

JMB continues to issue

FROM PAGE 1
admitted to Nilphamari Sadar Adhunik Hospital.

The huge bang triggered panic among the college students as well as the slum dwellers. Four students suffered minor injuries while trying to come out of classrooms in a hurry hearing the sound of explosion.

The police recovered seven bombs from the site of explosion and searched the pond and its adjacent areas to see if there were more.

Visiting the site, our correspondent found that pointed pebbles were used as splinters in the bomb. Superintendent of Police (SP) of Nilphamari Shobeh Ahmed told the press that it is too early to make any comment about the nature of the bomb.

Security has been beefed up in the town.

The JMB earlier threatened to blow up the Nilphamari Government Boys High School and Chilahati Merchant High School.

SATKHIRA
Our Khulna correspondent reports: Four farmers were harvesting in a field in Alaiapur area under Tala upazila of the district at about 10:30am when some unidentified persons from a speedy motorbike hurled a bomb at them.

The farmers escaped any harm as they ran for cover.

The police said they suspected that the miscreants exploded the bomb from a long distance for experimentation.

CHITTAGONG
A powerful bomb was recovered in front of the Railway Post Ground High School near the Tiger Pass in the port city yesterday morning.

Some passers-by saw the bomb around 100 yards off the school at about 9:15am and informed the police.

At 12:20pm a Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) team defused the bomb by slashing the wire fixed on it and took it to their office.

"The bomb has no timer device on it but its ingredients seem powerful," said a Rab official.

SIRAJGANJ
Locals found a live bomb in front of the Hazrat FatematuZZohra Hafizia Qwami Women's Madrasa at around 6:00am yesterday.

A team of Sirajganj police and firefighters defused the five-inch bomb after one hour of hectic efforts and brought it to the Sirajganj Police Station.

DINAJPUR
The police recovered two powerful time-bombs from a paddy field in Bochaganj upazila in the district yesterday morning after locals found them, our Dinajpur correspondent said.

The police later defused the bombs. Meanwhile, the JMB issued death threat through letters to the DC of Dinajpur and five UNOs in the district. The letter asked the DC to transfer the UNOs of Nabanganj, Birampur, Hakimpur, Chirribandar and Phulbari

upazilas within December 24, otherwise all UNO offices will be blown up within December 30.

PANCHAGARH
The JMB sent a threat letter to DC Azhar Ali, asking him to release all the JMB men arrested in the district within three days.

The letter also said if any JMB men is arrested again, it will blow up the DC and if he fails to release the arrested JMB activists, they will shoot him down with AK47.

SHERPUR
Nalitabari police arrested a JMB member named Mohammad Wahiduzzaman alias Daksu, 42, of Bhati Baratia village under Nakti upazila of Kishoreganj district, from Garkanda area, said news agency BDNWS.

MEHERPUR
The JMB yesterday threatened to blow up the Habiganj DC office if arresting the militants continues, said BDNWS.

Meanwhile, Meherpur police yesterday arrested JMB cadre Jamal Uddin of Sunamganj district on a Dhaka-bound bus from Meherpur.

MAGURA
The police on Wednesday night caught suspected JMB cadre Shawkat Ali, 22, son of Badrul Alam Bakul, at his residence in Akshi village of Magura sadar upazila. Shawkat was produced before a court yesterday with a seven-day remand prayer.

NOAKHALI
The police on Wednesday night held suspected JMB members Yusuf, 25, Abu Zafar, 27, Omar Faruq, 32, and Rezaul Karim, 27, from Begumganj.

BOGRA
The police arrested two JMB suspects-Hafez Mozammel Haq and Mamunur Rashid-in the town on Wednesday night and yesterday noon. Rashid claimed to be the imam of Barapukuria mosque in Dinajpur.

TRAINING GROUND IN BOTANICAL GARDEN

The JMB used the Botanical Garden in Dhaka as a ground for military training under the guise of physical exercise and morning walk, reports our Chittagong correspondent.

The information came out during the interrogation of five JMB activists arrested from Dhaka on Wednesday night.

