



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with Narayanganj City Corporation Mayor Ivy Rahman after the latter took oath of office at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday.

PHOTO: BSS

MP Liton's family asks for security

STAR REPORT

Family members of slain lawmaker of Gaibandha-1 Manzurul Islam Liton have sought security from police.

Khurshid Jahan Smrity, wife of Liton, and their only son Sakib Sadman Rakib are now in the capital. Rakib is studying at an English medium school in Dhaka.

As the killers of the lawmaker were still at large, Liton's family members were feeling insecure and for this reason, they applied for police protection, said a member of the family yesterday.

"Yes, they have applied for protection to the Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner. I have also got a copy of the application," said Abdul Latif, officer-in-charge of Dhanmondi Police Station.

Our Gaibandha correspondent adds: five days have already passed after the killing of Liton, police are yet to arrest any killers though high level teams of law enforcement agencies have been working in the field.

Preferring anonymity, a top police official said investigation was going on.

Police recovered a black cap apparently used by one of the killers that fell while the killers were fleeing after shooting the lawmaker. Police sent the cap to Dhaka for DNA cross-matching, which could help identify the killers, the police official said.

Police showed 21 people arrested in connection with Liton murder case and sent them to jail. In police record, all are the leaders and activists of Jamaat-Shibir, many of them stand accused in some other cases.

Police interrogated some family members of Liton, including his wife Smrity, brother-in-law Badrul Ahsan Betar, sister Fahmida Bulbul Kakoli and son Rakib, and driver Forkan Akand.

However, police did not disclose anything for the sake of investigation.

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US TRAVEL ALERT Embassy staffs' working family members can now return

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US Department of State yesterday updated its travel warning and is now allowing employed adult family members of US government personnel to remain in or return to Dhaka.

"The Department is updating this Travel Warning to reflect the change in the US Embassy in Dhaka's status to 'partially accompanied', effective January 5, 2017, allowing only employed adult family members of US government personnel to remain in or return to Dhaka," it read.

The update warns US citizens of continuing threats from terrorist groups in Bangladesh and asks them to consider the risks of travel to and throughout the country.

After the July 1, 2016, café attack in Gulshan's diplomatic zone, several countries, including the US, Australia, Germany, Canada, the European Union authorised voluntary

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AL celebrates

FROM PAGE 1

Barisal, Tangail, Naogaon, Narayanganj, Sylhet and Rajshahi.

Talking to journalists at the BNP's Nayapalton office yesterday, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir said police and the AL men foiled his party's countrywide black-flag processions.

"Today [yesterday] some supporters of Projonmo League tore banners at our party office in the presence of police. They [the AL] want to push the BNP towards the path of conflict," he said.

The AL held two rallies at two points in the capital -- one at the party central office on Bangabandhu Avenue and the other in front of the Bangabandhu Bhaban at Dhanmondi-32.

At the programme on Bangabandhu Avenue, AL leaders bitterly criticised BNP for boycotting the January 5 election.

They alleged that the BNP-Jamaat alliance carried out mass killings in the name of waging movement to destroy democracy and sovereignty of the country.

The party leaders said they would face the BNP politically if it again wants to launch any movement.

They alleged that the BNP-Jamaat alliance is hatching conspiracies to stop the ongoing development activities.

At the Dhanmondi rally, top AL leaders asked BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia to do politics within a "democratic framework".

They questioned what she had achieved by boycotting the January 5 polls.

Popularity of both the AL and the BNP would be tested through the next national polls in 2019, they said.

Earlier, AL leaders had said people wouldn't allow the BNP to take to the streets yesterday.

The ruling party announced holding rallies in the capital and bringing out processions in district headquarters.

On the other hand, the BNP announced that it would bring out processions in all district headquarters, except for Dhaka, carrying black flags and wearing black badges.

On the first anniversary of the January 5 polls in 2015, the BNP and its allies had enforced almost a ceaseless blockade and hartals for three months. Street violence left at least 95 people killed and around 1,000 injured, mostly in targeted arson attacks on public transport.

On the second anniversary last year, the BNP had held a rally in the capital, but did not enforce any hartal. The AL and the BNP held rallies in the capital on two different dates.

In Barisal city, at least 15 BNP men and four journalists were injured in an attack allegedly by Bangladesh Chhatra League activists.

BNP city unit General Secretary Mojibur Rahman Sarwar said the BNP-led 18-party alliance organised a gathering in front of the party office.

"When we began the programme at our office, a group of Awami League and Chhatra League men attacked us. They threw bottles and brickbats in the presence of police, leaving at least 15 of our activists injured," he said.

However, Abdur Razzak, general secretary of district unit BCL, denied their involvement in the incident.

