INTERNATIONAL

'POLLS DISINFO' EU probes Facebook, Instagram

The EU yesterday launched an investigation into Meta's Facebook and Instagram over concerns the platforms are failing to counter disinformation ahead of EU elections

The probe is under the EU's new Digital Services Act, a landmark law that cracks down on illegal content online and forces the world's biggest tech companies to do more to protect users online.

The European Commission said it suspected Meta's moderation of adverts was "insufficient" and that an increase in paid spots in those conditions could harm "electoral processes".

Facebook and Instagram are among 23 "very large" online platforms that must comply with the DSA or risk fines up running up to six percent of a platform's global turnover, or even a ban for egregious



US Capitol Police remove a pro-Palestinian protester as US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin testifies on the Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Request during a US House Armed Services Committee hearing, on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC

7 Maoist rebels killed in India

AFP. Raipur

At least seven Maoist insurgents were dead by Indian security forces yesterday, police told AFP, the latest clash in a decades-long conflict waged in the country's wild central forests.

The guerrillas were killed in a remote part of the central state of Chhattisgarh.

Security deployments in the state have been bolstered in the past month with India currently in the middle of a six-week general election.

"Bodies of seven Maoists have been recovered," a police official told AFP.

Two of the cadres killed were women, he said, adding that a large quantity of weapons including automatic firearms had been recovered.

G7 to phase out coal power plants by mid-2030s

AFP, Turin

G7 energy and climate ministers yesterday agreed a timeframe for phasing out coal-fired power plants, setting a goal in the mid-2030s, in a move hailed as significant by some environmentalists but described as "too late" by others.

The Group of Seven two-day meeting in Turin is the first big political session since the world pledged at the UN's COP28 annual climate summit in Dubai in December to transition away from coal, oil and gas.

existing unabated coal power generation in our energy systems during the first half of 2030s," the final statement read.

However, it left some wiggle room, saying nations could follow "a timeline consistent with keeping a limit of 1.5-degrees-Celsius temperature rise within reach,

in line with countries' net zero Japan -- which relies heavily on coal

It also preserves a place for coal power if it is "abated", meaning its emissions are captured or limited by technology -- something panned by



The G7 commits to "phase out many as unproven and a distraction from cutting fossil fuel use.

The G7 members are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United

Negotiations over a fixed date were reportedly tricky. Some countries, and many environmentalists, had been pushing for a 2030 limit, but

was reluctant to set a date at all.

The leaders of the G7 countries will produce their own statement after a summit in southern Italy in

The 2015 Paris Agreement saw countries agree to cap global warming at "well below" 2C above preindustrial times -- with a safer limit of 1.5C if possible.

To keep the 1.5C limit in play, the UN's climate expert panel has said emissions need to be slashed almost in half this decade, but they continue to rise.

The G7 ministers also tackled the thorny issue of plastic pollution amid a heated debate over how to best design a treaty addressing the

The ministers said they "aspired" to reduce and if necessary restrain the global production of plastic, and renewed their commitments to end plastic pollution by 2040.

AFGHANISTAN 6 killed in mosque attack

AFP, Herat

A gunman stormed a mosque in western Afghanistan and killed six people, a government spokesman said yesterday, local residents claiming the minority community had been targeted.

An official said that "an unknown armed person shot at worshippers in a mosque" in Herat province's Guzara district on Monday at around 9:00pm.

While no group has claimed the attack, the regional chapter of the Islamic State (IS) group frequently targeted Shia communities in the past.

King Charles III resumes public duties

AFP, London

King Charles III yesterday reportedly told fellow cancer patients "I'm well", as he carried out his first official public engagement since being diagnosed with the condition. The British head of state appeared relaxed as he and his wife Queen Camilla met patients and staff at the University College Hospital Macmillan Cancer Centre in central London. Charles, 75, suspended most of his duties in February after cancer was found while he was being treated for an enlarged prostate the previous month. The exact nature of his cancer has not been disclosed but doctors said last week they were "very encouraged" by the progress of his treatment as an out-patient and "positive" about his recovery.

HEAVY APRIL RAINS 143 killed in Pakistan

At least 143 people died in Pakistan from lightning strikes and other storm-related incidents in April, with the country receiving more than twice as much rain as usual for the month, officials said vesterday. April brought flash floods, landslides and inclement weather that caused houses to collapse in some areas and destroyed crops in others. The largest death toll for April was in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where 83 people died. In Punjab, a total of 21 people were killed in different rain-related incidents. Another 21 deaths were reported in Balochistan province. In parts of Pakistan-administered Kashmir, 14 people were killed, and at least four were killed in road accidents linked to floods in Sindh province.

