

Islamist militants in south-western dists regrouping

AMANUR AMAN, back from Meherpur and Jhenidah

Banned Islamist militants organisations are regrouping their cadres in southwestern districts.

At least 12,000 trained cadres are active in the region covering Kushtia, Meherpur, Jhenidah, Jessor, Khulna, Narail and Satkhira, according to intelligence sources. Most of them are madrasa students.

They belong to five militant outfits-- Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Harkatul Jihad (Huji) Hizbut Tawhid, Jgrata Muslim Janata (JMJ) and Muslim Guerrilla Sangshtha (MGS).

Police arrested around 100 militants at different times in the region--26 in Kushtia in 2003 and 2006; 35 five in Jhenidah in 2004 and four in Satkhira on May 22 this year.

It was gathered from different sources that a good number of militants who fled their areas and crossed the border after the crackdown following the August 17 serial bomb blasts in 2005 have returned to their respective areas and started activities.

On April 13 this year, police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in separate drives arrested Anisur Rahman, Meherpur district chief of Hizbut Tawhid and its Gangni upazila unit chief Saharul along with seven activists from Harbhanga village in Gangni upazila. Firearms, sword, books and leaflets calling for jihad were also recovered.

The arrestees told police that they dedicated their lives to the cause of 'Islam' and they were out for 'Jihad' (holy war) to establish an 'Islamic state' in Bangladesh.

In another drive, Rab-6 arrested two JMB leaders from Ullahpara

village in Kaliganj upazila in Jhenidah.

On May 22, joint forces arrested four Huji men including women at Shetpur village in Kaliganj upazila in Satkhira.

This correspondent recently visited Harbhanga village in Gangni upazila in Meherpur and Ullahpara in Kaliganj upazila in Jhenidah.

In Meherpur, Hizbut was quite active in at least six villages in Gangni upazila in the recent past allegedly due to police inaction.

The villages are Debjpur, Chatian, Baout, Harbhanga, Karamdi and Kardab.

Police said they could not arrest Hizbut men in the area as they were operating under the banner of Tabligi Jamaat.

The militants would call on villagers to join them to establish Islamic rule, rejecting all 'man-made' laws.

Ramzan Ali of Chatian village and Basir Uddin of Baout used to train recruits at secret places in the evening. The training would continue till late night.

Asked about militants, Meherpur Additional Police Superintendent Proloy Chisham said they are hunting for Hizbut Tawhid activists in several areas of the district. He however claimed that situation is under control after arrest of eight Hizbut men including their district chief. All are now in Meherpur jail.

Jhenidah

According to sources, JMB cadres were using remote Ullahpara village in Kaliganj upazila as a training centre for last several years. Rab identified the house of Abu Hasan, an Imam of a local mosque, as the leader of the outfit.

in the area.

Sources said one Zakir Hossain of Bhitswar village in the same upazila was a trainer who organised JMB activities in the area.

Some villagers told this correspondent that Zakir with Imam Abu Hasan often arranged meeting and called local people mostly young and teenage and teach them what is 'Jihad and why it is necessary for all Muslims'.

Police said Imam Hasan and Zakir were involved with JMB.

During their arrest, Rab also recovered bomb-making materials including explosives and Jihadi books written by executed JMB leader Khaled Saifullah.

Jhenidah was a stronghold of JMB because during study at Kushtia Islamic University, JMB 'operations commander' Ataur Rahman Sunny organized several dens in different areas of the district where he trained JMB men in use of arms.

Local people demolished one of such JMB dens at Nagpara village in Saikupura upazila in December 2003.

This was revealed by JMB Jhenidah second-in-command Bulbul Ahmed alias Abu Zar. Bulbul was in charge of August 17 blasts in Jhenidah were arrested on November 23, 2005.

According to Bulbul's information, Sunny trained at least 500 JMB activists.

Local people also said Harkatul Jihad Chief Mufti Hannan often came to Nagpara before his arrest.

Jhenidah Police Superintendent Zillur Rahman, when contacted, said "We are very much alert about militants' activities in the district".



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

A tornado that battered Madarganj upazila headquarters in Jamalpur district Friday night left a trail of destruction. At least 100 houses and business establishments including a rice mill were torn down.

11 Sherpur 'corruption suspects' submit statements of assets

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Representatives of 11 listed 'corruption suspects' in Sherpur submitted their statements of assets to the Secretary of Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) in Dhaka, ACC sources said here yesterday.

Notices were issued from Sherpur ACC Deputy Director's (DD) office on May 17 to 12 listed 'corruption suspects' asking for statements of assets by seven days.

Wife of former BNP whip Zahed Ali Chowdhury submit statement of assets on behalf of her husband, family sources said. Zahed Ali was elected from Sherpur-2 (Noktara) constituency.

Zahed Ali Chowdhury is now in

Singapore for treatment, family sources claimed.

