

# 4 'ABT' men'

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The arrestees were identified as Farid Mridha, 32, commander of Faridpur region ABT, of Alamnagar village; Sahidul Islam, 35, of Mukutarchar village; Mohasin Mollah, 35, of Charvisnupur village under Sadarpur upazila, and Nahid Mollah, 20, of Laxmipur village under Bhanga upazila of the district.

Farid provided arms and training to the other members of the outfit, said the police official, adding that he had also motivated them through religious speeches.

Acting on a tip-off, police arrested Nahid in Laxmipur village in the early hours of Friday. According to information extracted from him, the others were arrested in Charbhadrasan upazila that night, SP Jamal said.

During the raids, police recovered a pistol, a home-made gun, five rounds of bullets and 12 handmade bombs from the house and shops of the arrestees.

Police filed four cases against them with Bhanga, Sadarpur and Charbhadrasan police stations.

# Shamim

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their plan of arranging her treatment.

Earlier, the 42-year-old banker arranged treatment of two mentally-challenged women and helped them get reunited with their families. The Daily Star ran a story titled "Selfless love for the helpless" on June 27 in this regard.

"We should do something for these people because our little effort can change their lives for the better," Shamim said.

# Petrol pumps

FROM PAGE 16  
Malik Shramik Oikya Parishad.

"We believe the government will soon hold talks with us and meet our demands. Otherwise, we will announce an indefinite strike later," adds the statement.

In the last couple of years, the association repeatedly appealed to the government bodies concerned for holding talks over their problems, but the authorities paid no heed, said Mohammad Nazmul Hoque, convener of the Parishad.

As per rules, all the petrol pumps have to pay a particular amount of rental fees to the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) for using space that connects the pump and the road.

The rent fees are set on the basis of the volume of space. The government has recently issued a gazette notification that raised the rental fees "abnormally", the association said.

Citing an example, Nazrul said a petrol pump previously used to pay Tk 24,000 annual fees, but the new gazette asks the same pump to pay Tk 2.7 lakh annually.

"We demand cancellation of the gazette," he told The Daily Star last night.

Currently, pump owners receive Tk 1.7 in sales commission for a litre of diesel, Tk 3.2 for petrol and Tk 3.6 for petrol or octane.

"We demand an increase in sales commission in accordance with a rational proportion," he said.

One of their prominent demands is to assign a separate category for fuel tank lorries, which are now categorised under trucks and covered-vans, he added.

There are around 5,500 refuelling stations and more than five lakh petroleum distributors and agents in the country, according to the association.

# Maqbul

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three-member panel.

Two senior and influential Jamaat leaders - war criminal Abdu Subhan and Delaware Hossain Sayeede - were not considered by the members of majlis-e-sura for the post.

Abdu Subhan was awarded death penalty by the International Crimes Tribunal while Supreme Court commuted the death penalty of Sayeede to jail unto death.

Maqbul has been serving as the party's acting ameer since the arrest of Motiur Rahman Nizami for war crimes. The post of Jamaat ameer fell vacant after Nizami was executed.

On the other hand, Shafiqur has been discharging duties of the party's acting secretary general since the arrest of Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed for crimes against humanity.

This post of secretary general fell vacant after Mojaheed was executed on November 21, last year.

Nizami was elected ameer in 2009. He later picked Mojaheed for the secretary general post.

Party insiders said Shafiqur is likely to be selected by Maqbul as his deputy. Shafiqur also does not face any war crimes case.

Both Maqbul and Shafiqur are discharging their duties by hiding in unknown places, said party sources.

Once the secretary general is picked, the party will elect the members of its central majlis-e-sura, central working council, central executive council, divisional secretaries and ameer of district and city units, added the sources.



Students of Pabna University of Science and Technology torched and vandalised vehicles of the university protesting frequent power cuts on campus in the wee hours of yesterday. The university was closed until September 30. Story on page 13.

# Padma raises alarm

FROM PAGE 16  
Rajshahi city to protect the banks from the mighty Padma.

Some 15 chars, including Char Khanpur, Khidirpur, Majh Char in Paba upazila; Char Atarpur, Laxmipur, Narayanpur in Bagha upazila; and Char Alatuli and Ashariadaha in Godagari upazilas of Rajshahi have been flooded, according to WDB and district administration.

Many houses in Kajla and Talaimari areas near Rajshahi city were also inundated.

