

Draft broadcast law gets nod

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becomes a bank loan defaulter, or is sentenced to two years or more in jail by a court, or declared bankrupt or mentally imbalanced.

The cabinet secretary said if anybody continued broadcast despite being declared disqualified by a court for running the media after being bankrupt, he or she would have to face maximum seven years' jail term or a fine of Tk 5 crore or both.

The draft law says a seven-member commission will issue licence to TV channels, radio stations and cable operators following recommendations of the government. The broadcasting media outlets will have to renew their licences every five years by paying a specific fee.

Similarly, news portals must be registered with the commission.

The chairman and other commissioners will be picked through forming a search committee. They will be appointed for five years after an approval by the president. The maximum age of the commission members will be 70, the proposed law says.

The members of the commission must have 15 years' experience in various areas concerned, including knowledge on digital tools and techniques.

The proposed law has a provision

for lodging complaints with the commission which will be resolved following the Alternative Dispute Resolution system.

The cabinet secretary said there would be complaint centres under the commission. Any consumer aggrieved at the content of a media outlet would be able to lodge a complaint.

MASS MEDIA EMPLOYEES ACT
The cabinet approved the draft of the proposed Mass Media Employees (services and conditions) