

# ‘He was right under their nose’

## Militant who escaped from court lived in rented Gazipur house for a month before disappearing

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

On November 20 last year, two death row convict militants, Abu Siddiq Sohel and Moinul Hasan Shamim, escaped from a Dhaka court in broad daylight with help from their associates.

Of them, Shamim lived at a rented house in Gazipur for over a month this year. He even celebrated Eid-ul-Fitr with them, before vanishing once more. During his stay, he adopted the name “Rifat”.

All this happened when a countrywide hunt was ongoing to catch him.

The area where he stayed falls under the jurisdiction of Kaliakoir Police Station.

An operative of banned militant outfit Ansar Al Islam, Bakhtiar Rahman alias Nazmul, 30, offered Shamim shelter as a sublet tenant in his house. The outfit had initially offered Nazmul payment for providing the shelter, but he declined, as a gesture of loyalty.

Nazmul gave a confessional statement in this regard at a Dhaka court on October 18, confirmed Deputy Commissioner SM Nazmul Haque of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit.

“We got some clue about Shamim’s



Death-row convicts Moinul Hasan Shamim and Abu Siddiq Sohel. PHOTO: COLLECTED

hideout from Nazmul’s statement, and we are now analysing it to trace his current whereabouts,” he told this newspaper yesterday.

During his stay in the house, Shamim never went out of the home and only used cell phones with Wifi connection. He did not use any registered SIM cards to avoid law enforcers’ surveillance, according to investigators.

Meanwhile, Nazmul joined Ansar Al Islam in 2017, said Atikul Islam, additional deputy commissioner of the CTTC unit.

Nazmul said the outfit’s top leader Fahim alias Masmua Masul directed him

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Algae chokes the lake adjacent to the glass tower, a major component of the Swadhinata Stambha complex, in the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan. The photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



## PM leaves for Belgium today

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is set to leave here for Brussels this morning on a three-day official visit to Belgium to attend the “Global Gateway Forum” to be held there on October 25-26.

She is going to Brussels at the invitation of the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

“A commercial flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines carrying the prime minister and her entourage members will depart from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport,” said PM’s Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim.

The flight is scheduled to land at Brussels Zaventem Airport at 6:45pm local time (October 24).

Her visit is seen as extremely significant as it would help take Bangladesh’s ties with the European Union to a new height, said Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen at a press briefing.

“This is a very significant visit. This is an achievement for us,” he said, noting that the visit is happening at a “crucial moment.”

# Gas crisis as govt cuts LNG imports

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Acute gas crisis has yet again hit the country as the government reduced import of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the international spot market for the last couple of months.

Due to gas supply crunch, domestic users, industries and transport sectors are suffering the most. Officials said the crisis may aggravate further due to the government decision to reduce LNG imports for an extended period amid budget shortage.

According to Petrobangla, the government is now supplying around 2,600 million cubic feet a day (mmcf) against a demand for over 4,000 mmcf.

The supply was around 3,000 mmcf in July, and around 2,800 mmcf in August and September.

The government had imported three LNG cargoes in July from the spot market but it came down to two LNG cargoes in August and September each. The plan for this month is to import only one cargo.

“Usually the supply is reduced in November-December as per yearly plan,” said Md Shah Alam, general manager (LNG) at Rupantarita Prakritik Gas Company Limited, the dedicated organisation for LNG import.

He also said one of the two LNG regasification units will go for maintenance next month, which will further reduce the supply.

**PEOPLE BEAR THE BRUNT**

“For last two months, we have not been getting gas during the daytime. Now, gas is unavailable from morning till evening,” said

Usually, the supply is reduced in November-December as per yearly plan. One of the two LNG regasification units will go for maintenance next month, which will reduce the supply further.

MD SHAH ALAM  
General manager at RPGCL

For last two months, we have not been getting gas during the daytime. Now, gas is unavailable from morning till evening.

RASHIDA KHANOM  
A resident of Mugda

Rashida Khanom of Mugda area. Residents from Mirpur, Banasree and Old Dhaka, and industries in Gazipur, Narayanganj are complaining the most about the gas crisis, according to Titas, gas distributor in Dhaka and adjacent areas.

“Since it is an integrated network, consumers from the last end of the network usually suffer most. Those who are in the first end, get good pressure,” said Md Salim Miah, general manager (operation) of Titas.

Any rationing plan is not possible in the current structure,

he said.

Md Fazlul Hoque, vice president of Bangladesh Textile Mills Association, said, “We are helpless. We had a good number of foreign orders but we are anxious if we will be able to ship the products on time.”

“There was always a crisis, but it increased in the last 10-15 days in Gazipur’s Sreepur area. Textile mills in Narshingdi, Maona, Bhaluka and Narayanganj are also facing an acute gas crisis. We don’t get gas for around 12-14 hours a day,” he said.