There was waist-deep water in the Majh Char and knee-deep water at Char Khidirpur.

The Majh Char, which emerged several years ago, had never been flooded before. Many of the 50 families there were living on boats while others took shelter at schools which were not hit by flood, reports our Rajshahi correspondent after visiting the area.

Locals were providing rice, puffed rice and other dry food to the flood affected people as the authorities con-

cerned were yet to reach the victims.

Some 15 villages in Bagha upazila, including Chalkrajapur, Atarpura, Chowmadia, Maniker Char, and Kalidaskhali, were worst hit.

The villagers had witnessed river erosion for two weeks since the end of July. Now the flood has come at a time when they were recovering from the situation, said Aminul Islam, a resident of Chalkrajapur village.

Our Chapainawabganj correspondent adds, the sudden rise in the water level of the Padma has inundated low-lying areas near the river banks in Shibganj upazila.

Most of the affected houses were situated outside the flood protection embankment.

Shahidul Alam, executive director of WDB, said the water level in the district had not crossed the danger mark yet.

The water level was not rising at the Farakka point which indicates that the flood situation would start to improve in Bangladesh in a day or two, he added.

# Help us

FROM PAGE 16  
while one was taken from Comilla.

Other than the 13, eight youths -- mostly students or people who had just finished their studies -- were picked up from the city's Bashundhara Residential Area on the night of December 4, 2013.

"I am a freedom fighter, a member of Bangabandhu's bodyguard team. I am also a member of the Awami League. But nothing could prevent the law enforcement agencies from picking up my son in the early hours of March 24, 2014," Matin, father of Shaon, said in an emotion choked voice.

"My son was the organising secretary of Comilla Victoria College unit of Chhatra League. He later joined Jubo League. There was not a single case or a general diary filed against my son with any police station in Comilla or elsewhere in the country," he said.

"I sought help from police officials and ministers in the last three years. But no one could tell the whereabouts of my son. I didn't get any assurance from any minister I visited," he added.

"Is this the country we dreamt of and fought for?" asked Matin.

Shamsuddin, father of Nizam Uddin Munna, alleged that Rab men picked up his son from his house in

2013 and since then he has been missing.

"I urge the state, please at least inform us if my son is still alive or law enforcers have killed him. If he is dead, give his body back to us so that we can bury him..." Shamsuddin said.

Shammi Akhtar, wife of Khalid Hasan Sohel, said their six-year-old son ask her almost every day when his father would return home. "To console my son, I tell him your father has gone abroad and will come back soon."

"My sorrow knows no bounds when Eid comes, as the little boy cry to celebrate Eid with his father. I can't do anything other than shedding tears at that time."

Shammi alleged that police and Rab arrested her husband, president of ward-89 Dhaka City unit of Chhatra Dal, two years and 10 months ago. "Since then, we haven't got any information about him. Law enforcement agencies are not providing any information to us about his whereabouts," said a crying Shammi.

Members of Committee for the Protection of Fundamental Rights, Shahdeen Malik, Nur Khan, Syed Abul Maksud said the government would not be able to tackle militancy unless it stops enforced disappearance and extra judicial killings.

# Dhaka should get

FROM PAGE 16  
Chenab, flow from India to Pakistan and despite deterioration of our relation with the country, India has not stopped sharing water.

"So, India cannot deny sharing of water with the lower riparian country Bangladesh. Let this irritant be removed," he said yesterday evening after inaugurating a conclave "Cross-Border Terrorism in Bangladesh: Implications for India's Border States" organised by a news portal in Agartala of Tripura.

He said the visa system between Bangladesh and India should be simplified and he has taken up the matter with the central government.

Roy, a former leader of the BJP in West Bengal, said, "Nearly half of the border of Bangladesh is with West Bengal and many terrorists from the country are using the state as their sanctuary. It is alarming."

AB Mathur, former chief of Research and Analytical Wing (RAW) said, "Pakistan is the source of terrorism in South Asia. The army and the ISI rule the country in the real sense and sponsor terrorism. The army is funding and encouraging terrorism."

Expressing his gratitude to Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Mathur said, "She is fighting against terrorism in her country and did not allow insurgents of north eastern region of our country to use the soil of her country. If terrorism grows in Bangladesh, it is also a matter of deep concern for us."

