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Workers preparing stalls for the upcoming Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela at Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday. Inset, CCTV cameras being installed in the TSC area for security. The month-long book fair is going to begin on February 1.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

TOP CRIMINALS

DMP to seek their bail cancellation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police has planned to apply for the cancellation of bail for top criminals recently released from long-term imprisonment.

Police allege that these individuals have resumed criminal activities, including extortion and gang operations, following their release.

DMP high-ups disclosed the development during a meeting with the newly elected executive committee of the Crime Reporters Association of Bangladesh yesterday.

"It's unfortunate that these criminals have not changed despite spending years in prison. After their release, they've resumed the same activities as before," said SM Sazzat Ali, commissioner of the DMP.

SN Md Nazrul Islam, Additional Commissioner (Crime and Operations) of DMP, said reports of their involvement in criminal activities are being documented.

"We are collecting evidence against these freed criminals, including Jasim, known as 'Benazir's Cashier,' as well as Subrata Bain, Pichchi Helal, and Emon. We will write to cancel their bail," he said.

Following the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government on August 5 last year, several top criminals were released on bail. Among them, Sanjidul Islam Emon was freed on August 15, followed by Pichchi Helal on August 16. Most had been in prison for over a decade and a half.

UNIFIED POLICE UNIFORM APPROVED
At the meeting, DMP boss Sazzat Ali also

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SN MD NAZRUL ISLAM
DMP Additional Commissioner
(Crime and Operations)

Misinformation rise by 58pc in 2024: Dismislab

Sparks communal tension, distrust across Bangladesh-India borders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fact-checking organisations in Bangladesh debunked 58 percent more content in 2024 compared to the previous year, with misinformation skyrocketing during August.

This is according to Dismislab's yearly roundup report, released yesterday.

Fact-checkers identified and verified over 3,000 unique pieces of false or misleading information that went viral, the report said.

The Awami League and its affiliated bodies topped the list of institutions or organisations whose names appeared in misinformation throughout 2024, while India topped the list of countries featured in such misinformation.

Indian actors and pro-Awami League social media users were both prominent in spreading misinformation, the report found.

A third of all misinformation spread was about politics, followed by religion.

Disinformation related to communal tension and religious hatred had already been on the rise since August, but it took on a new dimension in November and December.

In December, a third of the fact-check reports published by fact-checking organisations about Bangladesh focused on religious topics.

"On November 5, an anti-ISKCON Facebook post in the port city of Chittagong led to a clash, injuring seven police officers and five members of the army," said the report.

On November 26, Chinmoy Krishna Das, spokesperson for the Bangladesh Sammilita Sanatani Jagaran Jote, was arrested on

charges of sedition. This event triggered a spate of misinformation.

"Several fake quotes attributed to Chinmoy Krishna Das were circulated using fake photocards in the name of mainstream media houses. Because Chinmoy was previously associated with ISKCON, false information about the organisation also circulated. For example, it was falsely claimed that weapons were recovered from the ISKCON temple in the

- Over 3,000 claims debunked
- Indian actors, pro-AL social media spreading misinformation
- Religious misinformation spike after Chinmoy arrest
- One-third misinfo political in nature
- Student advisers targeted

eastern Bangladesh district of Sylhet, or that a supermarket and one of the leading inter-district transport companies had funded the group," the report added.

In April 2024, as India entered its Lok Sabha elections, false claims of religious hatred and persecution spread on social media in both India and Bangladesh.

After August 5, false information about minority attacks and communal tension

spread, fuelling division and unrest, said the report.

India giving shelter to Sheikh Hasina also led to a flurry of misinformation.

"A number of claims went as far as to propagate that Indians have been employed in the Bangladesh police force or that a director of Bangladesh Bank is an Indian citizen. During the student movement, it was falsely claimed that the Indian army was entering Bangladesh or that Indian aircrafts were stationed at Bangladesh air bases," the report said.

After the fall of the Awami League government, false claims circulated that Indian soldiers were withdrawing from Bangladesh.

