



The editors board for the book "Gonotranter Bonhishikha: Sheikh Hasina", published by the Awami League, hands over a copy of the book to President Abdul Hamid at the Bangabhaban yesterday. PHOTO: PID

### Abbas flies

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A special aircraft carrying the president is expected to land at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the afternoon. He would be accompanied by the foreign minister, chief justice, spokesperson of the president, diplomatic affairs adviser and other top civil and military officials of his country.

The Palestinian president is scheduled to visit the National Mausoleum at Savar on his arrival and place wreaths in memory of the freedom fighters, who sacrificed their lives for independence of Bangladesh in 1971. President Abbas would also visit the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum on Dhanmondi Road 32 and pay respect to the portrait of the Father of the Nation.

The foreign ministry in its release said President Mahmoud Abbas would call on his Bangladesh counterpart and hold a bilateral meeting with Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Both the sides are expected to discuss bilateral, regional and international issues of common concern.

At the meetings, Palestinian Foreign Minister Dr Riad NA Malki is likely to seek continuing support from Bangladesh on Palestinian causes. Foreign ministry officials said Dhaka would reiterate its reaffirmation of Bangladesh's unequivocal support for the rights of the Palestinians to self-determination and independence.

Bangladesh and Palestine are also expected to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on formation of a Joint Commission at the foreign ministry level.

### AL's Sohel

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allegedly made in the US in September 2014.

The parliamentary seat was declared vacant by the Parliament Secretariat from September 1 and Latif tendered his resignation letter to the Speaker of the parliament. On September 15, 2015, the EC set October 28 of the same year for holding by-polls in the constituency.

The by-election was suspended due to legal complexities over the validity of candidacy of Krishak Sramik Janata League President Abdul Kader Siddique, also the younger brother of Latif.

The Supreme Court on January 18 this year upheld the cancellation of Kader Siddique's nomination and on January 24 the EC decided to proceed with the by-polls.

### A gala feast

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Twenty-two cows and 25 castrated goats had been slaughtered. Four tonnes of rice and curries of four tonnes of potato and four tonnes of fish were also cooked for the grand meal. An extra 400kg rice and 200kg meat was stowed away in case the food was insufficient, Zia said.

### ATTACK ON JOURNOS

## Probe body submits report against 8 cops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT  
The probe body, formed to investigate last week's assault of two journalists in Shahbagh, submitted its report against eight policemen yesterday. A highly-placed police source told The Daily Star that four of the accused were from Shahbagh Police Station. One of them is Assistant Sub-inspector Ershad, who was suspended immediately after the incident. Three others were Sub-inspectors Subrata Poadder, Abdur Rahman and Imam Arefin. The name of the other accused could not be known immediately. The three-member probe committee is headed by Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Additional Deputy Commissioner Nabid Kamal. The report was handed over to DMP Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia,

Maruf Hossain Sardar, deputy commissioner of the DMP (Ramna division), told The Daily Star last night. He, however, declined to disclose anything about the report and said the DMP commissioner would take necessary steps. On last Thursday, a group of policemen assaulted ATN News cameraperson Abdul Alim while he was covering a police crackdown on a strike enforced by the National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports at Shahbagh. ATN News Staff Reporter Ishan Bin Didar was also assaulted when he rushed to his colleague's aid. Mosharraf Alam Siddique, deputy manager of ATN News, later filed a general diary with Shahbagh Police Station over the police assault.

## Trump ban strands six Iranians in Amsterdam airport

AFP, The Hague  
Six Iranians travelling to the US have spent three nights stuck in transit at Amsterdam airport, angry and humiliated by the sudden decision to deny them entry. "This is a very confusing and contradictory state to be in," Pedram, a 33-year-old doctor, told AFP yesterday, speaking by phone from the transit lounge at Schiphol airport. He and the five others -- a PhD student, and two married couples heading to visit their children and grandchildren in the United States -- have been left stunned by President Donald Trump's executive order blocking entry to citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries, including Iran.

The group was transiting through Schiphol -- one of Europe's busiest travel hubs -- on a KLM flight from Tehran to catch connecting flights to different cities in the United States. "When we set off from Tehran nothing was said about Trump's new rules. They gave me a boarding pass and everything was OK," said another of the group, a 29-year PhD student, who asked to remain anonymous. But when he landed at Schiphol airport on Saturday he had to go through another security check and was pulled to one side.

