

# Lovachhara

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Locals rushed the worker to the upazila health complex where doctors pronounced him dead. His body was sent to MAG Osmani Medical College yesterday morning for an autopsy, the OC added.

Abdul Karim Kim, general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon's (Bapa) Sylhet unit, said unplanned extraction of stone might cause landslides on the banks of the Lovachhara and at nearby hillocks.

Around 80 metre-deep trenches have been dug in the river, making the nearby villages and agricultural land vulnerable to landslides, he added.

Tareq Mohammad Zakaria, upazila nirbahi officer of Kanaighat, said the district administration leased out some land to several traders for extracting stone. But some others were doing the same job illegally, damaging the river and hillocks.

The local administration will continue raids against illegal extraction of stone, he told The Daily Star.

Sharif Jamil, joint secretary of Sylhet Bapa, alleged that influential traders with connivance of some local politicians and government officials were doing the illegal business defying a High Court verdict.

# Abbas to arrive

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other regional and international bodies over Palestinian issues. Dhaka also condemns the Israeli occupation and backs the demand for Palestine's "full membership" of the UN.

This will be the first official visit of the Palestine president to Bangladesh. Earlier, he made a brief stopover in Dhaka in February last year on his way to Japan from Jordan.

Palestinian Foreign Minister Dr Riad NA Malki visited Dhaka in December last year to attend an international meeting on migration during which he called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

During his three-day visit, the Palestinian President will meet President Md Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali and discuss strengthening of bilateral ties and seek continuing support from Bangladesh on Palestinian causes.

Foreign ministry officials said Dhaka will reiterate its reaffirmation of Bangladesh's unequivocal support for the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence during the visit.

"Bangladesh always supports the cause of Palestine and it will continue to do so," said a senior official.

The UN Security Council on December 23 last year passed a resolution demanding an end to the construction of Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian territories after the US abstained from voting.

The resolution was introduced to the UNSC by New Zealand, Malaysia, Venezuela and Senegal on Friday, a day after Egypt withdrew reportedly under pressure from Israel and US President-elect Donald Trump.

In December, Trump and Israeli authorities also called on the US to veto the resolution. The document was eventually adopted with 14 of 15 UNSC members voting in favor. The US was the only nation to abstain from voting.

# 'AL men'

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of the culprits," said Shariful Islam, a tenth-grader of the school.

Shah Alam, a teacher of the school, said some eight to 10 attackers, led by AL man Abu Siddique of Haridev village, who was earlier involved in BNP politics, entered the headmaster's room around 10:45am and started beating him up. They had sticks and iron rods.

While talking to this correspondent, Manoranjon said, "Abu Siddique was trying to convince me to recruit one Shirina Akhter as the computer teacher, but I refused several times. So, he became angry."

"Abu Siddique led the attackers when they were beating me mercilessly," he said with tears in his eyes.

Nurul Huda Mandol, president of the school managing committee, said it was under process to appoint a computer teacher, and 12 candidates already applied for the job.

"Former BNP leader, now a new activist of the ruling Awami League, Abu Siddique was trying to recruit his candidate Shirina Akhter, maybe he took a handsome amount of money from this candidate," he said.

Abu firstly tried to convince me, but failed. He then made an effort to persuade the headmaster to appoint his candidate, but could not be successful there. So, Abu and his men assaulted the headmaster, he added.

Contacted, Shirina said Abu is her relative and she never sought help from him for ensuring her recruitment.

However, this correspondent could not contact Abu for his comment as he went into hiding and his mobile phone was switched-off.

Azmol Haque, resident medical officer at Lalmonirhat Sadar Hospital, said the headmaster suffered injuries to his eyes, back, head and hands.

Nihar Ranjon Roy, a sub-inspector of the Sadar Police Station, said police raided the attackers' houses, but could not arrest any of them.

# HC orders govt

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The petitioner said stone crushers operate on public roads and playgrounds and in forests and residential areas, causing environment, sound and air pollution, thus affecting public health. It prayed to the HC to direct the government to stop operation of illegal stone crushing machines in these areas.