HUSH MONEY TRIAL Trump fined for violating court order

The New York judge presiding over Donald Trump's hush money trial yesterday fined the former president for defying a gag order and warned that further violations could result in jail time. Judge Juan Merchan held the 77-year-old Trump in contempt of court for breaching an order that he not publicly attack

witnesses, jurors or court staff and their relatives. Merchan fined Trump \$1,000 each for nine specific violations of the gag order, and instructed him to remove seven "offending posts" from his Truth Social account and two from a campaign website by yesterday afternoon.

60pc DSA cases filed by agencies, govt or AL activists

study period [October 2018 - August

This means more politicians were arrested last year, in the run-up to the January 7 national election. "We have data regarding the

professions of 1,534 individuals sued," said Prof Ali Riaz, distinguished professor of political science at Illinois State University, while presenting the findings at an online event yesterday.

At least 495 politicians were sued under the DSA, making them a third of all those prosecuted and at least a quarter of those arrested, according to the research. Addressing the seminar, Dr Badiul

Alam Majumder, secretary general of Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik, said, "The quiet now is uncanny. This law is to blame for it. We don't know who will be prosecuted at what point and for what frivolous reason. These laws have been used against political opponents."

Meanwhile, journalists constitute

another third of those prosecuted. At least 451 journalists were sued under the DSA since its inception, and 255 of them were sued for their journalistic

At least 97 journalists, of them 50 working for outlets outside the capital, were arrested, said the research paper. Of the accused, 209 journalists are

associated with national-level media and 197 with regional media outlets. Online media journalists from outside Dhaka form the largest group of iournalists -- 113 -- sued under the DSA.

"Journalists outside Dhaka are the most vulnerable," said Prof Riaz. Journalists have been accused under

members of former minister and MP of

Lalmonirhat-2 Nuruzzaman Ahmed,

former minister and MP of Cumilla-10

Relatives of AL MPs

the DSA by 202 people.

Of the accusers, 124 are "aggrieved parties", while 61 were individuals who had not been directly impacted by the news or any other actions of these journalists. "When the law was rolled out,

journalists internalised it. By punishing one, you teach a lesson to 10 others. Editors should be deciding what journalists should and should not write but journalists decide by themselves that they will stay quiet," said Prof Riaz.

At least 28 minors were sued under the DSA and 22 of them were arrested, found CGS, calling the situation deeply disconcerting.

It said, "The law allowed anyone to file a case, even if he/she is not an aggrieved party. Such provision of the law, especially in a very polarised socio-political environment and highly politicised law enforcement agencies, opened the door for vigilante justice."

According to CGS data, 190 cases have been filed alleging that the accused have defamed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Of them, 92 were lodged by activists of the ruling party, while law enforcers filed

A total of 80 cases were lodged for the alleged defamation of ministers, and the majority of them were filed by people who were not directly aggrieved, instead of the ministers concerned. This too mostly constituted of ruling party affiliates.

"Give bail to all arrested under DSA," urged Prof Riaz, adding that since the law itself has been replaced by the Cyber Security Act last year, the "offences" should not logically still be valid.

OCT 2018 – SEPT 2023

DSA cases filed

1.436

People accused 4.520

ACCUSERS

AL activists

263

Filed by other party activists

'Aggrieved parties' 124

Individuals not directly impacted

61

Law enforcers

31 **ACCUSED**

Politicians

495 Journalists

451

Minors **28**

Rafah offensive

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had raised cautious hopes for an end

The Palestinian militant group said it was considering a plan for a 40-day ceasefire and the exchange of scores of hostages for larger numbers of Palestinian prisoners.

adding that "we are keen to respond as quickly as possible".

duties. According to media reports,

the issue of temporary passes to journalists has been stopped due to an unwritten ban from the top authorities of the country's banking and financial sector regulatory body. Journalists involved in reporting on the economy have been protesting, but the matter has not been resolved so far," read the statement.

"The Noab and the Editors' Council think this decision of Bangladesh Bank is tantamount to taking away the freedom of the media. For the ban, people will be deprived of the right to know the real state of the bank and financial sector as well as the country's the sector. At the same time, it will further encourage irregularities and corruption in the banking and financial sector," it continued.

Noab, Editors' Council slam restrictions

The statement also said, "The central bank is one of the most important institutions of any country's economy and people's trust. It is necessary to ensure free flow of information to build a sustainable banking sector in the long term and strengthen people's confidence in this sector."

