

ICT ACT

Legal notice for scrapping section 57

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eleven citizens, including some academicians, sent a legal notice yesterday to the government, asking it to inform them of steps taken to scrap much-criticised Section-57 of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act.

According to the section, if any person deliberately puts up false, obscene and derogatory information on a website or transmits them in any other electronic form, he or she will be sentenced to seven to 14 years' imprisonment and fined up to Tk 1 crore.

Supreme Court lawyer Jyotirmoy Barua served the notice on their behalf to the secretaries to the ministries of law, home and ICT, saying that appropriate legal action would be taken if they did not respond to the notice in 24 hours.

The provision contradicts constitutional rights of freedom of expression, reads the notice calling for its cancellation. Those who sent the notice are Dhaka University teachers Ahmed Kamal, Gitiara Nasreen, Fahmidul Haque, Tanzimuddin Khan and Samina Lutf and former DU teacher Akmal Hussain, Jahangirnagar

University teacher Anu Muhammad, Bam Morcha (left alliance) leader Abdus Salam, singer and writer Arup Rahi, writer Rakhal Raha and Biplobi Workers' Party General Secretary Saiful Huq.

Earlier on Wednesday, Zakir Hossain, an accused in a case filed under this section with the cyber crimes tribunal in Dhaka, filed a writ petition with the High Court challenging the legality of the section.

He also prayed to the HC to declare the section unconstitutional.

Supreme Court lawyer Eunus Ali Akond on the same day sent a legal notice to the government, requesting it to scrap Sections 57 (1) and 86 of the ICT law.

Section-86 of the law says government permission must be taken ahead of any legal action against any public servant. The two sections are discriminatory and unconstitutional, Akond said in the notice.

Though rights activists have been critical of the provisions in the law, the debate over Section- 57 and the demand for its repeal have intensified following the arrest of journalist Probrir Sikdar under the act.

The arrest sparked huge protests on the streets and in the social media.

Bangladesh 2nd highest source of tourists in India

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh was the second highest source of tourists in India last year.

The number of tourists from Bangladesh rose to 942,562 in 2014 from 524,923 and 487,397 in the previous two years.

According to the Indian tourism ministry statistics, 12.27 percent of total foreign tourists who visited India last year were Bangladeshis.

In 2013, the number of foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) in India from Bangladesh was the third highest after the US and the UK.

The US sent the highest number of tourists to India in 2014.

The top 15 countries -- US, Bangladesh, UK, Sri Lanka, Russia, Canada, Malaysia, France, Australia, Germany, Japan, China, Singapore, Nepal and Thailand -- sent 5,526,363 tourists to India, which is 71.97 percent of total FTAs last year.

Meanwhile, Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pankaj Saran recently disclosed that some 1.2 million people of the two countries crossed through the India's Petrapole and Bangladesh's Benapole land ports last year.

The envoy said India was now issuing multiple-entry visas with a validity of one to five years to Bangladeshi businesspeople as they had been facing problems related to visa for long.

Unease among AL

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This touched off a series of scathing remarks from some leaders of the JSD -- which was founded on October 31, 1972 -- and the AL over each other's activities surrounding the August 15 bloodbath.

"The nation could not know the truths about the time due to a massive distortion of history ... Now everybody should know the truths," Bahauddin Nasim told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We are telling the history of that time. We have no intention to destroy the unity of the 14-party," he added.

However, the left-leaning parties in the alliance, including the JSD, don't see it that way.

"Such irresponsible allegations will adversely affect the 14-party alliance," said JSD General Secretary Sharif Nurul Ambia.

"The Awami League forged an alliance with the JSD, knowing full well its past. So, the ongoing debate is totally undesired.

"The comments are coming from Awami League policymakers. I don't know whether these are party statements. If it's the official stand of the Awami League, we'll have to think about our next strategy," he said.

The comments of Sheikh Selim, who lost a number of family members in the August 15 massacre, were followed by those from some senior AL leaders including Joint General Secretary Mahbul Alam Hanif and Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal.

