

PM invites 16 parties to talks

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dialogue will be fixed in consultation with you," said the chairperson of the ruling alliance leader BNP.

Besides the AL, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) yesterday sent the invitation to the chiefs of Jamaat-e-Islami, Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Janata League, National Awami Party (NAP), Samyabadi Dal, Zaker Party, Gono Forum, Bangladesh Smajtantrik Dal (BSD), and the three factions of Jatiya Party, two of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) and three of Islami Oikya Jote. Of them, Gono Forum, NAP, Samyabadi Dal and a JSD faction are components of the 14-party combine.

The 14-party opposition camp termed the invitation a farce, alleging the government is not sincere in routing the Islamist militants and the move is aimed at gaining political benefits.

"Consultation with the opposition parties is not needed to find ways to contain militancy. The government itself has spawned the militants and it alone can resolve the problem," Abdul Jalil, AL general secretary and coordinator of the 14-party opposition combine, remarked yesterday.

Zaker Party also expressed its unwillingness to join the dialogue. The party chairman, Mostafa Ameer Faisal, at a discussion meeting yesterday dubbed Jamaat-e-Islami the godfather of militants and said the dialogue is not possible keeping Jamaat in the government.

As of 8:00pm, when this report was filed, the CPB did not receive the letter.

CPB General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim told The Daily Star, "We have asked the government to let us know when it will expel the war criminals from the cabinet and punish them, and when it will take actions against the ruling alliance leaders accused of patronising the militants."

He said, "We have no problem to join the dialogue if the government meets our demands."

Kazi Firoz Rashid, political adviser to Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad, said they too were yet to receive the letter. But if invited, the JP will sit in the dialogue.

HASINAREFUSES TO RECEIVE THE LETTER

Prime Minister's Assistant Private Secretary (APS) Shamsul Alam arrived at Hasina's Dhanmondhi residence Sudha Sadan at 4:50pm to deliver the letter and waited until 5:05pm, when AL President's APS Alauddin Nasim told him Hasina will not receive it.

"As per a party decision, the opposition leader will not receive the letter," Alam quoted Nasim as telling him over cellphone.

"I am here to deliver the letter as directed by Prime Minister's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury," Alam told reporters in front of Sudha Sadan. Before leaving the spot, he made another attempt to deliver the letter, but Sudha Sadan staff member Akkas Ali told him at the gate there was no

one in the house to receive the letter. Alam then went to Hasina's office in the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban but found none to receive the letter.

PMO sources said the letter was then faxed to both Sudha Sadan and Hasina's Jatiya Sangsad office, and was also given to a courier service operator to deliver to the opposition leader.

Before sending Alam to Sudha Sadan, Harris Chowdhury informed AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil and Political Secretary to AL President Saber Hossain Chowdhury about the government move over telephone.

Harris Chowdhury said, "We will send the letter to opposition leader's parliament office and if the office does not receive it our leaders will meet Awami League leaders."

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, political secretary to the opposition leader said the government is playing a dual standard role. "In one hand the government is calling us for dialogue on the other hand they accused us of bomb terrorism in the country," Saber told The Daily Star.

"We will have to assess the situation...in which context the government sent the letter for dialogue...as a political party or as a terrorist group," he said. "The government will have to make it clear first."

14-PARTY BRIEFING

Leaders of the 14-party opposition alliance met at an emergency meeting in the city last night where they discussed about the prime minister's move to send to different political parties including the opposition leader.

Quoting the meeting discussion, the co-ordinator of the 14-party alliance said, "It is now transparent that ruling coalition partner Jamaat-e-Islami is the main force of militants and action should be taken against them."

"Ministers like Aminul Haq and deputy minister Ruhul Quddus Talukder Dula, and a number of other government men have been accused of protecting militants and government high ups should prove their sincerity in fight against militants by taking action against these people," Jalil said.

"Government is not sincere to root out militants," Jalil said and about the prime minister's letter, he said, "Its nothing but a farce of the government to gain political benefits."

"It is not necessary to talk the opposition to find ways to combat militancy. It's the government who has created militants and government can alone resolve the problem," he said.

He said the prime minister should discuss the issue in the cabinet before meeting with opposition parties.

About Harris Chowdhury's phone to him before sending the letter, Jalil said, "Prime Minister's political secretary phoned me to inform about sending the letter to leader of the opposition. I told him to send the letter to the Parliament office of the opposition leader from where we collect it later."

"Instead, the letter was sent to the residence of the opposition leader...the way they carry the letter is

questionable and there is political bad motive," Jalil said.

