



Businessmen's move towards consensus Meet with PM today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the prospect of a dialogue between the government and the opposition fading fast, the country's major trade bodies have taken initiatives to create a national consensus on combating militant activities that panicked the people as well as foreign and local investors.

The trade bodies will meet Prime Minister Khaleda Zia today and await an appointment with Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina, sources said.

The leaders of different chambers and trade associations at a meeting organised by the Federation of

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Blasts caused serious damage to economy MCCI says investments held up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) yesterday in a statement said due to the recent bomb blast incidents, foreign and local investors have become panicked and are delaying their investment decisions.

"The bombing incidents in the last couple of weeks have caused a serious damage to the economy. Foreign investors who came here to explore investment opportunities got panicked and openly stated that they would like to wait for the time being and watch the s

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BCS TESTS

JCD, Shibir men make hay with leaked questions

SURANJITH DEABNATH

Illegal practices of leaking question papers of entrance examinations for the Bangladesh Civil Service and selling those have become brisk business as the Public Service Commission (PSC) continues to downplay the allegation that such practices exist.

A vested quarter including PSC staff and leaders of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS), have been earning a large sum from sales of these leaked question papers.

The leak of question papers of the 27th BCS preliminary tests held on November 18 was the fourth in a row, beginning from the 24th BCS

examinations in 2003 under the PSC chairmanship of Prof ZN Tahmidia Begum who had been appointed in 2002.

Persistent allegations of such leaks of question papers of both the preliminary and written tests have been around for the last three

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Jamaat man on Satkhira JMB list

SHARIFUL ISLAM, back from Satkhira

A Jamaat man, who figures high on a list prepared by district police of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) operatives after the August 17 blasts, had been patronising the militants in remote villages of Satkhira Sadar upazila.

A recent investigation by The Daily Star also reveals that Moulana Washiqur Rahman, who has been on the run since the countrywide serial blasts, was always the host to militant kingpin Bangla Bhai or other JMB top

boss whenever they visited the area.

Described by locals as a leader of ruling coalition partner Jamaat-e-Islami, Washiqur hails from Taluigachhi village.

The list he is on with 39 JMB men has already been distributed among the law enforcers across the country, said sources in Satkhira police.

Jamaat lawmaker from Satkhira-2 constituency Moulana Abdul Khaleq Mondal however said Washiqur is only a supporter, he does not hold any post in the

party.

Asked whether he knows anything about Washiqur bearing direct links to Jama'atul Mujahideen, the lawmaker said he (Washiqur) is not involved in the militant outfit, rather an anti-Ahle Hadith group is spreading such falsehood about him.

Locals said Washiqur has a very close personal relationship with the local Jamaat lawmaker and if the people should meet Khaleq Mondal, they have to go through Washiqur.

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Madrasas under watch for JMB cadres

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The law enforcers have brought several madrasas across the country under constant surveillance as part of a massive manhunt for cadres of outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

Based on their preliminary findings, detectives suspect these Qawmi and Forkania madrasas are the breeding grounds and safe hideouts of Islamist militants.

Sources said some 500 madrasas in Tangail, Jamalpur, Moulvibazar, Sunamganj, Sylhet, Narail, Narsingdi, Natore, Naogaon, Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, and Cox's Bazar will be watched over.

The government has recently issued strict directives to the home ministry to trap militants in the wake of rise of militancy in the country.

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Jamaat leader with militant links held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday arrested a Jamaat-e-Islami leader and his employee from Rangpur town on charge of militant links.

Rab also recovered some books on 'Islamic revolution' from the possession of Ekramul Hoque, 55.

District Jamaat however denied links to Ekramul but his neighbours said he is an active leader of the party.

A Rab team picked up Ekramul, also known to be a former activist of Jamaat's student wing, from his residence adjacent to the party office at Kamarpara in the town at around 3:00pm yesterday. They

