

# 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, Jessore, Khulna, Narail and Satkhira, according to intelligence sources. Most of them are madrassa student.

They belong to five militant outfits-- Jamaatul Mujahedeen Bangladesh (JMB), Harkatul Jihad (Huji) Hizbut Towhid, Jgrata Muslim Janata (JMJ) and Muslim Guerilla 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 crack-down 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 Towhid 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 Gngni 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 Debipur, Chatian, Baout, Harbhanga, Karamdi and Katdah.

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

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 Chishim said they are hunting for Hizbut Toudid 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 one 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 Jihad 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 Saikupa 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 alerted, said "We are very much alert about militants' activities in the district".



Atornado that battered Madarganj upazila headquarters in Jamalpur district Friday night left a trail of devastation. At least 100 houses and business establishments including a rice mill were tore down.

PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

## 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 news on alleged criminal activities by members of 'Jalal Bhaban', a gang in Bheramara upazila.

Annoyed by the news, Jalal, chief of the Bahini, 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 journalist's organisations have protested the incident and demanded immediate arrest of the criminal.

Kushtia Reporters Unity Convenor Amanur Aman, joint convenor Munshi Torikul 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.

## UP chairman caught while taking bribe

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

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 Zahed 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 Zayeed 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.

## 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.

A group of miscreants hacked him at Daulatpur village in Satkhira Sadar upazila allegedly to retaliate the arrest of JMB operatives.

Pickpocket Rawshan Ali of Bakal Islampur village in Satkhira Sadar upazila was the only eyewitness to the August 17 serial blasts.

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

Police arrested Abdul Aziz, son of Yusuf Gazi of Bakal Islampur, allegedly for 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.

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

the roadside at Daulatpur village in a critical condition. He along with others went there and found his father lying on a pool of blood on the roadside, police said quoting Nur Islam.

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

Police took him to Satkhira 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 Satkhira 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.

Pick pocket Rawshan Ali who went to pick pocket on the premises of Women and Children Repression Preventive Court on August 17, 2005, saw his neighbor Nasir Uddin Dafadar standing there with a bag in his hand. Five minute after the bag was kept, it went off. Five other bombs also were went off at five places in Satkhira town simultaneously.

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

## ATTACK ON MINORITY COMMUNITY

## Two more Agoiljhara cops stand-released

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Two more cops of Agoiljhara police station have been suspended and stand-released for their failure to take action after the attacks on minority community people at Askor-Dusmi village of Bagdha union in the upazila.

Higher authorities yesterday took the action against sub-inspector Aftabuddin and conatable Abdul Razzak.

Earlier, officer-in-charge of the police station, Yunus Ali Howladar, was suspended and stand-released on Thursday for allegedly patronising the attackers by playing biased and partial role in their favor.

Deputy Inspector General of Police Aminul Islam in Barisal Range acknowledged the action said Sub Inspector and Second Officer Md. Gazi was ordered to take charge of the police station till a replacement is posted there.

The administrative actions followed visit to the village by high police officials and human rights activists. Barisal Range additional deputy inspector general of police, district additional police superintendent, circle inspector and representatives of Manabdhikar Aingato Sahayato Kendro and Ain O Shalish Kendro, visited the spot on Thursday.

Police arrested 19 people till yesterday, most of them members of the gang allegedly led by Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) cadre Qaium. They include

Rubel, Tuku and Karim Molla--, Humam Kabir, Kabir Hossain, Fazlul Karim, Amir Hossain, Luthfor Howladar, Sultan Molla, Rubel Bakhtiar, Monir Bepari, Asaduzzaman, Al-Amin Howladar, Nazmul Islam, Alauddin Molla, Majid Bepari, Sohel Molla, Zakir Shah and Solaiman. Qaium Molla built a gang of musclemen called Qaium bahini in the area.

Qaium was sent to jail on Tuesday while he surrendered to upazila magistrate court.

## Minor boy burnt to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A minor boy was burnt alive and another received burn injuries at Char Kalibari slum in the district in a fire incident in the early hours of yesterday.

Eight year-old Sajib was burnt alive while 10 year-old Shabbir was rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) with serious burn injuries.

The fire broke out in the slum on the bank of Brahmaputra river when all were asleep, police said.

Several shanties were burnt to ashes. The slum dwellers could not say anything about the cause of the fire.

## 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 (Nokla-Nalitabari) constituency.

Zahed Ali Chowdhury is now in

Singapore for treatment, family sources claimed.

Zahed Ali Chowdhury's younger brother Mahbub Ali Chowdhury alias Munir Chowdhury submitted his wealth statement through Sherpur jail 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 Razzak Ashish, former joint convener of district BNP and BRDB chairman Fazlul Haque

Badsha, district Red Crescent secretary Saiful Islam Swapan, Sadar upazila BNP president Fazlul Kader Lutu and former organising secretary of central unit of Krishak League Bodiuzzaman 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.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Rajshahi Businessmen Association held a seminar on 'Prospects for Development of Rajshahi' in the city yesterday. Rajshahi University teachers and other professionals took part in the seminar.

## 2 cops among 20 injured in Netrakona clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

At least 20 persons including two police constables were injured in a clash between two rival groups at Daribinni village of Madan upazila in Netrakona on Friday night.

Those injured police constable are Mahbulul Alam and Sharif Mia and seriously injured villagers are Firoz Mia, Makhon Mia, Chand Mia, Abdul Hamid.

Seriously injured persons were admitted at Netrakona Sadar Hospital. Others were treated at Madan Upazila Health Complex.

Police sources said, centering

exerting influence in the region men of Fazlur Rahman group and Abdus Sobahan group of Teosree union in Madan upazila locked in clash with sharp weapons on Friday night.

After getting information police rushed to the spot and fired 10 round bullets from shotgun to control the situation.

Police arrested Tanu Mia, Mohammad Ali, Lesku Mia, Ajhahan, Abul Mia, Habibur Rahman and Biddya Mia in this connection.

A case was filed accusing arrested 7 persons.



PHOTO: STAR

The Jamuna has devoured several villages and vast croplands in Sirajganj Sadar upazila in about a week. The photo was taken from Shimla village.

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