

## Rab cordons off 'terror den' in Narsingdi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law enforcers cordoned off a suspected militant hideout in Narsingdi Sadar upazila yesterday afternoon.

A team of the Rapid Action Battalion and local police surrounded the two-storey under-construction building at Gabtoli village (Uttar) in the upazila around 4:30pm, said Lt Col Kamrul Hasan, commanding officer of Rab-11, adding that 5-6 militant suspects may be hiding inside.

"We are trying to communicate with them, repeatedly requesting them to surrender.... Due to lack of light, we may not conduct any operation tonight."

The district administration imposed section 144 in the area last night. Law enforcers are likely to launch an operation this morning.

The house is owned by a Dubai expatriate, Moin Ahmed. After the death of his wife, his family members moved to Raipur village. A youth rented the house early this month, Rab said.



Some documents and books lay strewn around at a room at the Gulshan office of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia after police raided the office yesterday morning. Top right, protesting the police action, BNP leaders and activists hold a rally in front of the office. BNP Standing Committee Member Goyeswar Chandra Roy, bottom right, talks to journalists at the office.



## Zakir Naik granted Saudi citizenship

INDIA TODAY

Controversial Islamic preacher Dr Zakir Naik, booked under an anti-terror law in India, has been granted citizenship by Saudi Arabia, according to media reports.



The Middle East Monitor reported that King Salman had intervened to grant Naik Saudi citizenship to protect him from arrest by the Interpol.

51-year-old Naik, who founded the banned Islamic Research Foundation (IRF), was believed to be staying in Saudi Arabia to evade arrest after his activities came under scanner following accusations that he had inspired some of the terrorists who attacked a cafe in Dhaka last year.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) had filed an FIR against Naik and his associates in November.

The physician-turned-preacher was booked for allegedly promoting

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## Result 0

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They called BNP leaders to tell what was going on.

Police entered the building around 7:30am.

Salahuddin, an inspector of Gulshan Police Station, said they completed the search but did not enter Khaleda's office room.

Witnesses said before starting the raid, security was beefed up around Khaleda's office and adjacent streets and movement of people was restricted.

A good number of policemen, including detective police, Rab members and different intelligence agency members were there. A group entered the office while the rest took position outside.

Khaleda's office staffers claimed that the law enforcers broke some CCTV cameras during the raid.

"Police entered the security room on the first floor. They turned off all the CCTV cameras. They broke a good number of cameras too. Then they went to the second floor. They filmed the whole office," said Mohammad Rashed, an employee of the office who was inside during the raid.

Rashed said police asked him

about the books of Vision-2030, a document Khaleda Zia recently announced that outline what the party would do if voted to power.

The police officials did not talk to the media during or after the raid.

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi went to the Gulshan office around 9:00am and entered the building after talking to police officials. Twenty minutes later, BNP Joint Secretary General Habib-un-Nabi Khan Sohel also went there.

After the raid, police gave a list to the BNP leaders. The list, signed by Gulshan Police Station SI Azizul Islam, mentioned "zero" as seized items but did not mention where the raid was conducted.

After the police had left, senior BNP leaders went to the office. They along with party activists staged a demonstration for a while in front of the office.

Following similar complaints, the police had been allowed to search Khaleda's Gulshan office in March 2015.

In a petition filed before a court on March 1, 2015, Sub-Inspector Sohel Rana of Gulshan Police Station claimed that suspects in a

criminal case were hiding in Khaleda's office and they had been communicating with their cohorts across the country and instructing them to carry out subversive activities.

At that time Khaleda was staying at the office after she had announced a countrywide non-stop blockade from January 5, 2015.

Gulshan police got the warrant but did not raid the office.

THE GD

In the GD number 1159 filed on Friday, it was alleged that a substantial amount of "anti-state materials" were stored in House-6 of Road-86 in Gulshan [Khaleda's office] and its adjacent areas to carry out "anti-state activities and subversive activities".

The materials include stickers urging people to engage in subversive activities, the GD claimed.

It remains a mystery as to who filed the GD.

Asked, Officer-in-Charge Abu Bakkar Siddique of Gulshan Police Station, said they could not disclose the identity of the complainant due to legal reasons.

The Daily Star contacted Deputy Commissioner Mustak Ahmed of Gulshan Division Police, who led

the raid, and he suggested talking to Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) media wing about the matter.

During a press briefing at the DMP Media Centre, several high-ranking police officials briefed journalists on a different issue. They avoided journalists' questions regarding the raid.

BNP'S REACTION

Terming the raid unprecedented, BNP leaders said law enforcers acted on a dubious GD only to harass the party chairperson and termed it "a conspiracy against Khaleda Zia".

