

Record hunt for Bangla Bhai in Kushtia

Daylong raid involves over 2,000 law enforcement men; 10 suspects held, residents asked to stay indoors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Joint forces threw a five-kilometre cordon around four villages in Kushtia early yesterday in the biggest-ever operation in recent times to arrest top brass of the banned Islamist militant organisation Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

The local police at 8:00am made an announcement over loudspeakers asking people of the villages Poradaho, Khajanagar, Jagati and Koburhat to stay indoors until the operation ends at 6:00am today.

They could not retrieve any bomb or explosive or firearm during the operation but arrested 10 people on suspicion.

Over 1,000 personnel of police,

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and ansar took part in the operation. Additional 1,000 lawmen joined them after 9:00pm. With the reinforcements, they were combing the entire area for the militants in a curfew-like situation.

The issue became yesterday's topic of the country drawing public attention as rumour spread that militant kingpin Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai was arrested.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Abdul Quayum while briefing reporters yesterday evening at the Police Headquarters, however, said none of the arrestees resembled Bangla Bhai or JMB chief Abdur Rahman.

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PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

One of the choppers used in yesterday's operation against JMB top brass.

More arms, explosives found in Bandarban
Cache includes M16 rifle, detonators, gunpowder, GPS

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Security forces recovered more sophisticated explosives, firearms and military equipment, including one global positioning system (GPS) and two range-finders, from remote hills of Naikkhongchhari yesterday, just 12 hours after Wednesday's huge arms haul.

The seized arms and ammunition include one M16 rifle, one submachine carbine, one .303 rifle, 20 detonators, 10 mine-fixing devices, three grenade-throwing handles, mining cable, 14 fuses and 20kg gunpowder. Apart from the GPS equipment, the cache also contains two long-range range-finders, hand microphones, walkie-talkies, five binoculars and a telescope, and antennae.

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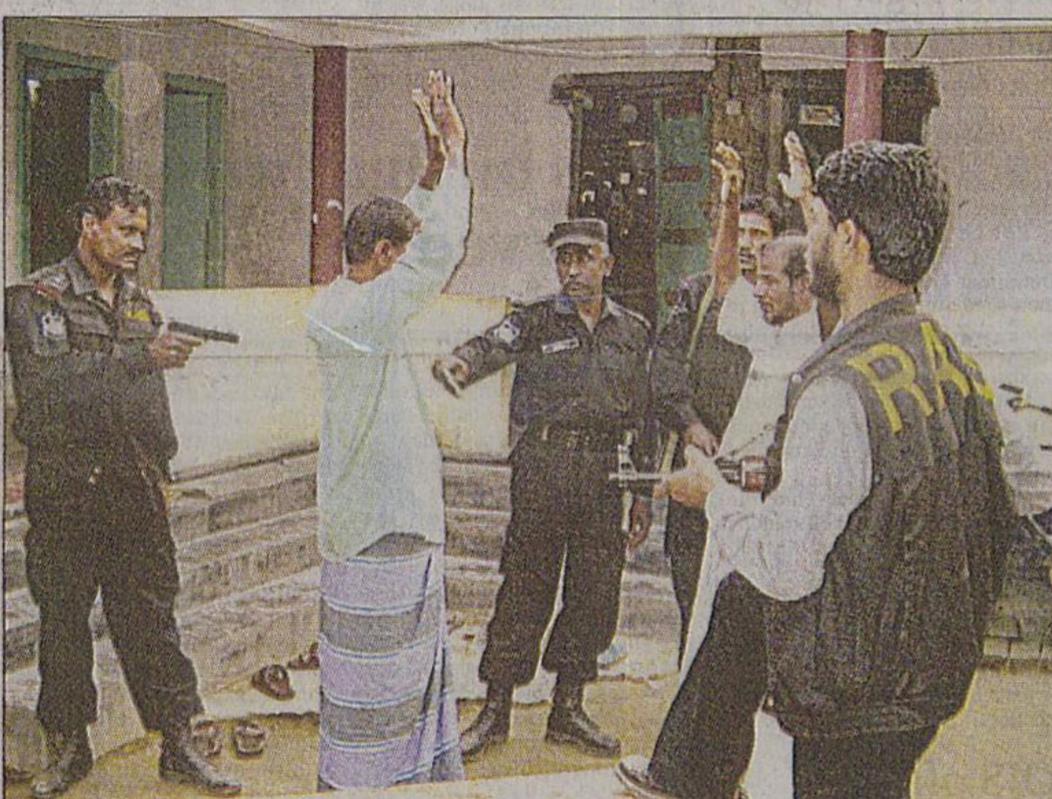


PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Rab men search a house as part of a massive operation in Kushtia yesterday to hunt down top leaders of outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh.

PM's visit to India, Pakistan confirmed

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Ending speculations, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is finally going to both Pakistan and India on bilateral visits towards the end of February and March.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday confirmed that the PM would visit Pakistan most likely at the end of next month and then India by the end of March.

There have long been invitations to Khaleda Zia from both Pakistan and India to visit the countries.

Lastly, the PMs of India and Pakistan reiterated their

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Rocca arrives
January 26

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US Assistant Secretary of State (South Asian Affairs) Christina B Rocca will arrive on January 26 in Bangladesh on a three-day official visit.

