

5 'Neo JMB militants' held in capital

They were planning to attack govt establishments, says Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion claimed to have arrested five militants of a cell of "Sarwar-Tamim group" early yesterday on charge of planning to attack government establishments.

The arrestees were identified as Oliuzzaman alias Oli, 28, Anwarul Alam, 29, Saleh Ahmed Shis, 22, Md Mohon alias Mohsin, 20, and Abul Kashem, 27.

They were arrested while conducting drives in the capital's Kafrul and Mirpur based on tip-offs, said Rab Additional Director General (operations) Col Anwar Latif Khan.

A stash of raw materials used in making bombs, two fake firearms and jihadi books were recovered from their possession, he told a press briefing at the elite force's media centre in the capital.

He said they were trying to trace other members of the cell, including two, namely Monir and Salam alias Abdullah, who were tasked with carrying out the attack.

Comprising 10-12 members, the cell has been operating for the past 15 months with the sole target of attacking government establishments, said Col Anwar.

According to Rab, Sarwar Jahan, who jumped to his death while trying to flee from a building during a Rab raid in Ashulia on October 8, is the chief of "Neo JMB", an offshoot of banned militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

However, Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit says he is a third-tier leader of "Neo JMB".

They also say that Tamim Ahmed Chowdhury is the chief coordinator of the outfit and mastermind of the July 1 Gulshan attack, in which 20 hostages, 17 of them foreigners, were killed.

THE DETAINEES
Oliuzzaman started working with "Sarwar-Tamim group" at the end of 2015 and was the "in-charge" of the cell, said the Rab official.

He gave training on making "anti-Islamic" posts go viral in social media so that the cell could garner sympathy

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WORLD WATER DAY TODAY



Passengers take a boat ride down the Buriganga near the capital's Babubazar last week. The river is so badly polluted that its water is unsuitable for use even after treatment. The stinky, pitch black water shows its high pollution level from industrial waste.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Ganges, Yamuna get status of 'legal persons'

AFP, Dehradun

Two of India's holiest but most polluted rivers have been recognised as "legal persons" in a landmark court ruling that could see the sacred waterways restored to health.

The decision to bestow legal standing to the Ganges and the Yamuna, one of its major tributaries, comes just days after New Zealand awarded similar rights to its own spiritual river in a move described as a world first.

The highest court in Uttarakhanda the Himalayan state where the Gange originates, late Monday declared the rivers as "living entities having the status of a legal person" and all corresponding rights.

The state's High Court in the resort town of Nainital said it took the unusual step because the hallowed rivers upon which Hindu rites are conducted were "losing their very existence".

"This situation requires extraordinary measures to preserve and conserve these rivers," the court said in its ruling.

The Ganges is India's longest and holiest river, but the waters in which pilgrims ritually bathe and scatter the ashes of their dead is heavily

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Customs seizes car

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Moosa's relative and was seized from there.

Customs Intelligence had information that two vehicles with same number plate were being used for a long time.

During investigation, the agency found that the Range Rover was registered with the Bhola office of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority under the name of Faruquzzaman from Pabna.

Moinul Khan, director general of CIID, said the vehicle was registered against fake import documents. It was claimed that Tk 17 lakh was paid at a duty rate of 130 percent.

"This is highly suspicious," he said, adding that 600 percent duty is realisable from the importer of the 3000cc car.

Some Tk 3.5 crore was supposed to be paid in duty for the car.

CIID said although the seized car was black, its registration document showed that it was white.

Detectives visited Faruquzzaman's house, but did not find the vehicle.

Early yesterday, detectives went to Moosa's Gulshan house. Security guards there admitted that Moosa used the car to go to office.

CCTV footage from the house showed that the vehicle was sent to school. Moosa's grandchild returned home from school by another car around 2:00pm.

The Range Rover was later handed over to CIID at the Dhanmondi house of Moosa's relative.

CIID said it would now ask Moosa and Faruquzzaman to give their statements for the sake of probe.

"We will investigate the incident from the viewpoints of three laws related to dodging duty, money laundering and corruption," said CIID DG Moinul.

Moosa is the chairman of manpower recruiting company DATCO.