Hoque said the government assured business people to ensure gas supply when they hiked record gas prices. “But the situation remains the same,” he added.

Farhan Noor Bhuiyan, secretary of Bangladesh CNG Filling Station and Conversion Workshop Owners Association, said, “The gas pressure is very low from 7:00am to 3:00pm. We are rationing gas every day from 6:00pm to 11:00pm.”

According to RPGCL, without spot market purchase, it will be necessary to depend on local production and long-term import from Qatar and Oman. The supply is fixed from these two sources.

After a 7-month pause, Bangladesh resumed LNG purchase from the spot market in February this year, while increasing gas price by up to 178.9 percent for industries, power plants and commercial users, with assurance to keep the supply stable.

Despite repeated attempts, Petrobangla chairman Zandendra Nath Sarker could not be reached for comments.



A bus emits a gust of black smoke while plying the capital’s Mirpur Road. Carbon emissions are one of the leading contributors to the city’s worsening air quality. The photo was taken recently in College Gate area. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## TALKS WITH HAAS

### Home ministry clarifies its position

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A range of topics, including the upcoming elections, the October 28 rally, the ongoing Durga Puja, Rohingya crisis and similar issues, were discussed between US Ambassador Peter Haas and Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal on Sunday.

The discussions took place in an affable environment, said the home ministry in a statement yesterday.

The statement was issued in response to a US embassy statement on Sunday night which stated the subject of road closures in Dhaka surrounding the October 28 rally was not discussed between the home boss and the US ambassador.

“Ambassador Haas expressed the importance of peaceful demonstrations and interference-free participation in the political process,” a statement from the US Embassy in Dhaka read.

In response, the home ministry clarified that the US ambassador had a courtesy meeting with the home minister around 2:30pm on Sunday. During this interaction, the ambassador inquired about the mentioned issues and sought the minister’s opinions on those matters.

Following the courtesy meeting, the minister

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## BNP’S OCT 28 RALLY

### EC defers training of top admin, cops

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Election Commission has deferred its scheduled training for top field level administration and police officials due to BNP’s grand rally on October 28.

The second round of residential training for divisional commissioners, deputy commissioners, deputy inspectors general of police, superintendents of police and regional election officers was scheduled to be held on October 28 and 29.

The training will now be held on November 2 and 3, according to separate EC letters to the cabinet secretary and senior secretary of public security division of Ministry of Home Affairs.

BNP will hold a grand rally in Dhaka on October 28 to press home its one-point demand – resignation of the government and election under a non-party neutral administration.

The commission pushed back the training date upon request from the police and local administrators, as they will need to stay in their locality to “maintain the law-and-order situation”.

The situation is tense as words on the streets are Awami League and law enforcement agencies will use all possible means to “drive out” BNP from the streets if the opposition party tries to stage any sit-ins or blockades after its scheduled rally.

According to ruling party leaders and police high-ups, they have devised plans to counter BNP, as they think the party might go for nonstop agitations, including cutting off Dhaka from the rest of the country, calling hartals or laying siege to key establishments, after the event.

A top EC official said the commission pushed back the training date upon request from the police and local administrators, as they will need to stay in their locality to “maintain the law-and-order situation”.

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## BNP creating panic in name of Oct 28 rally

### Says Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said BNP is creating panic among people in the name of the so-called rally on October 28.

They are trying to create anarchy in the country ahead of the next general elections, he said.

“We expect a free and fair election with the participation of all political parties to be held in a peaceful environment. But BNP is hatching plots to spoil the polls,” he said in a statement.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, said BNP does not believe in the independence of Bangladesh.

The AL is committed to keeping the country’s constitution and sovereignty effective, he said.

## MASS MEDIA BILL

### JS body gets 90 more days to scrutinise

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The fate of the much-debated Mass Media Employees (Services Conditions) Bill 2022 seems to be bleak as the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Ministry yesterday got another 90 days to examine the proposed law.

This is the fifth time the chairman of the parliamentary watchdog Hasanul Huq Inu sought time in parliament as the committee couldn’t scrutinise the bill for placing it before the House within the stipulated time.

The House yesterday unanimously approved the committee chief’s proposal for an extension.

Sources at the parliament secretariat said the fate of the proposed law seemed uncertain as there is little possibility for passage of the bill in the ongoing session of the current 11th parliament.

The ongoing session, which is also the last session of parliament, will continue till November 2.

There will be no effectiveness of this bill if it is not passed in this session. In that case, a new bill on this matter will have to be placed afresh in the 12th parliament.

Various journalists’ organisations and owners associations, and Transparency International Bangladesh have seriously opposed various sections of the proposed law.

The wages and benefits of journalists, employees and press workers, and artists of broadcast, online,

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