

DIGITAL SECURITY BILL An attempt to justify illegitimate activities: Speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government formulated Digital Security Bill in an attempt to "justify its illegitimate activities", speakers said at a meeting yesterday.

The bill is aimed at shrinking the scope for freedom of speech, they said. Ganasamhati Andolon organised the views-exchange meeting on "Anti-people Digital Security Law: Freedom of Press and Citizens, and Security Contexts" at Moni Singh-Farhad Memorial Trust Bhaban in the capital's Paltan.

The speakers, who included left-leaning politicians and like-minded concerned citizens, said cyber threats could be tackled by amending the country's existing laws.

On Thursday, the Digital Security Bill 2018 was sent to the office of President Abdul Hamid for his assent, said sources at the Parliament Secretariat and the Bangabhaban.

Amid widespread criticism against some of its provisions that have been termed a threat to freedom of speech and expression and the freedom of the

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Increase in road crashes not a one-dimensional problem

Says DMP chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The increase of road accidents in the country is not a one-dimensional problem, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia said at a programme in the capital yesterday.

"Carelessness of the drivers is one of the reasons. But apart from that, pedestrians are also reckless, crossing roads haphazardly with lack of civic sense," he said while attending a mock parliamentary debate as chief guest at Bangladesh Film Development Corporation.

Lack of infrastructure and flawed road engineering are also reasons for road accidents, he added.

Expressing frustration over the age-old traffic system, the DMP Commissioner said Bangladesh is the only country

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A group of elated graduates throw their graduation caps in the air after the 51st convocation of Dhaka University yesterday. President and Chancellor of the university Abdul Hamid attended the convocation as chief guest while National Professor Anisuzzaman was the convocation speaker.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

DISPOSAL OF GRAFT APPEALS

Three years on, little progress on Supreme Court order

Overburdened HC benches, lack of documents blamed

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

In June 2015, the Supreme Court ordered the High Court to quickly hear and dispose of 27 appeals that had challenged verdicts in as many corruption cases.

In more than three years since, the HC delivered judgments in just three cases and reheard another.

The appeals were filed by 35 corruption convicts and accused, mostly politicians and their family members.

"The relevant High Court benches are overburdened and a number of them have been reconstituted. In some cases, documents needed for the hearing were not produced before the court in time. A number of

petitioners had also filed review petitions with the Appellate Division," said Anti-Corruption Commission lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan.

Justice is being delayed as a result of this, he added.

"We will look into the reason behind the delay in rehearing the appeals. We will find out if any court officials or staff members are involved in this in any way," Saifur Rahman, a special officer at the Supreme Court, told The Daily Star last night over phone.

Earlier this year, some of the appeals were included on the cause list of the HC bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice KM Hafizul Alam for hearings, said the ACC lawyer.

The bench may start rehearing the appeals filed by former BNP state ministers Iqbal Hasan Mahmood Tuku and Aman Ullah Aman this month, he added.

On August 14, the same bench concluded rehearing the appeal by Relief and Disaster Management Minister Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya against a lower court verdict that sentenced him to 13 years' imprisonment in a corruption case.

The HC is expected to deliver the judgment today.

Following a leave-to-appeal petition by the ACC, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court on June 14, 2015, cancelled a previous HC verdict that had acquitted Maya.

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WB approves \$515m for three projects

Host communities affected by
Rohingya influx among beneficiaries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank yesterday approved \$515 million for three projects in Bangladesh, part of which will help host communities in Cox's Bazar who have been affected by the Rohingya influx.

A World Bank (WB) statement said this will help alleviate poverty and create new livelihood opportunities, including for the local communities, in the Cox's Bazar district hosting Rohingyas who fled violence in Myanmar.

The projects will improve coastal and marine fisheries, forest management and rural roads, the WB said.

"These three projects will create opportunities for the rural population and especially help lift vulnerable people out of poverty," said Qimiao Fan, World Bank country director for Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal.

According to the WB statement, the \$175 million Sustainable Forests and Livelihoods Project will help improve forest cover through a collaborative management approach involving the local communities.

"The project will support enhancing income through alternative activities for about 40,000 households in the coastal, hill and central districts of the country," said Madhavi Pillai, World Bank senior natural resources management specialist and task team leader for the project.

This will include Cox's Bazar where nearly one million Rohingyas have taken shelter. The project will particularly help the host communities through its income generation activities -- improving the availability of wood for fuel in a sustainable way and reducing human-wild elephant conflict which has affected parts of the district, the WB said.

The \$240 million Sustainable Coastal and Marine Fisheries Project will help improve fisheries management, expand mariculture and strengthen aquaculture biosecurity and productivity.

In 10 coastal districts, the project will set up community co-management associations with the fishing communities -- enabling them to adopt supplementary and alternative livelihoods. It will also empower female workers through alternative livelihoods support, skills development, and nutrition awareness.

"Fisheries are vital to the country's food security and the sector employs more than 18 million people," said Milen Dyoulgerov, World Bank senior environment specialist and task team leader for the project. "The project will help improve fisheries management systems, infrastructure, and other value chain investments. This will result in better productivity and availability of fish."

The project will also help expand the current fisher ID card system, which will be linked with the geographic information system platform. It will also improve vessel registration and licensing for fishing.

The \$100 million additional financing to the Second Rural Transport Improvement Project will help rehabilitate rural roads in 26 districts that were damaged from last year's heavy rainfall and floods. The ongoing project has improved and repaired more than 5,000km rural roads that helped millions of people access markets, hospitals, and schools. The financing will factor in climate-resilience in planning, technical design, implementation and maintenance of the roads.

The World Bank has already signed an agreement with Bangladesh to provide \$75 million grant for Rohingya people. This is part of \$480 million grant announced in June.

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