



# The Daily Star



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**In the name of Digital Security Act, people's freedom of expression is being assaulted. We need to get our society out of this completely.**  
DR KAMAL HOSSAIN



**"How much more can we allow the Myanmar military to get away with?"**  
UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL ENVOY CHRISTINE SCHRANER  
BURGENGER ASKS 15-MEMBER UN SECURITY COUNCIL



**"From this place, where faith was born, from the land of our father Abraham, let us affirm that God is merciful and that the greatest blasphemy is to profane his name by hating our brothers and sisters."**  
POPE FRANCIS DURING HIS VISIT TO UR IN IRAQ

## ANSAR AL ISLAM

# Regrouping by stealth

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Ansar al Islam is far from over. Xulhaz Mannan, an LGBT rights activist, and his friend Khandoker Mahub Raby Tonoy, were the victims of its last targeted killing in Dhaka in 2016. The militant outfit has not carried out any such operation since then but its other activities continue in full swing, according to police officials. Apart from making recruitments through online platforms including Facebook, it is targeting the needy, even from non-Muslim and transgender people, who would not ever come under suspicion of joining militancy. It has undertaken some projects in Dinajpur, Netrokona, Jamalpur, Madhupur and Tangail for marginalised and ultra-poor communities, providing them with cash and other supports, to get close to them. Ansar al-Islam has also got a new spiritual leader who goes by the name of Sheikh Tamim Al Adnani. A former madrasa teacher, he is now responsible for reorganising the outfit, said an official of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of DMP.

- ➔ Sheikh Tamim Al Adnani new spiritual leader
- ➔ Targeting marginalised communities, including transgenders
- ➔ Adopted new communication strategy
- ➔ Continues to get funds from abroad, some businessmen at home
- ➔ Invests in local business
- ➔ Has at least 56 sleeper cells

Sheikh Tamim's sermons are published in different platforms to draw potential militants, he added. Officials say the organisational activities of Ansar al-Islam appear strongest in Dhaka and Chattogram. It also has bases in Satkhira and Kusthia. Said to be the Bangladesh chapter of al-Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), the outfit continues to get financial support from abroad and some businessmen in the country, according to documents obtained by the CTTC officials. A high official told this newspaper that

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**ROAD TO FREEDOM**  
THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH  
LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

## Thus spoke MUJIB

March 7, 1971

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

It was the afternoon of March 7, 1971, the day Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman made the historic speech that would resonate throughout the annals of history, changing its course forever. Bangabandhu unequivocally declared, "The struggle this time is for emancipation. The struggle this time is for independence." Bangabandhu called for a peaceful, non-cooperation movement to continue the struggle for independence and the emancipation of the Bengalis. He issued several directives for

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## Abuse of DSA worries editors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalists and free speech advocates are constantly being harassed and tortured by the execution of the Digital Security Act, Sampadak Parishad (Editors' Council) said in a statement yesterday. The Parishad said the controversial act must be amended immediately. "We have feared such when the act was being formulated. It is no exaggeration to say that in some cases the implementation of the Digital Security Act is more concerning than what we feared," said the statement. "Mushtaq Ahmed, a free-spirited writer, had to prove it with his life. We thank the honourable court for granting bail to cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore. But the way journalists and writers are subjected to cruelty after their arrest under the Digital Security Act is unexpected. "It's needed to be mentioned here that journalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol had been missing and then was in jail for a long time just for sharing an article on social media. Although he was granted bail, cases against him are ongoing. Kajol, who is financially, physically and mentally disadvantaged, has to deal with the case." According to Article 19, a UK-based

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## 3 PMs phenomenal in pandemic

Says Commonwealth secretary general



Hasina Jacinda Mottley

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been named among the top three inspirational women leaders who have demonstrated extraordinary leadership during the Covid-19 pandemic in the Commonwealth, Bangladesh High Commission in London said in a statement yesterday. In a special announcement ahead of the International Women's Day 2021, Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland QC bracketed Hasina with New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Arden and Barbados Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley for demonstrating extraordinary leadership during the pandemic. "For me whilst I am inspired all the time by so many women and girls, I would like to name three phenomenal leaders in our Commonwealth -- Jacinda Arden, the prime minister of New Zealand, Mia Amor Mottley, the prime minister of Barbados and Sheikh Hasina, the prime minister of

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## 50,000 female migrants returned during pandemic

Says Brac data

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About 49,924 female migrant workers returned home from 21 countries amid the coronavirus pandemic, according to the Brac Migration Programme. Besides, at least 487 bodies of female migrant workers arrived after 2016. The NGO yesterday shared the data with the media ahead of the International Women's Day on March 8. Brac said about 9.24 lakh female migrant workers went abroad for employment in different countries including the Middle Eastern ones between 1991 and last year. However, there is no comprehensive data on the female returnee migrants, it said. Shariful Hasan, head of Brac Migration Programme, said in the last two and a half years, they in support of expatriates' welfare desk provided immediate support to some 2,645 returnee female migrants at the airport. Besides, Brac supported about 200 returnee female migrants in launching small-scale trades, he said.

