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Your Right to Know

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"Election Commission has completely failed to maintain law and order during the ongoing union parishad elections."
JATIYA PARTY CHAIRMAN GM QUADER



"All the major powers have business interests in Myanmar, and despite the Myanmar military's abuses of power, these countries are not taking any harsh actions."
SECURITY EXPERT BRIG GEN (RETD) M SHAKHAWAT HUSSAIN



"The Digital Services Act that is now before this [EU] Parliament has the potential to be a global gold standard."
FB WHISTLEBLOWER ON CURBING POWER OF BIG TECH

FARMERS BANK LOAN SCAM

Ex-chief justice Sinha gets 11yrs

Convicted for money laundering, breach of trust

CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER and EMIRUL HASAN BAPPI

Former chief justice Surendra Kumar Sinha was the principal beneficiary of the illegal loans approved for him in violation of the Farmers Bank's credit policy, a Dhaka court observed in its verdict yesterday.

The court sentenced Sinha to seven years in prison for money laundering and another four years for breach of trust to be served concurrently.

Judge Shaikh Nazmul Alam of the Special Judge's Court-4 also sentenced eight others to jail terms of three to four years in a graft case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission against Sinha and 10 others. Seven of the accused were present at the packed courtroom.

Sinha, who is believed to be in the USA, was fined Tk 45 lakh, in default of which, he will have to serve an additional six months in jail.

The court asked the authorities



concerned to confiscate Tk 78 lakh from a Dhaka Bank, now Padma Bank, account of Sinha's nephew Shankhajit Sinha in favour of the state. Justice Sinha deposited the money into Shankhajit's account.

The 182-page verdict mentioned that the five convicted former officials of Farmers Bank's Gulshan branch illegally and dishonestly forwarded the credit proposals to its head office for sanctioning two loans of Tk 2 crore each, violating the banking laws.

Violating the credit policy of the bank, the head office then illegally and dishonestly approved the loans that were disbursed in the account of the disgraced chief justice.

"The proceeds of loans are the proceeds of crime; resultantly, credit of the loan amount in the account of SK Sinha makes him the abettor and the prime beneficiary," the verdict observed.

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French President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina stand outside the Elysee Palace in Paris yesterday. Hasina arrived in the French capital from London.

PHOTO: REUTERS

ESKAYEF'S COVID pill hits market

3 other local drugmakers also get nod for production, marketing of the oral medicine

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eskayef Pharmaceuticals yesterday rolled out the world's first oral anti-Covid drug Molnupiravir after the drug administration gave emergency production and marketing authorisation of the pill that is said to halve the rate of hospitalisations and deaths in high-risk Covid-19 patients.

Called Monuvir, the tablet, which costs Tk 50, is available in all drug stores and hospitals all over the country, according to Mohammad Mujahidul Islam, executive director of Eskayef's marketing and sales.

Developed by American pharmaceutical companies Merck and Ridgeback Biotherapeutics, the pills are designed to be taken as soon as possible after a positive coronavirus test and within five days of the onset of symptoms -- a time when the virus is replicating rapidly and the immune system has not yet mounted a defence.

Patients will take four capsules twice a day for five days, so the full

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TOMORROW'S UNION PARISHAD ELECTIONS

AL infighting ruins festivity in campaign

PARITHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The ongoing union parishad polls show just how desperate the grassroots Awami League leaders are to go to power or cling to it at the lowest tier of the local government.

Many AL leaders filed nominations ignoring the party's decisions and repeated warnings, and pitted themselves against party nominees in the polls boycotted by major political parties.

Such bitter infighting within the AL has led to numerous incidents of violence across the country in recent weeks. Also, some chilling remarks made by the AL chairman nominees and party leaders give an indication that they would do whatever they could to bar voters, who might go against them, from exercising their franchise.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan) President Hafizuddin Khan said, "Such activities and comments of the ruling party men are an ominous sign for democracy. Such activities could never have taken place if there was democratic practice."

He said democracy starts with an impartial election. "Turnouts in elections to local bodies have

- 690 rebel candidates contesting 2nd phase of UP polls
- 40 killed in pre-polls violence during January-October
- Nine more people killed in 9 days in November

decreased and more voters will now feel insecure to go to polling centres to cast their votes after hearing such comments."

Asked about polls violence and comments by ruling party men, Election Commissioner Mahbub Talukdar said, "This is a huge threat to democracy." "By making such comments, they are totally ignoring the Election Commission," Mahbub said without elaborating.

A total of 846 unions will go to polls tomorrow and elections to another 1,004 will be held on November 28 in the second and third phases.

Kishoreganj's Bajitpur upazila AL Secretary

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Boy killed as road-side wall collapses

Parents, locals blame it on negligence of authorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"Our seven-year-old child is dead. So is our dream!" The father of Zihad Hossain, a schoolboy who was killed as a wall collapsed on him in the capital's Azimpur area, kept wailing as he said this yesterday.

"We had a dream of educating our youngest child Zihad, but shattered," said Nadir Hossain, a betel leaf seller. Zihad met the tragic end of his life around 8:15am yesterday while going to his school, around 2km away from his home, on foot.

A boundary wall of the Azimpur Government Officers' Quarter (south zone) fell on him as he reached the area, leaving him critically injured.

He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where on-duty doctors declared him dead, said Nadir, who also sustained minor injuries on his leg in the incident.

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BUS OVERCHARGING

Joint drive in capital starts tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will conduct joint drives in Dhaka city from tomorrow onwards to stop bus operators from overcharging passengers.

Eleven executive magistrates of the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) and the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), police personnel, and representatives of the transport associations will take part in the drives.

"We have been getting some allegations of overcharging [by bus operators], especially in Dhaka city. We have taken the issue seriously and will conduct joint drives in Dhaka city from Thursday," BRTA Chairman Nur Mohammad Mazumder told The Daily Star yesterday.

The decision came following a meeting between the BRTA and transport leaders at BRTA headquarters yesterday evening.

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Students taking pictures after receiving coronavirus jabs on Kakoli High School and College premises. The vaccination programme gave students and guardians a mixed feeling as they somewhat struggled because of mismanagement at the programme.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

SCHOOL KIDS' COVID JABS

Joy is there, sufferings too

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Long queues, mismanagement in the vaccine centres and multiple difficulties in the registration process have dampened the excitement surrounding the government's initiative to inoculate schoolchildren aged 12-17 with Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine.

"We had to stand in line for around an hour and a half to get our vaccine," Lamia Akhter, a student of Dhanmondi Kamrunnesa Govt Girls High School told The Daily Star yesterday.

Like Lamia, many other guardians and students complained about mismanagement and demanded an increased number of vaccine centres.

According to the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE), a list of more than 4 lakh students aged between 12 and 17 years, of schools in Dhaka, was sent to the ICT Division for vaccine registration. Of them, over 2.5 lakh have already been registered.

There are about 6.5 lakh students of 12-17 years enrolled at schools in Dhaka.

This correspondent visited the centres in Ideal School and College in Motijheel and Kakoli High School and College in Dhanmondi and found the situation outside the school gates to be chaotic.

Students had to face hurdles to even enter the school premises.

A former governing body member of Motijheel Ideal School was receiving students from the gate on Monday noon. Students from Viqarunnisa Noon School and College, Shiddeshwari Girls' High School and Motijheel Govt Boys' High School were seen there.

Scout and BNCC members of the school were seen helping students.

The former governing body member, wishing anonymity, SEE PAGE 2 COL 1