Contacted, ATM Mahub Morshed, deputy general manager of DATCO, said the chairman had been using the car on rent from Faruquzzaman since August 2015.

The chairman's family members also used the vehicle, said Mahub on behalf of Moosa.

The businessman hit headlines after



The Range Rover seized by customs.

the Anti-Corruption Commission in 2010 had launched an enquiry into the allegation of siphoning over Tk 51,000 crore abroad.

Moosa in his wealth report filed with the ACC claimed that he had \$12 billion frozen in Swiss bank accounts and also owned about 1,200-bigha land in Savar and Gazipur. In March last year, the ACC sued Moosa for allegedly furnishing false and baseless information in his wealth statement.

15 lawyers

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The lawyers handed down punishment include former president of the district bar advocate Shah Alam, former general secretary advocate Abdus Sattar, General Secretary advocate Tozammel Hossain Toza and advocate Mostafa Asaduzzaman.

The lawyers appealed against the verdict yesterday afternoon and the Court of District and Sessions Judge granted them all an interim bail, said Public Prosecutor Abdul Gani.

Advocates Sarder Saif and Shaheduzzaman have been acquitted in the case.

Court sources said equipped with sticks, the convicted lawyers along with court staff on November 18, 2013 ransacked the doors and windows of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal and created panic among justice-seekers.

Tribunal Judge Md Fakhrudin filed a case against 17 lawyers with Sadar police the same day.

Sub-inspector SM Humayun Kabir investigated the incident and pressed charges against the 17 lawyers. The court framed charges against them on August 3, 2014.

Precious water for people in need

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her area.

On days when she could not collect water, her husband, Prodig Biswas, would ask local traders heading towards Khulna city, some 40km from Chalna Bazar, to bring water for them.

A jar of water would cost them Tk 50 and they had to pay additional Tk 20 to the traders for bringing the water.

Given the acute crisis of drinking water, the three-member family had to drink in small amounts. But whenever any relative visited their house, the couple would get worried.

Josna's struggle for and worries about water came to an end with the setting up of a groundwater treatment plant on the municipality premises earlier this year.

"I no longer worry about drinking water. Now I collect water with my card from the municipality office. All I need to do is swipe a card on the machine. I can get 15 litres at one go," the 26-year-old woman told The Daily Star on Sunday.

"It's just a few steps from my house. I pay only 40 paisa for a litre of water. When I first used the machine, I was little confused. But it's very easy to operate," Josna said with a smile.

To provide drinking water at a low price to small groups of people, Rupantar, a local non-government organisation, in association with WaterAid, Bangladesh, and Hongkong Shanghai Banking Corporation Ltd (HSBC) set up vending machines on the municipality compound in January this year.

The machines dispense around 8,000 litres of water a day through three booths. The booths have the capacity to dispense 10, 15 and 30 litres of water per transaction. It opens at 8:00am and closes at 8:00pm.

The total cost of the project was Tk 31 lakh. The municipality had provided Tk 7 lakh to construct the building that houses the plant, said Zahidur Rahman, project manager of Rupantar.

Some 210 families have so far been given the ATM like cards. The municipality authorities have a plan to provide the service to 600 families, he said.

Using the card, a person can get 3 litres of water a day. He or she will also be able to collect water for his or her family members.

For example, a person with a four-member family will get 12 litres a day,

which means the family will get a total of 360 litres of water a month. The person can take as many litres as possible a day until his quota of 360 litres is exhausted, the project manager explained. The person then needs to refill his card to collect water again.

However, during the summer, the amount of water is increased to 4 litres per person, he said.

Asked how a family would get a card, municipality Mayor Sanat Kumar Biswas said any member of a family could get a card after submitting an application to the municipality office. The person needs to provide a copy of his or her voter ID card, a passport size photo, a recommendation letter from the local ward concerned and pay Tk 200.

He said the municipality office would verify the documents and then issue the card. The validity of a card expires in 90 days unless it is refilled.

Tk 100 is for the issuance of the card while the rest Tk 100 is needed for card activation. However, a card can be refilled with up to Tk 999 a month, the mayor said.

Forty paisa per litre is charged each time the card is swiped, he said.

According to Sanat, this is the first community-based water treatment plant with vending machines in the country.

