## Militant leader, his wife arrested in the capital **Explosives recovered**

## STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terrorism and Counter The Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of police arrested Shamin Mahfuj, founder of militant outfit Jama'atul Ansar Fil Hindal Sharqiya, and his wife from the capital's Demra last night.

It also recovered a huge cache of explosives from the couple, said Md Asaduzzaman, chief of the CTTC.

Leaders of three militant outfits formed Jama'atul Ansar Fil Hindal Sharqiya in 2019.

Shamin, a former leader of outlawed militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh, had been a key figure in the outfit since its formation, the CTTC official said

## West Bank risks 'spiralling out of control'

### Warns UN rights chief

AFP, Geneva

yesterday.

The new outbreak of violence in the occupied West Bank could spiral out of control, the UN human rights warned chief

This week, at least 18 people have been killed in the territory in incursions by the Israeli military or attacks by Palestinians or Jewish settlers.

latest killings "These and the violence, along with the inflammatory rhetoric, serve only to drive Israelis and Palestinians deeper into an abyss," Volker Turk said in a statement.

So far this year, more than 200 people have died in violence linked to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the vast majority of them Palestinians.

Deadly violence has flared in recent days in the northern West Bank, a stronghold of Palestinian armed groups where Israel has stepped up military operations.

Turk said this week's violence was being fuelled by strident political rhetoric and an escalation in the use of advanced military weaponry by Israel.

UN High Commissioner The for Human Rights said the sharp deterioration was having a terrible impact on both Palestinians and Israelis, and called for an immediate

# Biden, Modi urge Pakistan to act against extremist attacks

#### **REUTERS**, Washington

US President Joe Biden and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi have called on Pakistan to act to ensure that its territory is not used to launch extremist attacks, the White House said in a joint statement on Thursday.

"They strongly condemned cross-border terrorism, the use of terrorist proxies and called on Pakistan to take immediate action to ensure that no territory under its control is used for launching terrorist attacks," the White House said.

Relations between nuclear-armed neighbors India and Pakistan have been fraught for years. Since British colonial rule in the Indian subcontinent ended in 1947, India and Pakistan have fought three wars, two of them over the Muslimmajority Himalayan region of Kashmir, which they both claim in full but rule in part.

India has for years accused Pakistan of helping Islamist militants who have battled Indian security forces in its part of Kashmir since the late 1980s. Pakistan denies the accusation and says it only provides diplomatic and moral support for Kashmiris seeking selfdetermination.

The special status given to the Indian



in 2019 when New Delhi split it into two federally controlled territories. Pakistan calls the moves illegal and wants them rolled back

India's decision led the two countries to downgrade their diplomatic ties.

"President Biden and Prime Minister Modi reiterated the call for concerted action against all UN-listed terrorist groups including Al-Qaeda, ISIS/Daesh, Lashkar e-Tayyiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), and Hizb-ul-Mujhahideen," the joint statement said.

Hafiz Saeed, founder of the Islamist militant Lashkar-e-Taiba group, is blamed for the 2008 Mumbai attacks, which killed over 160 people over three days, beginning the evening of Nov. 26.

"They (Biden and Modi) called for state of Jammu and Kashmir was revoked the perpetrators of the 26/11 Mumbai

and Pathankot attacks to be brought to justice," their joint statement said.

In the 2016 attack on India's Pathankot air base, seven Indian security personnel were killed.

Modi was set to meet US and Indian business leaders in Washington later yesterday, the final day of a state visit marked by pledges of deeper US-India cooperation on areas including space, artificial intelligence and quantum computing.

The CEOs of top American companies, including FedEx FDX.N, MasterCard MA.N and Adobe ADBE.O, and representatives of Indian companies such as Tech Mahindra TEMLNS and Mastek MAST. NS are expected to be among the 1,200 participants.

Modi, who touted "a new chapter" in the countries' "strategic partnership" at the White House on Thursday, is seeking to position India, the world's most populous country at 1.4 billion and its fifth-largest economy, as a manufacturing and diplomatic powerhouse.