Indian mainstream media also spread false claims that the Pakistani army was patrolling in Bangladesh. When a cargo ship from Pakistan arrived at a Bangladeshi port for the first time since 1971, fake news began spreading that the vessel was carrying weapons.

The report said that all of this misinformation increased distrust on both sides of the border.

Pro-Awami League social media users disseminated false information, claiming that the leaders and activists of BCL and Jubo League who attacked protesters with firearms were actually members of Islami Chhatra Shibir, the report said.

"One piece of misinformation after another hit social media concerning the three student

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CONTESTING POLLS

Disqualify those convicted by ICT Says Badiul Alam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Individuals accused and convicted by the International Crimes Tribunal, as well as those involved in enforced disappearances, should be disqualified from contesting elections, said Electoral Reform Commission's Badiul Alam Majumdar yesterday.

Speaking at a discussion organised by the Reporters Forum for Election and Democracy (RFED) at the Election Commission (EC) Bhaban yesterday, he said, "The intention is not to keep anyone away from the elections. However, those who committed serious crimes like killing students and the public during movements, fugitive defendants, and those who played a major role in subverting the electoral system should be barred from contesting polls."

"No one is above responsibility in a democratic state. If the Election Commission makes a mistake, violates the constitution, or breaks its oath, they will be held accountable," he said.

Criticising previous governments, he said, "The government [in the past] has done whatever it wanted, without paying attention to the Election Commission. We have established the authority so that the Election Commission cannot act arbitrarily."

Badiul also called for a "neutral investigation commission" to probe the elections of 2014, 2018, and 2024, ensuring those involved in electoral fraud face justice.

"If the election commissions at that time committed wrongdoing, they too should face justice. No one wants to return to the past, and we do not want a repetition of fraudulent elections. The electoral process must be freed from

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AS Mahmud's 21st death anniversary today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 21st anniversary of death of AS Mahmud, the founding managing director of Mediaworld Ltd, the owning company of The Daily Star, and the founder chairman of Ekushey Television (ETV).

AS Mahmud, also one of the leading businessmen of the country, passed away on this day in London.

AS Mahmud was born into an illustrious family in Sylhet on July 10, 1933. He graduated in economics from Dhaka University in 1954 and started his career as an oil company executive in Burma Shell.

He was also the chairman of Reliance Insurance Company Ltd, a director of Infrastructure Development Company Ltd, jointly financed by the government and the World

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Seize Anisul's income tax documents

Court passes order

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered seizure of the income tax documents of former law minister Anisul Huq in a case filed on charges of amassing wealth beyond his known sources of income.

The same court also ordered to seize and confiscate moveable and immovable properties of AM Naimur Rahman Durjoy, former captain of Bangladesh National Cricket Team and also former Awami League lawmaker from Manikganj-1 constituency, in connection with allegations of corruption.

Judge Md Zakir Hossain of Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's

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Take in more Rohingyas for rehabilitation

UNB, Dhaka

Home Affairs Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury has called on the United States to take in more Rohingyas from Bangladesh for rehabilitation.

He made the request during a meeting with the US Embassy's Charge d'Affaires in Bangladesh, Tracey Ann Jacobson, at the Secretariat yesterday.

Praising the US for its humanitarian aid and rehabilitation efforts for the Rohingyas, the adviser said, "The US has already rehabilitated some Rohingyas..."

Jacobson noted that USAID, a US-based development organisation, has been collaborating with local Bangladeshi NGOs to improve the living standards of the Rohingyas. "The US has already rehabilitated about 17,000 Rohingyas and this process is going on."

The bilateral meeting covered several topics, including security, counterterrorism, the Rohingya crisis, law enforcement cooperation, police reforms, border issues, minority rights and agriculture.

Terming the US a key development partner, the adviser acknowledged its continued support in addressing terrorism and security challenges.



The Public Works Department yesterday carried out an eviction drive through the Pallabi Slum. This 15-acre of land was under the control of Elias Mollah and his family for decades. The first round of eviction drives has allowed PWD to recover a portion of the land and going forward these drives will continue.

PHOTO: STAR