



A family member cries over the body of a policeman killed when a prison van came under attack and three convicted JMB men were snatched at Trishal on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway yesterday. The police have seized this black microbus, *bottom right*, which they suspect was used for taking away the convicts.

PHOTO:
BANGLA CHOKH/STAR

Robber killed in 'shootout'

A CORRESPONDENT, Sathkira

An alleged robber was killed in a "shootout" between police and his cohorts in Shyamnagar upazila of Sathkira early yesterday. A sub-inspector and a constable of Shyamnagar Police Station received minor injuries during the gunfight.

The dead, Ashraf Hossain, of Kurikaunia village in Ashashuni upazila, was the ringleader of a gang of robbers, said Sagir Miah, officer-in-charge of the station.

He was accused in 20 cases filed with different police stations there and jailed for 11 years in an arms case, the OC said.

Police started a drive in the area, adjacent to the Sundarbans, around 12:30am following information that Ashraf was holding a meeting with his associates there.

When the law enforcers reached there on a speedboat around 4:00am, the gang members opened fire on the law enforcers forcing them to fire back, the police official said.

After a 15-minute gunfight, police recovered Ashraf's bullet-hit body but his associates managed to escape by a trawler.

Doctors declared Ashraf dead around 7:30am when he was taken to Shyamnagar Upazila Health Complex.

Police recovered a gun, a machete, four cocktails and two cartridges from the spot.

Cop shot dead to free 3 JMB convicts

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Rakib, who was commander of the militant outfit in Khulna division, was nabbed around 3:00pm. Following his escape from the prison van, he had shaved his long beard to avoid arrest, but police identified him from the marks of fetters on his hands and legs.

Law enforcement agencies continued their hunt for the two others in Mymensingh and Tangail.

Police said they had picked up Rakib from Gazipur's high security prison, Salahuddin from Kashimpur-1 and "Boma" Mizan from Kashimpur-2 jails and started for Mymensingh around 7:15am.

As the van reached Signboard point, a truck waylaid it. As planned, a black Toyota Voxy microbus with armed criminals aboard was already following the prison van from Gazipur, while other members of the gang were waiting at Signboard point in a white microbus.

With the prison van blocked from both sides, the gang got down and started shooting and hurling crude bombs.

The attackers then snatched the key from the law enforcers, opened the door of the van, cut the fetters with rod cutters and took away the JMB men, said Firoz Talukder, officer-in-charge of Trishal Police Station.

They took only five minutes to finish the operation and fled away in two groups, before people from nearby villages and markets rushed there. The white microbus

headed for Mymensingh and the black one made a U-turn and drove towards Shakhipur via Bhaluka, police said.

Constable Atiqul Islam, who was guarding the rear gate of the prison van, was hit by multiple bullets and bombs. He died on the spot.

Two other cops -- Subedar Habib and Constable Soheli Rana -- were wounded and sent to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

Law enforcers recovered one live and two used bullets of 7.65 pistol from the spot. They also found the two Chinese guns that the attackers snatched from the police.

The gang chose the Signboard point as there is no house or other establishment nearby.

Before the ambush, other members of the gang took position at different points from Gazipur to Mymensingh to monitor the situation. They maintained constant contacts to update each other of any developments, said police.

On information, police put up a barricade near Shakhipur Police Station. Around 11:00am, as a speedy black microbus (Dhaka Metro Cha-11-6048) was coming towards the barricade, police signalled it to stop but it drove away.

However, the microbus, broke down about a kilometre away and hit a CNG-run auto-rickshaw.

Microbus driver Zakaria Hossain and others then got down and started running away through the village. Smelling a rat, locals caught

Zakaria, 29, and handed him over to the police.

An active member of JMB, he was carrying a pistol, five bullets and 10 bombs, Tangail Additional Superintendent of Police Hasibul Alam told The Daily Star.

Zakaria, who hails from Gomostyapur of Chapainawabganj, was one of the masterminds behind the ambush, he said, adding that the JMB man even offered the locals TK 12,000, requesting them not to hand him over to the police.

During interrogation, Rakib admitted to hatching the ambush plan 15 days ago and that two microbuses were bought to execute the plan, said Hasibul Alam.

Another microbus also took part in the operation, police quoted Rakib as saying.

Interestingly, only four policemen were entrusted with carrying such dangerous militants.

Asked if it was enough, Dhaka Range DIG Mahfuzul Haq Nuruzzaman told the media that it was "really not enough".

Meanwhile, Gazipur Reserve Police Inspector Saidur Rahman and Subedar Abdul Kader were suspended for negligence of duty, said Gazipur Superintendent of Police Abdul Baten. But he did not clarify what their duties were.

