

3 Ansar Al Islam members arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Cox's Bazar

Three suspected members of the banned militant organisation Ansar Al Islam were arrested in the Chowfaldandi area of Cox's Bazar.

The arrested Zakaria Mandal, 19, of Jamalpur, Md Niamat Ullah, 21, of Bhola, and Md Ozair, 19, of Feni, are active members of the banned militant outfit, said Rab.

Ten extremist books, 29 leaflets, 1 diary, 2 madrasa identity cards, 2 NIDs, 2 mobile phones and Tk 4,590 were seized from their possession.

Teams from the intelligence wing of Rab headquarters, Rab-15 and Rab-7 conducted the operation Thursday night, Commander Arafat Islam, director of the legal and media wing of Rab, told journalists yesterday.

After the Eid holidays, the arrestees left home and gathered in Cox's Bazar to conduct secret meetings, Arafat said.

They joined Ansar al-Islam after being inspired by the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan, he added.

"The activities of Ansar Al Islam almost came to a standstill in the face of regular operations by Rab and other law enforcement forces. Due to disruption of activities in the name of this organisation [Ansar Al Islam], they formed a new militant group named 'As Shahadat' with the ideology of Ansar al-Islam and are carrying out recruitment activities."



MY DHAKA

The unknown tomb in Mohammadpur

SK MEHEDI HASSAN

Between Shia Mosque and Mohammadpur Bus Stand, a mausoleum stands at Banshbari, easily visible on the left. On the other side of the road is the historic Sat Gambuj Mosque and today, surrounded by numerous modern buildings, the sepulchre stands out because of its unique design and structure.

"Whose grave is this?" – I often wonder. With utmost curiosity, I asked several locals this very same question, but no one could provide a clear answer.

From the outside, the structure looks like a Nawab's house. The old building evokes a forgotten past with its style, shape, and use of materials, intriguing people about the story behind it.

Archaeologists and historians suggest that the building belongs to the Mughal era. Buildings of that era have a uniform pattern of structure and character, including large bulbous domes, slender minarets at the corners, massive halls, large vaulted gateways, and delicate ornamentation.

Regarding the mausoleum, Nuruzzaman Sheikh, a resident of Mohammadpur, said, "I see the structure regularly but never



PHOTO: STAR



thought about whose grave it might be. When the government itself doesn't know, how would I?"

The Department of Archaeology has a signboard that reads: "Unknown Tomb:

The tomb appears to be an inseparable part of Sat Gambuj Masjid. According to the legend... one of the daughters of Nawab Shaista Khan was buried in it."

Shaista Khan governed Bengal for 24 years (1664-1688), with a break for a little over one year in 1678-79. His tenure as subahdar was the longest. Of Iranian origin, his family was connected with the Mughal royal family.

As even the Department of Archaeology cannot determine who is buried there, a mystery always shrouds the structure.

Besides, there are two more graves on the tomb premises, but no statement clarifies who they belong to. It is assumed that the graves are of those who took care of the tomb.

On a sunny afternoon, I visited the spot. The gate was open, and the premises were

fenced with iron bars, with no one around the structure.

There are four doors on four sides. I got close to one of the doors. Amid the chaotic life outside, an eerie silence existed inside the building. A large grave with a green cloth covering the surface was visible.

In a dimly lit, ancient tomb, several candles flickered, casting eerie shadows on the walls. Amidst the glow, a man seemed to pray.

The air was thick with mystery as if the secrets of the past were silently watching over the scene.

While I was getting out, I looked back. The mysterious tomb of Mohammadpur stood as an enigmatic relic of history – its silent walls echoing with unanswered questions and forgotten tales from centuries past.

Indian foreign ministry

FROM PAGE 1
Narendra Modi on June 24 opposing any water-sharing talks with Bangladesh without the state's involvement, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

Jaiswal said India's internal committee on the renewal of the Ganges water-sharing treaty has submitted its final report. He, however, did not disclose its content.

India and Bangladesh signed the Ganga water-sharing accord in 1996. The 30-year treaty is due to expire in 2026 but may be extended by mutual agreement.

Last Saturday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi after meeting his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina in New Delhi announced that the two countries will begin technical-level discussions on the renewal of the treaty.

In the letter to Modi, Mamata had claimed that the decision to start talks for the renewal of the Ganges water-sharing treaty with Bangladesh was "unilateral" and urged him not to hold any discussion with Bangladesh without involving the West Bengal government.

Asked if any payment of fees and deployment of security personnel were discussed while signing the MoU allowing Indian railways to access Bangladesh territory, Jaiswal said those can only be answered by technical experts.

"These are technical questions and these will be addressed by technical experts at the right time."

The MEA spokesman said India and Bangladesh are working to enhance connectivity to promote bilateral trade and in other areas to take the relationship to a higher level.

AL to hold

FROM PAGE 1
The AL announced its programme yesterday saying that it will hold a discussion at 3:00pm today in front of its central office on Bangabandhu Avenue, around 1.6km away from the BNP headquarters.

This is the third time since the January 7 parliamentary polls the ruling party is organising a programme to counter BNP's.

