



P3
38,000 pilgrims yet to get visas



P5
Road expanded at the cost of 298 trees



P7
Russia: US trying to destabilise India during polls



P11
No dead rubbers as evolution emphasised

Cybergangs now selling 'genuine' NIDs

They provide people's personal data, location, financial records too; cops bust one such gang

SHARIFUL ISLAM and MUNTAKIM SAAD

Imagine someone ordering and taking delivery of your personal data – national identity card information, phone call records, and statements from your mobile financial accounts – as conveniently as ordering food online.

Astonishingly, this is what is going on. Cybergangs in connivance with a section of unscrupulous staffers at the Election Commission and other government offices have been selling people's personal data.

They even offer "services" like providing a genuine copy of an NID card, changing one's information in the NID server and even locating a person by phone triangulation.

Anyone can avail themselves of these "services" via websites, Telegram channels, WhatsApp and Facebook groups for money.

Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Unit of police arrested two members of one such cybergang on Tuesday.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

UPAZILA POLLS AL sweeps amid lowest turnout since 2009

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first phase of the upazila parishad polls was an Awami League show, with most other political parties boycotting the election.

According to the results, leaders from the ruling party and its associate bodies have secured the most wins.

They won the chairman post in around 119 upazilas out of the 139 that went to polls on Wednesday.

However, the overall voter turnout was 36 percent – the lowest since 2009, when it was 70.57 percent.

The figure fell to 61.23 percent in 2014.

In 2019, the turnout was 43.31 percent in the first phase of the election, in which 78 upazilas participated. It was 41.25 percent in the second phase, 41.41 in the third, 36.54 in the fourth, and 38.62 percent in the last phase. Combined, the average turnout that year was 40 percent.

Speaking to reporters at the EC office yesterday, Election Commissioner Md Alamgir said the turnout was only 36 percent as a major political party did not participate. Meanwhile, many labourers went home after a general holiday was announced for the election.

He also blamed the rain on polling day and paddy harvesting for the low turnout.

According to EC sources, there was over a 60 percent turnout in nine upazilas, while more than 75 percent voters did not vote in 12.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 5



PHOTO: BANGABANDHU BRIDGE PROJECT AUTHORITY

IN FULL VIEW..The entire 4.8km long Bangabandhu Railway Bridge over the Jamuna is now visible as the installation of all spans were completed last month, finishing 84 percent of the Tk 16,918.59cr project. The authority is expected to open the dual-gauge double line bridge, the largest dedicated rail bridge in the country, this December. The photo was taken recently.

Will BB steps build up reserves? Not so soon

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh Bank's steps to boost the country's foreign currency reserves will not yield any positive results overnight.

According to the government and IMF projections, the reserves will not increase until June next year despite the latest measures taken in line with the International Monetary Fund prescriptions.

Bangladesh's net international reserves (NIR) will be between \$14 billion and \$16 billion till March next year, according to the projections.

In June next year, the NIR might be close to \$20 billion. This means the country's gross reserves could be around \$25 billion at that time.

The NIR refers to gross reserves (based on the International Monetary Fund method) minus the central bank's forex liabilities and reserves earmarked for quasi-fiscal activities that involve

state-owned banks and enterprises.

Speaking at a press briefing in the capital on Wednesday, IMF mission chief Chris Papageorgiou said Bangladesh will need some time to get the expected results from the BB steps.

He said the authorities have now taken "bold actions", a package of reforms.

"So, all of the measures, I think, will create more flexibility, more return. We see Bangladesh slowly coming out of these challenges," he added.

Talking to The Daily Star, Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the think-tank Policy Research Institute (PRI), said

it might take six to nine months to get the expected results from the BB's new measures given that the policy is implemented properly.

In a rare instance, the BB on Wednesday devalued the local currency

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

The latest reforms, backed by the development partners, will help Bangladesh reach its full potential under the IMF programme, according to officials.

GRAFT AT BANKS GM Quader blasts govt for failure to control

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition Leader GM Quader yesterday in parliament criticised the government for its failure to properly control the banking sector.

"NRBC Bank is an example of the country's banks that are going bankrupt. This bank is sinking under the weight of corruption," he said while delivering his winding up speech for the second session of the 12th parliament.

He said 13 directors of NRBC Bank wrote to him on April 30, saying that the bank was "drowning in corruption".

"Entrepreneurial directors say they have invested there. Now they are not sure if the bank will exist. They don't know

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Nobody can isolate me from people

PM tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday told parliament that nobody would be able to isolate her from the people as the people trust her.

While delivering her winding up speech for the second session of the 12th parliament, the leader of the House said her government has been working for the welfare of the people.

People are now enjoying the benefits of her government's activities, she said, calling upon her critics to admit it.

"You can't isolate me from the people." She said people have confidence in her. "This confidence and trust is the only asset of mine. I move with this asset."

On load shedding and power generation, the premier said the power production was once only 1,600 megawatts, but today the capacity is more than 16,000MW.

Pointing to the critics of the indemnity on quick rental power plant law, Hasina said the special law was enacted not to give indemnity to anyone rather

SEE PAGE 7 COL 5



BUSINESS

Rural food inflation hit 15% in Dec: study

Food inflation remained at around 15 percent in rural areas in December last year, which was much higher than the overall inflation rate in the country, according to a study conducted by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS).

The national food inflation rate in the same month stood at 9.58 percent, data of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics shows.

"The key driver contributing to higher inflation was the price of fish. It increased by 20 percent," said Binayak Sen, director general of BIDS.

STORY ON B1

SOHEL CHOWDHURY MURDER

Aziz Mohammad Bhai, 2 others get life in prison

Verdict comes 26 years after the killing; judge says witnesses tried to hide facts

COURT CORRESPONDENT

ADhaka court yesterday said prosecution witnesses tried to hide facts while giving their statements in film actor Sohel Chowdhury's murder case.

Judge Arunav Chakraborty of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-2 of Dhaka made the observations while sentencing three accused – businessman Aziz Mohammad Bhai, Afakul Islam alias Bunty Islam and Adnan Siddiqui – to life imprisonment in the case.

The three were also fined Tk 2 lakh each, in default of which they will have to serve six months more in jail. The court also issued conviction warrants against them.

On December 18, 1998, Sohel was shot dead by some unidentified criminals at Trumps Club in Abedin Tower on Banani's Road-18.

On the same day, his brother Towhidul Islam Chowdhury filed a murder case with Gulshan Police Station against some unidentified people.

Six other accused – Ashish Rai Choudhury, Tariq Sayeed Mamun, Faruque Abbasi, Sanzidul Hasan Emon, Selim Khan and Harun-Or-Rashid alias Leather Liton – were acquitted as the charges against them were not proven.

In the observations, the judge said, "The state's witnesses tried to save their own skins while testifying in court. Moreover, the CD [case dockets] disappeared."

He added, "Sohel Chowdhury had a previous enmity with Aziz Mohammad Bhai. He was not an infamous person. Yet he was shot. Those who testified were also biased and tried to hide the truth. Even the magistrate, who recorded the statements, was not produced before the court to testify."

"It has an adverse effect on the people when the case has not been tried in so many years. The soul of every deadman wants justice."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Sohel Chowdhury



Aziz Mohammad Bhai

Heartiest Congratulations to
Alhaj Khalilur Rahman
Honorable Chairman, KDS Group
For being elected as a Chairman of National Bank PLC

From the house of KDS