

Four 'JMB men' held in Bogra

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra
Detectives claimed to have arrested four operatives of banned militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) raiding a house at Selimpur Uttarpara in Bogra town Monday night.
The arrestees were identified as Fazle Rabbi, former ameer of Gabtoli upazila unit Jamaat; his son Ahmed Shaifullah Sadik, a former Shibir activist and a student of Rangpur Carmichael College; Osama-bin-Anis, a class-X student of Al Akaba Madrasa in the district, and Osama's associate Imamul Saklain Rihan.
Bogra Superintendent of Police Asaduzzaman said Fazle Rabbi quit Jamaat in 2005 and joined JMB. His son is now an active member of the militant outfit in the northern region.
Acting on a tip-off, a team of Detective Branch of police in Bogra raided a house at Selimpur Uttarpara around 10:30pm and made the arrests. The arrestees were in a meeting at that time, said police.

"The meeting was aimed at carrying out acts of sabotage, terrorist and anti-state activities and creating panic," said a police official.
Gaziur Rahman, senior assistant superintendent of police (media) in Bogra, said the arrestees had connections with JMB members whom police had arrested earlier.
Police filed a case under the Anti-Terrorism Act with Sadar Police Station against them and sought 10 days' remand for each yesterday. The Court of Senior Judicial Magistrate in Bogra Md Kamruzzaman granted three days' remand for each.

Delhi plane

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his Indian counterpart and expressed his deep shock at the death of the BSF men.
Our New Delhi correspondent adds: all the 10 men in the BSF plane were killed when it crashed near Delhi International Airport yesterday shortly after take-off.
Indian aviation sources said the accident happened around 9:50am when the twin-engine Superking plane crashed into the airport boundary wall near a railway track and landed in a sewage treatment plant apparently due to a technical problem five minutes after it took off for Ranchi, the capital city of eastern Indian state of Jharkhand.
The aircraft lost contact with the Air Traffic Control at 9:50am, they said.
"It is unfortunate that all 10 people, including the pilots, have died in the crash," Minister of State for Civil Aviation Mahesh Sharma said. There were two pilots on board.
An inquiry has been ordered by the Indian Civil Aviation Ministry.
The 10 people on board the ill-fated aircraft comprised the pilot, who was a second-in-command rank officer of special investigation branch, the co-pilot, who is a BSF deputy commandant, six technicians, an engineer and a crew member.
BSF sources said the technicians were on their way to Ranchi to repair a helicopter.
Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoned the loss of lives in the crash.

Six Shibir men

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Six crude bombs, one kg of gunpowder, one kg of sulfur, nails, stones, two police uniforms and publications on Jamaat-Shibir ideology were recovered from them, he said.
The police official also said the Shibir men were making bombs to carry out subversive activities ahead of Christmas and New Year celebrations.
The arrestees are Jakir Hossain, 23, Md Shafique, 25, Md Roni, 24, Rumman Hossain, 22, Ataur Rahman, 20, and Abdul Quader, 24.
Police sources said during their primary interrogation, the six youths have admitted their links with Shibir but were yet to name their position in the student organisation of Jamaat.
Rafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Rampura Police Station, said the arrestees were yet to say why they had been having the police uniforms. But, law enforcers believed that the youths had an intention to use those for escaping after committing any crime, he added.
Visiting the spot, this correspondent saw that the entrance to the third floor of the building, which was raided by police, was sealed off.
Caretaker Abul Hashem said one Raihan had rented two units of the floor in November for Tk 24,000 a month, introducing all its tenants as service holders.
Two cases were filed with Rampura Police Station.

Bangladeshi shot dead by BSF

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon
Indian Border Security Force (BSF) shot dead a Bangladeshi cattle trader on Boshalgaon border in the district's Haripur upazila early yesterday.
The dead, Hemanta Kumar Roy, 30, was the son of Jitendranath Roy of Kholra village under the upazila.
With Hemanta, 45 Bangladeshis have been killed by the BSF till December 22 this year. The number was 33 last year, according to rights body Ain o Salish Kendra.
The BSF members of Bahargaon camp in West Bengal's Uttar Dinajpur opened fire on four to five Bangladeshi cattle traders while they were returning home through the border around 4:00am. Colonel Mohammad Khalekuzzaman, sector commander of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) of Dinajpur, told this correspondent over the cellphone.
Hemanta died on the spot, while other Bangladeshis escaped unhurt. The BSF members took away the body immediately, the BGB official said.
Later, a commanding officer-level flag meeting was held between the BGB and BSF at a place near the border inside India.
In the meeting, the BGB strongly protested the killing. The BGB also asked its Indian counterpart to return the body, said Lt Col Akhter Iqbal, commanding officer of 42 BGB Battalion in Dinajpur, who led the Bangladesh side in the meeting.
The BGB also asked the BSF to detain Bangladeshis and hand them over to the BGB if they commit crimes along the border.
The BGB would take steps to ensure punishment to the Bangladeshis as per the country's law, the BGB official said.
On completion of some official formalities, the BSF would return the body of Hemanta to Bangladesh, said the BGB official.



