

Militants' 'ammo factory' busted

London-based Bangladeshi sets up so-called madrasa in remote Bhola village; the den fortified with canal, hanging bridge; arms, ammo materials seized

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK with SHARIFUL ISLAM

In a chilling reminder of how the militants are still alive and kicking, the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday unearthed a mini-ammunition factory inside a madrasa-cum-orphanage in a remote village of Bhola.

During the bust, they recovered a huge cache of firearms and ammunition, explosive substances, four pairs of German-made uniforms and booklets on jihad, Moulana Moududi and al-Qaeda

founder Osama bin Laden.

Besides, the elite crime-busters arrested four suspected militants—Abul Kalam, Abdul Halim, Jasim and Moulana Mohammad Russell.

The raid was still on as of filing this report at 1:00am.

Earlier at night, the coastal district's Superintendent of Police Azizur Rahman told The Daily Star that the arrestees did not yet disclose their organisational identity. But the materials seized suggest they are lined to a banned Islamist group like Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

Following up leads, a team of Barisal Rab-8 had been keeping a close watch on Green Crescent Madrasa in Ramkeshob village under Borhanuddin for the last one week.

Then at around 11:00am yesterday, they stormed the building that stands on a four-acre land.

The seizure list includes nine firearms, 2,500 bullets, 3,000 grenade splinters, an explosives blaster, 200 gram gunpowder, bullet-making components and equipment, two walkie-talkies, two bows, two

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PHOTO: STAR
The firearms, ammunition, grenades and bomb-making materials and equipment seized in Ramkeshob village of Borhanuddin upazila in Bhola. Inset, the madrasa encircled by a moat.

Govt to ensure balance in role of MPs, upazila chairmen: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister (PM) Sheikh Hasina said there would be balance and coordination between the works of members of parliament (MPs) and upazila chairmen to avert any scope of conflict.

Hasina made the remark when Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, chief observer of the European Union (EU) election observation mission called on her at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) yesterday.

Alexander greeted the PM on the Awami League (AL)-led grand alliance's landslide victory under her leadership in the general election held on December 29 last year.

Hasina thanked the EU for

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MP advice to be made must again

JS body on LGRD agrees to reinstate the provision in Upazila Parishad Act

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Members of the parliamentary standing committee on LGRD ministry yesterday agreed in principle to recommend that the House reinstate the provision that makes mandatory for upazila parishads to seek suggestions of lawmakers concerned in running their activities.

The committee might also recommend inclusion of a provision in the city corporation bill to involve lawmakers concerned in the corporations' activities, a few members gave reporters hints after a meeting of the committee at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

Scrutinising a bill that seeks revival of the now defunct Upazila Parishad Act 1998, the committee members disagreed with one of its proposed provision that says lawmakers will be advisers to upazila parishads in their constitu-

encies but does not elaborate on their role as the advisers.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam placed the bill in parliament on February 24, seeking revival of the Upazila Parishad Act 1998 and proposing to scrap its controversial provision that made mandatory for the parishads to take lawmakers' suggestions.

The committee will recommend incorporating the previous provision in the bill, meeting sources said. So, if the bill with the committee's recommendations is passed in parliament, lawmakers will get back their authority over upazila parishads.

In defence of making the recommendation, committee Chairman advocate Rahmat Ali said the proposed law on upazila parishad is

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Another BDR man dies of heart attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

A BDR man of 9 Rifles Battalion in Bagaichhari upazila of Rangamati district died of cardiac arrest yesterday, sources said.

Mohammad Mizanur Rahman, 40, son of Taher Uddin of Jaldhaka upazila of Nilphamari district was a Sepoy (No. 43305) of the battalion.

Marissha BDR zone and Khagrachhari Adhunik Sadar Hospital sources said Mizanur became senseless at about 11:20am and later rushed to Bagaichhari Upazila Health Complex where the attending doctors declared him dead.

The body was sent to the sadar hospital morgue for autopsy.

Major Iqbal of the battalion said "his death was natural" and they will hand over the body to his family after the autopsy.

With the death of Sepoy Mizanur, eight BDR men, including pesh imam of central mosque at BDR headquarters, have died since March 9.

No footage of Darbar Hall meeting found

Only audiotape, CCTV recording at BDR arms depot found

KAILASH SARKAR

Investigators of the BDR Headquarters carnage have so far recovered CCTV footage from the arsenals and DG office but not any footage of the meeting held at Darbar Hall on February 25, CID sources say.

However, a CID official said they found a piece of audiotape of the Darbar Hall meeting on March 1.

Commerce Minister Faruk Khan, president of the committee to coordinate the probe activities being conducted by different ministries, yesterday told The Daily Star: "Only an audiotape of the officers' meeting was found abandoned at the Darbar Hall, while the video footage of looting the arms and ammunition captured by CCTVs was also recovered."

Speaking anonymously, an assistant superintendent of police engaged in the CID investigation said, "The audiotape of the Darbar Hall meeting contains part of the BDR DG's speech as the mutineers had cut power supply half-

way." "There were nine CCTVs installed at the arsenals and the office of the DG. These nine CCTVs captured events until those were damaged by the mutineers," said a CID analyst, who is examining the audio-video footage.

The CID sources say they first identified one of the BDR men, who took part in the CCTV destruction, as his action was captured.

Another CID official said they found the cassette player containing the audiotape abandoned at the Darbar Hall on March 1.

The sources say besides the CCTV footage they have also collected all the video footage from BTV and nine private TV channels and identified around 70 mutineers by analysing the footage.

An investigator said, "We are identifying the mutineers with the help of the BDR members, who have already been identified."

