

## CASES UNDER DSA Almost all accused kept hanging Only 2pc see their cases disposed of, finds CGS study

ZYMA ISLAM

Only two percent of the people accused under the Digital Security Act saw their cases come to a close with the court handing either a conviction, an acquittal or the dismissal of the case.

This is according to the data collected by the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS), who logged each case filed between October 2018 and August 2022.

It recorded 1,109 cases filed under the DSA, of which around 60 percent were over Facebook activities.

A total of 2,889 individuals were accused.

Of them, only 52 saw their cases coming to a close within the court system, the data shows.

Around nine others found some relief only because their accusers withdrew the cases against them.

Meanwhile, the police are still investigating three quarters of the

- ➔ Ruling party affiliates were the largest group prosecuting journalists
- ➔ Every week a case has been filed by a ruling party activist over last 4 yrs
- ➔ 140 cases filed directly for defaming PM Sheikh Hasina
- ➔ One of every 3 facing prosecution under DSA has been arrested
- ➔ Politicians and journalists were the most accused
- ➔ 60pc cases filed for Facebook activity

thousand or so cases, according to CGS's data.

At least 725 of these cases are from before 2022 -- meaning it's a clear violation of the legal time limit given to the law enforcers to complete investigations.

"The law stipulates that an investigation report must be submitted within 60 days. If necessary, the investigating officers can seek an extension of 15 days from the authorities. After 75 days, they will have nothing to do. It then falls under the jurisdiction of the tribunal," said Dr Ali Riaz, distinguished professor of political science at Illinois State University, USA, and lead author of this research.

He made the marks in a report titled "What's happening: trends and patterns of the use of the Digital Security Act 2018 in Bangladesh".

He added, "Over the past four years, we have seen that, in many cases, even if the investigation report is not given within the stipulated 75 days, the accused is still in custody and effectively being punished before trial."

The increase of cyber tribunals from one to eight, with one in each administrative division, has neither expedited trials nor helped the accused get bail quickly.

This has made matters even more alarming as over a thousand of those accused have faced arrest. This means one out of every three people facing prosecution under the DSA were being arrested, he said.

"The number, while significantly large, does not include all the cases filed nor all the people accused. This is because law enforcement agencies refuse to provide statistics regarding the cases and the accused," said the CGS report.

"The data from the cyber tribunal only reflects the cases which have reached their dockets and are in the process of being tried. As such, these numbers represent a small portion," it added.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



Sand being illegally hauled off the bed of the Padma in an area at the border of Pabna and Kushtia districts. The land will be under water during monsoon a few months later and the patch of depression on the river bed will disrupt the water flow, worsening erosion of the banks and putting nearby villages at risk. However, the ubiquity of such sand extractors in the two districts is a sign that the authorities are turning a blind eye to this.

PHOTO: AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

## First phase of Biswa Ijtima ends today 7 devotees die on Ijtima ground

UNB, Gazipur

Four more devotees died from old age and respiratory problems at the Biswa Ijtima venue in Tongi on Friday night and yesterday morning.

With this, seven devotees have so far died on the Ijtima ground during the first phase of the religious congregation, said Jisanul Haque, additional deputy commissioner of Gazipur Metropolitan Police.

Meanwhile, the first phase of the Ijtima will end today with Akheri Munajat (final prayers).

The deceased were identified as Nurul Haque, 63, son of Fazlul Haque of Jaintapur in Sylhet, Abu Taiab alias Abu Taleb, 90, of Gazipur, Habibullah Habi, 68, of Keraniganj in Dhaka,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



WOMEN'S U-19 T20 WC

## A 'perfect' Bangladesh downs Aussies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh marked their first appearance in the inaugural edition of the ICC Women's Under-19 T20 World Cup with an emphatic seven-wicket win over tournament favourites Australia at Willowmoore Park in Benoni on Saturday.

The young Tigresses produced an all-round effort to restrict Australia to 130 for five and chase the target down with two overs to spare.

Batting first, Australia  
SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

BRAHMANBARIA BY-POLLS

## AL 'clears the way' for ex-BNP leader

Ruling party leaders running as  
independents withdraw

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Following the directives of Awami League high-ups, three local party leaders, who were running in the by-polls to Brahmanbaria-2 (Sarail-Ashuganj) as independents, yesterday withdrew from the race.

The move by the ruling party would make it easier for expelled BNP leader Abdus Sattar Bhuiyan to win the February 1 by-election as an independent, said local voters.

The three AL leaders are Md Moin Uddin Moin and Mahbul Bari Chowdhury Montu, former joint secretaries of Brahmanbaria district AL; and Shajahan Alam Saju, a former leader of Chhatra League.

Today is the last day for withdrawal of candidacy.

"One of our senior party leaders called me on Friday afternoon and asked me to hold a meeting with the

three candidates to make sure that they withdraw their candidacies within 24 hours," said Al Mamun Sarker, general secretary of Brahmanbaria district AL.

He said the AL didn't nominate anyone for the by-election and that's why the three leaders were in the race as independents. This led to divisions in the party's grassroots, he added.

"As the next national election is only about a year away, we don't want to see any division in our grassroots. That's why our party high-ups have decided to keep the party men away from the by-polls," Mamun told The Daily Star over the phone yesterday evening.

Seeking anonymity, several local AL leaders told this correspondent that some senior party leaders of the district, following the directives of the high-ups, held a meeting with the three candidates and asked them to withdraw by yesterday.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

## US official Lu arrives, meets Momen over dinner

Dhaka to push for  
sanctions on Rab lifted

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Wrapping up his two-day visit to India, US Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Lu arrived in Dhaka last night and had a meeting over dinner with Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen.

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Peter Haas was also present during the hour-and-a-half meeting.

A source refused to disclose what they had discussed but said the discussions on bilateral issues were elaborate.

Journalists who had gathered in front of Momen's home did not receive any formal briefing on the discussions afterwards.

The US assistant secretary, who  
SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



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