



BUSINESS

Tax return filing hits new record

The number of people who filed tax returns has crossed the 30-lakh mark for the first time in Bangladesh. The National Board of Revenue received 31.7 lakh returns from taxpayers in the first 10 months of the current fiscal year, up 22 per cent from a year ago. Credit lies with the tax authority's increased efforts aimed at expanding the tax net. Besides, awareness among taxpayers has also increased.

STORY ON B1



Lack of dredging and dumping of waste over the years have turned the Louhajang river in Tangail into a bush of shrubs. The river in many places has narrowed and lost navigability. The photo was taken in Tangail Stadium area on Saturday.

PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL

MYANMAR CITIZENSHIP

Rohingyas have to go through verification

Says refugee commissioner after Myanmar team visits camp

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh will get Myanmar citizenship if they go through verification under the national verification card (NVC) scheme.

Mohammad Mizanur Rahman, refugee relief and repatriation commissioner (RRRC), yesterday made the comment after a Myanmar delegation visited refugee camps at Teknaf in Cox's Bazar.

The 14-member Myanmar delegation, led by Aung Mye, regional director of Myanmar's social affairs ministry, visited Bangladesh as part of the initiative that was launched to start Rohingyas' repatriation on a pilot basis.

The delegation talked to 280 Rohingyas. They mainly focused on creating awareness among the refugees about the repatriation process, said RRRC Mizanur.

During the talks, Rohingyas demanded Myanmar citizenships and told the delegation that they wanted to return to their homeland, said Mizanur.

"In response, members of the delegation said Rohingyas would have to apply for national verification card (NVC) to get citizenship," he said.

"Now we will work for the repatriation of Rohingyas who want to return to Myanmar voluntarily," Mizanur said.

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DSA goes against int'l rights treaty

Says UN human rights office, asks govt to scrap 2 DSA sections, amend 8

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) recommended over 11 months ago that the government scraps two sections and amends eight others of the Digital Security Act but the government said it will not scrap them and is reviewing the sections.

Experts said the DSA has become the government's and ruling party activists' favourite tool to muzzle critics. Despite harsh criticism from the media, rights bodies, and experts, filing of cases under this law and arrests of journalists continue unabated.

The OHCHR made the call as the sections concerned failed to meet the standard for upholding article 19 (3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which protects the right to freedom of opinion and freedom of expression.

Law Minister Anisul Huq made it clear by saying that they have no plans to scrap the sections.

"Almost all countries across the world have laws like the Digital Security Act. The Digital Security Act has been formulated in Bangladesh to combat cybercrimes including hacking, and therefore, there is no question of scrapping the sections, let alone the law," he said.

More than 2,000 cases have been filed under the act, which came into force on October 1, 2018.

The abuse of the law came to the fore again on early March 29 when Samsuzzaman Shams, a journalist of Bangla daily Prothom Alo, was picked up from his home hours after a case was filed against him under the law.

Another DSA case was filed that night against Prothom Alo Editor Matiur Rahman and Shams. Shams was sent to jail the next day. He got out on bail on April 3.

The High Court on April 2 granted a six-week anticipatory bail to Matiur.

UN Human Rights Chief Volker Türk on March 31 called upon the Bangladesh authorities to immediately suspend the application of the DSA.

"My office has already provided detailed technical comments to assist with such a revision," he said.

The OHCHR, in June last year, submitted its recommendations titled "OHCHR Technical Note to the Government of Bangladesh on Review of the Digital Security Act".

Bangladesh has been a party to the ICCPR since 2000 and thus has obligations to uphold article 19 of the treaty.

Article 19 (2) says: "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice."

Article 19 (3) says: "The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 [article 19 (2)] of this article carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary: (a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others; (b) For the protection of national security or of public order, or of public health or morals."

REPEAL
The OHCHR proposed repealing sections 21 and 28 of the DSA.

Section 21 says that if any person by means of the digital medium, makes or instigates to make any propaganda or campaign against the Liberation War of Bangladesh, the spirit of the Liberation War, the father of the nation, the national anthem, or the national flag, then such an act of the person shall be an offence.