Security was beefed up at all prisons following the incident.

"We also put on alert all the law enforcement agencies throughout the country and also on the borders

and directed them to capture the two snatched JMB operatives," said State Minister for Home Asaduzzaman Khan.

Meanwhile, police detained Zakaria's wife Swapna Begum and recovered Jihadi books and a list of JMB men from her house at Gazipura in Tongi, said Faruk Hossain, senior assistant superintendent of police of Tongi.

In another development around 10:30pm, a white microbus (Dhaka Metro-Cha 132688) believed to have taken part in the attack and driven away with Salahuddin and "Boma" Mizan was found abandoned near the girls' dormitory of Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University in Trishal.

The fetters and cutter machines were also found in the vehicle, said the officer-in-charge of Trishal Police Station.

A three-member probe body headed by DIG of CID Saiful Alam was formed to investigate the incident. The committee will submit its report in three work days.

Yesterday's was the first JMB attack in several years, following a series of bomb blasts by the outfit during 2004-2005.

Militancy in the country saw a rise during the past BNP-Jamaat rule. But the outfit seemed inactive, following the execution of seven JMB kingpins, including Shaikh Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai in 2007, and the arrests of several hundred of its leaders and operatives.

HINDI MOVIE 'GUNDAY'

Dhaka protests history distortion

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka has conveyed to New Delhi a deep sense of hurt and disappointment over the distortion of historical facts about the 1971 Liberation War in the Hindi film "Gunday".

The foreign ministry in Bangladesh protested against clearing of the film by the Central Board of Film Certification, India and urged the authorities to move immediately to stop screening of the film in its present form, according to a press release issued yesterday.

Gunday, produced by Yash Raj Films, was released in India on February 14. It portrays the birth of Bangladesh in 1971 as a result of a 13-day battle from December 3 between India and Pakistan, undermining the nine-month-long bloody war the then East Pakistan fought with the West Pakistan. The war claimed as many as three million Bangladeshis.

Bangladeshis from across the world have expressed their strong disapproval of the film on social media and demanded an apology from the production company.

Against the backdrop, the producer of the film has recently offered an apology to the people of Bangladesh.

In the press release, the foreign ministry said its attention had been drawn to the media reports and reactions of people, particularly on the social networking sites, over the film.

"The matter has already been raised officially with the Indian authorities," states the press release.

The ministry and the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi have been working on ascertaining the veracity of the reported distortion of historical facts in the film, it adds.

Justice Rahim

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Justice Enayetur will enjoy salaries, allowances and other facilities of a sitting HC judge, it said.

HC sources said the new chairman will join office today.

The chairman post of Tribunal-1 fell vacant on December 31 last year as Justice ATM Fazle Kabir went into retirement.

Since, five cases, including the one against Jamaat-e-Islami chief Motiur Rahman Nizami, in the tribunal have seen no progress.

Apart from the case of Nizami, the cases against Jamaat leaders ATM Azharul Islam and Abdus Sobhan, BNP leader Zahid Hossain Khokon, and Mobarak Hossain, former Jamaat-e-Islami member who later got affiliated with ruling Awami League, are under trial in the tribunal.

Besides, several petitions regarding contempt of court are also pending.

On November 13 last year, the tribunal kept Nizami's case waiting for the verdict. As per the war crimes law, a tribunal can resume a case's trial from where it stopped even after any change in the judges' panel.

But, the Tribunal-1 had heard the closing arguments of both the prosecution and the defence in the war crimes case against another Jamaat leader Delwar Hossain Sayedee for the second time after its chairman Justice Md Nizamul Huq stepped down over a controversy.

ATM Fazle Kabir then took over the tribunal charge.

Tajul Islam, counsel for Nizami, yesterday told The Daily Star: "We will make decisions on the basis of the tribunal's next decision."

"We may file a retrial petition too," he added.

Intelligence

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chief Soheli Mahfuj.

Apart from Soheli, other mentionable leaders still eluding arrest include Masum, MA Sadik Babul, Abdullah alias Kafi, Abdullah alias Abu Jahid, Abu Sayeed Sheikh, Abdullah Al Mamun and Mir Mosharraf Hossain.

The sources suspect the outfit carried out yesterday's attack as part of a plan to revamp its strength.

Soheli Mahfuj might have made the plan from his hideout in a neighbouring country to snatch Mohammad Rakib Hasan Russell alias Hafez Mahmud and Salahuddin alias Salehin, who are the third and fourth top-ranked leaders of the outfit, said a top Rab official.

