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"Voters apathy to election is an ominous sign for democracy."
ELECTION COMMISSIONER MAHBUB TALUKDAR



"If they [Taliban] do not have an inclusive government, and gradually it descends into a civil war...that too will impact Pakistan."
PAKISTAN PM IMRAN KHAN



"Less than one percent each of Alpha, Beta and Gamma are currently circulating. It's really predominantly Delta around the world."
WHO'S TECHNICAL LEAD ON COVID MARIA VAN KERKHOVE

All legit in name of development!

Without compensating, acquiring lands, Gazipur city corporation encroaches on private properties, knocks down structures

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Several thousand residents of Gazipur city have lost valuable lands as the city corporation "encroached" on their private property and demolished their buildings to widen streets, drains and footpaths.

Aggrieved landowners allege that the city corporation employees earlier this year started either demolishing the structures or forcing the owners to knock down parts of their residential buildings and factories, shops and boundary walls without acquiring the lands in the first place.

Most of the residents did not get any compensation and many had to hire workers to clean the rubble left on their properties by the city corporation.

Several hundred trees on the private lands were also chopped down, locals alleged. Properties in Gazipur city are as expensive as



"If you follow the government laws, you will not be able to do anything here."

GAZIPUR MAYOR MOHAMMAD ZAHANGIR ALAM

they are hard to get.

The GCC, however, claimed that there was no provision for acquiring the lands and providing compensation. Almost 800km of roads are being widened, drains and footpaths are being constructed under two projects taken at a cost of Tk 2,200 crore.

The GCC's drive also disregarded two High Court orders to maintain status quo on possession of the properties in at least three instances.

More than 100 people who lost their lands filed separate writ petitions with the HC since last year, challenging GCC actions. The court ordered that the matter be disposed of as soon as possible.

The GCC disposed of 95 of the 100 cases by handing out a measly amount in compensation, said locals and a GCC official requesting anonymity.

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MOTHER AND CHILD REUNION ... An overjoyed mother, Shirin, embraces her equally delighted son, Shanto, at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital yesterday. The mother and son were reunited after two and a half years. Shirin left home and spent those years in Saudi Arabia working to help pay for Shanto's treatment for kidney and liver diseases.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

HC freezes Evaly asset sale, transfer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued an injunction order restraining controversial e-commerce platform Evaly, which allegedly has liabilities of more than Tk 1,000 crore, from selling and transferring its assets until further order.

The company bench of Justice Muhamad Khurshid Alam Sarkar passed the order after holding the hearing on an application filed by an aggrieved Evaly customer Md Farhad Hossen seeking the necessary directives for winding up of the company and distributing the proceeds among creditors.

Hossen had ordered a washing machine from Evaly in May and made payment through mobile financial services provider bKash and Nagad.

He did not get the product nor a refund in the four months, which prompted him to take the legal route, said Sayed Mahsib Hossain, one of the lawyers fighting the case for Hossen.

The bench also asked the representatives of respondents to appear before it on September 30 to explain why

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Evaly has no money to pay back

Says Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi dealing a blow to aggrieved buyers, sellers; Govt has no plans to close Evaly, others

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Evaly is unlikely to be able to return the amount it took from customers in advance payment for goods, said Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi yesterday -- in a crushing blow to the rogue e-commerce platform's hundreds of thousands of aggrieved buyers.

"I don't think Evaly has any money -- there is not much scope to recover any money from them," Munshi told reporters after a meeting to review the recent problem in the e-commerce sector.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan, Law Minister Anisul Haque, Information Minister Hasan Mahmud and Inspector General of Bangladesh Police Benazir Ahmed was present at the meeting among others at Munshi's secretariat office in Dhaka.

The platform owes about Tk 700 crore to customers and another Tk 250 crore to vendors, its incarcerated Chief Executive Officer Mohammad Rassel told investigators this week.

"It seems Evaly will not be able to return the money to customers. Because, either Evaly has moved the amount or it has spent most of it on advertisements. It sponsored sports and many other events," Munshi said.