AL's archrival BNP too joined in. BNP Standing Committee Member Goyeshwar Chandra Roy came down hard on JSD chief

Hasanul Haq Inu on Tuesday.

He said, "I was involved in the JSD in 1974. We decided to lay siege to the then home minister Captain M Mansur Ali's residence on March 17. We were chanting slogans, but suddenly a group led by Inu and Anwar started firing at the residence."

Goyeshwar was then general secretary of pro-JSD Chhatra League's Jagannath Hall chapter.

Such attacks against the JSD are not a good sign, thinks Politburo Member Anisur Rahman Mollick of the Workers Party of Bangladesh, a key component of the 14-party combine.

"A conspiracy is being hatched to destabilise the country's politics and the ongoing mudslinging between the two allies will only help the conspirators," he said.

"The war of words between the two allied parties will harm the secular unity and benefit the communal forces," observed Presidium Member Nurur Rahman Selim of Gonotantrik Party, another component of the 14-party.

AL leaders, however, won't buy their leftist friends' arguments.

"Jasad [JSD] should not react if anyone brings the truth to the fore," said AL Organising Secretary Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury.

"Efforts to discover the truth will not harm the unity of the alliance as it was formed with different objectives," he argued.

National Awami Party General Secretary Enamul Haque said they would seek an explanation from the AL at the next meeting of the 14-party for the ruling party leaders' "anti-JSD remarks".

Myanmar 'rebel'

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house for one and a half months.

The BGB chief at the press briefing said the drive in the hilly areas bordering Myanmar would continue as long as they deemed it necessary.

A total of around four to five army platoons and 10 to 12 BGB platoons will join the drive by today, he added.

Aziz, who visited the Bandarban attack spot yesterday, said they found rocket shells, bullets, a belt and some other things that proved the presence of Myanmar rebels.

Some 50 Arakan Army men attacked BGB personnel near Boro Modak camp in Thanchi border area, leaving nayek Zakir Hossain bullet-hit, he mentioned.

BGB sources said Zakir is out of danger and has been undergoing treatment at the Combined Military Hospital in Chittagong.

Trails of dragging people and testimony of locals suggest that some Myanmar rebels sustained injuries during Wednesday's gunfight, said the DG.

"Locals told us they saw people in olive green uniforms taking away eight to 10 injured. Some of them might be dead."

The BGB didn't expect such an incident would happen as there was no insurgency inside Bangladesh's territory, he noted. "No war situation prevailed in the border with Myanmar so that their army could swoop on the BGB camp."

The DG said the rebel group might have carried out Wednesday's attack after being angered by the seizure of 13 horses by BGB men the previous day. The animals were being sent to the rebels through the area, he added.

Aziz said there is no den of Arakan Army in the hill districts, but its members might have trespassed on the area at different times.

Though there is no permanent camp of security forces in remote areas, the BGB send its members there if any Myanmar separatist is seen, he mentioned.

"The Myanmar authorities once in a while claim that separatists including members of Arakan Army receive training from BGB; fight against Myanmar forces and return [to Bangladesh territory]. But the attack on the BGB has proved their allegation was baseless."

Bangladesh, said the BGB chief, has around 539 kilometre unguarded border, including 17 kilometre with Myanmar, in the hilly areas.

Border observation posts have been set up along 110km border line in the last one year. More observation posts would be built in the unguarded border areas, he noted.

Textbook

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settle the issue this month, free distribution of textbooks to primary students may miss the deadline of January 1, said officials of the board.

The textbook board that has been distributing free textbooks since 2010 invited international tenders on April 29 for printing around 11 crore copies of primary books this time. Around 800 firms took part in it.

Some 22 local printing firms submitted the lowest bid at Tk 221 crore, prompting the WB to express doubt over the quality of books they would deliver.

Local printers have been doing the major task of printing since the inception of international tender in 2011, said Shahid Serniabat, president of Bangladesh Mudran Shilpa Samity.

"We have been doing quality work and will ensure quality this time as well," he said.

Calling the role of the board into question, he said it wanted to award the job to Indian printers.

