

Militants using 25 mosques in Sakhipur and Mirzapur

Top 10 JMB men still evade arrest: Security tightened at Tangail Jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Activities by Islamist militant are being conducted from about 25 mosques in forest areas of Sakhipur and Mirzapur, established with financial assistance from a Kuwait-based NGO, according to police and local people.

There is a large number of followers of Ahle Hadith and members of JMB (Jama'atul Mujahideen, Bangladesh) in the areas, it was gathered during a recent visit.

Police so far arrested around 45 suspected militants from the areas, but the 'top ten' who recruited and organised the militants are evading arrest, police sources said. Of them 19 were arrested since Tuesday's suicide bombing in Chittagong and Gazipur court premises.

The mosques are located in Dhanchala, Dakkhin, Taktarchala, Phoolgachichala and some other

villages of Mirzapur upazila and Nalua, Taktarchala Uttar Para, Maolana Para, Hatibandha and Kamilachala villages in forest areas of Sakhipur.

The JMB suicide bomber Abul Bashar alias Abul Bashar alias Hossen Ali who killed one policeman and injured many people in Chittagong court premises on Tuesday last used to stay at Taktarchala Maolana Para Mosque. His brother-in-law Imam Ali is the Imam of the mosque.

Hossen Ali, 17, a student of class ten of Nalua Based Khan High School in Sakhipur, was a member of JMB suicide squads.

Imam Ali was not found on Wednesday and the mosque was also closed.

Unknown persons used to visit the Taktarchala Dakkhin Bazar mosque and held meetings with madrasa students. Talking to this correspondent on Wednesday, its

Imam Abdullah-hel-Baki admitted this.

Some local people said they were told that the visitors were Islamic scholars from Medina University in Saudi Arabia. Their visit was stopped two years ago when some local influentials raised objection.

The locals said people from far away areas also visited the mosque, identifying themselves as madrasa students or teachers.

Of the arrested JMB suspects, 19 are in Tangail jail, five on remand and one sent to Dhaka for interrogation.

Police said they netted eight persons from Delduar upazila, six from Basail, three from in Ghatal, four from Kalihati, three from Sakhipur and one from Mirzapur.

Among the arrestees, at least 19 militants are now remaining in the District Jail, five on remand and one was sent to Dhaka earlier.

Of the militants, Delwar Hossen, of Araihasar in Narayanganj district and Yameen Miah, 17, of Delduar of Tangail, arrested from Baropakhia Quami Madrasa in Delduar on August 28, gave confessional statements before a First Class Magistrate in Tangail.

Meantime, security has been beefed up in and around Tangail District Jail. Several checkpoints manned by armed police have been set up on streets around the jail, sources there said.

JMB in a letter earlier threatened to blow up the district jail. Jailor ABM Fattah said additional security measures have been taken for protection against suicide bombing.

The JMB suspects arrested since Tuesday are Idris Miah, Sona Miah, Yakub Miah, Abdul Karim, Yahya Miah and Anwar Hossen of Habla Dakkhin Para village in Basail

upazila; Nazrul Islam of Taktarchala village and Abdul Aziz of Pahar Kanchanpur village in Sakhipur; Mizanur Rahman of Bahalabari village, and Shamim Ahmed, Masum-bin-Azad and Rabbani of Balla Dakkhin Para village in Kalihati; Sadat Hossen of Madarkol village in Delduar; Zohurul of Ramdevpur village, Al Mamun of Garasin village and Noor Mohammad of Kumulli Khan Para Village in Tangail Sadar upazila and Mamun-or-Rashid of Hargram village in Bagmara upazila in Rajshahi district.

They are being interrogated in different police stations, police sources said.

High police officials when contacted said they have intensified drives against militants. But the listed 'top JMB cadres' including Shueb, Russel, Arman-bin-Azad and Khaled Siddiky are still evading arrest.

Dinajpur by-polls amid tight security today

45 centres out of 122 vulnerable

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

By-election to Dinajpur-1 constituency will be held today.

The seat fell vacant following death of Jamaat lawmaker Maulana Abdullah Al Kafi on September 12.

The district administration has taken all possible measures to hold the by-election in a free, fair and peaceful atmosphere, according to Dinajpur Election Commission (EC) Office sources.

