



Relatives of slain Gaibandha-1 lawmaker Manzurul Islam Liton in tears at the Rangpur Medical College Hospital last night. Assailants had shot the MP inside his Gaibandha home in the evening. PHOTO: COLLECTED

# PM launches bangla

FROM PAGE 16  
 been dotbd (.bd) since 2003 and already 36,500 websites use it. Dot bangla was added on October 4 last year.

This kind of domain names makes it easier to identify a certain country's websites, for example; dot UK (.uk) websites belong to the United Kingdom.

Earlier, Indian state of West Bengal and Sierra Leone (one of whose official languages is Bangla) also asked for the .bangla domain and they would also receive another new domain label. And .bangla is Bangladesh's own Unicode domain label.

In the ceremony, Hasina expressed hope that the new domain would lead to an increase in ICT business.

"Those who criticised the announcement of a Digital Bangladesh will now be able to use .bangla domains," said the PM.

State Minister for Telecom Tarana Halim also spoke at yesterday's ceremony, while Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu, Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Nurul Islam, Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan, Railways Minister Mazibul Hoque, and Prime Minister's Advisers HT Imam and Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury were present.

After the program, Tarana said when she had taken office, she promised the .bangla domain and she did it after more than one year's effort.

She said the new domain would make it easier for people to use the internet in Bangla and that the image of Bangladesh would be held high in the global arena.

Officials said the BTCL is to start accepting applications for the domain from today. They said customers could complete all procedures for .bangla domain names online while registration fee would be received using state-owned mobile phone operator Teletalk.

Domain names, such as "thedailystar.net", were originally designed only to support ASCII characters. In 2003, a specification was released that allows most Unicode characters to be used in domain names. All modern browsers and email applications support this, allowing people to use links in their native languages.

Therefore, users can go to the BTCL website (www.btcl.com.bd) by just typing btcl.bangla in Bangla fonts in their browsers.

# Help improve

FROM PAGE 2  
 The prime minister said this while formally inaugurating free textbook distribution for the academic year 2017, as the "National Textbook Festival" is set to be celebrated across the country today.

Hasina opened programme by handing over textbooks of primary and secondary levels to students at a function at the Gono Bhavan in the morning.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid and Primary and Mass Education Minister Md Mustafizur Rahman spoke at the function.

At the function, the two ministers presented the prime minister with "special utariyas".

Spelling out her government's various steps for the improvement of education, Hasina said after assuming office, the government set a goal that everybody must have education as it is their fundamental rights.

Terming education as the "main base" of freeing the country of poverty, Hasina said her government had been working tirelessly to improve the quality of education further to achieve that goal.

"We want to establish Bangladesh as an illiteracy-free country and our aim is to build a poverty- and hunger-free nation. The goal could be achieved if we make all the people well educated," she said.

The prime minister once again defended the Primary Education Completion (PEC) and Junior School Certificate (JSC) examinations, saying that these exams boost children's self-confidence and help them prepare for bigger public exams.

The free textbooks will be distributed among 4.26 crore pre-primary, primary, secondary, ebtedayee, dakhil, dakhil vocational, SSC vocational, ethnic minorities and visually challenged students across the country.

# Gaibandha MP

FROM PAGE 1  
 to do with internal conflict of the local AL or militancy, Ashraful Islam, superintendent of police in Gaibandha, said they were investigating the matter.

Talking to The Daily Star around 12:30am today, he said several of their teams were working and two suspects had been picked up.

**PM CONDEMNS**  
 Strongly condemning the killing of MP Liton, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the law enforcement agencies to bring the killers to book.

"When Bangladesh is advancing towards development, a vested quarter is making ill efforts to create anarchy in the country to gain their interest... they have chosen the path of killing and terrorism which would not be tolerated," Hasina said in a condolence message, reports BSS.

Hasina said the vested quarter killed Liton following "the path of their politics of killing".

The premier said Publicity and Publication Secretary of Khulna City Awami League and Khulna City Swecchasebak League General Secretary ZA Mahmud had been shot in Khulna. A pedestrian was killed as the bullet missed the target, she said.

She asked the authorities concerned to hunt down Liton's killers and take legal actions against them.

The PM prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family.

