

# JMB chief Abdur Rahman

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media channels however mentioned her name as Ayesha Rahman.

The JMB chief, who has a Tk 50 lakh bounty on his head, warned he has a large number of powerful explosives in his possession. Eight explosions were also heard from the house, but it could not be known whether there was any casualty.

Rab intelligence wing chief Lt Col Gulzar Uddin Ahmed told The Daily Star last night they reckon two JMB operatives, identified later as Mojib and Hanif, were with Rahman in the house.

Over a thousand-strong force drawn from Rab, Bangladesh Rifles and the police was besieging the house. The law enforcers also had been trying to flush out the Islamist militant linchpin and his accomplices by streaming water and lobbing teargas shells into the house through holes drilled in the roof until 8:00pm.

Rab Director General Abdul Aziz Sarker at 11:45 last night told The Daily Star over telephone that they would refrain from breaking into the house at night. They want to do it in the daylight.

Thousands of locals thronged the area and gathered around the sealed-off place to witness the imminent arrest of the mastermind behind all the bomb attacks in the country since the August 17 near-simultaneous bomb strikes across the country last year.

## OPERATION DETAILS

Acting on intelligence and confessions of arrested JMB Majlis-e-Shura member and Khulna regional chief Rakib Hasan alias Hafez Mahmud, Rab members launched simultaneous combing operations in search of Rahman's hideout in Tiligari, Shaplabagh, Brahmanpara, Mirapara and Kalashil areas in the north-eastern divisional city at around 8:30 Tuesday night.

Split into several teams, the Rab forces started searching every house in the areas in the dark of the night.

When a Rab team knocked at Surya Dighal Bari, a single-storey house in East Shaplabagh Road 2, at around 9:00pm, no response came from inside. Smelling a rat, the Rab team returned to the house after searching 40 other houses in the area and knocked at its door again.

Finding no response once again, some Rab troopers scaled the gate and jumped onto the compound at around 12:30am yesterday.

All of a sudden, a man in his 30's appeared in a grilled veranda brandishing a sword. He shouted "Naraye Takbir" and then quickly disappeared into the house.

The Rab team then called in additional forces and cordoned off the area. The Rab members enquired of the neighbours about the owner and the tenants of the house. When the locals told them that the landlord lives abroad, they became even more certain that Rahman was hiding in the house.

Rab forces from other areas rushed to the spot and took position around the house, while several teams were stationed at different points in the area.

At around 1:00am, Gulzar Ahmed started asking Rahman over a megaphone to surrender, while Rab men kept their firearms pointed at the house.

"Abdur Rahman, come out and surrender. We're not your enemy. Come out. We'll not do any harm to you. We'll ensure your safety and security," the repeated Rab announcement reverberated in the dead of the night.

But Rahman shouted from inside that he would not come out. "Don't call me by my name. I'm a Mujahid [who fights for Islam]," he said at the top of his voice.

At one point, Rahman even started preaching, saying the Rab men have deviated from the true path of Islam. He asked them to admit their wrongs and return to the fold of the 'true faith'.

"This state system is wrong. Come back to the path of Islam," he kept on saying.

Those who are in the brothels are also mothers and sisters of some people, he said, adding: "You're looking after them and thus assisting in their physical violation. This is the rule of this country."

"You don't fight against these. On the contrary, you announced a bounty of Tk 10 lakh on an innocent child and have come with firearms to win it."

After one hour of such preaching, he finally stopped.

As the Rab men gain urged him to surrender after some time, the JMB chief said they were trying in vain to persuade him, adding, "Our victory is certain. Don't think I'll be easy to capture me. Don't take us as weak. We've jihadis even in Rab and the police."

Warning that there are powerful bombs in their possession, Rahman said: "It won't be easy to capture us alive. We'll explode the bombs if necessary."

"We don't believe in surrendering to anyone except Allah," he declared.

At around 4:00am, Rahman asked the Rab men to talk with the state minister for home affairs. "I don't want to talk to you. Arrange for me to talk with the minister."

Rab men asked him to surrender considering the welfare of his family. But Rahman made no response.

Rab took position on the rooftops of adjacent houses, barring locals from coming out of their homes.