Two damaged microbuses of the motorcade of BNP Vice Chairman Altaf Hossain Chowdhury in front of his house on Sher-e-Bangla Road in Patuakhali town yesterday afternoon. Unidentified criminals attacked the vehicles in the morning at Rahmatpur of Kalapara upazila. The former home minister was on his way to join the polls campaign of the party's mayor candidate in Kalapara municipality.

PHOTO: STAR

Muslims shield

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killed 28 non-Muslims travelling to Nairobi for the Christmas holidays.
"The locals showed a sense of patriotism and belonging to each other," Manderia governor Ali Roba told Kenya's private Daily Nation newspaper.
The militants decided to leave after the passengers' show of unity, he added.
The passengers on the bus showed great bravery, but there was another quality revealed by their surprising decision to stand up to the gunmen: Frustration.
The majority of the local population in the north-east are Kenyan Muslims of Somali descent, and they have been hit hard by the consequences of al-Shabab attacks, even if non-Muslims are supposedly the main target of the Somali militant group.
An attack last year in Manderia, in which Christians were killed after being separated from Muslims, caused the departure of more than 2,000 teachers, as well as many health workers who had come from

other parts of the country.
Perhaps the passengers felt that the region could simply not afford another such attack.
It will be interesting to see if their actions embolden local populations to increase their resistance to al-Shabab, which has attacked the area several times.
An employee of the Makkah bus company, who had spoken to the driver involved in the attack, confirmed to the BBC that Muslims had refused to be separated from their fellow Christian passengers.
One of the victims was shot dead after trying to run away from the militants after passengers had been forced off the bus, the same employee told the BBC's Bashkas Jugsodaay in Nairobi.
Al-Shabab has been at war with Kenya ever since Kenyan forces entered Somalia in October 2011 in an effort to crush the militants. Kenya's north-eastern region has a large population of ethnic Somalis.

Uttara priest gets fresh

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the same sender had written to him: "You would be facing action on Christmas."
Jagdish told The Daily Star that he limited his movement as he was feeling insecure following the repeated threats. "I have informed police about the matter."
Ali Hossain Khan, officer-in-charge of Uttara Paschim Police Station, said they were investigating the incident.
Several members of the Christian community said they have been gripped by an unprecedented sense of insecurity before Christmas due to the death threats and some recent attacks on Christian priests.
Police failure to arrest the sender of the threats has also raised their concerns, they added.
A Mirpur-based priest, who was among the 12 priests receiving the death threats in mid November, said: "We are scared and in constant touch with the law enforcement agency members for our security during the Christmas celebrations."
He preferred not to be named.
Pastor Luke Sarker survived a deadly attack on October 5 in Pabna

while Piero Parolari, an Italian doctor and priest, was shot in the back of his head in Dinajpur in November.
William Proloy Samadder, organising secretary of Bangladesh Christian Association, also said they were anxious about their security for the same reasons.
He said during a courtesy call ahead of Christmas, Christian leaders met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban yesterday, and she assured them of adequate security during the upcoming celebrations.
Hasina also greeted Christians on the occasion of their biggest festival, he added.
Yesterday, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said apart from regular intelligence surveillance, "visible" security measures will be in place to ensure a peaceful Christmas celebration on Friday.
All the churches across the country, including around 60 in the capital, will be brought under CCTV coverage, he said after a meeting with top officials of law enforcement agencies at his ministry.

Extraterrestrial

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eventually building a controlled dome on Mars capable of farming the ancient crop.
The team will replicate Martian atmospheric conditions in a laboratory, using soil from Peru's Pampas de La Joya desert—reportedly nearly identical to that found on the Red Planet.
"The increased levels of carbon dioxide will benefit the crop, whose yield is two to four times that of a regular grain crop under normal Earth conditions. The Martian atmosphere is near 95 percent carbon dioxide," CIP explained in a recent press release.
By understanding atmospheric changes on the surface of Mars, the team hopes it will help build more dynamic and accurate simulation centers on Earth. If successful, the experiment could see CIP and Nasa pioneer space farming for future manned missions to not just Mars, but other planets and moons in the solar system.
"The extraordinary efforts of the team have set the bar for extraterrestrial farming. The idea of growing food for human colonies in space could be a reality very soon," said Chris McKay, planetary scientist of the Nasa Ames research center.
A second goal of the project is to highlight the role of potatoes in improving global food security.

