



Toys on the ground for a makeshift memorial after a gas explosion rocked a residential building in Russia's Urals city of Magnitogorsk. Rescuers hunted for survivors in the rubble of the apartment building hit by a New Year's Eve gas explosion, but found only bodies.

PHOTO: AFP

## DT journo

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present at the jail gate to greet Hedait upon release.  
Some five to six lawyers, including Masum and Tariq Mahmud, represented Hedait during the hearing yesterday.  
Hedait was arrested on January 1, a day after the case was filed against two reporters, including him, with Batiaghata Police Station in the district.  
The other accused is Rashidul Islam, staff reporter of the daily Manab Zamin, reports our Khulna correspondent.  
Batiaghata Upazila Nirbahi Officer Debashish Chowdhury, also the assistant returning officer, filed the case against the two.  
The case statement said the accused published false, fabricated and provocative information on the voting with the use of electronic devices, including laptops, which might confuse people and create a chaotic situation.  
**CPI CONDEMNS ARREST**  
The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPI) on Wednesday called on the Bangladeshi authorities to immediately release Hedait.  
Quoting media reports, the CPI said, Hedait and Rashidul both reported the initial election results of a certain constituency that indicated the number of votes cast was higher than the number of total voters.

An election officer later asserted that this had been a mistake, but the reporters had already published their stories.  
The police report said that their articles were "false information that was made intentionally to make the election result seem questionable and controversial," according to Reuters.  
CPI's phone call to Batiaghata Police Station, where the case was filed, went unanswered on Wednesday.  
In Washington, DC, CPI Asia Programme Coordinator Steven Butler said, "Arresting a journalist for reporting on alleged election irregularities and raising legitimate questions is a disappointing way for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the Awami League party to respond to their re-election."  
"The government should reaffirm its commitment to democratic values and refrain from abusing the Digital Security Act to attack press freedom."

**Jubo League**  
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murder case along with other accused.  
They alleged that around 12:30pm, some 10 to 15 men, who are Shakil's opposition in the case, waylaid and stabbed him in Koibortokhali village when he was returning home alone by motorbike.  
Locals took Shakil to Pirojpur Sadar Hospital. He died when he was being shifted to Khulna Medical College Hospital around 3:30pm.  
Mollah Azad Hossain, additional superintendent of Pirojpur police, said Ashis was murdered over a previous enmity. "We are trying to arrest the culprits."  
On January 11, 2016, some youths stabbed Sajidul Haque Joy, 23, son of late Ziaul Haque Mridha of Daudpur village, to death. Ashis was one of the accused in the case.

## World leaders

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They also expressed hope for further progress of bilateral relations between Bangladesh and the UAE for the benefit of both the friendly countries and their people.  
Meanwhile, the Emir of Qatar, Deputy Emir and prime minister have also congratulated Hasina.  
Qatar Emir Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, Deputy Emir Abdullah Bin Hamad Al-Thani and Prime Minister Abdullah Bin Nasser Bin Khalifa Al-Thani greeted Hasina in separate messages yesterday, reported BSS.  
"It gives me pleasure, on the occasion of your landslide victory in Bangladesh's general election, to extend to you, on behalf of the people of the state of Qatar and my own behalf, our heartfelt greetings and felicitations," Qatar Emir said in his statement.  
He also wished Hasina's wellbeing and continued success as well as further progress and development of Bangladesh.  
The Emir also expressed his hope that the bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Qatar would be further enhanced in the days to come.  
In separate messages, the Deputy Emir and the prime minister also wished for wellbeing and continued success of Hasina during her new tenure.  
Also, Bhutanese Prime Minister Lotay Tshering and Fijian Prime Minister Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama



Al-Nahyan

yesterday congratulated Hasina.  
Former Bhutanese Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay greeted Hasina, saying her victory in the general election is good not only for Bangladesh but also for the region and the international community.  
In a message, Bhutanese Prime Minister Lotay Tshering said, "It gives me immense pleasure to extend warmest felicitations on her victory in the 11th parliamentary elections of Bangladesh."  
He said, "The landslide mandate secured by Sheikh Hasina is a clear demonstration of the deep confidence and trust the people of Bangladesh have in your leadership as you guide Bangladesh in fulfillment of the vision of Sonar Bangla."  
Lotay Tshering wished every success in discharging her duties during the coming tenure.  
He expressed his firm conviction that the warm and cordial relations between Bhutan and Bangladesh would continue to strengthen and achieve new height in the true spirit of friendship and understanding.  
The Bhutanese prime minister said he was looking forward to working closely with Bangladesh to further strengthen the ties and have the opportunity to receive Sheikh Hasina in Bhutan at a time of her convenience.  
He also highly commended the PM's son and ICT Adviser Sajeeb Wazed Joy for his tremendous contri-

bution to her success.  
"Sajeeb's tireless efforts and leadership is an immense inspiration to the people of Bangladesh and beyond," he said.  
Lotay Tshering wished good health of Hasina and peace, prosperity and happiness of the people of Bangladesh, reported UNB.  
Fijian prime minister, in his congratulatory message, said, "The impressive victory of the Awami League with 288 seats of 300-member parliament is testament of the confidence of the people of Bangladesh in your [Hasina's] leadership and ability in progressing your country's economy."  
He said Fiji and Bangladesh share formal diplomatic ties since 2003, building up cooperation in the areas of trade and economic activities.  
Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, commonly known as Frank Bainimarama, said he was looking forward to strengthening the friendship and advancing bilateral cooperation between the two counties.  
He wished all the success of the Bangladesh government in its next tenure.  
In a separate message, former Bhutanese prime minister Tshering Tobgay said, "The victory of Sheikh Hasina and Bangladesh Awami League is good for Bangladesh, good for the region and good for the international community."



Al-Thani

Extending his heartiest congratulations to Hasina, he said internationally Hasina was seen as a role model of leadership who was playing a pivotal role in poverty alleviation, environmental conservation, women development and addressing the problems of physically challenged persons.  
"I see your Excellency as an elder sister and am personally happy that you and Bangladesh Awami League have secured a landslide victory," Tobgay said.  
Pakistan has also welcomed the newly elected government in Bangladesh.  
"We want Pakistan-Bangladesh relations to move forward in line with the 1974 tripartite agreement. We welcome the newly elected government in Bangladesh and hope and expect that it would help take the bilateral relationship away from the irritants that it has faced in the recent times," Mohammad Faisal, spokesperson for the Pakistan foreign ministry, told the weekly briefing in Islamabad yesterday.  
Muhammad Aurangzeb Haral, counsellor (press) of Pakistan High Commission in Dhaka, sent the statement made in the briefing to the press in Bangladesh.  
Bangladesh-India-Pakistan on April 9, 1974, signed the tripartite agreement on the repatriation of prisoners of war and civilian internees and for normalisation of relations in the sub-continent.

## No comment

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Prosecutor Mosharrar Hossain Kajol argued that the defense was trying to delay the charge framing by saying those things.  
The court fixed January 13 for the next hearing.  
The judge also kept a petition in the case file submitted by Attorney General Mahbubey Alam on November 22 last year seeking permission to produce an FBI agent and two Canadian police as witnesses before the court to testify.  
On December 9, 2007, the ACC filed the case with Tejgaon Police Station accusing Khaleda and 10 others of abusing power to award a gas exploration and extraction deal to Canadian company Niko.

## Man killed

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officer-in-charge of Meherpur Sadar Police Station, said hearing gunshots, a team of police went to the spot around 3:30am and found the bullet-hit body, which could not be identified initially.  
Police also recovered a firearm and 30 bottles of Phensedyl from the spot.  
Later, the body was sent to Meherpur General Hospital morgue where family members identified the victim.  
"We are suspecting that Musaed was killed in a shootout took place between two groups of drug dealers," said Mostafizur Rahman, additional superintendent of police in Meherpur.  
He was accused in 16 drug cases filed with Meherpur and Mujibnagar police stations, Mostafizur added.