"How do we accept that we will get the bill only after the World Bank is satisfied?"

The president of the Samity said he hoped to complete the task before the deadline if they could start the work soon.

In efforts to break the stalemate, the board sat with the bidders on Wednesday, but to no avail.

The printers have until September 2 to accept the job, said board officials.

"If they don't, we will have to go for other options as we want that children get the books in time," said an official, preferring anonymity.

Contacted, Primary and Mass Education Minister Mostafizur Rahman said an effort was on to resolve the problem.

The textbook board has to settle these issues, the minister told The Daily Star.

"If the board expresses its inability, the government will intervene since it's a national issue."

He, however, said the government wanted the lowest bidders to do the job. "We want that their capacity gets increased."

The government this year aimed at distributing around 35 crore textbooks among primary, secondary, technical and madrasa students at an estimated cost of Tk 733 crore.

Pro-AL panel

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Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Oikya Panel bagged the rest. The elected members will take the office for the next three years.

The official results are yet to be announced.

The newly elected 14-member executive body in their first meeting will elect from among them a vice-chairman to work as the chief executive. They will also form other standing committees required to run the council.

In the 2012 Bar Council elections, the Oikya Panel had got nine posts while the Samannoy Parishad had secured five posts.

This year's winning candidates of the Samannoy Parishad are: M Amir-Ul Islam, Abdul Baset Majumder, Abdul Matin Khasru, ZI Khan Panna, Nazubullah Hiru, HR Zahid Anwar, Ibrahim Hossain Chowdhury Babul, Parvez Alom Khan, Md Yahia and Md Rezaul Karim Mantu.

The polls were held on Wednesday. Amir-Ul Islam (14,181 votes), Baset (15,235 votes), Khasru (14,397 votes) and Panna (13,190 votes) were elected from general seats, while the six others were elected from regional seats.

The Oikya Panel's wining candidates are BNP leader and current vice chairman of Bar Council Khandker Mahub Hossain, AJ Mohammad Ali, AM Mahub Uddin Khokon and Qaimul Hoque.

Mahub (14,354 votes), Mohammad Ali (13,201 votes) and Khokon (15,138) were elected from general seats and Qaimul was elected from regional seats.

Abdul Baset Majumder declared the unofficial results at his Supreme Court Bar Association chamber. He said the results were collected from the polling centres across the country.

Baset Majumder could not say the number of votes cast in the election and the numbers of votes secured by regional candidates.

The lawyers had voted them (the AL-backed lawyers) for bringing a change in the Bar Council, he said.

The Bar Council is a welfare organisation for lawyers but the outgoing committee has used it for implementing their political agenda, Baset added.

Khandker Mahub Hossain told reporters that his panel could not get majority in the Bar Council election,

but that does not mean they (Mohammad Ali, Mahub Uddin Khokon, Qaimul and he) had lost or it was the defeat of democracy.

The ruling party-backed lawyers' panel got majority in the elections by giving "hopes and dreams" to the voters, he said. He, however, added that they would cooperate with the Samannoy Parishad-led committee to run the council.

M Amir-Ul Islam and Abdul Baset Majumder are said to be the favourites for the post of vice-chairman of the Bar Council.

Attorney General Mahububey Alam, who is the ex-officio chairman of the council, told reporters that the official results would be released on Monday.

Bolt takes

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championships. The clear victory extends Bolt's domination of sprinting which stretches back to when he took the world by storm at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, also at the Bird's Nest stadium.

Galzin, who has served two doping bans and finished just one-hundredth of a second behind Bolt in Sunday's 100m, clocked 19.74sec, with South African Anaso Jobodwana taking bronze with a national record of 19.87sec.

Two more

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members of Ansarullah Bangla Team, for their suspected involvement in the murder.

"We arrested two people suspecting their involvement in Niloy murder on August 14. According to their information, we arrested Kausar in Mirpur around 5:00pm and Kamal in Dholaipar around 6:30pm today [yesterday]," Mahub Alam, deputy commissioner (East) of the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star.

