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## Blast at Shahjalal shrine injures British HC, kills 2

### Sylhet DC, Bar president among 70 hurt: None arrested: BDR deployed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Two people were killed and British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Anwar Choudhury was among about 70 injured in a powerful bomb blast, second in five months, at Hazrat Shahjalal Shrine in Sylhet yesterday.

Choudhury, barely 18 days into his new assignment, suffered minor leg injuries as the bomb exploded on impact bouncing off his belly to the floor of the shrine after Friday prayers.

The 700-year-old shrine, 278km northeast of the capital, jolted with the force of the blast that came at about 1:40pm with a big bang sending worshippers running for cover. Witnesses saw scores of the injured writhing in pain on the

ground. Two worshippers in white clothes were later found sitting blood-smeared in hospital for treatment. At least 10 people were seriously injured. Jubair Ahmed Rubel, son of Lilafar Ali of Jharnapur, was among the dead. The 26-year-old was a student of master's in philosophy at Madan Mohan College, but the other dead could not be identified immediately.

Sylhet Deputy Commissioner Abul Hossain and the envoy's two bodyguards suffered injuries in the explosion that blasted off about 1 square feet of floor tiles and flung splinters as far as 20 feet. Thick smoke covered the area. Later in the day, an army helicopter flew the Bangladesh-born envoy, deputy commissioner and a police-

## Bangla Bhai's men put seven more on hit list

### List includes former legislator, four Raninagar UP chairmen

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

After bludgeoning to death three leftist outlaws in Naogaon on Thursday, the Islamist outfit Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) was now preparing 'to punish' seven more people including a former legislator and four union parishad chairmen.

A top JMJB leader yesterday gave the names put on a hit list and said his group would continue 'vigorous outlaw cleansing operations with continued police assistance' for an indefinite period. The leader claimed the list was finalised after Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) operative Badshah admitted to them that he killed up to 50 people at the directive of a state minister's brother and the chairmen in Raninagar.

The JMJB operatives on Thursday allegedly killed Badshah, Bashar and Khejuri, but the fate of their co-activist Alauddin could not be known. Villagers found one of the bodies hanging upside down from a roadside tree in Bamongram village in Nandigram upazila of Bogra, not far away from the northwestern district of Naogaon. Local residents say a gang of dreaded JMJB vigilantes picked up the four from Sharia village in Atrai Wednesday and held them hostage.

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Injured British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Anwar Choudhury, left, after a bomb attack on Hazrat Shahjalal Shrine in Sylhet left two people killed and about 70 others injured. People look at the blood-soaked scene at the shrine.

PHOTO: STAR, AFP

## Bhola faces deluge as crack in dam widens

### Patuakhali flooded; thousands marooned

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Bhola is on the brink of a deluge with water from a turbulent Meghna gushing through a rapidly widening breach in the town protection embankment, while parts of Patuakhali town remain under floodwater. The Meghna made a 25-foot breach in the Bhola town protection embankment in Nasir Majhi area Thursday and by yesterday evening

widened it to 75 feet, local people and administration said. Two out of 24 passengers of a trawler remained missing until yesterday evening after the boat capsized Thursday afternoon on its way to Dhal Char from Char Ashraf in Bhola. Local fishermen rescued the rest of the passengers. As of yesterday evening, Gangakirti, Balaramasura and Kanainagar unions under Bhola Sadar upazila and the suburban

unions of Dhania and Kachia were submerged under swirling floodwater, which was just 1.5 kilometre away from the town. At least 10,000 families are marooned by flood in the unions, and many more are in panic of an imminent disaster. Crops of thousands of acres of land have been spoiled and fishes of around 300 ponds worth about Tk 50 lakh washed away in the affected areas.

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## No headway in Jan 12 shrine blast

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

The investigation into the January 12 bomb explosion at the shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal in the city has made no headway even in more than four months. The apparent failure of the probe follows 10 other unresolved cases of bomb blast in Sylhet region since 1997 that left 14 people killed and scores injured. Initially, 24 people were arrested and put on remand for interrogation on the January 12 blast. Kotwali police transferred the case to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). But the probe saw no progress. Moreover, a probe body headed by the superintendent of police,

Sylhet, failed to publish a report on the investigation despite repeated extension of time. The report is now gathering dust at the Sylhet police headquarters, said a police official. Both the CID and Detective Branch of Police (DB) conducted investigations into the incidents of bomb explosion. But in most cases they failed to track down people involved in making the bombs and exploding those. In 1997, two explosions took place at Sagardigharpar and Amabarkhana in the city. Bangladesh Chhatra League leader Ali Ahmed was killed in the Sagardigharpar blast. On March 15, 1999, three people were killed as bombs exploded when

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## Attack condemned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Yesterday's bomb attack on a congregation of worshippers including the new British envoy to Bangladesh at a Sylhet shrine drew widespread condemnation and expression of horror both from home and abroad. President Professor Iajuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina and British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw were among the first dignitaries who reacted with deep shock immediately after the incident took place. Dhaka expressed its 'deepest shock and anger' at the hurling of a bomb at worshippers at the gate of Hazrat Shahjalal's shrine after the Juma prayers that killed two devotees and injured British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury, Deputy Commissioner (DC) of