Director of NSI, Bangladesh, Nurul Absar, said, "Our country follows the principle of zero tolerance towards terrorism. It is presumed that different terrorist groups in our country are trying to regroup and our government is alert."

He said terrorist groups had made an attempt on the life of Sheikh Hasina in 2004 because she was against terrorism.

Absar said, "Bangladesh is not Pakistan or Syria. Our people are influenced by the Sufi thoughts, so it would not be possible for terrorists to find solid ground in our country. The country would overcome the menace of terrorism."

He also attached importance on sharing of information regarding activities of the terrorists so that both the countries could act against them.

# SOS couple

FROM PAGE 16  
The survivors - who were spotted on a beach near the makeshift sign on East Fayu Island in Chuuk State, Federated States of Micronesia - are safe, the U.S. Coast Guard said on Friday.

The rescue followed a seven-day search by an international maritime team, who searched a total of 16,571 square miles for the pair. The US Embassy in Kolonia identified the boaters as Linus and Sabina Jack, who are both in their 50s. The couple had departed from Weno Island on August 17, en route to Tamatam Island, according to the US Coast Guard. They left with limited supplies and no emergency equipment, and were expected to arrive on Tamatam Island the following day, but never made it.

The embassy noted the Jacks had a flashlight in their boat, which ran into difficulties due to water depth while trying to access the lagoon.

On August 19, the US Coast Guard's command center in Guam received a notification of a missing 18-foot boat with two people aboard.

While conducting a search pattern, the international maritime team spotted light signals from a nearby island on Wednesday.

A US Navy aircraft crew was deployed to investigate the source of light when they spotted the stranded couple on the island and their makeshift sign. The pair was then picked up by a patrol boat on Friday and transferred to Nomwin Atoll, which is located 22 miles west of East Fayu Island.

Following the rescue, the couple was reportedly in good spirits and was excited to get back home to their family.

# Rampal power

FROM PAGE 1  
for installing the Rampal power plant "at the cost of the country's interest".

Khaleda came up with the reaction while exchanging greetings with members of the Hindu community at her Gulshan office.

In the afternoon, the PM in a press conference at the Gono Bhaban defended the Rampal power plant refuting concerns over adverse impact on the largest mangrove forest in the world.

In her brief speech, Khaleda called upon the people to unite and raise their voices against the Rampal power plant. She said the government would be forced to backtrack if a united and strong movement could be launched.

The BNP chief also asked the PM to explain what the "wrong and incorrect" information were provided in Khaleda's August-24 press conference on Rampal power plant.

"Sundarbans is our national treasure; it's not a property of any organisation. We are not against setting up of power plants, but not at the cost of the Sundarbans. The power plant can be set up in another place without affecting the environment," she added.

ON MILITANCY  
Khaleda said the government was "crying about militancy to hide its misdeeds".

"You have seen that there has been no investigation so far on the attack on Holey Artisan cafe. The government is yet to inform people who were behind this attack. Then the Kalyanpur incident came into the fore. You have seen photographs of that operation... Seven to eight shots to the back that killed them all... They were at their young age and were educated. It is understood that the incident was staged. Why were they killed?" she said.

She alleged that the real militants had not been arrested. "After arresting someone, they [law enforcement agencies] killed them only to earn praise."

On the militants killed in a gunfight in Narayanganj yesterday, Khaleda asked why were they not arrested and instead killed.

# Sundarbans to stay safe

FROM PAGE 1  
The premier said the BNP chief's support for "the propaganda" is an indication of a deep conspiracy, reports BSS.

"Otherwise, why she [Khaleda] has come up with a reaction long after the launching of construction work of the power plant?"

The premier said all the information and data on the project, provided by the BNP chief, are "false, fabricated and misleading", and that she came up with "false information" to misguide people.

Coal is the most reliable source of future energy as it would be impossible to continue supply of natural gas to the country's gas-based power plants in near future, Hasina noted.

Developed countries, including the USA, France, Germany, China and Japan, as well as neighbouring India meet about 40 to 98 percent of their electricity demand with coal-based power, she pointed out.

But coal-based electricity accounts for a little more than one percent of power generated in Bangladesh.

About environmental concerns, the PM said ultra supercritical technology would be used at the plant. "We are going to set up a power plant that is equipped with the state-of-the-art technology."