**DRIVES AT COMPANIGANJ, JAFLONG**  
Meanwhile, drives against illegal stone extraction began in Sylhet yesterday a day after two workers died in a landslide caused by cutting of hillocks for stone extraction, reports our Sylhet correspondent.

The district and police administrations have formed two committees to look into the killing of workers at Matiar Tila, a part of Shah Arefin Tila.

Sylhet's Additional District Magistrate Abu Saffat Md Sayedul Islam visited the place yesterday. He was asked to submit a report in two working days, said Deputy Commissioner Md Joyal Abedin.

During the drive at Bholaganj along with officials of the upazila administration, Sayedul found stones being extracted from hillocks by dredger machines locally called as boma machine.

Two such machines and 11 shallow machines were seized, he said, adding that the administration would no longer let illegal traders continue stone extraction that destroyed hillocks.

Another three-member team was

# An opportunity

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Department of Commerce.

Even in such a negative growth trend, garment export from Vietnam to the US soared just before final implementation of this mega trade deal.

Garment export to the US from Vietnam registered 2.18 percent year-on-year growth to \$ 4.03 billion in the last 11 months. During this time, Bangladesh's export to the US declined by 0.04 percent year-on-year to \$ 2.03 billion.

US President Trump upended America's traditional, bipartisan trade policy on Monday as he formally abandoned the ambitious TPP brokered by his predecessor, reports The New York Times.

With the stroke of a pen on his first full weekday in office, Trump signaled that he plans to follow through on promises to take a more aggressive stance against foreign competitors as part of his "America First" approach, the report said, adding, in doing so, he demonstrated that he would not follow old rules, effectively discarding longstanding Republican orthodoxy that expanding global trade was good for the world and America -- and that the United States should help write the rules of international commerce.

However, Michael B Froman, the trade representative who negotiated the pact for Obama, said in an interview, "There's no doubt that this action will be seen as a huge, huge win for China."

"For the Trump administration, after all this talk about being tough on China, for their first action to basically hand the keys to China and say we're withdrawing from our leadership position in this region is geographically damaging," he said, reports The New York Times.

In such a situation, the attorney general's office moved against the HC's order on surrender by filing an appeal with the Appellate Division. Chamber Judge of the Appellate Division Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain on October 14 stayed the HC order clearing the way for Liton's arrest.

Detectives detained MP Liton in the capital's Uttara on the night of October 14. A team of detectives left Dhaka with Liton for Gaibandha the same night to hand him over to Gaibandha police.

Liton was produced before a Gaibandha court the next day. His bail petition was rejected and he was sent to jail.

He was, however, granted an ad interim bail by the Gaibandha court on November 8 last year so that he could attend the parliament session scheduled for that afternoon. Later, he got bail.

He filed a petition to the court for discharging him from the charge. The petition was not disposed off. The court fixed January 5 this year as the date for hearing for framing charge against him to begin the trial of the case, his lawyer Sirajul Islam Babu told The Daily Star yesterday.

With his death on December 31, the case proceeding could not be resumed on January 5.

The sudden statements by ruling party MPs in parliament on Sunday blasting the media for "misreporting" about the shooting incident thus stands in total contradiction of the charge sheet by the police.

Interestingly the claims of "ambush" and MP Liton's firing in "self defence" was never mentioned earlier neither by police, not by local AL party members and even by Liton himself, though he said many other things about the shooting incident.

# Facts and alternative facts

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prosecute him on charges of attempting to murder and voluntarily causing injury by dangerous weapons under sections 307 and 324 of Penal Code.

"The offences under sections 307 and 324 of Penal Code against accused Manzurul Islam Liton were primarily proven," said the charge sheet submitted to the court of Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate on April 1 last year.

It prayed for holding trial of the lawmaker in open court.

Describing the incident, the charge sheet said, and we quote: "On October 2, 2015 wounded Sourav Mia, a 10 year old boy, was taking a morning walk with his uncle at Golapcharan village in Gaibandha. MP Liton was returning to home on his pajero jeep. He found Sourav and called the boy to come near to him. As Sourav refused, accused Manzurul Islam Liton became angry with him and opened fire with his pistol to kill Sourav. Bullets hit both legs of the boy wounding him."