US will help

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Bernicat. She appreciated that the country helped this vulnerable population.
Since FY 2013, the US government has provided more than \$152 million in life-saving humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons, refugees, and asylum seekers, including Rohingya in Myanmar and in the region, read the release.
This funding supports humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organisations which provide medical care, food, water, shelter, sanitation and access to services for people with disabilities.
The US envoy also visited two USAID-funded projects in Cox's Bazar.
One of the projects supports the Bangladesh government's National Plan of Action on Combating Human Trafficking that includes raising public awareness, supporting outbound migrant workers, training police, and providing shelter and support to victims.
The other scheme backs the Prime Minister's Access to Information (a2i) programme which, through improved access to modern technology, aims to increase transparency, improve the quality of public services, and reduce the time, cost and difficulty associated with obtaining government services for the underserved communities of Bangladesh.

A murder

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the red traffic light.
It was there Faruk caught up with him.
He parked his auto-rickshaw on the roadside and stood in front of the bus, asking for an explanation and demanding compensation from the bus driver for the damage to his three-wheeler, Faruk's brother Md Harun told The Daily Star.
"At one stage of the argument, Majid told my brother, 'Move away. What compensation? Move away now.' The traffic lights turned green right then and Majid then drove over Faruk," he said, citing witnesses.
Faruk got stuck under the wheels and was dragged for about 30 yards. He died on the spot.
Locals pursued then chased the bus and managed to catch driver Majid at the House Building intersection, more than a kilometre from the accident spot.
They later handed him over to police.
"He had left home around 7:00am for work. He had told his wife that he would return in the evening," said Harun as he was waiting in front of Uttara Paschim Police Station to receive Faruk's body.
Harun filed a murder case against Majid, 25, with the police station last night. Police have seized the bus.
Majid is originally from Pabna and lives in Mirpur in Dhaka.
"I don't know what happened to me. I have no idea why I ran him over," Majid, who claimed to have a valid driving licence, told this correspondent while being taken to the police station.

Bangladesh

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greetings with them in the evening ahead of Christmas Day. She sought cooperation from all to take the country forward.
Hasina said Bangladesh is a secular country where people of every religion would live peacefully and with fraternity. "People of every religion, creed and colour took part in the Liberation War and gave blood for the country's independence. So, Bangladesh's soil is for the people of every religion."
The function began with recitation from holy Bible. Leaders of the Christmas community greeted the premier by presenting her with a bouquet of flowers.
A Christmas Tree was decorated at Gono Bhaban. Bishops, Fathers and distinguished members of the Christian community attended the function.
Religious Affairs Minister Motiur Rahman, State Minister for Social Welfare and President of Bangladesh Christian Association (BCA) Promode Mankin, Archbishop Patrick D Rozario and Secretary General of BCA Nirmal Rozario also spoke.
Hasina Later cut a Christmas cake and the BCA leaders presented an X-mas card to her. The PM entertained the delegation members with cakes and sweetmeats.

Int'l law

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backed Houthis groups who seized Sana'a in 2014. It has quickly escalated into a humanitarian crisis with numerous reports of civilian targets being hit by the coalition's air strikes.
According to United Nations' figures, the war in Yemen has killed at least 5,884 people since March, when fighting escalated after Saudi Arabia began air strikes against the Houthis. Cross-border shelling has also killed dozens of Saudi border guards and soldiers.
According to the report, one of the Saudi Arabian-led coalition strikes hit a house in Sana'a's Old City, a Unesco World Heritage Site, on the night of September 13, killing 18 civilians.

