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4 CASES OVER POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Conviction of 46 BNP men comes after five years

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Another 46 leaders and activists of BNP and its front organisations were sentenced to different jail terms yesterday in four cases filed in 2018 over political violence in the capital.

With this, at least 1,277 BNP-Jamaat activists have been jailed since November 7 this year in 73 cases lodged between November 2010 and December 2018 on charges of illegal gathering on the streets, rioting, damaging properties, arson attacks on vehicles, vandalism, and assaulting police and obstructing them from discharging duties.

In a case filed with Kalabagan Police Station in September 2018, 17 BNP members were sentenced to two and a half years imprisonment each by a Dhaka court yesterday.

No convicts were present in the courtroom when Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Mainul Islam delivered the verdict.

During the trial, five prosecution witnesses testified. Kalabagan BNP President Saidur Rahman Sayeed and its Joint General Secretary Haji Md Hossain Ali are among the convicts.

According to the case statement, on September 30,

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A Palestinian woman shows victory sign from a damaged room of her house overlooking a building destroyed by Israeli bombardment in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

ELECTION CAMPAIGN Hasina to join rally in Rangpur tomorrow

To visit Barishal Dec 29

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to visit Rangpur tomorrow and Barishal on December 29 as part of the party's campaign for the January 7 polls.

In Rangpur, she will address a public rally at the Taraganj Upazila College ground, in support of the AL candidate from Rangpur-2 (Taraganj-Badarganj) Abul Kalam Md Ahsanul Haque.

The prime minister will then visit her in-law's residence in Pirganj – Jaisadan – for the first time in five years, and have lunch there.

Later, Hasina will join another public rally in Rangpur-6 (Pirganj) constituency arranged for the campaign of AL candidate



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Over Tk 71 lakh spent on political ads on Facebook

Says report analysing 355 FB pages in Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Facebook pages with political endorsements spent about \$65,142 (Tk 71.5 lakh) on political ads over the last one year, according to a report released yesterday.

Digitally Right, an organisation focusing on digital rights, published the report titled "Hits and Misses: An Examination of Meta's Political Ad Policy Enforcement in Bangladesh".

It analysed 355 Facebook pages in Bangladesh that spent over 100 dollars on each ad, and classified them into four broad categories: "Political" (politicians, election candidates, political parties), "Commercial" (selling products and services), "News and Media" (newspapers, publications, and media websites), and "Others".

BNP's official public relations page – BNP Media Cell – was the top spender among those that declared themselves as political pages, having spent \$9,751 in boosting their ads and content.

State Minister for ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak's official Facebook page was a close second, spending \$7,544.

On the other hand, BNP's official party page, Bangladesh Nationalist Party-BNP, came in third for spending \$6,233.

However, AL far outweighs BNP's spending in that it utilises multiple social media handles.

According to the report, "BNP largely disseminated its messages via the 'BNP Media Cell' and the official party page. In contrast, Awami League used several politicians and supporter pages in addition to their official party pages, as seen by the top ten political pages list."

The top spenders related to AL (either directly or indirectly) include a Facebook page about Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called "Amar Netri Amar Ahongkar",

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VIOLATION OF LABOUR LAW Verdict in case against Yunus Jan 1

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The verdict of a labour law violation case filed against Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus and three top officials of Grameen Telecom will be delivered on January 1.

Sheikh Merina Sultana, chairman of the Third Labour Court of Dhaka, yesterday set the date after hearing the closing arguments from the defence and prosecution around 8:30pm, Abdullah-Al-Mamun, a lawyer for Yunus, told The Daily Star.

Yunus, also chairman of Grameen Telecom, and its top officials – Ashrafur Hassan, Nurjahan Begum and Mohammad Shahjahan – appeared before the court yesterday.

Yesterday, the defence also sought acquittal of Yunus and others from the charges on completion of their arguments. On November 16, the prosecution completed their arguments in the case



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Israel pounds Gaza on Christmas Eve

Military campaign targets south of the enclave where most displaced Palestinians are trapped; Biden urges caution

AGENCIES

Israel yesterday pushed with its military campaign in Gaza, as the focus of the deadly campaign shifted to southern Gaza where most displaced Palestinians are trapped.

US President Joe Biden stressed the "critical need" to protect civilians, in a call with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who vowed Israel would "continue the war until all of its goals have been achieved", officials said.

As heavy fighting raged on, the Israeli army said it had struck another 200 targets in the past 24 hours in the besieged Palestinian territory.

The army said 153 troops had died in Gaza since it launched its ground invasion on October 27. Ten soldiers were lost in battles on Saturday, one of the deadliest days for the Israeli side.

"This is a difficult morning, after a very difficult day of fighting in Gaza," said Netanyahu. "The war is exacting a very heavy price... but we have no choice but to keep fighting."

