

# Gobbled up by giants

FROM PAGE B1  
Outside of Google News, publishers compete with each other to find themselves at the top of Google search results. A combination of top-notch SEO work and a history of good, organic writing ensures excellent domain authority ranks (on a scale of 100) which the publishers peddle later on to send their content on top of Google searches.

Facebook -- leveraging its superior ad-tech -- tracks news consumption of users on its platform and invites companies to place "targeted" ads to reach the "right" consumers. Therefore, a tech enthusiast regularly checking Techradar will find ads regarding the latest iPhone, Samsung and OnePlus; a travel junkie will get sponsored ads regarding resorts in Bali, etc -- ads that were once meant for newspaper placements.

Recent data has also shown almost half of news consumers are satisfied only reading the headline and the summary that's provided for them on the platforms. Another study in the United States has illustrated that this change in news consumption pattern ensures readers prefer to find their news on Facebook and Google. To readers, this appears to be more convenient.

Search and social media giants, on many previous instances, refused to share data regarding news consumption patterns to the news organisations. The platforms are able to utilise news consumption data to craft better and convenient news ecosystems to retain users within their platforms. But news outlets, relying solely on page referrals and website visits, struggle to "internet" albeit creating the news content and analyses Google and Facebook are peddling mostly to their benefit.

Facebook and Google contend that they are bringing thousands of click-throughs and unprecedented levels of reach every day for news outlets. However, US Senate Committee of Commerce, Science and Transportation report has suggested that both Google and Facebook host the click-through on their portal through "Accelerated Mobile Pages" and "Instant Articles" respectively.

**THE LOSER**  
The same Senate Commission report also finds that local newspapers in the United States have lost 40 per cent of their ad revenue in the past two decades. Australian News Corp reported losing 50 per cent of their ad revenue in the fourth quarter of 2020, losing \$1.5 billion, while News UK lost 13 per cent of their revenues throughout last year.

In 2020, at least 60 per cent of regional newspapers in Bangladesh shut down their businesses after struggling to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic. This meant at least 1,600 employees lost their jobs immediately. Fahim Ahmed, chief news editor of Jamuna Television, stated in a 2019 interview that ads worth Tk 50,000 per minute in 2003 were now going at Tk 500 per minute. For many news publishers in the country, search and social media domination appears in the form of low and often delayed salaries, a struggling -- and often absent -- employee benefits scheme and layoffs.

Without any appropriate compensation made for the unique content, the often unbearable responsibility to report keeps tugging at the weight of public-interest journalism. News organisations have always cooperated for content, but behind

the curtains, were the first to be unfairly compromised for-profit and data.

**THE MONOPOLY**  
Both Google and Facebook have vigorously maintained that their conduct is within "fair use". The US Senate Committee of Commerce, Science and Transportation report identified that tech giants have weaponised "fair use", veiling behind a self-reinforcing dynamic that retains users but refuses to help content producers. For instance, The Wall Street Journal, back in 2017, decided not to participate in a Google news programme -- "first click free" -- that allowed Google users to bypass the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) paywall. Subsequently, WSJ found that their online traffic from Google dropped by 44 per cent. Chief executive of News Corp (WSJ's parent company), Robert Thomson, also commented that publishers either had to comply or disappear from Google search.

In another instance, when Spain decided to mandate compensation to news content creators for the use of headlines and summaries, Google responded by withholding the news-focused product in Spain altogether. Search and social media's "legal" advantage has continuously superseded moral responsibility to protect the same groups who provided them with content, artificially brewing a market failure for public-interest journalism.

In February 2019, the Bangladesh government asked Google, Facebook, and other digital platforms to provide a report on digital ad revenues generated from the country, but got no response. From July 1 of the same year, the Bangladesh government decided to implement VAT on the advertisements made on the digital

platforms by local firms. The policy mandated digital giants to either set up offices in Bangladesh or appoint agents such that the government can collect the VAT.

It was more than a year -- on September 2020 -- that Facebook decided to pay Tk 1.7 crore as VAT for July and August 2020. Facebook has resisted all pressure from the government to set up offices in Bangladesh, one of their largest markets.

Worldwide claims to make search and social media pay for news are all infused to save public-interest journalism, in absence of which, fake news and disinformation take over. The Guardian confirmed that the 5-day news blackout on Facebook Australia gave rise to unreliable citizen journalism, hosting a plethora of disinformation, misinformation, and fake news regarding the Covid-19 vaccination campaign, including but not limited to anti-vaccination rhetoric.