The charge sheet further stated, and we quote: "The witnesses took wounded Sourav to the hospital. Ballistic report of pistol was reviewed during the investigation and it was found that the fire was shot with the confiscated pistol."

As the incident generated huge outcry, the government also moved to bring MP Liton to book.

The law enforcement agency members were hunting for Liton as he went into hiding after the incident.

Liton filed two separate petitions to the HC on October 12 seeking anticipatory bail. Both the petitions were rejected. The HC asked the lawmaker to surrender before a lower court in Gaibandha by October 18, creating confusion as to whether or not Liton could be arrested before that date.

formed by police to investigate the deaths. The probe body led by Assistant Superintendent of Police Hasnat Ahmed was given five working days to submit a report, said Sugyan Chakma, additional superintendent (media) of Sylhet police.

At least two people were killed and several others injured in Monday's landslide when they were digging out stones from a hillock in Companiganj upazila of Sylhet.

The victims are Abdul Quddus and Khokon, of Purbo Dhalpur village in Netrakona, said Sugyan.

Local sources, however, put the death toll at six.

Meanwhile, a taskforce formed by the environment department, Border Guard Bangladesh and upazila administration of Gowainghat yesterday conducted a drive against illegal stone extraction and crushing at Jaflong, adjacent to Companiganj upazila.

During the drive, the taskforce seized and destroyed four machines used to extract stones and eight crushers.

Around 50 illegal structures, which had been illegally built on government land, were also razed to the ground.

Assistant Director of DoE Mostafizur Rahman and BCB camp commander Md Humayun Kabir were present there along with hundreds of BGB and police members.

Salah Uddin, upazila nirbahi officer of Gowainghat, said the drive would be continued to protect Jaflong's environment.

# Mother, child killed in city road crash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT  
A recklessly driven human haulier killed a mother and her around two-year-old daughter, who was in her lap, in the capital's Khilkhet area yesterday afternoon.

The victims -- Salma Akhter, 24, and Mehjabin Akhter Maisha -- belonged to a poor grocer's family living in Barura village, around six kilometres east of Khilkhet bus stand.

Salma's husband Mokbul Hossain Sikder said they had a wedding to go to at his in-laws' house in Ruppur in Narayanganj and his wife needed some laundry to be done before that.

The incident happened around 12:30pm when the human haulier lost control and hit the mother and daughter who were waiting at the laundry to receive their clothes.

They died on the spot, said Moshirur Rahman, sub-inspector of Khilkhet Police Station.

Angry locals set fire to the vehicle and beat up driver Moidul Islam before handing him over to police.

# Trump revives controversial oil pipeline projects

AFP, Washington  
US President Donald Trump yesterday revived two oil pipeline projects blocked by his predecessor on environmental grounds, signalling his determination to undo Barack Obama's legacy.

Trump gave a conditional go-ahead to the Keystone XL pipeline -- which would carry oil from Canadian tar sands to US refineries on the Gulf Coast -- and an equally controversial pipeline crossing in North Dakota.

Both had been put on hold by Barack Obama's administration on environmental grounds.

Since being sworn in on Friday, Trump has begun rolling out an orthodox Republican agenda.

He has moved to curb funding for abortions, embraced Israel, frozen government hiring and sought to loosen environmental regulations.

His administration has also sought to place a tighter grip on departments that may not be sympathetic to his politics.

# Letter on EC

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time is likely to have more members, including a woman.

The search committee will constitute the next EC which would oversee the parliamentary elections in 2019.

President Hamid started talks with political parties on December 18 last year for forming the new EC through consensus. The president held talks with 31 political parties.

Like the previous time, the cabinet division will be playing the secretarial role after the formation of the search committee.

Meanwhile, the BNP secretary general yesterday alleged that the ruling Awami League had made the president's dialogue initiative on formation of new EC controversial as it wanted to stay in power by creating political instability.

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir also warned that the people would never accept it if a "subservient Election Commission" is formed in line with the "AL's desire".

He made the comments while speaking at a milad and doa mahfil at the party's Naya Paltan headquarters, marking the second death anniversary of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's younger son Arafat Rahman Koko.

