

Pak minister

FROM PAGE 16

He said, "There is no way to extradite Ajmal Kasab. We can conduct the trial of the accused who are in Pakistan. Ajmal Kasab has committed a crime in India and New Delhi can conduct the trial according to its own laws."

Pakistan on Wednesday identified Ajmal Amir Kasab as the "prime suspect" for the Mumbai terrorist attacks and formally requested India to hand him to facilitate "successful prosecution of other accused arrested in this country."

"The Government of Pakistan has formally requested the Indian government to hand over the custody of Ajmal Kasab because he is the prime suspect and the rest of these suspects, they are abettors, they abetted the crime," Deputy Attorney General Sardar Mohammad Ghazi HAD said.

Ghazi, who has been appointed the Special Public Prosecutor for the trial of Pakistani suspects arrested for the Mumbai attacks, said it would be difficult to prosecute the accused if Kasab is not handed over to Pakistan.

"I am sure the Indian government is going to look into it, they are going to take a decision because without having the custody of Ajmal Kasab in Pakistan, I think it will be very, very difficult to prosecute the rest of the suspects," Ghazi had told Dawn News channel.

At one point no less than Pakistan Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani said they had demanded that New Delhi hand him over, a statement later refuted by Pakistan Information Minister Sherry Rahman.

However, one cannot be certain whether the Defence Minister is the last word on the subject.

Meanwhile, a seven-member FBI team from the US is expected to visit Pakistan next week to follow-up the findings of the probe conducted by authorities here in connection with the Mumbai terror attacks.

The visit by the FBI team has been cleared by the Foreign Office, diplomatic sources said.

The team will interact with Pakistani law enforcement officials to discuss the findings of their probe into the November 26 Mumbai attacks, the sources told PTI.

They said the FBI is also expected to question the six suspects detained by Pakistani authorities in connection with the attacks which left over 180 people dead, including six Americans. These suspects include Lashker-e-Taiba operations commander Zakir Rehman Lakhvi, its communication expert Zahir Shah and another member of the group Hamad Amin Sadiq.

Meanwhile, Pakistan is yet to make a decision on sending an investigation team to India as part of its probe into the Mumbai terror attacks though the issue is being considered by the government, Prime

Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani has said.

Richard Holbrooke, the US Special Envoy for Pakistan and Afghanistan, had told Pakistani leaders during his recent visit to the country that India is willing to "let in Pakistani investigators to share further information on the Mumbai incident", Gilani said.

"So we are considering sending a FIA (Federal Investigation Agency) team to India but no decision has been taken in this regard as yet," he told reporters on the sidelines of an official function here yesterday.

The FIA conducted a probe into the Mumbai attacks after India handed over its dossier on the incident to Pakistan on January 5.

Pakistan gave India a set of 30 questions seeking more information on the Mumbai incident along with its response, which was handed over on February 12.

Interior ministry chief Rehman Malik had last week said Pakistani authorities had filed formal charges against nine suspects, including Ajmal Amir Kasab, the lone terrorist captured alive during the attacks. He said six of the eight other suspects had been detained while two are still at large.

Malik had also acknowledged that part of the conspiracy behind the Mumbai incident was hatched on the Pakistani soil.

The FBI has played a key behind-the-scenes role in the sharing of information uncovered by Indian and Pakistani investigators. The FBI also has a sizable presence in the US embassy here and it is believed that some of its officials have conducted preliminary inquiries in Pakistan, including in Kasab's village Faridkot in Punjab province.

Islamabad last week handed over to New Delhi the findings of its probe. Pakistan's nine-page response to the Indian dossier included the findings of its investigation and 30 questions seeking further information from New Delhi.

Diplomatic sources said the information provided in the Indian dossier was used by Pakistani security agencies to round up suspects and gather vital evidence. In one case, GPS coordinates and phone numbers provided in the dossier helped Pakistani sleuths locate two houses in Karachi that were used by the attackers and their accomplices.

Both these houses were located after extensive surveillance and in one of them, officials found a dinghy that was used by attackers for training at sea, the sources said.

An anti-terrorism court judge has so far remanded four suspects - Lakhvi, Shah, Sadiq and Abu al-Qama - to the custody of Federal Investigation Agency till March 3.

Thai PM asks media for evidence of Rohingya abuse

AFP, Jakarta

Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva called Saturday on the international media to provide evidence to back up allegations the Thai military abused Myanmar migrants.

Thailand has faced criticism over claims that its security forces abused migrants from the Rohingya Muslim minority, hundreds of whom have been rescued in Indian and Indonesian waters in recent months.

Thai authorities have not found "the kinds of abuses that are claimed by some of the people that have spoken to the international media," Abhisit told reporters after meeting Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan. "But I have at the same time insisted that if the international media have evidence otherwise they should submit it to the Thai government and the human rights commission, which is an independent body in Thailand."

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More JMB grenades

FROM PAGE 1

Gazipur were made after seven other JMB operatives including three women had been arrested the day before with seven grenades, a huge quantity of other explosives, and jihadi books and CDs in their possession.

They new arrestees are identified as Nasrin Aktar, 22, Atikur Rahman, 20, Zahid Hasan, 21, and Masud Rana, 22.

