



Cadres of Bangla Bhai armed with bamboo sticks and guarded by the police bring out a procession in Rajshahi city on May 23, 2004.

PHOTO: FILE

Born-again JMB far more dangerous

FROM PAGE 1

charge sheets, 1,157 JMB leaders and activists have been made accused, according to an estimate of the police headquarters.

Of the accused, law enforcers arrested 960 militants, said an official at the headquarters. He, however, could not say how many of them are now behind bars.

An official record shows between 2007 and 2014, 478 JMB men were tried in 177 cases. Of them, 51 top leaders of JMB were sentenced to death, 178 got life imprisonment and 245 were jailed for different terms.

The Neo JMB was spreading its network while the law enforcers were claiming that the spine of JMB had been ripped off through anti-militancy drives.

Apart from training its members in explosive-making and shooting, the Neo JMB has been providing radical motivation to fresh recruits predominantly using encrypted apps.

"While we were directing all our attention towards the mainstream JMB and other known militant outfits, the group [Neo JMB] silently gathered strength escaping our vigil," a top police officer who has been dealing with militancy told The Daily Star recently.

The Neo JMB recruits from physicians, engineers, architects, technologists and other educated people. Most of its members are comparatively affluent.

As it makes recruitment and communicates using encrypted apps and operates through sleeper cells, law enforcers had long struggled to get a clear picture of its network and leadership, they added.

"JMB operatives, who became inactive after Mawlana Saidur Rahman took over as the chief following Abdur Rahman's execution in 2007, formed the Neo JMB," said chief of the counterterrorism unit of DMP Monirul Islam.

Stirred by the activities and more radical views of the Neo JMB, a good number of activists from the original JMB, who had become almost inactive after Saidur's arrest in May 2010, also joined the faction, he added.

Law enforcers came to know in details about the Neo JMB's network, strength, funding and weapons after the Gulshan and Sholakia attacks and a raid at its Kalyanpur den.

Law enforcers managed to glean vital information about the group from two militants -- one arrested in Sholakia and the other during the Kalyanpur raid in which nine other militants were killed in a gunfight.

The militant arrested in Sholakia was later killed in a "crossfire".

"The Neo JMB has a few hundred leaders and activists," a top official, who deals with militancy, said yesterday.

DMP's counterterrorism unit chief Monirul Islam yesterday said that with several of its activists arrested and killed in Gulshan, Sholakia and in Kalyanpur, the Neo JMB has been weakened.

He said the DMP has deployed its full strength so that the group cannot carry out any further attack.

An official at the police headquarters wishing anonymity said that there is still fear of further attack by the new group. "If we remain vigilant, we will be able to thwart such attacks."

While a Bangladeshi-Canadian named Tamim Ahmed Chowdhury, who, according to IS propaganda magazine Dabiq, identifies himself as Shaykh Abu Ibrahim Al-Hanif, is leading the group as its operational commander.

Its spiritual leader, known by the group members as "Boro Hujur", is from the northern region. His name could not be known.

The Neo JMB, in recent times carried out a number of targeted killings. Their targets include a wide-spectrum of people -- Hindu, Christian, Buddhist or Bahá'í leaders, spiritual leaders or pirs, members of Shia sect, university teachers, religious converts and foreigners, among others.

Although the original JMB carried out terrorist activities to establish Shariah law, the Neo JMB believed in establishment of a "caliphate" -- a state governed in accordance with Islamic law by a "caliph".

About the funding of Neo JMB, an official dealing with militancy said that apart from bank heist, robbery, mugging and snatching, donations from expatriates are its source of money. Non-resident Bangladeshis provide the money sometimes without knowing its exact purpose.

The old JMB mostly used explosives like bombs and grenades in attacks. It had explosives experts like Abdur Rahman's brother Aatur Rahman Sunny, Mollah Omar and after Omar's death Zahidul Islam alias Boma Mizan. The JMB members seldom used firearms.

But, the new JMB is using firearms, including sophisticated ones, alongside grenades. In the July 1 siege at Holey Artisan Bakery in Gulshan, the militants used eight arms, including three semi-automatic AK 22 rifles. A semi-automatic sniper rifle was also recovered from a den in Chittagong.

The new JMB has several of its activists trained in making explosives and operating firearms, he said.

Of them, "Boma" Shakil is the man JMB found as the most talented explosive expert after "Boma" Mizan, who was arrested in 2009. Police suspect Shakil might have got killed in internal feud.

Fellow militants freed Mizan and two other top militants in an armed ambush on February 23 in 2014. Police suspect Mizan and the two others have been hiding abroad.

BORN WITH FOREIGN LINKS

Shaykh Abdur Rahman established JMB in April 1998.

The group started underground activities that year to establish Taliban-like rule through jihad, but it grabbed the limelight in April 2004 when it started vigilante operations against underground communist outlaws, popularly known as Sarbaharas, in Rajshahi, Natore, Naogaon and Bogra.

