### US couple arrested in plan to join IS in Yemen

A US couple was charged Thursday with support for a terror group after trying to board a Yemen-bound ship to join the Islamic State group, the Justice Department said.

James Bradley, 20, of New York and Arwa Muthana, 29, from Alabama were stopped Wednesday as they stepped onto the gangplank of a cargo ship in Newark, New Jersey.

The Justice Department said that Bradley had expressed violent extremist views since at least 2019, and in contacts with an undercover law enforcement agency last year repeatedly said he believed in the Islamic State group.

He also told the undercover agent he was willing to carry out an attack against a US target, including possibly the US Military Academy at West Point.

Bradley had already drawn the FBI's attention after a friend of his was arrested in 2019 planning to travel

to Afghanistan to join the Taliban, according to a court filing.

Since then, Bradley "has continued to express his desire to carry out violence in support of radical Islamic ideology, directed his support and allegiance to ISIS, and attempted to travel overseas to join and fight for ISIS," the FBI said, using an acronym for the Islamic State group.

Bradley also shared Islamic State propaganda with the undercover agent, and they discussed his various options for joining extremist groups or launching an attack in the United

Ultimately Bradley decided to head to Yemen to link up with the Islamic State with Muthana, a woman he married in January 2021.

"If I don't find them I just keep going to Somalia," he told the agent, referring to the East African country where the violent, Al-Qaeda-linked Al Shabaab Islamic extremist group menaces the government.

# Bangladesh wants

Experts hailed it as a good initiative from the government.

They also said the government should be in contact with innovators of other vaccines, which are developed with other newer platforms or technologies.

"Bangladesh has the capacity to produce vaccine from seed. What we need is the transfer of appropriate technology as most of the vaccines developed against Covid-19 have applied relatively newer techniques. However, combining the seed with adjuvants, stabilisers and preservatives to form the final vaccine preparation might not be difficult for our vaccine manufacturers if they get required technical assistance from the innovator," Md Sayedur Rahman, chairman of pharmacology department at BSMMU, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said if Bangladesh wants to produce vaccines from seed, substantial investment is needed to establish the required facilities of a global standard and to employ skilled technical manpower.

A senior epidemiologist, preferring not to be named, however, said the country's drug licensing authority Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) -- needs to upgrade its biological lab to meet global standards.

"The DGDA's biological lab is not an A-category lab. It should be ungraded from category C to A," the epidemiologist said, adding that the World Health Organization certifies

categories after inspection. certification of DGDA is required to export vaccines from

The health ministry recently wrote to WHO requesting inspection of DGDA's biological lab as part of its

upgradation process. ABM Farooque, former dean of pharmacy faculty at Dhaka University, said the government has made a very good move, but it should also contact with other vaccine producers like

"If pharmaceuticals companies get the technology, it would be great as Bangladesh can produce the vaccine. We can even bring vaccines in bulk and repackage here, which will also be a good move. We have some worldclass pharmaceuticals companies and they are capable enough to produce it," he added.

Bangladesh received 70 lakh Oxford-AstraZeneca doses Serum Institute of India as part of an agreement. The country has purchased three crore vaccine doses from Serum.

Apart from this, the country on January 21 received 20 lakh doses as a token of friendship from India and another 12 lakh from the same country that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi bought with him during his visit to Dhaka last month.

The Daily Star sent an email to AstraZeneca but did not get any response till filing of this report last

AstraZeneca has more than 20 supply partners in 15 countries and more than 20 analytical testing sites -three manufacturing sites in UK, more than five in EU (Belgium, Netherland, Germany, Italy and Spain).

In South Asia, Serum Institute of India is the manufacturing partner of AstraZaneca

An official from AstraZaneca in Sweden told The Daily Star that apart from the government, some pharmaceuticals companies Bangladesh are also contacting them.

He, however, declined to elaborate

### Hefajat blames it on ruling party

torched. But you shot and killed people as if they were birds.

"We didn't see the IGP expressing grief over the deaths. Aren't they citizens of the country?