Critics for big tech can easily ask to pass the baton over to the government to pay or subsidise public-interest journalism. But if we are living in a world of "fair use" and "equitable" wealth, pursuing the true essence of capitalism, then it becomes a crucial aim to draft policies that strike a balance in payments made and payments deserved. Some critics will wag statistics to say news organisations "couldn't be big enough".

Reporters need salaries to survive, equipment and maintenance require money, printing the news requires money. But journalists' call for equitable financial distribution is not being taken seriously. If news organisations don't survive, what will search and social media disseminate to bring in digital revenue?

# An avenue for small savers

FROM PAGE B1  
**Services at Post Office Savings Bank**

This bank initially provides two types of facilities -- ordinary accounts and fixed deposit -- to the depositors. An account holder can open only one account with Post Office Savings Bank, depositing Tk 100.

However, wherever the account is opened, it can be shifted to any branch of the post office across the country. And the deposit can be made from any branch of the post office. A depositor will get a cheque book for withdrawal of deposited money.

**Ordinary Account**  
Interested people can open two types of ordinary accounts -- single and joint.

Under the service, an account holder will get a 7.5 per cent interest on the deposit and can invest a maximum of Tk 10 lakh for a single account and the highest Tk 20 lakh for a joint account.

A joint account can be opened by a maximum of two persons.

The account-holder can change nominees anytime. The notable benefit for the account-holder is that they will start getting the required interest from a month after depositing the funds.

**Fixed Deposit Account**  
Under the scheme, an individual can deposit a certain amount of money for one year, two-year and three-year terms. The three-year scheme will provide an 11.28 per cent interest on the deposit, while the interest rate is 10.70 per cent for the two-year scheme and 10.20 per cent for the one-year deposit.

In case of redemption before the maturity of the fixed terms, or if an account-holder wants to close their schemes before maturity, he or she will get a 9 per cent interest on deposit in the first year, 9.5 per cent in the second year, and 10 per cent in the third year.

Under the scheme, a single account-holder can invest the highest Tk 10 lakh, and joint account-holders can invest a maximum of Tk 20 lakh.

Besides, the post office offers insurance benefits for citizens of the country as well.

# Boro farmers' hopes dashed by nor'wester, heat wave

FROM PAGE B1  
A late variety of BRRI-29 and some other varieties of paddy which were at the flowering stage mostly bore the brunt of the gusty heat wave, said the DAE officials.

Agriculturists and food experts said the extent of damage might seriously impact food security during the coronavirus pandemic as Boro paddy contributes more than half of the total rice production in Bangladesh.

As per the estimate of the DAE, usually around four tonnes of rice is produced from every hectare of paddy. From such approximation, around 187,884 tonnes of rice could be produced from 46,971 hectares of affected paddy.

This year, the government targeted to ensure production of 2.05 crore tonnes of rice.

Md Asadullah, director of the field services wing of the DAE, told The Daily Star that around 14,000 to 15,000 hectares of paddy might have been completely destroyed.

Besides paddy production might decrease by 20 to 50 per cent in the affected paddy fields, he said after visiting the affected areas in Netrakona and Kishoreganj recently.

"The targets we have achieved this year, even if the damage is higher, it will not have much impact nationally," he added.

"We experienced unbearable heat on that night and the next day. We saw most of our paddy getting destroyed due to the heat. We've never experienced such disaster," said Ali Hossain, a farmer of Nachni village in Sunamganj.

Like Hossain, multiple farmers of the affected districts said their paddy was burnt, sheaves were dried out and destroyed after the unusual heat wave carried by the nor'wester.

Tahmid Hossain Ansari, principal scientific officer of plant pathology division of Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI), said, "That's no way 'Bacterial Panicle Blight', but heat wave."

The BRRI is investigating the matter and will publish a report soon, he told The Daily Star.

The gusty heat wave may have blown due to climatic conditions during the dry weather and the latent heat has increased in such a condition that could have likely burnt crops and tree leaves, said Samarendra Karmakar, former director of Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) and SAARC meteorological department.

In Kishoreganj, the heat storm wave took a serious toll on Boro paddy at haor areas.

Around 25,000 hectares of paddy, out of a total of 166,000 hectares, were affected, Md Saiful Alam, deputy director of the DAE, told The Daily Star's Mymensingh correspondent.