Dhaka police held the five-Nazrul Islam Rubel alias Jewel, 26, Abdur Rahman, 45, Farhad alias Nasim, 28, Mohammad Hasan, 37, and Kamal Uddin, 40-following information provided by JMB men Akash and Mithu arrested in Chittagong.

Quoting the five, police sources said Rubel, who hails from Jamalpur and is a martial art expert with black belt, used to train the JMB military wing activists under the guise of physical exercise in the Botanical Garden every day in the morning and afternoon.

They said Rubel, who was held from a mess at Pallabi in the capital, joined the JMB as a trainer about a year ago.

Nasim is the younger brother of top JMB leader Jahurul Islam while Hasan is Nasim's brother-in-law, the police said.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS THREATENED

A JMB letter yesterday threatened the authorities of Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall of Dhaka University not to allow their students to sit around the hall at night.

A letter from JMB and Harkatul Jihad yesterday asked the principal of Sathkira Women's College to introduce madrasa education in the institution and threatened to blow up the college hostel.

Another letter sent to the headmistress of Bogra Government High School allegedly by JMB operations commander Mohammad Musa accused her of not paying any importance to Islamic studies and asked her to close down the school activities.

The JMB yesterday threatened to blow up the PabnaAlia Madrasa and its students' hostels with bombs. The threat gripped the students and teachers with panic.

Hindu bomber

FROM PAGE 1
criminals have attacked the common people, Chief of the ministry's Media Cell Khandaker Manirul Alam said.

The cycle repairing shop where the suspected suicide bomber worked has confirmed his name as Yadav Biswas, he added.

He informed newsmen that since the August 17 countrywide bomb blasts 181 cases have been lodged in connection with bomb attacks, and charge sheet of 72 cases and final investigation report (FIR) of six of them have been submitted.

About 700 suspects have been netted and 103 cases are still under investigation, he said.

Meanwhile, Yadav Biswas' elder brother Biplob told our correspondent that Yadav went to the spot to see a bomb that was found there earlier.

Mine explosion

FROM PAGE 20
"This is the first accident at a mine around here. I'd heard that it had a problem with the ventilation which trapped gases underground and caused the explosion," said He Wenping, who works at a nearby colliery and has been a miner for 32 years.

Local people said most of the miners were from poorer, inland parts of China. Families of the dead would each be compensated 200,000 yuan (14,000 pounds), state television said.

An explosion in the northeastern province of Heilongjiang in late November killed 171 miners.

Flooding at another Hebei mine days earlier trapped 18 underground. Three managers fled the scene, leaving rescuers with no guide to the underground warren.

JMB bicycle bombers

FROM PAGE 1
themselves up apparently to raise the number of casualties.

Fifth since the first ever suicide bombing in Jhalakathi, yesterday's attack took place in the hometown of State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar. Casualties rose to 25 with the latest one in a series of suicide blasts that earlier hit Jhalakathi on November 14, Chittagong and Gazipur on November 29 and Gazipur again two days later.

Three of yesterday's victims were identified as Udichi's joint convener Khwaja Haider Hossain, Jaharana and Ripon.

Back on March 6, 1999, a powerful explosion at a conference of the same cultural organisation in Jessore left 10 people dead and scores of others injured.

THE CARNAGE
Locals found a powerful bomb 20 yards off the office of Udichi Shilpi Gosthi near Borobazar at 9:30am, reports our Netrokona correspondent.

Hearing the news, officials of police and local administration rushed to the scene. Fire fighters splashed water on the bomb to keep it from blasting and later police had it defused.

As onlookers crowded the scene, two suicide bombers riding a bicycle got into the crowd and detonated bombs. One of them was in trousers and shirt while the other in lungi and shirt.

Additional Superintendent of Netrokona Police Saidur Rahman and Officer-in-Charge of Sadar Police Station Samiul Islam were at the site when the blast occurred.

"Suddenly two men fell from a bike and a powerful explosion rocked the entire area," an injured police constable, now undergoing treatment at Netrokona Sadar Hospital, told reporters.