Washington wants Delhi to be a strategic counterweight to China, and deals announced this week included several investments from US-firms aimed at spurring semiconductor manufacturing in India and lowering its dependence on China for electronics.

## 2 die inhaling toxic gas inside septic tank

NEWS

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Two construction workers died in Rangpur yesterday after inhaling toxic gas while cleaning a septic tank of an under-construction building in the city's Kellaband area.

Humayun Ahmed, 32, and Liton Mia, 24, built the tank around 25 days ago, said locals.

Yesterday morning, they entered the tank to clean it and fell unconscious after some time, they added.

On information, firefighters arrived at the spot and recovered their bodies around 12:30pm.

Later, the police sent the bodies to Rangpur Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Hajirhat Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Rajib Basunia said, "They died while working inside the septic tank. The bodies will be handed over to their relatives after autopsy."

Police did not get any complaints from the victims' families till the report was filed yesterday afternoon.

## UP chairman suspended for negligence of duty

UNB, Ctg

Ruhullah Chowdhury, chairman of Charati union in Chattogram's Satkania upazila was suspended for negligence of duty.

Jasmine Pradhan, senior secretary of the local government department, issued a notification in this regard, Deputy Commissioner Abul Bashar Mohammad Fakhruzzaman confirmed vesterday.

Ruhullah was suspended temporarily as he was found to be negligent in performing his duties, as per the notification.

Besides, his activities went against the public interest including the union parishad, it added.

Earlier, a five-member investigation committee submitted a report accusing Ruhullah of theft of sand and excavator from the union.

The report was submitted to UNO Fatema Tuz Zohra who then sent it to the deputy commissioner with recommendations to take action against him.

## Four hurt in clash over setting up cattle market

#### UNB, Sylhet

Four people were injured in a clash between two groups over setting up a cattle market in Machimpur area of Sylhet city yesterday.

The injured were admitted to Sylhet Osmani Medical College Hospital. Among them, Harun Rashid Khasru, 55, is in critical condition.

According to locals, the clash broke out between the supporters of reserved ward no. 8 councillor Sharmin Akter Rumi and ward no. 23 councillor Mostak Ahmed over setting up the cattle market in Machimpur.

On information, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Sumon Kumar Chowdhury, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Kotwali Model Police Station, said "Police have been deployed at the spot. The



Furopean diplomats stand inside a destroyed building during a visit by a diplomatic delegation to the village of Turmus

Volker Turk

end to the violence.

the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah yesterday, in the aftermath of an attack there by Israeli settlers. PHOTO: AFP situation is now under control."

#### **Opposition parties unite** Undersea oil pipeline to save Tk 800cr a yr

36 inches in diameter. Between the floating mooring point and the storage terminal, 9km of pipes are have already been laid under the seabed and 7km on the seabed.

The Maheshkhali terminal has six storage tanks -- three each for diesel and crude oil. About 1.15 lakh tonnes of crude oil and 75,000 tonnes of diesel can be stored there.

The pipes from the storage facility to the Eastern Refinery are 18 inches in diameter. About 65km of these are under the sea, he added.

the government is also working on a 250km Chattogram-Dhaka Fuel (diesel) Supply Pipeline project at a cost of Tk 3,171.85 crore and a pipeline from Pitalganj (Purbachal) in Dhaka to Kurmitola Aviation Depot to save transportation costs and stop waste of fuel.

Contacted, Col Jahangir Hossain, roject director of Chattogram-Dhaka Fuel Supply Pipeline Project, said 230km of the pipeline has already been set up.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Power Narayanganj's Godanail is pending, management of the pipelines.

Development Board officials said he said, adding that 60 percent work of the project has been completed.

Jahangir said around 27-30 lakh tonnes of fuel can be transported annually through the 16-inch diameter pipeline.

