



ECOMMERCE SCAM Customers yet to get Tk 600cr back

SUKANTA HALDER

As many as 19,623 cases against 50 e-commerce companies involving about Tk 600 crore filed with the Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection (DNCRP) are pending, leaving the customers in a state of limbo over their money.

Of them, 16,204 pending complainants are against Evaly, Alesha Mart, E-orange, Dhamaka Shopping and Qcoom, companies that are as good as being defunct.

The highest number of complaints (10,978) have been filed against Evaly, followed by E-orange (6,017), Alesha Mart (2,157) and Dhamaka Shopping (618) as of February.

So far, just Tk 1 crore could be recovered from Alesha Mart, according to Mohammad Hasanuzzaman, assistant director for the complaint section of DNCRP.

But since December last year, Monzur Alam Sikder, chairman of Alesha Mart, has stopped all communication with the DNCRP, he said, adding that they have asked the law enforcers to file a case against Sikder.

The High Court constituted Evaly board is yet to respond to the DNCRP's repeated communication over the settlement of consumers' complaints, he added.

The owners of many of the rogue e-commerce firms have left the country, according to AHM Shafiquzzaman, director-general of DNCRP.

"So the cases are taking longer to clear. Besides, some of the companies have taken the matter to the court. Until the court gives a verdict, DNCRP



A man tries to tend to customers at his shop with a single candle as his source of light. Shopkeepers and small businesses are suffering through frequent power outages as power producing companies had to shed load due to the closure of two LNG terminals in Moheshkhali on Friday. The photo was taken on Saturday night.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

TURKEY VOTES Rivals claim early lead

Runoff likely for Kilicdaroglu, Erdogan

REUTERS, Ankara

Turkey appeared headed for a runoff presidential election, with the parties of both Tayyip Erdogan and opposition rival Kemal Kilicdaroglu claiming the lead but sources in both camps admit they may not clear the 50 percent threshold to win outright.

Early results put Erdogan comfortably ahead, but as the count continued his advantage eroded, with a runoff on May 28 beckoning.

Both sides dismissed the other side's count, with no official result announced. Ankara's opposition mayor Mansur Yavas said a count by his party suggested Kilicdaroglu was ahead with 47.42 percent, while

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MD SAYED ALI, DEPUTY SECRETARY AT THE COMMERCE MINISTRY

cannot do anything," he added.

The owners of E-orange, Dhamaka Shopping, RingID and Dalal Plus have left Bangladesh, said Tapas Kanti Baul, DNCRP's lawyer.

"They do not appear in court when the date of the hearing is called. From my career experience, I fear it will take a long time for the consumers to get their money back," Baul said.

At present, the ministry is paying the consumers from the money stuck in the payment gateways, said Md. Sayed Ali, deputy secretary for the Central Digital Commerce Cell of the commerce ministry.

About Tk 525 crore of 27 e-commerce companies were stuck in the payment gateway.

After verification, Tk 361 crore was refunded to customers, Ali said. "But the possibility of those who made purchases before June 30, 2021 is less," he added.

Cases filed against those e-commerce companies will be resolved through the legal process, said Sahab Uddin Shipon, vice-president of the e-Commerce Association of Bangladesh (e-CAB).

The errant e-commerce companies' e-CAB membership has been suspended, he added.

"We are in the process of settling all complaints and are in contact with the commerce ministry over this," said Jashim Uddin Chishty, managing director of controversial e-commerce company Dhamaka Shopping.

Everything will be settled according to the laws of the land, he said. "Hopefully we can solve this very soon," he added.

As much as 70 percent of the 1,097 complaints filed by consumers against Qcoom have been resolved, said Abul Kalam Azad, legal adviser of Qcoom.

"But the matter has not yet been officially reported to the DNCRP," he added.

Aman Ullah Chowdhury, chief executive officer of E-orange, along with founder Sonia Mehjabin are in jail, said Md Haider Tanviruzzaman, Chowdhury's lawyer.

"Due to this, complaints are not being resolved," he added. If it takes a long time to settle customer complaints due to the cases, it will create a further negative impression on the e-commerce industry, said BM Mainul Hossain, professor of the Institute of Information Technology at the University of Dhaka.

The government should take a vigorous initiative to solve the cases pending with the court to bring back the trust of the customers, he added.

Alesha Mart and Evaly could not be reached for comment.

BARISHAL CITY ELECTION Over 20 BNP leaders to vie for councillorship

ASHIK ABDULLAH APU with SUSANTA GHOSH

Ignoring the party's decision of boycotting the polls, at least two dozen leaders of the BNP and its associate bodies are likely to run for councillor in the June 12 Barishal city elections.

Kamrul Ahsan Rupon, son of late Barishal mayor and ex-city BNP president Ahsan Habib Kamal, has announced that he will take part in the mayoral polls as an independent. Rupon doesn't hold any party post.

Though the councillor polls are not held along party lines, the BNP said it will go tough against its leaders and activists who will run for mayor and councillor. Actions will be taken against their patrons as well, warned the party.

Filing of nomination papers closes on May 16.