Evaly has run frequent advertisements in print and electronic media, sponsored government activities such as Digital World 2020, the Bangladesh cricket team's tour of New Zealand, and funded Rapid Action

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Room for free speech online shrunk during pandemic

Freedom House report says about Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's internet freedom fared worse during the years of the pandemic than the years before, found a new report by international think tank Freedom House.

The "Freedom on the net 2021" report gave countries a score between 0 and 100, where 0 meant least free and 100 meant most free. Bangladesh was given 40, a two-point drop from the last year's score.

The country has been classified as having "partly-free" internet because in the last one year it has blocked access to social media, blocked access to websites, shut down the internet, arrested

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LOCAL BODY POLLS Uncontested wins, rebels bug AL

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

The ruling Awami League finds itself in a strange predicament over local body polls.

In most places where rebel candidates do not withdraw from the race, intraparty feud takes the centre stage and where the party manages to field single candidates, they win uncontested, a practice for which the government has been drawing flak from different quarters.

The AL has expelled dissidents for violating "party discipline" after they contested elections against candidates nominated by the party. The AL high-ups expelled the leaders without even serving them with any show-cause notices. They also warned of not giving them any party nomination or portfolio in future.

But nothing seems to work. Rebels keep contesting the polls. In the meantime, AL leaders running against the party's very own symbol is creating division among the grassroots leaders which is ultimately weakening its organisational strength, something that concerns the party as the national election is approaching, said AL insiders.

The insiders also said the AL-led government wants to avoid uncontested elections because those invite criticism.

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Registration, guidelines for IPTVs soon

Info minister says

BSS, Dhaka

The registration for IPTVs will be given soon, and a guideline would also be formulated for this sector, Information and Broadcasting Minister Hasan Mahmud said yesterday.

"IPTV is a new media. We want it to be explored more. But it should be used for the protection of our culture and heritage," he told reporters after addressing an interministerial meeting on IP registration process at the secretariat.

Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Division, Information and Broadcasting Secretary Md Mokbul Hossain, Post and Telecommunication

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WHO raises air quality standards

Bangladesh's challenges to be much harder

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh will face tougher challenges in ensuring safe air as the World Health Organisation yesterday announced stringent changes to the Air Quality Guidelines (AQGs) to reduce health hazards caused by air pollution.

The new guidelines have significantly lowered the safe average concentration limits of three key traditional air pollutants -- particulate matter (PM) 2.5, PM 10 and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) -- to curb air pollution.

PM 2.5 refers to ambient airborne particles less than 2.5 microns in diameter and has a range of chemical makeup and sources. PM 10 refers to particles with a diameter of 10 microns.

The new AQGs provided evidence of the damage inflicted by air pollution on human health at even lower concentrations than

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Hundreds of goods trucks blocking both sides of the road at Tejgaon in the capital yesterday. Bangladesh Covered-Van, Truck, Prime Mover Goods Transportation Owners Association and Bangladesh Truck Drivers Workers Federation had called a 72-hour strike from Tuesday to press home their 15-point demand. The strike was called off yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

CHILD DEATH FROM 'NEGLIGENCE' Family under pressure to compromise

MOUJUD AHMED SUJAN

A family has allegedly been under pressure for a compromise, after they complained that their 11-month-old baby had died due to "sheer negligence" by doctors and staffers of a private hospital.

Abdullah Al Sayem and Tanzum Aktar lost their only child Azan around six hours after a surgery at Care Medical College Hospital in the capital on August 22. The baby boy was having breathing difficulties after his surgery for the reconstruction of cleft palate, they said.

The inconsolable parents alleged that there were no doctors either in the post-operative or in the general wards where their baby was kept after the surgery.

When the baby was struggling to breathe, the parents took him to the operation theatre twice, only to be "treated rudely" by the doctors there, they alleged.

Sayem's family submitted separate complaints to the Director General of Health Services (DGHS) and the Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council (BMDC) on August 29, seeking justice.

In the complaints, the family alleged that their child died due to "reluctance and negligence of the doctors" and "failure of the hospital authorities".

"But since then, we have been under pressure to compromise," Sayem told The Daily Star on Wednesday.

"Last week, I received a phone call from someone claiming to be a law enforcement official who asked me to withdraw the complaints."

Besides, Sayem said, "The physician who conducted the

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