CONTENT OF THE PM LETTER

"We have differences in opinion, ways and techniques which is usual in a democratic society. But today's problem is not of any party or politics but of the entire nation. Therefore, resolving the problem unilaterally is difficult for everyone," Khaleda said in the letter to the opposition leader.

Expressing her willingness to have talks with the political parties, the Prime Minister said date and time of the dialogue would be fixed in consultation with leaders of the parties concerned.

"You know destructive bomb attacks are being carried out in different areas of the country. Innocent people are being killed, maimed and property damaged," she said. These well-planned terrorist activities by an isolated and derailed circle in the name of holy religion Islam has pushed our public safety to a threat along with damaging national interest and image, she added.

The letter said she has arranged the national dialogue to define ways and means to resolve the crisis, which, she said, is also expected by the people.

"I believe that you will perform the history-set duty and fulfill the aspirations of the people and demand of the day by participating in it," she added.

In the letter, the Prime Minister said a ploy is going on to hinder the nation's success and advancement, including the democratic process, social stability and economic progress.

"You have noticed that the government has already taken all-out measures to tackle the situation," she told the opposition political leaders.

Khaleda said a new negative dimension has added to the problem with adoption of the suicidal approach in the activities conducted with misinterpretation of Islam.

"It is the demand of the present time to face the national problem nationally," she said.

The Prime Minister said such problems are being faced with concerted efforts of all in many countries with good results. The people of Bangladesh are also expecting a "united role of ours," she added.

She said the political leaderships in Bangladesh are united in favour of the hopes and aspirations of the people in every moment of need.

"We have the burning instance of working together in the great struggle for independence, movement for democracy and different national calamities," Khaleda Zia said and expressed her firm conviction that there would be no exception in the present case.

9kg explosive found

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League (BCL) activist Rafiq asked him to keep the containers, saying they contained fish-food.

The locals said Masum was close to Rafiq, who runs a fish project in the locality and is now in jail being accused in several cases, including for arms. Masum's classmates told this correspondent that Masum has been keeping himself isolated from them for the last couple of months.

Sub-Inspector Gazi Ruhul Amin of Gazipur Sadar Police Station filed two cases under the Explosive Substances Act in the two incidents of explosives recovery—one against Jewel, his wife Swapna, Selim Miah, Masum and his parents, and another against Jewel and his wife.

JEWEL'S CONFESSION

The police yesterday officially gave statement to the press disclosing some information Jewel provided in interrogation. The authorities, however, did not allow the press to interview him.

Superintendent of Police (SP) of Gazipur Atiqul Islam told the press that police on Monday morning recovered a flask from Jewel while he was fitting a bomb inside it, like the one that exploded in front of the DC office.

Among the seized equipment were also a drilling machine, a voltmeter, wires, knives, scissors, a wrench, a compass, a toy-car and pieces of iron used in fishing net.

Quoting Jewel, Atiqul told journalists that Jewel was one of the top JMB leaders and in-charge of the Dhaka-Tangail-Gazipur region. He had direct connection with JMB chief Shaikh Abdur Rahman, who trained him bomb-making.

Jewel also admitted to making the two bombs blasted on the bar association premises and in front of the deputy commissioner's office in Gazipur on November 29 and December 1.

He said he handed over the bombs to the suicide bombers, observed the blasts from distance and then reported to his high commands. The police seized a mobile phone and three SIM cards from his possession.

About the explosives recovered from Masum's house, Jewel said the load was transported to Gazipur from Dhaka in paint containers.

Fresh voter roll

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roll. In reply, the two gave note of dissent in each of those files, sources said.

Bypassing the objections from the two election commissioners, the EC secretariat on orders of the CEC has appointed 83 registration officers, 6,270 assistant registration officers, 55,684 supervisors and 2,16,722 enumerators for the job.

"Election Commissioner M Munsef Ali and I have objected to recruiting manpower for preparing a new voter list. We said new staff can be appointed only to revise the existing list," Mohammad Ali said.

Election Commissioner M Munsef Ali earlier told The Daily Star that he never assented to the idea of having a new list. "I said definitely and firmly that the existing voter list should be revised."

According to the schedule declared yesterday, the process of collecting information and scrutiny will end by January 31 and a draft voter list will be published on February 28.

The enumerators will start going from door to door for information about the persons eligible to be on the voter roll on January 1 and the supervisor will start checking those information on January 8.

Assistant registration officers will begin re-checking the information on January 22. Any complaint about the draft voter list will have to be submitted by March 16 and revising authorities will resolve the complaints by April 1.

Meanwhile, CEC MAAZ yesterday met President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban and apprised him of various activities of the commission.