## Police arrest

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Elias Sharif, superintendent of Noakhali police, said they arrested Ruhul as both the victim and the complainant alleged that the people involved in the incident were the men of Ruhul.  
Asked whether the arrestees spoke of Ruhul's involvement, the SP said he could not comment on a matter under investigation.  
**RUHUL**  
Ruhul, of Char Maddhyam Bagya village, was once poor and he joined the AL in 2009, said locals.  
After he was elected member of ward-5 of Char Jubilee Union Parishad in 2011, he led criminal activities in the locality, including drug trading, land grabbing and plundering trees, they claimed.  
Later, he was made the publicity affairs secretary of Subarnachar AL.  
Once a landless person, Ruhul built a housing estate a kilometre west of Pankhar Bazar on Ramgati-Char Jabbar Road. He named the estate after him, Ruhul Amin Nagar, reports our Noakhali correspondent.  
He has a house near the estate.  
Siddique Miah of the same village said Ruhul Amin Nagar was built on government land. He also alleged that Ruhul grabbed government land and built business establishments there and "sold" those at high prices.  
But Nizam Uddin, officer-in-charge of Char Jabbar Police Station, said they never received any complaint against Ruhul.  
Meanwhile, Jatiya Oikyafront leader Dr Kamal Hossain in a statement yesterday termed the rape a shame on the whole nation and demanded the perpetrators be brought to justice.

## India rebuffs

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using it in Afghanistan," Trump said. A statement provided by government sources in New Delhi said "India plays a significant role as a development partner," in Afghanistan, with projects aimed at achieving "a tangible improvement in the lives of its people".  
As the "largest donor in the region", New Delhi has helped with infrastructure projects, humanitarian assistance and economic development, the statement said.  
Highlights include a 218-kilometre (135-mile) road, a dam providing irrigation to farmers and training programmes for more than 3,500 Afghans in India.  
New Delhi has also provided 1.1 million tonnes of wheat to Afghanistan as well as a 400-bed children's hospital built in 1972 and renovated after the fall of the Taliban in 2002.  
Ram Madhav, general secretary of BJP's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), said on Twitter that India was "building lives" in Afghanistan.  
"Trump should know that while he is decrying every other help in (Afghanistan), India has been building not only libraries, but roads, dams, schools and even parliament building", he said.  
Ahmed Patel, a lawmaker and a senior member of the opposition Congress party, tweeted that the "tenor and tone" of the US leader's remarks was "not in good taste & is completely unacceptable".

## Khashoggi murder trial

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Saud al-Qahtani -- were sacked over the Khashoggi murder, but there is no proof that they are among those charged.  
Khashoggi, a contributor to the Washington Post, was murdered on October 2 in what Riyadh called a "rogue" operation.  
The 59-year-old Saudi insider-turned-critic was strangled and his body cut into pieces by a team of 15 Saudis sent to Istanbul for the killing, according to Turkish officials.  
There have been reports that his remains, which have never been found, were dissolved in acid.  
The defence team yesterday requested a copy of the indictment sheet and a timeframe within which to review the charges.  
The prosecutor agreed to both requests, SPA said. No date has been set for the next hearing.  
The Khashoggi murder shocked the world at a time when Saudi Arabia and its de facto leader, Crown Prince

Mohammed bin Salman, were pushing an aggressive public relations campaign to rebrand the ultraconservative monarchy as a modern state.  
Among Prince Mohammed's strongest allies is US President Donald Trump, who now faces increased pressure to approve measures against Saudi Arabia.  
The US has sanctioned 17 Saudi citizens in connection with the Khashoggi murder. France and Canada have also sanctioned Saudi Arabian nationals.  
The US Central Intelligence Agency has reportedly concluded that Prince Mohammed very likely ordered Khashoggi's murder. A bipartisan resolution approved by the US Senate last month also holds the crown prince responsible for the killing.  
But in November the Saudi attorney general ruled out any involvement by the young crown prince, whose reformist credentials abroad have been seriously tarnished by the murder.

## The death of a radiant star

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Syed Ashraful Islam had built an image of his own in a country where politicians often thrive on muscle power, greed and cronyism. But with his own brand of politics and oratory prowess, he lifted the ethical standards in politics.  
The man, who stood by his party -- the Awami League -- in good times and bad, died at Bumrungrad International Hospital in Bangkok around 9:45pm yesterday, said his personal assistant Tofazzal Hossain. He was 68.  
Son of Syed Nazrul Islam, the acting president of Mujibnagar Government, Ashraf had been suffering from lung cancer for long. He went to Thailand for treatment on July 3 this year.  
His death came just four days after he was elected MP from Kishoreganj-1. He was elected MP from the same seat four other times -- 1996, 2001, 2008 and 2014.  
His death came as shock to the country men, irrespective of their political affiliation. Soon after the news broke, social media flooded with messages of grief and prayers for his departed soul.  
He left behind his only daughter and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death. His wife Shila Islam died of cancer at a London hospital in October last year.  
Ashraf's body will be flown to the country tomorrow, said Anwarul Kabir, a close aide to Ashraf.  
President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed deep shock at his death.