"Soheli Mahfuj, who is the oldest and most experienced among the existing JMB leaders, got the ability to reorganise JMB," said the Rab official wishing anonymity.

An official of another agency said if the dreaded leaders like Hafez Hammud, Salehin and Mizan join the group again, it would definitely be a threat to the country's stability.

The Islamist outfit grasped the spotlight as a hardcore militant organisation after blasting 459 synchronised bombs in 63 districts on August 17, 2005 leaving two persons dead and 50 others injured.

In subsequent attacks, it also killed a number of people including two judges in Jhalakathi, sending a chill through the nation.

Most dangerous of the three

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With his neatly trimmed beard, Mizan looked unsurprised over what was going on around him that night. "I am on a path to justice and truth, you too should follow the lead," he had told reporters at the scene.

Following the confessional statement of Mizan, also known as Zahidul Islam, Rab busted a "mini-munitions factory" of JMB in East Monipur of Mirpur and recovered 11 bombs, plastic explosives, grenade casings, fuses and detonators, a pistol, and a huge stock of chemicals.

Mizan from Shekherbhita of Jamalpur Sadar upazila was jailed for different terms for possessing arms, ammunitions, attacking a judge

and exploding bombs.

He was given eight years' rigorous imprisonment in the sensational August-17, 2005, serial bomb blast case filed in Cox's Bazar. A Dhaka court on June 4, 2012, sentenced him and his wife to 37 years' of rigorous imprisonment each for possessing weapons and bullets. He was also given 34 years' of rigorous imprisonment in absentia for a bomb attack carried out on a judge in 2005.

Once a computer shop worker in Tangail, he was JMB ehsar (full-timer) since 2001 and had close relations with the executed militant kingpins Shaekh Abdur Rahman and Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai.

Mizan came to Rab's attention

50 hurt

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Facing police action, the agitating students took position at the university's main gate and fought with police several times by hurling brick chips on them, witnesses said.

Panic gripped the locals when students burnt tyres at different points on Jonson Road, blocking traffic movement.

The injured students and teachers took primary treatment at nearby Sumona Hospital and the National Medical College and Hospital.

Chairman of Department of English Prof Nasiruddin Ahmed told The Daily Star that he sustained injuries from rubber bullet.

"Police fired rubber bullets all of a sudden when I was trying to calm the students," he said. Prof Nasiruddin is now undergoing treatment at Square Hospital.

Harun-ur-Rashid, deputy commissioner (DC) of police of Lalbagh zone, said they tried to resist the students who marched towards Gulshan Ara City Shopping

Complex and unlawfully tried to "occupy" it.

Police lobbed tear gas canisters to defend themselves, he added.

Prof Mijanur Rahman, vice chancellor of the university, called an urgent syndicate meeting at his residence yesterday evening.

After the meeting, the VC told The Daily Star that they would continue their effort to "recover the dormitories". He also urged the relevant government authorities to help them.

"Despite today's [yesterday] incident, academic activities, including classes and exams, will continue," he added.

Meanwhile, teachers of Jagannath University Sikkhak Samiti demanded the removal of DC of Lalbagh zone and OC Moniruzzaman of Kotwali Police Station within next 24 hours.

Protesting the incident, the university teachers will hold a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club this morning.

Most of equipment

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It takes many years for upazila health and family welfare officials to get promoted. They are to travel by motor bikes, while the upazila executive officers are entitled to cars. Besides, thousands of posts have remained vacant for years.

Some 21,000 posts of hospital staff and 10,000 posts of doctors are currently vacant, health ministry officials said.

An 'attacker'

FROM PAGE 1

Gomez, who had converted to Christianity from Islam, was killed at Hazipur Bazaar on the night of September 18, 2004.

Salauddin and another Shura member Mohammad Rakib Hasan Russell alias Hafez Mahmud had threatened a judge with life after the judge sentenced them to death for the murder.

The High Court on January 15,

2013, upheld the death sentence of the two leaders of banned Islamist outfit in the Gomez murder case.

Salahuddin received jail terms in nine other cases.

He had passed SSC examinations from BM High School in Narayanganj Bandar. As a student of Tejgaon Polytechnic Institute in Dhaka, he got acquainted with chief of JMB military wing Aatur Rahman Sunny and joined the JMB.

Like other members of the JMB Shura, the top decision-making body, he had been a worker of Islami Chhatra Shibir, the pro-Jamaat-e-Islami student body, before joining the now banned militant outfit.

Salahuddin was planning to initiate another round of militant attacks and had Tk 40,000 with him to distribute among his men for arranging the attacks, Rab claimed after his arrest.