

MILITANT SUSPECT TRISHA

She called her parents during police raid

ANWAR ALI, back from Bagmara

Parents of Trisha Moni had been waiting to hear from her for eight long months. They finally heard from her early Saturday, but they had no idea what trouble she was into.

Trisha, wife of "Neo JMB" leader Maynul Islam, was then in the middle of a police raid at their Ashkona hideout.

"At 3:30am [Saturday], I saw a missed call on my mobile phone," said Trisha's father Abdus Samad. He thought the call came from a Bagmara hospital where his wife was admitted due to her illness.

He called back immediately. "Abba, can you recognise me ... I'm Trisha," she told her father.

"I felt a chill down my spine as I talked to her. We've been looking for them [Trisha and her family] for so many months," Samad told this correspondent.

Trisha told her father that police had cordoned off their house for their involvement with "Neo JMB" and asked him what she should do.

"I began shivering with fear when I

heard about her links with militancy. I asked her to surrender before the police and tell them the truth," said Samad, a fish trader, at his Saipara village home, around 40km from Rajshahi city.

He said Trisha was crying and suddenly hung up the phone. Hours later, she surrendered along with her four-month-old daughter.

Trisha again called him on Saturday evening and said she was in police custody. Two hours later, a police officer called him and asked him to go to Dhaka with clothes and food for Trisha's daughter, he said.

Samad is the general secretary of ward-7 unit Awami League of Gonipur union and his wife, Nazma Begum, is also involved with politics.

"I'm very upset to see my daughter in this crisis ... I'm involved with Awami League politics as I love my country," he said with tears in his eyes.

Samad said he was concerned about his daughter, but not worried about the baby. "If the law permits her to start a new life, I will guide her."

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



Police taking evidence collected from the house "Surya Villa" on Masjid Road in the capital's Ashkona area yesterday. The evidence will be handed over to the Counter Terrorism unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

PHOTO: SHAHEEN MOLLA

Even children not spared

FROM PAGE 1

For example, Shakira, the woman who blew herself up at Ashkona, was radicalised by her husband Suman, a suspected militant missing for about a month.

Afif Kaderi, the boy who died fighting against police, has a twin brother named Tahrim Kaderi. Both were radicalised by parents.

Police captured an injured Tahrim after the September 10 raid in Azimpur. He is now at a child correction centre.

Their father Tanvir Kaderi committed suicide during the raid while mother Abedatul Fatema alias Khadiza got arrested.

Khadiza told investigators that she was highly motivated by her husband and she believes that they were on the right path.

After police cordoned off the Ashkona hideout early Saturday, "New JMB" leader Maynul Musa instructed his wife Trisha to wear a suicide vest and blow up herself along with their four-month-old daughter instead of surrendering to law enforcers.

Trisha, however, did not carry out the instruction as the mother in the woman stopped her from detonating the vest.

Analysing the Ashkona incident, head of Dhaka University's criminology department Prof Zia Rahman thinks the patriarchal values are to be blamed.

"In Bangladesh, women are traditionally guided by patriarchal values and that's why a whole family becomes motivated by the males."

An eminent psychologist, who preferred not to be named, said radicalisation is invading families and women and children are facing the risk of slipping into the world of militancy.

Psychologists also suggest overhauling the education system and infusing liberal values into kids' lessons.

"If parents become radicalised and they discuss such issues within the family, children will certainly be radicalised. If children have strong role models at home like grandparents, apart from their parents, they might not accept whatever idea comes from parents."

She added, "The children who grow up as militants are more dangerous."

Experts say tackling radicalisation of women and children will be a big challenge for the government and law enforcers.

Awareness campaign, education reforms and counselling are the vital ways to check all forms of radicalisation in the society, they added.

"It is not possible to tackle radicalisation only through law enforcement. Comprehensive research and case studies are needed to find out the reasons behind radicalisation of women and children," psychologist Mehtab Khanam told The Daily Star yesterday.

She also said psychological counselling in schools is necessary. "But who will take the initiative when parents and teachers are not aware of the issue?"

Putting emphasis on proper parenting, Mehtab Khanam said, "The distance between parents and children is getting wider. Children say parents do not understand them while parents say they are busy with jobs and other stuffs."

Mahmudur Rahman, professor of clinical psychology at Dhaka University, said there is no mechanism in Bangladesh to assess extent of radicalisation of women and children.

In another chilling incident, Sharmin, wife of JMB's another explosive expert "Boma" Mizan, tried to kill herself along with their two kids by exploding bombs at their Mirpur flat as Rab members approached it for a raid in May 2009.