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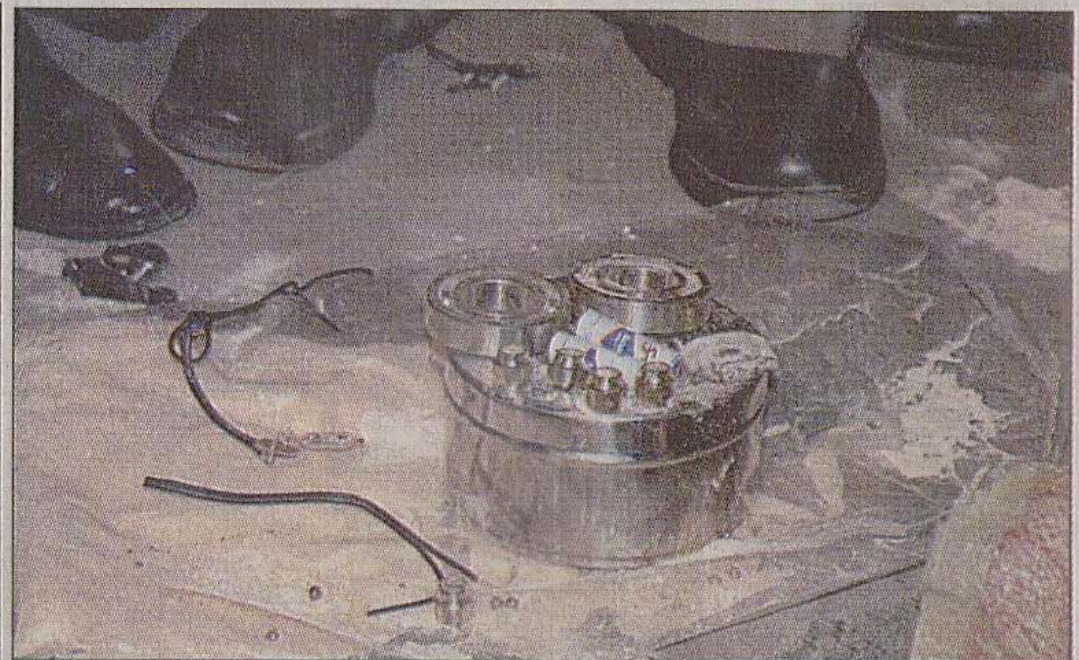


PHOTO: STAR

The powerful bomb found at Gabtoli bus terminal in the city yesterday.

3-kg time bomb planted under bus

Could have blown up the vehicle, say experts after recovery at Gabtoli

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Explosives experts last night defused a three-kilogram time bomb, which was planted under a passenger bus at Gabtoli bus terminal in the city.

The experts of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) said the powerful bomb, if exploded, could have blown up the bus and killed all the passengers.

Three street urchins by chance discovered the bomb having a detonator, a timer, and two batter-

ies. Around half kilogram trinitrotoluene (TNT), two bicycle bearings and 50 to 60 small iron balls were used to make the bomb, the experts said.

The boys noticed a packet of sweetmeat under a Dhaka-Barisal-Jhalakathi bus at 8:15pm. The bus was scheduled to leave for Barisal at 11:00pm.

Seven-year-old Bazilul Karim, accompanied by Jasim, 4, and Akbar, 5, picked up the packet and found a food container inside. 'As I

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Hartal today in tense Sylhet

Arges grenade detonated; 3 JMB men picked up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The main opposition Awami League (AL) has called an eight-hour hartal in the city for today and demanded immediate arrest of those involved in Friday's grenade attack on Sylhet City Corporation Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran.

The ruling alliance-backed militant groups have been carrying out all these pre-planned attacks on the leaders and activists of the opposition one after another, they alleged at a rally yesterday.

Tense situation is prevailing in Sylhet following Friday's grenade attack on the city mayor, who narrowly escaped the attack as the grenade did not explode.