In the early stage of JMB, Rahman communicated with Syed Abdul Karim alias Tunda, who was accused of masterminding over 40 bombings in India. Rahman had confessed that Tunda,

allegedly a Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist, was in Dhaka and stayed in Jatrabari area in 1990s.

Under Tunda's arrangement, Rahman visited Pakistan in 1997 along with Tunda. In Lahore, he met leaders of Markaz-ud-Dawa-wal-Irshad, mother organisation of LeT. He was then taken to Muzaffarabad where he underwent 20 days training in arms, explosives, war tactics, and secrecy.

After being arrested by Rab in 2006, Rahman told law enforcers, "I had contact with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood when I was in Saudi Arabia. I expressed my interest in setting up Islamic rule in Bangladesh... Upon my return... through setting up a separate jihadi organisation to usher in Islamic rule."

In 2002, he went to Pakistan again. There he met LeT acting chief Abdus Salam Bhatti at the organisation's headquarters.

In his statement, Rahman said they also had contact with the UK-based organisation al-Muhajirun, headed by the Syrian-origin British national Omar Bakri. The organisation had requested JMB to train its members in Bangladesh.

Al-Muhajirun leaders even visited JMB's programmes on char land. After the August 17 blasts, they reportedly phoned JMB leaders, advising them to attack various foreign diplomatic missions in Dhaka, and the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and also to abduct and assault important foreign persons.

REIGN OF TERROR

JMB was hardly known before the 2005 bomb blasts in 63 districts.

However, already in 2004, Rahman's deputy Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai's started operations against communist extremists. The group was then called JMJB (Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh).

But after the August 17 blasts, law enforcers went all out against JMB. Still, in November and December, JMB carried out five suicide attacks in Jhalakathi, Chittagong, Gazipur and Netrakona. These were the first suicide attacks in the country.

Between September 2001 and December 2005, JMB had carried out 26 attacks in which 73 were killed and around 800 injured.

Bangla Bhai started his activities openly with direct patronage from local administration, police and BNP-Jamaat government's lawmakers and ministers.

He went into hiding on May 23, 2004, a week after the government ordered his arrest. But he continued to lead his militant organisation from hideouts.

END OF KINGPINS

Shaykh Rahman and his family were arrested in Sylhet on March 2, 2006 and Bangla Bhai on March 6 from Mymensingh.

Towards the end of the BNP-led alliance government in 2006, death sentence was awarded to six top JMB leaders, including Rahman and Bangla Bhai.

They were hanged on March 29, 2007 during the caretaker government's rule. That was the end of the first phase of JMB.

and was banned under anti-terrorist laws in 2010.

Michael Adebolajo, one of the men who hacked to death British soldier Lee Rigby on a London street in 2013, had attended protests Choudary had organised.

Last year, the trial of a teenage Muslim convert found guilty of plotting to behead a soldier in London was told he had fallen in with al-Muhajiroun.

The group's influence is said to extend far beyond Britain. Those connected to it include Abu Hamza al-Masri, jailed for life in the United States last year for terrorism-related offences.

Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, the gunman who shot and killed a soldier in Canada's capital and then stormed parliament in 2014, followed Choudary on Twitter, although the preacher told Reuters at the time he had no links to him.

Mother sues 9 over illegal transplant of son's kidney

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT, Thakurgaon

A woman yesterday filed a case against nine people for defrauding her son and illegally transferring one of his kidneys to a patient.

Promila Rani lodged the case with a local court stating that the accused in connivance with each other took her son Babul Chandra Sharma, 26, to India by using a fake passport and then took away his kidney.

The accused include barbers Udhir Chandra Shil, Sunil Chandra Shil and Anjan Chandra Shil of Thakurgaon; patient Abu Bakkar Siddique, his wife Noor Jahan Akter Sweety, mother Selima Begum and brothers Nasim

Uddin and Abu Sayeed of Dinajpur. An unnamed broker in illegal human organ trade is the other accused.

After hearing the case, Thakurgaon District and Sessions Judge Mirza Ayub Ali ordered the Rab to probe it.

According to the case statement, Udhir lured Babul to have a barber's job at Border Guard Bangladesh in Dinajpur. But Babul was eventually sent to Kolkata where his kidney was transplanted into Abu Bakkar Siddique on July 12.

Victim's lawyer Mozaffar Ahmed Manik said the case was filed under Human Trafficking Deterrence and Suppression Act, 2012 and Transplantation of Human Organs

Act, 1999.

Transplantation of Human Organs Act stipulates that none other than a relative of a patient can donate him an organ. In the fake passport, Babul was shown as Nasim Uddin, brother of the patient, Manik added.

Babul said he cannot work as he has become sick now. He is struggling to support his wife, a daughter and parents.

