

## Four arrested over attack on Hindus in Sunamganj

STAR DIGITAL REPORT

Law enforcement agencies have arrested four individuals for their alleged involvement in vandalising homes, shops, and a temple of the Hindu community in the Dowarabazar area of Sunamganj district earlier this month.

The arrestees are Alim Hossain, 19, Sultan Ahmed Raju, 20, Imran Hossain, 31, and Shajahan Hossain, 20, according to a press release by the Chief Adviser's Press Wing.

The arrests came after police, after an investigation, filed a case yesterday against 150-170 individuals, including 12 named suspects, for their alleged roles in the violence.

On December 3, Akash Das, 20, made a derogatory post on Facebook criticising Islam. Although the post was deleted, screenshots circulated widely, sparking tensions in Dowarabazar area.

The local police promptly arrested Akash and transferred him to another station to ensure his safety.

On the same day, enraged locals attacked and vandalised homes, shops, and the Loknath Temple belonging to the Hindu community.

Authorities, including the district's superintendent of police (SP), deputy commissioner (DC), and army personnel, intervened to bring the situation under control.



Kajol Rashid Shaheen, Prof Mizanur Rahman and Professor Salimullah Khan speak at a discussion titled “The role of intellectuals in reforming the state”, a part of The Daily Star’s exhibition “36 Days of July: Saluting the Bravehearts”, held at The Daily Star Centre in the capital on the Martyred Intellectuals’ Day yesterday. Story Page 12.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Bangladesh welcomes President of Timor-Leste

UNB, Dhaka

President of Timor-Leste José Ramos Horta was accorded a red carpet reception on his arrival in Dhaka last night on a four-day official visit.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus received President Ramos Horta at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport around 10:40pm.

A 19-member delegation, including Timor-Leste's Foreign Minister, is accompanying President Ramos Horta. During his stay in Dhaka, the president will engage in a series of high-level meetings and events aimed at strengthening bilateral ties between the two nations.

## Khagrachhari AL leader arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Police yesterday arrested Advocate Ashutosh Chakma, joint secretary of Awami League's Khagrachhari district unit, from the town's Madhupur area.

He was arrested from his Madhupur residence around 7:45pm, Khagrachhari Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Abdul Baten Mridha told The Daily Star.

There are over 20 cases filed against Ashutosh with Khagrachhari Sadar and other police stations, the OC said, adding that he would be produced before court today.

Ashutosh is also the president of the Khagrachhari District Bar Association.

## ‘Hasina herself was involved’

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Earlier, the commission members announced at a press conference that they had found eight secret detention centres in Dhaka and its outskirts.

The commission has since found one more Rab-run secret prison, said Sajjad.

While receiving the report yesterday, Prof Yunus said he would visit some of the joint interrogation cells and secret detention centres, better known as Aynaghar, as he wanted first-hand knowledge about the sufferings of the victims.

The commission also recommends repealing or heavily amending the Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009.

Sajjad said, “Terrorism is very vaguely defined in the law creating room for abuse. We have also

recommended abolishing the death penalty under this law.”

The report called for the creation of a new law criminalising enforced disappearances.

They also told the government to repeal laws under the Armed Police Battalions Ordinance that grants law enforcers indemnity for acts done in “good faith”.

The committee also recommends that the government creates a National Preventive Mechanism as mandated by the UN Convention Against Torture to protect civilians from abuses, Sajjad said.

Last month, commission member Nur Khan Liton told a press conference that the commission found a cell operated by Rab measuring just 3.5 feet x 4 feet. The cell had no source of light, except a small peephole. People

had been confined to such cells for years, he said.

Yesterday, the report was handed over to the chief adviser at the state guest house Jamuna.

The commission chairman told Yunus that another interim report would be delivered in March. It would take at least another year to scrutinise all the complaints.

Commission members Justice Farid Ahmed Shibli, human rights activist Nur Khan, BRAC University teacher Nabila Idris, and human rights activist Sajjad Hossain; Interim Government's advisory council members Adilur Rahman Khan and Sharmeen S Murshid; Principal Secretary to Chief Adviser Md Siraj Uddin Mia; and Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam were present, among others.

## Purbo Banglar Jatiya Mukti Bahini

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that the guava orchards would be a perfect place to fight the Pakistani forces.

Meanwhile, the training of freedom fighters had already begun at different places in Jhalakathi in early March, including Pipoldia and Romanathpur schools under the supervision of Mujib Mehedi, a leader of the workers' movement.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Fazlul Haque Milu, a freedom fighter of the Purbo Banglar Jatiya Mukti Bahini, recalled that they set up a camp at Palbari with Selim Shah Newaz in charge.

Youths were taking arms training at Jhalakathi police station ground at the initiative of second officer Shafiuul Islam and the Awami League with weapons collected from the police station's armoury.

