

# NEWS

## Turkey detains 115 alleged IS members

AFP, Istanbul

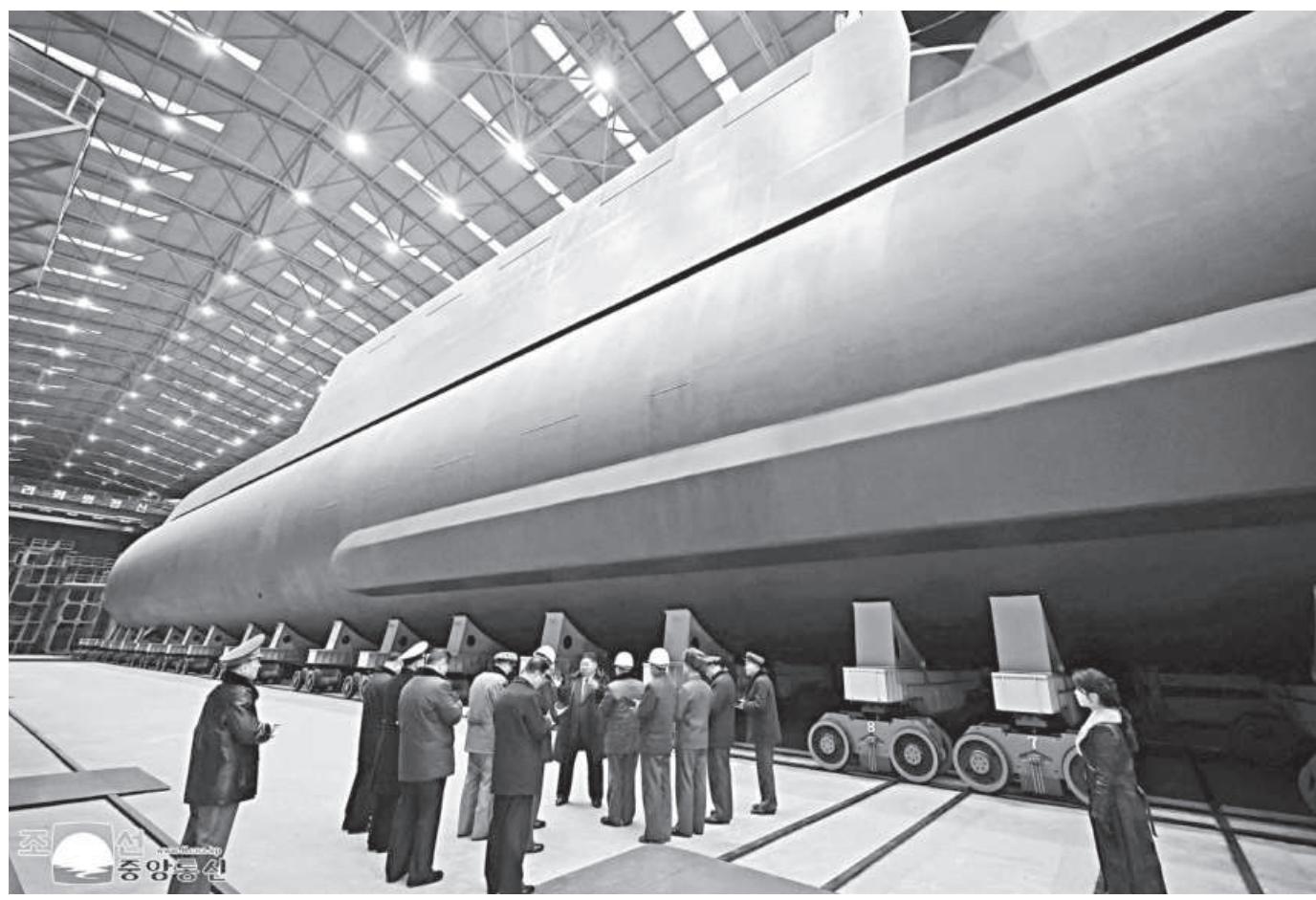
Some 115 alleged members of the Islamic State group suspected of planning attacks during the end of year holidays have been arrested in Turkey, Istanbul's prosecutor general said yesterday.

"Following intelligence indicating that the IS terrorist organisation was planning attacks during Christmas and New Year celebrations," the prosecutor's office ordered the detention of 137 people, 115 of whom have been arrested, the Istanbul prosecutor general's office said in a statement.

Turkey shares a 900-kilometre (559-mile) border with Syria, where jihadist groups are still active and where the IS was accused of an attack in mid December that killed two US soldiers and one civilian.