Sounds of three small explosions

came from the house at around 8:00am and two others at 9:15am.

The law enforcers cut the gas supply to the house at 9:00am and the power supply half an hour later.

Sylhet City Mayor Badruddin Kamran and Deputy Commissioner of the district SM Faisal Alam also requested the JMB top gun to surrender several times over a bullhorn yesterday, assuring him of security and proper legal assistance.

Three crackers exploded at 12:30pm when Rahman's wife Rupa was coming out of the house with their two-year-old son Ahmed in her lap. Rab escorted them to a Rab tent set up nearby.

Rahman's daughter Afifa Rahman with her four-month-old child Talha, his sons Mahmud alias Ashraf and Fuad, the wife of a JMB activist with her child and a nine-year-old domestic help came out of the house later. But, Rahman's eldest son Nabil alias Tanveer was not among them.

All except the minor ones were handcuffed after they had come out. Rab took them to Rab-9 headquarters.

In the afternoon, Rab brought Rahman's wife in front of the house and made her request Rahman to surrender.

"Come out, they've given all-out assurance of safety and legal assistance," Rupa told her husband over a bullhorn, but to no response.

## ATTEMPTS TO DEFUSE EXPLOSIVES

Firemen rushed to the spot and

poured water through the window in the afternoon to defuse the explosives inside the house. They also tried to break a boundary wall to pour in water.

In the evening, they drilled a hole on the roof to stream in water. Sources said, they saw something that looked like an explosive device in a room.

Rab Additional Director General Mahbub Mollah told The Daily Star, "We're giving him time and scope to surrender as we want to capture him alive."

The law enforcers also lobbied tear gas canisters into the house to flush Rahman out.

## THE MYSTERIOUS HOUSE

On January 2, one Hridoy Chowdhury rented the house from Mainul Haque, brother of the owner of the house Abdul Haque, who lives in the UK.

Law enforcers arrested Mainul yesterday.

Mainul told Rab he rented the house to Hridoy according to Tulitkor Union Parishad member Nurunnabi alias Deshi's recommendation.

Rahman's wife told Rab that she used to stay in a room and not go out as she maintained purdah. "I don't know what has been kept in other rooms," she said.

She, however, said two JMB activists are in the house with Rahman but she does not know them, as she never went before them.

for "creating" the "fictitious" character of Bangla Bhai.

"We do not know officially about the existence of the JMB. Only some so-called newspapers are publishing reports on it. We do not have their constitution in our records," State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar told the BBC radio on January 26, 2005.

Even Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, while exchanging views with editors in August last year, said there is no existence of Bangla Bhai.

Ruling coalition partner Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer and Industries Minister Matiur Rahman Nizami on July 22 last year said, "Bangla Bhai has been created by some newspapers."

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman on February 23 last year dubbed the onset of Islamist militancy across the country as nothing but a "foul propaganda" by a section of the media.

On the same day, however, after the government banned the JMB, Babar told the BBC, "We are embarrassed as it is not being possible to arrest Bangla Bhai...We have put extreme pressure on the police to hold him."

On May 15 last year, a cabinet committee meeting on law and order ordered the police to arrest Bangla Bhai and his followers. A week later, the JMB operatives staged a showdown in Rajshahi and met the deputy commissioner, superintendent of police (SP) and deputy inspector general of police (DIG).

Masud Mia, the then Rajshahi SP who had been suspended a few days ago, welcomed the JMB team, saying, "We [the police] hail you as you are helping us eliminate the Sarbaharas from Rajshahi. We will cooperate with you in the coming days so that people can rest without fear."

Rajshahi range DIG Noor Mohammad on June 23 said there is no existence of "so-called Bangla Bhai" in the region.

Zahirul Haque, director general of external publicity wing of the foreign ministry, on January 25 this year quoted US Embassy officials in Dhaka about the non-existence of Bangla Bhai. The US embassy, however, refuted his comment.

# Lanka's lower middle

short-leg to Mohammad Ashraf, off Enamul, after a 108-ball 69 that contained eight boundaries.

