



"There are no 'ghost' cases. Legal steps are being taken against the accused on specific charges."
HOME MINISTER ASADUZZAMAN KHAN KAMAL AT A PROGRAMME IN CITY

"A path will be created for discussions with other parties if they [the Awami League] apologise to people."
BNP SECRETARY GENERAL MIRZA FAKHRUL ISLAM ALAMGIR (PAGE 3)

"It's a disgrace that you even ask that question. It's all a big fat hoax."
US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP DENIES WORKING FOR RUSSIA (PAGE 10)

A bag full of potential

Fully organic, bio-degradable bags made in Bangladesh can replace polybag, cut pollution



MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

They look and weigh like poly bags, but they are not made of polythene. They are in fact 100 percent organic bags made from roots of cassava, a native South American plant with potato-like roots.

An initiative of a Chittagong-based young entrepreneur, the biodegradable shopping bags dissolve in land or water. In warm water, the material dissolves instantly.

After about two years' of trial run, small-scale production and limited export to European fashion brands, the bags are now set to hit the local market in June, said Md Raihan, founder and CEO of Ecospear Ltd.

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Employees look at a list of suspended workers outside a garment factory in Ashulia's Kathgora area yesterday. Such lists were also on display outside some other factories in Ashulia following weeklong protests in the apparel hub over disparity in workers' pay.

PHOTO: AKLAKUR RAHMAN AKASH

RMG workers now in fear of reprisals

STAR REPORT

Garment workers in Ashulia and Savar industrial zones now fear harassment and also termination from their jobs after normalcy returned yesterday following eight days of unrest over wage disparity.

Khairul Mamun Mintu, a local worker leader, claimed that so far more than 800 workers of different factories had been laid off. The factory managements also put up lists and photographs of the terminated workers at the entrance of the factories.

Some workers of a factory in Ashulia who were laid off said they had demonstrated peacefully on the factory premises but the authorities terminated their contracts for "vandalising the factory".

"When I went for duty today [yesterday], our production manager asked me to leave saying I had been suspended," said a worker on condition of anonymity, adding that his manager warned that he had been

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Will work to remove worries of journalists

Says info minister on Digital Security Act, other laws

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Information Minister Hasan Mahmud yesterday said he would work to remove the worries of journalists regarding some laws, including the Digital Security Act-2018.

"I will work to remove the worries of the journalist community regarding some laws, be it the Digital Security Act or others," he said, replying to a question from a reporter.

The minister was talking at a views-exchange meeting with local journalists at Chattogram Circuit House. Some local Awami League leaders were also present.

Mahmud's comment came at a time when journalists and right activists have been expressing grave concern over the Digital Security Act, which was

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Polls anomalies in 47 of 50 seats

Finds TIB survey on Dec 30 polls; election commissioner dismisses it as imaginary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Electoral irregularities like stamping ballot papers the night before the polls and ballot stuffing by capturing booths on the election day took place in 47 out of 50 constituencies surveyed, says a TIB study on the 11th parliamentary polls.

Other irregularities include silence of law enforcers and administrative officials, casting fake votes, barring voters from going to polling stations, forcing voters to cast vote for a specific symbol and barring polling agents from going to centres, the study found.

Transparency International Bangladesh unveiled the study titled "Review of Election Process of 11th National Election" through a press conference at its office in the capital yesterday.

It termed the election "partially participatory, non-competitive, questionable and faulty" and demanded judicial inquiry into the reported irregularities during the election.

The study, based on interviews of election stakeholders including law enforcement agencies, candidates and voters, was conducted between November 10 last year and January 10 this year in randomly selected 50 out of 299 constituencies that went to polls on December 30.

Polls to Gaibandha-3 seat were postponed after the death of a candidate. Of the 50 seats, the ruling Awami League candidates won 40, Jatiya Party six, Gono Forum two while BNP and JP-Manju won one each.

Speaking at the press conference, Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of TIB, said, "Faulty election will hamper democracy."

He added, "The Election Commission failed to act neutrally and the role of a section of polling officers and law enforcement agencies were biased."

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Suicide at public univs rises in 2yrs

DU saw 9 cases last year

NUMBER OF DU STUDENTS WHO DIED BY SUICIDE	2005	2006	2007	2012	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
DATA: UNIVERSITY PROCTOR OFFICE	2	2	2	1	1	4	1	4	9

SAYYED MOHMUD ULLAH

Nineteen students from five public universities died by suicide last year, showing a rise in such incidents.

Of them, nine were from Dhaka University, seven from Islamic University in Kushtia and one each from Bangladesh Agricultural University in Mymensingh, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology in Sylhet and Khulna University, according to newspaper reports and data obtained from the institutions.

In 2017, six public university students had died by suicide. Four of them were from DU while one each from Jahangirnagar University and Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University in Mymensingh.

According to data from the Police Headquarters, the number of suicides in the country rose from 9,665 in 2010 to 11,095 in 2017.

The rise in suicides in public universities comes at a time when most of them in the country have mental healthcare cells. The increase in such deaths perhaps warrants more action, especially effective counselling and creation of a congenial atmosphere

on the campuses for ensuring students' sound mental health, experts said.

Dhaka University is one of the institutes which has seen an increase in reported suicide cases. While as many as 13 students died by suicide between 2005 and 2016, the same number had died in two years between 2017 and 18.

In the latest reported suicide case at DU, Huzaifa Rashid, a second-year political science student, was found dead on November 22.

"Huzaifa took admission at DU in the 2014-15 sessions and dropped out twice. However, after readmission, he remained absent from classes and exams," Anika Tabassum Badhon, one of his classmates, told The Daily Star.

On November 14 last year, Laila Anjuman Eva, a home economics student of the university, was found dead at her rented room in the city's Azimpur.

Her friend Shrobona Shafique Dipti said Eva was a girl full of potential. She would stay busy with theatre, arts, and singing.

Since 2005, 26 DU students have died by suicide

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Spinners dictate the terms

SPORTS REPORTER

What was expected to be a cracker of a start to the Bangladesh Premier League's Sylhet phase turned out to be a dull affair both on and off the field at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

In the day's first fixture, a low-scoring encounter between Khulna Titans and Rajshahi Kings, the Titans clinched their first win in five matches, that too by successfully defending the low total of 128 runs, courtesy of some fine bowling from left-arm spinner Taijul Islam.

Taijul ended with figures of three wickets for just ten runs from his four overs while Junaid Khan also

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Pro-Brexit supporters hold up placards outside Parliament in central London. The photo was taken yesterday.

BREXIT DEAL VOTE UK PM suffers heavy defeat in House

CBC NEWS ONLINE

Lawmakers in the UK yesterday resoundingly defeated Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit divorce deal with the European Union by a vote of 432 to 202.

The vote was viewed as one of the most crucial taken by British parliamentarians since the Second World War. It was followed minutes later by a formal call for a vote of non-confidence by Opposition Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn.

Prior to the vote, May told MPs in the House of Commons that their decision would set the future course for future generations of Britons.

The deal, which the prime minister herself has

PHOTO: AFP

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