Nasrin is from Chinir Bandar in Dinajpur, Zahid from Sherpur, and Rana and Atikur are from Gaibandha. They were living in that house for the last two months, locals said.

The new arrests were made upon information given by Mamunur Rashid, a JMB operative who had exploded a grenade Friday afternoon injuring at least 13 people including nine police and three journalists while in handcuffs during a news briefing in the office of Gazipur police superintendent.

Nazmul Islam Khan, acting officer-in-charge of Joydebpur police station, told The Daily Star that the new arrestees said Nasrin's husband Mir Hossain is their leader. All of them confessed to being activists of the outlawed Islamist outfit, police added.

The bomb disposal unit of Rab diffused the grenades this time.

In another drive, police arrested two JMB men from Sarishabari and Sadar upazilas of Jamalpur district

Friday night. They are identified as Mukhlesur Rahman Mishu and Abdullah Kafi.

Our Nilphamari correspondent reported that Rab arrested another JMB activist from a char (shoal) in the River Tista around 5:00am yesterday.

The arrestee is identified as Monowar Moulana, 45, son of Golam Farid of Solmari Alsiapara village in Jaldhaka upazila of the district.

Rab-5 arrested him on information given by the JMB operatives arrested earlier.

Officer-in-charge of Jaldhaka Police Station Narendra Nath Sarkar confirmed the arrest, but said Rab had yet to hand him over to police.

Talking to The Daily Star, Rab Director General Hasan Mahmood Khandaker said, "We can't say that JMB is not active, but now they are not that organised. They, however, are trying to reorganise themselves."

He declined to disclose the sources of JMB's explosives and funding, 'for the sake of investigation'.

Inspector General of Police Nur Mohammad said, "JMB is still active, but not to the extent that we can't handle."

The IGP admitted that they suspect the JMB operatives collected the explosives and made the grenades and bombs to carry out attacks.

"The organisation didn't spring overnight, so it will take some time to defeat it," the IGP added.

Because of the changes made by Hamid, two ministers -- GM Quader and Dilip Barua -- and three lawmakers -- Rashed Khan Menon, Hasanul Haque Inu and Majibur Rahman -- got seats in the front row.

The others on that line are BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and her deputies Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, MK Anwar and Shah Mofazzal Hossain Kaykobad, and Oli Ahmed of LDP.

The chief whip-level talks mediated by Speaker Abdul Hamid to resolve the row on February 19 ended with neither side agreeing to disclose the outcome to the media.

Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia convened a BNPP meeting for Sunday after opposition Chief Whip Joyal Abedin Faruk briefed her about the negotiations.

Faruk on Thursday said the BNP parliamentary party will meet and decide about the next course of action before the House proceedings resume on Sunday.

SCBA polls on Mar 24, 25

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The annual election of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) for its 14 executive posts, including president and secretary, will be held on March 24 and 25.

About 1,800 lawyers of the Supreme Court (SC) have been rolled to cast their votes in the country's prime bar association poll.

Sources said main contest in the election will take place between the panel of ruling Awami League backed Bangladesh Sammilita Ainjibi Samannay Parishad (BSASP) and main opposition BNP backed Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Forum (BJAF).

The BJAF has already finalised its panel for contesting the election. The BJAF has nominated senior lawyer Khandaker Mahub Hossain for its president post while Helaluddin Mollah for secretary post, according to the sources.

Sources said the BSASP will finalise its panel after holding election of Dhaka Bar Association and Taxes Bar Association in Dhaka to be held on Wednesday and Thursday (Feb 25 and 26) and Thursday (Feb 26) respectively.

BSASP's aspirant candidates for the post of president are senior lawyer AFM Mesbahuddin, Mansurul Huq Chowdhury and SA Rahim while for the post of secretary are Azharullah Bhuiyan, SM Rezaul Karim, Jahangir Hossain Salim, Rabul Alam Budu, Abdur Robab and Abdur Rashid.

The SCBA executive committee at a meeting on Friday fixed the schedule of the SCBA polls.

According to the schedule, submission date for the nomination papers is March 1 to March 10 while last date for withdrawal of the candidature is March 14.

Advocate Abul Kashem Fazlul Haque will lead the seven-member election sub-committee to conduct the SCBA poll, the sources said adding that the aspirant candidates have already started seeking votes in favour of them.

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JMB now small

FROM PAGE 1

Haniif was arrested last year in the city's Mirpur area.

"It's quite urgent to nab these men who we believe are reorganising their cadres under the leadership of Saidur Rahman. They are also training new entrants to the outfit," said an investigator who would not be identified talking about the issue.

A Rab source well placed to comment on the JMB operatives rounded up in the last two years said most of them are field-level cadres, and during interrogations they could not give much information about their organisational network.

They said whatever they did they did on instructions from someone whose identity was meticulously hidden from them.

Referring to the information obtained in interrogations, an investigator said, "Our understanding is that the JMB leaders don't want to make the organisation big at this time as that might mean risking detection by the law enforcers. Rather, they prefer working in small groups with particular targets."

This strategy does not allow interrogators to get a bigger picture from the arrestees.