Awlad Hossain, officer-in-charge of Barisal Model Police Station, said some people were trying to attack the BNP office but police dispersed them.

In Tangail, police foiled a BNP programme, charging baton on activists of the party and its associate bodies in front of its office on Victoria Road in the town.

Police detained two BNP activists from the spot, reports our Tangail correspondent.

In Naogaon, at least 15 people were injured as BNP men clashed with police over bringing out a procession.

BNP leaders said they brought out

Second GM crop ready for release

FROM PAGE 1

According to the International Potato Center (CIP), potato is the third most important food crop in the world after rice and wheat in terms of human consumption. More than a billion people eat potato, and its worldwide production exceeds 300 million metric tonnes.

Late blight, responsible for the 19th century Irish potato famine that had led to one million deaths from starvation, still affects more than 3 million hectares of potato crops globally and causes economic losses estimated at \$2.75 billion a year, according to the CIP, which is helping Uganda develop the GM potato.

Breeders involved in developing the RB potato since 2006 at Bari said the resistant gene was taken from wild potato varieties and was infused into a potato variety called *Katahdin* in the United States. They said it was crossed with Diamant and Cardinal -- two popular potato varieties in Bangladesh.

After years of lab tests, greenhouse and contained field trials across the country, Bari scientists found out that RB potato succeeded in resisting the late blight. Later, they approached the Ministry of Agriculture for regulatory approval, said Md Jahangir Hossain, director of Bari's Tuber Crops Research Centre (TCRC).

"Right in this season, I'm receiving many phone calls every day from Northern potato growers seeking advice for protecting their produces

from blight attacks. Once approved, RB potato will bring them a big respite from the disease," said Hossain.

He said farmers now have to spray costly fungicides in their fields several times during a cropping season to save their potato from late blight.

Md Abu Kawochar, a scientific officer at the TCRC, had told this correspondent that the final regulatory trials conducted at six sites in the country during the last potato season had shown positive results.

Bari developed the late blight resistant potato in cooperation with the Agricultural Biotechnology Support Project II (ABSPII), a USAID-funded consortium of public and private sector institutions supporting scientists, regulators, extension workers, farmers and the general public in developing countries to make informed decisions about agricultural biotechnology.

Bari Director General Md Rafiqul Islam Mondal said once the Ministry of Agriculture would forward the approval application to the relevant biosafety regulatory committee, they would verify the matter. Once satisfied, the plea would be sent to the national biosafety body for approval.

He said the regulatory process would take a few more months to end.

RB potato would be the second commercially released GM food crop in South Asia after Bt Brinjal, which was also released by Bangladesh in

2013.

Empowered with a crystal protein gene (*Cry1Ac*) taken from soil bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis*, Bt Brinjal is resistant to Fruit and Shoot Borer (FSB), the deadliest brinjal pest.

After its release, Bari supplied Bt Brinjal plants to a limited number of farmers in 2014 and 2015. But since late 2016, the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) has been going for the crop's large scale production across the country.

"Success with Bt Brinjal has led Bangladesh to prioritise the field testing of a new late blight resistant potato [an important crop occupying 0.5 million hectares of land in Bangladesh] which could be approved as early as 2017," stated the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), in its latest report titled "Global Status of Commercialized Biotech".

ISAAA, a non-profit international organisation having three centres in New York (USA), Nairobi (Kenya), and Los Baños (the Philippines), keeps watch on production and expansion of biotech crops worldwide.

ISAAA recorded a 100-fold increase in global biotech acreage in just 20 years (from 1.7 million hectares in 1996 to 179.7 million hectares in 2015) making biotechnology the fastest adopted crop technology in recent times and reflecting farmer satisfaction with biotech crops.

'Lost' boy returns home from India

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A 12-year-old boy, who went missing four months ago and mysteriously wound up in New Delhi, was returned home yesterday.

Mohammad Yamin, son of late Abdul Kader of Chittagong city's Amin Jute Mills area, used to sell toys in Dhaka's Airport Railway Station area. He left his Chittagong home around a

said he boarded a train at the railway station to go to Tongi, on the outskirts of the capital, to buy toys four months ago. But the train did not stop at Tongi and he eventually went to Khulna.

He claimed that from Khulna, he got on another train and went to Benapole in Jessore.

The boy claimed that he blended in with a number of people heading towards the other side of the border



Shamnsunnahar with her 12-year-old son Yamin at Chittagong City Corporation office yesterday. Yamin was lost four months ago and he ended up in New Delhi. Two NGOs across the border collaborated to have him returned to his parents.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

year ago. He has four sisters.

He was handed over to his mother at a programme at the conference hall of Chittagong City Corporation. CCC Mayor AJM Nasir Uddin was present.

Two non-government organisations -- Butterflies of India and Aparajeyo-Bangladesh of Bangladesh - made the arrangements for Yamin's return home.

