

Over 100 JMB men hiding in Tangail-Gazipur forests

Combing operation launched, says top police official

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Police have started combing operations in Mirzapur, Sakhipur and Kaliakair forest areas in Tangail and Gazipur districts to find out JMB (Jamatul Mujahideen Bangladesh) dens and nab its activists.

A top police official in Tangail on condition of anonymity told this correspondent yesterday that at least 100 'dedicated' JMB activists including some suicide squad members are hiding in forest areas in three upazilas of the two districts.

JMB leader Enayetullah alias Jewel, arrested from Joydevpur upazila in Gazipur district with a huge quantity of bomb making materials few weeks back, had recruited a large number of activists from the areas, staying at a rented houses at Kalihati in Tangail, he added. Jewel hailed from Kotalpara upazila in Gopalgang district.

Meanwhile the three JMB cadres arrested on Wednesday from Gazipur and Tangail districts along with two hand grenades and bomb making materials are being interrogated by Tangail police. They were placed on seven days' remand on Thursday.

The three arrestees are Mahmudur Rahman alias Russel, 19, Jahirul Islam alias Jahir, 22, and Shahadat Hossen alias Imran, 19. They were arrested following confessional statements by JMB 'regional commander' Akash, arrested from Tongi on Monday.

The bomb making materials included including detonators and 33 lead splinters.

Police said they gave important information about JMB activities in the two districts.

Quoting Jahir, police said he took part in the August 17 bomb blasts at Gazipur road-intersection. He also said the recovered grenades were produced at a local factory of JMB.

Jahir further told that he joined

JMB under the influence of one Nizam Uddin Reza, a charge sheeted accused in Gazipur bomb blast case, and became an 'Ehsar' of the banned militant Islamist outfit within a few days.

During this correspondent's visit on Thursday, locals said there were several training camps and dens of JMB at Asgana, Namasola, Ashulia, Bhati Khalpar, Media, Solai, Rashidpur, Mazidpur, Telina, Kanchanpur, and Taktarchala villages in Kaliakair, Mirzapur and Sakhipur upazilas.

It was gathered that Russel, youngest of three brothers, joined JMB when he was a student of Kaliakair Senior Fazil Madrasa.

Russel's widowed mother Rahima Begum, 45, said, despite poverty, she was trying to educate her sons. Her husband died 10 years ago. Her two other sons are since Russel's arrest.

Kazi Akkas Ali, 55, Imam of Asgana Mosque also acknowl-

edged that three might have been JMB activists in the area. Saiful Islam, 50, teacher of Hafizia Madrasa in the same village, was driven away from the village after villagers knew about his involvement with JMB, Akkas said. Saiful admitted many students, whom he might have trained, Akkas claimed.

Hossen Ali, 16, son of Mofazzal Hossen of Taktar Chala village under Sakhipur upazila, who had blasted bombs on Chittagong court premises killing a policeman and injuring many others also hailed from the area.

Mirzapur and Sakhipur police so far arrested only eight JMB cadres from different areas of the upazilas.

When contacted, Ashraful Alam, officer-in-charge (OC) of Mirzapur thana however said they have launched a combing operation in forest and hills in the upazila to nab JMB cadres.

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Hindu devotees said, the miscreants demanded illegal toll from the puja committee members. But they refused to give them toll.

Following their refusal, the miscreants entered the temple, ransacked the puja mandap and damaged the idol of Swarawati at around 9.30 pm.

After the incident, Hindu devotees stopped the puja.

Being informed, Belkuchi police visited the spot.

Two Barisal journos get bail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A court here on Thursday granted bail to two journalists in a case lodged by authorities of the 'Amar Bazar', a shopping complex owned by Destiny-2000.

Barisal Sadar Upazila Court First Class Magistrate Munim Hassan granted the bail to Ferdous Sohag, staff reporter of daily Jai Jai Din and his brother Tawhid Sourav, staff reporter of Ajker Barta, a local daily.

Earlier, a case was lodged against the staff of 'Amar Bazar' for detaining and torturing three journalists, Tawhid Sourav, Sayed Menon and Nazmul, on January 22. The journalists went there to collect information about sale of adulterated food.

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) rescued the injured journalists by breaking locks and arrested two 'Amar Bazar' staff.

The market authorities filed a false case of toll collection against Sohag and Sourav on January 25.

The magistrate ordered Barisal Kotwali thana Officer-in-Charge (OC) to investigate.

However, without any investigation Sub Inspector (SI) Nasir recorded a criminal case against Sourav and Shohag, allegedly without investigation, sources claimed.