At least 45 out of 122 polling centres in the constituency are vulnerable, according to Returning Officer (RO) Suruzzaman, also Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Dinajpur.

Around 1,400 members of law enforcement agencies including 400 army and BDR men have been deployed in the constituency since Sunday night for the purpose, the

EC office sources said.

Six candidates are vying for the seat but nobody is contesting for the major opposition Awami League (AL).

The candidates are Maulana Aftab Uddin Mollah of Jamaat-e-Islami, Monoranjan Shil Gopal, a rebel candidate of Ershad-led Jatiya Party who is contesting as an independent candidate, Nasirul Haque Rustam and Shibli Sadeque of Nagorik Committee, Abdul Malek Sarker of Jatiya Party (JP-Ershad) and Mohammad Sadeque of Krishak Sramik Mukti Andolon.

Although six candidates are contesting the polls, the main battle is expected between Maulana Aftab Uddin Mollah and Monoranjan Shil Gopal, according to political circles and local people. JP candidate Md Abdul Malek Sarker may also be a factor for them. Monoranjan Shil Gopal is

being backed by AL and JP factions at Kaharol and Birganj upazilas. Former President and now Bikalpa Dhara chief Dr AQM Baduddoza Chowdhury and Gano Forum president Dr Kamal Hossain also extended their support to Gopal.

Ban on meetings and processions have been imposed since Saturday midnight.

There are 43 centres in Kaharol upazila and 79 centres in Birganj upazila while the number of voters is 2,33,818.

In support of the ruling alliance candidate, Fisheries and Livestock Resources Minister Abdullah Al Noman, Women and Children Affairs Minister Khurshid Jahan Haque, Social Welfare Minister Ali Ahsan Mujahid and State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mirza Fakrul Uddin Alamgir addressed two public meetings in the two upazilas on Thursday.

Farmers cry for 'wonder' pesticide

No supply of environment friendly pheromone in southwestern districts despite agriculture minister's assurance

HOSSAIN SERA, back from Jessore

Magura: A much-inspiring revolution in pest control and environment protection in six southwestern districts may die soon due to acute crisis of pheromone, the principal ingredient used to check pest attack in vegetable fields instead of using harmful pesticide.

Pheromone trap is made with a plastic bottle, half-filled with water. The ingredient pheromone is put inside, which attracts and kills pests. It is simple and costs very little but works wonder.

Farmers who earlier used to apply heavy doses of pesticide in their vegetable fields, now need only these wonder capsules they call 'talisman'.

This simple technology drastically reduced use of pesticide, making vegetables free from toxic elements and protecting the environment.

Farmers were doubly benefited by pheromone trap. They earned more money by producing vegetables with lesser costs while the environment was protected, said Shahidullah Khan, headmaster of a high school in Gaidghat.

Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) in 2001 took up a special programme styled Integrated Pest Management Programme (IPM) to discourage farmers to use harmful pesticide. At first, vegetable cultivation without pesticide was initiated at Gaidghat village in Bagherpara upazila in Jessore district on an experimental basis. Use of pheromone trap worked a wonder in brinjal and sweet-pumpkin cultivation.

The BARI programme assisted by DFID, UK achieved a great success. The Natural Resources Institute (NRI) UK, Asian Vegetable

Research and Development Centre (AVRDC) of Taiwan and multinational company Syngenta cooperated in the research, official sources said.

A high official of Agriculture Extension Department in Magura said farmers apply only 0.2 litre pesticide per hectare in paddy fields, 1.12 litres in vegetable (other than brinjal) fields but 1.41 litres in brinjal fields.

Earlier, farmers had to spend at least Tk 50,000 on pesticides per hectare for cultivating brinjal in a season but they now need Tk 15,000 for pheromone, the official said.

Malek Molla, a farmer in Gaidghat village told this correspondent during the recent visit

that earlier, 10 to 20 kilograms of brinjal per maund (37.5 kg) were damaged despite use of pesticides. On the advice of BARI scientists, they used pheromone, which reduced the crop damage to 3-4 kilograms only.

One pheromone capsule attracts male shoot and fruit borers for two months. When artificial pheromone secretion loses effectiveness, farmers are to replace it with a new one.

But the farmers are now frustrated as pheromone capsule is now scarce.

