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# Cricket fever sparks online betting frenzy

Crores being siphoned out of country, say police

MUNTAKIM SAAD

With the ICC Cricket World Cup currently underway, online betting is witnessing a surge in Bangladesh, resulting in crores of taka flowing out of the country every day.

At least 50 betting sites, operated from mainly five different countries -- Russia, Cyprus, Malaysia, India and UAE -- have agents in Bangladesh who are using mobile financial services (MFS) to collect cash from local users and then siphon the money off by converting the currencies through exchange sites, according to law enforcers.

In September, the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) blocked 21,725 MFS accounts due to their alleged involvement in hundi and online gambling.

BetWinner, melbet.com, bet365, Mostbet, linebet.com, and 22bet are some of the popular gambling sites in Bangladesh.

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police has recently forecasted a report based on information provided by some arrested agents. As it turns out, around Tk 260 crore was transacted through 1xbet in a year, while Tk 245 crore was traded through Bet365, Tk 230 crore through Mostbet, Tk 140 crore through Bet Winner and Tk 133 crore through Betbuzz, according to the report.

The BFIU 2021-22 Annual Report revealed that around US\$ 0.59 million was transferred to a Malaysia-based company from Bangladesh in six months for online game coins.

According to law enforcers, online gambling goes all year round but peaks during international sports tournaments, such as the World Cup, Indian Premier League, Big Bash, and English Premier League.

People from not only cities but also rural areas are getting engaged in online betting using MFS, being lured by advertisements and having easy access with smartphones,

said Muhammad Rezaul Masud, special superintendent of police at CID's Cyber Crime Command and Control Centre.

The CID official also said they have arrested 11 people in this connection over the last three weeks.

**EASY ACCESS TO BETTING SITES**

"Play and Win", "Best online casino in the country", "Up to Tk 10,000 bonus for all new players" -- anyone browsing through Facebook or

sites or apps using a phone number or email. An e-wallet is created against the account. With an initial zero balance, the person will add balance to the wallet using MFS among other options. After receiving the money, the local agents refill the gambler's account through online payment systems like Perfect Money, Skrill, PayPal, Net Hiller and Binance.

According to law enforcers, at least 25 currency exchange sites are being used by the betting agents to siphon off the money.

Investigators said 1xbet in Bangladesh is operated by a super-agent in Meherpur while bet365 is controlled by super-agents in Bagerhat and Khulna. Other betting sites also have similar agents in Brahmanbaria, Cumilla, Narayanganj, and Barishal.

**DRIVES ON, BETTING**

TOO

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has so far blocked many betting sites, but gamblers can still access those using Virtual Private Network (VPN).

In October last year, the BTRC blocked 331 betting websites while Google removed 14 apps among 150 in Google Play Store which were reported by the BTRC for being connected to online gambling.

Also, 17 Facebook and 17 YouTube links were removed after BTRC reported against 27 Facebook and 69 YouTube links for being used to promote gambling and provide training on online betting.

Between April and May, the Anti-Terrorism Unit arrested 13 people from Rajshahi in two separate drives for their alleged involvement with online betting during IPL.

In August, the CID arrested 10 people associated with 1xbet and BetWinner on allegations of money laundering.

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YouTube would frequently come across such advertisements of online gambling and betting websites.

In cricket, the bets are sorted across an array of categories -- ball by ball, the first ball of the match, over by over, first six overs of each match, whether a wicket will go in next over and which team will win, among others.

Getting into an online gambling site is very easy.

A gambler opens an account on these



## RINGLEADER, 3 GANG MEMBERS HELD

UNB, Dhaka

Members of Rapid Action Battalion arrested four members of a gang including its ringleader for their involvement in online gambling, centring the ongoing cricket world cup.

They were arrested in Dhaka's Malibagh and Gazipur's Sreepur area on Monday

night. The arrestees are ringleader Nishat Munna, 20, his associates Kamrul Islam Shuvo, 27, Sumon, 35, and Nazmul Hossain Babu, 31.

Commander Khandaker Al-Moin, law and media wing director of Rab, disclosed this during a briefing at its media centre in Dhaka's Karwan Bazar area yesterday afternoon.

He said Nishat used to work as a local agent of a foreign online gambling site.

The gang laundered around Tk 50 lakh to their foreign agents from the country after keeping their share, he said.

On information, Rab members recovered 16 mobile phone sets, 18 SIM cards, CPU and monitor from their possessions during the drive.

## Won't let BNP create unrest Says Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday warned that BNP would not be spared if it tries to resort to anarchy on October 28.