She has a wide range of issues to discuss with Bangladesh on her agenda including the critical issues of counter-terrorism and the next general elections.

A highly placed source at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Rocca is expected to carry a US government letter to Bangladesh appreciating Bangladesh's anti-militancy crackdown as well as the banning of militant organisations like Jama'atul Mujahideen

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jurisdiction, meeting sources said.

Held after a break of more than five months, the meeting witnessed a brief and heated debate between the CEC and election commissioners M Munsef Ali and AK Mohammad Ali. The commissioners strongly opposed the court's

PHOTO: STAR



Chief Election Commissioner MA Aziz, right, and four election commissioners at a meeting of the Election Commission held yesterday after a break of more than five months.

VOTER LIST

EC finally decides to appeal against HC directives

CEC faces opposition from Munsef Ali, Mohammad Ali

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With support from the newly appointed election commissioners, the chief election commissioner (CEC) yesterday had the majority in the Election Commission (EC) to decide to file an appeal against the High Court's (HC) January 4 directives for revising the existing voter list and questioned the court's

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FIRST TELE-TAP STEP

Prepaid mobile users face snap

ABU SAEED KHAN

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) yesterday asked the cellphone operators to collect personal details of the existing subscribers or snap connections in case of failure.

As part of the controversial tele-tapping ordinance, the telecoms regulator also made mandatory a 'certificate' issued by an elected

public representative or first class government officer for new subscription.

Calling in the top brass of the six mobile phone operators, BTRC Chairman Omar Farooq yesterday briefed them in presence of intelligence officials at his office.

The regulator did not disclose any agenda prior to the surprise meeting, and no minutes were also distributed afterwards.

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JCD men grab Tk 40cr bid for sports facilities

STAR REPORT

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leaders, allegedly with the backing of ministers, lawmakers and National Sports Council (NSC) authorities, have illegally secured tenders involving around Tk 40 crore for renovating and building additional facilities at four stadiums in the country.

Rearzur Rahman Ripon, JCD leader and former vice president of Kabi Nazrul College Student Union, JCD Dhaka South unit President Rafiqul Islam Majnu and

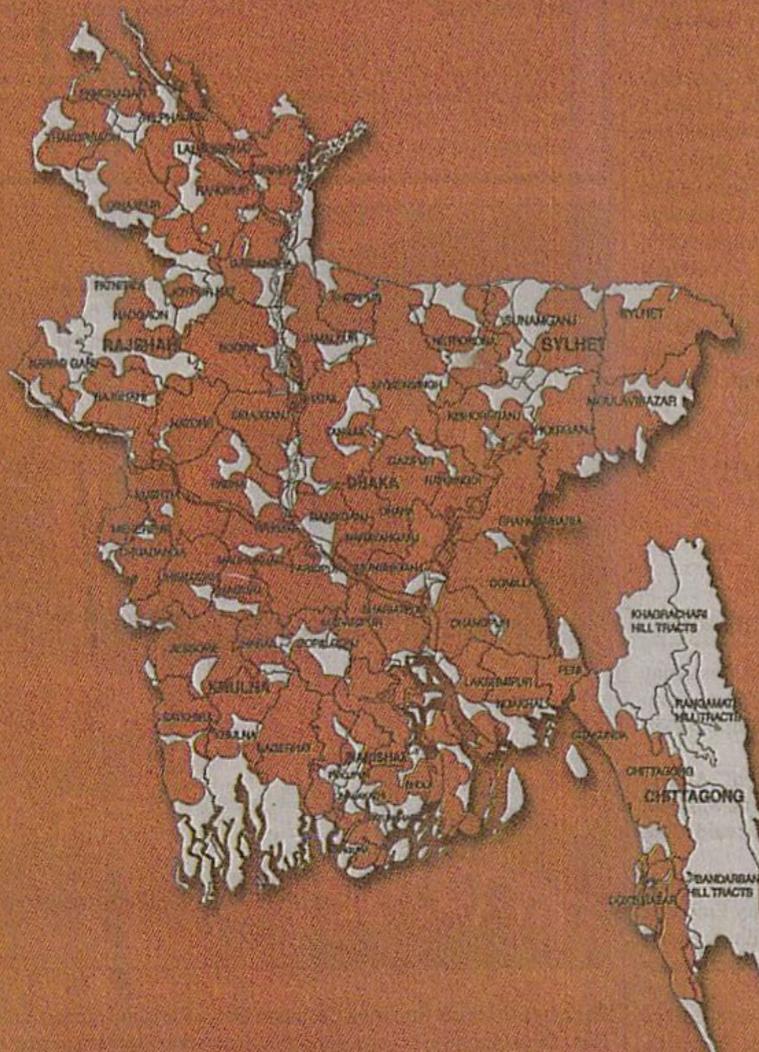
some other leaders of the BNP-backed student body managed to get all the four contracts, sources told The Daily Star yesterday.

Ripon and Majnu allegedly had earlier bought the tender schedules from the NSC's accountant at Wari residence and submitted those on the last day yesterday to get the deals finalised.

A group of JCD musclemen roamed the NSC office premises to keep other potential bidders at bay as the tender process for the four stadiums in Chittagong, Barisal, and

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