On Friday, the opposition party issued show-cause notices to at least 20 leaders over participating in the May 25 Gazipur city ward councillor polls.

Meanwhile, the leaders of the BNP and its associate bodies are already seeking blessings from the voters of Barishal city.

The leaders said they are running in the election keeping the voters' demand in mind. Several of them claimed that they are popular among the voters as they served as councillor in the past.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Rupon said, "Those who support the BNP will definitely not vote for 'boat', 'plough' and 'hand fan'. I belong to the BNP family. My whole family belongs to the BNP. I believe if the party supporters can vote after going to the polling centres, they will

definitely vote for me."

The "boat", "plough" and "hand fan" are the electoral symbols of the Awami League, the Jatiya Party and the Islami Andolon Bangladesh.

Habibur Rahman Tipu, a former ward councillor and also the joint convener of Barishal city BNP, is a councillor hopeful.

"I have been in politics for 40 years. Voters in my area believe that I would be able to realise their aspirations. That's why I am going to take part in the election. This will also strengthen the party's position in my locality," Tipu told this newspaper.

Firoz Ahmed, convener of ward-24 BNP and also the incumbent councillor of ward-9, Barishal City BNP Joint Convener Harun Ar Rashid, Joint Convener of ward-19 BNP Aminul Islam Amin, former ward-22 councillor and incumbent city BNP member Saiful Ahsan Azim, ex-councillor and ward-3 BNP member Mainul Haque, and city BNP member Altaf Mahmud Shikder, are among

the BNP leaders who have announced their decisions of running for councillor.

Saiful Ahsan said, "Though the party instructed us not to take part in the election, I have decided to participate in it considering my age [around 50] and the interest of my supporters."

Barishal City BNP Convener Mohammad Moniruzzaman said those who will participate in the elections going against the party's decision will have to do it on their own responsibility.

The last date for withdrawing from the polls is May 25.

The leaders of the BNP and its associate bodies are already seeking blessings from the voters of Barishal city.

Saturn's rings are no more than 400m years old

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Saturn's rings are no more than 400 million years old - much younger than the planet which formed more than four billion years ago, according to physicists.

Researchers used data gathered from Nasa spacecraft Cassini, which was destroyed via a controlled crash in 2017, studying the grains of rocky material that pass through the solar system.

This is because, sometimes, a thin layer of this cosmic dust is left behind on planetary bodies, including on the ice that makes up Saturn's rings.

The researchers wanted to see how rapidly this dust builds up around the rings, which would then offer clues on their age - much "like telling how old a house is by running your finger along its surfaces", according to the team.

They calculated that the rings have likely been gathering dust for only a few hundred million years.

Sascha Kempf, an associate professor in the Laboratory for Atmospheric and Space Physics at the University of Colorado Boulder in the US, said: "Think about the rings like the carpet in your house. If you have a clean carpet laid out, you just have to wait. Dust will settle on your carpet. The same is true for the rings."

Saturn has seven rings mostly made up of countless chunks of ice, with small amounts of rocky matter.



Bangladesh players celebrate with pacer Hasan Mahmud following the final over the third ODI against Ireland in Chelmsford yesterday where the visitors won by five runs to take the three-match series 2-0. Story on Page 11.

PHOTO: CRICKET IRELAND

Tk 40,000cr needed to depollute Meghna

Say experts, suggest 38 projects

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An estimated Tk 40,000 crore will be needed to make the Meghna river free of pollution, experts told a workshop yesterday.

Freeing the river from industrial, domestic and agricultural pollution will require implementation of 38 projects, water resources expert Farukh Ahmed Mohiuddin said.

The workshop titled Master Plan on the Meghna River Pollution Control, Navigability Increase and Ensuring Riverbank Stability was organised by Dhaka Wasa at a hotel in the capital.

When the Meghna water is cleaned, Dhaka Wasa will be able to use it at its water treatment facility in Sayedabad and supply people of the city with drinking water, experts said.

The Institute of Water Modelling and Centre for Environmental Geographical Information Services are preparing a master plan on cleaning Meghna water.

The 38 projects needed for the purpose have been categorised as very high priority, high priority and medium priority projects, Mohiuddin told The Daily Star.

Mohiuddin said he recommended providing factory owners with incentives for using effluent treatment plants round the clock.

Polluted water from the Sitalakkhya, Dhaleswari and Brahmaputra rivers deteriorate the condition of Meghna water, he said, adding that a detailed master plan was needed to check the pollution of rivers around Dhaka.

In his keynote paper, Mohiuddin said 20 action plans would be needed to fight riverbank erosion and maintain smooth navigability in the river.

Tazul Islam, minister of the local government, rural development and co-operatives ministry, said the master plan has been made to prevent pollution of the Meghna.

People use pesticides and fertilisers for farming and pollute water through industrial waste, he said, urging everyone to protect precious resources like water.

Local Government Division Secretary Muhammad Ibrahim was present as the special guest while Dhaka WASA Managing Director Taqsem A Khan presided over the event.

When the Meghna water is cleaned, Wasa will be able to treat it and supply people of the city with drinking water, say experts.