An officer from the US immigration services "told me that I no longer had the allowance to go into the country," he said, adding he was embarrassed by the whole ordeal. He was travelling to Minnesota -- on his first visit to the US -- to begin a six-month collaboration at the university researching water treatment systems, on a valid non-immigrant J visa.

### 67,000 Rohingya

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question, Asaduzzaman said no terrorists of the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) would be allowed to use Bangladesh's territory for carrying out criminal activities. "The government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has made it clear that no one would be allowed to use Bangladesh's territory for militant and terrorist activities."

Responding to another supplementary question from a lawmaker, the home minister said the government suspended a cop on charges of assaulting two journalists in the capital's Shahbagh on January 26. A three-member probe committee, led by an additional superintendent of police, has been formed to probe the incident. The government will take necessary actions against the assaulters after receiving the investigation report, he added.

### HC accepts probe report

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Hossain Sazu placed the probe report before the HC bench yesterday. Meanwhile, the Santal community of Gobindaganj's Madarpur and Joypurpara villages demanded punishment to the police personnel involved in torching Santal houses in Shahebganj sugarcane farm of Rangpur Sugar Mills, reports our Gaibandha correspondent.

"We don't know what is happening, but police involved in driving out Santal families and setting fire to their sheds should be punished. We want to settle on the land," said Rafayel Hasda, a leader of Shahebganj-Bagda Bhumi Uddhar Sangram Committee. "We still stick to our one-point demand of returning our forefathers' properties, but no step has been taken yet in this regard," said Subol Hembrom of Joypurpara village. "No progress has been made to

rehabilitate the Santal families in Shahebganj sugarcane farm, and no initiative has been taken yet from any quarter for returning the land to them after nearly three months of their eviction, said Nitai Tudu of the same village. Mihir Ghosh, president of Gaibandha Communist Party of Bangladesh, said after visiting the spot of Shahebganj sugarcane farm on November 7 last year, they demanded a judicial investigation into the police action. Policemen involved in setting fire to Santal houses must be punished and at the same time, those who patronised police for doing excesses should also be tried, he said. Three Santals were killed in a clash with Rangpur Sugar Mills staff and police. At least 25 people, including nine policemen, were injured in the incident. Several Santal houses were also burned down.

### Hawks

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flight but it has not been confirmed. It caused a stir on the social media site, with many people challenging leniency over whether they were hawks or falcons.

The transportation of falcons on Middle Eastern airlines is fairly commonplace, with Qatar Airways allowing up to six of the birds to be transported in economy class, with prices ranging from €90 to £500 per bird depending on the destination. It is understood they are often transported to take part in hunts, with the birds allocated a seat and placed on cloths to avoid any accidents.

Etihaad also provides for transportation of the birds, and a statement on its website said: "We accept the carriage of falcons in the main aircraft cabin provided that all the necessary documents have been obtained. We also accept falcons as checked baggage." Falcons are one of the symbols of the United Arab Emirates and they are eligible to have their own passports for air travel, as part of a plan to combat smuggling.

The strange image prompted a range of responses on reddit, from shock and awe to humour. One user said: "For those wondering, this is probably one of the gulf states royal families going hunting."

"Stuff like this is common to a lesser degree in the Gulf on regular flights. If you fly Etihaad or Emirates or Qatar enough you will eventually see someone flying in first class with a falcon sitting next to them. They have their own passports so they can travel for hunting and there are special laws in the gulf states to prevent discrimination against falcons."

But another said: "doesn't he know hawks can fly?"

### 8,000 tonnes

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water or fog. "Damaged fertiliser will never produce expected output in croplands."

Farmers do not buy such damaged fertiliser and as a result, the retailers do not buy those from the dealers. The dealers, in anticipation of losing business, already made several complaints to the BCIC authorities, requesting to ensure quality of fertilisers delivered to them from the warehouse, said Abdul Hakim, president of Lalmonirhat District Fertiliser Dealers' Association.

"We definitely don't want to receive damaged fertiliser from the buffer godown as retailers are not interested to receive these from us."

The BCIC authorities however, did not take any measure in this regard, he added.