Describing the EC's role as extremely important in holding elections in a free and fair manner, he assured the CEC of all-out cooperation in carrying out the task.

Jewel himself also had one of those one-kg containers and used around 80 gram explosives in each of the bombs blasted in Gazipur.

The SP, who received training on explosives in the US, told the press that around 150-160 bombs could have been made with that amount of explosives.

Jewel is an expert in bomb-making and each bomb he made was unique and different, he added.

Jewel also admitted to writing the leaflets found at the August 17 blast sites and sending threat letters to the local journalists and making threat phone calls to one of them.

He has lost regular contacts with his high-ups following the August 17 blasts. Atiqul Islam quoted Jewel as saying,

"Our Tangail correspondent adds: Top JMB leader Jewel stayed at the house of his brother-in-law Shoeb, another JMB activist, in Balla area under Kalihati upazila in the district, for collecting members and training them.

The police said a big consignment of the bombs used in the JMB attacks in Tangail, Gazipur and Dhaka was supplied by Jewel.

FOREIGN EXPERTS IN GAZIPUR

The team of eight foreign explosive experts from Singapore visited the Gazipur blast sites yesterday noon at 12:45pm. They examined the evidences of the bomb blasts. They also had a meeting with the local police officials, sources said.

The local authorities, however, remained silent on the details of the foreign experts.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Abdul Quayyum last night told The Daily Star over phone that the team arrived on Monday night to examine the modes of bombs and explosives.

"They have come as a part of bilateral cooperation and will only examine the bombs," the IGP said.

This is the first time that any foreign experts went to the district following the August 17 countrywide blasts.

Niko seeking

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the second on June 24.

State-owned Petrobangla sent the letter claiming the compensation to Niko following the nod to go ahead from the Prime Minister's Office and the energy ministry, sources said.

A Niko official said the company would possibly send a reply letter today after consulting with the company headquarters.

A source said, the amount in the compensation-claim is around Tk 250 crore which includes Tk 84 crore for environmental damage and the rest for the burning of 8 billion cubic feet of natural gas.

Niko has been operating two gas fields in Bangladesh, one in Feni and another in Tengratila of Chhatak.

Chairman of Niko Board of Directors Edward S Sampson, with intimation to the Prime Minister's Office, energy ministry, Petrobangla and Bapex, removed President Quasem Sharif of its Bangladesh operations from his position.

Sharif had been working in that position since the beginning of the company's operations in Bangladesh.

Brian J Adolph, vice president and country director of Niko, is now working as the chief of Bangladesh operations. None was appointed to the vacant post of president.

Industry sources said Sharif and Niko relationship was facing troubled times for last few months.

Following the second blow out in Tengratila Sharif was criticised for his mishandling of the project. Even some of his decisions were questioned in the Niko headquarters in Calgary.

He was staying in the United States for the last four months having no relation with the company, a Niko source claimed. Sharif was absent during Sampson's recent visit to Bangladesh.

Robber killed in Rab 'crossfire'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A notorious robber, Anu alias Anu Dakat, was killed in a shootout between Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and his gang members at Bhatpara on the city suburb yesterday.

Rab sources said Anu, 40, was captured around 4:00am on Monday at his parent's house in Bhatpara. The Rab men took him to the battalion headquarters where he was quizzed.

On Anu's information, Rab men took him to Bhatpara Katakaphar around 3:15am yesterday to capture other members of his gang and recover weapons. Rab claimed Anu's accomplices opened fire on the team forcing the special force to return fire. Anu was severely wounded in the gunfire.

Rab sources said he was rushed to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College and Hospital where the duty doctors declared him dead at 4:15am. His body was handed over to the family yesterday afternoon after autopsy.

The elite force also recovered two revolvers, one pipe gun and two cartridges from the spot.

Anu is the fourth person to be killed in 'crossfire' in Rab custody in Sylhet. He had robbery, looting and 11 murder cases filed against him with the Sylhet Kotwali Police Station. He had also served two years imprisonment.

OIC meets

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the future challenges and proposes comprehensive solutions that take into consideration political, economic, social and cultural aspects of the Muslim Ummah.

The summit, aimed at restoration of the Muslim nations' self-confidence, involved Islamic scholars in the preparation of the summit agenda, which is for the first time in OIC's history, officials said.

Meanwhile, the issues concerning Iraq, Kashmir, and Palestine are not on the draft agenda of the summit.

The summit aims at doing something concrete rather than indulging only in political rhetoric, OIC Secretary General Prof Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu told journalists in Jeddah yesterday.

"We condemn terrorism in all its forms and that includes state terrorism. We condemn terrorism because it targets innocent people," he said.