"If this is your mindset, then we want to tell you that tomorrow's Bangladesh is Hefajat's Bangladesh."

Hefajat also criticised the local media of Brahmanbaria who decided not to cover the Islamist organisation's strike on Sunday protesting Hefajat's attack on the press club in the district.

"Someone may have mistreated journalists in Brahmanbaria. We apologise for it," Mamunul said.

He then claimed that the media could not write anything against an MP in Brahmanbaria but they "keep writing fictitious stories about

The organisation's deputy chief Ahmed Abdul Quader said, "We want to seek revenge for the blood that has been shed. The Juba League, Chhatra League and Helmet League attacked

us. But the police didn't arrest them." Hefajat leader Maulana Jasim Uddin said, "The country has been turned into a police state. Every drop of blood will be taken into account. Ershad is gone, Khaleda Zia is gone too. Sheikh Hasina will also have to

go to jail. Wait, it's not too late. 'WITHDRAW ALL FALSE CASES'

Hefajat chief Junayed Babunagari said the cases filed by police following the mayhem were false and demanded that they be withdrawn immediately.

"The cases which were filed across the country following the peaceful movement of Hefajat supporters are false cases. It was the police who instigated the Hefajat men, attacked the demonstrators and killed innocent people. The law enforcers are now harassing us by filing false cases," he said.

demanded exemplary punishment and immediate removal of Hathazari Police Station OC Rafiqul Islam. We also want the trial of the policemen who shot innocent protesters.'

He was addressing a rally after Juma prayers in front of Hathazari

madrasa in Chattogram. Hathazari is a stronghold of Hefajat men, mostly

Qwami madrasa students.

"We've prayed for Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. We also pray for Bangladesh. We are not antiliberation or anti-government or anti-Bangladesh. We oppose the atheists and we will continue to do so.

"The government is trying to close madrasas in the name of containing the spread of Covid-19. We will resist the decision with an iron fist.

Due to the rally, traffic on the Hathazari-Khagrachhari road remained suspended for hours and

police were on alert. Yesterday, similar protest programmes were held in Narayanganj and Munshiganj, where hundreds of demonstrators joined defying the health restricts imposed to curb the

spread of the coronavirus. At least 43 cases have been filed so far in connection with the destruction carried out by Hefajat activists in Dhaka, Chattogram, Brahmanbaria,

Kishoreganj and Narayanganj. Over 20,000 people were made

accused in the cases. Although there is plenty of video footage and photos showing that the recent countrywide mayhem was unleashed by Hefajat, only a handful of people from the Islamist organisation have been accused in the cases over the violence.

HEFAJAT-COPS CLASH IN GAZIPUR At least 20 people, including seven policemen, were injured as police and Hefajat supporters clashed on Dhaka-Mymensingh high in Gazipur after Juma prayers yesterday.

The clash broke out as Hefajat men tried to block the highway near Chowrasta Jame Masjid area. As police went to clear the road, the protesters threw brick chunks at them, leading to the clash, our Brahmanbaria correspondent reported, quoting witnesses.

Police fired tear gas and dispersed the crowd.

At least seven people were detained from the spot, the correspondent



Workers build a boat along the Jamuna river in Tangail's Bhuiyanpur upazila. Boat becomes the only means of communication in some remote char areas of Tangail, Sirajganj and Jamalpur districts during the rainy season. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL

### Covid to cause \$1 trillion losses

The report said India's central budget for education dropped by 11 percent in the period while Bangladesh's budget rose by 12 percent.

The World Bank introduced a concept several years ago known as learning-adjusted years of schooling (LAYS). It seeks to combine access and learning outcomes into a single measure. It combines quantity (years of schooling) and quality (how much a student knows at a given grade) into a single summary measure of human capital in a society.

The latest report said estimates of the loss of LAYS in the third quarter of 2020 were based on scenarios between three to seven months of closures.