A two-member AL delegation went to Gaibandha last night from Dhaka to enquire about the incident, BM Muzammel Haque, a member of the delegation, told The Daily Star. The other member is Jahangir Kabir Nanok.

**PROTESTS**  
 Leaders and activists of local AL and its associate bodies demonstrated at several places in Gaibandha and Sundarganj upazila last night.

Blocking the railway lines at

Bamondanga Railway Station, they demanded the attackers' arrest and punishment.

Several hundred activists of AL barricaded Gaibandha-Bamondanga-Rangpur road immediately after the attack. Led by local AL MP Abul Kalam Azad, they also brought out a procession at Gaibandha district headquarters.

A group of locals set fire to the home of a Jamaat leader Abdul Gaffar at Sundarganj municipality.

Talking to The Daily Star, MP Azad said MP Liton was always vocal against Jamaat leaders.

Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Haque said the perpetrators would be arrested soon.

He claimed that yesterday's incident happened after MP Liton had asked a police team guarding his home to leave.

Liton had drawn widespread flak after he allegedly shot a 10-year-old boy in Gaibandha on October 2, last year.

Sourav Mia, son of Sazu Miah of Gopalcharan village in Sundarganj, was shot twice in his legs.

Sazu filed an attempted murder case against Liton the following day.

Liton was arrested on October 14 at Uttara in the capital.

Born in Shahbaz Masterpara area in Bamondanga of Sundarganj in 1968, Liton became a lawmaker of Gaibandha-1 through the January-5 national elections in 2014.

Liton mentioned farming and business as his profession in his affidavit submitted to the Election Commission.

Earlier, two AL lawmakers -- Ahsanullah Master and Shah AMS Kibria -- were killed in 2004 and 2005.

On May 7, 2004, gunmen shot dead Ahsanullah, also the then president of Jatiya Sramik League at Noagaon near the legislator's house in Tongi.

On January 27, 2005, former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria was killed in a grenade attack during a public meeting in Habiganj.

# Govt working

FROM PAGE 16  
 ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury and AJM Nasir Uddin respectively were present at the ceremony.

While inaugurating the six hours of regional programming, Hasina said the government has been working for the expansion of the media both in public and private sectors to ensure the free flow of information, reported UNB.

"The free flow of information is essential to develop an improved and time-befitting social system in the country," she said.

"Bangladesh Television always tries to discharge its responsibilities to the people rather than making a profit," she said, adding that education-oriented programmes can be aired on BTV which might not be possible with private television channels.

Hasina said the government has taken necessary steps to continue the expansion of electronic media, particularly television and radio stations.

She, however, stressed the need for broadcasting more programmes to create mass awareness about education and other pro-people issues.

Hasina said various state-run organisations like Bangladesh Betar, BTB, NIMC, PIB, DFP, Bangladesh Films and Television Institute and BFDC were working to provide information and entertainment to people as well as promote the country's own culture and tradition.

She hoped the Chittagong BTB would be able to promote local culture more easily following the extension of its broadcast time.

She mentioned that the government so far gave approval to 32 TV channels, of which 23 are in operation.

# Rights situation

FROM PAGE 2  
 Concerted efforts by the government and the civil society are must to establish equal rights and dignity of people irrespective of their caste and creed, Nur Khan said.

"Above all, the government has to play a more effective role to improve human rights situation."

**EXTRA-JUDICIAL KILLING, CUSTODIAL DEATH**  
 Some 195 people were killed in "crossfire", "shootout", and "gunfight" with law enforcement agencies and in their custody last year. The number of such deaths was 192 in 2015 and 128 in 2014, as per the report.

The ASK, however, cited arrest warrants issued by a Kushtia court for three policemen, including an officer-in-charge, for their alleged involvement in the killing of a farmer in "crossfire" in 2007 as a positive move.

**ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE, SECRET KILLING**  
 Although the country's highest court declared illegal anyone's arrest by plainclothes law enforcers, abduction and detention by plainclothes men identifying themselves as law enforcers continued.

Ninety-seven people fell victim to enforced disappearance last year. Of them, 26 could be traced when they were shown arrested, and three others returned to their families. Eleven were found dead while the rest remained untraced,

To this, Nur Khan said, "We have been demanding a judicial investigation in each incident. But the state did not take any visible step.... For this reason, a culture of impunity prevailed."