On January 30, the BNP took out black flag processions in the capital calling for dissolution of the 12th parliament. On the same day, the AL organised nationwide rallies protesting "undemocratic activities" of the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami.

The ruling party held "peace rallies" since December last year apparently to counter the BNP's demonstrations demanding general election under a non-party neutral administration.

Anti-graft laws, rules relaxed over the years

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As per the 2018 act, an employee can be in service even after being sentenced to up to 12 months in prison for a criminal offence.

The 2002 amendment to the Government Servant (Conduct) Rules 1979 is yet another example.

According to Section-13 of the rules, civil servants had to submit their wealth statement to their departments every year.

But now the employees have to do it every five years, thanks to an amendment to the rules during the tenure of the BNP-led alliance government in 2002.

Many officials do not bother with submitting their wealth statements at all, sources said.

Besides, the public administration ministry has taken an initiative to further relax this provision. The ministry proposes that the

government collect the employees' wealth statements from annual tax returns if necessary.

Former secretary Badiur Rahman said that weakening the law means encouraging corruption.

The lenient rules and laws send a message to the government employees that they can get away with corruption, he said. "These amendments are a step in the wrong direction."

Only stringent laws can deter corruption, he added.

Supreme Court lawyer Arif Khan said, "Enacting laws or regulations that encourage corruption is tantamount to ignoring the Constitution."

The Constitution states that the government will enact laws so that no citizen can possess illegal wealth. According to Article 20(2) of the Constitution, "The State shall endeavour to create conditions in

which, as a general principle, persons shall not be able to enjoy unearned incomes..."

Over the last few weeks, corruption by several government officials hogged the headlines.

Awami League leader and lawmaker Mahbul Alam Hanif on June 25 told parliament that corruption had eclipsed the government's achievements.

"The government has repeatedly announced its zero-tolerance policy against corruption... The rules and regulations have been relaxed and made more lenient. There is scope for errand officers to be on job with the bare minimum penalties."

He said the Government Services Act, 2018, could be "considered a law to protect criminals."

On June 26, lawmaker Kabirul Haque said corruption had become institutionalised.

2 of the killers faked identity

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filed with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station by his daughter.

According to investigators, all the suspects of MP Azim's murder went into hiding after detectives arrested Amanullah alias Shimul Bhuiyan, the coordinator of the killing mission, on May 19.

"Foyzal and Mostafiz are the followers of Amanullah, a leader of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party. They worked as two main associates of Amanullah in the murder of the MP," said DB chief Harun Or Rashid, also an additional commissioner of the DMP, yesterday.

He said the duo were involved in different criminal activities on Amanullah's instructions.

Regarding the hideout in the temple, the detectives said Foyzal and Mostafiz returned to Bangladesh on May 19 from Kolkata after the killing of the MP on May 13. They then called Aktaruzzaman, one of the masterminds of the murder, over the

phone to pay the blood money. Aktaruzzaman, now believed to be hiding in the US, then gave them Tk 30,000.

With the money, the duo first went to Chandranath Temple on the Chandranath Hill of Chattogram and tried to stay there.

Investigators said there is a police outpost on the hill. The area is also under the coverage of CCTV cameras, they said.

When the two approached the on-duty police personnel, they were told that they could not stay at the temple.

But at their request, the police personnel asked the duo to go to Patal Temple at the foot of the hill saying that they could stay there at night, said investigators.

The two then went to the temple. Posing as cousins, they identified themselves as Shimul Roy and Polash Roy.

Quoting devotees at the temple, the detectives said no one could doubt their activities.

Rice prices up by Tk 2-3 a kg

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Majumdar Traders, a leading rice market, said millers have hiked the rice prices gradually since the reopening of the mills after the Eid.

"Prices of paddy have been increasing for the last two-three days, but the millers started hiking the rice prices after the Eid," he added.

Chitta Majumdar, owner of

he said even though rice is cheaper in India compared to Bangladesh, they cannot import the staple.

"This is because the selling price of the imported rice would be higher by Tk8-10 per kg than the price of a similar variety of local rice as we have to pay import taxes and VAT," he added.

BOGURA JAILBREAK

Deputy jailer, chief prison guard suspended

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

A deputy jailer and the chief prison guard of Bogura District Jail have been suspended from their posts over negligence in duty following the jailbreak of four death row convicts early Wednesday.

Md Hosenuzzaman, deputy jailer, and Farid Uddin, chief prison guard, were suspended on Thursday, jail authorities told The Daily Star.

Earlier on June 26, prison authorities also suspended three other prison guards, Bogura District Jail Superintendent Anwar Hossain said.

The prison authorities also evacuated the "Jailong cell" and shifted the 10 death row convicts and 16 other prisoners, including militants, to another building following the jailbreak.

They have been kept under a special arrangement in another cell of the jail, said the jail superintendent.

The investigation committee which was formed after the incident considers the building risky, he added.

Three held with foreign liquor worth Tk 2 crore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The Narcotics Control Department arrested three people along with large quantities of illegal foreign liquor worth about Tk 2 crore in Patuakhali early yesterday.