Laxman Chandra, a farmer in Khanpur village in Bagherpara upazila said, "We came to know that farmers in India are being provided with pheromone by the

government at subsidised rate but we are deprived of it while Rabi season has started.

Official sources said, NRI in UK is the only pheromone producing and marketing institute.

In May this year, Agriculture Minister MK Anwar after visiting vegetable producing areas in Gaidghat assured farmers that they would never face crisis of pheromone. As government had permitted multinational company Syngenta to import and market pheromone, it would be available from June, the minister had said.

But the assurance has not turned into a reality, plunging the farmers into uncertainty.



A farmer using a pheromone trap in a brinjal field in Gaidghat village in Jessore.

STAR FILE PHOTO

Death of student triggers violent protest in Kishoreganj

A CORRESPONDENT, Kishoreganj

Agitated students of Jahurul Islam Medical College and Hospital (JIMCH) at Bajitpur yesterday ransacked the principal's office, some rooms of the hospital and dormitories and barricaded the Kishoreganj-Dhaka railway track.

The Egarosindhu inter-city train was stranded near Halimpur railway station for about six hours as the angry students blocked the track after finding the body of a student of the college on the track in the morning.

Police said the body of Tawhid Al-Mamun, a first year student of the medical college, was found by some students on the rail tract near Halimpur railway station under Bajitpur thana in the morning.

After vandalising the college and the hospital, the angry students attacked the railway station and barricaded the track at about 1 pm, stopping the Dhaka-bound train from Kishoreganj. They also torched a microbus on the Bajitpur-Kishoreganj road.

Police rushed to the spot from Kishoreganj and brought the situation under control.

The students withdrew the barricade at about 6 in the evening after district administration officials assured them of proper investigation into the incident.

Police could not say whether the incident was a murder or suicide.

Killing people is not jihad

Amini terms militants cold-blooded murderers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Fazlul Haque Amini MP, leader of a faction of Islami Oikya Jote, has said killing of innocent people and creating panic is not Jihad (holy war for Islam).

"Bombers can be dubbed either as cold-blooded murderers, insane or heinous criminals in the eyes of Islam", he said at a seminar held on Netrakona Sadar upazila UNO office premises Friday night. It was organised by a local madrasa.

The perpetrators of bomb attacks are engaged in a deep-rooted conspiracy against the

country. They want to push the country towards anarchy by destroying the democratic system, he added.

They are also creating a wrong impression about Islam, a religion that always upholds peace and amity and never supports such destructive activities. They are confusing people in the name of Islam, Amini said.

He said due to bomb blasts by militants, law enforcers are harassing madrasa teachers and students across the country.

"If any teachers or students of any Qawmi or Forkania madrasa is

involved with the JMB, please shut those. But do not harass them for nothing", he urged the government.

Some youths, misguided by vested quarters started the conspiracy when the country is progressing in a peaceful atmosphere, he said and urged people to unite and resist the evil forces.

Presided over by Mowlana Azizur Rahman, ex-principle of Netrakona Alia Madrasa, it was addressed by, among others, Mowlana Emdadul Haque Arihazari and Mowlana Junayed Ahmed.

Released JMB suspects flee Manikganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

The 11 JMB suspects released yesterday few hours after their arrest fled from their mess at Bardulia in the town later at night.

Acting on a tip-off, Manikganj Sadar police arrested the 11 youths from their mess at about 4 am Saturday.

They were released after district Amee of Jammata-e-Islami Maulana Delwar Hossain and General Secretary Anwar Hossain went to the police station for their release.

Forty-five youths including the 11 had been staying at the house for about one year. All the youths including those who were not arrested left the house Saturday night, sources said.

Meanwhile, alleged JMB member Rafiqul Islam, accused of involvement in August 17 blasts in Savar, was placed on seven days' remand yesterday.

BOMB SCARE

Fire Brigade to be deployed in Khulna court area

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna Metropolitan Police has decided to keep fire brigade units stand-by in court areas in the city during office hours as part of security measures following the suicide bomb attacks in Jhalakati, Gazipur and Chittagong.

DC Akbar Ali of KMP said water is indispensable for defusing a live bomb. But there is no source of getting water from any area near the courts.