"We are selecting families after verifying their application. The amount we charge is for repairs and maintenance of the plant," he added.

Amirul Sheikh, caretaker of the building, said he was happy to be a part of the project.

"Apart from keeping the place clean and maintaining queues, I help people who face difficulties in using the machine," he said.

Sources in the Department of Public Health Engineering in Dakop said there were some 46 government ponds in the upazila and many of them had dried up. Only two ponds had been dug up recently to meet the need of drinking water. Besides, more than 810 shallow tube-wells were set up in the upazila but there was no deep tube-well.

People in the upazila have been facing the crisis of drinking water for years, as it is a saline-prone area. Saline water has intruded into rivers and other water bodies, affecting thousands of people.

Buriganga water shows signs of improvement

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that have not yet shifted remain suspended, meaning they are not releasing any waste into the river either.

In addition, the Department of Environment (DoE) has recently shut down 19 factories of various types in Keraniganj. These factories too used to dump their toxic waste into the river.

The latest DoE test found the level of average dissolve oxygen (DO) in the Buriganga water was 0.1 in the first two months of this year compared to 0.00 in January and February last year.

It also found the level of BOD (biochemical oxygen demand) came down to 10.4mg per litre in January and 24.4mg per litre in February this year. It was 11.5mg and 29.1mg in January and February last year.

DO is the level of oxygen required for the survival of aquatic resources, while the level of BOD is the volume of organic waste materials in water.

In Bangladeshi context, the level of DO should be above five and that of BOD below six in dry season for any aquatic species to survive.

The DoE collects water sample from eight points of the Buriganga every month to monitor the water quality.

Though its latest test shows a slight improvement, the water is still far worse than the official standard.

"The level of BOD fell to 24 from 29 in the last one year. We consider it a huge improvement. The biodiversity of Buriganga will revive automatically if we can stop the discharge of untreated water in the river," said a DoE official.

Regular drives against water polluters are also yielding some fruits, he added.

The Buriganga and other rivers around the capital have become highly polluted over the years due to indiscriminate discharge of untreated

industrial and household waste into them.

In Bangladesh, around 92 percent wastewater is seriously neglected while around 2.10 crore people drink unsafe water, said Prof Dr Md Mujibur Rahman of Buet, who has been monitoring the discharge of wastewater into the Buriganga for years.

"Every day around 60,000kgs of BOD is dumped into the Buriganga from industrial and domestic sources through 41 drainage outlets," he told a seminar in the capital organised on the occasion of the World Water Day yesterday.

The theme of this year's World Water Day is "wastewater".

In the Buriganga, the level of dissolve oxygen hovers between zero and one during dry season while it goes up to 4mg per liter during monsoon, said Prof Mujibur.

A few years ago, the government took up a Tk 21-crore project to clean

up the waters of the Turag and the Buriganga.

But as the river pollution continues unabated, dependence on groundwater has been growing in the capital.

Currently, around 78 percent of the city's water demand is met from below the ground, as most of the surface water is contaminated. This heavy reliance on groundwater causes the water table to lower three to four metres a year, said sources in Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa).

The level of pollution of rivers surrounding the capital is so high that the Wasa has taken an initiative to set up several treatment plants outside Dhaka to bring water from the Padma and the Meghna, said AKM Shahid Uddin, former chief engineer of Wasa.

"We wouldn't need to bring water from those rivers if the waters of the rivers around the capital were usable," he said.

Rockefeller

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chief executive officer of Chase Manhattan Bank during his 35 years at the company.

He was also a confidant of world leaders, from Deng Xiaoping in China to Nelson Mandela in South Africa, from the shah of Iran to Henry Kissinger. Rockefeller famously asked President Jimmy Carter to let the deposed shah come to the US for medical treatment, leading to the seizure of American hostages in Tehran from 1979 to 1981.

Rockefeller was equally well known for his philanthropy. In 2006, he bequeathed \$225 million to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, which he and his brothers established in 1940 to promote social change worldwide. The year before, he donated \$100 million each to two New York institutions: the Museum of Modern Art, which was co-founded by his mother, and Rockefeller University, a medical-research school started by his grandfather.