"We will ensure that all available modern technologies are applied there to prevent pollution," she said, adding that carbon dioxide to be emitted through the 275-metre chimney would remain within a 1.6km radius of the plant.

The density of other gases would be within the permissible limit set by the World Health Organisation and other international agencies. The best quality coal from Australia, Indonesia and South Africa would be used at the plant, said the premier.

The plant would treat used water and cool it down before discharging it into the Pusur river, she said.

The government is aware of emission of light and sound during coal transportation. The emission would be kept at the minimum level, and coal would be brought to the plant site from deep sea by covered barges, said the premier.

The government appointed

German group Fishner as project consultant for maintaining the highest international standard in implementing and operating the project, she said.

"There is no scope for raising any question about the quality of work. We will not make any compromise on it [quality]," said the PM.

The country would need 24,000MW power in 2021 and 60,000MW by 2041. In view of this, the government has prepared a roadmap with many long and short-term projects, including quick rental power plants, Hasina said.

India's largest coal power company National Thermal Power Corporation has formed a joint venture -- the Bangladesh-India Friendship Power Company Pvt Ltd - with Bangladesh Power Development Board on a fifty-fifty basis for setting up the plant.

India's state-run Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd has won the deal to build the plant. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$1.8 billion.

Indian government's external lending arm, the Exim Bank, has backed up BHEL's offer with nearly 70 percent funding of the project cost.

Bangladesh is seeking to diversify energy sources as the reserves for natural gas are fast-depleting.

According to Petrobangla, the country now produces 2,750 million cubic feet of gas per day, with a shortage of more than 500mmcf. At the current pace of consumption, the country's 13.22 trillion cubic feet of proven and probable gas reserves would last till 2030.

"As gas reserves are depleting, there is doubt whether it would be possible to supply gas to power plants in the future. So, coal is the most reliable source of energy in terms of price and availability," said the PM.

Referring to yesterday's police operation in Narayanganj, she said the elimination of the mastermind of the Gulshan cafe attack would boost people's confidence, reports BSS.

"We would be successful in rooting out terrorism and militancy if we keep up the ongoing drive against these social menaces and create public awareness against them," she said.

# Freedom of media

FROM PAGE 1  
international peacekeepers, helping bring security to people's lives from Ethiopia to East Timor. Currently, Bangladesh has more than 7,000 troops deployed in 10 UN Peacekeeping Operations.

The US embassy said Bangladesh has achieved extraordinary progress on health metrics. The country's maternal and child health programmes achieved the Millennium Development Goals and have ensured that a higher proportion of children get education, receive proper healthcare, and escape the shackles of poverty.

The USAID has helped Bangladesh reduce maternal and child mortality by more than 60 percent since 1990. The US mentioned that Bangladesh has reduced its poverty rate from over half of the population to less than a third.

The US government, through the USAID, has provided more than \$6 billion in development assistance to Bangladesh since 1971.

Bangladesh is a key partner country for the US government's three major development initiatives: Feed the Future (addressing global food insecurity), Global Climate Change and the Global Health Initiative.

Additionally, the USAID provides assistance to address gender-based violence, empower women, and combat both human and wildlife trafficking.

About 5,455 Bangladeshis are studying in the USA, almost 60 percent at the graduate level. Bangladesh is close to joining the top 25 sending countries of foreign students to the US (as of 2015, Bangladesh ranks 27th).

# Thailand frees prominent activist over royal insult

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand has freed a political activist after eight years in jail for insulting the country's widely revered monarchy under its draconian royal defamation laws.

Darane Charnchoengsilpakul, also known as "Da Torpedo", was freed on Saturday under an annual series of royal pardons, Charnchao Chaivanukij, permanent secretary of the Justice Ministry, told Reuters.

She was originally sentenced to 15 years in prison, he said.

Darane, a key supporter of ousted former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, was convicted of making defamatory comments against the

monarchy during a fiery speech at a political rally in 2008.

The Criminal Court found her guilty on three counts of lese-majeste.

Under Article 112 of Thailand's criminal code, anyone who "defames, insults or threatens the king, queen, heir-apparent or regent" faces up to 15 years in prison.

Since seizing power in 2014, the military junta has taken a hardline stance against perceived royal insults and handed down record sentences.

For more than a decade, Thailand has been bitterly divided between rival camps, one led by Thaksin, the other dominated by the royalist and military establishment who accuse Thaksin of corruption and nepotism, charges he denies.