

Another JMB cache

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Road, said an unidentified youth aged around 18 left the sack in front of his shop, saying he would be coming back soon after buying a rack, according to our Rangpur correspondent.

But, as the youth did not return even after two hours, a local named Zamil Hossain became suspicious and informed the local police about the matter.

A contingent of Rab and another of Kotwali police led by Sub-Inspector Dibakor rushed to the spot and cordoned off the area, sparking off panic among the locals.

The explosives haul was found packed in eight cartons in the abandoned sack, witnesses and police sources said.

A Rab source said manufacturing of the grenades and time bombs seized was yet to be completed.

Kotwali Police Station Officer-in-Charge Bazur Rashid said the youth probably was a carrier and abandoned the sack in fear of getting caught by law enforcers, when he heard that the Rab was conducting a raid near the spot.

Rashid said there is little doubt that the recovered explosive items belong to the outlawed Islamist outfit JMB.

RAJSHAHI
The four Islamist militants including the JMB Rajshahi district commander held on Friday admitted that they had been waiting for orders from the party bigwigs to carry out some planned subversive activities in Rajshahi and elsewhere in the country, police investigators said.

The arrestees also told the investigators that they lost contacts with the party nucleus after some key JMB leaders including Sunny had been arrested.

All of them had once been involved with ruling Jamaat-e-Islami's student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) and also had links with some leaders of another outlawed Islamist outfit Ahle Hadith Andolon Bangladesh (Ahab), one of the arrestees and some of their neighbours said.

Motihar police yesterday afternoon placed three of them — Rajshahi JMB commander Abu Isa alias Enamul, Ajmat Ali and his brother Hasmat Ali — before a metropolitan magistrate with a prayer for a seven-day remand for them for further interrogation. The hearing is slated for today.

Earlier in the day, Rab handed the four arrestees and bomb-making materials recovered on Friday to Motihar and Putia police stations. Putia police will bring Abdul Wahab before a magistrate today.

To investigators Enamul admitted that he was the JMB commander of eastern Rajshahi district covering Charghat, Bagha, Putia, Durgapur and Bagmara upazilas. He said another man named Sheikh Enamul Haque Moni, who goes around in the guise of a journalist, is the commander of the JMB western Rajshahi district.

Enamul also named one Rafikul Islam Shipli, who stayed at his place, as involved in the August 17 bomb blasts. He repented for his involvement with the JMB and pledged to law enforcers that he would not do such crimes ever again, sources said.

Enamul used to stay overnight at Ajmat's Naodapara house under Motihar Police Station quite often, said some villagers. They said, during the last one year the two had often been seen holding meetings and giving arms training to known and unknown

youths at the local mosque and madrasa at night.

The villagers also said though they had submitted a written complaint to the OC of Motihar PS against the mysterious activities and training, no action followed and showed a copy of the complaint.

OC Fayezur Rahman of Motihar PS, however, claimed he was not aware of any such complaint.

Hasmat's wife Shefali said Enamul and an unknown man brought the seized explosives and bomb-making materials in two boxes to their house a week ago. She said Hasmat joined the JMB after he had failed to pass the HSC examinations last year.

In Putia, villagers said Abdul Wahab of Banshabaria was once an ICS activist and his father Jasim Uddin Sheikh was a member of the local chapter of Jamaat.

Wahab's wife Taramon Bibi said some unidentified men kept the bag containing the explosives at their house a month ago. The bag was scheduled to be taken away a few days ago, she said, but could not give any more details.

She said Abdul Matin, a teacher at Dhokrakul Madrasa and a JMB military trainer, lured Wahab into the JMB from Jamaat. During Bangla Bhai's anticommunist operations last year, Matin formed the JMB organisation in the area, recruiting local youths.

CHAPAINAWABGANJ
Detective Branch (DB) of police in the early hours yesterday arrested JMB member Abu Sufian Mim, son of retired principal Mohsin Ali of Nawabganj Girls College, for threatening to kill some local journalists and police officials.

The DB held Mim at Pathanpara in the town and seized a cellphone, five SIM cards and eight diaries from him. The diaries carried lists of politicians belonging to both the ruling and the opposition parties, government officials and journalists.

