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DRAFT CYBER PROTECTION LAW Women, children and minorities given back seat Speakers say at an event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The newly approved Cyber Protection Ordinance-2024 largely neglects minorities, women and children, and the indigenous groups, speakers said at an event yesterday.

They also said the draft law was merely a rebranded version of the draconian Cyber Security Act 2023.

The issues were discussed at a views-exchange meeting titled "Proposed Cyber Protection Ordinance 2024", organised by Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) in association with the Institute of Informatics and Development, Cyberteens Foundation and Safety Net, at the capital's Biswa Sahitya Kendra.

Supreme Court lawyer Abdullah Al Noman said the new ordinance fails to address sexual harassment of women and children in the digital space, adding that it does not clearly outline how sensitive issues should be handled or tried.

During the July uprising, as many as 250 fake accounts were created in the name of Safety Nets member Farzana Shithi.

Speaking at the event, Shithi said that people impersonating her extorted money from others, adding that AI-generated images of her were used in various TikTok videos.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Protesting Friday night's attack on two fellow traders by armed criminals, shop owners and employees demonstrated in front of the Multiplan Centre in the capital's Elephant Road around noon yesterday. Adviser Asif Mahmud is seen arriving at the scene. He assured them of security and justice following which the trades withdrew. Story on page 1.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

EC thinking about nat'l polls only

Says Election Commissioner Md Sanaullah

UNB, Dhaka

The Election Commission is focused on the national polls, and not any other election, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (Retd) Abul Fazal Md Sanaullah said yesterday.

"I would like to say categorically that our overall focus is on the national election.... Any event that may hamper the national election should not come before," he told reporters at the Nirbachan Bhavan in the capital after a meeting of the commission, chaired by Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin.

Sanaullah said this as a response to whether the EC will hold local polls as a test run before the next national election.

"It's not possible to conduct all

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Tk 2,300cr anomaly found at Nagad Says BB governor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Bank has so far uncovered irregularities amounting to Tk 2,300 crore at the controversial digital financial service provider Nagad.

The irregularities include unauthorised creation of Tk 600 crore in e-money and misappropriation of funds intended for social safety net programmes for the poor, said BB Governor Ahsan H Mansur at a seminar yesterday on the digital financial ecosystem.

After the fall of the Awami League government on August 5 last year, the central bank has taken over the operations of Nagad, a big beneficiary of the previous regime, with the objective of improving governance and handing it over to a new investor who will operate it properly.

An audit of Nagad's past activities is underway, and once it is completed, the digital financial service provider will be offered to interested parties, Mansur said at the event jointly organised by the Metropolitan

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

Strong winds threaten to spread LA inferno

Death toll rises to 16; looting reported in affected areas

AFP, Los Angeles

US officials warned "dangerous and strong" winds were set to push deadly wildfires further through Los Angeles residential areas yesterday as firefighters struggled to make progress against the flames.

At least 16 people have been confirmed dead from blazes that have ripped through the city, reducing whole neighbourhoods to ashes and leaving thousands without homes.

Despite massive efforts, including precision sorties from aerial crews, the Palisades Fire continued to grow, spreading east towards the priceless collections of the Getty Center art museum and north to the densely populated San Fernando Valley.

"The winds are potentially getting dangerous and strong again," Deanne Criswell, head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), told CNN.

"The biggest thing that people need to know is that this is still dangerous."

A brief lull in the wind gave way to gusts that forecasters warned could reach up to 50 miles per hour (80 kilometers per hour) early yesterday, and feed the blazes for days to come.

The winds were due to weaken later yesterday

before picking up again overnight, the National Weather Service said.

The Palisades Fire was 11 percent contained but had grown to 23,600 acres (9,500 hectares), while the Eaton Fire was at 14,000 acres and 15 percent contained.

Official figures show more than 12,000 structures burned, though Cal Fire's Todd Hopkins said not all were houses and the number included outbuildings, trailers and sheds.

In some areas, the ferocious fire left streaks of molten metal flowing from burnt-out cars.

The sudden rush of evacuated people needing somewhere to live posed a growing problem for the city.

"I'm back on the market with tens of thousands of people," said a man who gave his name as Brian, whose rent-controlled apartment has burned. "That doesn't bode well."

