

# Khulna Khonjonis wins MPL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Musical teams Khulna Khonjonis and Dhaka Dholoks have become the champion and runner up of the 7up Musical Premier League 2016 - Powered by Kurkure.

The announcement came at the grand finale of the music competition held at the Nabaratri Hall of the International Convention City Bashundhara (ICCB) in the capital last night, said a press release.

A total of eight musical teams from as many divisions took part in the competition, which began on April 4, organised by Asiatic 3sixty and sponsored by Transom Beverages Ltd.

The competition aimed to hunt musical talents from every corner of the country, said organisers.

The teams were: Dhaka Dholoks, Khulna Khonjonis, Chittagong Chimes, Barisal Beats, Rangpur Rockers, Comilla Chorus, Sylhet Sargams and Rajshahi Rhythms.

The champions were awarded with Tk 10 lakh while the runners up got Tk 5 lakh. Other prizes included the title of Kurkure Performer of the Day and gifts from Transom Digital.

The participating singers from Khulna Khonjonis were Rakhi, SEE PAGE 10 COL 3



Winners of 7up Musical Premier League-2016 powered by Kurkure at its Grand Finale in the city's International Convention City Bashundhara yesterday. The event was organised to find out new musical talents.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

# INVITING IS SUPPORT Anjem Choudary jailed in UK for five and a half yrs

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Hate preacher Anjem Choudary has been jailed for five years and six months for drumming up support for IS.



Choudary, 49, backed the terrorist group in a series of talks posted on YouTube and recognised a caliphate - a symbolic Islamic state - had been created under an IS leader after it was announced in June 2014, the Old Bailey heard.

Despite being a leading figure in the banned group al-Muhajiroun (ALM), and with a series of former supporters going on to be convicted of terrorism, Choudary stayed on the right side of the law for two decades.

But police arrested Choudary and Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, 33, from Whitechapel, east London after a pledge of allegiance posted online.

Following an Old Bailey trial, the pair were found guilty of inviting support for IS between 29 June 2014 and 6 March 2015 and remanded in custody.

For legal reasons, details of the case could not be reported until three weeks after the guilty verdicts were delivered on 28 July. SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

# PATRONS OF WAR CRIMINALS Raise voice for their trials

PM urges countrymen

UNB, Dhaka



Branding the backers of war criminals as the "biggest culprits and Razakars", Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon people to be vocal for their trials.

"Those who had made war criminals ministers and gave them our national flag and those who had brought Bangabandhu's killers to parliament by rigging votes are the biggest criminals and Razakars," she said.

The PM was addressing a joint meeting of the AL advisory council, central working committee and the council preparation committee at the Gono Bhaban in the evening.

Hasina said the patrons of war criminals are against humanity and their trial should be held in

Bangladesh. "Why did they [backers] make war criminals ministers despite knowing that they were Al-Badr and Razakars who had tortured people, torched their houses and carried out genocide time and again?" she questioned.

The premier said the country's progress would continue and no one would be able to halt it.

Militant activities marked a rise at a time when her government was taking the country forward and working for people's welfare, added Hasina, also the AL president.

Coming down heavily on the BNP chairperson for her recent statement against the anti-militancy drives, she posed a question, "Why is Khaleda Zia shedding crocodile tears for the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

# ISB planned 'jihad' from Panchagarh

FROM PAGE 1 with a view to eventually joining up with IS (also called ISIS or ISIL).

"The accused [Mizanur] tried to join ISIS on three occasions but failed to do so due to his inability to obtain a visa allowing him to travel to Turkey and Algeria," it read.

Turkey is the easiest gateway to the IS-held territories in northern Syria and northwestern Iraq while Algeria in North Africa is increasingly becoming another stronghold of the world's most dangerous militant group.

"The accused's dream is still to join ISIS and become a mujahideen fighter to destroy all disbelievers' activities through an armed struggle with them."

Mizanur became radicalised after meeting one Jahangir Alam during his trip to Bangladesh last year.

Jahangir's identities could not be known; usually, militants operate under different pseudonyms.

Mizanur, who went to Singapore in 2007 as a worker, developed a liking for IS sometimes in 2014 but became a hardcore radical after meeting Jahangir, who gave him many propaganda materials of IS.

After failing to join IS, Mizanur returned to Singapore on December 3 last year with a mission.

Police investigation found that in January, Mizanur met three workers at a void deck under Housing & Development Board (HDB) in Sembawang and convinced them that they should join and support IS.

A void deck is an open space typically found on the ground floor of apartment blocks in Singapore.

There, they discussed forming their own group, read another document on ISB member Miah Rubel reads.

Rubel, a worker, was in charge of financial affairs of the group; his identities could not be known either.

In meetings in Boon Lay Park and Waterfront Park in Woodland in February and March, Mizanur convinced four more workers to join and support IS. It was also decided that they will form ISB.