It has in fact made it difficult for the law enforcers to detect and dismantle the militant network, he continued.

"The most frustrating aspect in the campaign against militancy is our failure to have moles infiltrated the terror network."

To complicate matters further, relations between Rab and police personnel have worsened due to professional jealousy and ego conflict, said some other sources concerned.

Rab has been leading the anti-militant drive since 2005. Till the caretaker government rule began, they worked effectively with cooperation from the police.

But in last two years, there was a serious lack of coordination between them.

Under the caretaker administration, police preferred running their own anti-militant operations. They decided not to involve Rab in pursuit of their targets.

Such an approach led to a gap between them and the elite crime busters in the crackdown on militants.

Things got worse as the then government high-ups did not intervene to thaw the relations between the two forces. Increasingly, Rab's enthusiasm wore thin, and they seemed to have lost the initiative in the fight against militancy, observed a highly placed source.

"We were like 'okay...let them [police] go on their own if that's what they want,'" said the source.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, another law enforcement official said, "You will see Rab-police coordination only in statements. It is absent at the field level, where it matters most."

Friday's recoveries and arrests made separately by police and Rab in Gazipur exposed the lack of coordination, he added.

Rab has been after the militants in Gazipur for the last 15 days. But on Friday morning when the local police happened to have leads about some JMB activists holed up at Ghortail village, they carried out a raid all by themselves. They did not even share the intelligence with Rab, said a source.

"They wanted their success to hog the media attention and so arranged a press briefing in the evening during when the grenade blast took place. Around same time, Rab held a press meeting on the outcome of their raids at Konabari and Uttarkhan," added the source.

Sources in law enforcement agencies said the strained relations between police and Rab are not only hampering the drive against militants but also undermining the efforts to contain other crimes.

Speaking from his experience, an investigator said, "I'm afraid if we fail to pull apart the militant network, the JMB men will soon gather enough strength to repeat blasts like 2005. This time the result would be even more devastating as they can now make grenades, bombs and other explosive devices out of local materials."

Govt calls

FROM PAGE 1

yesterday made a clarion call for forming all-party committee in every mohalla to combat terrorism and militancy.

"Form committees drawing members from senior citizens, political parties and their front organizations, social organizations, educational institutions and religious leaders to fight against extortionists and militants," the home minister said.

She made the call while talking to reporters after a discussion meeting marking the Shaheed Day and International Mother Language Day at Aziz Master Academy at Manikdi in the city.

Replying to a question she said the home ministry will give guidelines for constituting the committees.

"The days are not so far off when terrorism and militancy will be rooted out," she added.

JMB has been campaigning for establishment of Islamic rule in the country. The outfit was banned after the staging of synchronized serial bombings in all but one of the 64 district headquarters on August 21, 2004.

Several hundred JMB members were arrested since then. Six top leaders, including their chief Shaikh Abdur Rahman, were hanged to death during the rule of the last caretaker government.

Hamid's predecessor Jamiruddin Sircar allocated all 10 front-row seats for the opposition lawmakers including Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) President Oli Ahmed. All 12 seats in the next row too went to them.

Usually, the leader of the opposition of the House gets the privilege of placing wreaths at the Shaheed Minar after the president, the prime minister, the speaker and the deputy speaker.

However, several organisations were seen placing wreaths at the Shaheed Minar before Khaleda.

Dhaka University (DU) Vice-chancellor (VC) Prof AASM Arefin Siddique refuted the allegation of disrespecting the opposition leader and not maintaining protocol.

Talking to The Daily Star last night Prof Arefin said the BNP chief failed to show up on time. He said the time between her arrival and the deputy speaker's placing his wreath was utilised and a number of organisations paid their respect to the language heroes.

"She [Khaleda Zia] placed her wreaths as soon as she reached the venue," the VC said.

Expressing her anger after placing wreaths at the Shaheed Minar around 12:20am, the BNP chief told the DU VC and his colleagues, "You have failed to maintain neutrality in conducting the ceremony."

Khaleda, however, stopped the angry BNP leaders who had started chanting slogans against the VC.

"Such a situation cannot be tolerated," Khaleda said getting into her car.

A close aide of Khaleda told The Daily Star that Khaleda was scheduled to place her wreath at 12:10am and she had left for the Shaheed Minar accordingly. He said law enforcers in charge of her motorcade took several detours and had stopped at a few places before taking her to the destination.

He claimed it was all part of a conspiracy to undermine Khaleda's image.

Opposition Chief Whip Joyal Abedin Faruk told The Daily Star that they had earlier informed the university author-

JS seat row

FROM PAGE 1

"If she [BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia] is satisfied and convinced, we'll likely to join the parliament proceedings tomorrow [today]," he added.

A close aide of the leader of the opposition also hinted that Khaleda herself is in favour of returning to the House.

"Everything will be decided at tomorrow's parliamentary party meeting," the close aide of Khaleda said.

The BNP-led opposition lawmakers have been boycotting parliament since January 28 in protest against the seat plans rearranged by Speaker Abdul Hamid.

In the new layout, the opposition lawmakers were allotted four seats in the front row and four more in the second row.

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