At one stage of the training, the freedom fighters stockpiled food at a guava orchard. Jahangir Kabir, a freedom fighter of the force, said, “We opened up the storage for the common people as well.”

Acting on orders from Shafiuul, more than 100 students, youths, and Awami League activists, armed with 36 rifles, gathered at Kirtipasha High School when the Pakistani forces entered Jhalakathi town on April 27.

In a book titled “Comrade Siraj Sikder O Muktiyuddher Prothom Juddho”, Shafiuul wrote that a joint force called Oikya Front was formed at Kirtipasha school in Jhalakathi on April 29 by workers' group Purbo Bangla Sramik Andolan and the local Awami League, considering the Pakistanis as “national enemy”.

The workers' group held a rally at Bhimiruli school in Jhalakathi on April 30, 1971, according to “Ekattorer Biplobi Muktiyuddher Prothom Ghanti Elaka Peyarabagan”, a book edited by Munir Morshed. The force was named Purbo Banglar Jatiya Mukti Bahini at that rally. A supreme military council of directors was also formed for the force there, with Siraj as the supreme leader of the party and the force, Ram Krishna Pal as political commissioner and Selim Shah Newaz as the commander.

On May 2, the central base of the force was established with the guava orchards as the No. 1 Front Area and Bhimiruli as the headquarters. For training, a military school was opened in Bhimiruli. The orchards were divided into eight guerilla sectors under one commander and a political commissioner in each.

Khurshid Alam Khasru, a freedom fighter of the force said the political commissioner was mainly the chief of the sector while the commander's duty was to make immediate decisions.

Among the battles at the guava orchards was an assault on a Pakistani launch in Jhalakathi's Hemandkathi on May 7, when the occupation force was carrying out looting and arsons on the villages. As many as 24 Pakistani soldiers were killed in the attack.

Upon intelligence, the freedom fighters took position on both sides of the canal and ambushed the launch when the Pakistanis were returning to their camp after the day's looting.



Siraj Sikder



Khurshid Alam

🔴 **Operation area:** Greater Barishal, greater Dhaka, Pabna, Kushtia, Faridpur. Total of five front areas across Bangladesh. Carried out operations in eight sectors under Sector 1.

🔴 **Duration:** April-November

🔴 **Operations:** more than 100 across the country

🔴 **Supreme leader:** Siraj Sikder



PHOTO: AHMAD ISTIAK

**Recent photo of Bhimiruli, Jhalakathi Sadar upazila where this force established its HQ during the 1971 war.**

Jahangir Kabir, a freedom fighter of the force, recalled, “The man who was supposed to signal us upon arrival of the launch opened fire instead of giving us the signal out of thrill. The enemies fired back, but couldn't cope up with our firing. Their launch ran aground to the other bank of the canal.”

Abdul Jabbar, another freedom fighter of the force, said, “We took up position in such a strategic way that the bullets fired by the Pakistanis were going over our heads.”

The force conducted another significant operation on Banaripara Police Station in Barishal on May 25 with four teams under the command of freedom fighters Khasru, Firoz Kabir, Selim Shahnewaz and Ziaul.

Khasru said they first confined the patrolling police officers to the dispensary. A gunfight took place while looting the armoury as the other police officers resisted the freedom fighters.

“We couldn't take control of the police station because Firoz Kabir's troops failed to enter the premises. But we were able to bring eight rifles, some revolvers and ammunition,” Khasru said.

The Pakistani forces deployed one brigade encircling the orchards and forced villagers to fell the guava trees after realising that the freedom fighters established their base there.

Abu Saleh, the pir of Sarsina Darbar Sharif shrine in Pirojpur, also ordered the students of his madrasa to cut the trees.

The freedom fighters were on the verge of being captured as the Pakistani military brought 35 speed boats and two gunboats while tree felling continued for several days.

In this situation, on June 3, the workers' organisation was renamed from Purbo Bangla Sramik Andolan to Purbo Bangla Sarbohara Party.

Having been cut off, the freedom fighters decided to attack the Pakistani military's Kuriana camp on the bank of a river as a diversion on June 6 night.

When all the Pakistani vessels rushed to the Kuriana camp

immediately after the attack, the freedom fighters, led by Siraj Sikder, crossed the river to safety on small boats.

The Purbo Banglar Jatiya Mukti Bahini also fought more than 100 battles in other parts of the country by forming several other front areas in Barishal, Bhola, Munshiganj, Pabna, Madaripur and Savar.

Ramakrishna Paul and Khasru were the leaders of the front area in Barishal. Besides Gouranadi, Babuganj, Muladi, Hijla, Mehendiganj, Banna and Golachipa in Barishal, they fought in Madaripur town, Kalkini and Palong, and Shariatpur's Naria and Zazira.