NATORE
In Natore the DB yesterday arrested Quamrul Islam alias Karim, an Islamic History teacher at Madhnagar Degree College in Naldanga, at his Moharajpur home under Gurudaspur upazila. The detectives also held Morshed, son of Akbor, at Shakharipara village in Naldanga.

Investigators believe Karim and Morshed have links with JMB Military Commander Sunny, who stayed at Shakharipara Madrasa for a few days and two a-half months ago and roamed the neighbouring areas with Morshed on a motorbike.

BOGRA
The Rab arrested six suspected JMB operatives in Sherpur upazila of the district in the early hours yesterday.

The arrestees are Joyral Abedin, 20, Raihan Islam Palash, 20, Abdullah Al Mamun alias Hira, 17, Mohammad Yusuf, 20, Faruq Ahmed, 19, and Abdul Latif, 22.

Proper leadership

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14-party leaders who spoke at the meeting.

Prof Zafar Iqbal, Prof Anisuzzaman, Dr Kazi Kholiquzzaman, president of Bangladesh Economics Society, economist Prof Abul Barakat, Abul Ahsan, president of Centre for Democracy, Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud, vice chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council, Yusuf Abdullah Harun, former president of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI), Ibrahim Khaled, managing director of Pubali Bank Ltd, Prof Khan Sarwar Murshid, former vice-chancellor of Rajshahi University, Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, editor of The Daily Bangladesh Observer and Mahfuz Anam, editor of The Daily Star also spoke.

Dr Kamal criticised the government for its 'dillydallying' in coming clean on the issue of the Islamist militants.

He said despite the opposition's repeated demand to deal with the militants sternly and the media's incessant exposure of the militants the government kept on accusing the opposition and the media of tarnishing the image of the country by harping on the issue.

How will the government now explain to the people the rising tide of militants in the country, he asked.

He said the government is concealing information about the militants instead it is inviting the opposition for a dialogue, which makes no sense at all.

The Gono Forum president said despite suffering from a severe sense of insecurity there has developed a national consensus against the communal militants.

Tofail Ahmed said it is true that politicians have lost credibility with the people. All the sectors have been degraded and values in every sphere of life have been destroyed including politics, he said.

On the issue of militants he said the forces that had been defeated through the Liberation War have given rise to the militants. With a voice choking with emotions he said today the anti-liberation forces are carrying the flags of Bangladesh. "This is what Bangladesh has come down to," he said.

Blaming the BNP-Jamaat led alliance government for the rise of militant activities he said the pro-liberation forces will again defeat the once-defeated communal forces with the spirit of 1971 and will enshrine the secular spirit of Bangladesh.

Suranjit Sengupta MP said to eliminate militants and to establish a corruption free democratic country the 14-party coalition has formulated a 23-point political programme for the future of Bangladesh by discussing with the

LDCs

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LDCs' interest in textile exports in the WTO and beyond.

The agreement emerged at an informal meeting of the ministers, under the leadership of Bangladesh, on the sidelines of the Sixth WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong, a Bangladesh delegation member told UNB over telephone.

Commerce ministers of Laos, Afghanistan, Solomon Islands, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka were present at the meeting.

"They agreed to form the group informally. At this stage, they want to see the activities of the LDC group in the WTO trade talks," said the delegation member, adding, "The time has not run out to form the group."

The LDC group leaders were working hard to avoid any split among the ranks during the WTO negotiations.

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) initiated the move to form the G14+1 group.

The 14 countries among the LDCs, including Bangladesh, have been left out of the duty-free market access that the USA offered under the Trade Act 2000.

Sri Lanka, a member of the developing countries' group, wants to join the proposed group to enjoy the duty-free facility on the plea that they were affected by the last year's tsunami.

WTO package

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overcome in the next 24 hours," said US Trade Representative Rob Portman.

Chowdhury noted that many of the world's poorest countries, most of them in Africa, have no tradable products for Western markets and urged richer nations to increase so-called "aid-for-trade" donations—money meant to help developing countries to strengthen their trading capabilities.

Chowdhury said half of these donations should go to least developed countries. "This is what I am asking because their needs are the greatest," he said.

The issue of duty-free and quota-free access is a key component of the Doha round, which was launched in Qatar's capital in 2001 and is meant to address the concerns of developing countries, who say they lost out in previous WTO negotiations.

"It would be for almost all products, with the exception of just a few products from just a few countries," Portman said.

