



Law enforcers on top of the buildings surrounding the militant den in Ashkona of Dhaka yesterday. Inset, ambulances leave Ashkona. The body of a militant suspect, top left, on the floor of the militant hideout. Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, bottom left, holds a press briefing there. Onlookers gather at the scene, bottom middle.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN/COLLECTED

Chilling desperation

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took part in the raid.

"As the woman in Burqa continued to walk towards us but was not raising her hands in surrender ignoring our repeated calls, we suspected something was wrong," said Mohibul Islam, deputy commissioner of the DMP's Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit.

"At one point, she sped up and pulled something in her waist detonating the suicidal vest."

Inspector Shafiq Ahmed of CTTC unit also suffered minor injuries in the explosion.

Law enforcers immediately took the baby girl to Dhaka Medical College Hospital and the injured officer to another hospital. Shakira's body was sent to DMCH morgue around 10:00pm.

Sabina, who mentioned her parents' names as Iqbal and Shakira, was in a serious condition as her alimentary canal sustained 10 to 12 punctures, the resident surgeon of DMCH told The Daily Star.

Details about the family could not be known immediately.

Those who surrendered said Sabina's father could be a militant named Suman, police added.

SWAT, Bomb Disposal Unit of the CTTC and different other units were involved in the 15-hour raid in the

densely populated neighbourhood. The target was a flat on the ground floor of a three-storey building of Jamal Hossain, a Bangladeshi living in Kuwait.

The 14-year-old, Afif Kaderi, whose father Tanvir committed suicide during the September 10 raid on a militant hideout in Azimpur, refused to surrender.

After Shakira's death, Afif alias Ador alias Abir opened fire at police from inside the three-room flat.

Police fired shots and gas grenades and shots as Afif did not surrender. Officials said Afif might have been killed in police firing around 2:30pm.

Afif's body was not recovered last night as, police say, there was still gas and explosives in the flat.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, who visited the scene, said the boy got engaged in gunfight with police and finally blasted a grenade that left him dead.

During the operation beginning at 12:30am, the two women responded to police call and came out around 9:15am.

Jeannnah Shila, widow of Major (retd) Jahid alias Murad, surrendered with her one-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Trishna, wife of Musa, too was with her daughter, aged six to seven months.

Jahid was killed in an operation in Rupnagar on September 2. A week later,

law enforcers conducted another raid on Azimpur den where Shila used to live.

She, however, escaped arrest in Azimpur while Tahrim Kaderi, twin brother of Afif, was taken into custody from the house and he is now in jail.

The two women surrendered to the police along with a pistol and several bullets after law enforcers made the call using a loudspeaker, Masudur Rahman, deputy commissioner (Media) of DMP said.

A number of anti-militant operations have taken place since the July 1 Gulshan café attack that killed 22 people, mostly foreigners.

Over the last few months, law enforcers conducted such drives in Kalyanpur, Rupnagar, Azimpur, Savar, Narayanganj, Gazipur and Tangail, killing 26 suspected militants, including "Neo JMB" coordinator Tamim Ahmed Chowdhury, thought to be one of the masterminds of the café attack.

Officials at the CTTC unit said they were hunting for Shila, Afif and Musa. A few days back, Musa was traced in Ashkona area.

They finally located the den on Friday and conducted the raid but failed to capture Musa.

Police reached the three-storey Surya Villa at 12:30am and asked the landlord's wife and daughter about their tenants who rented the ground-floor flat in September.

Police managed to bring in Shila's mother and brother to echo the police plea to the suspects.

Mohammad Ali Rubel, a banker who was trapped in his flat on the first-floor during the operation, said, "Police came around 12:30am and asked me about the suspected militants. But I couldn't say as I never saw them. I requested them to ask the building owner, who lives on the second floor."

Around 6:45am, police urged the suspects on the ground-floor flat over loudspeaker to surrender and assured them that they would not be harmed.

It went in vain when Shila's mother first urged her daughter to surrender over the loudspeakers from outside the building.

Officials say the mother with the help of police then wore a bulletproof vest and went inside the building and made an emotional appeal to her daughter.

"I am your Ma [mother].... Please come out. I want to see you alive"

She even went near the flat, talked to Shila through a window.

Shila held her girl near the window and the grandmother touched the baby with affection, police said.

At one stage, Shila agreed to surrender and walked out. Trishna followed her.

It was probably the first time that suspected militants surrendered to police during a drive at militant dens.