Under political commissioner Ziaul Quddus and commander Lal Gazi, the freedom fighters of the front area in Bhola took control of Lalmoahan and Charfeson police station in August and September.

On October 16, they joined forces with the local Siddique Bahini to fight the battle of Deula in Borhanuddin upazila. At least 29 Pakistani soldiers, the officer-in-charge of the local police station, and another policeman were killed in the five-hour battle.

Mazid alias Engineer Nasir was the leader of the Purbo Banglar Jatiya Mukti Bahini in the front area in Munshiganj, where the regional force began guerilla warfare under Shahjahan Talukder's leadership in late May by driving away the collaborators of the Pakistan.

From the front area of Pabna, the freedom fighters of Purbo Banglar Jatiya Mukti Bahini carried out several attacks on police stations in Pabna, Tangail, Sirajganj, Kushtia and Faridpur.

Madaripur was under the Front Area No. 2 in Barishal first, but a separate front was established in Madaripur later.

The other front area of the force was in Savar, from where they started fighting under Samiullah Azmi in Savar and Manikganj from July.

[Translated and edited from Bangla by Osham Sufian]

**A video story will be available on our YouTube channel soon.**

## ACC, NBR, CID teams to probe

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11-member taskforce to recover laundered money. Money laundering is considered a major reason behind the country's financial troubles.

The taskforce, led by Bangladesh Bank Governor Ahsan H Mansur, has already held two meetings, said ACC and NBR sources.

They said the taskforce selected the 10 major businesses for allegedly laundering money, dodging taxes and investing money abroad without approval. Other businesses involved in such crimes will also be investigated in phases, they said.

The Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU), which is providing secretariat service to the taskforce, has written to the ACC, NBR and CID, asking them to form separate teams to probe the 10 groups, the sources said.

“The teams are expected to be formed within this week,” said an NBR official wishing anonymity.

According to the letters, the investigation teams will also get necessary assistance from the Office

of the Attorney General. The teams will have to regularly provide reports to the taskforce and the BFIU about the progress of the probes.

Many of these 10 groups are also facing separate investigations by the ACC over alleged corruption, sources of the anti-graft body said.

Moreover, the government in October blocked the transfer of shares of Bashundhara Group, Orion Group, Summit Group, Beximco Group, S Alam Group and Nassa Group.

The NBR on October 2 directed the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies & Firms (RJSC) to immediately freeze any sales or transfers of shares by these companies.

As per the white paper committee's report, the laundered money was sent to or routed primarily through the UAE, the UK, Canada, the US, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and India, as well some tax havens.

The report read, “Illicit financial outflows constituted a complex web of shadow economy that thrived on criminal activities of diverse

nature and drew sustenance from an unholy alliance of sections of corrupt politicians, businessmen, financial players, middlemen, government officials, influence peddlers and wheeler-dealers of different types.

“These people worked in connivance with and corrupted the country's executive, legislative, financial, legal and other institutions; undermined domestic investment and revenue mobilisation efforts; depleted forex reserves; weakened the country's macroeconomic management; and seriously damaged the cause of good governance in all spheres.”

The laundered money was used for buying real estate or was funnelled through “anonymous” business operations, said the 30-chapter and 400-page-long report submitted early this month.

After the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led government on August 5, BFIU froze banks accounts of 550 individuals and companies, which had a total of Tk 14,500 crore, the unit's sources said.

Razakars, Al-Badr, and Al-Shams this year.

He also emphasised the importance of preserving the historical truth of the 1971 genocide and reclaiming the Awami League's narrative of the war.

“This is why two political student bodies with different ideologies came together today to commemorate the day.”

Speaking at a separate discussion hosted by Bangladesh Udichi Shilpigoshthi, Asif Munir, son of martyred intellectual Munier Choudhury, said, “The creations of intellectuals — their plays, stories, and novels — remain relevant. We must research and present their works to the youth to reclaim our roots.”

Meanwhile, this correspondent found no commemorative events by Students Against Discrimination at DU.

A Facebook post citing spokesperson Umama Fatma read, “We are postponing our event on Martyred Intellectuals' Day due to unavoidable circumstances. A new date will be

abstained, with eight votes nullified.

With the impeachment, Yoon has been suspended from office while South Korea's Constitutional Court deliberates on the vote.

The court has 180 days to rule on Yoon's future and Chief Justice Moon Hyung-bae vowed to hold “a swift and fair trial”.

If the court backs his removal,

## South Korea’s President Yoon impeached

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In a televised address following the parliamentary vote, the impeached Yoon said he would “step aside” but did not apologise for his botched bid to impose martial law.

Out of 300 lawmakers, 204 voted to impeach the president on allegations of insurrection while 85 voted against the motion. Three