Some least developed countries are particularly vulnerable and Chowdhury urged greater protection for those which have no access to the sea, as transporting goods to ports makes their exports up to 50 percent more expensive when they reach developed country markets.

"These countries are losing all competitiveness," he said.

The needs of small island states, such as those in the Pacific, also need to be considered because they are so distant from the global trading system.

"They do not have any negotiating power," Chowdhury added.

HuJi helped

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Naimuzzaman alias Jafar alias Sohag, Rafikul Islam alias Javed alias Roman, and Monirul Islam.

They said JMB chief Abdur Rahman visited Chittagong about a year ago and held three meetings with his leaders and activists in a bid to reorganise them.

The meetings were held at the JMB hideouts of Salimpur in Bhatiary, Jhaubana along the coastal area in Sitakunda and Painsdang near Cox's Bazar-Lama border area.

Following confession of the arrestees, a Rab team on Friday night carried out a raid in Kattali and Salimpur to seize two more caches of arms and explosives. But the Rab drive yielded no result.

"We think JMB men escaped with their arms and ammunition after the arrests of Mohammad and Jafar," a Rab source said yesterday.

TRAINING CAMP AT HATHAZARI
Police on June 1 last year busted an abandoned HuJi training camp at Mulatali in an almost inaccessible hilly area under Hathazari upazila. The police seized some arms, explosives, combat dresses, and books and booklets on jihad.

The police had arrested two top HuJi leaders, Eskander and Enamul, but their ringleader Mir Anis, cousin of a former state minister, escaped arrest, sources said quoting the four.

Anis, Eskander and Enamul used to render training to militants. Initially they had trained 150 militants but they had to split the recruits in groups as the number increased.

The JMB men said the HuJi led by Abu Raihan Siraji regrouped and reorganised in three to four months after the arrest of Eskander and Enamul.

The HuJi even distributed leaflets on behalf of the JMB with calls for joining jihad. The leaflets urged all to take the path of militancy to establish Islamic rule in the country, they added.

After August 17, the HuJi distributed JMB leaflets and booklets in Hathazari under the name of a new organisation, Israt-e-Deen, they claimed.

SUNNY SLIPPED ARREST
JMB operations commander Ataur Rahman Sunny, brother of the JMB chief, escaped arrest at least twice by the skin of his teeth after October 3 bomb attack on the Chittagong court building.

A police official speaking anonymously said they could not arrest Sunny due to non-cooperation of some cops.

Sticky stew

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and inside the party, the former president has opted to dilly-dally on the issue while closely monitoring the political developments, added the sources.

"As part of the strategy, Ershad has told the press that he will not declare his decision on allying with other political parties for the next election before March 1," a senior member of JP presidium told The Daily Star.

"We hope a lot of changes will take place in the next two months," he added.

"If the anti-government movement gathers momentum by next March, the party will join the opposition campaign. But if the opposition camp fails to do so, then we'd have to wait for some time again," said another senior presidium member seeking anonymity.

Due to government pressure, the JP has already failed to table at the national dialogue with the prime minister its original demand for expulsion of Jamaat-e-Islami from the government and the ruling alliance for having militant links. The JP presidium had decided to include in its written proposals to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia the call for immediate actions against the ministers and lawmakers having militant links.

But as the decision was leaked, the prime minister's office (PMO) forced the party to change the proposals at the eleventh hour, reported different national dailies.

The day after the dialogue, the JP chairman however contradicted the news. A presidium member on condition of anonymity told The Daily Star yesterday that the chairman did not have any alternative but to contradict the reports.

After the formal talks on Tuesday, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia held separate meetings with Ershad and Rawshan Ershad. Ershad told reporters that he was happy with the way the discussion progressed.

Meanwhile, it has been widely reported that the government had assured the JP chairman that in the next two months it would relieve him of the cases pending against him.

But sources said the government high-ups are in a dilemma whether to withdraw altogether the cases pending against Ershad. They are not sure whether he will be with the ruling alliance once all the cases against him are withdrawn, BNP sources said.

In view of the prevailing situation in the country as well as the government's attitude towards the party, the JP district-level leaders and most of the presidium members would not like to join the ruling four-party alliance. They were also against attending the dialogue with the prime minister last week, sources said.

JP Presidium members GM Quader and Kazi Firoz Rashid in interviews with different dailies have already accused Jamaat of being the most serious problem for the nation.