Under this project, a new depot will be built in Cumilla's Barura, he said, adding that a proposal for extending the project deadline to December 2024 has been sent to the ministry concerned. The initial deadline was in December 2022.

has formed Pipeline BPC Terminal construction work in Company Ltd for maintenance and

## BNP, Jamaat to destroy country

#### FROM PAGE 1

She said her government has ensured food for the people, provided electricity to every house, illuminated every house with the light of education, reached healthcare service to their doorsteps up to grassroots, improved the communication system through infrastructural development and ensured socio-economic advancement.

The AL chief said, "Bangladesh has become known as a role model for development throughout the world today through the construction of the Padma Bridge with its own financing. Today, Bangladesh has gained the status of a developing country."

The PM vowed to establish the country as a happy, prosperous Sonar Bangla following the ideology of Bangabandhu.

The AL was founded on June 23 in 1949.

The chief of the AL along with party General Secretary Obaidul Quader inaugurated the day's programme by hoisting the national and party flags and releasing pigeons and balloons. PM ATTENDS DISCUSSION Speaking at a discussion on the occasion of the AL's 74th founding anniversary, Hasina vesterday said the fate of the country's people would improve further

if the party stayed in power. "We have made a massive change... This change would never have happened if the Awami League did not come to power," she said.

The PM chaired the event, organised

Centre.

Hasina said people witnessed the change after they voted for "boat", the AL's electoral symbol.

She said the AL was founded by the people and for the people and that's why serving the people is its job.

Noting that her government has moved a long way towards implementing the dream of Bangabandhu, the premier said Bangladesh will attain the status of a developing country in 2026.

About the people's suffering due to commodity price hikes, Hasina said people are now going through a tough time. "We are eagerly trying to ease the suffering of the people."

She urged the affluent people of the society to stand by the poor during this tough time.

The PM reiterated her pledge to improve the people's lives further.

'No man will live unhealthily. We will provide everyone with a beautiful home and a beautiful life. This will be the promise of the Awami League on its foundation anniversary day."

The AL chief said her party started making a planned development of Bangladesh after assuming power in 2009.

She drew a comparison between the fag end of the BNP rule in 2006 and the AL's current rule.

Hasina said the size of the national budget has increased to Tk 761,785 crore in FY2023-24, up from only Tk 61,000

by the ruling party, at the city's crore in 2006, the size of the GDP has Bangabandhu International Conference increased to Tk 50.31 lakh crore from only Tk 4.15 lakh crore, the economic growth rate has gone up to 7.25 percent (average 6 percent) from 5.40 percent in 2006, and the size of ADP has increased to Tk 274,674 crore from TK 21,500 crore. She said the per capita income increased to \$2,825 from only \$543 in 2006 and the figure has now dropped to \$2,765. The country's forex reserve reached \$48 billion mark during the Covid-19 pandemic from only \$0.74 billion during the BNP rule and the

forex reserve is still \$30.83 billion, the M added. Hasina said the export earnings surged to \$52.97 billion from only \$10.05 billion in 2006, the annual remittance inflow soared to \$ 24.03

billion from only \$4.8 billion, and the revenue collection increased to over Tk 500,000 crore from Tk 37,870 crore.

She said the electricity generation increased to 25,227 megawatt from 3,078 megawatt in 2006, the beneficiaries under the electricity coverage to 100 percent of the population from only 28 percent, the allocation for social safety net programmes to Tk 126,272 crore from Tk 2,105 crore and the number of beneficiaries under the social safety net to 1,81,23,554 from 21,49,357.

AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader, advisory council member Tofail Ahmed, and presidium members Jahangir Kabir Nanak and Abdur Rahman, among others, spoke at the discussion.

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on either side by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Rashtriya Janata Dal chief Lalu Prasad.

Kharge announced that the next opposition meeting will be held in Shimla "to prepare an agenda on how to move ahead together while working in our respective states to fight BJP in 2024."

This was the first meeting of the opposition parties and was seen as a take-off point for them to come together to take on the Narendra Modi-led BJP.

Rahul Gandhi said a united opposition is going to defeat the BJP in the 2024 general elections and claimed a battle was on between his party's "'Bharat Jodo' ideology and the BJP's 'Bharat Todo' thinking".