**POLITICAL VIOLENCE, LAW AND ORDER**  
 The law and order situation deteriorated after targeted killings of foreigners, religious minorities and free thinkers by religious bigots. Violence also took place centring on Union Council elections, leaving 147 people killed, which was the highest in any UP election.

**REPRESSION ON RELIGIOUS MINORITIES**  
 The repression and killing of minorities increased too in 2016, as per the report.

The ASK deemed the incident of Nasimagar in Brahmanbaria to be the biggest, where 15 temples and more than 50 Hindu houses were attacked over a Facebook post allegedly for hurting religious sentiments of Muslims.

**FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**  
 Freedom of expression is constitutional right but it was violated on several occasions, ASK said, adding that there were allegations of government vigilance on different mass and social media.

Be it repressive action by the government or an act of religious fanatics, people's freedom of expression in both cases was violated, it said.

## HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN BANGLADESH

INCIDENTS	2016	2015
Extra judicial killing, death in custody	195	192
Enforced disappearance, secret killing	97	55
Death in political violence	177	153
Hindu houses and temples vandalised	391	317
Border killing	30	46
Repression on journalist	117	244
Sexual harassment against women	244	224
Rape	724	846
Killing in mob beating	51	135
Killing of children	415	133

SOURCE: ASK

**REPRESSION ON JOURNALISTS**  
 One-seventeen journalists faced repression by law enforcers, influential people, local representatives, criminals, political activists and government officials, ASK said in the report. It also pointed out that at least 79 sedition and defamation cases were filed against Mahfuz Anam, the editor and publisher of The Daily Star, in less than two weeks.

# Police say

FROM PAGE 2  
 But her version had contradictions, and after Amiridis's body was found in the burned-out car under a bridge, police took Oliveira in for more questioning, and also detained Moreira.

Traces of blood were reportedly found on a sofa in the apartment Amiridis and Oliveira had been using, leading investigators to believe he had been killed there, then his body was placed in the rental car and driven to the spot it was found.

Pontes said that Oliveira had offered Tedeschi the equivalent of \$25,000 to help with murdering the ambassador.

Moreira acknowledged that he and Amiridis had had a physical fight, and that he had strangled the ambassador in self-defense.

- Young daughter -  
 Amiridis had previously served Greece's consul general in Rio from 2001 to 2004, where he met Oliveira.

The couple have a 10-year-old daughter.

A Greek police team was due to leave Friday for Brazil to take part in the investigation, while Greece's ambassador in Argentina was headed to Brasilia, Athens said.

Rio de Janeiro, though picturesque, has a reputation as a dangerous place. The 2016 Olympic host city has seen crime rates soar in recent months, fueled by drug gang violence.

Hit hard by Brazil's worst recession in more than a century, Rio de Janeiro state is facing bankruptcy and struggling to deal with the violent crime that has long dogged the area.

# Russia pushes

FROM PAGE 16  
 could occur as the resolution needed to be "seriously studied" and hinted Russia might be hard-pressed to muster the nine votes needed for it to pass.

Washington is conspicuously absent from the new process, but Moscow has said it hoped to bring US President-elect Donald Trump's administration on board once he takes office in January.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a British-based monitor of the war, said that most of the country remained calm yesterday.

But limited clashes continued in some areas including Wadi Barada near Damascus and the southern city of Daraa where one opposition fighter was killed.

The fighting in Wadi Barada has led to water shortages that have affected four million people in the capital, with the two sides trading blame.

Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman said that five rebel fighters were killed on Friday in the opposition bastion of Eastern Ghouta near Damascus and in Wadi Barada where helicopters carried out raids on rebel positions.

A civilian was also killed by regime sniper fire in Eastern Ghouta while another died in shelling in Wadi Barada, he said.

The forces in Wadi Barada include former Al-Qaeda affiliate Fateh al-Sham Front, previously known as Al-Nusra Front, which Syria's government says is excluded from the ceasefire.

Syria's government and its ally Iran have both welcomed the ceasefire deal.

Damascus called it a "real opportunity" to find a political solution to the war, which has killed more than 310,000 people since it began in March 2011 with protests against the regime of President Bashar al-Assad.