As GM Quader spoke relentlessly against joining the dialogue of the prime minister last week, Ershad served a show-cause notice on him under pressure from the government, party insiders said.

Quader replied to the notice yesterday and the matter is likely to be solved in a couple of days.

The district leaders on December 5 at a meeting suggested the chairman would better not ally with BNP-Jamaat as, they said, the ruling alliance has lost its acceptability among the public for failing to deliver and is desperate to have JP on board just to clear the hurdle of forthcoming general election. The leaders launched a blistering attack on Jamaat-e-Islami for harbouring the militants.

Manpower export

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Malaysia, which had signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Bangladesh to hire its workers back in October 2003, reportedly shied away from the commitment showing high migration costs as a major reason.

Similarly, South Korea, a lucrative job market for Bangladeshi workers, also identified high migration cost as the root cause for switching jobs and illegal overstaying of workers, a recruiting agency source said. About 15,000 Bangladeshi workers are staying illegally in Korea.

Bangladesh is yet to qualify for entry into the coveted Employment Permit Scheme (EPS) of Korea that allows Korean employers to choose workers freely from listed countries. Entry in the Korean EPS could boost the manpower export, said Baira Secretary General Ali Haider Chowdhury.

"Bangladeshi workers in Korea violate contracts by switching jobs or by migrating to Japan for higher salaries because they are desperate to earn more money to recover the huge amount they pay to the recruiting agencies at home to emigrate," a Baira source added.

The government has failed to reduce the cost of migration to Korea that shot up to Tk 5 lakh, since it has no control over the four recruiting agencies, Silver Line Associates, Unique Eastern (Pvt) Ltd, Rupsha Overseas Ltd, and Orbital Enterprise, the source added.

Recently, the Korean Federation of Small Businesses awarded these four agencies contracts for supplying 200 trainee workers as the last chance and fixed the fee at Tk 1.92 lakh, but the agencies are charging Tk 8 lakh each, sources said.

AHM Mustafa Kamal, managing partner of Orchid Enterprise, however, declined to disclose the amount of money the four agencies charge for sending a worker to Korea.

"It is the media that contributes to

the increase of the cost, because whenever you (media) report that the agencies here charge high fees, the agencies in the destination countries also charge more," he told The Daily Star.

He said even if the workers were charged less, they would not act responsibly and would not hesitate to violate the contracts. He blamed the "fundamentalist image" of the country for the decline in manpower export.

Baira President Mosharraf Hossain MP said the government should update the rate of migration cost. "For example, the government fixed the rate at Tk 70,000 to send a worker to Malaysia a few years back, but it is now much more as the value of dollar went up."

Taking the advantage, the agencies are charging higher fees violating the rate fixed by the government, he said.

Baira president also said lack of funds and experts in the expatriate ministry and apathetic attitude of the foreign missions towards emigrant workers are a major deterrent to exploring new markets.

For example, Sudan is a potential market for foreign workers because of massive investment from foreign companies there, some of which sent letters to Bangladesh expressing interest in hiring its workers. But there is no Bangladesh mission there and the Cairo mission shows no interest in this regard, he added.

Baira's Secretary General Ali Haider Chowdhury suggested formation of a government cell for finding out new markets and for preparing the human resources accordingly in collaboration with the education ministry.

"A joint commission of the private and public sector also could be formed," he said.

BNP holds

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militants and the conspirators as the procession started at 4:00pm from Naya Paltan.

Inaugurating the procession with a brief speech, Mannan Bhuiyan said Awami League does not want an end to the militancy problem. "They do not want to see the militants arrested."

Termining the militants "hyenas," Bhuiyan reiterated the government's commitment to root out the militant forces and renewed his call to the main opposition Awami League to cooperate with the government in its efforts to resist the evil forces.

Recalling the history, the BNP leader said Awami League governed the country right after the independence, but failed to realise the dream for which the people fought the war.

BNP city unit, Jatiyatabadi Muktioddha Dal, Krishak Dal, Jubo Dal, Mohila Dal, Sramik Dal, Sweekhchasebak Dal, Chhatra Dal, Jassas, Olama Dal, Tanti Dal, Babshae Dal, Bastuhara Dal, Matsyajib Dal, Hawkers Parishad and the BNP ward units led by their leaders came one after another holding national and party flags as well as the portraits of late president Ziaur Rahman and party Chairperson Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

Some of the processionists made artificial tanks and guns set on three-wheeler vans and posed as freedom fighters attacking the Pakistani army. Another group posed as Pakistani army with their hands up.

