

## EBF held meetings with UNCHR Representatives in Geneva

Geneva: EBF representatives held two separate meetings with the senior officials of the United Nations Commission for Human Rights (UNCHR) on 30 July and 7 Aug 2018 respectively at Oxford University, UK and in Geneva, Switzerland respectively.

**Meeting in Geneva:** A delegation of the European Bangladesh Forum (EBF) met with officials of the United Nations Commission for Human Rights at its office at the Palais Wilson, Geneva on 7 August 2018. The delegation briefed the UNCHR officials of the overall situation in Bangladesh. They said, with the forthcoming general election in Bangladesh, the extremist groups will attempt to disrupt and destabilize the present secular government. Past records have shown that during and after the elections the fundamentalist militants targeted minorities and burnt their houses and looted their properties. It is important to be vigilant against these misdeeds and ensure the protection of minorities, the delegation told. The UNCHR officials were Ms. Johanne Bouchard and Ms. Brenda Vukovic. The EBF delegation was led by its President Mr Ansar Ahmed Ullah. EBF representatives also discussed the importance of the international recognition of



Genocide of 1971 Bangladesh War committed by Pakistani soldiers. Following the meeting it was decided that EBF will attend the Human Rights Council scheduled to be held in Geneva in September and the General Assembly in New York in October 2018 to highlight the overall situation of Bangladesh. The meetings were organised as a follow-up to the EBF conference held in the United Nations, Geneva, in March 2018 and to find out ways for future collaboration and support from UNCHR. *(Picture shows EBF delegation with the UNHCR officials in Geneva).*

**Meeting in UK:** Earlier, on 30 July EBF President Ansar Ahmed Ullah held a meeting with UN Special Representative on Human Rights, Ms. Karima Bennouna. The meeting with the Special Representative of UNCHR Ms. Karima Bennouna discussed at length on the extreme violence in and beyond Bangladesh. She said, extremist violence should be treated as a human rights issue. She suggested to engage the youth of the diaspora as they don't seem to be aware of the seriousness of the issue.

# Call to work for recognition of 1971 Genocide in Bangladesh by Pakistan

The Hague, 15 Aug 2018: Embassy of Bangladesh in The Hague organized a program on 15 August 2018 at the embassy auditorium to commemorate the 43<sup>rd</sup> martyrdom anniversary of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the National Mourning Day. Embassy officials along with members of the family, leaders of the Netherlands Awami League and expatriate Bangladesh community attended the program.

The discussion held on the occasion was addressed by the Bangladesh ambassador Mr Sheikh Mohammad Belal, visiting Professor and Chairman of the Department of Criminology of the University of Dhaka Dr. Zia Rahman, local Awami league leaders Mr Mayeed Faruque, Mr. Jounal Abedin Mr. Mostafa Zaman and expatriate Bikash Chowdhury Barua.



The visiting Professor Dr. Rahman presented a paper titled, “Political philosophy of Bangabandhu in the development of Bangladesh”. In his paper Prof Rahman said, Bangabandhu turned Bangladesh into a secular state despite all odds. The two countries were divided in the name of religion. Bangladesh was just a new born country from a Muslim-country, Pakistan. During that period the social structure, faith, life style- all were dominated by religion. That period can well be termed as a ‘theological stage’. Living in this time in 2018 in Europe can we think how difficult it was to give a Muslim country into a Secular form and how much modern

philosophical thoughts and directions you have to have? Impossible. Despite all the obstacles and objections from the fundamentalist groups, Bangabandhu remained determined and uncompromising to the 1972 Constitution of the country, turning Bangladesh a Secular state. (Photos: From left Prof Rahman, Mayeed Faruque, Bikash Chowdhury Barua & below: ambassador Sheikh Mohammad Belal. Photo: Bangladesh Embassy)

Quoting from a speech of Bangabandhu delivered in 1973 the Prof said, Bangabandhu in his speech said,

*“so that religious fundamentalism cannot raise their heads. Bangladesh is a secular country. Muslims will do their religious activities, Hindus will perform their religious activities. Buddhists will do their religious work. No one can hinder the other. But in the name of Islam no one will be allowed to exploit the people of Bangladesh anymore”.*

Prof Rahman regretted the 1971 genocide perpetrated by the Pakistani forces and their allies in Bangladesh is one of the heinous crimes in the world. But unfortunately it has not yet received international attention and recognition. He called upon the expatriates to reach to the mainstream population and work to get recognition of the 1971 genocide.