Niloy was hacked to death inside his house at Goran in the capital on August 7.

Kausar, Kamal and Nahiyen were arrested earlier as they were charge-sheeted accused in an attempted murder case filed in connection with an attack on blogger Asif Mohiuddin two years ago, police said.

Trump lead grows, Clinton slips: poll

AFP, Washington

Billionaire Donald Trump extended his lead yet again atop the Republican presidential field, with front-running Democrat Hillary Clinton slipping and Vice President Joe Biden faring better than her against Republicans, poll results revealed yesterday.

Trump, the combative real estate mogul, leads the 16 other Republican candidates with 28 percent support among registered voters nationwide, up from 20 percent in a similar July 30 survey by Quinnipiac University.

Yesterday's lead marks the widest margin for any Republican so far in the election cycle, the survey said.

Retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson placed a distant second with 12 percent, followed by former Florida governor Jeb Bush, Senator Ted Cruz and Senator Marco Rubio, each with seven percent.

Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker was next with six percent, and Ohio Governor John Kasich and businesswoman Carly Fiorina each registered five percent.

"Other GOP hopefuls seem to disappear. Trump proves you don't have to be loved to be the leader," said Quinnipiac poll assistant director Tim Malloy.

MacGyver

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This word along with 999 others made their way into Oxford Dictionaries online on Wednesday.

The new additions highlight the things people were talking about in the summer of 2015, Time.com reported.

"Beer o'clock" (time to drink beer), "manspreading" (sitting with legs wide apart on public transport), and "hangry" (angry for being hungry) were included in the dictionary.

New word Grexit, a term for referring to the possible exit of Greece from the European Union, points to how global our economy is becoming.

Oxford Dictionaries is the branch of the Oxford family that focuses on modern language, words that people are using now and how they're using them, which makes their barriers to entry different than the venerable, historical Oxford English Dictionary.

Their new words often arise from fresh technology and pop culture and might include Internet slang (like new entry pwnage) that would get laughed out of the OED's admittance office.

According to Oxford Dictionary's language monitoring service, hangry has seen its usage increase since 2012, with a spike in April 2014 connected to an American study about low glucose levels making people cross.

New words and phrases are added to the website once editors have enough independent evidence to be confident of their widespread currency in English. a

50 found dead

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Those who make it ashore and others travelling by land have increasingly tried to make their way north via the Balkans, causing tension among countries along the route.

Hungary plans to reinforce its southern border with helicopters, mounted police and dogs, and is also considering using the army as record numbers of migrants passed through coils of razor-wire into Europe.

Investigations were underway in Austria and Hungary after the bodies were discovered. The truck had Hungarian number plates, a Hungarian official said.

Austrian Interior Minister Johann Mikl-Leitner called it "a dark day" and underscored Vienna's demand that the European Union adopt a way to distribute a wave of refugees fairly so that they would not have to turn to human traffickers.

"This is a signal on the European level to act as quickly as possible here," she told the news conference, adding controls on international trains and border areas had been stepped up.

"It will certainly be a central task to protect our outer borders better," European Commissioner Johannes Hahn told the conference, reiterating that Brussels will propose within weeks a fresh look at the situation.

"We will have another go at quotas. I hope that in the light of the most recent developments now there is a

readiness among all the 28 (member states) to agree on this," he said.

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, whose country expects 800,000 asylum seekers this year, said a fair distribution of refugees was needed to ensure support in countries taking in the bulk of migrants.

"That is why it is so important to make progress here. We need the same standards and processes, we need the commitment of all states to carry out early registration," he said.

His Austrian counterpart Sebastian Kurz said: "If we are not able to find a quick European solution here, then more and more countries like Hungary and Denmark - who are already doing it - will try to solve this crisis for themselves on their own with individual measures and their own initiatives."

"It won't work and above all it threatens our European idea of having open borders and with that proper security at the EU's outer borders."

Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic put the onus on EU countries to find a better way to handle the influx of refugees.

"So you have a problem but you are asking us, Serbia, to come up with the action plan for migrants. You should come up with an action plan first and then ask us to come up with our plan," he told the conference.