Besides, plan is also underway to raise barbed wire barricades to prevent processionists from entering court compounds, said Assistant Police Commissioner Anisur Rahman of KMP's traffic division.

Police have started checking all residential hotels in Khulna city as part of the ongoing drive to nab Islamic extremists.

6 'JMB suspects' held in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Barisal Kotwali police arrested six persons including one Indian national as suspected JMB men from residential hotels and a bus stand in the city yesterday.

They are Bijoy Swarup, an Indian citizen; hawkers Ainal Fakir and Akkas Ali; betel nut trader Torab Ali Matubbar; and college students Faisal Khan and Manzur Shahin.

They were arrested under Section 54. Police said they will seek for remand of the arrested persons today.

Police said Bijoy Swarup, 38, son of Ram Swarup of Dakshinewar Mandir, Belgharia in Kolkata, West Bengal, has no legal document.

Bijoy Mela cancelled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Bijoy Mela, a traditional programme organised by the district administration in December, has been dropped from the schedule this year due to bomb threats across the country by Islamist militants.

Bijoy Mela was held every year since 1972 as part of programmes to celebrate victory over Pakistani occupation forces.

The decision to drop this Bijoy Mela was taken at a meeting held recently with Deputy Commissioner Rafiqul Islam in the chair, official sources told this correspondent yesterday.

When contacted, the DC said the program has been dropped on security reasons.



A landless family working on a weaving machine in Bhangamore in Saghata upazila in Gaibandha district.

PHOTO: STAR

Fighting an effective battle against Monga

An NGO creates jobs for the destitute in Gaibandha

REZAUL HOQ, Gaibandha

Landless Rafiqul Islam sheltered on the bank of Brahmaputra has finally got a means to save off Monga.

His five-member family no more starves now. They produce warm clothes and towels on a small weaving machine supplied for free by the Practical Action (Bangladesh), a foreign donor. They now dream of a better life.

Rafiqul Islam had taken shelter on the riverbank after the Brahmaputra devoured his homestead in Bhangamore village in Saghata upazila about two years back.

His family turned destitute as they lost their belongings. He worked as a day labourer and his family often starved during Monga (a pre-harvest jobless period).

Gaibandha is one of the disaster prone areas, affected by flood and erosion by Teesta and Brahmaputra rivers almost every year. Job creation for the river affected people is the most challenging work there.

Practical Action (former ITDG),

a donor agency, came to the aid of the Monga-affected people in Gaibandha district. After a survey of the affected people and assessing their opinion, it launched a pilot project to train 50 members of 10 families on weaving and supply them machines.

It worked well. The families learnt weaving in a fortnight. During training, each trainee got Tk 100 per day. They saved part of the allowance, which ultimately accumulated into a capital.

Practical Action initially bought them ten weaving machines at a cost of Tk 9,000 each.

The programme will be extended to other Monga affected areas, officials of the donor agency said while talking to this correspondent.

All these weaving machines went into operation on October 15. Three local NGOs -- SKS, PBKS and Ekota -- are running and monitoring the project.

A towel costs Tk 15.30 and is sold at Tk 30, said Rafiqul Islam. "We can produce 12 towels a day if we are provided soft loan", he

added. Rafiqul Islam's wife Sajeda Begum said she and their sons and daughters help Rafiqul by processing the yarn.

This correspondent during the visit saw about 150 destitute families on the riverbank, all sheltered there after the mighty river washed away their homesteads.

All of them are interested to set up weaving machines, which will ensure jobs round the year, said Kamal Hossain Jilani, Field Project Officer of SKS.

Rafiqul's family, like others covered by the project, now remains busy as winter is bout to set in. They are supplying warm wrappers for women at a very cheap rate, only Tk 50 per piece.

"Our ultimate aim is to provide Monga-affected people with jobs. The weaving project is suitable for them and we will expand it", said Ataur Rahman, Project Manager of Practical Action.

The project is under its Char Livelihoods Programme (CLP) in remote shoal areas of Brahmaputra, he added.

'False' case for protesting illegal sand extraction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A 'false' case has been filed against five persons accusing them of extortion, allegedly for protesting illegal extraction of sand from Surma riverbed in Golapganj upazila.