The OHCHR said that given the overly broad language, section 21 risks criminalising legitimate expression that cannot be limited under article 19 (3) of the ICCPR.

Moreover, its lack of precision renders it difficult for individuals to regulate their conduct to avoid prosecution. The harshness of the penalty, including life imprisonment for repeat offences, could serve as a deterrent to legitimate public discourse, it said.

Section 28 of the DSA says that if any person or group willingly or knowingly publishes or broadcasts or causes to publish or broadcast

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SYLHET MAYOR POLLS EC scraps bids of five independents

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The Election Commission yesterday cancelled the nominations of five independent candidates for Sylhet City Corporation elections slated for June 21.

After the evaluation of the nomination papers, the returning officer of the election and regional election officer of Sylhet Md Faysal Kadir announced the cancellation.

The nominations of Noor Talukdar, Mohammad Abdul Mannan Khan, Jahid Uddin Chowdhury, Md Shahjahan Mia and Mushtaq Ahmed Rouf Mostafa were cancelled.

Of them, discrepancies were found in the list of voters supporting Shamsun Noor Talukdar, Md Abdul Mannan Khan, and Jahid Uddin Chowdhury.

According to the rules of the Election Commission, an independent must submit a list of 300 voters

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Handing control of Bakhmut to Moscow

Says head of Wagner mercenary group

AFP, Moscow

The head of Russia's Wagner mercenary group yesterday said his troops had started transferring their positions in the flashpoint eastern Ukraine city of Bakhmut to the Russian military.

His announcement comes days after Moscow's military said it had deployed jets and artillery on Russian soil against a "sabotage" group that crossed from Ukraine.

The Kremlin said meanwhile that China's special envoy for Ukraine would be visiting Russia today as part of a tour of European capitals including Kyiv.

The battle for Bakhmut has raged for nearly one year, levelling the city and decimating waves of Wagner recruits who have led Russia's assault on the industrial hub.

"We are withdrawing units from Bakhmut today. We are handing over positions to the military, ammunition and everything," Wagner boss Yevgeny Prigozhin said in a video released on social media.

"We pull back, we rest, we prepare and then we will get new tasks," added Prigozhin, who was dressed in tactical body armour and a military helmet.

Earlier this week, he conceded that around 10,000 prisoners he had recruited to fight in Ukraine had been killed on the battlefield. Prigozhin's announcement came shortly after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky accused Russia of again terrorising Ukrainians by launching a wave of Iranian-made attack drones at targets across his country.

"The enemy continued to terrorise Ukraine by launching 36 Shaheds. None reached their target," Zelensky said in a social media post. "I'm grateful to our air defence forces for the 100 percent result."