Talking to The Daily Star, Yamin

and that he was not stopped at any point.

He said he got on another train that he thought would take him back to Dhaka. The train took him to Sealdah of Kolkata.

It was there that Yamin realised he had reached India, as he heard some people speaking in Hindi and some others in Bangla.

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Myanmar covering

FROM PAGE 20

abuses have been committed, but has prevented independent journalists and aid workers from accessing parts of northern Rakhine.

Under international pressure Suu Kyi ordered the commission to investigate the attacks and the abuse allegations.

"The Bengali population residing in Maungtaung region, the increasing population of Mawlawi (Islamic scholars), mosques and religious edifices are proof that there were no cases of genocide and religious persecution in the region," said the report.

Many in Myanmar refer to the Rohingya as "Bengalis" as they see them as interlopers from Bangladesh.

The panel also said it had so far found "insufficient evidence" for legal action on allegations of rape by soldiers.

"No cases of malnutrition were found in the area, due to the area's favourable fishing and farming conditions," it added, despite concerns from international aid organisations that tens of thousands of people who were receiving food aid before Oct 9 are now cut off.

Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director at New York-based Human Rights

Watch, said the panel was "looking more and more like the Myanmar government whitewash mechanism that we feared it would be," highlighting that the panel chair Vice President Myint Swe, is a former army lieutenant general.

Robertson said it was "astounding" that the commission could conclude from the presence of mosques that the Rohingya are not being persecuted.

"Judging by what is written in this interim report, the commission has so far acted to discount out of hand what it calls 'external allegations' rather than seriously investigate them and risk uncovering the litany of rights violations against the Rohingya," he said by email.

Matthew Smith, founder of campaign group Fortify Rights, said the commission's report was sharply at odds with accounts collected by researchers interviewing civilians in northern Rakhine and those who have fled to Bangladesh.

"The army has committed atrocity crimes and this commission is attempting a whitewash. Ministries led by Suu Kyi have charted the path of denial, waging a shameful propaganda campaign," Smith said by email.

GUANTANAMO BAY PRISON US to transfer four detainees to Saudi Arabia

REUTERS, Washington

The United States will transfer four detainees to Saudi Arabia from the Guantanamo Bay military prison in the next 24 hours, US officials said on Wednesday, in President Barack Obama's final push to shrink the inmate population there despite pressure from the president-elect to halt such releases.

It will be the first in Obama's final flurry of transfers aimed at sending as many as 19 prisoners to at least four countries, including Italy, Oman and the United Arab Emirates, before Donald Trump is sworn in on Jan 20.

If the final transfers go according to plan, only about 40 prisoners will remain at Guantanamo, despite Obama's pledge to close the controversial facility at the US naval base in Cuba.

The Republican president-elect has vowed, however, to keep the Guantanamo military prison open and "load it up with some bad dudes."

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UP chairman held

FROM PAGE 1

said Mafidul Islam, officer-in-charge (DB) of the district police.

Iqbal Hossain, additional superintendent of police in Brahmanbaria, told this newspaper that the arrest of Ankhi is a big success as they believe the motive, masterminds and main instigators would be found through interrogating him.

According to the ASP, Ankhi is "one of the key instigators and organisers" of the attack that left more than a hundred Hindu houses and some 17 temples vandalised and looted in Nasirnagar upazila of Brahmanbaria over an anti-Islam post.

A team led by OC Mafidul took Ankhi to Brahmanbaria later in the day.

On November 29, police arrested Jahangir Alam, owner of Al-Amin Cyber Point and Studio at Horinbar Bazar in Haripur, who allegedly played an active role in inciting locals against Hindus after the post appeared on the Facebook wall of Hindu fisherman Rasraj Das.

Police say someone else uploaded it using the account of Rasraj as part of a conspiracy.

In his confessional statement at the Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court in

Brahmanbaria on December 8, Jahangir said Ankhi ordered him to gather people and hire trucks for the attack.

On October 29, four to five trucks were hired, and people gathered through an announcement over a loudspeaker were taken from Haripur union to Nasirnagar upazila headquarters around noon.

Reaching the upazila headquarters, they burnt tyres to draw attention of people, distributed copies of the Facebook post and gave instigating speeches against the Hindu youth and his community, said local sources.

The following day, men of Ankhi and Jahangir came from Haripur on trucks and pickups and joined a rally at Ashutosh Pilot High School ground in the upazila.

A section of participants of the rally took part in the mayhem, witnesses and victims said.

In his statement, Jahangir also said Ankhi gave him Tk 10,000 for truck rents. He himself and four of his friends contributed Tk 11,000.

Police have so far arrested 109 people in the eight cases filed for the attack and six including Jahangir has so far given confessional statements in court.