Abu Bakkar's elder brother Md Selim said he heard that a boy donated a kidney to his brother who is now undergoing treatment in Kolkata. He further mentioned that his family would give some money to the donor.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Death penalty inappropriate

FROM PAGE 16

The following day, Turkey withdrew its envoy reportedly for consultation. Two weeks later, Dhaka also called back its Ambassador in Ankara Allama Siddiki for "consultation".

The Turkish envoy returned to Dhaka on August 12. Besides, three Turkish diplomats left Dhaka for other countries after they were asked to return home to face inquiry on their alleged links to the failed coup.

According to media reports, the Turkish president on August 7 told a rally in Istanbul that he would approve the death penalty if parliament voted for it. The capital punishment was abolished in 2004.

Earlier on July 19, BBC reported, Erdogan said he was ready to reinstate the death penalty if the Turkish people demanded it and parliament approved the legislation, adding: "You cannot put aside the people's demands."

"Today is there no capital punishment in America? In Russia? In China? In countries around the world? Only in European Union countries is there no capital punishment," he said.

Turkey abolished the death penalty in 2004 as part of its bid to become a member of the EU.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Describing the relations with Bangladesh

as very good and cordial, Ambassador Devrim Ozturk said they give "brotherly advice", but do not interfere in Bangladesh's domestic affairs.

"It's a misunderstanding.... My priority is to work on promoting the existing excellent relations.... We are supporting each other in every possible way."

Asked whether Turkey was softening its position on Bangladesh affairs after the Turkish government survived the coup attempt, he said his country's position was unchanged. "We give importance to developing our relations with Bangladesh. That's all our intention. Our approach to Bangladesh is very cordial and there is no shift from that."

Enquired whether the Turkish government has sympathy for Jamaat-e-Islami and reservations towards the Bangladesh government, Devrim said they do not have any "reservations" about the current government or any other political party.

He condemned the brutal murder of Bangladesh's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on August 15 in 1975 and expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for supporting the Turkish democracy during the July 15 coup attempt.

Devrim called the press conference on the failed coup attempt. He said the situation in his country was under total control of the government and everything has been normal.

About the departure of three Turkish diplomats, he said a couple left Dhaka for another country without informing Ankara while another official returned to Turkey.

The government has not brought any allegation against the officials, but they have been called back home for inquiry, he added.

On the operations of International Turkish Hope schools in Bangladesh, he said they would talk to the Bangladesh government regarding changes in the administration of the schools as they are allegedly involved in the movement of Fethullah Gülen and might have some other agenda.

Earlier, a video documentary on the events related to the abortive coup was screened. Describing the incidents, the ambassador said it has been a milestone in Turkish democratic history as people foiled the coup attempt.

Apart from common people, the media also played a very strong role in foiling the coup attempt. Some 240 supporters of the government and at least 24 coup plotters were killed during the coup attempt, he mentioned.

Learned about family's fate

FROM PAGE 16

husband about the coup in Bangladesh.

From television news, they came to know about the death of Bangabandhu. But no information was available about the fate of others.

The PM said they arrived in New Delhi on August 24. They wanted to come home and tried to know from international agencies the extent of damage as she hoped that at least her mother was alive.

An air of gloom grasped the audience as the PM became emotional while describing the memories of the days before and after August 15, 1975

mayhem and her struggle to put the country on the track of Bangabandhu's ideology.

The premier recalled that due to financial hardship she could not attend the marriage ceremony of her younger sister Rehana in London in 1977. Due to political chaos in India at that time, Indira Gandhi was not in a position to help her to go to London, she added.

Hasina called upon people not to be misguided by the decision of BNP chief Khaleda Zia to refrain from celebrating her birthday on the National Mourning Day.

"It would be wrong if anybody is

confused about her decision to refrain from celebrating false birthday out of her generosity," she said, adding that the BNP leader didn't observe the day as she could not celebrate the birthday of her dead younger son Arafat Rahman Koko.

Deputy Leader of Jatiya Sangsad and Awami League presidium member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury presided over the meeting. Members of AL's advisory council Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed and Suranjit Sengupta, presidium members Matia Chowdhury and Mohammad Nasim, among others, took part in the discussion.

Bangabahadur leaves villagers in tears

FROM PAGE 1

descended on Koyra and Dhanhata villages in Sharishabari of Jamalpur yesterday morning when the news of his death spread.

Many locals, who had been volunteers in the rescue effort for several days, shed tears, our correspondent reports.

Chamak Vanu, 55, a woman from Dhanhata, where the elephant had been tranquilised and had died, could not eat the entire day after she heard that Bangabahadur was no more.

Some were even more upset.

He was doing well until the officials of the forest department tranquilised him and chained him in the marshy land. Locals were giving him food, said Panjab Ali, 35, of Dhanhata.

