

Panic of bomb attack in Khulna city

Trade and other activities hampered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Panic gripped people of all walks of life including judges, lawyers, journalists, teachers, government officials, NGO workers and businessmen here due to fear of attack of the Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) suicide squad.

As a result, normal life and trade activities are being hampered greatly.

However, members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), police and intelligence agencies could not detect existence of suicide bombers in the city.

Legal profession faced a severe blow because both the judges and the lawyers felt insecure. Although law enforces threw security blankets in and around the court premises, yet presence of clients was very thin, said Khulna District Bar Association president Advocate

Mujibar Rahman.

Khulna Press Club president Sheikh Abu Hasan expressed his grave concern over JMB threats towards journalists. He said, 'Our lives are at stake because we write reports boldly against the Islamist militants. Khulna Press Club wore a deserted look because its members are avoiding to visit the club fearing bomb attacks', he said.

Khulna Zila School Headmaster Maleka Begum said, 'We think attendance in classes will come down after the winter vacation as most of the school authorities received threats of JMB bomb attack. Guardians are deeply concerned at the situation, she said.

Leaders of political parties also limited their movement fearing suicide bomb attacks, said Khulna city AL president Talukder Abdul Khaleque MP. He demanded of the

authorities concerned to provide adequate security measures to them like the ruling Four-party Alliance lawmakers.

On-duty policemen were provided with bullet-proof vests. They were asked to remain cautious during checking.

Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) DCAkbar Ali.

said, most of women in the city feel insecure fearing bomb attacks.

Former general secretary of Khulna city BNP Nazrul Islam Manju said the situation is worsening day by day.

Khulna Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Alhaj Munir Ahmed said, 'Trade and commerce hampered much due to continued JMB threats for the last two months.

Tk 5 cr programme to combat munga in Nilphamari stalled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

A Tk 5 crore government programme launched to combat Munga in December last year has been stalled due to acute shortage of fund, manpower and mismanagement.

The 'Zero Poverty Special Loan Programme' was launched at the directive of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to create job opportunities to farm labourers and marginal farmers in five northern districts of Nilphamari, Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram and Gaibandha.

Last year at the time of its launching, it was declared that Tk 5 crore would be disbursed to ultra-poor people during pre-harvest period of 'aman' cultivation season in Bangla month of Aswin and Kartik (mid-September to mid-November). Ultra-poor would be directly benefited as the loan was mortgage-free having minimum interest rate of 5 to 6 per cent and repayable in 48 equal weekly installments.

Last year only Tk 27.25 lakh were disbursed but this year not a single paisa was disbursed till now as there is no fund or any loan allotment.

Priority was given to provide loan to blacksmiths, handicrafts makers, artisans, coppersmiths, sweetmeats, fried rice makers, village carpenters and people engaged in traditional and extinct professions like weaving of fishing nets and hand embroidered quilts (Nakshi

Kantha). Each beneficiary was supposed to receive loan between Tk 500 and 10,000, according to skills.

Four upazilas in Nilphamari district like Dimla, Domar, Jaldhaka, and Kishoreganj were brought under the programme at the initial stage while Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank (Rakub) was loan sanctioning authority.

According to sources in Nilphamari Zonal office of Rakub, as many as 763 people of various professions were provided with Tk 27.25 lakh loan last year. But the loan was of little help to five lakh ultra-poor people in the district.

It was gathered, similar situation prevailed in four other districts.

When contacted, Nilphamari Rakub Zonal manager Ashraf Hossen told this correspondent this year there is no fund for 'Zero Poverty Special Loan Programme' although the government did not withdraw the programme.

He said that the bank is providing loan to the ultra-poor through 'Poverty Alleviation Programme' and 'Swanirvar Programme'. This year an amount of Tk 14 lakh was distributed under the two programmes. Man power shortage is another factor for failure of the programme, he said.



Awami League leaders placing wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar in Barisal to mark the Victory Day yesterday.

Move to create awareness for protecting trees

STAR NATIONAL DESK

A three-day fair aimed at creating awareness for reducing dependence on fuel wood concluded at Banshkhali in Chittagong on Monday.

Nishorgo Support Project of Forest Department funded by the USAID, organised the Alternative Energy Fair, in a bid to protect trees in Chunati Wildlife Sanctuary, Banshkhali from rapid depletion.

People living around the sanctuary allegedly extract fuel wood at random from the forest threatening biodiversity and ecology. The sanctuary has 8,000 acres of open grassland and forests. Wild elephants are also found in the area. State Minister of Environment and Forests Alhaj Jafrul Islam Chowdhury opened the fair while Banshkhali Union Nirbahi Officer Nur Mohammad Majumdar and Nishorgo project's Chief of Party Phillip J DeCosse addressed.