West Bengal Chief Minister

# India wants trial, BR seeks clear proposal

#### FROM PAGE 1

If India is allowed rail transit facilities through Bangladesh as per the proposal, its trains will be operated from one part of West Bengal to another via Bangladesh. On the other hand, if India gets transshipment facility, Indian trains will come up to one border and then the BR trains will transport the goods or passengers to another border, from where Indian trains will take them to the destination. Before the partition of India in 1947, there was seamless railway communication between different regions of India and Bangladesh through eight crossings. Five of them Benapole-Petropole, Darshana-Gede, Rohanpur-Singabadh, Biral-Radhikarpur and Chilahati-Haldibari have resumed operation in recent times

Following the proposal, the railways ministry held the inter-ministerial meeting, which was attended by the foreign, home and commerce ministry officials and also by the National Board of Revenue representatives. Railways Ministry Secretary Humayun Kabir chaired the meeting.

Mamata Banerjee (TMC), her Delhi counterpart Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab's Bhagwant Singh Mann (AAP), Tamil Nadu's MK Stalin (DMK), Jharkhand's Hemant Soren (JMM). Samajwadi Party supremo Akhilesh Yadav, Maharashtra's former chief minister Uddhav Thackeray (Shiv Sena-UBT), and NCP president Sharad Pawar are among the leaders who attended today's meeting.

Leaders of the PDP, CPI(M), CPI, CPI(ML) and the National Conference are also present at the meeting.

However, chinks in opposition ranks came to the fore with Kejriwal staying away from the press conference as his party is cut up by Congress' refusal to promise its support against the Centre's ordinance on the control of administrative services in Delhi.

stand ambiguous as to whether it would support the AAP or not when the ordinance is put to the test in parliament.

Samajwadi Party is the only party from Uttar Pradesh, a politically key state and India's most populous region, attending today's meeting. BSP supremo Mayawati was not invited and Rashtriya Lok Dal chief Jayant Chaudhary skipped the event due to a family programme. Uttar Pradesh sends the maximum number of 80 MPs to the Lok Sabha.

Taking a jibe at the meeting, Indian Home Minister and BJP leader Amit Shah said, "Today a photo session is underway in Patna. They (the Opposition) want to challenge Prime Minister Narendra Modi and NDA. 1 want to tell them that PM Modi will form his government in the 2024 Lok Sabha Polls with more than 300 seats.'

The Congress has so far kept its

minutes

As per the proposal, an empty freight

and through Bangladesh it will enter India again via the Darshana-Gede border. Once loaded, the train from India will return to Haldibari through the same route, reads the meeting

Bangladesh and India maintain a friendly relationship and Bangladesh wants to establish itself as a connecting hub, said a foreign ministry representative at the meeting.

"Bangladesh should take the decision after analysing the issues of security, revenue collection and tariff and also the potential of export of goods to Nepal and Bhutan via India," he said.

A commerce ministry representative said Bangladesh imports goods worth \$14 billion from India annually while it exports goods worth only \$2 billion to India annually, indicating a trade gap of \$12 billion.

"The gap may widen if transit is given to India," the minutes quotes the commerce ministry representative as saying.

A representative of Security Services Division of Home Ministry said if goods

train will enter Bangladesh from West are transported from one part of India Bengal via Chilahati-Haldibari border to another via Bangladesh, all the goods need to be scanned.

"But I don't think we have that capability right now. Security issues should get the highest priority," he is quoted as saying.

In addition to tariff and security issues, the capacity of BR and the rail tracks need to be analysed too, a BR representative said.

According to decisions taken at the meeting, the letter was sent to the Indian Railways last week, BR sources said.

During a high-level meeting with a Bangladesh Railway delegation on April 21 last year, an Indian delegation discussed rail transit issues and both sides agreed to work out the finer details and obtain necessary approvals from the authorities concerned, said a BR official with knowledge of the meeting.

Besides, the Indian authority placed the same proposal during Bangladesh Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan's meeting with his Indian counterpart in lew Delhi on June 1 last year and the Bangladesh side agreed to examine the proposal, he added.