Young Enamul then trapped Tillakaratne Dilshan (22) leg before to wrap up the rival top-order, but Maharoof joined Samaraweera to stage a superb fightback before pacer Shahadat bowled Maharoof.

Rafique and Enamul shared four wickets between them and new ball bowlers Rasel and Shahadat took one apiece.

Earlier, Bangladesh could add only four runs to their overnight total of 315-9 before being bowled out. Lasith Malinga picked up the wicket of Shahadat to finish with figures of 4-57 as the most successful Sri Lanka bowler.

# Rahman's den

FROM PAGE 1  
a photograph and other details of Hridoy as a precautionary measure before renting out the house to him. He also informed the local union parishad members about the rental.

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), which has been spearheading the blockade, arrested Mainul yesterday afternoon and taken Hridoy's photograph from him to ascertain the man's real identity.

# DFID official denies

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said the representative of DFID (Department for International Development, UK).

He said there are some 'odd exceptions' in this case but did not elaborate them.

The DFID official made the comment at a press briefing in Dhaka yesterday, replying to a question about Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman's views on donors' dictations. Saifur alleged a few days ago that the donors often dictate the government in different policymaking issues.

"We see lots of reports in the newspapers about donors' dictations but I do not think so...the only thing donors usually do is to ask the government to follow the aid utilisation rules adopted in a Paris meeting a few years back," David Wood said.

The DFID representative also said the donors are there only to extend support and the development in Bangladesh must be made by the Bangladeshis themselves.

He stressed the need for accountability in government, donors and NGOs, capacity building of the government and effective utilisation of aid.

The briefing was organised to inform the press about the grand Asia 2015 Conference to be held in London on March 6-7. The conference jointly sponsored by the DFID, World Bank and ADB (Asian Development Bank) will confirm commitment to development and poverty reduction in Asia.

The conference will also discuss how increasing aid demands of Asia can be met.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair will formally open the conference to be participated dignitaries including Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, UK Secretary of State for International Development Gareth Thomas, ADB President Haruhiko Kuroda and World Bank Vice-President Praful Patel.

Senior ministers and officials from Cambodia, China, Japan, India,

# JP won't join

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The JP chief pledged 16 pledges to be fulfilled if his party is voted to power. The pledges include separation of judiciary, forming independent Election Commission, bringing electoral reforms to ensure free and fair elections, giving facilities for the farmers, formation of complete upazila system with its chairman's power to run, forming strict laws to check criminal activities and corruption, providing gas facilities, and setting up industries for the people of northern areas.

The present government has completely failed to run the country as the people are witnessing severe fuel, fertiliser, seed, water and gas crisis, Ershad said, adding that the government has been playing double standard regarding criminal activities and corruption, providing gas facilities, and setting up industries for the people of northern areas.

Former prime minister and JP leader Kazi Zafar, Secretary General Ruhul Amin Hawlader, JP leaders Kazi Firoz Rashid, Nasim Osman, Abu Hossain Babla, Tazul Islam Chowdhury, Karim Uddin Bharasha, Prof Delwar Hossain Khan, Abu Sufian, Golam Kibria Tipu, Sheikh Sawkat Hossain Nilu, Mostafa Zaman Haider, Mainuddin Bhuiyan, Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu, Fakir Ashraf, Moshir Rahman Ranga, among others, spoke at the rally.

# Thousands of Muslims

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organisations were preparing for similar protests on Thursday.

Eight political parties, most of them communist, have formed a Committee Against Bush Visit, which will hold a "people's march" and put up cartoons and T-shirts poking fun at Bush on Thursday.

"President Bush is the topmost official of US imperialism, leading enemy of the sovereignty of nations and the peoples of the world today," the committee said in a statement Wednesday.

The left-affiliated cultural organisation Sahmat said activists from other outfits had made cartoons, posters and T-shirts for the protests bearing slogans such as "Killers in town".

Hundreds of students at Jawaharlal Nehru University were joined by Booker prize-winning writer Arundhati Roy late Tuesday in keeping a night vigil against the visit.

Muslims are enraged over US foreign policy in the Middle East. Left-wing parties also opposed to its economic policies, which they say exploit the poor.

The communists are scathing in their criticism of the Indian government for its softening stance towards the US, which they say is interfering in Indian foreign policy.