Koko died of cardiac arrest at the age of 45 in Malaysia on January 24, 2015. BNP and its associate bodies took various programmes to mark the day.

In his speech, Fakhrul said, "The Awami League will not be able to stay in power if a free and fair election is held in a congenial atmosphere. So, they always create chaos by destroying the country's political stability."

"As part of it, the party has already made the president's dialogue initiative controversial."

He also added that there was a belief among people that the president would constitute a credible EC as he had talked to the political parties.

"But the Awami League leaders are making controversial comments about it only to make the move futile," he observed.

He also alleged that the government had established "a reign of terror" across the country by resorting to repressive acts, killing and enforced disappearances to hang onto power illegally and unethically.

Fakhrul urged his party colleagues to get organised to remove the current "undemocratic and evil force" from power.

A special prayer was offered later seeking the eternal peace of Koko's departed soul.

# Sundarbans at risk

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This trend of increasing salinity will be aggravated in the coming days due to effect of climate change. It will alter the ecosystem of the forest and leave a deep impact on its flora and fauna. The spawning pattern of some of the aquatic species will change, the study said.

Soil salinisation is likely to lead to a significant decline in the output of high-yielding variety of rice which ultimately impacts on the poor farmers' livelihood.

The increasing water salinisation will change the availability of many freshwater fish species. Some of them will migrate from the Sundarbans area as the salinity is likely to adversely affect their reproductive cycle and capacity, extent of suitable spawning area and their feeding and breeding.

"This will lead to a striking loss of habitat of freshwater fish in the western part of the Sundarbans," the study stated.

Though some of the brackish fish species will increase, that would be insignificant in comparison to the reduced fresh water fish species. It will leave a deep impact on the poor community as their income would reduce and they would be deprived of their main protein source.

The analysis looked into the salinity

# BCL leader

FROM PAGE 16  
student of the college, from Janu Muhurir Bari of Hadi Fakir Hat in Gachhbaria of the upazila.

Amin was the information technology secretary of the BCL unit.

Sources said earlier on Sunday two rival factions of BCL at the college locked in a clash and a negotiation was settled between both groups by Russell Iqbal Chowdhury, president of Mirsarai upazila unit BCL on the day.

On Monday Amin and his friends were again attacked and beaten by the rival group when they went to the campus at around 11.30 am, sources said.

About half an hour later, by when Amin had managed to get away from the scuffle and reached Hadi Fakir Hat, he began to complain of chest pain.

His friends first rushed him to a local hospital where his condition deteriorated and then took him to Chittagong

# Brexit needs

FROM PAGE 1  
Media reports have suggested that up to 80 Labour lawmakers (MPs) in the 650-member House of Commons, the lower chamber, would ignore Corbyn and vote against triggering Article 50, while the small Liberal Democrat Party said it would oppose Brexit unless there was a second referendum on the final deal.

Meanwhile, the Scottish National Party, which has 54 MPs, vowed to put forward 50 "serious and substantive" amendments. However, the opponents of Brexit are still likely to be some way short of the numbers needed to either delay May's timetable or to stop it.

The upper chamber, the House of Lords, could also seek to amend the plans but ministers are confident that unelected peers would not try to stop Britain leaving the EU after voters backed Brexit by 52-48 percent in last June's referendum.

**BREXIT PLANS UNCHANGED**  
May's spokesman said the court's decision did nothing to change the path of Brexit or her timetable.

Davis said: "The point of no return was passed on June 23rd last year. This judgment does not change the fact that the UK will be leaving the European Union."

Last week May set out her stall for negotiations, promising a clean break with the world's largest trading bloc as part of a 12-point plan to focus on global free trade deals, setting a course for a so-called "hard Brexit."

Some investors and those who backed the "remain" campaign hope that lawmakers, most of whom wanted to stay in the EU, will force May to seek a deal which prioritizes access to the European single market of 500 million people, or potentially even block Brexit altogether.

Sterling initially rose on the news

# Driverless buses

FROM PAGE 16  
The test unveiled Monday, which will last three months, is the first stage of the city's embrace of self-driving vehicles which use a combination of lasers and cameras to detect other objects and people around them.