# Discussion on Bangladesh Election and Minority issues at European Parliament

Brussels: Campaign for Protection of the Religious Minorities in Bangladesh (CPRMB) and Secular Bangladesh Movement, UK jointly organised a Discussion at the European Parliament in Brussels on “Bangladesh Election 2018- The State of Politics, Economy and Society” on 10 July 2018. The discussion was convened by the British MEP, Dr Charles Tannock who is also the UK Conservative Party Foreign Affairs and Human Rights Spokesman for London. The Seminar discussed at length the political and economic setting in Bangladesh in the run up to the 2018 elections as well as the threats of terrorism, minority rights issues and the rule of law within the country.

The seminar also discussed how the international community can help to strengthen Bangladeshi democracy and governance. Speakers from Bangladesh were: political advisor to the PM of Bangladesh, H T Imam, former Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, advisor to the PM of Bangladesh Mashiur Rahman: and from Europe, MEP Ms. Jean Lambert, head of European Bangladesh affairs group, Professor Willem van der Geest, an economist, Dr. Siegfried Wolf, a SE Asia terrorist expert, Baroness Mobarrak from London, Sayeed Kamal, MEP, Sajjad Karim, member of European Parliamentary Group, Amjad Bashir, Pusphita Gupta of Secular Movement for Bangladesh UK and Ajit Saha of CPRMB. The seminar was held in a committee room of the Parliament.

Leaders from the main opposition party, BNP were also invited to the Seminar, according to the organisers. But they refused to participate in the seminar on the ground that they would not be given enough floor to place their arguments. Around 40 participants took part in the seminar. Awami league leaders from a number of European countries, human rights activists also took part. Speakers in the seminar underscored the need for an independent and strong Election Commission to ensure free and fair elections in Bangladesh. They



said, to keep the pace of current development intact this is very important. Ms Jean Lambert in her speech called upon the government of Bangladesh to

take stern actions against those who created and took part in violence in different elections in the country. She also called for ensuring the rights of peaceful protests by all in Bangladesh. Ms Dipu Moni former Foreign minister said, the forthcoming elections will be free and fair and there will be scopes for observation teams. But if any party does not want to join the polls, it means they already know that they are rejected by the people because of their past deeds. (In this meeting BNP leaders were invited, but BNP says in such meetings in the past BNP was leaders were not given enough floor to express their views. That is why BNP did not take part in this meeting in Brussels.)

At the start of the meeting Charles Tannock MEP appreciated the progress of Bangladesh but also mentioned about the challenge of terrorism. South East Asia terrorism expert Dr Wolf Siegfried accused Jamaat-e-Islami of the spread of religious extremism in Bangladesh. He said, although Jamaat is not registered with the Election Commission, this party will have influence in the coming elections. He said, terrorism is being expanded to the madrasahs and universities in Bangladesh. Even the Rohingya refugee camps and the jails have become the targets of terrorism and violence, he added. But Ms. Lambert said, it is not that only one party is working to spread religious terrorism, lot of other groups are also involved. Charles



Tennock said, it would be very unfortunate if BNP attempts to make Jamaat accepted to people. PM's two advisors from Dhaka gave a list of the success stories of AL government in last 9 years. Pushpita Gupta and Ajit Saha gave a description of the atrocities meted out to the Hindu community members during the AL government period and said, the present government has failed to ensure the lives and properties of the minority community members. Their allegations were refuted by the Bangladeshi delegates from Dhaka.

## Bangladesh Elections: US calls for free, fair elections, India terms it 'internal matter'

US Ambassador in Bangladesh Ms. Marcia Bernicat called for a 'free, fair and credible' election in Bangladesh, while the Indian High Commissioner in Bangladesh Mr. Harsh Vardhan Shringla termed the elections as an 'internal matter' of Bangladesh. Both of them were talking to the local journalists in Dhaka following their meeting with the Bangladesh Secretary recently.

The US envoy told the journalists that US "free, fair, credible process and an inclusive "And details will be worked out among all the involved and the government," she said, adding is counting on the government" to do that as the itself has said that it is committed to holding a credible election.