With around 130 million Muslims among its 1.1 billion inhabitants, India has one of the world's largest Muslim populations.

Meanwhile Delhi authorities have thrown a security blanket never seen for any head of state, with anti-Bush protesters pledging to take to the streets in thousands against the US President during his visit here March 1-3.

In an unprecedented act, Delhi Police have asked motorists to avoid several arterial roads in the heart of the city Thursday when George W Bush will have a packed day in the national capital.

Also Thursday 50,000 to 100,000 people are expected to march from the Ramliya ground to Parliament Street, armed with posters, banners and Bush caricatures.

"We are protesting against everything Bush stands for," said Rajan, one of the organisers of Thursday's rally that will draw more than 100 small and big groups ranging from mainstream political parties to fringe outfits.

The office of Sahmat, a Left-leaning cultural body, is overflowing with a variety of anti-Bush stickers and posters and even T-shirts that mock at the US president, who is visiting India for the first time.

Indonesia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam will also attend the conference.

A high-level delegation from Bangladesh led by Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman will attend the conference.

Representatives from civil society and business leaders will also join the conference and deliver speeches in a number of sessions. Bangladesh Enterprise Institute President Farooq Sobhan, founder of Brac Fazle Hasan Abed, CAMPE Executive Director Rashida Chowdhury, The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Aram and The Daily Ittefaq Editorial Board Chairman Mainul Hossain are among them.

The main theme of the conference is to listen to the voices from Asia, David Wood said.

Stressing the need for broader relationship between the donors and recipient countries, the DFID country representative said other than aid and project related issues there should be more discussion between the two sides. "It is partly about improving the aid relationship, but it would also move beyond financial aid to issues such as trade, debt relief, security, climate change, migration and reform in international organisations and private sector."

Appreciating Bangladesh's recent progress in different areas, the DFID official cited macro-economic stability, expansion of micro-finance, vast network for NGOs, primary school enrolment and low infant mortality as success stories.

Bangladesh still has to address enormous challenges like governance, improving the condition of underdeveloped communities and spreading benefit of development to all the people in an equal manner, David Wood added.

Responding to another query, DFID country representative said the British aid in Bangladesh is being used effectively.

DFID Senior Economic Adviser Tom Crowards was also present at the briefing.

BNP and the AL for their large-scale corruption, misuse, mismanagement and confrontational politics, the former president urged the people to come under the umbrella of JP to snatch victory in the upcoming election.

JP Presidium Member Rawshan Ershad said the countrymen witnessed good governance, infrastructure developments, good law and order situation during the Ershad regime.

The country's democracy for which the JP had to quit power is now at stake due to bad politics of the two big parties, she said.

Former prime minister and JP leader Kazi Zafar, Secretary General Ruhul Amin Hawlader, JP leaders Kazi Firoz Rashid, Nasim Osman, Abu Hossain Babla, Tazul Islam Chowdhury, Karim Uddin Bharasha, Prof Delwar Hossain Khan, Abu Sufian, Golam Kibria Tipu, Sheikh Sawkat Hossain Nilu, Mostafa Zaman Haider, Mainuddin Bhuiyan, Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu, Fakir Ashraf, Moshir Rahman Ranga, among others, spoke at the rally.

# Outlaw killed

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Khan Tipu, 27, regional commander of Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-Janauddho).

Rab sources said Tipu was wanted in 12 cases filed with Khulna and Rupsha police stations. He was also involved in looting five rifles from Sundarbans Sea Food in 1997, the sources added.

Rab-6 members arrested Tipu at Sonadanga in the city on Tuesday. On his confessional statement, they along with Tipu set out for Gunari village at about 2:30am yesterday to arrest his accomplices and seize the hidden firearms.

When they reached there, Tipu's cohorts opened fire, forcing the members of the elite force to retaliate.

Rab said Tipu was caught in the shootout and died instantly. A shutter gun and two bullets were recovered from the scene.

The body was sent to Khulna Medical College and Hospital morgue for autopsy.

# 26 JMB men

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surrendered to a magistrate's court on Tuesday.