The head of the Paris transport network, Elisabeth Borne, said she envisaged the buses being used one day to connect homes and railway stations in the suburbs, which are served by overland trains known as RERs.

"We dream one day of having buses like these parked near RER stations which would come to collect passengers on demand," she told reporters at the launch.

The advent of self-driving vehicles poses a series of regulatory, ethical and economic questions which policymakers will have to grapple with as the technology improves and grows more widespread.

One of them is: What happens to the humble bus driver?

"We need to start thinking from today about how to train drivers so they can shift into the new jobs created by autonomous vehicles," Missika, who is a transport expert in the mayor's office, told AFP.

In October, delivery drivers got an uncomfortable glimpse of the future when a self-driving truck built by Uber's Otto unit successfully delivered a beer shipment.

Cars with some autonomous functions are already on our roads, and more than a dozen automakers including BMW, Kia, Volkswagen and General Motors are racing to get fully self-driving cars to market by 2020.

tolerance range of 83 fish species typically found in the region with expected location-specific water salinity resulting from climate change by 2050.

Regarding the vegetation pattern, the WB study predicts significant losses for Sundari and Passur-Kankra, along with gains for Gewa, Baen and Goran. The stock of Sundari, the highest value timber of the Sundarbans, has been declining over time due to natural causes such as "top-dying-disease" which has killed millions of trees since 1970. Climate change is likely to worsen this depletion of Sundari stock through increased salinity.

The analysis compared the different salinity tolerance ranges for 14 varying dominant mangrove species detected in 2013 satellite images of the Sundarbans with the expected salinity for alternative scenarios of climate change by 2050.

"Since changes in the Sundarbans ecosystem induced by rising salinity are likely to change the prospects for forest and fishery-based livelihoods, resources should be directed to the development of alternative livelihoods for ecosystem-dependent household," the report said quoting Susmita Dasgupta, lead environment economist of the Development Research Group, as saying.

Medical College Hospital (CMCH). The on-duty physician there declared him dead at around 1.30 pm.

When contacted, Russell said he negotiated a settlement between the two groups on Sunday.

"I heard a similar scuffle occurred between the groups on Monday but I am not sure whether Amin's death was caused by this incident," he said, adding, "I have heard Amin came to Hadi Fakir Hat by himself after the incident."

Nurul Hadi Sujan, Amin's elder brother, claimed Amin died after being beaten by the rival group.

Sairul Islam, officer-in-charge of Mirsarai Police Station, when contacted said he had not received any formal complaints about the death.

"The body has been sent to CMCH for an autopsy," he said stating that the reason behind the death could only be known after getting the autopsy report.

that the government had lost its appeal, but it then fell over half a cent to hit day's lows against the dollar and euro after the ruling that the devolved assemblies did not need to give their assent.

Those who campaigned for Britain to leave the EU said the vote on triggering Brexit should be a mere formality.

"Any attempt to delay the Brexit process ... would be an unforgivable betrayal of the British people," said Richard Tice, co-chairman of the Leave Means Leave campaign. "The Lords should also follow suit; any delay by them would ensure their abolition."

While yesterday's ruling has settled the argument over the role of parliament in starting the Brexit process, other hurdles and headaches await May.

Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said the court's decision on devolved assemblies raised the specter of another Scottish independence referendum because Scots, who voted in favour of staying in the EU, were not being treated as equal partners.

May's spokesman also stressed that the government's assertion that Article 50 was irreversible, but another legal case is being prepared to challenge that view in the courts.

Headmaster  
FROM PAGE 2  
The headmaster was given class-VI and class-VII English classes.

According to Bhabananda, Ohidul became extremely angry as he was not happy about the decision. The headmaster assaulted him before the students, tying him to a mango tree on the school premises with the help of some other teachers.

He claimed that locals rescued and admitted him to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital.

Contacted, the headmaster outright rejected the allegation.

Shahin Akhter, district education officer, said he heard of the incident and talked to the headmaster.

They were investigating the incident and would take departmental action against him after the investigation, he added.

Khan Md Shahriar, officer-in-charge of Rubea Police Station, told this correspondent over phone that they were yet to get any complaints in this connection. After getting the complaint, they would take legal steps.