Additional Deputy Commissioner of Counter Terrorism Unit of DMP Sanwar Hossain said "Neo JMB", an offshoot of JMB, had no female unit.

"But from the recent trends it seems that the organisation is engaging

TERRORISING TRENDS

A study in February for Combating Terrorism Centre at West Point military academy that examined Islamic State propaganda on child and youth "martyrs" between January 2015 and 2016, found three times as many suicide operations involving children over the year.

"They represent an effective form of

psychological warfare -- to project strength, pierce defence, and strike fear into enemy soldiers' hearts," the study said.

"Islamic State is mobilising children and youth at an alarming rate," it added, according to a report of Reuters in August.

Those tactics are mirrored in West Africa where UN officials have tracked a rise in attacks like the one carried out by a girl as young as ten who last year exploded a bomb in a busy market place in the Nigerian city of Maiduguri, killing 16 people.

In Bangladesh, Shakil Ahmed alias Sohel alias Mollah Omar, a bomb expert of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), was killed during a raid on a Comilla den in March 2006. His wife along with two minor children died in a suicide blast.

In another chilling incident, Sharmin, wife of JMB's another explosive expert "Boma" Mizan, tried to kill herself along with their two kids by exploding bombs at their Mirpur flat as Rab members approached it for a raid in May 2009.

Community groups are developing materials to help religious leaders counter hardline ideology, and reaching out to parents through seminars on how to foster critical thinking and protect their children against radical teachings.

females, particularly family members and close relatives, in terrorist activities, including suicide attacks," the official told The Daily Star.

He also said the "Neo JMB" is engaging females as law enforcers already have information about male militants.

HOW IT'S BEING TACKLED

In Britain, an "educate against hate" website was launched as part of a renewed drive against extremism, according to BBC.

The website holds information for schools and parents to tackle the "spell of twisted ideologies". The government promises a "tougher approach" to preventing illegal, unregistered schools.

Besides, a charity has trained its counsellors to help parents who fear their children are being radicalised.

In Denmark, the government's strategy aims at re-educating radicals and integrating them back into society, whether they are caught before travelling abroad or when they come home, according to The Independent.

In Singapore, greater emphasis is placed on community response. That includes mobilising and training Singaporeans to guard against attacks and to maintain social harmony and unity.

The government is also stepping up efforts against extremist propaganda online, according to an article of The Straits Times on April 25, 2016.

Community groups are developing materials to help religious leaders counter hardline ideology, and reaching out to parents through seminars on how to foster critical thinking and protect their children against radical teachings.

Militants used hollow books to carry arms

FROM PAGE 1

commissioner of Counter Terrorism unit, told The Daily Star that militants used to carry firearms to and from dens and operations this way.

Asked how they carried bombs and grenades, Sanwar said they used to collect raw materials and then make bombs and grenades in their dens.

An official of the CT unit said female militants were not properly trained in using suicide vests.

Militant suspect Shakira tried to detonate her suicide vest among policemen during the raid. She ended up blowing herself up and seriously

injuring her daughter.

"It was 14-year-old Afif who helped Shakira wear the vest and gave her instructions on how to detonate it," the official told The Daily Star.

Afif was killed in an exchange of fire during the raid.

The case statement said militant suspect Trisha Moni exchanged chits with police during the raid in an attempt to negotiate their release. She had told police that they would surrender if police did not take any legal action against them.

In the case, police accused eight

named and three to four unnamed people.

Trisha Moni, wife of "Neo JMB" leader Maynul Islam Musa, who is on the run; Jebunnahar Shila, widow of Major (retd) Jahid alias Murad, who was killed in an anti-militancy drive in Mirpur; Shakira, the suicide bomber; Afif Kaderi, who was killed during the operation; Musa, presently a key leader of the outfit; Shakira's husband Rashedur Rahman Suman; Selim; and Feroz are the named accused.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court yesterday granted seven-day remand each for

Trisha Moni and Jebunnahar Shila, who surrendered during the raid with their two children.

Metropolitan Magistrate Meher Nigar Suchona passed the order after Inspector Saidur Rahman of the CTTC unit produced them before the court with 10-day remand prayers for each.

No lawyers represented the suspects. They had the two children in their laps.

Doctors of the forensic medicine department of Dhaka Medical College conducted autopsy on Afif's body yesterday afternoon and said Afif's body had multiple bullet holes.

EC wary of polls code violation by MPs

FROM PAGE 1

today [yesterday], requesting her to keep all the lawmakers out of their constituencies," he said.

Contacted, Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury said she was yet to receive the letter. "I will look into the matter once I get it [the letter]," she told this correspondent.