Kazi Zafar no more

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his Gulshan residence while preparing to go to Chaudhagram upazila in Comilla for party activities. He was rushed to United Hospital where doctors pronounced him dead half an hour later.

Zafar left behind his wife and three daughters.

President Abdul Hamid, BNP Chairperson Khaleida Zia, different other political leaders and distinguished personalities mourned the death.

Zafar's party men, friends, well-wishers, former colleagues, Noble Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus and Workers Party chief Rashed Khan Menon went to the hospital hearing the news.

Khaleida visited the house of the leader and consoled his family members later at night.

Born in 1939, Zafar served as different ministers under HM Ershad's government. Ershad also appointed him as a deputy prime minister and later made him a prime minister -- the post he held till the fall of Ershad's regime in 1990.

In November, 2013, Ershad expelled Zafar from the JP for calling the former dictator a "betrayal". The then party presidium member made the comment after Ershad changed his earlier decision that he would not join the January 5 elections under Sheikh Hasina.

Zafar too expelled Ershad from the same party and formed a new JP faction. Later, it joined the BNP-led 20-party alliance last year.

According to Zafar's Facebook page, he got involved in politics when he was a student of Dhaka University. He became

the general secretary of the East Pakistan Chhatra Union in 1962-63.

The freedom fighter joined Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani-led National Awami Party after the Liberation War and became the party's second-in-command later.

In 1974, he joined the United Peoples Party (UPP), a coalition of pro-China Communist Party's platform. Later, BNP founder Ziaur Rahman appointed him as the education minister.

Until 1986, Zafar-led UPP was engaged in the anti-Ershad movement. But later, he dissolved the party and joined Ershad-led government. He was with Ershad's JP till 2013. He was elected MP thrice from Comilla under the banner of the Jatiya Party.

Zafar was also the leader of the house at the fourth parliament.

JANAZA AND BURIAL Zafar's first namaz-e-janaza is scheduled to be held in Tongi Rail gate area around 8:00am today while the second one around 11:00am at the South Plaza of Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, party sources said.

Later, his body would be taken to Baitul Mukarram National Mosque for the third namaz-e-janaza after the Juma prayers.

The date and place for the burial of the leader would be decided after his daughter's return to country, sources added.

Meanwhile, the BNP-led 20-party alliance yesterday announced that special prayers for Zafar would be organised at different mosques, temples and churches across the country today.

A tale of purple-backed

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the National Botanical Garden in Dhaka. Our target was to bird, with a special focus on a rare passenger migrant starling species. We found out the right spot, described to us by Dr Reza Khan who initially had sighted the bird in this vast garden on 16 April, 2015. It is the second photographic record of this species from Bangladesh.

On 18th April we saw a large flock flying very speedily from south to north towards the Durapara area. There were around 35 birds. After an intensive search, I found the starling flock on a Rain tree. We could hear their sweet songs that they were singing having alighted on the highest branches, remaining hidden in the tree's dense foliage. After a while some of them landed on a shewra tree to nibble at the ripen fruits. It was then we got a good chance to take a few pictures.

This photographic record in April indicates that they are perhaps passage migrants. The first record of this species was done by Rainer Schutt, a

German ornithologist, in October 2009. He photographed them in the Sundarbans. It is a very good record.

Purple-backed starlings are highly social birds that move around in large flocks and in seeming synchronicity. They have a pale grey head and a purplish black patch on the hind crown, a purplish-black mantle and glossy greenish-black wings. They have a very short blackish tail and two whitish wing bars. Their iris is brown; legs and toes are tinged with green.

This bird is a vagrant in India and is also found in Mongolia, Manchuria, Korea, China, Myanmar, Malaysia, Thailand, Nepal and Indonesia. It usually breeds in May or June mainly in Russia and Korea. It is also known to breed in the Himalayas, Tibet, China and Mongolia; it migrates to south-east Asia and South Asia.

The species mostly prefers open woody areas and feeds on fruits, berries, nectar and insects.

The writer is a biologist.