

Mastermind caught with bomb

FROM PAGE 1 Bangladesh chapter in making the 76kg bomb planted near the rally stage of Sheikh Hasina in July 2000.

Meanwhile, locals and neighbours told The Daily Star that the bomb-maker introduced himself as a lungi trader, saying that he had a shop at the Joydevpur crossing.

He rented the tin-roofed three-room flat two months back. The curtain on the veranda of his flat remained drawn all the time, and his family refrained from having any communication with neighbours.

The local administration declined to make any official comment on the arrest and barred journalists from talking to and taking snaps of the militant.

Following statements of JMB suicide squad members Milon Islam Mithu and Akash, arrested at Chittagong on Sunday night, police raided Enayetullah's house at the Telipara village, Chandana, Joydevpur at 4:00am.

Police also picked up his wife Swarna, 24, one-and-a-half-year old child and caretaker Monir from the house, which was owned ironically by a former National Security Intelligence officer Nesar Ahmed.

Enayetullah confessed to making the two deadly bombs blasted on the bar council premises on November 29 and in front of the deputy commissioner's office two days later, sources said.

He also admitted to handing over a bomb to suicide bomber Abdur Razzak, held after the blast on December 1.

Claiming himself as a once-close associate of the militant kingpin Mufi Hamman, Enayetullah said he assisted the operations commander of the Harkatul Jihad (Huji)

who is his uncle. The other arrestees are -- Mejbah, 35, and Shafiqul Islam Pachu, 50.

GAIBANDHA Police yesterday recovered a list of 54 JMB militants, whose monthly contributions were outstanding, from a house in Gobindaganj, writes our Gaibandha correspondent.

Police said three suicide squad members including a woman rented the house on Sub-Registrar Office Road on Friday, identifying themselves as students of Mohimaganj Aliya Madrasa.

However, all the three fled leaving all their belongings behind yesterday morning. The landlord informed police about his tenants' missing, resulting in a raid by the law enforcers.

The police recovered a letter written to the house owner, the list, a mini tape recorder and some religious books.

The list includes names of JMB cadre Sabuj, an accused in the Mohimaganj BRAC office bomb blast case.

The letter signed by Baduzzaman reads, 'You've learnt our real identity and please keep it secret. God likes secrecy. We are in a hurry. We'll pay the rent when we come back for our luggage.'

RAISHAHI The Rab and police yesterday arrested seven top JMB leaders in Bagmara and Godagar upazilas, according to our staff correspondent in Rajshahi.

Tarikul Islam, a suspected suicide squad member, was sent to Joint Interrogation Cell in Dhaka, while three others -- Rafiqul Islam, a teacher of Nakhopara Dakhil Madrasa, Abu Sayeed of Konabaria, Mahsin Ali of Nakhopara in Bagmara -- were placed on police remand.

The rest -- Nazrul Islam of Hamitkutsa, Ruhul Amin, a teacher of Khamarpara primary school, Akbar Hossain of Taktapara in Bagmara, and Nazrul Islam of Godagar -- are yet to be hauled before a court.

Besides, police recovered a bomb-like material from the gate of Advocate Quamruzzaman's house in Alupotti in the city after the lawyer raised an alarm. However, it was a box wrapped in red tape and filled with sand.

MADARIPUR Police yesterday submitted charge sheet against six people including JMB and JMB lynchpins Abdur Rahman and Siddiqul Islam alias Bangla Bhai to a court in connection with six blasts in Madaripur on August 17, writes our Madaripur correspondent.

Other charge-sheeted accused are Madaripur unit JMB leaders Maolana Ali Ahmad, Maolana Abdur Rouf, Hijbut Tawheed leader Abbas Akand and Ismail Khan.

The investigation officer of the case in the charge sheet said Ali Ahmad and Abdur Rouf led a team to blast bombs at six places following a plan taken at Ali's house.

Meanwhile, panic gripped the town's residents after two fake bombs were recovered on the premises of Amin Uddin High School, KHULNA.

Khulna police recovered three bombs -- two from Customs Ghat and one from Pabla -- in the city on Sunday and yesterday, our staff correspondent in Khulna reports.

The two bombs recovered yesterday from Customs Ghat, close to Khulna Zilla School, were taken to Rab headquarters at Khalishpur for examination.

A few days ago, the headmistress of the school received a letter from JMB threatening to blow up the school for not introducing Islamic education system.

Meanwhile, a man who resembles Bangla Bhai was caught by a security guard of Gobachakra Khalashibari Jam-e-Masjid and madrasa yesterday noon, but he was freed later.

Sonadanga police rushed there to

see the man but in the meantime he was freed. It is unclear who influenced the locals to free the man.

SATKHIRA The District and Sessions Judge's Court at Satkhira yesterday ordered attachment of 10 moveable property of the 10 absconding accused, out of 17 who were charge-sheeted in the August 17 bomb blasts cases in the district, reports our Satkhira correspondent.

