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POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Two BNP vice chairmen jailed in 12-yr-old case

56 more BNP-Jamaat activists also sentenced to different terms in 4 cases

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Two vice chairmen of BNP and 56 BNP-Jamaat leaders and activists were sentenced to different jail terms yesterday in four cases filed in 2011, 2014, 2017 and 2018, over political violence in the capital.

The vice chairmen are Air Vice Marshal (ret'd) Altaf Hossain Chowdhury and Major (ret'd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed.



Altaf Hossain Chy



Hafiz Uddin Ahmed

With the 58, at least 1,400 BNP-Jamaat activists have been jailed since November 7 this year in 82 cases lodged between November 2010 and December 2018 on charges of illegal gathering on the streets, rioting,

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A Palestinian man mourns over the body of a child killed in an Israeli strike at the Nasser hospital in Khan Yunis on the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Forcing anyone to vote a violation of human rights

Says NHRC chairman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Barring people from casting this vote or forcing someone to vote are both violations of human rights, said Kamal Uddin Ahmed, the chairman of the National Human Rights Commission.

"If someone wants to vote, no one has the right to stop him. If someone does not want to vote but is forced to vote, that is a violation of human rights, too. We are keeping an eye on it," Kamal said while talking to reporters after a meeting with Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal at the latter's office.

The meeting was held ahead of the 12th national election scheduled for January 7.

By violating the electoral code of conduct, many candidates and their workers cause anxiety for the people and break their trust, Ahmed said.

"We have been saying that such things should not happen."



Kamal Uddin Ahmed

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Pre-election violence leaves 16 injured in six districts

STAR REPORT

At least 16 people were injured in election-related violence and a campaign office was damaged in six districts on Wednesday night and yesterday.

Of them, nine were wounded after the supporters of the AL candidate for Joypurhat-2, Abu Syeed Al Mahmud Swapan, and independent Golam Mahfuz Chowdhury clashed in Akkelpur upazila on Wednesday night.

Locals said the followers of the AL nominee were holding a meeting near the upazila health complex when the supporters of Mahfuz were passing the area.

At one stage, Swapan's supporters threw chairs at those of the independent contender triggering the clash, they added.

Contacted, Mahfuz, also the joint secretary of Joypurhat AL, alleged that his men first came under attack by the supporters of Swapan.

Swapan did not answer phone calls despite several attempts by The Daily Star.

The two groups filed two cases accusing 110 people. Additional law enforcers were deployed in the area to avert further violence, said Shahinur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Akkelpur Police Station.

In Pabna-1, four supporters of independent Abu Sayeed were hurt yesterday as they were attacked allegedly by those of AL's pick Shamsul Haque Tuku.

"We were campaigning in Silonda Bazar area of Shanthia upazila around 12:30pm. Suddenly, a group of supporters of the

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Israeli strikes wipe out 'entire families' in Gaza

More than 200 Palestinians killed in 24 hours as UN warns Gazans face 'grave peril'

AGENCIES

Israeli forces continued with the offensive in besieged Gaza Strip as relentless strikes killed more than 200 people including entire families over the past 24 hours across the Palestinian territory.

The Israeli offensive, which started on October 7, has devastated much of northern Gaza and air and artillery strikes and house-to-house fighting have recently shifted to the south of the enclave.

Ashraf al-Qudra, spokesman for the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza, reported more than 200 deaths over the past 24 hours in Israeli strikes.

Entire families were wiped out in Israeli strikes, he added.

An AFP correspondent reported heavy artillery strikes overnight particularly on Khan Yunis.

The Israeli army has deployed an additional brigade to Khan Yunis, the hometown of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, said military spokesman Daniel Hagari.

More than 80 percent's of Gaza's 2.4 million people have been driven from their homes, the UN says, and many now live in cramped shelters or makeshift tents in the far south,

in and around the city of Rafah near Egypt.

UN World Health Organisation chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus called for "urgent steps to alleviate the grave peril" facing Gaza's people, including "terrible injuries, acute hunger and... severe risk of disease".

UN asks Israel to end 'unlawful killings' in West Bank

Gaza death toll rises to 21,320

French President Emmanuel Macron in a call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu voiced his "deepest concern at the very heavy civilian toll" and stressed "the need to work towards a lasting ceasefire", Macron's office said.