Saudi King Abdullah will lay the foundation of the new headquarters of the OIC secretariat in Jeddah.

Besides 57 OIC member states and five observer states, 25 independent organisations are taking part in the summit.

The OIC was formally established in September 1969.

Textbook

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year, many prospective bidders will not accept it easily," Abu Taher said.

Referring to the price hike of paper and other materials, he said publishers and sellers will go for movement if the government invites tenders without increasing the books' prices.

Bangladesh Book Publishers and Sellers Association also demanded that the government make good about Tk 1,000 crore that the publishers claim to have invested for publishing the new textbooks under the proposed system.

Different teachers and students' organisations yesterday demanded taking stringent actions against those who have financially benefited from the process of introducing the uni-track education.

Meanwhile, Education Minister M Osman Farruk yesterday told journalists at his office that the government will soon sit with the publishers for ensuring the timely availability of textbooks to the students.

Silk Route

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delegation started the journey from Kunming, the capital of the western province Yunnan of China on December 1, by two cars. They were scheduled to reach Teknaf point on December 7 and reach Dhaka on December 10.

At present they are awaiting the permission to enter the Myanmar territory with their cars at the rally point of China-Myanmar border.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh government took necessary steps to receive the delegation at the Teknaf point. The Chairman of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation Dr Mahfuzul Haque will formally receive the delegation upon their arrival.

"We are ready to receive them at Teknaf after they cross the river Naf," said a high official in the ministry of communication. The ministry of home affairs and National Board of Revenue have taken special measures to give them immigration and custom clearances, he added.

The Cox's Bazar executive engineer of roads and highways has also been given orders to arrange ferry services for carrying the delegation with their cars.

The communication ministry officials said the visit would contribute a lot in establishing a direct road link with China.

22 Ctg journos

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Meantime, the law enforcers arrested 24 people including a retired army sergeant on Monday night and yesterday.

CHITTAGONG
JMB yesterday threatened to kill 22 journalists of Chittagong and to blow up the Chittagong Press Club, reports BDNNEWS.

The managing committee of the Chittagong Press Club (CPC) filed a general diary with the Kotwali police station.

The hand-written letter received by post was handed over to President of the CPC Abu Sufian at around 1:00pm.

JMB claimed that it has a well-organised network in Chittagong.

In addition to the president and secretaries of the CPC and of the Chittagong Union of Journalists, resident editor of the Protom Alo, Abul Momen, journalists Fark Iqbal, Biswajeet Chowdhury, Anjan Kumer Sen, Samarash Baidya, Sumi Khan and Ali Abbas are also on the hit list, the letter said.

The managing committee has convened an emergency meeting tomorrow to determine the next course of action, said CPC president Abu Sufian.

The managing committee in a meeting on Monday also decided to install CCTV cameras and metal detectors at the entrance of the five-storied Club building.

A similar letter threatening to blow up the club and to kill journalists was sent earlier also.

A contingent of police has been guarding the club round the clock.

SYLHET
Our Staff Correspondent in Sylhet reports: JMB sent a letter to the Superintendent of Police (SP) of Sylhet Ansar Uddin Khan Pathan yesterday threatening to kill him within a week if JMB members are not released immediately.

TANGAIL
Our Tangail correspondent adds: Tangail police yesterday arrested three suspected JMB cadres. Rapid Action Battalion arrested Saiful Islam, Imam of the Biswas Betka Ahle Hadith mosque on Monday night. Two other JMB suspects were arrested on Monday in Nagarpur.

Meanwhile, suspected JMB members Habli, Ahad, and Rustam, of Madarok village under Delduar upazila in the district who are accused in the August 17 countrywide serial blast case surrendered to a magistrate court on Monday. They were sent to jail.

KUSHITIA
Our Kushtia correspondent reports: JMB threatened to kill the Kushtia DC, four magistrates and the officer-in-charge (OC) of Bheramara police station yesterday.

Six pieces of cloths, which are used to make shrouds, were attached to the letters sent to the DC and the OC, sources said.

In the letter DC Jamal A Naser Choudhury, was warned that he will be killed and all offices of the district administration will be blown up anytime.

In the other letter the militants asked the Bheramara OC to eat good as his 'days are numbered'.

MYMENSINGH
Our Mymensingh correspondent adds: Shah Alam Bakshi, DC of the district, received a letter yesterday in which the militants said he will be attacked by suicide squad members within 15 days if Islamic law is not established in the country.

Bhaluka upazila UNO also received a similar letter sent by Shahidur Rahman of Bhaluka municipality ward no 9 who claimed that he and his three sons belong to a JMB suicide squad and his sons have been assigned to carry out an attack on the UNO.