Requesting anonymity, an official at the BCIC warehouse confirmed that they had to receive a consignment of damaged urea fertiliser from China with direct instruction from the high-ups.

"The urea fertiliser grains in most of these bags have been hardened and these are unusable in crop fields," he added.

Abdul Hanif, the executive engineer at the warehouse, confirmed that the dealers had been refusing to receive the hardened fertiliser bags.

When contacted, Shamim Ahmed, regional manager of BCIC in Bogra, said, he did not receive any written complaint from Lalmonirhat dealers regarding damaged fertiliser and he would take prompt measures if any such complaint were filed with his office.

He, however, claimed, "The urea grains in some bags might have gotten hard due to rain or fog, but its quality hasn't been affected."

### Saraswati Puja

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"Vasant Panchami". As Saraswati is considered the goddess of wisdom and knowledge, Hindu devotees, especially students, celebrate the Saraswati Puja at different educational institutions and temples.

Traditionally, the students of Dhaka University's Jagannath Hall celebrate the puja, setting up 35-40 mandaps, which every year turn into the main attraction of the celebrations.

The puja is also arranged at DU dormitories of girls, Dhaka College, Eden Girls' College, Buet, Dhakeshwari Mandir, Siddeshwari Temple, Ramkrishna Mission and temples in Tantibazar, Shankharibazar, Banglabazar, Mohakhali and Farmgate areas in the city.

On the occasion, President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in separate messages greeted the Hindu community.

Mentioning that Bangladesh is a place of communal harmony, the president in his message urged all to contribute from their respective positions to strengthening of the existing tradition of harmony.

In her message, the PM said Saraswati is the goddess of learning, speech and music, and also the symbol of justice and beauty. She called upon the people of Hindu community to devote themselves to nation-building.

### ICT asks IGP

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six months after his death, the tribunal indicted Wazuddin, appointed a state defence counsel and fixed January 31 to record testimonies of prosecution witnesses.

The following day, the tribunal came down heavily on the prosecution, investigation agency and police for giving it wrong information. On the same day, the Mymensingh SP sent a report to the tribunal's registrar's office on Wazuddin's death.

The tribunal, in its yesterday's order, said the document that the SP sent showed that the office-in-charge of Phulbaria police informed him about Wazuddin's death on August 22 last year.

But the SP "remained gravely negligent and mum for about five long months" and then sent the report when charges had already been framed against Wazuddin and a report run on

the matter, the court said. The death of the fugitive accused should have been communicated immediately to the investigation agency, prosecution and the tribunal after the OC sent the report.

The enforcement agencies must keep it in mind that the tribunal is a "special judicial forum meant to prosecute, try and punish" the perpetrators of 1971 crimes.

So, they "should have acted and responded to comply with the directives of the tribunal effectively, properly, promptly and with due attention," said the tribunal.

It dropped the name of Wazuddin from the case and cancelled the appointment of Gazi MH Tamim as state defence counsel.

February 16 was set to record the prosecution's opening statement with Riaz Uddin Fakir as the lone accused in the case.

### Beware of 'hurting'

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Writers and publishers reacted sharply to his comments.

"This will have a disastrous impact on writers, publishers and readers," said publisher Robin Ahsan of Sraban Prokasoni, adding they are already in panic.

He said the book fair was a place for exercising free-thinking and that it had a history of secular and non-communal spirit. "I never heard anywhere in the world that police take such preventive action against books or writers and publishers."

A book maybe banned if readers complain about its content that has a serious negative impact on the society, he said, adding, "But such comments from the DMP commissioner may incite the fundamentalists."

Another publisher echoed this view, saying "What kind of policing is this?" Mazharul Islam, President of Academic and Creative Publishers Association of Bangladesh, said it was not law enforcers' job to check books

in the fair. "Bangla Academy should look into the matter."

Contacted, Prof Shamsuzzaman Khan, director general of Bangla Academy, said, "It's his [DMP chief's] statement. Bangla Academy has no relations with his remarks."

Last year, the Bangla Academy authority shut down the book stall of Ba-Dwip Prakashan for selling a book that "hurt religious sentiments".

It also shut down two stalls -- Rongin Ful and Nil Pori -- for selling pirated books.

This year the academy arranged stalls for 409 publications, 80 on the the academy premises and 329 in Suhrawardy Udyan.