Washington recently blamed a lone IS gunman for an attack in Palmyra, Syria, on December 13 in which two US soldiers and an American civilian died.

This week, Turkey's intelligence agency also conducted an operation on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border area, capturing a Turkish national who it said held a senior role in the IS group.



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un visits the construction site of an 8,700-tonne nuclear-powered submarine said to be capable of launching surface-to-air missiles, in this photo released yesterday by the country's official Korean Central News Agency. PHOTO: AFP

## 'NCP leaning towards seat-sharing deal with Jamaat'

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Repeated attempts to reach NCP Convener Nahid Islam and Chief Coordinator Nasiruddin Patwary by phone and message were unsuccessful.

NCP Joint Convener Sarwar Tushar told The Daily Star that no final decision had been made. "Nothing has been finalised for an official announcement. Details will be shared once discussions are over," he said.

Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar confirmed to BBC Bangla that discussions on seat-sharing between Jamaat and the NCP were under way.

Hewrote that the NCP was finally forming an alliance with Jamaat, calling it a "suicidal decision" driven by the interests of a few leaders.

Kader claimed the NCP had initially demanded 50 seats from Jamaat but eventually settled for 30, under conditions that would prevent the party from fielding candidates in the remaining 270 constituencies.

He also claimed NCP's Patwary and Jamaat leader Abdullah Mohammad Taher would oversee the

Jamaat has also agreed to a seat compromise while keeping the Gonoantrik Songskar Jote intact. "Overall, the talks are moving in a positive direction," one NCP leader said.

The issue entered the public domain yesterday morning after Abdul Kader, former coordinator of the anti-discrimination student movement and convener of the defunct Dhaka University Democratic Student Union, raised concerns in a Facebook post.

He wrote that the NCP was finally forming an alliance with Jamaat, calling it a "suicidal decision" driven by the interests of a few leaders.

Kader claimed the NCP had initially demanded 50 seats from Jamaat but eventually settled for 30, under conditions that would prevent the party from fielding candidates in the remaining 270 constituencies.

As negotiations with the BNP stalled, NCP leaders said the party shifted its focus toward Jamaat-e-Islami to preserve its political relevance and

finalisation of candidates for those seats. Taher did not receive phone calls for comments.

Sources said talks between the BNP and NCP had been ongoing since the start of election preparations, with both sides initially exploring an alliance rooted in the legacy of the July mass uprising.

The NCP had sought 20 seats, and most of its leaders supported the move.

However, disagreements over seat distribution, the July charter and reform issues gradually widened, becoming public with the signing of the charter.

In early November, Nahid had announced his decision to contest separately. On December 7, the Gonoantrik Songskar Jote was launched, followed by the NCP's announcement of candidates for 125 seats on December 10.

As negotiations with the BNP stalled, NCP leaders said the party shifted its focus toward Jamaat-e-Islami to preserve its political relevance and

organisational footing. A senior NCP leader, speaking anonymously, said the BNP's stance had changed as its position strengthened. "During difficult times, the BNP needed us. Now they have taken a dismissive, almost despotic attitude," he said.

"They are offering only three seats, with the condition that we dissolve the party and our alliances to merge with them. Under these terms, the prospects of an alliance or seat-sharing with the BNP are extremely low," he added, noting that a final decision would follow talks with Tarique.

A BNP leader with knowledge of seat-sharing talks with other parties said it had held discussions with the NCP a long time ago. "There was no talk with the NCP recently," the leader added, requesting anonymity.

**MIXED REACTIONS AMONG ALLIES**

The developments have drawn mixed reactions within the Gonoantrik Songskar Jote. The Amar

Songskar Jote, The Amar Bangladeshi Party (AB Party) has responded pragmatically, while the Rastro Songskar Andolon has voiced sharp criticism.

"We will speak with our alliance partners soon. We want to move forward together," said a senior NCP leader.

An AB Party leader, requesting anonymity, said, "Without an agreement with a major party, our post-election existence would be uncertain. Since the BNP is unwilling to compromise, Jamaat has become our last option."

In contrast, Rastro Songskar Andolon Chairman Hasnat Kajiyam said the NCP's engagement with Jamaat undermined the alliance's principles.

"Jamaat is an undemocratic party. By negotiating simultaneously with the BNP and Jamaat, the NCP has violated the core democratic conditions of the alliance. As a result, this alliance has effectively collapsed and no longer exists," he said.

## Russia makes 'proposal' to France over jailed researcher

AFP, Moscow

Moscow has made an offer to Paris regarding jailed French researcher Laurent Vinatier, who is facing espionage charges that could see him sentenced to 20 years in a Russian prison, the Kremlin said yesterday.

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