Foreign

focuses on a process". parties that "the US government free, fair and

### Indian Envoy:



"That is an internal matter of Bangladesh," the Indian high commissioner said when asked, adding that he would not make any comment on the issue. The High Commissioner said, they took stock of the bilateral relations during the meeting with the foreign secretary. They also discussed the outcomes of the just-concluded BIMSTEC Summit, he said.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith on Wednesday said Dec 27 might be the possible voting date for the next parliamentary election. The BNP-led alliance that

boycotted the last general election in 2014 is still not sure about contesting in the next polls which will be held with Sheikh Hasina as the Prime Minister.

## EBF Conference at House of Lords in London

European Bangladesh Forum (EBF) will organise a Conference on 'The challenge of Parliamentary Democracy & Radicalisation in Bangladesh: Way Forward' on Thursday 25 October 2018, from 3.30 pm to 5.30 pm at the House of Lords, London, UK.

The Conference will bring together democratic and secular actors, politicians, think tank and create strong public opinion in favor of Parliamentary and secular democracy and against the Islamist extremist groups. This will also strengthen European and global stake holders to address a phenomenon that is pertinent to the problems and exchange good practices of prevention.

It may be mentioned that in end-December 2018 Bangladesh is set to hold its next general election but there is considerable political uncertainty with one of Bangladesh's main political party – the BNP (Bangladesh Nationalist Party) - failing to agree on an election process. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has proposed of forming a cross-party interim cabinet to supervise the election but BNP leader, Khaleda Zia, has threatened to boycott the elections if they are not held under a non-elected/non-party caretaker government.

Another key issue causing tension between the two main parties is the appeasement of Islamists by the BNP. Islamo fascist party Jamaat-e-Islami is a partner of BNP-led Alliance. Despite objections from all quarters including EU, BNP has refused to sever ties with Jamaat. The world community is aware of BNP Jamaat-led violence against minority communities when they were in power. EBF is working to ensure that Bangladesh remains a secular democratic politically stable state.

The Conference will be addressed by Lord Paul Bew as host, Mr. Jim Fitzpatrick, MP, Prof. Martin Frampton, Queen Mary University of London, Ms. Roberta Bonazzi, President, European



Foundation for Democracy, Belgium, Dr. Siegfried O. Wolf, Director of Research, South Asia Democratic Forum (SADF), Belgium, Dr. David Lews, London School of Economics, Syed Badrul Ahsan, Editor in charge, The Asian Age and Mr. Ansar Ahmed Ullah, President, EBF.

## Turkey's emergency rule expires as Erdogan's powers expand

A two-year state of emergency imposed after Turkey's failed 2016 coup will end on Thursday but Tayyip Erdogan's opponents say his new executive presidency and a draft anti-terrorism law leave him with sweeping powers to stifle dissent. Since emergency rule was declared, more than 150,000 civil servants have been purged and 77,000 people suspected of links to the attempted coup have been charged, in a crackdown criticised by rights groups and Turkey's Western allies. Ahead of elections last month, Erdogan promised to lift the state of emergency if re-elected, but he said the government would also introduce new counter-terrorism legislation and take tough action against any threat to Turkey's security.

'Although the government is trying to disguise the new laws as an end to the state of emergency, what's really going on is that the state of emergency is being made permanent,' Ayhan Bilgen, spokesman for the pro-Kurdish HDP party, said. New anti-terrorism laws, which the government says will prevent 'an interruption in the fight against terrorism', will be discussed in parliament on Thursday. The proposed law grants local governors authority to limit access for specific people to parts of their province if they suspect

the person will disrupt public order. It also allows authorities to press ahead with mass dismissals of civil servants and hold suspects in custody for up to 12 days. It also broadens the scope to ban demonstrations.