The accused whose property would be attached are JMB chief Ataur Rahman, his younger brother Ataur Rahman Sunny, Siddiqul Islam alias Bangla Bhai, ex-operations commander of Jagata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMB), Fakar Uddin Raji, Nayeem, Asadul, Momtaz, Noor Ali Member, Asadullah Hujan and Abul Khair.

Seven of the charge-sheeted accused have already been arrested. SYLHET The 25 youths caught as suspected JMB activists from Deraul upazila of Sunamganj district on Sunday were sent to jail by a magistrate court at Sunamganj yesterday, writes our staff correspondent in Sylhet.

The police quizzed the arrestees but failed to extract any significant clues from them.

Deraul police picked them up from Deraul College building. The arrestees aged between 15 and 42 years, however, claimed themselves as vendors. They hail from Kushtia, Jhenidha and Rajbari districts.

MANIKGANJ Police arrested a suspected JMB member from a mosque at Shibhalaya on Sunday night. The arrestee, Yakub Ali, hailing from Feni teaches Quran at Kholoid mosque at Shibhalaya, adds our Manikganj correspondent.

TANGAIL Tangail police yesterday arrested an Indian citizen at Jamuna Residential Hotel in New Bus Stand area of the town. Police suspect that he might have links with the militants, according to our Tangail correspondent.

The arrestee introduced himself to the police as Akram Ali, hailing from Kharbali village of Sarbuk thana in Bhorpeta district of Assam. He claimed that he is a student of Goalpara Madrasa and also the imam of a mosque in India, sources said.

The police said the arrestee checked in to the hotel hiding his real address. He mentioned in the hotel register that he is a resident of Roumari in Kurigram district.

The police also recovered some Islamic books and mobile numbers of different persons of Bangladesh in his possession.

RANGPUR The police arrested four suspected JMB members -- Hafez Abdul Gafur, Nayeem Raihan, Shariful and Raihan Kabir -- in the district yesterday, reports our Rangpur correspondent.

He believed that his son was involved in a sacred work, which would bring 'blessings to his family'.

But after the recent spate of countryside suicide bomb blasts Matiar got concerned and ran to the madrasa again.

Panic gripped him when the principal, Mohammad Firoj, also a well-known activist of Jamaat-e-Islami told him that he did not know where his son was.

Matiar went to the elders and influential people of the area and then to the police station.

The police received Matiar's written statement and said they would investigate the matter first and then think about taking actions.

As this correspondent asked the

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Dhaka also extended cooperation in improving the road condition in Myanmar but Yangon is yet to agree to declare the proposed Dhaka-Yangon direct road as part of the Asian Highway.

A high official of the communications ministry told The Daily Star that the matter now depends on the national policy. It is true the country will hardly benefit from joining the giant network with the existing road map.

But, if the country remains out of the huge network, it may cause difficulties in future, he thought.

Former ESCAP director (communications) Dr M Rahmatullah had earlier told The Daily Star that joining the Asian Highway network did not mean giving transit to any country. The highway is just a communication network, and separate bilateral agreements are required to transport goods and people through this route.

If Bangladesh does not want to give transit to India, it will not sign those bilateral agreements. But still it can develop the roads up to the Asian Highway standard, he pointed out.

FROM PAGE 1 discussion with the ministers for education, information, finance, commerce, science and ICT, communications, and home affairs, and some senior leaders of trade bodies at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

Commenting on his meeting with the prime minister, Bill Gates said, "I am pleased to see such a progress to bridge the digital divide and grow the software industry in an emerging market like Bangladesh. The results we are achieving here can only come through strong partnerships between industries and the government."

Microsoft Bangladesh signed the Partners-in-Learning (PL) MoU with the Ministry of Education.

Feroz Mahmud, country manager of Microsoft Bangladesh, and Abdul Aziz, education secretary, signed the three-year agreement, which aims to increase access to and build capacity for the use of ICT by educators and students.

The Microsoft chief walked into the room with a mild smile in his face to witness the signing ceremony also attended by a number of ministers and secretaries.

"Here in Bangladesh, we aim to train over 10,000 teachers and over 200,000 students over the next three years. We have also donated a sum of \$100,000 in cash grants," Bill Gates told the ceremony.

"We have also rolled out 'Unlimited Potential' programme in partnership with Learn Foundation where community ICT training is provided to a target of 2,000 disadvantaged youths each year.

In addition, alliances were also established with 10 leading universities in Bangladesh to deliver the Microsoft Developer Network Academic Alliance (MSDNAA) where teachers and students will have easier access and exposure to the latest software and technology at

affordable prices," Bill Gates mentioned.

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Under this programme, Microsoft is providing technology access and skills-based training to primary and secondary-level schoolteachers and students in developing countries around the world.

So far, 100 countries have taken part in the PL programme reaching over 10.2 million students. Bangladesh is the 101st country to be enlisted in this programme.

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Education Minister Farruk Sobhan M Osman Farruk said IT education at secondary and higher secondary levels will be strengthened as Microsoft gives the technical backup to the educational institutions, reports UNB.