Sayed Zakir Hossain of Adorn Publications said, "We are satisfied with the overall arrangement."

Bangle Academy publications will launch 101 books this year. The fair will remain open for all from 3:00pm to 8:30pm on workdays, from 11:00am to 8:30pm on holidays and from 8:00am to 8:30pm on February 21.

### Nature of police demand

FROM PAGE 1  
additional superintendent of police demanded repeal of the act that was placed in parliament by a ruling party lawmaker who himself was a victim of torture.

"Due to the government's increasing reliance on the law enforcement agency, it is only natural that law enforcers will demand more and more power, privileges, and facilities," eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik told The Daily Star recently.

Regarding the repeal of the act, Malik said the police might have some reasons for asking for this but this law was enacted to provide punishment for custodial torture and death. Their demand for repeal indirectly demands the freedom to torture and cause death, he added.

Iftekhazaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh, told The Daily Star, "This may be a reflection of the intent of the law enforcement agency to justify use of higher levels of power than they are capable of with their professional and technical skills and to protect excessive use of force that they are often alleged of."

Questions might be raised if such demands include parallel provisions for higher level of accountability and professional integrity in the police service, he said.

"Accountability is particularly important in a monopolised political space where police are perceived to be often used for promoting partisan political agenda at the expense of public interest," added Iftekhar.

Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) Executive Director (acting) Nur Khan Liton said police were mainly used for political and party agenda that was why they were placing such demands rather than fixing their internal problems, like rations and allowances, as they want to keep their activities beyond accountability.

Mohammad Nurul Huda, a former inspector general of police, told The Daily Star, "It is not that police should only demand better allowances; other demands can be placed as they have to work with a lot of limitations."

However, the demand for repealing the act was a "misplaced emphasis", he said, adding that torture itself was an offence and that the penal code mentioned the punishment for it in several places.

The demand for its repeal should not have been made, he said. Mokhlesur Rahman, additional inspector general (admin and operation) of police headquarters, argued that they placed those demands that create obstructions to performing their duty and that they want to increase the capacity of the force and speed up their service deliveries.

"We want to create a partnership with people and to take our services to remote areas so that people can come to us with their problems," he said. Regarding allegation raised by rights activists and legal experts, Mokhlesur said the police were often accused of

that as they work in the field following the rules and laws. "If someone is unhappy with our work done following the rules, we have nothing to say. It is not possible to work and make everyone happy," he told The Daily Star.

About making the government happy, Mokhlesur said it was mandatory to ensure satisfaction of the government and service seekers. If the government was happy with their job they get inspired to do better, he said.

During the police week a year ago, officials demanded amendment to the "Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act" with the provision for the police itself to probe complaints filed under the act.

Even in 2015, police submitted proposals to the home ministry for bringing major changes to the law, and sought safeguards for law enforcers but never made a strong demand to scrap it.

In 2015 police week, their major demands were mobile courts run by two magistrates under the superintendents of police in districts, and legal permission for eavesdropping on phone calls. In 2016, they sought formation of the home ministry division run by them.

Interestingly, police started placing such demands after the government in 2014 police week upgraded the IG posts to the level that of a senior secretary. The government also promoted two additional IG posts to grade one. The sub-inspector and inspector posts were also upgraded to second class and first class positions.

In 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 police weeks, police officials' prime demand was the upgrade of the IG's post to the level of a three-star general from a two-star.

Other major demands include welfare trust for police freedom fighters, setting up of DNA lab in Dhaka, mobile phone bills, uniform allowance, medical facilities, funds for computers, more manpower, rules for providing VIP service, permissions for transport requisitions and some posts for police in foreign embassies.

### Children

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Locals expressed a concern over the school students suggesting that they should be handled carefully.

A tea-stall owner told this correspondent that, "It is true that the number of schools have increased in this area, so is the gang-violence."

Termining the drugs as one of the main problems, around thousands of people took an oath on "Say No to Drugs."

Bidhan Chandra Tripura, deputy commissioner (Uttara zone) of DMP was the chief guest while Brig Gen Jahid Hossain (ret'd), president of Uttara Sector 13 Kalyan Samity, chaired the programme.

Adnan, a student of the school, died following an attack in Uttara on January 6. Uttara West police after the incident said some teenagers used to form gangs to establish supremacy in the area.