Programme for quality education in 26 villages

A CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A five-year programme has been undertaken for development of quality education of children and ensuring cent per cent birth registration in 26 villages of Hatibandha upazila in Lalmonirhat district by 2010.

This was disclosed at an orientation programme on five-year (2005-2010) Country Strategy Plan (CSP) of Plan Bangladesh, an international NGO, held recently at Lalmonirhat Circuit House auditorium.

The programme also includes improved sanitation coverage in the villages within the stipulated period.

Presided over by Plan Bangladesh Country Director Edward Thomas Espey, the function was addressed by Lalmonirhat Deputy Commissioner (DC) M Fazlul Haque as chief guest and Lalmonirhat Civil Surgeon Dr

Shohrab Hossain as special guest.

The chief guest assured the administration's all-out cooperation in implementation of child-related activities.

Hatibandha Program Unit Manager of Plan, Md Azizul Islam discussed local child rights situation.

Among others, Babul Chandra Roy, Additional Deputy Commissioner (Circle) and Sponsorship and Grants Support Manager of Plan Bangladesh, Kazi Nabiul Haque addressed.

Local elite, representatives of local government bodies and NGOs, journalists and representatives of child organisations took part.

Plan has facilitated for achieving 100 per cent sanitation coverage and quality education in three unions of Hatibandha upazila.

JMB suicide squad in Satkhira

12 including political leaders, govt officials, journalists on the hit list

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A suicide squad of banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) is now staying in Satkhira with a mission to kill over a dozen of people including political leaders, government officials and journalists.

Police and intelligence sources said, three government officials, two top district level politicians, one from the opposition party and two journalists, who helped law enforcers detect and arrest JMB cadres after the August 17 bomb blasts, are on the hit list.

The authorities asked them to move cautiously, sources said.

Meanwhile, security measures have been beefed up in the district, they said.

Confirming existence of JMB suicide squad here, the members of law enforcement agencies said, the killing squad entered the town, in groups, on Wednesday and took

shelter somewhere to accomplish their task.

Earlier, Satkhira police arrested JMB cadre Nasir Uddin with the help of an eye-witness. He blasted bombs on the court premises on August 17. After his confessional statement, police arrested seven JMB cadres with the help of an official of intelligence agency, a local journalist and a pick pocket, also an eye-witness.

Now, JMB has sent a suicide squad targeting them and some others, sources said.

Earlier, Islamist militants sent letters to government officials, lawyers, teachers and journalists including Deputy Commissioner (DC), Superintendent of Police (SP), Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) and Assistant Commissioner (AC-Land), threatening to kill them and blow up their offices and residences.

When contacted, Satkhira SP

Abdur Rahim told The Daily Star adequate security measures have been taken at all key installations in the town.

Four JMB men rounded up

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Police, in the early hours of yesterday, arrested four alleged cadres of the banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) here.

The arrested are Abdul Baten of Khamar village and Maulana Jalal Uddin, Ashraf Ali and Abdul Mannan of Rashidpur village in the district.

Being informed, police arrested them for their alleged involvement in bomb attacks in various places of the district. Police said they are being interrogated.

NETRAKONA BOMBING

Culprits yet to be arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Police failed to arrest any cadre of banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) even after nine days of bomb attack here on December 8 killing eight people. Five of the dead were identified because they were well known to all in the town. One of the dead, a young man of 16-18 years of age is yet to be identified.

Although Umal Sarker, Sujan Biswas and Shahid were arrested under Section 54, but they were not involved in the attack, said Netrakona Police Station Sub Inspector (SI) Mohammad Alauddin who is also the investigating officer of the case. He said policemen are totally confused at the prevailing situation.

The dead included Udichi cultural activists Haider and Shaly, Rani Akter wife of a DSB SI Shahid of Netrakona DSB office, Aftabuddin of Islampur under Netrakona

Pourasabha and a street beggar who was well known to all.

When contacted, Netrakona Superintendent of Police (SP) Ali Hossain Fakir said he is unable to say anything about bomber.

He said, 'I hope police will be able to find out the real culprits within a short period.'

Tractor procession

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

A tractor procession was held here yesterday to mark this year's Victory Day.

Rangpur Krishi Unnayan Forum, a newly floated organisation, organised the procession.

Processionists paraded the main roads of the town in the morning with more than one hundred tractors.

10X3

8x2

12X3