Authorities say the crackdown following the failed 2016 coup, blamed on the network of US-based preacher Fethullah Gulen which the government refers to as FETO, was crucial to preserve Turkey's security. They say the president's new powers and the proposed legislation are also needed to help confront threats from conflict in neighbouring Syria and Iraq as well as an insurgency by Kurdish militants in the southeast. 'Ending the state of emergency should not be deemed as ending our fight against terror,' Justice Minister Abulhamit Gul said this week. 'The most persistent and determined fight against all kinds of terrorism, especially the FETO, will continue til the end.' 'We remain concerned that many of the emergency measures have been given permanent effect in Turkish law and will have pernicious and lasting consequences for the enjoyment of human rights and for the rule of law in Turkey,' said Massimo Frigo, a legal adviser to the ICJ. Lifting the state of emergency has been a demand of Turkey's main business lobby. An executive of the TUSIAD business group said in January that foreign investors had been deterred by the repeated extension of its three-month terms. A source close to the presidential palace said the state of emergency may have affected investor perception of Turkey, but the country was moving on and it was wrong to portray the new legislation as an extension of the emergency rule. 'The state of emergency was creating a different perception for investors, especially foreign investors. With the new law, this cause for concern will have been removed.' (Source: Reuters)

## **Bangladesh reiterates support to ICC in The Hague**

The Hague: The Speaker of the Bangladesh Parliament, Ms. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury was in the Hague to attend the the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute in The Hague on Tuesday, 17 July 2018. Addressing the meeting she reiterated Bangladesh support to the Rome Statute and the International Criminal Court to put an end to the impunity, bring the perpetrators of the world's most heinous crimes to justice and uphold the rule of law. She extended Bangladesh's support to the Trust Fund as it will help soothe the victims. She also talked on Rohingya issues.

The Speaker drew the attention about the technological progress that is superseding the national borders and stressed on the importance of ICC's flexibility and openness to new ideas and voices to remain relevant to the coming decades and to put an end to impunity, uphold the rule of law and



ensure access to justice for all peoples. High-level representatives from the States Parties to the Rome Statute, including the President of Nigeria; Ministers and Parliament Speakers from a good number of States Parties, attended the celebrations of the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute in The Hague.

Later in the evening on the day, a dinner reception was hosted by the Bangladesh ambassador in the Netherlands Sheikh Mohammad Belal at his residence in honour of the Speaker. It was attended among others by the Judge O-Gon Kwon, President of the Assembly of State Parties of ICC, Ms. Fatou Bensouda, Prosecutor of ICC, Philippe Cuvreur, Registrar of International Court of Justice, Rabin Baldewsingh, Ex-Deputy Mayor of the Hague Municipality, Ambassador Laetitia van den Assum, Former Member of Anan Commission and Peter Potman, Director, Asia & Oceania Dept, Dutch foreign Ministry.

## Secular Forum held meeting in London

London: Vice President of Secular Forum (Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee) Prof Muntasar Mamun, Researcher and senior Professor of Dhaka University said in a meeting in East London recently that the confusion which was created after the killing of Bangabandhu Sk Mujibur Rahman in 1975 among the people on the spirit of the liberation war and secular democracy due to

distortion of history has not yet been over. That is why a big group within the Awami League leadership wants to go to power and remain in power in collusion with fundamentalist power, he added.



Prof Mamun said, only by going to power through tactical games of politics will not help. Awami League has to win the inner mind of the Bangladeshi people to establish a secular Bangladesh

which was the dream of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He was speaking at a meeting with the leaders of UK branch of the Ghatok Dala Nirmul Committee (Suclar Forum) at a restaurant in East London. The meeting was attended among others by advisor of UK Secular Forum and UK Awami League President Sultan Sharif, Secular Forum Central Committee member and President of EBF Ansar Ahmed Ullah, Vice President of UK Secular Forum Matiar Chowdhury, Asstt Secretary of the UK Secular Forum, Jamal Khan, Member of the Secretariat of Secular Forum Pushpita Gupta, JSD leader Mujibul Hoq Moni and Shah Mostafizur Rahman Belal. It was presided over by UK Secular Forum President Ishaq Kajal. Prof Mamun said, we have to realise one thing that like the 'left', there is a reactionary force within Awami League today. Bangabandhu turned Bangladesh into a secular and democratic state but the post-1975 anti-liberation forces conspired with a blue print to destroy that dream. Sk Hasina has brought Bangladesh to such peak of success today despite threats on her life, but it has been possible only because, she is the daughter of Bangbandhu, added the visiting Dhaka university professor

## ‘Rohingyas’ crisis: possible victims of int’l terrorist groups

The displaced Rohingya people will fall prey to international terrorist groups if the ongoing refugee crisis is not resolved, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said today. “Tackling the Rohingya situation is a new challenge for us. But if we cannot solve the problem then the Rohingya people will become an easy prey of the international terrorist groups,” the minister said at a meet the press programme at Dhaka Reporters’ Unity in the capital this morning. “Although Myanmar is claiming again and again that they will take back

the Rohingyas, we don’t see any sign of that happening,” he added.