Zahed Ali Chowdhury's younger brother Mabbub Ali Chowdhury alias Munir Chowdhury submitted his wealth statement through Sherpur authorities. He is now in jail.

Zahed Ali's another younger brother Toton Chowdhury and nephew Rabbe Noor Chowdhury submitted their statements of assets through their wives, family sources said.

Besides, Sherpur town BNP president Awal Chowdhury, former chairman of Sherpur municipality Abdur Razzaq Ashish, former joint convener of district BNP and BRDB chairman Fazlul Haque

Badsha, district Red Crescent secretary Saiful Islam Swapani, Sadar upazila BNP president Fazlul Kader Luu and former organising secretary of central unit of Krishak League Bodhuzzaman Badsha submitted their wealth statements through their wives, sources said.

On the other hand, Sherpur Sadar Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Refaz Uddin Refaz submitted his wealth statement through jail authorities.

Sherpur ACC published a list of 15 'corruption suspects' in the district including former BNP whip Zahed Ali Chowdhury and former lawmaker and district BNP secretary Mahmudul Haque Rubel on March 8.

Joint forces yesterday caught a Union Parishad chairman and BNP leader from his residence allegedly for taking bribe at Trishal upazila headquarters yesterday.

According to Trishal police, Momtaz Begum of Chikna village in No. 6 Trishal Union Parishad in Trishal upazila settled a bribe of Tk 50,000 with local UP chairman Abu Zaheed Masud, joint secretary of Trishal BNP, to settle a land dispute in her favour.

Momtaz made the settlement through her brother-in-law Rafiqul Islam and sent Rafiqul to the UP chairman with Tk 9,500 as part payment. Rafiq brought the matter to the notice of joint forces stationed at the Trishal upazila headquarters earlier.

Joint forces caught Abu Zayed red-handed with the bribe money when Rafiq was handing over the money.

The UP chairman was taken to joint forces camp and then handed over to Trishal police. A case was lodged with the Trishal police.

Death threat to Kushtia editor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A gang leader has threatened a Kushtia daily editor with death for publishing news against him.

The editor has filed a general diary (GD) with Kushtia Sadar police station seeking security and step against the alleged criminal.

According to the GD, daily Arshinagar published some reports on alleged criminal activities by members of 'Jalal Bhaban', a gang in Bheramara upazila.

Annoyed by the news, Jalal, chief of the Bhaban, phoned Arshinagar Editor Rasedul Islam Biplob Thursday night and threatened him with death.

"I am feeling insecure as they threatened to kill me if I publish more news on their criminal activities," Biplob told this correspondent.

Different journalists' organisations have protested the incident and demanded immediate arrest of the criminal.

Kushtia Reporters Unity Convenor Amanur Aman, joint convenor Munshi Tonkli Islam, Kushtia Crime Reporters Association and Kushtia Medical Reporters Association protested the incident and urged the administration to ensure security of the editor and other staff of the daily and action against the criminals.

Critically injured Rawshan was taken to Sathkira Sadar hospital and later shifted to Khulna.

Police arrested Abdul Aziz, son of Yusuf Gaz of Bakal Islampur, allegedly involved in the attack.

Rawshan Ali's son Nur Islam said, on Friday night, two persons identifying themselves as members of intelligence agency asked Rawshan Ali to go with them to nab JMB activists.

"I followed my father. At one stage, being suspicious about the motive of the two persons, my father asked me to contact intelligence authorities to be sure of the drive. I returned back and phoned intelligence authorities who expressed their ignorance about the drive," Nur Islam said.

Soon after the incident, Pickpocket Rawshan Ali informed police, who arrested Nasir Uddin.

Some time later, he was informed that his father is lying on

Witness to Satkhira Aug 17 JMB serial blast fights for life

Retaliatory attack suspected

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

The pickpocket who helped law enforcers detect and nab JMB activists after the August 17 serial bomb blasts in Satkhira in 2005 is now fighting for life at Khulna hospital.

Miscreants left him on the roadside taking him to be dead, police said.

Police took him to Sathkira Sadar Hospital in a critical condition.

Pear Ali, a relative of the victim, hailing from the same village, filed a case with Sadar thana accusing seven people including a commissioner of Sathkira Pourasava.

The accused are Pourasava Commissioner Shahidul Islam, Abdul Aziz, Golam, Abdul Bari, Alim, Mostafa and Jalil.

On contact, Sadar thana Officer-in-Charge (OC) Safiqur Rahman confirmed the incident and said they are trying to nab the culprits.

Pickpocket Rawshan Ali who went to pickpocket on the premises of Women and Children Activists against Violence (WCA) in Arishinagar on August 17, 2005, saw his neighbor Nasir Uddin Dafadar standing there with a bag in his hand. Five minutes after the bag was kept, it went off. Five other bombs also were went off at five places in Satkhira town simultaneously.

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