Bimstec

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forum, launched on June 6, 1997, more open and forward-looking.

The one-day ministerial meeting tomorrow will be preceded by the 10th Bimstec Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) represented by the foreign secretaries of the member states.

The foreign secretaries are now in the capital to begin their discussions today at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will inaugurate the ministerial meeting at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

The foreign ministers will hold informal talks in the morning before the working session to discuss issues on their agenda and also consider the SOM report.

Bangladesh Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, who will take over the chairmanship from Thailand, will preside over the meet.

Bhutanese Trade and Industry Minister Lyonpo Yeshey Zimba, Indian Minister of State for External Affairs E Ahamed, Myanmar Foreign Minister U Nyan Win, Nepalese Foreign Affairs Minister Ramesh Nath Pandey and Thai Foreign Minister Kantathi Suphachokh will attend the meet. Sri Lankan Additional Foreign Secretary Karunatilaka Amunogama will lead his country's delegation.

"We won't have to wait long to see the FTA entered in the Bimstec countries," Morshed told diplomatic correspondents, adding, the commerce ministers of the new economic grouping will meet in Dhaka early next year to sign the FTA.

Trade Negotiating Committee (TNC) from the seven countries will meet for the final round of talks to resolve the issues of rules of origin, sensitive list, and dispute settlement in Kathmandu on December 21-27.

Bangladesh choke

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strikers. In the end, they were chasing shadows as India, with a tidy performance, outplayed their opponents in the midfield throughout the 90 minutes.

During the first ten minutes, when Bangladesh looked tentative, Baichung taunted the rival defence with his speed and moves but found no support.

Alfaz saw his 18-yard drive come off a defensive wall after being set up by Hassan Al Mamun in the 12th minute and Bangladesh, who lost too many midfield tackles, invaded the Indian area on counter attacks without creating any real chance.

India threatened to score in the 27th minute when Baichung, under strict marking, flicked a Venkatesh freekick to the right side of the Bangladesh box but Climax Lawrence's low drive harmlessly ran across Aminul's goal.

Six minutes later, a crossfield chip by Avlito from the right unsettled the Bangladesh backline when Ajayan headed the ball to Baichung near the penalty spot. But Mehraj, who missed the semifinal after being sent off during the Bangladesh-India group match, scored with a scorching right-footer into the right top corner of Aminul's post after winning a partly cleared ball just outside the penalty area.

Like it or lump it, India never looked back after scoring the first goal and they could have won by even bigger margin had their forwards not missed a few sitters against a panic-stricken Bangladesh defence.

It was only fitting for India to see their inspirational captain Baichung killed the game with nine minutes remaining on the clock when he stabbed a low cross into the near post after substitute Abdul Hakkim won a tackle against Hassan Al Mamun and sent the ball near the goalmouth.

Pakistan Prime Minister Shawkat Aziz witnessed the final and gave away prizes among the winners.

Bhutan won the Fair Play Trophy.

Yellow cards: Gawli, Suresh (India).

TEAMS

INDIA: Sandip, Surkumar, Suresh, Gawli, Manju (Hakkim, 50th minute), Mehraj, Venkatesh, Climax, Ajayan, Rahim Nabi and Baichung.

BANGLADESH: Aminul, Hassan Al Mamun, Sujon, Rajani, Titu (Emnly, 84th), Arman (Abul, 61st) Joy, Munna, Alfaz, Kanchan and Farhad (Ujjal, 89th).

Referee: Ashfarian Khodadad (Iran).

Artificial ear

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Foreign consultants and ear, nose and throat (ENT) surgeon Jonathan Osborne, with the help of Dr Ghan Clwyed, Dr Peter Prinsley and Bangladeshi specialists Dr Abdus Samad and Dr Akhter Jahan, operated on the woman at SAHIC's National Centre for Hearing and Speech for Children Hospital on December 15, a press release said.

While this successful operation created hopes among the hearing impaired people, the SAHIC authorities told The Daily Star the operation is extremely expensive and most patients of the country will not be able to afford the procedure.