The government is communicating with all international community including the UN to solve the Rohingya crisis and the issue was one of the main topics of discussion with Indian Home Minister during his

recent three-day visit. Replying to a query on the Deputy Inspector General Mizanur Rahman, the minister said the police official was suspended immediately and steps were taken to ensure flawless investigation.

When asked about government’s inaction against over 200 police officials who appeared as drug patrons in the home ministry’s lists, the minister said, “We are not sparing anyone. Possibly you are not getting all the messages.” Asked about why godfathers are not being brought to book, the minister said law enforcers are taking action against those whose names appeared common in the five lists prepared by five separate intelligence agencies. The minister also said the killing of Teknaf municipality Councillor Akramul Haque is under investigation and action will be taken against responsible persons after completion of probe.

No incidents of enforced disappearance are taking place, the minister also said, adding, “We do not conduct any extra-judicial killings.” When asked about police’s inaction as some youths are repeatedly assaulting teachers and students on Dhaka University campus, Kamal said that police never intervene in the university issues until its authorities call them in. The minister, however, said the attackers on VC’s residence were being identified and arrested. About the investigation on journalist couple Sagar-Runi murder case, Kamal expressed his hope that Rab, the investigating agency of the case, will be able to come up with findings anytime. (Source: The Daily Star)

## Malaysia: seven people arrested over militant links

The Muslim-majority country has been on high alert since gunmen allied with the Islamic State (IS) militant group carried out a series of attacks in Jakarta, the capital of neighbouring Indonesia, in January 2016. Four Malaysians and three Indonesian men were arrested in four states between July 12 and 17, Inspector-General of Police Mohamad Fuzi Harun said in a statement.

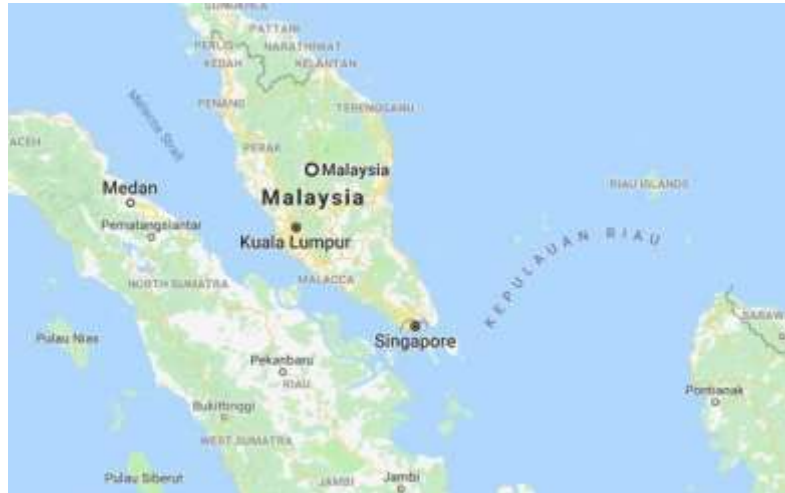
A 34-year-old unemployed man was arrested in the Malaysian state of Johor, north of Singapore, for allegedly posting death threats on social media against Malaysia’s King, Sultan Muhammad V, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, and the minister in charge of religious affairs Mujahid Yusof Rawa. Police



believe the threats were made based on the belief the targets were “un-Islamic leaders, whose methods of ruling the country were not based on Shariah law”, Muhamad Fuzi said.

A 42-year-old technician was picked up for allegedly making threats to launch bomb attacks in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines after the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr. The other Malaysian suspects were a man and a woman in their 20s. The woman allegedly sent funds to a known Malaysian militant in Syria, while police believe the man had planned to travel to Syria to join the Islamic State, Muhammad Fuzi said.

One of the arrested had pledged allegiance to military training State of Indonesia or Indonesian militant Bandung. Police year-old man, Malaysian woman, planned to take his children to Syria to State, Mohamad Fuzi Indonesian suspect linked to a member Ansharut Daulah involved in the May 10 killing of an Indonesian police officer at the mobile police brigade headquarters in West Java, Muhamad Fuzi said.