In the meetings, Mizanur shared "jihadi" materials with others, discussed joining "jihad" and created a fund to buy food and weapons for "jihad" in Bangladesh.

As the group leader, he also prepared an organisational chart according to which each member had a specific duty -- like handling finance, media, security or legal matters.

ISB started functioning while Bangladeshi workers were being monitored by Singapore police following

the arrest and deportation of 27 workers in January.

In the meetings, all held before April, Mizanur also discussed the arrests and asked the group members whether they were aware of any other jihadist group in Singapore.

The group members swore an oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, head of Islamic State (IS), say the court documents.

They discussed using pseudonyms to hide from the authorities, and shared among themselves a five-page document on counter-surveillance techniques.

But the mission could not be accomplished due to the arrest of all the ISB members.

The documents said at least two ISB members were in Bangladesh, suggesting the group might have links with militants in the country.

"We don't have information about Mizanur's link with any militants in Bangladesh," Monirul Islam, chief of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star when asked about ISB's possible Bangladesh connection.

In the first conviction under the Terrorism (Suppression of Finance) Act of Singapore, four Bangladeshis,

including Mizanur, were jailed in July, followed by two others on August 30.

All arrested under Singapore's Internal Security Act in May, the six were sentenced to two to five years' imprisonment.

Two other workers were arrested along with the six but faced no charges. They are now under two years of detention.

Apart from the eight, 32 Bangladeshi workers have been arrested in Singapore since December last year over their alleged involvement in radical activities.

The 32, who have been deported, were not members of ISB but they possessed or circulated "jihadi" materials or supported use of armed violence in pursuit of religious cause according to investigation by Singapore police.

The city state is home to Bangladeshi community of about 160,000. Because of the arrest, deportation and imprisonment of the 40, Bangladeshi workers here are under special watch, facing some kind of image crisis despite being known as honest and hardworking.

[The reporter is in Singapore to attend the Asia Journalism Fellowship programme]

# Obama won't meet Philippine president

FROM PAGE 16 with Duterte yesterday afternoon had been called off following a fresh tirade by the Filipino leader the previous day.

Shortly before flying to Vientiane, Duterte warned he would not be lectured by Obama over a war on crime in the Philippines that has claimed nearly 3,000 lives in just over two months -- an average of 44 a day.

"You must be respectful. Do not just throw away questions and statements. Son of a w\*\*\*\*, I will curse you in that forum," Duterte told reporters when asked about his message for Obama.

"WALLOWING" Duterte, who has quickly earned a global reputation for his acid-tongue, then used typically colourful language to describe their planned meeting if rights issues came up.

"We will be wallowing in the mud like pigs if you do that to me," he said. Duterte had previously also branded the US ambassador to Manila a "gay son of a w\*\*\*\*", and sought to

taint the reputation of Pope Francis's mother in similar fashion.

Duterte was elected to office in a landslide this year after pledging to kill 100,000 people in an unprecedented war on crime.

When faced with criticisms over an apparent spate of extrajudicial killings in his crime war by the United Nations, he responded with what has become familiar abuse.

"Maybe we'll just have to decide to separate from the United Nations. If you are that disrespectful, son of a w\*\*\*\*, then I will just leave you," he said last month.

But following the Obama backlash yesterday, Duterte offered a rare moment of contrition, albeit qualified.

"While the immediate cause was my strong comments to certain press questions that elicited concern and distress, we also regret that it came across as a personal attack on the US President," he said in a statement.

CRUCIAL TIME The setback in US-Philippine relations

comes at a crucial time in the region, with China seeking to cement control over the contested South China Sea.

The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan also have competing claims to the strategically vital waters, but have watched China expand its presence by building artificial islands in key locations.

An international tribunal ruled in July that China's claims to the waters -- through which \$5 trillion in global shipping trade passes -- had no legal basis.

The verdict was widely seen as a sweeping victory for the Philippines, which filed the suit under the previous administration of Benigno Aquino.

But China has vowed to ignore the ruling.

And Duterte has sought to heal relations with China rather than inflame them by pressing the tribunal's ruling.

Obama's aides had previously said he wanted to discuss the South China Sea issue with Duterte in Laos.

Nevertheless, the South China Sea issue is expected to once again be discussed at the three days of meetings hosted by Asean, which will be attended by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang.

The gathering will see the 10 Asean members meet by themselves, then with leaders from the US, China, Japan, South Korea and China.

Other leaders to come for an East Asia summit tomorrow include those from Australia, India and New Zealand.

Laos is the final Asian visit of Obama's eight-year presidency, during which he has sought to refocus American military, political and economic resources on the region.

It is also the first visit by a sitting US president to Laos, which the United States secretly carpet bombed for nearly a decade in the Vietnam War, killing tens of thousands of people.

Obama yesterday announced greater help in clearing the bombs, saying it was a "moral obligation".

# Damage to Sundarbans

FROM PAGE 1 The government claimed that the committee was not making statements based on science, she said. "But from the very beginning, we have been presenting scientific data and research findings. We have also shared those with government representatives."