The incident has created commotion in the upazila. Local people are now planning agitation, sources there said. Villagers in Swarasati had earlier protested sand extraction from the riverbed there by Karia Enterprise using mechanized dredgers last week. A clash between the villagers and Karia men took place Sunday last.

Following this, Karia Enterprise filed an extortion case with Golapganj thana against five youths of the village on Monday. Sources said Karia Enterprise managed a license from the Bureau of Mineral Development (BMD) last year for sand extraction from Surma river.

Apprehending landslide and erosion along the bank in the area, people of Swarasati and neighbouring villages protested the illegal extraction.

Lawmaker from the area Syed Mokbul Hossain also wrote a letter to the State Minister for Petroleum and Mineral Resources to stop the "illegal sand extraction". The extraction remained suspended for a few days but started again, triggering protests by local people.

The BMD cancelled the license in the face of protests. The firm then went to the High Court and got a stay order on the BMD action. Meanwhile, filing of the 'false' case was discussed at the Golapganj Upazila Law and Order Committee meeting held there on Tuesday. The committee agreed to look into the matter and decided to take steps for withdrawal of the 'false' case.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md. Shahidul Islam chaired the meeting, attended by Union Parishad chairmen.

15 fishing boats looted in Bay

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Pirates looted fishes worth about Tk 2 lakh from 15 fishing boats from an off-shore area in Kuakata Friday night.

Earlier, on the same night, the same gang of pirates belonging to Alauddin Bahini looted merchandise valued at about Tk one lakh from five boats on the Tetulia river, police said.

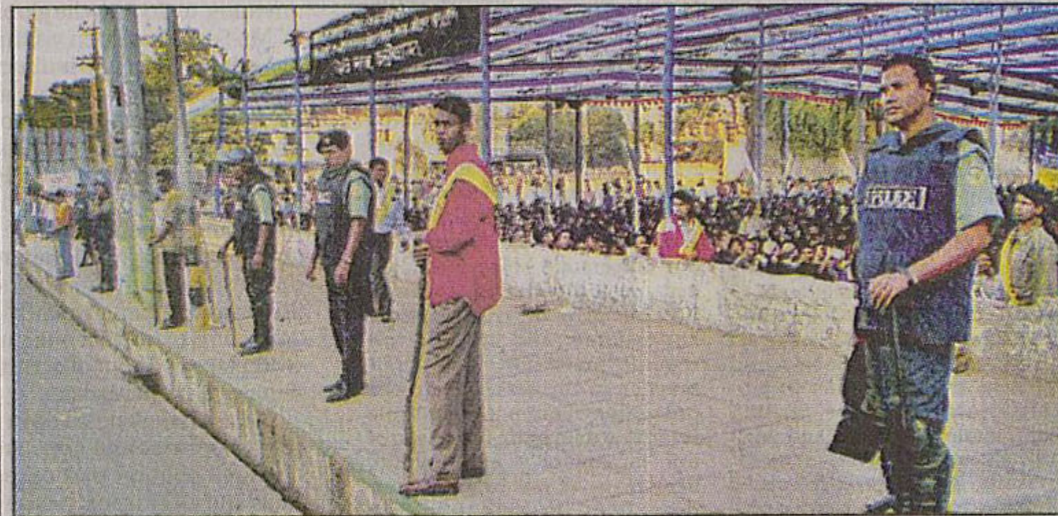
At least 20 fishermen and traders were injured in the attacks. Nine of them have been admitted to Mohipur and Kalapara hospitals.

They are Zafar, 24, Amin, 30, Shahana, 32, Farid, 33, Kawasr, 35, Alamgir, 30, Solim, 28, Nasir, 34 and Moazzem, 26 all from different villages in Kalapara upazila.

The pirates fled towards Bhola in four speed boats. Kuakata ferry police also confirmed the incidents.

Fishing in the Bay and off-shore areas have become risky because of frequent incidents of piracy. Alauddin, the ringleader of pirates in the area is from Gajaria village in Lalmolah upazila in Bhola district, sources said.

Police said they can not take any effective action due to lack of logistics including speedboats.



Jubo League members (wearing yellow badge) joined law enforcers in maintaining security during a 14-party meeting at Laidighi Maidan in Chittagong yesterday to protest bomb attacks.

PHOTO: STAR