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## Papul jailed, but victims in lurch

PORIMOL PALMA

Thousands of poor Bangladeshi workers who faced physical, mental and financial exploitation over the years due to Kazi Papul's crimes have so far been denied justice. Bangladeshi MP Mohammad Shahid Islam alias Kazi Papul had been sentenced to four years in jail and fined Tk 55 crore in a bribery case in Kuwait, some eight months after his arrest. Papul was also charged with allegations of human trafficking. The conviction led to the cancellation of his membership in the Bangladeshi parliament. His victims, however, have not yet gotten any justice for the sufferings they had to endure because of Papul. "He [Papul] is facing punishment for the crimes he committed, but I have not committed any crime. I have lost much time, money and peace of mind. Where is my justice?" said Sheikh Farid, a victim of Papul's misdeeds. A first-year undergraduate student of Government Titumir College in 2015, Farid had received a job offer in Kuwait through a broker with the promise of about Tk 50,000 a month. The young man, from a lower-middle class family of Brahmanbaria, then decided to take the opportunity, hoping it would change the fate of his family. Farid had sold some of his family assets and borrowed most of the Tk 6.5 lakh required to finance his travel and job at "Ali Tawab" company as assistant to technician. Later that year, he arrived in Kuwait where he and dozens of other workers were given accommodation in the desert. They were also not issued any iqamas [residency permits]. "We were worried over what was going to happen to us. At one point, we were told that we would be placed as security guards at a market. We

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## BUSINESS

### People's mobility passes pre-pandemic level in Bangladesh

Google's Mobility Report shows

People's mobility has gone past the pre-pandemic level in Bangladesh, according to a new Google report, although the coronavirus pandemic is still prevailing in the country. Bangladesh is the only country in the world that has shown positive growth in all of the six indicators used by the Covid-19 Community Mobility Report to help remediate the impact of the crisis and shows how visits to places, such as corner shops and parks, are changing in each geographic region. The report was published on March 2. The turnaround came compared to the baseline period of January last year. In Bangladesh, mobility trends for places such as restaurants, cafes, shopping centres, theme parks, museums, libraries, and cinemas rose 13 per cent on March 2 compared to the baseline. The trends for places such as supermarkets, food warehouses, farmers markets, specialty food shops and pharmacies were up 41 per cent compared to the baseline.

STORY ON B1



Forest department officials seized this boat of stolen logs in Chiringa area on the Karnaphuli river in Rangunia, Chattogram. They later claimed that a gunfight took place and the boat was taken. Locals and police say that was not the case.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## 'Gunfight staged' to release stolen logs

Forest officials claim firefight; police, locals say nothing of that sort happened

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Ctg

Three forest officials in Chattogram's Rangunia staged a fake gunfight allegedly to give back a boat, seized earlier with logs, to its owner in exchange for a bribe. The Daily Star investigated the incident, which took place in Chiringa beat adjacent to the Karnaphuli river on January 3, and found it to be all cooked up. The three forest officials at the centre of the plot are Masum Kabir, range officer of Rangunia Range Office, Shafikul Islam and Debobroto Debu, both forest guards at Chiringa beat, all under Chattogram South Forest Division. Rouful Islam Khan, beat officer of Chiringa, filed two cases -- one with Rangunia Police Station, stating loggers fired at beat officers and took away the engine-run boat from where it was anchored. Another was filed with the Forest Court, mentioning the boat was seized with illegal logs and planks. It did not mention any incident of attack. Khaleque Member, who is named as the accused in both the cases, said he owns the boat and claimed, "My men had to pay Tk 40,000 to the range officer to get it released. It was done after mutual understanding." He denied attacking the forest officials or carrying any illegal goods, claiming that he brings logs from the hill tracts for timber trade. Usually, forest officials can practise COR (compounding offence report) under section 68 of Forest Act-1927, which allows them to release the seized goods by realising revenues from the loggers. In that case, the revenue goes

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