Indonesians allegedly and received from the Islamic NII, an group in believe the 26-married to a had also wife and step-join the Islamic said. Another was allegedly of Jemaah (JAD) who was

A third Indonesian, who police said admitted to being a Islamic State member, was detained for saving about 190 videos and photos of the militant group’s activities on his mobile phone, and uploading similar images to his Facebook account. Malaysia has arrested hundreds of people over the past few years for suspected links to militant groups, but has never suffered a major attack. Islamic State took responsibility for a 2016 grenade attack on a bar on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, which wounded eight people. It was the first such strike in Malaysia. (Source: Bdnews24.com)

## Leftist parties form new Left Democratic Alliance as general election nears

Eight leftist parties, including the Communist Party of Bangladesh or CPB, Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dalor BaSaD and Ganasanghati Andolan, have floated a new alliance with an eye on the parliamentary elections. They announced the ‘Bam Jote’ or Left Democratic the CPB headquarters Bhaban in Dhaka’s Purana Wednesday.

Saiful Haque, the general the Biplobi Workers Party Revolutionary Workers Bangladesh (RWPB), has with coordinating among the new alliance. The in the new bloc are the (Marxist), the United League of Bangladesh, Ganatantrik Biplobi Party and Samajtantrik Andolan. CPB President Mujahidul Islam



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said they would try to garner support of the voters. “But it’s not an election alliance. Elections are a part of our overall movement,” he said. “We can contest in elections for the sake of the movement, or we can boycott as well,” said Selim, whose party stayed away from the 2014 general election. The next election is scheduled by the end of this year. Rashed Khan Menon’s Workers Party of Bangladesh and some other leftist parties joined the ruling Awami League-led coalition as the left democratic alliance formed two decades ago like that in West Bengal started to split. The parties that joined the ‘fascist’ ruling coalition would not be called into the new alliance, Selim said.

The parties that joined the ‘fascist’ ruling coalition would not be called into the new alliance, Selim said. “Our fight is against them, too,” he said. Saiful, who is a leader of the breakaway party of Menon’s Workers Party now, announced a series of programmes as the coordinator of the new alliance. They will organise rallies across Bangladesh against the ‘misrule and corruption’ on July 24, discussion on ways to ensure citizens’ right to vote on Aug 4, and rallies and processions in six main cities on Aug 10 and 11. BaSaD General Secretary Khalequzzaman, CPB General Secretary Shah Alam, Ganasanghati Andolan Chief Coordinator Zonayed Saki, RWPB General Secretary Moshrefa Mishu, BaSaD (Marxist) leader Shuvranshu Chakraborty, United Communist League General Secretary Mosharraf Hossain Nannu, and Samajtantrik Andolan Convenor Hamidul Haque were also present. Saiful said the alliance’s central council will be formed with two members from each of the parties. One from each party will take turns to act as the coordinator for three months, he added. (Source: Bdnews24.com)

## UK: man of Bangladesh origin plots to kill PM May

A 20-year-old British man of Bangladesh origin has been found guilty of plotting to kill Theresa May in a suicide attack on Downing Street, where he intended to behead the prime minister. Details of the violent plans of Naa'imur Zakariyah Rahman were heard at the Old Bailey where he has been on trial with another man, 22-year-old Mohammad Aqib Imran, accused of planning to travel abroad either to Libya or Syria to engage in terrorism, The Guardian reports.

Imran was found guilty of having a terrorist deliberations by the jury, which on considering a charge against him of Rahman had become the focus of a major by counter-terrorism officers from the and had believed he was corresponding while planning the attack. In fact, he was security services, according to the report.



handbook after 13 hours of Wednesday night was still preparing terrorist acts abroad. undercover operation mounted Metropolitan police and MI5, online with Islamic State talking to members of the

Rahman, who has family in Birmingham and the capital on Nov 28, shortly after the last of undercover police officers posing as been provided with what he was told was a suicide vest and a bomb. An examination of his mobile phone raised concerns that he may have been harbouring extremist views. Details of messages sent on the Telegram app by Rahman to a fake IS member were read out in court. On Sept 14 last year, he said: “Can

north London, was arrested in a number of meetings with terrorists, and where he had

you put me in a sleeper cell ASAP? I want to do a suicide bomb on parliament. I want to attempt to kill Theresa May.” The next day, he said: “My objective is to take out my target. Nothing less than the death of the leaders of parliament.” His plans evolved to the point where he carried out reconnaissance around Whitehall last November and gave a rucksack to an undercover police officer in the belief it would be fitted with explosives.