With incidences of looting and a nighttime curfew in place, police and National Guard mounted checkpoints to prevent people getting into the disaster zones.

Two people were arrested near Vice President Kamala Harris's Brentwood house for violating the curfew order after police received reports of burglary.



Three-day mobile data packages return

MAHMUDUL HASAN

The internet regulator has reinstated three-day internet packages in a move aimed at boosting internet usage and offering greater freedom of choice for customers.

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has also introduced per-hour, one-day and two-day packages.

The three-day and 15-day data packages were discontinued on October 15, 2023 -- a move that disproportionately impacted grassroots, low-income and youth segments and reduced access to telecom services, particularly the internet.

The number of data packages was previously limited under the assumption that too many options might confuse customers, said BTRC Chairman Emdad ul Bari.

"But I believe this

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Yunus for probing UK properties linked to Tulip

Salman F Rahman's son, Shayan, linked to £1.2 million property bought by Tulip's family

STAR REPORT

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus has called for an investigation into Tulip Siddiq and her family's properties in the United Kingdom, suggesting that those might have been purchased through illicit wealth linked to her aunt, Sheikh Hasina, according to The Times.

The report claims that several London properties were linked to offshore companies and businessmen named in the Panama Papers.

In a recent interview, the chief adviser emphasised that the properties connected to Tulip should be thoroughly examined. He said that if it is found that these assets were acquired through unlawful means, they should be returned to the people of Bangladesh.

"It's about plain robbery," he said, accusing the former regime, which was toppled in a mass uprising on August 5 last year, of embezzling funds through fraudulent practices.

According to reports published in UK media, the properties in question were bought by associates of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

The Times report links the family of Tulip, a British MP for Hampstead and Highgate and the UK's anti-corruption

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

DMCH doctor freed after payment of ransom

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

A doctor at the neurosurgery department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) returned home early yesterday after being released by kidnappers in exchange for Tk 1.3 lakh ransom.

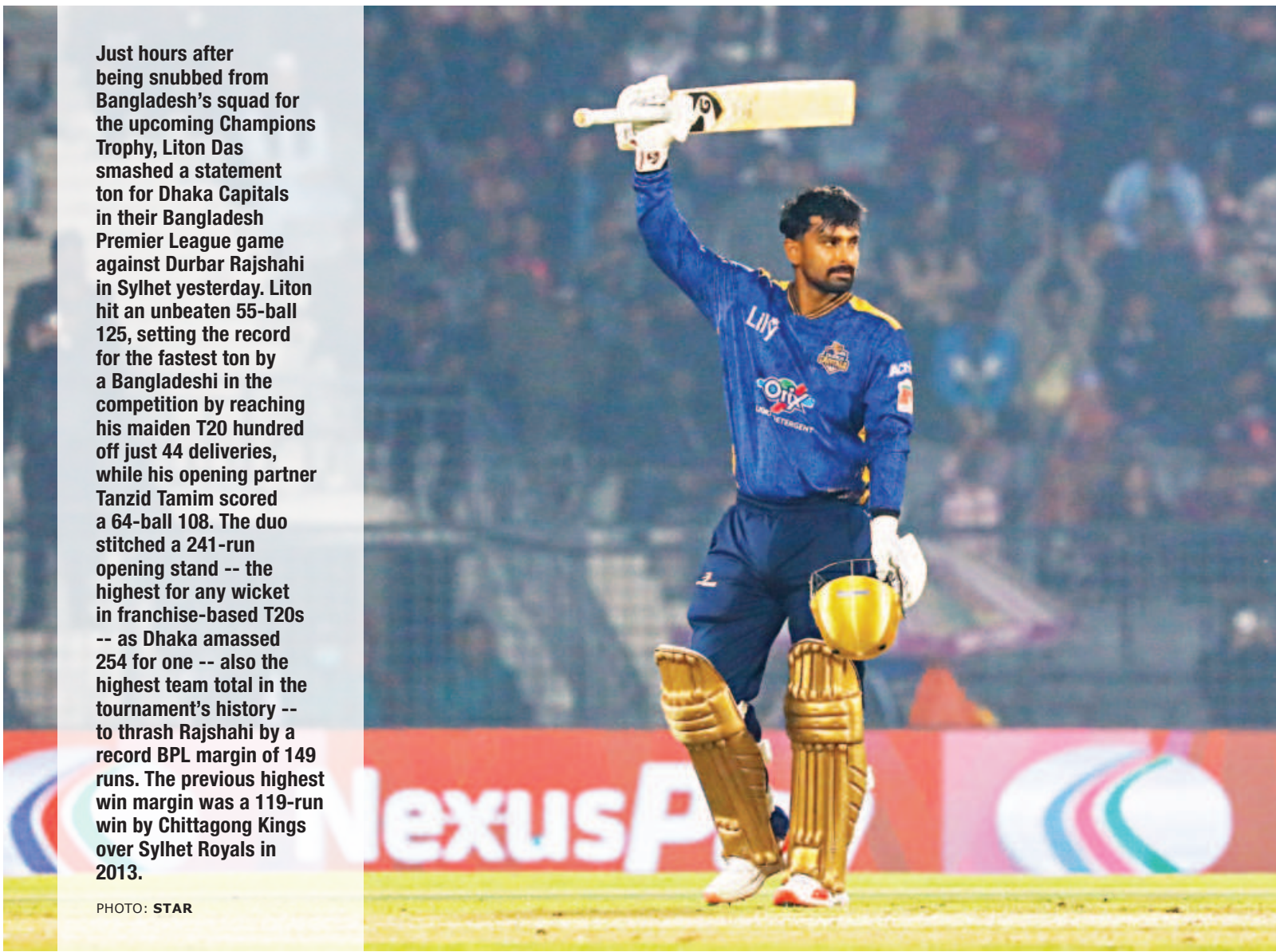
Aminur Rahman, 40, from Kachuti village in Kalihati upazila of Tangail, was abducted at 6:00pm on Saturday while returning home from Gazipur's Sreepur. He was freed around 4:00am yesterday near a spot between Hotapara and Rajendrapur in Gazipur. He had injury marks all over his body, according to family members.

