Credit (DSC) to Bangladesh.

The approval originally slated to come from a WB Executive Board meeting on November 17 was deferred following the cabinet's foot-dragging in clearing a draft Public Procurement Law, a major condition for the loan.

The bank finally tabled the matter in its December 1 board meeting on the government's written commitment to enact the law and the High Court clearing the way for Rupali Bank's privatisation, another of the 13 conditions for the

DSC.

The first DSC tranche of \$300 million was approved in June 2003, followed by the \$200 million DSC-2 in July 2004. The credit from the WB's concessionary arm International Development Association (IDA) has 40 years to mature with a 10-year grace period and carries a 0.75 percent service charge.

WHY THE DELAY
The draft Public Procurement Law was tabled at a cabinet meeting on November 2. But, in the face of strong opposition from some ministers, instead of okaying the draft, the cabinet formed a sub-committee to scrutinise the clauses

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Change of Head Office Location

PREVIOUS ADDRESS NASSA GROUP Head Office 100 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue C.A. Bhaban (4th Floor), Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215. E-mail : nassa@nassagroup.org	NEW ADDRESS NASSA GROUP Head Office 238, Tejgaon Industrial Area Guilshan Link Road Dhaka-1208. Tel : 8826369, 8819126, 8819127 9863185, 9863191, 8823761 E-mail : nassa@nassagroup.org
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