The former adviser to a caretaker government predicted that if the power plant was set up near the Sundarbans, there might be no immediate effect on the mangrove forest. "But the next generation will hold us responsible."

The national committee organised the press conference to inform people about the scientific explanations and clarifications made by international experts on "10 questions and answers". The questions were raised by Bangladeshi expatriate energy expert Arshad Mansoor and the Bangladesh-India Friendship Power Company Ltd (BIFPCL) came up with the answers.

Arshad in his article in a national daily raised the questions. He later said he was happy with the BIFPCL's answers.

Sharif Jamil, joint secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa), explained the international experts' response to the 10 questions.

"We know experts and consultants have been hired to talk in favour of the Rampal power plant. So we took those questions and answer to several international experts," Sharif said.

"We could see from the explanations of international experts that most of the answers of the power plant authorities were either wrong, vague, half-truth or irrelevant to the environmental impact assessment of the power plant," he added.

Prof Anu Muhammad said they were trying to give scientific explanations on how the power plant would damage the Sundarbans. But the government did not pay heed to their explanations, he alleged.

The government over the years could not save the rivers around the capital from industrial pollution. The rivers, including the Buriganga, were polluted severely. So it has been proved

that it would not be possible for the government to save the Sundarbans if the power plant was constructed there, Prof Anu argued.

He expressed fear that the power plant would leave an adverse impact on the entire country.

Rasheda K Choudhury, another former adviser to a caretaker government, said they raised some questions about the power plant and also provided scientific data about the adverse impact of it, but the company never responded to the queries.

However, when the expatriate engineer wrote an article with 10 questions, the power plant authorities responded to those and the expert was satisfied, said Rasheda.

"It seems everything is stage-managed," she said.

# WAR ON IS IN SYRIA Bombings blamed for rising civilian casualties: UN

AFP, Geneva

UN investigators yesterday said aerial bombardment by Syrian forces and their ally Russia were mostly to blame for swelling numbers of civilian casualties in Syria's devastating conflict.

The UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria criticised all parties in the bloody war over a clear increase in "indiscriminate attacks on civilians," citing attacks on medical workers and facilities, blocked humanitarian convoys, enforced disappearances and summary executions.

Investigator Vitit Muntarbhorn told reporters that aerial bombardments by "pro-government forces ... cause the most civilian casualties and damage to the civilian infrastructure, particularly in Idlib and Aleppo."

When asked to clarify who exactly the "pro-government forces" referred to, commission chief Paulo Sergio Pinheiro said "the forces that are in the air are Russian and Syrian forces."

# Defying the cultural tide

FROM PAGE 16 from the beach. She asked him to teach her and he agreed. Several years later, Rashed Alam's surfing school has eleven girls -- the youngest is ten years old and the oldest is 15.

"Surfing has just given them an outlet to be children," Allison Joyce, a photographer who has been following the girls for the past two years told The Independent.

"To be confident and to dream for more. When they're out on the water -- it's a break from everything that happens up on land. They're able to goof off. They're all together out there."

The girls sing Bollywood songs while they wait to catch waves, Joyce said. "It's something they don't get to experience up on land, that freedom." For Alam, who teaches the girls how

to swim as well as surf, making sure the girls keep coming is a constant battle. "At first the parents were angry that they were doing something inappropriate," said Joyce. "They were also angry that they weren't earning money on the beach."

Each time the parents got scared. "Rashed would go to their house and convince them [to let them keep coming]" she said. He would tell them "No it's not inappropriate. They're not working in a brothel -- they're just being girls. They're surfing."

The girls' parents were not their only critics. This year, some of the older boys who surfed in the same patch started to threaten them.

"The older surf guys started to get really upset that the girls were succeeding and that they were thriving," Joyce

said. "They said if they showed up to the beach they would break their legs."

"It was a really scary situation. We thought the girls would get attacked."

When Alam heard the threats he went to the police. He went five times to demand protection for the girls and, eventually, he got it.

Months on, after the girls' surf club moved away from the men's, the girls are safe, according to Joyce.

She has set up a fund to help pay for them to go to school. After the success of the fund, the girl surfers now have enough money to pay for their education for the next year. They have uniforms and schoolbooks.

"For most of these girls it's the first time in their life that they're able to get an education," Joyce said.

But Alam is still concerned about the girls. He wants to leave Bangladesh in the next year to go to the US to join his wife, who is Californian. "But I feel I have to take care of them" he said.

"I feel like I'm their brother. I'm worried whether something will happen," he said.

Alam, who is in his twenties, dropped out of school at a young age. "He grew up sort of with the same background as the girls," said Joyce. "He was forced to work on the beach to help support his family. I think he sees a lot of himself in the girls."

Alam said he was looking for someone who could keep training the girls after he left for the US.

But, he said he would never leave them for good. "I will always come back," he said.