Speaking to The Daily Star around noon, Sreepur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Joyal Abedin Mandal said, "We have been informed by the family that the doctor returned home after a ransom was paid."

According to Aminur's cousin Syed Moazzem Hossain Milton, the kidnappers made repeated contact with the family until 3:00am and extorted the ransom in several rounds. They later abandoned Aminur, leaving him injured.

Before releasing him, the abductors took his credit card, two

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6



Just hours after being snubbed from Bangladesh's squad for the upcoming Champions Trophy, Liton Das smashed a statement ton for Dhaka Capitals in their Bangladesh Premier League game against Durbar Rajshahi in Sylhet yesterday. Liton hit an unbeaten 55-ball 125, setting the record for the fastest ton by a Bangladeshi in the competition by reaching his maiden T20 hundred off just 44 deliveries, while his opening partner Tanzid Tamim scored a 64-ball 108. The duo stitched a 241-run opening stand -- the highest for any wicket in franchise-based T20s -- as Dhaka amassed 254 for one -- also the highest team total in the tournament's history -- to thrash Rajshahi by a record BPL margin of 149 runs. The previous highest win margin was a 119-run win by Chittagong Kings over Sylhet Royals in 2013.

PHOTO: STAR

1 dies as BNP factions clash in Kishoreganj

36 injured in BNP-Jamaat clashes in Jhenaidah, Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kishoreganj

A local BNP leader was killed and five people injured during a factional clash in Kishoreganj's Tarail upazila yesterday.

The incident happened in Banail Bazar of Rauti union around 11:00am. Deceased Abul Hasan, 55, was the president of BNP's Rauti union unit. Five people were also injured in the clash, said Sohel Mia, the officer-in-charge (OC) of Tarail Police Station.

According to locals and party sources, the violence stemmed from a disagreement over the draft list of councillors for the upcoming Tarail upazila BNP council on January 15.

They said on Saturday a meeting was called in Rauti to discuss the councillors' list. During the meeting, Abul Hasan and Ghias Uddin, a member of the union BNP, got into an argument over who would be on the list. The dispute escalated into a clash the next morning.

"The injured were taken to the Tarail Upazila Health Complex. Abul Hasan was declared dead on arrival," the OC said.

Shamim Mia, nephew of the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6