Microsoft has already announced a grant of \$15 million for Asian Women's University in Chittagong.

On the agreement, the minister said, "The ball is now in our court -- the future of this agreement depends on our performance."

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The IGRD minister made similar announcement on Friday as well, but no initiative was taken to that end.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on Wednesday called upon all political parties and personalities of the country to sit down with the government and find ways to put an end to the raging bomb terrorism by the militants. But she is scheduled to leave Dhaka today to attend the OIC summit to be held in Makkah on December 7-9.

On her return on December 9, political parties, professional bodies including those of engineers, physicians, agriculturists and journalists, and academics and vice-chancellors of universities, might be invited to a discussion in line with her call.

Though any tangible measures have yet to be taken to arrange the proposed talks, the prime minister on Sunday described her meet with the business leaders a beginning of the national dialogue and said it will continue.

In reality, things appear to be somewhat different. The country's major trade bodies said they went to the Prime Minister's Office as part of their continuing efforts to have a consensus reached among the political parties over ways to combat the menace of militancy which threatens to scare off local and foreign investors and affect the country's economy.

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"We sought her appointment in a letter on last Wednesday and met her

accordingly," he added.

"What can we say if the government terms it the beginning of a national dialogue," the FBCCI leader observed.

The business bodies, who also sent a letter seeking the appointment of the leader of the opposition on Thursday, did not get any responses as of last night.

"We are trying to meet the leader of the opposition too, as there's no alternative to getting united to stop the bomb terrorism," Mir Nasir Hossain said.

Al President Sheikh Hasina has not yet given the business leaders an appointment as the opposition parties have already rejected the proposal for a dialogue between them and the government, sources said.

"We couldn't help but wonder why the business community has to take such initiative now when there was none to take one after the August 21 grenade attacks and the killings of two former lawmakers" Saber Hossain Chowdhury, political secretary to the opposition leader, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the business leaders should first make their stance clear. They should clarify why they are not holding the government responsible for its failure to act, particularly when the prime minister says she knows who are the perpetrators behind the blast incidents, he added.

The AL-led 14-party opposition combine at a meeting on Thursday termed the prime minister's call for dialogue a farce. They said the government is making a mockery of discussion instead of hunting down the militants when every single democratic institution in the country is at stake due to repeated bomb attacks.

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The removal of Natwar from the Steering Committee came a few weeks after he was divested of external affairs portfolio in the wake of the report by the UN committee headed by former US federal reserve head Paul Volcker.

The report said the Indian minister and the Congress party were among non-contractual beneficiaries of illegal surcharges paid by business firms and politicians across the world for securing contracts in Iraq.

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Natwar's easing out of Congress Steering Committee came hours after he had ruled out resignation from the cabinet.

He said, "I am not guilty of any wrong-doing in law or equity. I refuse to sacrifice myself. I am aware that if I do that it will not stop with me. The opposition will use my resignation to further tarnish the reputation of the Congress party. I will not let that happen."

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When asked if he would accept Natwar's resignation, Manmohan Singh told reporters accompanying him to his Moscow visit on Sunday night that if Natwar voluntarily decided to quit the cabinet, he would consider what to do.

Manmohan's remarks came just a day after Natwar had held a meeting with him in the wake of a fresh charge reportedly made by India's Ambassador to Croatia Aniel Matherani that it was Natwar who had secured oil vouchers from Saddam Hussein regime in 2001.

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Asian highway

FROM PAGE 1 By joining Asian Highway," Communications Minister Nazmul Huda said. "So far our position is not to ratify the convention without bringing a change in the route map of the network."

Experts however are of the opinion that Bangladesh can join the Asian Highway network and ratify the convention without giving transit to any particular country.

The foreign ministry in a number of working papers emphasised signing the convention before the expiry of the deadline on December 31. It observed that the country should not be left out of the giant communication network.

Bangladesh will face an image problem in the international arena if it remains out of the network, the ministry said. It requested the communications ministry to take initiative so that the country is included in the network.

Foreign ministry officials also think that the change in the route map could be brought even after ratifying the convention. "If we do not ratify the convention, we will lose the opportunity to place any proposals regarding the network," said a top official.

The country should first ratify the agreement to become eligible for placing its proposals for consideration of the other countries concerned, he felt.

The working committee of the UN-ESCAP Asian Highway network will meet in Bangkok on December 14-15. Foreign ministry officials are likely to represent Bangladesh at the meeting.

Officials of the communication ministry attended the committee meetings in the past but this time foreign ministry officials have been assigned to represent the country at

Thousands march

FROM PAGE 16 banner of 14-party opposition coalition, marched through different city streets and chanted slogans demanding that the BNP-Jamaat-led ruling alliance step down.

Many of the marchers, led by ranking opposition leaders, carried placards and banners with anti-government slogans inscribed on them. They also wore black ribbons and carried small black flags.

The 14-party opposition coalition organised the march from the city's Mukhtagan to Central Shaheed Minar yesterday afternoon.</