Witnesses said the bombs that were strapped to the bodies of the suicide bombers blasted at the same time. The bomber in trousers and shirt died on impact. The blast severed his right hand and electric wire was found tied around his body.

Udichi leader Khwaja Haider and Jaharana, 35, of Patpotti area of the town also died on the spot while 44 including 10 police constables and the other suicide bomber were injured.

Of the wounded, 10 were admitted to Netrokona Sadar Hospital and the rest to Mymensingh Medical College and Hospital (MMCH). One died while people were preparing to shift them to the MMCH. Ripon of Kachari Road and an unidentified man died during treatment at the MMCH.

ABOMB UNEXPLODED
People found suicide bomber Yadav, a motor mechanic of Chhotobazaar area in the town, lying on the ground with most of his body charred in the blast. Another bomb, unexploded, was found tied to his right thigh.

Police rushed him to Netrokona Sadar Hospital in a critical condition. People at the hospital soon became unnerved, fearing that the bomber might anytime explode the bomb roped to his body.

Explosives experts of Rab defused the bomb at around 3:30pm at the hospital. The bomber eventually succumbed to his injuries at around 4:00pm.

Locals said Yadav hails from Bridgechhaparkona village of Saota union in Barhatta upazila of Netrokona. He is the son of Satyendra Chandra and Arati Rani. Netrokona SP Ali Hossain Fakir, however, did not confirm his identity.

SITUATION AT HOSPITALS
Condition of five of the injured undergoing treatment at the MMCH was stated to be critical, our Mymensingh correspondent reports. Two victims including a youth aged about 18 years

died during treatment at the hospital.

Doctors declared dead the second suicide bomber when he was brought to MMCH later.

Four of the policemen undergoing treatment have been identified as ASI Abdus Samad, havidar Shah Alam, constables Ismail Hossain and Humayun. The other injured are Sudipta Pal, Sahana Begum, Mohtasin Billah, Shafiq, Bimol Saha, Liton, Abul Kalam Azad, Aurangzeb, Subrata Roy, Khokon Das, Milton, Liton, Mahbub Zaman, Hirenda, Rony, Nikhil Chandra Sarker, Saptam Saha, Sujit Dhar, Sushak Banik, Sumon Saha, Sarwar Hossain, Masudur Rahman, Sattar, Alal Uddin, Shelly, Rezaul, Munna, Ashraf, Razib, Abdul Hakim, Shankar and Murshida.

Bimol and Munna were shifted to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital as their condition deteriorated.

Condition of no one of the 10 undergoing treatment at Netrokona Sadar Hospital was learnt to be critical.

NETRAKONA: HAVEN FOR MILITANTS
Although JMB militants had threatened on a number of occasions to carry out bomb attack on government offices, courts and educational institutions, police did not take measures to arrest the militants. They rather denied all along the militants' existence in the district, reports our Netrokona correspondent.

District SP Ali Hossain Fakir who too had received a death threat over phone told The Daily Star recently that the threat was made from outside the district. "There is no militant activity in my district," he observed.

Local reports say many militants were sheltered in different madrasas and mosques, taking advantage of slackness of the law enforcers. Soon the town became a safe haven for the religious extremists.

Meanwhile, Lutfozzaman Babar visited the spot and the victims at different hospitals yesterday afternoon. He instructed the law enforcers to launch an extensive drive against the militants and hunt them down.

"Such blasts are taking place not only in Netrokona but across the country. Bombers must be cut off from the ones supplying them with explosives and funds. Besides, the people will have to unite to resist them," he said at the site.

SECURITY
As an uneasy calm descended on the whole district after the ghastly attack, paramilitary BDR have been deployed in Netrokona town. Additional police forces were called in from different upazilas and were stationed at different points across the town.

Police so far have arrested eight people for suspected links to the suicide bombing.

Panicked, people shut their shops and businesses while vehicles stopped plying the roads soon after the blasts.

Solid start
FROM PAGE 20
scored in each half to take his personal SAFF tally against Bhutan to four, while a sublime effort from Emily ensured that the match finished with an identical scoreline with the one in the first SAFF meeting in Dhaka almost three years ago.

