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Your Right to Know

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"The Election Commission either is not working properly or it cannot work properly."
JATIYA PARTY CHAIRMAN GM QUADER



"Bangladesh needs no assistance from the UN to arrange elections"
INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING MINISTER HASAN MAHMUD



"It is unthinkable and unconscionable that 100 million vaccines will have to be thrown away from the stockpiles of the rich countries whilst the populations of the world's poorest countries will pay for our vaccine waste in lives lost."
FORMER BRITISH PM GORDON BROWN



FIRST PHASE UP POLLS

Three killed as violence rules the day

STAR REPORT

At least three people were killed and dozens others injured in clashes between supporters of ruling Awami League's chairman candidates and party rebels during the final part of the first phase of union parishad polls yesterday.

Postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the election to 160 union parishads and nine municipalities featured some of the prominent features of the 2018 national polls and recent local government elections: boycott by candidates and ballot stuffing at places.

The election lacked festivity and enthusiasm and the absence of candidates from the BNP apparently made it one-sided. Most clashes took place between supporters of chairman candidates from the AL and those of party rebels.

Unofficial results in 134 of the 160 unions were available until 12:30am today. AL candidates secured victory in chairman election in 103 unions. Independents, including AL rebel, won in the other 31 unions, reported our district correspondents citing returning officers.

Two people died in Maheshkhali and Kutubdia upazilas of Cox's Bazar yesterday and one died in Bagerhat's Mongla upazila the previous night, reported our correspondents in the districts.

Clashes also took place in Bagherhat's Moreganj, Sharankhola upazilas and Khulna's Dighalia upazila yesterday.

At least 10 candidates boycotted the elections and voting was postponed in five centres.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Fearing that he might lose his job, Mohammad Giasuddin, a Bangladeshi expatriate in Dubai, holding his passport, breaks down in tears while another migrant worker tries to console him during a sit-in at the Dhaka airport yesterday. The programme was organised demanding immediate set up of RT-PCR labs at the airport without which migrant worker cannot fly to the UAE. The migrants now need to have Covid-19 negative certificates based on RT-PCR test done within six hours ahead of their departure.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

'Question of our survival'

No RT-PCR labs at airports only obstacle for migrants ready to fly to UAE

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of UAE-based expatriates, who got stranded at home amid the pandemic, yesterday gathered at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport's multi-storey car park to demand speedy installation of RT-PCR labs there.

The building has been selected for setting up the RT-PCR facilities as the UAE government last month set a condition that foreigners must have rapid PCR tests for Covid-19 maximum six hours before boarding the flights to the Gulf country.

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman said seven healthcare facilities have been selected for setting up RT-PCR labs at HSI.

Six of them have submitted standard operating procedures (SOP), which have been sent to the UAE. Installing

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

DGHS driver gets 30 years in illegal arms case

Court says exemplary punishment meted out to deter others

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka tribunal yesterday sentenced Abdul Malek, a former driver of the Directorate General of Health Services, to 30 years' rigorous imprisonment in an arms case.

Judge Md Robiul Alam of the Metropolitan Special Tribunal-4 of Dhaka handed down the sentence in presence of the convict in a packed courtroom, Assistant Public Prosecutor Salahuddin Howlader told The Daily Star.

Malek was sentenced to 15 years for possessing firearms and another 15 years for possessing ammunition, but the punishment will run concurrently, the judge said.

It is very unusual for a fourth-grade

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3



ROGUE E-COMMERCE SITES

HC blasts govt for delayed action

Writ petition filed for an e-commerce watchdog

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday pilloried the government for its failure to take action in good time against companies that embezzled people's money.

"The government is taking action. But when? After I have become penniless," said the HC bench of Justice Abu Taher Md Saifur Rahman and Justice Md Zakir Hossain during the hearing of a writ petition.

The comment came on the day Supreme Court lawyer Md Anwarul Islam Badhon filed a writ petition with the HC seeking its directive for forming an e-commerce regulatory authority for oversight on the fast-growing industry.

The petition was made as public interest litigation: the National Digital Commerce Policy 2018 has a mandate to establish an e-commerce watchdog but the government has not taken any steps to that end.

In the petition, Badhon prayed to the HC to issue a rule asking the authorities concerned with the government to explain why their failure to form an e-commerce regulatory authority should not be declared illegal.

The development comes as hundreds of thousands of customers of rogue e-commerce platforms like Evaly and Dhamaka Shopping are left in limbo over their orders for which they had made payment months ago.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

"The government is taking action. But when? After I have become penniless?"

HC OBSERVES

Evaly CEO tells cops he committed no crime

Claims company owes Tk 950cr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Evaly has liabilities of upwards of Tk 700 crore to its customers and about Tk 250 crore to vendors, Mohammad Rassel, chief executive officer of the controversial e-commerce platform, told investigators.

Rassel boasted that he did not commit any crime but he gave products at a very low price with big discounts, law enforcement officials familiar with the investigation told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity.

"It's not like that no one got the products -- many of them got their orders," an official told The Daily Star quoting Rassel, who was

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

CHILD MARRIAGE

Creeping through the pandemic

85 female students of Baravita Girls High School married off

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Eighty-five girl students out of 345 of Baravita Girls High School in Kurigram's Phulbari upazila have been married off during the closure of the school amid the pandemic.

Aged between 12 and 16, they were students of classes VI to X and SSC examinees last year, said Headmaster Matiur Rahman Khandaker.

Of the 85 child marriage victims, two were in class VI, 10 in class VII, 17 in class VIII, 29 in class IX, 14 in class X and 13 SSC examinees.

After the reopening of the school on September 12, the attendance of students came down to about 40 to 45 percent. Before the closure in March last year, the attendance was 80 to 90 percent, said Matiur.

"We could not collect information about the students as the school was closed. In the meantime, their families married them off. We are working to bring them back to the school."

The headmaster said they have informed the upazila secondary education officer about the incident.

Sujit Chandra Roy, an assistant teacher at the school, said the child marriages took place between November last

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Adopt policies that work in Bangladesh

Rajshahi cyber tribunal urges Facebook

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The cyber tribunal of Rajshahi suggested Facebook adopt policies that are compatible with Bangladesh's social system, said Ismat Ara, the public prosecutor of the court.

Bangladesh's social values, people's beliefs, religious habits, culture, interrelationships and social customs are completely different from those of other countries, particularly the developed countries, she said.

Therefore, Facebook should adopt policies that suit the culture and habits of its users in Bangladesh.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Vehicles stop on the main thoroughfare in front of Rajuk Uttara Model College in the capital as a student jaywalks while another is about to do the same to cross the busy street. There used to be a footbridge nearby but it was removed more than a year ago. As a result, hundreds of pedestrians have to cross the road this way, risking their life. The photo was taken on Sunday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Lowest daily Covid deaths in 4 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-six Covid-19 patients died in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday -- the lowest single-day death in nearly four months.

The last time fewer than 26 single-day deaths were recorded by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) was on May 27, when there were 22 Covid-19 deaths.

The overall death count due to the highly transmissible viral disease now stands at 27,251.

The death rate is 1.76 percent of all cases detected so far.

In the same 24-hour period, the DGHS also reported 1,555 new cases after testing 27,431 samples, according to a DGHS press release. The daily positivity rate is 5.67 percent.

The total number of cases recorded now stands at 15,44,238. The overall positivity rate is 16.32 percent.

On March 8 last year, the DGHS reported the first three novel coronavirus cases in the country.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

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