Kishoreganj Sadar, Itna, Karimganj, Hossainpur and Tarail upazilas have been seriously affected, he said, adding that they were working on the field to assess the actual extent of damage on Boro paddy.

In Netrakona, around 14,420 hectares of paddy out of a total of 185,000 hectares were affected in different upazilas, including Barhatta and Khaliyaur, said Md Habibur Rahman, deputy director of the DAE. The damage in haor areas is comparatively low but it is serious in plain (non-haor) areas, he said.

"The heat gusty wind shattered our hope of getting crops. We have never experienced such extent of damage," said Rafiq Uddin, a 55-year-old farmer of Barhatta upazila.

In Mymensingh, 5,275 hectares of paddy, 2 per cent of the total cultivation, was affected at the flowering stage due to the wind, said Md

Motiuzzaman, deputy director of the DAE.

The affected areas are Trishal, Gafargaon, Muktagacha, Phulbaria and Gouripur upazilas, he said. In Sunamganj, parts of Derai, Shalla and Jamalganj upazilas were mostly affected.

Md Faridul Hassan, deputy director of the DAE in the district, told The Daily Star's Sylhet correspondent that they inspected the farmlands and confirmed that 180 hectares of paddy have been destroyed.

In Barishal, 2,096 hectares of land cultivating paddy were damaged in the nor'wester, which may result in less than 10,000 tonnes of paddy production, said Shiuli Rani, an official of the DAE.

Nripendra Nath Baroi, a farmer of Goumadi upazila, said the storm had damaged about one-third of his 1.5-acre paddy farm. There is no possibility of flowering as the paddy plants have been blown down flat on the ground by the strong wind, he said.

Kishore Kumar Biswas, senior assistant director of Lakutia Seed Multiply Production Farm under the BADC, said 37 tonnes of paddy seed on 25 acres out of a total of 60 acres of land

were damaged due to the storm.

This could lead to a seed crisis at the farmer level, the BADC officials told The Daily Star's local correspondent.


In Patuakhali, paddy seeds on 60 acres, out of total 248 acres, were slightly damaged by the storm, said Sheikh Iqbal Ahmed, deputy director of Dashmina Seed Production Multiple Farm.

In Moulvibazar, many farmers in Kulara upazila are worried as the paddy sheaves have dried up in Hakaluki haor due to what they are saying "blast disease", reports this newspaper's local correspondent.

Shafiq Mia, a farmer of Islamganj village, said around 50 per cent of his BRRI-58 land has been affected and the paddy was drying up.

Kazi Lutful Bari, deputy director of DAE, however, said the "blast disease" was at a very minimum level which would not affect the production target.

(The Daily Star correspondents Mintu Deshwara from Moulvibazar, Dwaha Chowdhury from Sylhet and Sushanta Ghosh from Barishal contributed to the story.)