Fatard opened the Bangladesh account in the 42nd minute and double the margin in the 58th minute.

Bangladesh scored their third five minutes from time when substitute Emily received a short pass from Alfaz, dropped his shoulder to send Bhutan defender Tandin Tshering the wrong way and curled the ball over the diminutive Singye from the edge of the area.

Bangladesh will play their next match against Nepal on Saturday.

In the day's second match, India narrowly beat Nepal 2-1.

14-party

FROM PAGE 1
Metropolitan Police (KMP) claimed yesterday they have arranged full proof security for the rally by deploying police, Rapid Action Battalion and paramilitary BDR.

He however did not rule out the possibility of any untoward incidents despite the beefed up security.

Meanwhile, the office of the opposition leader yesterday afternoon released details of her tour programme that said she will leave Dhaka at 7:00am today to attend the Khulna rally and visit Tungipara in Gopalganj.

Senior leaders of the opposition combine will address the rally, which is part of its series of programmes to protest the rise in militancy in the country and to force the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition government to step down.

The combine will also hold similar rallies in Rajshahi and Sylhet as announced from the November 22 grand rally in capital to mobilise people for the January 22 long march towards Dhaka.

The opposition camp took all preparations in the last few days to ensure a huge gathering at today's rally in Khulna. People from the adjacent districts will also join the rally, organisers said.

Our Staff Correspondent in Khulna reports: The entire city has been brought under a security blanket for today's grand rally while tension is running high against the backdrop of repeated suicidal bomb blasts in the country.

"Full proof security measures have been taken for the rally and none will be allowed to enter the venue without body checking," KMP Commissioner Khan Saeed Hasan told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Metal detectors and archway gates will also be set up to ensure full security," he added.

A total of 1,500 police, Rab, BDR and Armed Police Battalion members will be deployed at all key points and the rally to maintain law and order, KMP sources said.

Opposition sources said they would set up their own safety cordon deploying more than 500 volunteers.

AL Organising Secretary Abdul Mannan at a press briefing yesterday said any attempt to foil the grand rally would be resisted at any cost. He expected that about 10 lakh people will attend the rally.

14-party leaders of Khulna yesterday urged people to show maximum restraint in any case of provocation by the government side. They also requested people not to carry any bag or bring children at the rally venue for security reasons.

Govt's inaction

FROM PAGE 20
"Despite the presence of police, administration, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), Cheetah and Cobra, the country has become a slaughterhouse of militant terrorists only due to the government's lack of honesty and sincerity," she said in a press statement.

Hasina said, "The ministers and member of parliaments (MP) of the alliance government are accusing each other publicly. If the government had courage and had no links to the militants, it would have expelled those ministers against whom allegations have been brought."

"When a drastic action is needed to quell the militants, the government is killing time in the name of dialogue and discussion, allowing the evil forces to reorganise," she added.

Referring to the remarks made by the state minister for home affairs that the situation in the country is better than ever, Hasina said "bombs exploded in his home district within 12 hours of his 'boastful' statement."

She said the militants have even threatened the celebration of Victory Day. "Echoing their voice, Jamaat leaders claimed the situation in the country is not like 1971. It is clear to the people that the defeated forces of the Liberation War have let loose the militants in various names," she added.

The opposition leader asked the government to stop the bomb and grenade attacks and the activities of the militants to ensure peace for the people.

At the same time, she called upon the people irrespective of party and opinion to "free the country of terrorism, communalism and misrule by toppling the BNP-Jamaat government, the collaborators of militancy."

Dad won't know

FROM PAGE 1
"Dad asked me to do well in exam and I have kept my promise. But I couldn't tell him this," said Shiplu, a student of Anjuman School in the district town.

Haider's two-and-half-year son Shaon is too immature to understand what happened.

"While going out in the morning, he asked me what gift should I buy for a wedding ceremony we were supposed to attend today," said a waiting Shahna Begum, 30, wife of the victim. "He returned, but not alive..." she said.