A lorry along with 26,880 cans of Chinese beer were seized in a raid at the toll plaza area of Patuakhali Bridge on the Patuakhali Barishal highway, said Patuakhali Narcotics Control Department Assistant Director Enayet Hossain.

The arrestees are Mehedi Hasan Rabbi, 23, of Nachnapara Chowrasta area of Patuakhali's Kalapara upazila, lorry driver Rubel Munshi, 27, of Barishal's Kaunia area, and Basirul Islam, 28, of Dinajpur's Fulbaria Municipality area.

Of them, Basirul and Mehedi are working for Patuakhali's Payra Power Plant's contractor Chinese company, Oriental Pearl.

Enayet said the consignment was seized based on a tip-off. It is believed that these beers came from China to Kalapara via Payra Port. This is the biggest consignment of illegal beer seized in Barisal division.

A case has been filed with Patuakhali Sadar Police Station over the incident.

Quoting the lorry driver, the DNC official said each can contain 330ml of beer and the market value of the seized beer is around Tk 2.15 crore.

Flop show rocks Biden campaign

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immediate future, he told reporters he had done "well" as he stopped off at an Atlanta Waffle House with First Lady Jill Biden after coming off stage.

He added that he was croaking because of a "sore throat" and that, in any case, it is "hard to debate a liar."

Although Biden managed to pin down Trump on abortion rights and his role in the violence that marred the 2021 handover, he waited bafflingly long – almost 45 minutes – to bring up Trump's felony convictions and other legal woes in any detail.

He spoke under his breath and appeared at times to lose focus, pausing for several seconds after stumbling in the opening stages.

Trump's performance was far from accomplished – his verbal fusillades were littered with falsehoods and he dodged several times when asked what he would do about the opioid crisis ravaging middle-class families.

He also refused to clearly commit to accepting the results of November's election, playing into the narrative that he has little respect for democracy or the rule of law.

CNN reported that while Biden made nine false or misleading statements, Trump made a staggering 30, including "egregious" falsehoods on abortion, the US Capitol insurrection, health care and NATO.

But the Republican – who is countering Biden's rally with an appearance of his own in Virginia on Friday – largely avoided the rhetorical landmines that exploded under Biden.

At one point, the president bizarrely declared that "we finally beat Medicare," as the discussion turned to funding the health insurance program for seniors.

A Biden replacement?

As the disappointment of Biden's showing registered with Democrats, there was even talk of finding a new candidate before the party's convention in August.

Democrats – "including members of his own administration – traded frenzied phone calls and text messages within minutes of the start of the debate as it became clear that Mr. Biden was not at his sharpest," the New York Times reported.

Some also "privately discussed among themselves whether it was too late to persuade the president to step aside in favor of a younger candidate," the paper added.

Even a German official coordinating cooperation with the United States told a German newspaper that Democrats should consider replacing Biden as their candidate.

"There's been a lot of chatter in our circles about Newsom," one party strategist told political outlet The Hill – although California governor Gavin Newsom quickly shut down suggestions that he could take Biden's place.

In the Trump corner, pundits revealed at how the night turned out.

Keith Nahigian, a Republican veteran of six campaigns who helped prepare multiple election candidates including John McCain for debates, told AFP that Biden's performance was "the worst I've ever seen."

"Biden called for this debate a few months ago. He pushed for this debate. I think he just sunk his presidency," he added.

Ralph Reed, chairman of the conservative Faith and Freedom Coalition, compared the debate to a prize fight "that should have been stopped in the early rounds."

Maiden triumph or return to glory?

FROM PAGE 1
India's journey to the final has been smooth, as barring the first round match against Pakistan, which they won by six runs, they have hardly been tested, overpowering every opponent en route to their third T20 World Cup final.

By comparison, South Africa's road to the final has been bumpy and full of obstacles.

The Proteas edged Nepal and Bangladesh by one and three runs respectively in the first round in low-scoring thrillers, held their nerves against West Indies in their final Super Eight game which had turned into a virtual quarterfinal and then thrashed Afghanistan in the semifinals – their first win in a World Cup semifinal after seven unsuccessful attempts.

The win over Afghanistan lifted a weight which had been weighing down the South African team since the 1992 ODI World Cup, when their dreaded streak of semifinal defeats began.

Now, Aiden Markram's side will be stepping into uncharted waters in the

final, while Rohit Sharma's team will come face to face with a hurdle they have come to dread in recent years.

India have enjoyed a dominant phase in the last decade across three formats, reaching the knockout stage in nine ICC tournaments and making the final five times – T20 World Cup in 2014, ODI World Cup in 2023, ICC Champions Trophy in 2017 and the ICC Test Championship in 2021 and 2023.

However, in all five finals, the Men in Blue got bested. The defeat to Australia in last year's ODI World Cup final in front of over 130,000 home fans in Ahmedabad was particularly scarring for Rohit's team, a side that had come into that final undefeated, much like they have done in the current event.

Today's final in Barbados is an opportunity for Rohit and his team to exorcise the past demons and take India back to the top of the mountain in T20s for the first time since 2007. Meanwhile, for South Africa, the match is the chance to pass over the 'chokers' moniker to India and replace it with champions.