The army said soldiers had raided a northern Gaza compound near schools, a mosque and a clinic and found "explosive belts adapted for children, dozens of mortar shells, hundreds of grenades and intelligence documents".

Hamas rejected those claims as lies

meant "to justify their massacring of innocent civilians and their destructive aggression that has affected the entire infrastructure... in the already blockaded Gaza Strip".

Since October 7, Israel's withering military campaign, including massive aerial bombardment, has killed 20,424 people, mostly women and children, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry.

Israel military strike 200 targets in the past 24 hours

Churches across the Palestinian territory cancels Christmas celebrations

Palestinian death toll rises to 20,424

Vast areas of Gaza lie in ruins and its 2.4 million people have endured dire shortages of water, food, fuel and medicine due to an Israeli siege, alleviated only by the limited arrival of aid trucks.

Eighty percent of Gazans have been displaced, according to the UN, many now shielding against the winter cold

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Pre-polls violence leaves 12 injured in three districts

EC to sue 2 AL candidates in Ctg, Jhenaidah for electoral code breach

STAR REPORT

At least 12 people were injured and house of a union parishad chairman was vandalised in election-related violence in four districts since Saturday night.

Besides, the Election Commission has decided to sue two Awami League candidates in Jhenaidah and Chattogram for violating the electoral rules.

In Faridpur, two people were wounded after an election campaign office of independent candidate for Faridpur-3 AK Azad came under attack yesterday afternoon in Gerda Abul Faiz Mujibur Rahman High School area.

Azad's supporters alleged that followers of AL candidate Shamim Haque carried out the attack.

However, Shah Mohammad Amar Haque, local union parishad chairman and a supporter of Shamim, denied the allegation.

Contacted, Abdul Gaffar, inspector of Kotwali Police Station, said police were investigating the incident.

In Dhaka, a clash between two factions of the ruling party yesterday morning during an election campaign of party candidate Jahangir Kabir Nanak for Dhaka-13 injured four people.

Police detained one in this connection, said Mahfuzul Haque Bhuiyan, officer-in-charge of Mohammadpur Police Station.

In Chuadanga-1 constituency, six people were injured as followers of independent candidate Dilip Kumar Agarwala were attacked allegedly by those of AL candidate Solaiman Haque Joardar on Saturday night.

The victims said Dilip and his supporters were campaigning in Basubhandardah in Sadar upazila. Suddenly a group of people swooped on them.

Dilip alleged that the men of AL candidate were behind the attack.

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Rohingya man shot dead in Teknaf

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

An elderly Rohingya man was shot dead at a refugee camp in Teknaf upazila of Cox's Bazar Saturday night.

The deceased, Abul Faiz, 65, was a resident of Block C at the Noyapara camp.

Faiz's son Ismail had previous enmity with some Rohingya criminals, said Teknaf Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Muhammad Osman Gani.

"Criminals ambushed Ismail when he and his ailing father were returning home from a hospital adjacent to the camp around 11:00pm."

They shot at Ismail but missed, critically wounding his father, the OC added.

When Faiz was taken to Teknaf Upazila Health Complex, doctors declared him dead on arrival, confirmed Irfan Yusuf, a doctor at the hospital.

OC Osman said the victim's body was sent to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital morgue for an autopsy. "Police are taking necessary legal action in this regard."



PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

Sharifa Begum, 25, on her way back to Balasi Ghat from Rasulpur Char in Gaibandha's Phulchari upazila, with her two children. They had gone to the char, around 1km away from their home, to give Sharifa's husband, Joyen Mia, his lunch as he was tending to his corn cultivation on a field there. Every day Sharifa needs to travel with her children, carrying food and utensils, all the way on foot due to a lack of transport. In monsoon, the locals can use boats to move across, but they have limited options in the drier seasons. The photo was taken recently.

5 new species of fuzzy hedgehogs found in SE Asia

NBC NEWS ONLINE



Scientists identified five new species of soft-furred hedgehogs in Southeast Asia.

Two of the species are entirely new to science, while the other three have been upgraded from the subspecies level after DNA analysis and physical characteristics helped researchers from the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History describe and categorize the animals.

The study, published in the Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society, analysed physical specimens and genetic samples obtained from museum loans as well as specimens collected during field expeditions to Borneo, an island in Malaysia.

These newly described mammals are furry, distinguishing them from the more familiar spiny hedgehogs found in Europe.

Furry hedgehogs are teardrop-shaped, with faces ending in a long, narrow snout, not unlike a mini armadillo without a shell, or something halfway between a mouse and a shrew.

Previously, there were two known species of furry hedgehogs, but the study increases the total to seven. It can be hard to tell small mammals apart, and detailed studies, like the one conducted by the Smithsonian researchers, can lead to discoveries that previously known specimens are indeed different species, as with these furry hedgehogs.