"As things stand, it seems an even more pessimistic scenario is unfolding -- one where schools have been shuttered for nine months. Learning-adjusted years of schooling in the South Asia region falls from a pre-Covid baseline of 6.5 years to 5.5 years -- suggesting that children could lose a full year of learning adjusted

schooling," said the report.

The World Bank report said many of these students will find it harder to return the longer they are away from school. The effects on their expected future lifetime earnings will be exceptionally large compared to a scenario where Covid-19 never

The typical student can expect to lose as much as \$445 annually as a result of lost schooling and learning. In the long run, this could cost the South Asia region over \$1 trillion in

This amount is almost a quarter of what the region will spend to educate this generation of students."

The closures kept 391 million students out of school in South Asia. Many probably left school to help families with lost income. School closures in South Asia, on average, have been maintained for longer compared to the global average, despite findings that children, in general, have low caseloads and insignificant death rates

Schools in Maldives and Pakistan were kept mostly open, while Pakistan's approach to school closures varied across provinces and changed during the year. Schools in India received national guidelines for states to decide, but a national directive for the reopening of schools and colleges for non-virtual learning only came in January 2021. "The consequent loss of skills will reduce the productive capacity of the economies in the region for years to come." Between March 11, 2020 and

February 2, 2021, Bangladesh kept schools closed more days than any other South Asian country.

Professor Syed Md Golam Faruk of Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education said TV, online and assignment-based lessons were going on to make up for the learning loss.

'We are assessing the education loss due to the closure. We will make special plans like arranging extra classes for students, who might lag behind due to the digital divide," he told The Daily Star.

## Reign of fear in Faridpur

He said he was beaten up mercilessly by members of the syndicate on May 24, 2018 and also falsely implicated in a murder case.

"My only fault was I participated in the bidding ignoring the unwritten law that only they or those who pay them commission can participate in the bidding in the district," he told The Daily Star recently.

A CID probe revealed that the Barkat-Rubel syndicate controlled all the tenders of roads and highways, public works, LGED ministry, health department, BRTA, the municipality, zila parishad, Water Development Board, and the medical college.

They illegally took commissions from various haats (markets) and district land registrar's offices and extorted money in the transport sector.

The syndicate earned thousands of crores of taka under the shelter of Babar and Fuad, the CID mentioned in the charge sheet of a money laundering case filed against Barkat and Rubel last year.

"It was not possible for anyone to do any work without giving them commission," said Alim Haidar Tuhin, former vice-president of Faridpur district BCL unit.

However, the situation changed significantly after the arrest of the brothers, with their patrons and cohorts coming under immense pressure.

Faruq Hossain, executive engineer of LGED, they were now noticing that the number of tender submissions and contractors has increased since the arrest of Barkat and Rubel.

"We have already cancelled 41 work

orders of Barkat and Rubel." Barkat, general secretary of Faridpur town AL, and Rubel, former the president of Faridpur Press Club, along with seven others were arrested on June 7 last year for their alleged involvement in the attack on the house of Faridpur AL President Subal Chandra on May 16,

Later on June 26, SM Miraj Al Mahmud, a CID inspector, lodged a case with Kafrul Police Station against the two brothers among others under the Money Laundering Act.

Local sources say it was the attack on the house of Faridpur AL president that turned things around.

The 10 charge-sheeted accused in the case, including Barkat and Rubel, own land, houses, flats, and personal

They amassed such a vast amount of wealth through tender manipulation, land grabbing, lobbying, extortion and commission trade in the last decade, according to local politicians and an intelligence report. Babar, vice-president of Faridpur

district Awami League, and Fuad, also

former convener of Faridpur district

Jubo League, were among eight other charge-sheeted accused. BABAR'S RISE Local party leaders said Babar, 63, who is the third accused in the charge sheet in the money laundering case, was never involved in AL politics earlier. After his brother Mosharraf became a minister in 2009, he virtually took control of

Faridpur AL.

In his confessional statement, Rubel referred to Babar as Babar chacha (uncle) and said, "I have paid Babar chacha Tk 1 crore to get the work order for constructing the district council auditorium.' Rubel also confessed that Babar

took Tk 40 lakh for the contract of the upazila administration building construction and another Tk 40 lakh for the jute research market, according to CID investigators.