They said such a raid was a "crime" and the party would take legal steps in this regard.

The BNP yesterday announced countrywide demonstrations for today to protest the "unlawful" raid in the party chairperson's office.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir came down heavily on the government over the raid and said, "The raid proves that the government is intentionally trying to interrupt democratic practices."

Talking to reporters at his Thakurgaon home, he said there was no democracy in the country.

BNP standing committee member

Goyeswar Chandra Roy said the law enforcers turned off the CCTV cameras inside the office to hide their misdeeds.

"As the government is not democratically elected and does not believe in democracy, they always engage in conspiracy. Today's incident stunned the people of the country. We protest and condemn the attack," he told journalists.

Another BNP standing committee member Nazrul Islam Khan said he suspects the police had planted something inside the office to put party leaders in danger.

"A government, which is not accountable to the people and is not democratically elected, can do any kind of misdeeds. This act is a crime," he said demanding fair investigation into the incident.

BNP chief Khaleda Zia's adviser Zainul Abedin said, "According to the law, if there is any search warrant, then the officials have to notify the concerned person and request the person to ensure a representative during the search. But in this case, no one notified us. They conducted the raid at the office without following the law. We will take legal steps in this regard."



Police parade some arrested fake DB men before the media at the Detective and Criminal Intelligence Division in the city yesterday. The DB arrested 16 men for allegedly impersonating themselves as detectives to cheat people.

## Fake detectives on the prowl

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Munna, Afzal Hossain alias Shahin.

The joint commissioner said no policemen were found to be involved with the gang.

According to a DMP press release, one foreign-made pistol, a magazine, two bullets, two machetes, four knives, a walkie-talkie set, three DB jackets, two pairs of handcuffs, two truncheons, a bag and two DB stickers were recovered from the possession of those arrested in Banasree area. Two cars and a microbus were also seized.

Two toy pistols, a walkie-talkie set, a pair of handcuffs, 17 unused prepaid mobile phone SIM cards, seven mobile phones, an army jacket, a truncheon, a pair of boots, three flash drives and an iron rod

were recovered from the possession of the ones arrested on Friday. A microbus was also seized, said the press release.

Asked how the suspects got the recovered items, Baten said there are markets in the city where such items are sold. Those items are sold by maintaining certain procedures. "There might be some people helping them collect these things."

Earlier, law enforcers took actions against some shop owners in the city's Polwell Market where police uniforms are sold, he said.

Replying to a query about how people are to identify real detectives, Baten said, "It is actually tough to identify ... But if any policeman is found involved, action will be taken against him."

The senior DB official said the drives were conducted as part of checking criminal activities like mugging, robbery and theft in the capital ahead of and during the month of Ramadan.

Police claim that the incidents of abduction carried out by criminals posing as DB are actually committed by such fake detectives. At least eight such gangs have been arrested in the last one year.

On May 12, 2015, a group of men impersonating DB members abducted a garment official in broad daylight in Gazipur. They took Tk 1,50,000, mobile phones and other possession before leaving him in a jungle there.

The garment official was returning home after withdrawing Tk 1,44,000 from a bank branch in Maona around 11:00am.

## Seven stand strong

FROM PAGE 1

Devnath, Sanjida Islam, Rezwana Tabassum and Sneha Barman of Class-IX, and Jebunnesa Khanam Shyama, Jannatul Islam and Jerina Sultana of Class-VIII. Their tales are soon becoming the stuff of lore, whispered across the town, in tones once hushed now steadily amplifying.

It all began when the seven stopped the marriage of Nadira Akhter Panna, a ninth-grader scheduled to get married on April 11. They followed this up with preventing the illegal union of seventh-grader, Monwara Begum, scheduled for marriage on April 16.

However, their story doesn't end there. The seven are involved in actual grassroots empowerment of women in the area and exemplify how to stand up for oneself. The forum members, led by Tuli, also work to create awareness against stalking, having received training under a project of World Vision Bangladesh.

The seven also benefit from a great support system. Team leader Tuli said their teachers and the local administration helped them enormously in stopping the marriages. When queried how they went about it, she said that first they got primary information about the incidents from fellow students at school. They then discussed with their headmaster Abdul Khaleque how to foil Monwara's marriage on April 15, said team member Sanjida.

Later, they went to Monwara's house at Chandpur village of Achargao union but failed to convince her parents. The headmaster then informed Upazila Nirbahi Officer Hafizur Rahman who asked Officer-in-Charge Aatur Rahman of

Nandail Police Station to take the necessary steps. Monwara's father, Abdus Salam, a marginal farmer, was called to the police station and convinced to change his mind after being explained the very real negative consequences of child marriage. "Later he agreed with us," said Sanjida.