Despite being left out of the process, Washington described the truce as "positive".

Analysts were cautious but said the involvement of Russia, Iran and Turkey could be important.

Sam Heller, fellow at The Century Foundation, said there was "real interest and urgency" from Moscow and Ankara, but expressed doubts about whether Tehran and Damascus were on board.

"All indications are that Iran and the regime want to continue towards a military conclusion," he said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Friday he would now reduce Moscow's military contingent in Syria, which has been fighting to bolster the government since last year.

But he added Russia would continue to fight "terrorism" and maintain its support for President Bashar al-Assad's government.

Despite backing opposite sides in the conflict, Turkey and Russia have worked increasingly closely on Syria, brokering a deal this month to allow the evacuation of tens of thousands of civilians and rebel fighters from Aleppo.

Their ceasefire deal calls for negotiations over a political solution to end the conflict that has killed more than 310,000 people and forced millions to flee.

UN peace envoy Staffan de Mistura has said he hoped the agreement would "pave the way for productive talks", but also reiterated he wants negotiations mediated by his office to continue next year.

In an interview published yesterday, de Mistura said a UN resolution that foresees a political transition in Syria was also still on the table, although the focus had shifted following territorial gains by the regime.

"We now have before us another scenario: a negotiation between the Assad regime and the rebels," he told the Italian daily Corriere della Sera.

The Security Council held closed-door consultations on the Russian-proposed resolution early Friday and Moscow later amended the draft at the request of several member states.

The latest version of the resolution, a copy of which was seen by AFP, includes a reference to the talks being led by de Mistura.

# Catalan chief pledges 'binding' independence referendum

AFP, Madrid  
 Catalonia's separatist president said Friday that come what may, there would be a "legal and binding referendum" for independence from Spain next year despite fierce opposition from the central government.

In an end of year televised message recorded at regional government headquarters in Barcelona, Carles Puigdemont said that 2017 would be a "crucial" year for the wealthy Spanish northeastern region run by a pro-independence administration.

"We Catalans will freely decide our own future through a legal and binding referendum," he said.

Puigdemont announced in the autumn that he would call an independence vote in September 2017, a move that was ratified in a resolution voted by the majority-separatist, regional parliament.

But the Constitutional Court later suspended the resolution pending a five-month period during which it will decide whether to ban the vote for good or lift the suspension.

In his speech, Puigdemont said the vote would "be called in accordance with the mandate of our laws", but did not detail what he would do if the court banned the referendum.

Separatists in Catalonia have for years tried -- in vain -- to win approval from Spain's central gov-

ernment for an independence vote like Scotland's 2014 referendum.

Former president Artur Mas tried to hold such a referendum, but it was banned by the Constitutional Court so he held a symbolic, non-binding independence vote instead in November 2014.

More than 80 percent of those who cast their ballot did so for independence -- although just 2.3 million people out of a total of 6.3 million eligible voters took part.

# Deadline

FROM PAGE 2  
 A leader of Bangladesh Finished Leather, Leather Goods and Footwear Exporters Association said about 80 percent of pollution occurs during processing hides to wet-blue leather.

After the 35 factories, five more will be shifted to Savar by this month. These 40 tanneries do 95 percent of the processing, he told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity.

Abul Kalam Azad, president of Tannery Workers Union, said although the government is relocating tanneries to Savar, there is no residential facility for workers near the industrial estate. He feared this would be a big problem for workers.

Both the government and tannery owners were not paying any attention to the issue, he alleged.

# Egypt begins handing over MS804 crash victims' remains

AFP, Cairo  
 Egyptian authorities yesterday started handing the remains of those killed in the crash of EgyptAir flight 804 to their families, the airline said.

The Airbus A320 had been flying

from Paris to Cairo on May 19 when it crashed into the southeast Mediterranean killing all 66 on board, including 40 Egyptians and 15 French nationals.

EgyptAir said Saturday it had begun "overseeing the handover of the

remains of the MS804 plane crew members" to their families.

Officials will start handing over the Egyptian passengers' remains on Sunday and the bodies of French passengers and other nationalities will follow, it said, without specifying a timeline.