Probe reveals how Jupiter's lightning resembles Earth's

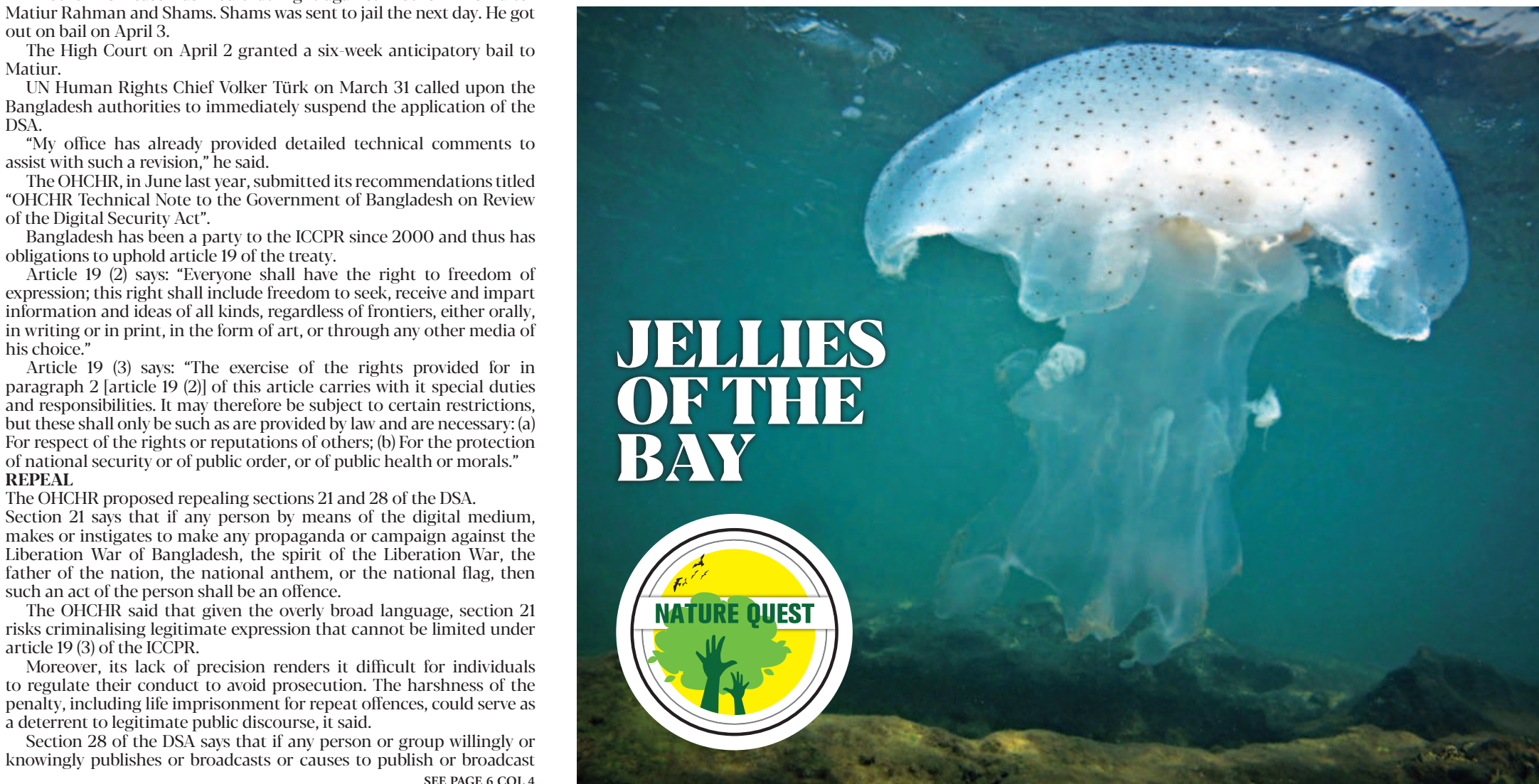
REUTERS, Washington

Hidden below the brownish ammonia clouds blanketing Jupiter are clouds that like on Earth are made of water. And like on Earth, lightning often is generated within these clouds -- an eerie sight spotted by various spacecraft that have visited our solar system's largest planet, including NASA's Juno probe.

Data obtained by Juno is providing fresh information on how the lightning processes on Jupiter are similar to those on Earth despite the dramatic differences between the two planets, according to scientists.

Earth is a relatively small rocky world. Jupiter, whose namesake ancient Roman god flung lightning bolts, is a gas giant so immense that all the other planets in our solar system could neatly fit inside it - including more than 1,300 Earths.

Tapping into five years of high-resolution data acquired by Juno's radio receiver as the spacecraft orbits Jupiter, the researchers found that the planet's lightning initiation processes pulsate with a similar rhythm to that observed inside clouds on our planet. The pulses observed on Jupiter as flashes of lightning were initiated with time separations of about a millisecond, similar to thunderstorms on Earth.



JELLIES OF THE BAY



A river jelly, or *Acromitus flagellates*, in the Bay of Bengal at Saint Martin's Island. Found mainly in brackish waters like mangroves, estuaries or coasts, these jellies aren't as harmful to humans as many others. The swarming of *Acromitus flagellates* occurs with the changes in the environment like habitat deterioration, overfishing, deep sea trawling, coastal pollution and climate change. So, swarms of jellyfish in a particular area isn't as good a sign as you would think -- it means we are destroying the environment there. Since they feed off zooplankton and ichthyoplankton, once they swarm, they can disturb the food web. However, according to research, their venom has shown anti-proliferative properties, confirming that it could be used for anti-cancer drug development in the future.

PHOTO: SHARIF SARWAR