The police calls for surrender went in vain in Kalyanpur, Narayanganj and Azimpur and in other places.

FAKE ID

"A to-let sign was hanging here. A man identifying him as Mohammad Imtiaz Ahmed, an online business man, rented it on September 1. The man, his wife and their 40-day-old baby moved here two days later," said Jonaki Russell, elder daughter of house owner Musa Hossain.

Imtiaz had said one of his sisters would also stay in the flat occasionally. He provided a national ID card and filled up the tenant information form.

"We submitted the form and ID card to local police immediately," Jonaki added.

A top police official told The Daily Star that the man faked the ID card to hide his identity.

Police suspect it was Musa who rented the flat but he didn't live there regularly.

Jonaki visited the flat three to four times and saw two beds, dining table and some other furniture. "We could not suspect them as they were polite," she added.

The family rarely came out of the flat. As Jonaki asked about it, they said they prefer to stay indoor as hijras used to disturb them, demanding money for the birth of the baby, during their stay in Uttara before moving to

Ashkona.

Hijras are often found in the city extorting from families with newborns.

Jonaki saw several mattresses folded on the floor. "We use those when our relatives visit us," she quoted the wife of Imtiaz as saying.

Rubel, a bank official, said, "I did not know anyone from the flat as the doors always remained shut. I did not see anyone."

WHO IS MUSA?

Musa, aged around 40, had friendship with Tanvir Kaderi for long. He along with Major (retd) Jahid used to visit Tanvir's Uttara home with their spouses and children.

Musa used to tutor Afif and Tahrim, Mathematics, English and Science.

He also used to visit Tanvir's Pallabi home.

Tanvir moved to Pallabi from Uttara before renting the Bashundhara house from where the Gulshan café attack was coordinated, according to the confessional statement of Tahrim.

Musa used to give Tanvir "jihadi videos on Syria war". Tahrim also said they were given copies of Dabiq, propaganda magazine of global terror body Islamic State, according to police.

"Neo JMB", an offshoot of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), is inspired by the ideologies of Islamic State.

Mustafizur

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Mustafizur has just returned after recovering from a shoulder operation on July 22. He played the only practice game in Auckland on December 22 against a New Zealand XI, but despite getting into the wickets-column straightaway in that game, he looked a bit uncomfortable with his throwing and diving on the field.

"I'm still feeling slight pain, but it's not in my shoulder. It's in my side. The physio said it will be there for a while. My throwing is not good at the moment. It will gradually improve," said the young sensation, who was recently declared ICC's Emerging Player of 2015-16.

"I'm not trying my cutters with the new ball during practice but doing it with the old ball," said the bowler who shot to fame with those lethal cutters.

Prone to homesickness and not very comfortable with the cuisine overseas, something that was evident during his Indian Premier League stint with Sunrisers Hyderabad last year, the young pace bowler said that he always feels comfortable while touring with the national team.

"No problem with the food. I have just finished my meal -- rice. If I'm with the team I don't feel any problem with food or anything else," Mustafizur said with broad smile on his face.

Asked how eager he was to come back to international duty, the otherwise shy Mustafizur replied with one sentence: "Who doesn't want to play?"

The team management still has one more day to make up its mind, but apart from the fielding aspects, Mustafizur's bowling fears are more mental than physical. And, like many Bangladeshis, even the New Zealand fans want to see him in action in the Boxing Day ODI.

This reporter, while buying a 2degrees SIM card from Christchurch's buzzing city centre -- which was having its last business day before the Christmas holidays -- was a bit surprised when the salesman of the shop proudly showed a picture of Mustafizur with his father.

"My father actually drove our players to Christchurch. He posted this photo. He [Mustafizur] is a very good fast bowler. He is as popular as Shakib [Al Hasan] in Christchurch," said the young New Zealander.

State agencies in a race to rule others

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entire speech of the chief justice," he added.

The home minister could not be reached for comments.

About the Supreme Court's verdict on scrapping the caretaker government system, Justice SK Sinha said a non-democratic government in place of a democratic government could not be a solution and that it was "the bankruptcy of politicians".

The SC has scrapped the caretaker government system for upholding the neutrality of the judiciary, he said.

When a former chief justice becomes the chief of a caretaker government, his neutrality became questionable to many, he said, adding that considering these things, the SC cancelled the caretaker government system.

He said the former chief justice became involved in politics when he discharged his duties as the head of a caretaker government.

Justice Sinha said a system had been introduced to conduct the national election as per wish of a quarter's interest, through the undemocratic care-

taker government's rule and the 13th amendment to the constitution.