Sneha, another forum member, said they came to know about the marriage of Nadira, daughter of day labourer Chand Mia of Dashedia area of Nandail municipality, on April 10. She was set to get married to a pick-up van driver. The team immediately rushed to Nadira's house and tried to convince her parents to stop the marriage but they did not listen.

The girls then went to Nadira's house again the next morning where they saw that wedding preparations were underway. Sensing that little time was left, they informed headmaster Khaleque about the matter. The headmaster then informed UNO Hafizur who directed Upazila Women Affairs Officer, Romana Akhter, to visit the spot with the girls. "We reached the spot at noon and saved Nadira," Sheha added.

For the girls though, while their intentions were noble, their first struggles began at home. Ghashphool member Rezwana said she initially had to face many obstacles from her family members. Now though, they were proud of her. Locals are also praising them, said the ninth-grader, adding that other girls at her school had expressed interest in joining them. "I'm very proud of my daughter," said Tuli's mother, Nipa Devnath, referring to her daughter's lead role against child marriage.

Meanwhile, Nadira's father,

Chand Mia, said he realised his wrong decision after the girls made him understand about the ills of early marriage. "Now I'm focused on my daughter's education," said Nadira's mother, Jotsna Begum. An elated Nadira said, "It is great that I'll be able to go to school again."

Praises for the girls though don't end just for their recent actions; the girls are truly unique in almost every aspect. Headmaster Abdul Khaleque said the seven girls, who are from middle and lower-middle class families, are very good in their studies and skilled in co-curricular activities. This is despite the predicament many of them had gone through. Assistant teacher, Afroza Parvin, said Tuli lost her father at the age of two. She passed her Junior School Certificate exam with a golden GPA-5 and also secured scholarship. Tuli's other feathers in her cap come from singing and having received upazila- and district-level prizes in dance competitions, said the teacher.

They were accorded with a reception at the UNO office on April 13 for their contribution. UNO Hafizur said the girls carried out an important task and stressed the need for similar types of work to be done in other parts of the upazila. Nandail Municipality Mayor Rafiq Uddin Bhuiyan further said the job done by the girls had made locals aware about the curse of child marriage. "What they did should be done by public representatives, administration and police first," he said.

The girls though decided a long time ago that they couldn't wait for help any longer. They would blaze their own trail and so they did and continue to do so.

## BNP-Jamaat infiltrators causing divisions in AL

FROM PAGE 1

From the meeting yesterday, Hasina inaugurated the party's membership collection and renewal programme after seven years renewing her own membership by donating Tk 500 to party fund. The renewal fees, however, is Tk 20.

The party also handed the grassroots leaders its new declaration and constitution, which were amended at the party's 20th triennial council on October 22-23 last year.

started distributing laptops among party offices across the country.

In her inaugural speech, the AL president mentioned that the grassroots leaders and activities of her party have always kept the organisation vibrant.

"And they always took the right decision at the right time and strengthened the organisation."

Representatives from 77 organisational district units -- presidents, general secretaries, information secretaries, office secretaries and their

deputies and publicity and publication secretaries and their deputies -- and all party lawmakers were present at the meeting.

Speaking at a closed-door session, Khulna AL president Sheikh Harun-Rashid pointed to the lack of discipline within the party. He demanded stern action against the party men who ignore the party decision and contest election as rebels.

Mymensingh AL President Jahirul Haque spoke on intra-party differences and conflicts within the party,

saying those are only for personal gains, not for any ideology.

Seeking the party president's intervention to resolve the feuds, he also alleged that people like Khandaker Mushtaq have invaded the party at all tiers, said sources.

Rangpur AL General Secretary Rezaul Karim Raju said BNP-Jamaat leaders are even getting AL portfolios. "If this trend is not controlled immediately, tested leaders of the party will be cornered," he was quoted as saying.

He also brought allegations that

party lawmakers are busy creating their own circles and trying to bring own men to grassroots committees.

Raju also said party men are "getting scared" following some remarks of AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader and divisions within the party have surfaced because of some of his speeches.

Recently, Awami League leaders have given mixed reactions to Obaidul Quader's remark that when the party would lose power, the AL men would have to be on the run with all the money they have been making.

Sylhet City unit president Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran said MPs and their circles are creating divisions within the party. He also opposed the formation of grassroots committees by the central body.

Chittagong (South) AL President Moslem Uddin pointed out distances between party MPs and leaders and activists and sought Sheikh Hasina's interference in this regard. Without mentioning any name, he said remarks of the party spokesperson are misleading party men.