"For the last 53 years after independence, journalists have played a role in ensuring accountability in the banking and financial sector of the country, as well as meeting the public's economy. On the other hand, it will information needs through free access

increase the public's mistrust of to the central bank and gathering information," it added.

On Thursday, Mezbaul Haque, spokesperson of Bangladesh Bank, said that henceforth, journalists will only be able to visit the spokesperson and other officials of the bank at its building through using a specific permit issued by the bank.

"If an officer gives passes to journalists, then only that officer can be met. However, journalists will not be able to enter any department of the central bank freely as before," he added.

The Noab and the Editors' Council also termed Mezbaul's speech as an expression of the undeclared ban on

HC scraps its order to probe Transmission line

directive for enquiring into the allegations of loan scams in Islami Bank, Social Islami Bank and First Security Islami Bank following the latest HC verdict.

S Alam Group is the principal shareholders of the three banks, he

Meanwhile, ACC's lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told this correspondent that ACC must conduct a probe into the allegations of loan scams in the

three banks. On December 4, 2022, the bench led by Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder issued the suomoto rule asking the secretaries at the ministries of finance, law and home affairs, the BB governor, the ACC chairman and heads of BFIU and the CID to explain why their inaction towards the persons involved in the loan scams should not be declared illegal and why they should not be

directed to take action against them. It also ordered the ACC, BB, BFIU and CID to investigate the allegations of loan scams in the three banks.

The HC bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Khizir Hayat Lizu gave the orders following news reports in November 2022 about the alleged loan scams in the three banks.

The bench also asked S Alam Group to come up with explanations on the reports that it took Tk 30,000 crore from Islami Bank and to place relevant documents in this regard before the court.

On November 24, 2022, Prothom

Alo published a report stating that an 'unscrupulous group' had withdrawn Tk 2,460 crore from Islami Bank. Islami Bank had sanctioned about Tk 7,000 crore for the eight companies

that year. On November 29, 2022, New Age published another report saying that S Alam Group and its associate companies have taken loans amounting to Tk 30,000 crore from Islami Bank, well above their limit.

US campuses rage

Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in Richmond on Monday evening pushing and shoving away protesters, with students saying teargas and pepper spray deployed.

At the University of Texas at Austin, police clashed with protesters Monday, including using pepper spray, and made arrests while dismantling an encampment, adding to the more than 350 people detained nationwide over the weekend.

Paul Quinzi, of the Austin Lawyers Guild helping those detained, told AFP they estimated "at least 80 arrests.'

Protests against the Gaza war, with its high Palestinian civilian death toll, have posed a challenge to university administrators trying to balance free speech rights with complaints that the rallies have veered into anti-Semitism and hate

the entry of journalists.

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"During test operation, no major problem was found in the line. So, Rooppur-Bogura new grid line is ready for use," Masudul added.

Rooppur-Baghabari power line's test transmission was completed last year while test run via Rooppur-Gopalganj will be done after completion of river crossing line work, according to the PGCB.

"We are likely to hand over the three power lines to the Rooppur power plant authorities by October this year," said Masudul.

Another dedicated line -- Rooppur to Dhaka -- was scheduled to be done

The deadline for the project's completion has been extended by two years from 2025 to 2027 at a meeting between Russian and Bangladeshi officials in Dhaka in the second week

of February. Construction work was hampered by the coronavirus pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war and delays in the construction of power lines, said several officials who attended the

9yr-old raped

FROM PAGE 12

daughter's body was lying in a bush near Khowaish Jame Masjid. We rushed to the spot with police and found her body there."

She added, "We don't have any enmity with anyone. We can't understand who could've done such a thing to my daughter or why.'

on May 8, almost 50 relatives of AL lawmakers participated. Prior to that election, the AL directed its lawmakers to make

AHM Mustafa Kamal, Habiganj-3 AL MP Abu Zahir, Pabna-3 AL MP Mokbul Hossain, among others, are participating the election. In the first phase of the polls held

their family members and close

relatives withdraw from the race. Only Lutful Habib, brother-in-law of State Minister Zunaid Ahmed Palak, withdrew from the race in Singra, Natore. Although the BNP has shunned the

election, around 40 local leaders of the party and its front organisations are participating in the second phase, up from around 30 in the first phase.

BNP yesterday expelled four leaders for ignoring the instruction, taking the number of expulsions over the polls to 80.

to the fighting.

The group, whose envoys returned from Cairo talks to their base in Qatar, would "discuss the ideas and the proposal", said a Hamas source,