Meanwhile, Rapid Action

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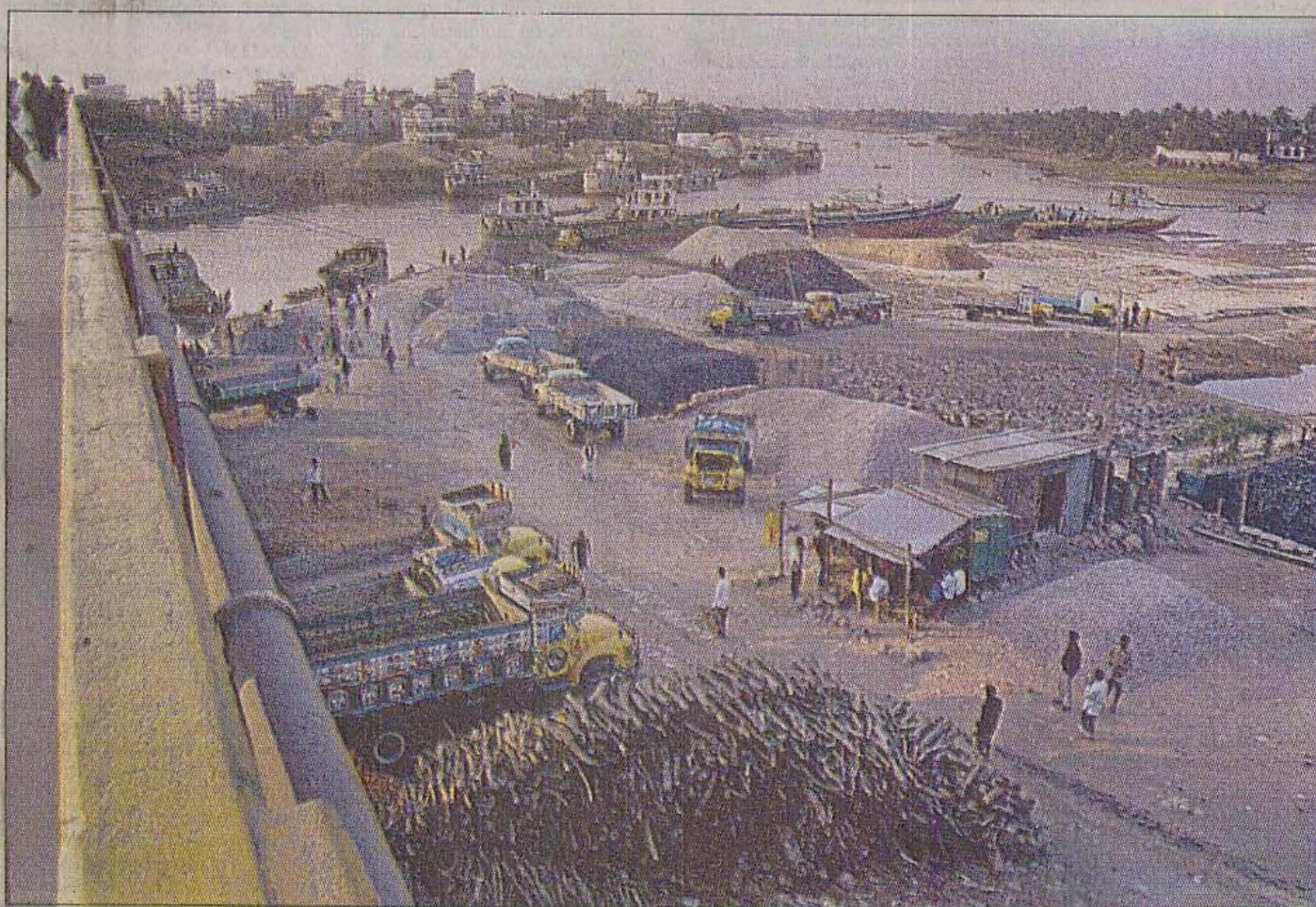


PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

ENCROACHMENT ON A RIVER: Unscrupulous traders use a large illegally grabbed area of the Turag river near Amin Bazar Bridge on the city outskirts to offload, stockpile and upload sand, brick and other construction materials in blatant deviance to law and the authorities.

ATTACK ON COURTS Hearing on govt appeal today

UNB, Dhaka

The hearing of government plea for staying operation of the High Court order directing the police to submit progress reports to the court every two weeks on the investigations into the recurrent bomb attacks is likely to be held today by the full bench of the Supreme Court.

Earlier, the chamber judge of the Supreme Court had held back disposal of the government petition until Sunday for a full-bench hearing.

The government sharply reacted to the November 30 High Court order upon a writ in the wake of unabated bomb strikes on courts, killing judges, lawyers, police personnel and justice-seekers. The government moved the Supreme Court the following day to stay the HC order.

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JMB threatens to blow up 5 edn institutions

STAR REPORT

Banned Islamist outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) yesterday threatened to blow up a number of educational institutions and kill six journalists.

The militants issued the threat to Islamic University in Kushtia, Independent University of Bangladesh (IUB) in Dhaka, Rajbari Government High School, Charhazari VVTC School at Companiganj in Noakhali and Habiganj Government High School.

Police arrested 35 more suspected militants from different places yesterday. But in Manikganj, the police released 11 alleged JMB members 12 hours after their arrest on recommendation of Jamaat leaders of the district, sources said.

The law enforcers arrested 132 people during the night-long crackdown in and around the capital on Friday, but no Islamist

militant was among the arrestees. The members of police, armed police battalion and Rab yesterday started checking at every entry point of Gazipur in the wake of panic and fear of further bomb attacks.

Lawyers of the district will begin a weeklong work abstention today to protest the killing of two of their colleagues in suicide bomb attacks.

GAIBANDHA JMB yesterday threatened six Gaibandha based journalists of national dailies with death if they continue writing against the militant outfit, reports our Gaibandha correspondent.

The hand-written threat letter was found on a cupboard at the local press club.

The letter mentioned the names of Abu Zafar Sabu of the Janakantha, Gobinda Lal Das of the Jugantar, KM Rezaul Hoque of the Daily Star, Amritav Das Himun of

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Militant linchpin Hannan shown held in another blast case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Mufti Abdul Hannan, operations commander of banned Harkatul Jihad's (HuJI) Bangladesh chapter, was shown arrested in another bomb blast case and remanded yesterday for the 10th time since his arrest on October 1.

Hannan was placed on a 10-day remand in one of the August 17 blast cases filed after an explosion near Dhaka Sheraton Hotel. He was placed on fresh remand on completion of his remand in the case filed for the explosion near Jatrabari footbridge.

The Detective Branch (DB) of police accompanied by the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members produced Hannan before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka at 3:00pm. He was wearing a

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