"His [Ashraf's] death is an irreparable loss to the country's political arena... People will remember his contributions with due respect for long," the president said in his condolence message.  
Hasina recalled with profound respect Ashraf's outstanding contributions to the country's politics.  
"The nation has lost a very honest, dedicated and courageous leader and his death is an irreparable loss to the country's politics as well as the Awami League," she said.  
The PM also remembered with "deep gratitude" his strong role during the 1/11 changeover in 2007.  
"This public leader will continue to live in people's hearts forever for his work," she said.  
Born in Mymensingh in 1952, Ashraf started his political career during his student years with Chhatra League and became General Secretary of BCL's greater Mymensingh district unit. He was a member of the Mukti Bahini during the Liberation War.  
Following the killing of his father on November 3, 1975, inside Dhaka Central Jail along with the three other national leaders, he left the country for the UK. There, he engaged in activism with the Bangladeshi community, and worked to organise the Awami League in the UK.  
On his return home in 1996, he was elected MP and served as the State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry from 1996-2001. During his second term in parliament from 2001-2006, he was a member of the House Committee on foreign affairs.  
After the 2008 election win, he became minister for the Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives. Later in July 2015, he was given the charge of the public administration ministry, a post he held till his death.

During the turbulent times of the 1/11 changeover, Ashraf, together with another AL veteran Zillur Rahman, ran the party when Sheikh Hasina was in jail.  
Later, he was elected party general secretary in 2009 and 2012. He was made a presidium member of the party in 2016.

## Better hire

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The BRTA lacked the relevant legal department, the committee members noted, adding that there was no employee who could work round-the-clock and therefore a consultant was needed.  
The committee sent a letter to the ministry in the first week of this month asking for the money to hire the consultant but is yet to get any response.  
At present, the BRTA has a law section led by a deputy director who is managing the section as an additional duty, sources at the office said.  
"We requested the ministry to appoint a consultant because we want a standard rules to be framed as soon as possible," BRTA Chairman Mohammed Moshir Rahman told this paper on December 10.  
In March last year, the cabinet approved in principle then proposed Road Transport Act. But the proposal remained stuck at the law ministry for over a year as opposition from transport workers and owners against some of its provisions grew stronger.  
The act was in parliament after two college students were killed by a bus at Dhaka's Airport Road on July 29 sparking a student agitation.  
Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation observed strikes on October 28-29 to realise their eight-point demand, including amendment of the act.

## Why don't

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heard a man repeatedly yelling "why don't you die?" and a toddler screaming. The neighbour then called the police emergency number, according to media reports.  
"Multiple police units responded (with) lights and sirens," the reports said, quoting from a Twitter post that appeared to have been posted by police in Wanneroo, just to the north of Perth. The post has since been deleted.  
The tweet showed what appeared to be a law enforcement communication log that included the initial emergency call, followed by an update 15 minutes later that said "police spoke with all parties who advised that husband had only been trying to kill a spider (has serious fear of spiders)".  
The log said the man "apologised for inconvenience to police" and that there were "no injuries sighted (except to spider)" and "no further police involvement required".  
The reports did not identify the man, or the type of spider.  
An out-of-hours call from Reuters to the Western Australia state police's administration number went unanswered.  
Australia has one of the world's highest populations of spiders, compared to people, and biologists have said a southern hemisphere summer heatwave has raised the likelihood of finding arachnids in buildings.

## 4th grader

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victim to hospital as they would "solve the matter through arbitration".  
However, due to the delay in the arbitration, the victim's father filed a case against Ruson on Wednesday.  
Chompok Dham, sub-inspector of Kamalganj Police Station and the investigation officer of the case, said the alleged rapist was on the run.  
Meanwhile, the victim was taken to Moulvibazar Sadar Hospital on Wednesday night. Polish Roy, resident medical officer, said, "The victim is now out of danger."