Violence growing

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on his way home after electioneering in favour of the BNP-nominated mayoral candidate in the municipal election there, Officer-in-Charge Shadhat Hossain Tito of Matiranga Police Station said, quoting the locals.
Local people rescued and sent him to the upazila health complex in a critical condition. He was declared dead there, reports our Khagrachhari correspondent.
Later, BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir blamed the ruling AL men for the murder.
"The brutal murder has proved that the government is determined to snatch the mayoral posts [in favour of AL-favoured candidates] through violence and killings," he said in a statement.
However, AL-nominated mayor hopeful Md Shamsul Alam, also president of the party's upazila chapter, denied involvement of his men in the killing.
MORE VIOLENCE
At least five more incidents of election violence were reported yesterday. In all those, supporters of the AL candidates were accused of attacking supporters of the rival candidates, report our correspondents.
BNP Vice Chairman Altaf Hossain Chowdhury allegedly came under attack yesterday morning when he went to Kalapara municipality of Patuakhali to campaign for the BNP-endorsed mayoral candidate there.
At least 20 people, including Altaf's wife and six journalists, were reportedly injured in the incident.
Witnesses said Altaf had gone there in a motorcade of six microbuses, which itself goes against the electoral code of conduct.
In Chandina of Comilla, an election meeting of the BNP's mayor hopeful came under attack allegedly by the men loyal to the ruling AL candidate there.
At least 10 BNP men were reportedly injured. However, the party's Publication Secretary Joyal Abdin Farook, who was present there, remained unhurt.
In Jamalpur, two BNP men were attacked allegedly by some AL men while the former were campaigning at Harijan Palli in Bosakpara area.
At Sujanagar of Pabna, supporters of the AL-endorsed mayor candidate allegedly attacked some men loyal to the mayor aspirant nominated by the BNP. An independent candidate too reportedly came under attack there.
In Jessore, AL's rebel candidate SM Kamruzzaman Chunnu alleged that unidentified miscreants vandalised his campaign office at Barandipara in the district town on Monday night.
In Dhaka, AL men allegedly attacked BNP's candidates in Savar municipality on Monday and in Jhenidah on Sunday.

BNP'S DEMAND AND CEC'S NO
A six-member BNP delegation led by its standing committee member Moyeen Khan met CEC Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad at the latter's office.
"We have asked the CEC to make sure that everybody feels it safe to go to the polling centres ... Army deployment can relieve people of all fears," Moyeen told reporters after the meeting.
He alleged the BNP-backed mayor candidates were facing harassment and obstructions from both the local administration and the ruling party men.
"We fear that the BNP will not get a level-playing field in the polls," he claimed.
Earlier at a party discussion on Thursday, BNP Chief Khaleda Zia had made the same demand.
This is for the first time the municipality mayor elections are being held on party lines.
The CEC, however, said army deployment would not be necessary.
"We are monitoring the situation," Rakibuddin Ahmad told pressmen at the EC secretariat last evening.
"We will take all necessary steps to ensure a congenial atmosphere so that everyone can go to the voting centres without any hassles."
He also claimed that actions were being taken regarding "all sorts of violation" of the electoral laws.
Meanwhile, AL's mayor candidate in Natore municipality Uma Chowdhury Joly has alleged that his rival candidate from the BNP camp is spreading communal propaganda against her.
"In his campaigns, BNP candidate Sheikh Emdadul Haque Mamun violated the electoral code of conduct, by telling voters that only a Muslim mayor can attend special prayers like doa mehfil and janaza," said Uma Chowdhury, who practises Hinduism, at a press conference in Natore yesterday.
'EC DOING NOT ENOUGH'
Following media reports on the incidents of polls code breach over the last five days, the EC yesterday and on Monday directed the police chiefs of six districts to take actions regarding these.
But no action was taken as the police officials did not get the directives till last evening, sources said.
What's worse is that the CEC and the election commissioners did not even discuss the issue of growing violence in their regular meeting yesterday, an election commissioner told The Daily Star.
"We have officially directed the police to take necessary steps to ensure congenial atmosphere for the elections. So, we think we have nothing more to do," he said, seeking anonymity.
Election experts, however, contradicts his claim, and say the EC should do more to control violence.
"Since the announcement of the polls schedule, the commission has been largely indifferent to applying the rules. Its slack attitude has led to the rise in violence," said former election commissioner M Sakhawat Hussain.
"Many news reports were published on the breach of electoral rules by candidates and their supporters. But the commission did not take any action, except issuing some show cause notices.
"Had it taken tough actions from the beginning, the situation would not have been so bad," said Sakhawat, who was in office between 2007 and 2011.
Abdul Alim, director of the Election Working Group, said violence inevitably affects the atmosphere for a fair election.
"Voters' turnout will go down on the polling day if such violence continues," he said.
TRAFFIC RESTRICTIONS ON VOTING DAY
The EC has placed restrictions on the movement of all motorised vehicles -- including auto-rickshaws, taxis, cabs, human hauliers, microbuses, sedans, pick-ups, cars, buses, trucks, launches and speedboats -- in the polling areas for 24 hours from 12:01am on December 30, the voting day.
The restriction on motorcycle movement will be in place from 12:01am on December 28 to 6:00am on December 31.
The commission has already sent the directives to the road transport and bridges ministry and the shipping ministry.
However, the restriction will be relaxed for the vehicles of the candidates, their agents, election administration officials, polls observers and journalists.
National highways, ambulances, and vehicles used by the fire-fighters and the gas, electricity and telecommunication authorities will be out of its purview.