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DRAFT OF DIGITAL SECURITY ACT APPROVED

Gag on freedom of expression

React journalists, rights leaders, feel duped by govt as cabinet keeps controversial restrictions, punishments under different provisions

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The freedom of the press and expression was put to the sword, feared journalists and rights defenders as the cabinet yesterday approved the draft of the Digital Security Act-2018 yesterday.

There would be every chance of the act being misused against people's right to express themselves after it is passed by the Jatiya Sangsad, they observed.

They also felt duped by the government as section 57 of the Information and Communication Technology Act was kept in the proposed law with some changes, despite assurances in the past of eliminating the controversial provision.

Section 57 deals with defamation, hurting religious sentiments, causing deterioration of law and order and instigating against any person or organisation through publishing or transmitting any material in

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COLONIAL ERA	DIGITAL ERA
● Max 2 yrs' jail for defamation	● Max 3 yrs' jail for defamation for first time, 5yrs for second time
● Max 2 yrs' jail for hurting religious sentiment	● Max 7 yrs' jail for hurting religious sentiment, 10yrs for second time
● Max 10 yrs' jail for provocation causing breach of the peace	● Max 7 yrs' jail for provocation causing breach of the peace, 10yrs for second time
PENAL CODE OF 1860 WHICH STILL EXISTS	PROPOSED DIGITAL SECURITY ACT



The water of Hatirjheel has become discoloured getting mixed with sewage from different areas in the capital. In the absence of a proper drainage and sewer management system, the contamination is a major headache for the city. It also leads to river pollution as the canal is linked with the Balu, which joins the Shitalakkhya. The photo was taken at Hatirjheel-Rampura on Sunday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

BB seeks to curb excessive lending

Measures in new monetary policy to raise interest rates, hurt businesses, consumers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Bank yesterday announced its new monetary policy for January-June with a target to tighten money supply and curb excessive lending, which is likely to raise interest rates and hurt businesses and consumers.

The new policy has set private sector credit growth target at 16.8 percent against 18.13 percent growth in the first half of the fiscal year 2017-18. In July last year, the central bank set the private sector credit growth target of 16.3 percent, but the growth was way over target on the back of rising imports and development activities.

The continued negative trend of government's bank borrowing has prompted the central bank to raise the private sector credit growth target.

The Bangladesh Bank will also slash loan-deposit ratio by two percentage points to 83 percent, meaning that the bank's

ability to lend will be further tightened.

An instruction would be issued today over the loan-deposit ratio, Bangladesh Bank Governor Fazle Kabir told the reporters at a press conference while unveiling the new monetary policy.

"The banks will have to follow the asset-liabilities and foreign exchange risk management. Strict measure will be taken against banks which will make excessive lending beyond the limit," he said.

Banks, which have been in a liquidity crisis for the last two months, would have no option but to increase their lending rates further.

"No loan will be given at single digit interest rate," said a chief executive officer of a private bank. "Already we have hiked our lending rates by 0.5-1 percentage points on all loan products. Bangladesh Bank's tightening stance on money supply will further make loans costlier," said the CEO.

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SHIPBREAKING YARDS

No let-up in deaths

2 more workers killed; 181 died in 12 years

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Two shipbreaking workers were killed at two scrap yards in Sitakunda in the early hours of yesterday and Sunday afternoon.

Md Borhan, 48, was killed at Premium Trade Corporation Shipbreaking Yard at Baro Awlia of Chittagong's Sitakunda around 2:00am yesterday after being hit by an iron plate while Abul Hossain, 30, a worker of RA Shipbreaking Yard in the same area, was killed Sunday afternoon inhaling poisonous gas, sources claimed.

However, the yards claimed that Borhan was killed as a truck of the yard hit him while Abul died after "cardiac arrest," said Officer-in-Charge Iftekher Hasan of Sitakunda Police Station.

"We are looking into the incidents," he said.

Yard owners often give misleading information about the deaths of workers to hide accidents in their yards, said Mohammad Ali Shahin, Bangladesh Coordinator of Brussels-based NGO-Shipbreaking Platform, an international organisation working for safety at shipbreaking yards.

The two incidents further proved that workers' safety gears were not maintained in the shipbreaking yards, he said.

Md Shahabuddin, a director of Premium Trade Corporation Shipbreaking Yard, said he did not know about the incident and that he was in Dhaka.

When asked, RA Shipbreaking Yard

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DEMONSTRATION AT DU

BCL backed it, blocked it too

AASHIQ ABDULLAH

At the Dhaka University, Bangladesh Chhatra League first added fuel to the fire and then tried to douse it.

Leaders and activists of BCL, who have twice foiled the demonstration of students against the university's affiliation with seven colleges on the campus, had actually initiated the very movement.

Four of the five administrators of Dhaka Bishwabidyalay Paribar (Dhaka University Family), a Facebook group that launched the campaign against the affiliation, are leaders of different units of the pro-Awami League student body in the university.

They are: Motakabbir Khan Probas, vice-president of DU BCL; Zihadul Islam Nirob and SM Rakib, vice-president and organising secretary of Fazlul Haq Hall BCL; and Sadman Sakil, publication affairs secretary of political science department BCL, shows the FB group. Several BCL sources and students have confirmed their identities.

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Some students form a human chain near TSC under the banner of Dhaka University Band Society on January 25. Interestingly, none of them were from the cultural organisation.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

BCL activists again attack protesting students

40 injured; strike observed at edn institutions

STAR REPORT

Activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League yesterday attacked and foiled agitation of Pragatisheel Chhatra Jote on the campuses of three different educational institutions, leaving at least 40 injured.

The leaders and activists of Pragatisheel Chhatra Jote, an alliance of left-leaning student organisations, observed a nationwide strike protesting against the attack on Dhaka University students carried out by BCL activists on January 23.

In Sylhet, BCL men swooped on a procession brought out by the Jote activists at the main gate of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (Sust) around 11:00am, leaving eight of them wounded.

Of them, Samajtantrik Chhatra Front activist Joydip Das, a third year student of the university, has been admitted to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital with critical head injury, while others received primary treatment.



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'Govt out to have Khaleda convicted'

BNP to brief diplomats about its concern over Zia orphanage case

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The BNP has planned to inform the foreign diplomats about the "weaknesses" in the graft case against party chief Khaleda Zia and convey its concern about the "government's eagerness" to convict the former premier to keep her away from elections and politics.

In a meeting with the envoys today, the party will also raise its concern that the path of negotiation over the next parliamentary polls will be closed if the BNP chairperson is convicted, senior party leaders said.

The party will brief the diplomats on the legal aspect and political implication of the upcoming verdict in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case.

The BNP will present its argument saying that the case is "politically motivated" and any verdict sentencing Khaleda will block the path of "restoring democracy" in the country.

According to a senior BNP leader, more than 40 countries, including the USA, the UK, China and India, have so far confirmed sending their representatives to the meeting at the party chairperson's Gulshan office at 4:00pm today.

The party is likely to hand over copies of a written statement on the graft case and the country's latest political situation to the diplomats. Legal experts of the BNP have

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