The court sent Md Tozammel Haque alias Toza, son of Md Jamil Hossain of Mohabbatpur village in the sadar upazila, to Dinajpur jail.

Toza was an active operator of outlawed Jama'at-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and was involved in last year's blasts in the district.

His brother Mofazzal Hossain Dulal, chairman of Awaliapur Union Parishad and president of union unit BNP, surrendered a licensed pistol and 20 bullets to police yesterday morning.

Earlier on Friday night, Detective Branch police raided Charadangi Bazar in the sadar upazila and arrested JMB operator Nurul Islam, 22, of Saidpur village.

The arrestee during primary interrogation by police confessed to his involvement in the blasts.

# CPB calls

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The CPB and its student wing the Bangladesh Chhatra Union yesterday brought out separate processions and held rallies in the capital yesterday in support of today's programme.

The Bangladesh Krishak Samity, Bangladesh Khetmajur Samity, Bangladesh Jubo Union and Garment Workers Trade Union Centre have extended support to the CPB rally.

All examinations under the National University scheduled for today have been postponed and fresh dates will be notified in due course, says a university press release.

Dhaka University authorities have also postponed all examinations for today.

A release of the Chittagong Stock Exchange yesterday said its transaction for today will begin at 1:00pm and run till 3:00pm.

# Deferred import

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percent, fertiliser by 44.85 percent, petroleum, oil and lubricants by 21.09 percent and crude petroleum by 102.28 percent. "Import growth of capital machinery and production inputs thus remain healthy," observed the central bank.

# Prof Yunus

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Institutions was placed in the parliament aimed at extending microcredit project nationwide in Turkey.

Yunus was invited to share his vast experience of microcredit management under Grameen Bank.

He was informed that Turkey has initiated Grameen Microcredit Project in 2003 by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The project attuned to the model of Grameen Bank is being implemented successfully in the province of Diyarbakir.

# Ctg fire victim

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undergoing treatment at the CMCH.

Sources at the CMCH said an injured worker, Hannan, was shifted to the intensive care unit (ICU) from ward no 27 on Sunday as his condition deteriorated.

# Building collapse

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the operation by tomorrow.

The rescuers were working to clear debris from the second, third and ground floors of the building yesterday.

The building that previously housed a garment factory collapsed on Saturday when labourers were working for its conversion into a hospital.

## ACCUSED STILL

## EVADING ARREST

Police detectives, who are investigating the case filed in connection with the building collapse, continued their drive to arrest seven absconding accused, including owner of the building Deen Mohammad.

The police arrested Manager (Finance) of Phoenix Fabrics Rezaul Karim Faruq on Saturday night.

Additional Deputy Commissioner of Detective Branch (DB) Shaiful Islam told The Daily Star that they raided Dhanmondi area and old parts of the city yesterday to arrest the absconding accused, but the raids did not yield any result.

# PM's response

FROM PAGE 1  
step towards election engineering. "That's why the chief election commissioner continues to prepare a fresh voter list ignoring the High Court verdict."

She announced that the 14-party opposition combine will lay siege to the chief election commissioner's office and district and upazila election offices on March 12 to press home the demand for a fair voter list.

She said: "We've placed the reform proposals to establish people's right, as we don't want to come to power through backdoor or conspiracy... BNP believes in such a course and is now conspiring to return to power."

"No proper investigation was held in the Chittagong arms haul case," Hasina said, accusing some ministers of arms smuggling in the country.

Criticising the prime minister's remarks against hartal, Hasina said the prime minister now talks against hartal, but during the Awami League rule (1996-2001) they called hartal for 302 days. "You attended the parliament only for 28 days and everyday you gave ultimatum for ousting us," she said indicating the prime minister.

Referring to the devastating fire in a garment factory at Kalurghat, she said: "It was not an incident, it was massive killings... when Khaleda Zia comes to power, the country experiences various disasters."

Accusing the prime minister of

patronising and harbouring the bombers, the AL president said: "She (PM) stops investigations where Shibir cadres are linked... Shibir cadres killed Rajshahi University professor Taher and because of that your administration cannot catch the culprits."