Bipul Ghosh, former general cretary of Faridour district AL and former central committee member of the party, said Babar was chiefly behind criminal activities like land grabbing and plundering other people's properties, which had been going on in Faridpur since 2009.

In the 2008 general election, Babar had worked for the BNP candidate and used to ride a 50cc motorcycle. Yet he later took control of Faridpur AL and started illegal activities which dented the party's image, said a number of local

Before the election, Babar was an employee of a private company in Dhaka. In 2008, he returned to Faridpur and started a poultry firm with a bank loan he took mortgaging his ancestral

According to an intelligence agency report, Babar has built a palatial house on five acres of land at a cost of around Tk 10 crore in Faridpur town. He also amassed vast wealth in several areas of Faridpur town and on the outskirts, said

CID sources said Babar has a home in Australia and businesses in Singapore. His portion of the ill-gotten gains was laundered abroad, including to these two countries, they added.

The Daily Star was unable to get a comment from Babar as he neither received calls nor responded to text messages

Asked about the allegations, Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, also lawmaker from Faridpur-3, told this paper on March 3, "I have no idea at all about how they made money. They got work orders through tender. I did not give them the work as it is not the job of a lawmaker or a minister. It is the job of government officials.'

About his brother's alleged involvement in tender manipulation and extortion, he said Babar neither signed any documents nor was he involved in any such activities. FUAD'S 'HELMET GANG'

AHM Fuad, the APS of Khandaker Mosharraf, allegedly took 15 percent commission from those whom he helped win work orders from the Public Works Department, Power Development Board, and the education engineering, public health engineering, and the roads and highways departments.

He had a "helmet gang" which would punish anyone going against him or submitting a tender without his permission or without giving him

He has five flats at Sumon Tower in Charkamalapur area in Faridpur town, two flats on the 10th and 11th floors of Zaman Tower in Jhiltuli

Mahalla, one at Dhanmondi and another at Siddheswari in Dhaka, according to the intelligence report. Besides, he owns a huge swathe of land in Faridpur.

Fuad could not be reached as his cellphone was found switched off. OTHER ACCUSED Before the 2008 election, none of the 10 charge-sheeted accused had any

mentionable wealth.

Former Faridpur town Jubo League president Khandakar Nazmul Islam evi had leaned towards the centre of power after Khandaker Mosharraf became a minister.

He got involved in tender manipulation and land grabbing by engaging in the syndicate along with Barkat, Rubel, and Fuad. According to the intelligence report,

Levi had several flats and a large plot of land in Faridpur town. He also has three houses in Dhaka, and Gazaria Haat has been leased out in his name. Asibur Rahman Farhan, former general secretary of Faridpur town unit

Jubo League, and Fahad bin Wazed Fahim, general secretary of Faridpur District Swechchhasebak League, used to participate in the processions and rallies of Khandaker Mosharraf.

Of the three, Levi and Fahim are now behind bars.

Farhan has four flats in Dhaka's Mirpur and has about six acres of land in Faridpur town and Bakhunda area, the intelligence report says. He also runs a Chinese restaurant in the town.

He built a two-storey house south of Faridpur Kotwali Police Station on land he leased from the municipality. Fahim owns at least five flats in Faridpur town and two business

firms called Digital Press and Fahima Construction. He was assigned by the syndicate leaders to control tenders of the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation, Water Development

Board, and PDB, according to locals and the intelligence agency report. Former joint convener of Faridpur town Jubo League Kamrul Hasan David, district Jubo League joint convener Mohammad Ali Minar, and Faridpur town Jubo League joint convenor Tariqul Islam alias Nasim

are among the charge-sheeted accused. Local sources say all three were members of Fuad's "helmet gang". Their job was to guard the tender boxes in various government departments and prevent anyone other than their own men from submitting tenders.