On Nov 28 last year, the officer returned the rucksack and coat – now containing dummy explosives – telling him he was “good to go”. Rahman was arrested as he walked away from the rendezvous in Kensington. Rahman had been known since late 2015 to the government’s Channel programme – aimed at intervening in the lives of those who may be at risk of violent radicalisation. Yet by the time of his arrest he had withdrawn



## EU expects fair Election in Bangladesh

The European Union on Thursday said they expect free, fair, credible and transparent elections in Bangladesh as the nation goes to national election by the end of this year. 'We are looking forward to free, fair, credible and transparent elections in this country,' said managing director for Asia and the Pacific at European External Action Service Gunnar Wiegand adding that they discussed preparations on this.

He made the remark while taking part in consultations between Bangladesh and the EU to support Rohingyas to ease their situation.

In the meeting, both sides discussed developments on both sides. Bangladesh can intensify cooperation with the EU and the UN to support Rohingyas in Meghna. Issues relating to the Rohingyas will continue to be discussed.

from any engagement in the programme. According to prosecutors, he had gone further, seeking to portray a self-styled "liberal" Muslim to avoid drawing any attention to his desire to wage violent jihad. (Source: Bdnews24.com)



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Foreign secretary M Shahidul Haque and his EU counterpart Gunnar Wiegand led Bangladesh and EU sides respectively in the meeting. The second diplomatic consultation between Bangladesh and the EU was held on February 15 last year in Brussels. (Source: United News of Bangladesh)

## Bangladeshi store owner shot dead in Florida

According to the Broward Sheriff's Office, 61-year-old Ayub Ali was shot and killed during a robbery at Aunt Molly's Food Store, near Southwest 17th Street and South State Road Seven. Ali, a father of four, was born in Fatikchhari Upazila's Nanopur village in Chattogram. He was the vice-president of the Awami League's Florida wing. Ali was pronounced dead at Broward Health Medical Centre after he was taken there.

"This cannot be a case of robbery but a hate crime as nothing has been looted from the store," Atiqur Rahman, executive vice-president of Bi-national Chamber of Commerce in Florida, told reporters after visiting the scene. Ali had been in the store 10 years ago. He also lived with his children and wife in Florida. Homicide detectives were searching for a man who they say shot Ali, "He was a very, very nice person," said victim. "He was very friendly with the customers. Everybody liked him



living in the US since 1994. He bought the house in Parkland last year and Farhana. Leaders of Florida Awami League, Florida, Bangladesh Association of Florida Commerce went to the hospital and met his searching for a man who they say shot Ali, "He was a very, very nice person," said victim. "He was very friendly with the in the community."

Friends of Ali said he was part of a very religious Bangladeshi family and he leaves behind four children, including one who survived the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting. "It's really shocking news, that somebody just shot him and he passed away," said Reza Islam, who respects the victim like an uncle to him. "We never thought that we were gonna lose him like that." (Source: Bdnews24.com)



## Bombing at Philippine festival: 2 dead, wounds 37

A homemade bomb hidden under a motorcycle killed two people, one a child, and wounded 37 at a local street festival in the southern Philippines on Tuesday, security officials said, the latest unrest in a region prone to militancy. The explosion occurred in front of a clothing stall along a highway in Isulan in Sultan Kudarat province, where a festival was taking place. An investigation was underway and there were no immediate claims of responsibility, according to police. The province



is on the Philippines' second-largest island, Mindanao, parts of which have been plagued by decades of Maoist and separatist rebellions that have given rise to banditry and the influence of the Islamic State group.

Arvin Encinas, spokesman of the army's 6th Infantry Division, said the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters or BIFF, an armed group that has pledged allegiance with Islamic State, was suspected of being behind the attack. Mindanao remains under martial law until the end of the year following a five-month occupation Marawi City in 2017 by an alliance of rebels loyal to Islamic State, in which the military prevailed. Hundreds of people were killed, mostly rebels and soldiers. The latest bombing comes a month after a device was detonated in a van stopped at a checkpoint on the island of Basilan which killed 11 people, including four civilians.