Hasina assured the people of Chittagong that if Awami League returns to power it will fulfil their demands for expansion of railway tracks from Chittagong to Cox's Bazar, construction of hanging bridge over the Karnaphuli, and establishment of seaport in deep sea, tourist spot in the three hill districts and a IT village in Chittagong.

The grand rally was addressed, among others, by AL leaders Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Abdur Razzak MP, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta MP, Motia Chowdhury, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim MP, Abdul Jalil MP, Obaidul Kader, CCC Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, Syed Ashrafur Islam MP, Prof Ali Ashraf, Aktaruzzaman Chowdhury Babu, Engr Mosharraf Hossain and Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah.

Others who also spoke at the rally included Dr Kamal Hossain, Rashed Khan Menon, Bimal Biswas, Hasanul Huq Inu, Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, Nurul Islam, Dilip Barua, Asit Barun Roy, Adv Enamul Huq, Supreme Court Bar Council Vice-Chairman Barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud and Chittagong District Bar Council General Secretary Ratan Kumar Roy.

# Dhaka to ask Delhi

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State Electricity Boards in Indian eastern region.

Indian daily The Telegraph on February 27 quoted Shinde as saying that water shortage at the Farakka plant is only temporary. "Because of the ongoing process of filling up of a reservoir in the Tehri dam project, the flow in the Ganges has become less. But once that is over, the situation will improve."

The Bangladesh state minister told The Daily Star, "We've been telling India about our being deprived of due share of Ganges water during January-May lean period. But no formal response from India has so far been received. We learned it informally that Ganges' flow at Farakka point has been reduced."

Expressing a deep sense of worry, he said any unilateral water usage from the trans-boundary river for power generation would be a violation of the Ganges Water Treaty.

Water Resources Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmed is learnt to have been expecting a response from his Indian counterpart about renewing talks on Teesta water sharing in the light of the treaty. He is now on a visit to China to develop water sector cooperation between Bangladesh and China that share some common rivers including the Brahmaputra.

Experts noted that while India pursues bilateral talks on the issues of river water sharing, Bangladesh prefers basin-wise solution to water sharing problems involving all co-riparian countries.

Sources at Joint River Commission (JRC) said Bangladesh at an expert-level meeting with India at Farakka on February 6-7 informed its upper-riparian neighbour about not getting its due share of Ganges waters.

Official statistics show Bangladesh got 55,840 cuses of water from the Ganges during the first 10-day slot (January 1-10) of lean period against its share of 67,515 cuses; 40,471 cuses in the second slot (January 11-20) against 57,673 cuses; 35,000 cuses against 50,154 cuses in the third slot (January 21-31); and 46,323 cuses against 52,059 cuses in the fourth slot (February 1-10).

Experts pointed out that the Ganges treaty has the provision of holding joint review if the river's flow at Farakka drops below 70,000 cuses; otherwise, lower-riparian's water share has to be guaranteed as per the 'indicative schedules' (averaging last 40 years' flow).

# Secret lies

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explosives were smuggled in and bombs were made and that Rahman and Khaled Saifullah trained them up on bomb-making.

The investigators believe the JMB chief and Saifullah learnt bomb-making in Afghanistan when they visited the country during Taliban regime. They also became sure that Saifullah had been a leader of Harkatul Jihad al Islami (HuJI) Bangladesh before he joined JMB.

About JMB funds, Sunny told the law enforcers that most of it comes from individual donations and Zakat.

On condition of anonymity some investigators said what they could not know from Sunny are JMB's foreign links, fund support and involvement of local quarters.

What Sunny confessed before a magistrate in Dhaka is that two British militant leaders—Abdur Rahman and Sajjad—provided the JMB £10,000 for carrying out the bomb attacks.

The investigators, however, believe that the militant organisation definitely enjoys support from some "third party" in and outside the country.

In an interview with The Daily Star in May 2004, Shaekh Rahman said he runs the Al-Madina Islamic Cadet Madrasa and a mosque in

Jamalpur. Saudi Arabian NGO Rabata-e-Islam and controversial Kuwait-based NGO Revival of Islamic Heritage Society provided him with the financial assistance to establish those institutions.

Awal also did not disclose any information other than his own role in the organisation. Nothing could be learnt from Hafez Mahmud as the Rab is presently