Haider's mother was only saying "Bring my son back".

Cultural activist Haider, joint convener of Netrokona Udichi, is among the seven people who died in the suicide bomb attack in the town yesterday morning.

Another victim of the attack is Jounal, a beggar. The disabled one-handed man was also known among the town dwellers. He had gone to the spot for begging as he found a big crowd there after the first bomb was defused.

Haider's mother was only saying "Bring my son back". Cultural activist Haider, joint convener of Netrokona Udichi, is among the seven people who died in the suicide bomb attack in the town yesterday morning.

Another victim of the attack is Jounal, a beggar. The disabled one-handed man was also known among the town dwellers. He had gone to the spot for begging as he found a big crowd there after the first bomb was defused.

Haider's mother was only saying "Bring my son back". Cultural activist Haider, joint convener of Netrokona Udichi, is among the seven people who died in the suicide bomb attack in the town yesterday morning.

Take concrete steps

FROM PAGE 20
being faced by the Muslim Ummah and attempts to victimise the Muslims all over the world, the PM laid utmost importance on projecting the unity and solidarity of the Muslim countries and strengthening bonds of brotherhood.

During her speech, Khaleeda Zia focussed on a number of issues including strengthening of the OIC secretariat, promotion of intra-OIC trade and investing, combating terrorism, fighting against Islamophobia and organising inter-religious, inter-cultural and inter-civilisation dialogue.

She suggested establishment of a multi-lingual OIC electronic media to fight against Islam-phobia and project the true image of Islam.

On the proposals regarding funding mechanisms for capacity building for poverty alleviation in the least developed countries and low-income member states, the prime minister suggested setting up of a concessional fund with sizeable resources for poverty alleviation, establishment of an "OIC Emergency Fund" and establishment of an International Zakat Fund.

Stressing cooperation among the Muslim countries in all fields, Khaleeda Zia said the focus would have to be on economic matters.

She suggested a framework agreement to establish a preferential trade system among the OIC member states and called upon all to sign and ratify urgently the existing agreements aimed at promoting trade and investment.

"Of particular importance is promotion of intra-OIC trade and investment," she said adding, "We believe that the target of intra-OIC trade reaching 20 per cent of the total trade of OIC countries by 2015 is achievable given our sincere efforts."

She said the establishment of the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation and the wider use of the Islamic Corporation for Insurance and Export Credit will contribute to the expansion of intra-OIC trade.

"She suggested a meaningful push forward in implementing the 'OIC Plan of Action to Strengthen Economic and Commercial Cooperation among OIC member states'.

Referring to the common concern of combating terrorism, the PM said, "At this critical juncture of history, we are all experiencing unprecedented incidents of terrorism affecting our daily lives."

In the war on terrorism, Muslim individuals and states have become unfortunate targets and efforts are being made to stigmatise the Muslims and the Muslim countries, she added.

"Attempts are being made to equate our great religion Islam directly or indirectly with terrorism. Muslims in general, all over the world, are victimised because of acts of terrorism by a handful of terrorists claiming to be Muslims or acting in the name of Islam," she continued.

She categorically stated that a terrorist must be identified as a terrorist only, irrespective of his or her colour, creed or religion. "We condemn terrorism as such and in all its forms of manifestations," she said and urged the OIC to clearly condemn all acts of terrorism in the name of Islam and to take concrete measures in this regard.

"The alarming phenomenon of Islam-phobia is increasing, in effect, racism and discrimination against Muslims all over the world. We think coirage of terms such as Muslim or Islamic terrorists, militants or fundamentalists in the media have contributed to the formation of an anti-Muslim feeling among the people," she said.

A significant portion of the non-Muslim population tends to believe in the venomous propaganda against the Muslims that are carried by certain

dominant sections of the print and electronic media, only aggravating the situation. This, in fact, indirectly helps the handful of terrorists who exploit the sentiments of the common Muslims, she added.