In 2008, Rockefeller gave \$100 million to his alma mater, Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

"The range of David Rockefeller's business and philanthropic and political connections is perhaps unequalled," said Ron Chernow, the author of "Titan," a 1998 biography of John D Rockefeller.

Go-ahead for mega health projects

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that the contribution of the development partners might increase and in that case the programme expenditure could go up Tk 20,000 crore more.

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which the programme would have special focus on, account for 59 percent of total deaths in the country, according to the World Health Organisation's NCD Country Profile 2014.

At least 17 percent of total deaths in the country are caused by cardiovascular diseases, while chronic respiratory diseases, cancers, accidents and diabetes cause 11, 10, 9 and 3 percent of the deaths.

More cases of NCDs could be attributed to the increased life expectancy, now 72 years, an ageing population, tobacco consumption, food habits, the environment, and sedentary lifestyle amid growing urbanisation.

The WHO in a 2015 report estimated that 21,316 die in the country every year due to traffic related accidents. Some three times this number face serious injuries leading to physical disabilities.

The health ministry, moving away

from the sector-wise approach initiated in the first five-year programme in 1998, started better-planned delivery of health, population and nutrition services in Bangladesh in the second five-year programme in 2003.

"Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in achieving the health-related Millennium Development Goals. We have not, however, focused much on non-communicable diseases," said Prof Abul Kalam Azad, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

While increasing the number of expert doctors and diagnostic facilities was important, the authorities would expand preventive care and nutrition services, two components crucial for reducing the burden of NCDs, he said.

ESSENTIAL SERVICE PACKAGE
The government has been providing primary healthcare services, mostly in maternal, childcare and family welfare services, but the new plan includes screening for diseases in health facilities, from community clinics to upazila health complexes.

The testing would include blood sugar, pressure, cancer, Prof Azad

said, adding, "This will require purchase of logistics as well as training and recruiting new health personnel. We will do it in phases."

At least 29 types of essential drugs would also be provided to all citizens in these facilities, he said, adding, "This is part of our goal to ensure all have access to affordable healthcare."

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION
The Health Sector Programme (HSP) 2017-2022 includes a new approach to local planning in which hospitals would maintain records to generate data that would be used for better decision-making, Prof Azad said.

According to the HSP, hospitals, in the new approach, would involve local authorities and elites for improving health services and make it more accountable.

"If hospital staff are sincere and provide quality services, clients will come to the hospital to seek services even though the problem of limited resources remains," it said.

NEW CONDITIONS FOR FUNDING
Development partners have tagged a new funding mechanism for the HSP to improve performance and efficiency.

The fund, pooled by the World Bank and other partners, would be disbursed based on results known as "Programme-for-Results (PforR)", which was agreed to by the government.

Under this mechanism, fund would be disbursed upon achievement of some preset disbursement linked indicators (DLIs), which are tangible, transparent and verifiable performance indicators, said Ashadul Islam, director general of health economics unit of the health ministry.

MULTI-SECTOR APPROACH
Work of other ministries has influence on health and nutrition. For example, improving nutrition is not possible without the help of agriculture, food, fish and livestock ministries that work on producing and manage food and ensuring food safety, officials said.

The HSP covers these aspects, said a health ministry official.

Prof Syed Masud Ahmed, of the Centre of Excellence for Universal Health Coverage at Brac University, said the programme meant was quite comprehensive.

"Effective implementation is crucial, however. Improving governance

is a major challenge."

According to a World Bank report, Bangladesh's Health Sector Programme is one of the largest in the world. The programme has been drawn on the basis of lessons learnt from previous programmes.

The programme has made good progress in improving health outcomes, which include reductions in infant and child mortality rates; a sharp decline in maternal mortality rate; and declining fertility rates, the WB report said.

In terms of health services delivery, child immunisation coverage has been above 80 percent while antenatal care visits increased from 54.6 percent in 2010 to 63.9 percent in 2014. Deliveries by medically trained providers rose from 26 percent in 2010 to 42.1 percent in 2014.

This increase in skilled birth attendance was predominantly due to a rise in facility-based deliveries, from 23.7 percent to 37.4 percent over the period.

The WB report said even though progress has been achieved in the sector, significant health challenges remain.