Organised by Diganta Dak, an NGO, the discussion was presided over by its president Prof Dr MA Jalil.

Ex-Principal of Magura Government HSS College Prof Habibur Islam and Hunger Free World Country Director Ataur Rahman, freedom fighter Akbar Hossain and Principal Kazi Firoz attended the discussion.

The speakers stressed on motivating people to improve their lot through cooperation among themselves and utilising their own resources.

Militants moving freely in Gangachara

53 on police list, none held

RAFIQUE SARKER, Rangpur

'Listed' outfits of Jamaatul Mujahideen, Bangladesh (JMB) have come out of their hideouts and are regrouping in shoal areas in Gangachara upazila in the district, allegedly due to lax police vigilance to nab them.

Many of the JMB cadres who went into hiding after the August 17 serial bombing across the country are moving freely there, locals alleged.

Police were informed but they did not take any action, some of them said seeking anonymity. According to a source in police, 53 JMB militants were listed in Nohali, Alambiditor, Kolkond, Changmari, and Gaighanta Sadar unions.

After August 17 blasts, all of them JMB left their houses overnight. But recently many of them have come out in the open.

The locals also named some of the JMB cadres moving openly. They include Fajjul Islam Munnu of Paikan, Azhar Uddin of Kuribishib, Belal and Bhutta of Changmari, Abdul Hoque, Sirajul Islam, Fazlul Hoque, and Abdul Kaiyum of Boro Rupai villages, they said.

Rangpur police did not yet take frame charges against the JMB outfits who were involved in the August 17 bomb blasts in Rangpur.

This has raised questions among people and political leaders about role of police as regards militants.

Talking to this correspondent,

Gangachara upazila Awami League President Mojibor Rahman Pramanik claimed that several JMB activists not seen in his area after the August 17 blasts are moving freely.

ganatantri Party central committee member Mohammed Afzal said police are not arrested JMB militants in Gangachara but nabbing opposition leaders and activists who are fighting for people's voting rights.

Officer-in-Charge of Gangachara thana Samsuzzoha denied the allegations.

"Police are vigilant and will arrest JMB militants, if found anywhere", he told this correspondent.

15 BNP men hurt in Patuakhali factional clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

At least 15 persons were injured in BNP factional clash at Dumki upazila headquarters on Thursday.

Local people said, the BNP activists were injured when the activists of Juba Dal, youth wing of the party, attacked a party procession in front of local Nasib Cinema Hall at about 2 pm.

The attackers were led by Juba Dal leader Saiful Alam Mridha.

The processionists were coming from Angaria union to attend the foundation laying ceremony function of Dumki Land Office.

Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury was the chief guest at the function.

The injured are: Abul Bashar Farazi, member of upazila BNP, Juba Dal leaders Humayun Kabir, Monir Molla, Aminul Islam, Abul Kalam Kalim and Masud.

A reliable sources said, Dumki upazila Juba Dal president Saiful Alam Mridha was defeated in Labukhali Union Parishad (UP) election held on January 31 due to non-cooperation of the BNP men.

Most rivers dying due to Farakka, says minister

BSS, Pabna

Shipping Minister Lt Col (Retd) Akbar Hossain said most of the rivers in the country are dying due to adverse effect of Farakka Barrage.

The minister said this while addressing a press briefing on board MV Titas after observing the condition of navigability of the Jamuna.

He said sources of most of the rivers of Bangladesh are originated in India where numerous barrages were set up to withdraw water in the dry season. As a result, about 4,000 rivers of the country are drying in the winter season, he said.

Akbar visited the dredging of the Hirasagar, an offshoot of the Jamuna, from Mohonganj point to Kazirhat in Bera upazila.

The minister said the Ganges Water Sharing Agreement signed during the period of Awami League (AL) government is a bluff as the agreement lacks any guarantee clause.

He said the present Four-Party Alliance government is trying to solve the vexed water-sharing problem between Bangladesh and India through inter-country negotiation.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) Chairman Advocate Shamsur Rahman Shimul Biswas, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) Chairman Dr Riaz Hasan Khondkar, Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation Chairman Sheikh Khurshid Alam was present at the press briefing.

Meanwhile, the concerned officials informed the minister the navigability of Baghabari point could be increased by 1.5 ft using bundling method.

They said they are expecting that all kinds of ship including oil tankers could anchor at the point with immediate effect, which will ease the perennial problem of fuel supply in the northern districts.

8X3

10X3



PHOTO: STAR
The Drug Control Department in a raid in Chittagong BRTC bus stand yesterday recovered 200 grams of heroin stashed inside a pair of sandals.