Since October 07, Israel's relentless aerial bombardment and ground invasion with troops and tanks have killed at least 21,320 people, mostly women and children, according to

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Will look into unusual rise in wealth but after polls

Says Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Action will be taken against those aspirants whose wealth have surged abnormally, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader said yesterday.

"If someone's income seems to be abnormal, the government cannot do anything at this moment because it is only carrying out routine work. Tough measures will be taken after the election," he said at a press conference at the AL chief's political office in Dhanmondi.

He was responding to a question about the Transparency International Bangladesh's (TIB) allegation of discrepancies in the affidavits submitted by the aspirants to the Election Commission.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, said the prime minister had said she would learn from the previous mistakes.

In its report released on December 26, the TIB questioned the authenticity of many candidates' income, wealth, loans, and debts.

The graft watchdog said a minister owns "undisclosed overseas companies", engaged in real estate business abroad, with a total assets of around Tk 2,312 crore.

The TIB prepared the report by analysing affidavits submitted by candidates for the 7 January national polls.

According to the report, the wealth of 10 MPs swelled between 4,000pc and

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New wasp species named after Dr Who villain

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Fourteen newly discovered species of wasps have been named after the villainous Daleks from Doctor Who to mark the 60th anniversary of the popular sci-fi series.

The insects, which bear the genus "Dalek", are among the 619 new wasp species described this year by London's Natural History Museum (NHM).

An alien warrior race of mutants, the Daleks are the formidable bad guys in BBC's long-running TV show.

One particular species of wasp from Costa Rica called Dalek nationi also honours Terry

Nation, the Welsh screenwriter and novelist who created the mutant race that terrified children for the past six decades.

Dr John Noyes, scientific associate at the NHM, said: "I thought it was a good name for a genus and a bit of fun having been a big fan of Doctor Who in my early years."

A total of 815 new species were described by NHM scientists in 2023, including a 407 million-year-old parasitic fungus named after children's author Beatrix Potter.

Potteromyces asteroylicola was discovered infecting the roots of ancient plants and is thought to be the earliest disease-causing fungus ever discovered.

The researchers said they wanted to honour Potter's reputation as a dedicated mycologist - someone who studies and works with fungi.



Tigers eye another Bay Oval success

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bay Oval at the city of Mount Maunganui had cemented a special place in Bangladesh cricket history for having staged the Tigers' maiden Test victory over New Zealand at the beginning of last year.

Fast forward to almost two years since that momentous triumph, the Najmul Hossain Shanto-led Bangladesh T20 team has an opportunity to achieve another milestone - a series victory in New Zealand in any format - at the same venue, which stages today's fixture and also the third and final match of the series on Sunday.

Today's match, scheduled to begin at 12:10 pm (Bangladesh time), will be televised by Green TV and Nagorik TV.

Bangladesh are leading the series 1-0 after a five-wicket win in Napier in the first match on Wednesday

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HUNGRY BIRDS

The Gumai beel of Chattoagram, one of the largest paddy fields in country, sees hundreds of red-breasted parakeets descend from the mountains in search of rice to feed on. Every year, these birds have a feast just before the end of the Boro and Aman seasons, as this particular beel turns completely golden with ripe paddy just ahead of harvest.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

National Bank broke rules to reschedule MP aspirant's loan

Says Bangladesh Bank

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Bank delivered false information into the Bangladesh Bank's credit information bureau database to hide the default loans of one of its clients, said a Bangladesh Bank letter.

The central bank later asked the private bank to explain why its officials should not be penalised for this.

As per its rules, the BB can fine the bank officials concerned Tk 50,000 to Tk 5 lakh if any false information is submitted to the database.

The banking regulator on December 6 wrote to the National Bank Limited (NBL) managing director saying that the loan of defaulter "Marium Construction Ltd" was first reported under the bad and lose (BL) category in the CIB database on November 15. Then on December 3, the loan was reported under standard (STD) category.

Alam Ahmed, an adviser of Bangladesh Krishak League, the ruling Awami League's farmers' front, is the managing director of Marium Construction Ltd. He is in a legal battle for running for parliament as an independent in Gazipur-4.

When Bangladesh Bank enquired about the discrepancies before writing to the NBL, the bank said the loan had been rescheduled. But the BB said the loan was reported under the unclassified category in the CIB database without having a no objection certificate (NOC) from it which was a clear violation of its rules.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Bangladesh Bank

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