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Surge in orders to test RMG sector's capacity



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Sri Lanka meet Pakistan in must-win affair



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Russia will win against 'evil' in Ukraine: North Korea



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91pc Bangladeshis prefer democracy: survey

Resolve political crisis over polls immediately

Urge eminent citizens at EC event; 'election must be free, fair and participatory too'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The next general election will have to be free, fair and at the same time participatory and competitive so that people in the country and elsewhere find it credible, eminent citizens told a discussion yesterday.

Besides, the current political crisis over the coming election has to be solved immediately, they told an Election Commission [EC] workshop titled "12th National Polls: Expectations and Reality".

If a major political party does not participate, the election will be questioned locally and internationally, former election commissioner Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hossain said.

"If you bring 300 parties to the election ignoring a major party, the polls will still not be deemed credible," he said.

Referring to the deputy commissioner of Jamalpur who recently urged people to vote for the ruling party, Sakhawat said, "You [EC] should take a tough stance against such things."

During polling, the EC should have a strong system in place to address complaints, he added.

Former cabinet secretary Ali Imam Majumdar said the last two national elections following the abolition of the caretaker government were widely questioned.

In the 2014 election, 153 lawmakers were elected without any competition while during the 2018 election, there were allegations that

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Homes have been built within the demarcated area of the Buriganga river at Basila in the capital. A few years ago the BIWTA evicted people occupying the river and demolished the structures they had built. But new buildings have now sprung up and the demolished ones have been rebuilt.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

CYBER SECURITY BILL 2023 JS passes it amid strong protests

JP, Gonoforum MPs slam it saying new law will curb freedom of speech, media

RASHIDUL HASAN

The Cyber Security Bill was passed in parliament yesterday amid strong protests by opposition lawmakers.

Jatiya Party and Gonoforum MPs said it was old wine in a new bottle. Like the Digital Security Act, the new law will also be against people's freedom of speech and thought, and freedom of the media. It is against the constitution, they said.

The new law is to replace the DSA, which has been widely criticised at the national and international levels.

Rights activists and different journalists' organisations said almost all the controversial provisions of the DSA have been retained in the Cyber Security Bill. Only the punishment for committing some offences has been reduced.

The government is saying that it is a new law, but there will be no relief. Because it is an old wine in a new bottle, said Gonoforum MP Mukabbir Khan while taking part in the discussion on the bill.

He said journalists, the United Nations, and the Editors' Council have objected to and expressed concern regarding the new law.

Mukabbir said the Editors' Council pointed out that at least nine sections of the DSA severely curb freedom of expression and independent journalism and demanded they be amended.

"Now in the proposed law, seven sections have been amended regarding punishment and bail. The definition of crime is not clarified. It remains the same. No changes were made to two of the sections. The UN Human Rights Office called for the repeal of two clauses. But instead of repealing those sections in the proposed law, changes have been made in terms of punishment and bail."

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I'll work to stamp out graft: CJ

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Newly appointed Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan yesterday said he will work with judges, lawyers and journalists to eradicate corruption and make the judiciary more robust.

"Corruption is like cancer. There is corruption to some extent in every sector. It cannot be even said there is no corruption or irregularities on the court premises. I learnt from newspapers that a High Court order had been falsified by forging the signatures of two judges of a High Court bench. A lawyer's assistant and a police constable were found involved and they were punished. There is zero scope for compromise with any corruption or misdeeds," he told The Daily Star over the phone.

"Reducing the backlog of cases at courts across the country, and continuing the work and efforts of my predecessors are my main goals. I will solicit opinions from all judges of the appellate and high court divisions of the Supreme Court, lawyers, and



Obaidul Hassan

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PROBE INTO WEALTH ABROAD S Alam seeks injunction on all media

Files petition with Supreme Court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

S Alam Group Chairman Mohammed Saiful Alam and his wife Farzana Parveen have filed a petition with the Supreme Court, seeking a blanket injunction against "any and all discourses" about the now-stalled investigation into S Alam's wealth abroad.

The injunction they seek applies to electronic and print media as well as social media – a blackout on the topic.

They also named The Daily Star, Prothom Alo, New Age and SC lawyer Barrister Syed Sayedul Haque Suman, and petitioned that the court restrain them from publishing or broadcasting any statements, opinions, reports, remarks, or online videos "touching the merit" of the Appellate Division's decision to put on hold the enquiry into Alam's assets abroad.

The petition, filed on Tuesday, is slated to be heard today.

The petition says "their [Alam and Farzana] personal and business reputations have been seriously affected" because of the discourse. They called the damage irreparable.

In a suo moto order, the High Court on August 6 asked the Anti-Corruption Commission to probe Alam's wealth abroad after The Daily Star published an investigative report on his overseas businesses.

On August 23, Justice M Enayetur Rahim, chamber judge of the Appellate Division, ordered a status quo on the probe, until January 8, 2024, when the matter will be heard before a full bench, led by the chief justice.

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BNP plans rallies in 19 dists this month

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The BNP has planned to hold rallies in 19 districts and organise marches from one district to another this month to realise its one-point demand for election under a non-partisan government, insiders say.

Supporters from the adjacent districts will be asked to join these rallies, they add.

Members of the party's standing committee, its highest policymaking body, made a draft of these programmes on Tuesday night and sent it to the top leaders, according to sources.

The BNP wants to make an impact with these programmes over the next one month, they add.

The standing committee held a meeting online on Monday night and another one in person on Tuesday night. The programmes were discussed in the meetings.

After finalising the draft, the standing committee sent it to BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman.

A formal announcement of these events is likely to come next week after the matters are discussed with the like-minded political parties.

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US worried over 'oppression' of journalists here

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US yesterday expressed concern over what it said was Bangladesh government's "systematic and pervasive oppression" of journalists and media personalities, who attempt to hold the authorities accountable.

"They [journalists] must be able to do their jobs without fear of harassment, violence, or intimidation," State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller told a press briefing in Washington.

He said this after a reporter asked for his comment on the sentencing of senior journalists Shafiq Rehman and Mahmudur Rahman for seven years and the seizure of the property of another journalist Eleas Hossain, who is now in New York.

Miller said, "Their work uncovers corruption, safeguards the public's right to know information that affects their lives. They

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Almost two lanes of the Dhaka-Chattogram highway in the capital's Shanir Akhra are occupied by dirt and debris from construction work. Besides, there is no room even for pedestrians in the densely populated area.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Islamic banks face liquidity challenges

Says Fitch Ratings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Islamic banking sector in Bangladesh continues to face liquidity challenges because of weak governance and regulatory quality, Fitch Ratings said.

In the first half of this year, Islamic banks faced sizable customer deposit outflows and lower liquidity buffers than conventional banks amid reports of loan irregularities, said the American credit rating agency in a report on Tuesday.

Islamic banks' excess liquidity – defined as total cash reserves minus required reserves with the central bank – declined by 66.6 percent year-on-year to Tk 982 crore at the end of June.

However, excess liquidity has since improved with a 12.7 percent quarterly rise, it said.

"In contrast, deposit growth is slowing."

Islamic banks' total deposits grew by only 3.8 percent year-on-year in the first six months of 2023, "a significant fall from the 12 percent year-on-year growth" in the first half of 2022.

Islamic banks' vulnerability to short-term liquidity challenges is demonstrated by the fall in the liquidity coverage ratio (LCR) to 87.7 percent at the end of 2022, below the regulatory requirement of 100 percent.

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