"The elephant died as water entered its lungs through its trunk. It had to sleep in the mud. Besides, it was weak," he claimed.

Mustafizur Rahman, assistant veterinary surgeon of Bangabandhu Safari Park, Cox's Bazar, who had been working with the forest officials, said the elephant died of "heart failure".

He suffered a heart attack and breathed his last at Koyra village around 6:30am, he said.

"There were multiple factors behind the heart attack. Stress, severe dehydration and electrolyte imbalance were the main factors," our Jamalpur correspondent quoted him.

After Bangabahadur collapsed yesterday, a 17-member rescue team of the forest department administered 12 litres of saline and tried to get him up until midnight, Mustafizur said.

Bangabahadur collapsed in the muddy field around 11:30am yesterday.

"Concerned with Bangabahadur's plight, we stayed on the spot and tried to save him until midnight. His tem-

perature was recorded at 101 degrees Celsius whilst their normal body temperature is 97 degrees Celsius," Mustafizur added.

A team led by Mymensingh Divisional Forest Officer Govindo Ray was heading for the spot and would conduct an autopsy, said wildlife inspector Ashim Kumar Mallick. Samples will be sent to central disease investigation lab in Dhaka, he said.

The elephant was to be buried beside the field where he died, he added.

When Bangabahadur was darted the first time on August 12, he started jumping around and had fallen into a pond.

Later, members of the rescue team with the help of locals took him to a field. He regained consciousness but he was again sedated.

The officials chained him but Bangabahadur broke free and went into a pond and just sat there.

Just after he got out of the pond Sunday morning, the forest officials tranquilised him again.

"We all tried to save Bangabahadur, but could not save him," said Saddam Hossain, one of a few hundred people who helped in the rescue efforts. The elephant spent its last 19 days in this area and Madarganj upazila of Jamalpur.

The forest department was expecting two trained elephant from Kaptai to facilitate the rescue work. "We were planning to take the elephant to Bangabandhu Safari Park, Gazipur, in a truck," said wildlife inspector Mallick, who had been monitoring Bangabahadur for nearly a month.

Even though Bangabahadur was tranquilised for over 24 hours, the forest department could not take him to the park since he was over a kilometre away from the road, where a truck was waiting.

Bangabahadur got separated from his herd and entered Bangladesh floating on the Brahmaputra river in late June. He was moving frantically from one char to another.

He went to more than 40 chars in Kurigram, Gaibandha, Bogra, Sirajganj and Jamalpur districts. Initially, the locals drove him away as he had damaged a few houses.

Later, the forest department formed a 17-member committee comprising forest officials and three veterinary surgeons. The committee followed Bangabahadur for a month.

As Bangladesh informed India about the matter, a three-member Indian team reached Bangladesh on August 3. A joint rescue team then followed him around but they did not get a good opportunity to tranquilise him, said forest officials.

The Indian team stayed in Bangladesh for three days and left on August 7.

High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh Harsh Vardhan Shringla yesterday thanked the government, ministries concerned and the villagers for their support and help in looking after Bangabahadur, reports our diplomatic correspondent.

"We are really grateful ... we can't expect anything more. We are sorry that the elephant died," he told reporters after his meeting with the foreign secretary yesterday.

Bangabahadur's origins were not known but the wildlife team from India had opined that given his complete lack of familiarity with humans, the elephant was likely to be from Kaziranga or even Arunachal Pradesh.

"This means he floated down an incredible 1,500kms! Over the last month and a half, he has been steadily heading north over five districts of Bangladesh towards India," the high commissioner had said earlier.

UK Islamist preacher found guilty

FROM PAGE 1

for targeting Muslims.

Prosecutors said that in postings on social media, Choudary and his close associate Mizanur Rahman, 33, had sought to validate the "caliphate" declared by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and said Muslims had a duty to obey or provide support to him.

In one hour-long speech, Choudary set out the requirements for a legitimate caliphate under Islam and why he believed the Islamic State met those criteria.

Both men, who had denied the terrorism charges and claimed the case was politically motivated, were found guilty last month but their convictions could not be reported until yesterday for legal reasons. They are due to be sentenced in September and could face a jail sentence of up to 10 years each.

Choudary, the former head of the now banned organization al-Muhajiroun, became infamous for praising the men responsible for the 9/11 attacks on the United States.

Despite his often controversial comments and refusal to condemn attacks by Islamists such as the London 2005 bombings, Choudary has always denied any involvement in militant activity and had never been previously charged with any terrorism offence.

Rahman served two years in jail for encouraging followers to kill British and American troops in Afghanistan and Iraq during a protest in 2006.

BREEDING GROUND FOR MILITANTS Al-Muhajiroun has been regarded as a breeding ground for militants since it was founded in the late 1990s by Syrian-born Islamist cleric Omar Bakri, who was banished from Britain in 2005,