Khaleeda Zia said Bangladesh strongly supports and has participated in all moves to bring about inter-religious, inter-cultural and inter-civilisation dialogue and cooperation. "We sincerely believe that these can promote mutual understanding, respect and tolerance among religions, cultures and peoples," she said adding a dialogue among civilisations should be based on mutual respect, dignity and reciprocity.

The prime minister drew the attention of the Muslim world towards the advancement of science and technology for the welfare of the Ummah and said, "The more we educate ourselves the stronger we become."

"Once the Muslim Ummah were at the zenith of scientific and technological advancement, our falling behind in this has contributed to the marginalization of the Muslim countries, particularly in the key areas of development," she added.

Khaleeda Zia stressed the need for nurturing the human resources with intellectual potentials in OIC member countries and establishment of new centres of excellence and allocating adequate resources to those institutions. She sought more supports from the Muslim countries in a substantive manner for the OIC-sponsored Islamic University of Technology in Gazipur.

The Islamic University of Technology is the realisation of the vision of Shaheed president Ziaur Rahman and the Muslim Ummah can indeed be proud of this institution for its remarkable progress in academic excellence and human resource development, she said.

Referring to the Palestine issue, the prime minister said the Muslim Ummah should continue to speak in one voice as we have always done. "We must maintain a principled stand for a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions, the Arab Peace Plan and the Road Map," she added.

About strengthening of the OIC she said the immediate task to project the unity and solidarity of the Ummah will be to add vigour and substance to the existing institutions.

"We need to approach the OIC, the apex institution of our solidarity, in a more pro-active manner. This will enable the OIC to play a more effective role in the international system," she said.

She also called for renewing commitment by signing and ratifying all OIC agreements and implementing all Plans of Action taken up by OIC.

The PM said over the centuries the Muslim world has faced various challenges and on each occasion it came out recharged, strong in its faith and ever vigorous in holding the banner of Islam high.

She ended her speech in a positive note saying, "The challenge that we face today may seem to be all-encompassing. But with the spirit of Islam properly infused in us all, we can surely tackle it to secure our position in the global community."

Udichi again

FROM PAGE 1
But this year the identity of the attackers has become clear as Islamist militants themselves claimed responsibility for carrying out the serial blasts on August 17 and all subsequent attacks.

For long a section of people were expressing concern over the rise of Islamist militants and their destructive activities.

They also pointed finger at international militant outfit Harkatul Jihad Al-Islami (Hujji) leader Mufi Hannan, saying he had a hand in the plot to kill the then prime minister Sheikh Hasina in 1999 by planting 76-kg bombs near her meeting venue at Kotalipara in Gopalganj.

No effective steps were however taken against the militant outfit and its members for long.

On different occasions, militants fought with police and for mysterious reasons, police had to release militants including their linchpins Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) leader Siddiqul Islam alias Bangla Bhai, JMB Chief Abdur Rahman's brother Ataur Rahman Sunny and son-in-law Abdul Awal.

Even in March-April last year, JMB militants led by Bangla Bhai and Abdur Rahman carried out exercises of their own style in Rajshahi, Naogaon and Natore in the name of outlaw cleansing operation with the backing of the local administrations and law enforcers.

There are allegations that some ruling coalition ministers and lawmakers directly patronised the militants in the operation and provided administrative support to them.

Besides, allegations of patronising Islamist militants were brought time and again against the coalition, particularly Jamaat-e-Islami, even by many leaders and activists of the ruling BNP.

CRONOLOGY OF MAJOR BLASTS
Ten killed at Udichi function, Jessore, on March 6, 1999.

Eight killed in Ahmadiya Mosque, Khulna, on October 8, 1999.

Seven killed at the CPB rally at Paltan in Dhaka on January 20, 2001.

Ten killed at the Pohela Boishakh function at Ramna in Dhaka on April 14, 2001.

Ten killed in June 3, 2001 at a church in Gopalganj.

Twenty-two killed at the AL office in Narayanganj on June 15, 2001.

Eight killed at an AL rally in Bagerhat on September 23, 2001.

Four killed at an AL rally in Sunamganj on September 26, 2001.

Three killed in Sathkira Cinema hall blast on September 28, 2002.