Elections to 61 zila parishes will be held tomorrow. Only elected representatives of different local government bodies are eligible to vote in this election.

As no leaders or activists of the BNP and the Jatiya Party are participating in the election, only ruling party men are contesting it.

According to EC officials, 22 chairmen -- all from the ruling AL -- have been elected unopposed.

This time, the AL has to deal with more than 50 dissident candidates for chairman posts in more than 30 districts.

In a last-ditch attempt to get the dissidents' support for the party-blessed candidates, several AL central leaders visited different districts and had discussions with the dissidents and also party-backed candidates, said AL insiders.

The electoral code bars the Speaker, the opposition leader in parliament, ministers, MPs, city corporation mayors and other VIPs enjoying government facilities from joining any polls campaign or election activities.

Breaching the electoral code, some

MPs are campaigning for their favourite candidates in their constituencies.

But none of them has been punished though the code provides for six months' imprisonment or a fine of Tk 50,000 or both for the violators.

However, the returning officers (ROs) served show cause notices on two MPs and warned several others verbally.

But these actions appear to be an eyewash as the EC and ROs thought it would suffice to serve show cause notices or give verbal warning instead of enforcing the electoral rules, said noted election expert Tofail Ahmed.

In Chandpur, the RO on December 22 verbally warned Dipu Moni, AL lawmaker from Chandpur-3 constituency, following the allegation from a chairman candidate that the MP was influencing voters.

Talking to The Daily Star, a chairman aspirant, Nurul Amin, yesterday said he filed a complaint with the RO against Disaster Management and Relief Minister Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, also lawmaker from Chandpur-2 constituency, that he gave money to some voters to cast ballot for his favourite candidate Osman Gani.

However, Osman, former vice president of the district AL, refuted the allegation.

Speaking at a press conference at Chandpur Press Club last night, he said the allegation is "baseless" and

breaching the electoral code, some

"irrelevant".

The minister couldn't be reached for comments. His mobile phone was found switched off yesterday.

Abdus Sabur Mandal, the RO and deputy commissioner of Chandpur, declined to comment on the matter.

Rajuuddin Ahmed Raju, AL lawmaker from Narsingdi-5, along with many of his supporters, went to Nilakkha area in Raipura upazila on Sunday noon to campaign for a member aspirant. A clash broke out there when supporters of a rival candidate attacked them, reported our Narsingdi correspondent quoting police and locals.

Asked, District Election Officer Sadekul Islam said they urged the MPs not to violate the electoral code.

In Pabna, three AL lawmakers campaigned for their party-backed chairman candidates around two weeks ago.

Of them, lawmakers Golam Faruk Khandaker Prince from Pabna-5 and Mokbul Hossain from Pabna-3 were served show cause notices by the RO on December 18 following complaints by a rival chairman candidate.

The two MPs didn't reply to the notices. Instead, their preferred candidate, Rezaur Rahim Lal, also senior vice president of the district AL, wrote to the RO two days later.

"I along with the MPs attended the party's different organisational meetings. The lawmakers didn't take part in elec-

tion campaigns," Rezaur said in the letter.

In Natore, Shafiqul Islam Shimul, AL lawmaker from Natore-2 constituency, repeatedly violated the electoral code but he is yet to face any action.

Shimul accompanied his party-backed chairman and member candidates when they submitted their nomination papers on December 1.

Later on December 13, the lawmaker allegedly sought votes for his preferred candidates at a meeting with elected representatives of the local government bodies and party men at Natore Circuit House.

On December 17, he again allegedly begged votes for his favourite aspirants at another meeting with his party men at Shankar Gobinda Chowdhury Stadium.

Similarly, Abdul Wadud Dara, AL lawmaker from Rajshahi-5, sought votes for the party-backed chairman candidates at a meeting at a community centre in Puthia upazila on December 17. But no action has been taken against him.

In Chittagong, City Corporation Mayor AJM Nasir Uddin accompanied an AL-supported chairman candidate when the aspirant submitted his nomination paper at the RO's office on December 1. But he is yet to face any action.

Besides, allegations of influencing voters have been made against ruling party lawmakers in Nilphamari and Sunamganj.

Accused sent to jail

court for a 10-day remand of Belal. Other fugitive accused would be arrested soon, the police official added.

On December 15, Belal and his friends went to meet Suma at her mother's house at Paschim Dorsha village of Sylhet Sadar upazila. At one stage, they took her to go out with them. They took her to a nearby hut filled with firewood, tied her hands with ropes and cut her tongue so that she cannot scream. Then they slashed the tendon of her left leg.

The next day, Suma's brother