SIRAJGANJ
Our Sirajganj correspondent reports: JMB on Monday night threatened to kill two first class magistrates—Khurshid Alam and Munira Begum—of the district court.

Security has been beefed up in the districts following the threats.

DINAJPUR
128 die

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by the crash. It was like being in hell," he said.

The C-130 aircraft had just taken off from the nearby Mehrabad airport en route to Bandar Abbas, a port city in southern Iran. It experienced a technical problem and was returning the Mehrabad for an emergency landing when it hit the building, state-run television said.

The plane, which belonged to the army air force, carried 84 passengers and 10 crew members, Iranian television reported. All aboard were killed, the mayor of Tehran, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, told The Associated Press.

Witness Iraj Mordi told AP he saw the plane as it appeared to circle the Mehrabad Airport before seeing its tail suddenly burst into flames, leaving a smoke trail in the sky as it plummeted.

Mordin said he thought the plane was going to crash into a gasoline station and fled, but turned and saw it slam into what he thought was the building's eighth floor.

In April, an Iranian military Boeing 707 with 157 people aboard skidded off a runway at Tehran airport and caught fire, killing three people. Last year, a Ukrainian-built aircraft carrying aerospace scientists crashed in central Iran, killing all 44 people aboard.

Our Dinajpur correspondent writes: JMB made death threats to the DC of the district, the district judge, and the UNO of Kaharol upazila yesterday through letters sent to them.

In the letters the militants said suicide squads will kill DC Surutzamman, the district judge and the UNO within three days.

The threats were made in the name of Moshir Rahman of Bogra who is supposedly a member of a suicide squad of JMB. Bogra police later arrested Moshir, his father Masudur Rahman, and his elder brother Mostakul Alam Mamun.

Dinajpur Zilla School also received a letter from JMB, which threatened to blow up the school.

Dinajpur police arrested at least six suspected militants from Parbatipur upazila yesterday.

SATKHIRA

Our Satkhira correspondent adds: Rabiul Islam and Shariful Islam, who claimed themselves as suicide squad members of JMB, yesterday issued a letter to Satkhira DC threatening to kill him and to blow up his office if Islamic Shariah law is not introduced.

Labelling the DC and all officials as corrupt, the militants asked the DC to resign if he fails to contain corruption.

Meanwhile, police yesterday arrested three suspected JMB cadres in Satkhira town.

The police said Mufti Azhar, general secretary, of Islami Oikya Jote, a coalition partner of the ruling alliance, phoned the OC of local police station requesting him to release the arrestees.

BOGRA
Our correspondent in Bogra reports: Police arrested three people including a retired army sergeant in Bogra early yesterday suspecting their links to militancy.

The police raided a house at Jaleswashi in the town and arrested Munshi Habibur Rahman, 63, a former madrasa teacher and 60-year old Abdul Malek, an ex-army sergeant. In a separate drive Shahajapur police arrested Wajed Ali, 35, in the district.

Meanwhile, police sent JMB chief Abdur Rahman's nephew Abdul Mannan to a court yesterday with a prayer for remand. Rab arrested Mannan from Bogra on Sunday.

Khetlal police arrested Ishaq Ali, suspected cadre of JMB, yesterday from Telabadul village of Khetlal upazila in Joypurhat, reports BDNNEWS.

JESSORE
Our Jessore correspondent reports: Police recovered a powerful bomb from the premises of a fish farm at Kholadanga village under the Sadar upazila yesterday.

MANIKGANJ
Our Manikganj correspondent adds: JMB member Rafikul Islam yesterday admitted to police of his involvement in the serial blast at Savar on August 17.

He informed the police that JMB chief Abdur Rahman's brother Ataur Rahman Sunny often visited Ashulia Jame Mosque and he trained 23 youths, 12 of whom took special training for suicide operations while the rest went to Afghanistan, police sources said.

Rafikul, a first year student at Sharif Bagh Madrassa at Kafraan under Dharmrai police station, is now on a seven-day remand, said the police.

7 killed

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village under Shahajadpur upazila, Parul Bala Datta, 58, of municipal area of Sirajganj and Rahul Islam, 14, son of Dr Rashedul Islam of Bera municipal area in Pabna.

The identity of two women, aged around 35 and a child aged around 12 could not be known.

Of the injured, 25 were admitted to Pabna General Hospital, Bera and Santhia Health Complexes.

The driver and helper of the bus managed to flee the scene.

Consensus

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Earlier on Sunday, a meeting of the secretaries general of the alliance parties was postponed as the Azizul and Amini factions of the