Sylhet Abul Hossain and a score of others. The foreign ministry in a statement said the government had all along condemned such mindless acts of violence and was determined to nab the culprits and bring them to justice. All medical assistance was being provided to the British high commissioner and others injured in the ambush, it added. The high commissioner was brought to Dhaka later in the day for better treatment by an airforce helicopter. "His injury is not critical and he is also out of danger," the foreign office statement said. President Iajuddin Ahmed expressed intense sorrow at the incident and wished early recovery of the high commissioner, the DC and others injured. He prayed for

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## Terrible, says Jack Straw

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw yesterday expressed grave concern over the bomb attack on British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Anwar Choudhury at Shahjalal's shrine in Sylhet yesterday. "I'm shocked at the news that Anwar Choudhury is among the injured in the bomb attack but my sympathies go to all the victims and their families," the UK Foreign Secretary told the BBC Bangla Service yesterday in his reaction to the bomb attack that left two people dead and at least 25 hurt, including the UK high commissioner. "What's happened is terrible but it was a relief to know Anwar Choudhury's injury is not serious," Jack Straw said. He said they thought the

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## Manmohan takes oath as Indian PM today

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India's Prime Minister-elect Manmohan Singh and his senior colleagues in Congress party yesterday intensified efforts to complete the arduous task of today's swearing in ceremony amidst indications of hard bargaining for some plum portfolios. Singh, the 71-year-old economist-banker-bureaucrat-turned politician, held talks with Congress President Sonia Gandhi and other senior party leaders interacted with chiefs of allies to firm up the ministry-making. As per a new law passed by the

outgoing Parliament restricting the size of federal and state ministries, Singh can have only a 83-member council of ministers. Singh, who has embarked on the most delicate assignment of his 13-year-old political career, got a taste of the pulls and pressures of coalition partners jockeying for ministerial berths. According to sources, Singh himself is likely to retain at least for the time being the key portfolio of Finance, which he had handled skillfully from 1991 to 1996 under Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao. There are already indications that ministry-making would not be an easy task with so many aspirants

for ministerial berths not only from Congress but also from its pre and post-poll alliance partners. For instance, Rashtriya Janata Dal, which has 21 MPs from its bastion Bihar, went into a sulk after Congress reportedly turned down the party chief's wish to get the crucial home portfolio. RID chief Laloo Prasad Yadav, who had been camping here for the last several days, returned home Thursday in a huff and did some tough talking by reminding that Congress party did not have majority on its own and cannot do anything without consulting the allies. For the record, however, Yadav

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## Blasts rage, probes stall

140 killed in 5 yrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Major bomb blasts that left 140 people killed and about 1,000 injured in Bangladesh in the last five years still stand unresolved and no attackers were punished because of politicisation of probes. The latest bomb attack that came amid scenes of law and order downslide killed two people and wounded about 70 others, including British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury and his bodyguard at Hazrat Shahjalal Shrine in Sylhet, 278 kilometres northeast of Dhaka. It was the second blast at the shrine this year: an explosion killed five people and injured 30 others on January 12.

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## REMOVAL OF TOP LEADERS FBCCI board sits today to weigh govt order

STAR REPORT

The FBCCI has convened an emergency meeting of its board of directors today to discuss the latest government order for incorporation of a clause in its Memorandum of Articles of Association (MAA) for the removal of the president or vice-president. The emergency meeting may decide to hold an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) to take the decision whether the clause will be incorporated in the MAA.

"An emergency board meeting of the FBCCI will discuss the issue on Saturday. We have to convene an EGM to take a decision on the government order," President of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) Abdul Awal Minto told The Daily Star yesterday. According to sources, a section of business leaders have reservations about the government order as it came from a joint secretary of the commerce ministry instead of the

Director Trade Organisation (DTO). A political aide to the prime minister is behind the government move and another section of business leaders including a top loan defaulter is also pursuing the issue, sources said. The initiative came immediately after the FBCCI president came up with a set of proposals to reform key areas including politics. High officials of the commerce, home and law ministries have been asked to look into the existing rules

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Standard Chartered logo and advertisement with the slogan "We believe seeing is believing" and "Standard Chartered Operation Theatre & Children's Ward at Islamia Eye Hospital".

Advertisement for a practice match starting today, mentioning RABEED IMAM from Grenada and details about the match at Queen's Park Stadium.

Advertisement for Rejoinder and our reply, mentioning Kazi Air International (Pvt) Limited, Pan Bright Travels (Pvt) Limited and Versatile Travels and Tours Limited.

Large advertisement for Dhaka Bank Islamic Banking Branch at Chittagong, featuring the bank's logo and contact information: "Dhaka Bank Islamic Banking Branch, 102 Sadharon Bima Sadan, Agrabad Commercial Area, Chittagong. Phone: 712401-3".