 <b>Bangladesh Election Commission</b> Identification System for Enhancing Access to Services (IDEA) Project (2nd Phase) Nirbachan Bhaban (Floor-8) Agargaon, Dhaka-1207		
<b>Invitation for Tenders</b>		
<b>Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh</b>		
1	Ministry/Division	Bangladesh Election Commission.
2	Agency	Election Commission Secretariat.
3	Procuring entity name	Bangladesh Election Commission represented by Project Director, Identification System for Enhancing Access to Services (IDEA) Project (2nd Phase).
4	Procuring entity district	Dhaka.
5	Invitation for	Office/Support Services (Data Entry Operator under Cumilla and Chattogram region) for the Project Office Operations.
6	Invitation Ref. No. & date	ECS/IDEA (2nd Phase)/NCS-6/2021/29; Dated: 08 April 2021.
<b>KEY INFORMATION</b>		
7	Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (OTM).
<b>FUNDING INFORMATION</b>		
8	Budget and source of funds	GoB (Development Budget).
<b>PARTICULAR INFORMATION</b>		
9	Project/program code (if applicable)	224331200
10	Project name (if applicable)	Identification System for Enhancing Access to Services (IDEA) Project (2nd Phase).
11	Tender Package No.	NCS-6
12	Tender package name	Office/Support Services (Data Entry Operator under Cumilla and Chattogram region) for the Project Office Operations.
	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>
13	Tender publication date	09 April 2021
14	Pre-tender meeting date and time	19 April 2021 02:00pm
15	Tender last selling date and time	06 May 2021 03:00pm
16	Tender closing date and time	09 May 2021 11:00am
17	Tender opening date and time	09 May 2021 02:00pm
18	Name & address of the office(s)	<b>Address</b>
	Selling tender document (principal)	Identification System for Enhancing Access to Services (IDEA) Project (2nd Phase), Nirbachan Bhaban (Floor-8), Room No. 814, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207.
No conditions apply for sale, purchase or distribution of tender documents		
19	Receiving tender document	Conference Room No. 721, IDEA Project (2nd Phase), Nirbachan Bhaban (Floor-7), Agargaon, Dhaka-1207.
20	Opening tender document	
21	Pre-tender meeting	
<b>INFORMATION FOR TENDERER</b>		
22	Eligibility of tenderer	1. Tender shall have the legal capacity to enter into the contract under the applicable law. 2. Tenderers shall be enrolled in the relevant professional or trade organizations registered in Bangladesh. 3. Tenderers shall have to fulfill its obligation/obligations to pay taxes under the provisions of laws and regulations of Bangladesh. 4. Detail information has been provided in the tender document.
23	Brief description of services	Office/Support Services (Data Entry Operator under Cumilla and Chattogram region) for the Project Office Operations.
24	Price of tender document (Tk)	BDT 2500.00 (two thousand five hundred only) non-refundable.
25	Package No.	Identification of package
		Location
		Tender security amount (Tk)
		Completion time in weeks
	NCS-6	Office/Support Services (Data Entry Operator under Cumilla and Chattogram region) for the Project Office Operations.
		Dhaka
		22,00,000.00 (twenty-two lac)
		4 (four) weeks from the date of signing contract.
<b>PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS</b>		
26	Name of official inviting tender	Brigadier General Abul Kashem Md. Fazlul Kader.
27	Designation of official inviting tender	Project Director.
28	Address of official inviting tender	Identification System for Enhancing Access to Services (IDEA) Project (2nd Phase), Nirbachan Bhaban (Floor-8), Agargaon, Dhaka-1207.
29	Contact details of official inviting tender	Telephone: 00-88-02-55007571; e-mail address: pd.idea.bd@gmail.com
30	The procuring entity reserves the right to reject all the tenders or annul the tender proceedings.	
<b>Abul Kashem Md. Fazlul Kader</b> Brigadier General Project Director		
GD-716		

 <b>Bangladesh Election Commission</b> Identification System for Enhancing Access to Services (IDEA) Project (2nd Phase) Nirbachan Bhaban (Floor-8) Agargaon, Dhaka-1207		
<b>Invitation for Tenders</b>		
<b>Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh</b>		
1	Ministry/Division	Bangladesh Election Commission.
2	Agency	Election Commission Secretariat.
3	Procuring entity name	Bangladesh Election Commission represented by Project Director, Identification System for Enhancing Access to Services (IDEA) Project (2nd Phase).
4	Procuring entity district	Dhaka.
5	Invitation for	Office/Support Services (Data Entry Operator under Dhaka and Faridpur region) for the Project Office Operations.
6	Invitation Ref. No. & date	ECS/IDEA (2nd Phase)/NCS-3/2021/23; Dated: 08 April 2021
<b>KEY INFORMATION</b>		
7	Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (OTM).
<b>FUNDING INFORMATION</b>		
8	Budget and source of funds	GoB (Development Budget).
<b>PARTICULAR INFORMATION</b>		
9	Project/program code (if applicable)	224331200
10	Project name (if applicable)	Identification System for Enhancing Access to Services (IDEA) Project (2nd Phase).
11	Tender Package No.	NCS-3
12	Tender package name	Office/Support Services (Data Entry Operator under Dhaka and Faridpur region) for the Project Office Operations.
	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>
13	Tender publication date	09 April 2021
14	Pre-tender meeting date and time	19 April 2021 10:00pm
15	Tender last selling date and time	06 May 2021 03:00pm
16	Tender closing date and time	09 May 2021 11:00pm
17	Tender opening date and time	09 May 2021 11:30pm
18	Name & address of the office(s)	<b>Address</b>
	Selling tender document (principal)	Identification System for Enhancing Access to Services (IDEA) Project (2nd Phase), Nirbachan Bhaban (Floor-8), Room No. 814, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207.
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		Completion time in weeks
	NCS-3	Office/Support Services (Data Entry Operator under Dhaka and Faridpur region) for the Project Office Operations.
		Dhaka
		19,00,000.00 (nineteen lac only)
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<b>Abul Kashem Md. Fazlul Kader</b> Brigadier General Project Director		
GD-719		