Meanwhile, CID has engaged around 200 more of its personnel in the investigation

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Power situation may improve next week

Spur-line to boost gas supply from Jalalabad

STAR REPORT

The persisting bleak power situation is expected to improve slightly from the end of this month with the commissioning of a "spur-line" to boost gas supplies from Jalalabad gas field.

Due to lack of gas supplies, different gas-fired power plants in the country cannot generate around 660 megawatt (MW) power. And for inadequate gas pipeline and production, the authorities are unable to supply 150 to 165 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) gas to power plants.

But commissioning of the new spur-line will add 60 to 70 mmcf gas, which can help Power Development Board (PDB) to generate around

another 300 MW power.

This means, against an official demand for 4,800 MW power, the PDB would be able to supply around 4,000-4,100 MW bringing the level of load shedding down to 700-800 MW from 1,000-1,200 MW at present.

The PDB yesterday generated 3,680 MW power. During the caretaker government's tenure, it could supply up to 4,200 MW for a short time when gas supplies to power plants could be maximised. Unofficial estimates projected the demand at more than 5,200 MW.

As the demand for power began soaring up from early this month, frequent load shedding every day has become ubiquitous across the country. This situation is not only making city

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Black night revisits

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The black night of March 25 is here again, evoking the painful memories of how thousands of unarmed Bangladeshes were slaughtered by the Pakistani occupation forces in 1971.

On this night, the Pakistani military rulers launched "Operation Search Light", leaving some 7,000 Bangladeshes killed.

Dhaka University, being a bastion of protracted struggle of the repressed of the country, faced severe wrath of the Pakistani army as students, teachers and employees were exterminated in their hundreds.

The occupation army also

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RECESSION TASKFORCE MEETS

Steps for quick disbursement of cash incentive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister AMA Muhith said yesterday immediate steps would be taken for quick disbursement of export cash incentive, and rules to get clearance from the credit information bureau (CIB) for loans would be relaxed.

He also assured that the renewal fees fixed on captive power generation and VAT on export would be withdrawn temporarily.

Muhith was talking to journalists after presiding over the first meeting of the recently formed 27-member taskforce to face the global crisis impact.

Top economists present in the meeting stressed increase in credit supply by

relaxing banking rules and boosting public expenditure in social and development sectors to support local economy.

Nobel laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus was present in the meeting on special invitation.

The economists also suggested the government start dialogues with donors to augment foreign assistance as Bangladesh is a victim of the crisis that originated outside the country.

They stressed formation of sector-wise committees so that they (committees) can make specific recommendations for each sector.

"We will take instant action on some of the recommendations we have received after considering those. Decisions would

be taken about some other recommendations after scrutinising them," Muhith told journalists.

After the meeting, Dr Yunus told newsmen, "No matter how big the crisis is we will have to face it with courage. No crisis can be solved through panic. The crisis has been created outside Bangladesh. So we will have to consult them (foreign countries) how they can assist us."

He went on, "They are offering bailout packages for their countries. But the case of victims like Bangladesh will also have to be considered."

"We will have to strive to solve our basic problems like food, energy and infrastructure. For solving these

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10 HC judges reappointed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ten High Court (HC) judges who were not confirmed by the BNP-Jamaat government despite the chief justice's positive recommendation, were finally reappointed as regulars yesterday as per the Supreme Court guidelines.

The judges are Md Abdus Salam, Md Mamtaz Uddin Ahmed, Md Shamsul Huda, Faruque Ahmed, Hasan Fiaz Siddique, Md Abdul Hye, Md Abdur Razzaque, Mohammad Marzi-ul Huq, Mohammad Nizamul Huq and AHM Shamsuddin Chowdhury.

The number of the High Court judges now stands at 74.

President Zillur Rahman yesterday appointed the judges as per Article 95(1) of the Constitution.

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday told The Daily

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN SORRY STATE

Savar ancient site left 'unprotected'

EMRAN HOSSAIN

The "Harishchandra Rajar Dhibi" in Savar may appear to the visitors as a dump, garage, poultry farm or any sleazy place, but obviously never a 'protected' archaeological site.

The way the Department of Archaeology maintains the site only 32 kilometres off from the capital would definitely take visitors, if there is any, by surprise. They might even wonder what is happening to those sites scattered elsewhere across the country. But it's really no wonder the scenario is the same in almost everywhere in Bangladesh.

The government has not yet conducted a nationwide survey to trace or detect how many ancient sites are there in the country.

As many as 391 archaeological sites, many of which have already been encroached, have so far been announced "protected" since the British rule here. "Harishchandra Rajar Dhibi" in Savar is one of those.

A metalled road crosses a part of "Harishchandra Rajar Dhibi" on which heavy vehicles including goods-laden trucks ply all day long. A brick-built room stands at one point where a deep tube-well was installed once. Now people use the building for drying cow dung.

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Locals dump garbage at Harish Chandra Rajar Dhibi site in Savar, Dhaka where archaeologists had excavated. The site, only a few kilometres away from the capital, is an example of the poor state many important sites across the country are in.

PHOTO: STAR

BSMMU gets new VC, pro-VCs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday appointed new vice-chancellor (VC), two pro-VCs and treasurer of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

Prof Pran Gopal Dutta, acting chairman of ENT department at the university, has been appointed VC, an official announcement said.

Prof Anisul Haque, chairman of neuro-medicine department, and Prof Shahidullah, chairman of neonatology department at the BSMMU, have been made pro-VCs while Prof Moazzem Hossain, chairman of paediatric nephrology department, has been made treasurer.

Moazzem Hossain is president of BSMMU Teachers'

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