"Awami League will allow BNP to hold its rally on October 28 if the party does not try to create chaos on that day," said Quader.

He came up with the remarks while speaking at an extended meeting of Dhaka south city unit of AL held at the party's Bangabandhu Avenue central office in the capital.

He said BNP's dream of Dhaka siege will fall flat, alleging that they are now out to destroy democracy.



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

A makeshift furniture store has been set up taking up most of the footpath and a portion of the road, right opposite Motijheel Ideal School and College, hampering the movement of pedestrians and vehicles.



## PM departs for Brussels to attend Global Gateway Forum

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina departed for Brussels yesterday morning for a three-day official visit to Belgium to attend the "Global Gateway Forum" from October 25 to 26.

She is going to Brussels at the invitation of the European Commission (EC) President Ursula von der Leyen.

"A commercial flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines carrying the prime minister and her entourage members departed from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport

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## School admissions through digital lottery starts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Admission for the 2024 academic year in government and private secondary schools started yesterday, with a provision of maximum 55 students per class.

The admission process will run until November 14.

The ministry released two sets of guidelines for enrolling students in both public and private schools. Students will be admitted through a digital lottery, the education ministry said.

Non-government schools in metropolitan areas and Sadar upazilas will come under the central lottery. However, non-government schools that are not part of the central lottery will also need to hold a lottery through committees approved by the education ministry.

The age of students for admission to class 1 has been fixed at 6+ years.

There will be no admission forms available at schools. Students must apply online at <https://gsa.teletalk.com.bd> from 11:00am on October 24 to 5:00pm on November 14.

They will need to deposit Tk 110 as an application fee on a TeleTalk prepaid number.

During the application process, candidates can select up to five schools in each application, based on availability.

In the case of double-shift institutions, selecting both shifts will be considered as completing two applications. The same school or shift cannot be selected twice in the same application.

There are a total of 1,17,381 seats available in government schools, while 9,98,692 in non-government schools, according to DSHE sources.

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## 'Govt wants to politicise Ansar'

Says Fakhurul, opposes move to give it power to frisk, arrest

UNB, Dhaka

BNP yesterday opposed the government's move to equip Ansar battalion members with authority to arrest offenders, frisk detainees, and seize goods. The party demanded withdrawal of the newly introduced Ansar Battalion Bill, 2023 in this regard.

Tabled in parliament on Monday, the bill was sent to the parliamentary standing committee on the home ministry for further examination.

"A bill was placed in parliament yesterday (Monday). It is not only a cause of serious concern but also a matter of panic. This is how they (govt) are destroying the entire state system and the institutions," said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhurul Islam Alamgir while speaking at a press conference.

He said police are the only institution all over the world that has the power to arrest offenders. "But Ansars, who don't even have basic training, will be given that power here (in Bangladesh)."

The BNP leader said policing is a different thing and the force is run under several laws, rules, and a different code of conduct.

However, the role and activities of the Ansar force are different, he added.

Fakhurul said late President and BNP



**Police are the only institution all over the world that has the power to arrest offenders. But Ansars, who don't even have basic training, will be given that power here.**

founder Ziaur Rahman modernised the Ansar force during his rule.

The BNP leader alleged that the government has brought the Ansar Battalion Bill, 2023 as part of its move to politicise the force.

"We condemn it and simultaneously demand the withdrawal of the bill. We strongly demand that this bill is not passed in any way," he said.

## DENGUE OUTBREAK 12 more die, 1,852 get hospitalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 12 more people died from dengue in 24 hours preceding 8:00am yesterday as the country grapples with a record outbreak of the mosquito-borne disease.

Of the 12 deaths, five were reported in the capital.

At least 1,852 dengue patients were hospitalised in the 24-hour period, according to DGHS.

Dengue has so far claimed at least 1,284 lives this year and nearly 258,912 were infected, making this the deadliest year since the first recorded epidemic in 2000. At least 7,546 dengue patients were undergoing treatment at different hospitals.

## 'We're closely monitoring the situation'

Says US state dept on events in Bangladesh ahead of polls

UNB, Dhaka

The United States said on Monday it was "closely monitoring" developments in Bangladesh leading up to the elections.

"It's important for free and fair elections that all stakeholders are able to participate peacefully," Spokesperson at the US Department of State Mathew Miller told reporters during a regular briefing in Washington yesterday.

That includes government officials, law enforcement, political parties, the Election Commission, the media, and, of course, voters themselves, he said.

"And we will continue to call on all stakeholders to respect the rule of law and to refrain from violence, harassment, and intimidation," said the State Department spokesperson.

On Sunday, US Ambassador to Bangladesh

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