They would hack or beat up their critics and rivals on Fuad's instructions. The amount of their wealth could not be known from local sources, though the CID in the charge sheet mentioned they also got a share of the illegally earned money of Barkat and Rubel.

Apart from the 10 charge-sheeted accused, CID also found the names of 42 others who have links with the syndicate but did not press charges against them due to lack of evidence. An investigator said an investigation is going on against them and if they get evidence, a supplementary charge sheet will be given against them.

#### Democratic society suffers if media doesn't work properly

Says information minister Bss, Chattogram

Terming media the mirror of the society, Information and Broadcasting Minister Hasan Mahmud has said multidimensional and democratic society suffer when the media does not play its role properly.

"We live in a democratic multidimensional society. The media is the fourth pillar of the state. So, when the media does not work properly, multidimensional and democratic society suffers," he said.

The minister said journalism is not just a profession, but a vow for many

"There are many journalists who could have retired as secretaries if they had entered government service. Many have left university jobs to pursue a career in journalism. The best students of the university study journalism. They come to this profession falling in love with journalism. It is necessary to keep an eye on fake journalists so that they could not to tarnish the image of entire journalistic society," he added. SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

### Cop's son found dead at Ctg home

His body bore bullet wounds STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police recovered a bullet-hit body from a house in Akbarshah area in Chattogram

The victim was identified as Musfiqul Haque Mahin, 18, son of Mohim Uddin, a sub-inspector of Khulshi Police Station under Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP).

The law enforcers primarily suspected that Mahin shoot himself with his father's service pistol.

Abdul Warish, deputy commissioner west) of CMP, told The Daily Star, "The incident took place around 1:40pm at SI Mohim's house in Shapla residential area of Akbarshah.

'SI Mohim scolded his son Mahin over his studies and went to the mosque to say his Friday prayers. Following the event, Mahin shut the door of his bedroom and shot himself with his father's pistol at his chest.

Quoting the family members, Arif Hossain, assistant commissioner of Pahartali zone of CMP, said Mahin was supposed to take part in yesterday's medical tests, but he did not do so triggering his father's anger.

Mahin first took bath, wore Panjabi, shut the door from inside of his bedroom, and fired one round," he said. Mahin was rushed to Chattogram

where on-duty doctors declared him dead, the police official said. Police took SI Mohim's service pistol

Medical College Hospital (CMCH)

into custody. An Unnatural Death (UD) case wil be lodged in this regard, said Jahir Hossain, officer-in-charge (OC) of

### Akbarshah Police Station.

15 days of the month.

Daily record

FROM PAGE 1 The DGHS data shows that 65,079 people were infected last month. Of them, 50,408 were detected in the last

Meanwhile, 50 people died from Covid-19 in 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, according to a press release issued by the DGHS. Among the deceased, 40 were men and 10 women. One was aged between 21 and 30, two were within 31-40, four

between 41 and 50, 11 within 51-60 and

32 were above 60 years old, added the release. The death toll from Covid-19 in the country has reached 9,155, and 6,887 of them were men and 2,268 women. Over 5,100 deceased were above 60 years old. The highest number of

deaths was registered (5,228) in Dhaka division. This year, 1,596 people died from novel coronavirus infections, and the

record shows that over 500 died in the ast 15 days. Some 2,473 Covid-19 patients recovered in those 24 hours ending 8:00am yesterday, rising the number of

ecoveries to 5,47,411. The recovery rate is now 87.64

#### Tigresses

Test status to Bangladesh women's team has been taken although the official procedure is not yet complete. If the Covid-19 situation is under control, there is hope of playing Test cricket this year," Nadel told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We are very excited to have gotten the Test status. And I hope that this will help our women's cricket go a long way," Salma Khatun, Bangladesh's T20 skipper, said in a video message after learning about ICC's decision.

#### Rejoinder

FROM PAGE 1

the spot on February 27, he saw notorious illegal logger, Md Jamal, chitchatting with a forest guard in front of the Chiringa range office in Sharaf Bhata union.

We stand by the report.