"The judiciary has been made questionable through amendments to the constitution...." he said.

The apex court declared the 13th amendment undemocratic and illegal as it had damaged the basic foundation of the state -- people's sovereignty, and its republican and democratic identity, he said.

The chief justice said corruption, terrorism and smuggling were the hurdles to economic development.

Corruption damages 40 percent of the development and the judiciary obstructs corruption, he said, adding that the contribution of the judiciary to the financial growth of the country in last two to three years could not be denied.

He said the judiciary has shown zero tolerance against corruption. The higher court has cancelled bail grants by the lower courts in corruption and smuggling related cases.

Justice Sinha instructed the lower court judges present there to issue arrest warrant against witnesses of cases, if the police failed to produce

them before courts. This is so that cases could be disposed of quicker.

He said the SC has delivered a verdict with necessary directives so that police cannot torture any person on remand for collecting confessional statements.

Describing problems in the judiciary and its successes, Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha said the rate of case disposal by the lower courts and higher courts has increased in recent years.

There are 98 judges in the appellate and high court divisions of the SC and around 1,300 lower court judges are doing the jobs of 1,500 and it is not possible for so few to dispose of 30 lakh pending cases, he said.

Former chief justice Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury said police ask lower courts for permission to take accused on remand so that they could get confessional statements by torturing them. The lower court judges should carefully consider remand prayers, he said.

He said the government might be unhappy with judges' orders and they

could be transferred, but they must have the courage to discharge their duties.

If the lower court judges do not have courage, they need not be in the judiciary, the former chief justice said, adding that the SC should protect lower court judges for the independence of the judiciary.

Justice Mahmudul said the appellate courts should not cancel the lower courts orders of bail immediately after they were passed as people have the right to get bail in cases.

Land Minister Shamsur Rahman Sharif and State Minister for ICT Division Zunaid Ahmed Palak, among others, spoke to the occasion with Justice Md Abdul Wahhab Miah, the senior most judge of the Appellate Division of the SC next to the chief justice, in the chair.

The SC organised the conference in association with Department for International Development, a UK based development organisation. Almost all judges of the SC and many lower court judges are attending the two-day judicial conference.

2 teen girls 'raped' in 2 districts

STAR REPORT

Criminals have raped two teenage girls in Joypurhat and Bandarban and stabbed one of them indiscriminately in a bizarre show of barbarism.

The criminals stabbed a class IX schoolgirl indiscriminately after raping her in Kalai upazila of Joypurhat in the early hours yesterday, reports our Dinajpur correspondent.

Locals of Bandighi village of Kalai upazila said the criminals had broken into the house of the 15-year-old girl. They locked her parents' room and raped her in the next room.

The criminals left the scene after indiscriminately stabbing her in the face.

The victim's father, a farm labourer, suspects his daughter might have identified the criminals, who, sensing that, wanted to shut her mouth forever.

The victim's mother woke up early in the morning hearing her daughter's wail and found the room locked from outside. As they shouted for help, locals rushed there and immediately took the girl to Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital in Bogra.

Villagers blocked the Kalai-Gobindaganj Road for an hour in protest against the incident.

In a separate overnight incident in Bandarban, a 17-year-old indigenous girl was gang-raped.

The victim of Marma community, an SSC examinee, is now undergoing treatment at Bandarban Sadar Hospital.

Ufochaing Marma, who was accompanying the girl, said four unidentified men raped the girl in Rowangchhari bus station area around 11:20pm when they were returning from Rajpunyah festival. The criminals also beat up Ufochaing.

A case was under process in this regard yesterday evening. Bandarban Sadar police station Officer-in-Charge Rafiqul Islam said they were raiding different areas to arrest the culprits, reports our district correspondent.

Costliest in South Asia

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The project cost had shot up to Tk 2,300 when it was opened for public in 2013.

There are examples of delays in project implementation in other South Asian countries too but compared to Bangladesh, those delays are small, according to several project profiles of different countries.

India, Pakistan, and Malaysia, among other countries, have several examples in which projects were completed ahead of time, saving costs.

WHAT EXPERTS SAY

Experts think contractors' negligence, improper planning and feasibility studies, lack of accountability and transparency, red tape, and inadequate preparation, among others, are the main reasons for the high cost. Land acquisition, rehabilitation of people, finding financiers, legal and bureaucratic tangles also cause unnecessary delays.

Shamsul Haque said the fear factor