Artificial cochlea implant surgery can be done on hearing impaired people of all age but it is more applicable to adults and children aged 2-5 who cannot hear even with the assistance of a hearing aid.

In cochlea implant surgery a tiny machine is put inside the ear which costs around Tk 10,75,000. The treatment however costs around Tk 40-50 lakh overseas, the press release read.

The woman, preferring to be anonymous, was only two and a half years old when she became deaf after suffering from high fever for several days. She however can speak and continued her studies, family sources said.

Global experts

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globally endangered animal elephant.

The conference titled 'International Conference on Conservation of Asian Elephant' is expected to provide necessary information and direction for developing elephant conservation management policy and programmes, sources said.

The two-day meet would also provide guidelines for a long-term master plan for a Mike-Site and critical conservation areas in the country with emphasis on human welfare and poverty alleviation side by side with protecting the elephants.

Two international organisations -- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (Cites), and Monitoring Illegal Killing of Elephants (Mike) are jointly organising the conference to be held at a city hotel. Some 75 delegates will attend it.

The elephant population in Bangladesh is declining fast due to loss of their habitat and biotic pressure resulting from deforestation, forest department officials said.

Unplanned conversion of forestland into farm land and infrastructure and housing development along 'migration routes' are also causing increased 'human-elephant conflicts' that leave 10 to 15 people and five to eight elephants killed in Bangladesh annually, they mentioned.

"Bangladesh now has some 178 resident, 100 non-resident and 94 captive elephants", one official said.

A survey carried out in 2003 (by IUCN) said the wild elephant population in Bangladesh varies from 280 to 300.

Sources said there are 13 'range states' of Asian elephants including those in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. But many of the Asian countries are yet to

develop conservation management plan for the elephants due to lack of resources and technical knowhow.

Meanwhile, man-elephant conflicts in Indo-Bangladesh border areas have now become a serious problem.

In the present crop harvesting season, a group of some 100 elephants from the Indian state of Meghalaya is migrating to Bangladesh and damaging crops and property and also causing loss of lives in Mymensingh, Sherpur and Netrakona districts, forest officials said.

Besides, such conflicts are also leaving some people dead in different forest areas of Banskhalhi, Lohagara, Satkania and Rangunia in Chittagong, in Cox's Bazar and in the hill districts of Bandarban and Rangamati.

"In many cases poor locals fall victims to elephant attacks while collecting fire-wood or fishing in the remote forest areas," said Divisional Forest Officer Dr Tapan Kumar Dey of Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Division in Chittagong.

Many also fall victim to elephant stampedes while erecting houses on their migration routes clearing off forests and destroying their habitats, causing fodder crisis for the elephants, he told this correspondent yesterday.

Some low-cost fencing, like those in India, could have put a check on the menace, he thought.

Secretary for Environment and Forest Jafar Ahmed Chowdhury will inaugurate the conference.

RB Lal, inspector general of forests (wildlife), India, Mohammad Osman Ghani, chief conservator of forests, Bangladesh, and Nigel Hunter, director, Cites/Mike programme, would be among those attending the conference.

Babar denies

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government custody." Babar said brushing aside the 'rumour' strongly, following a meeting on the law and order situation with the inspector general of police, all deputy inspector generals and commissioners of police, and the director general of Rapid Action Battalion.

On the claim of Awami League lawmaker Mirza Azam, also brother-in-law of Rahman, that the JMB chief is in government custody, the minister said, "He may know it better if he has made such statement. Since [Rahman] is his relative, he might know well where Abdur Rahman is."

Asked about Industries Minister Motiur Rahman Nizami's claim that the JMB chief is under intelligence watch, Babar said the intelligence agencies are looking for him. "We will arrest him as soon as we come to detect his whereabouts."

Citing examples of big countries like the USA and India, the minister said no country can guarantee ridding itself of militant attacks.

"The parliamentary proceedings in India came to a halt [following a bomb threat] yesterday. Nobody can give the guarantee," the minister told reporters, asked if the government has adequate arrangement at present to rid the country of the ongoing militant attacks.

"But we are doing all we can. This government is trying sincerely to stop [militancy]," he added.

Claiming "significant develop-

ment" in the investigations into the militant attacks, Babar said he has instructed the law enforcers to arrest JMB's district-level commanders and that the police have already identified most of them.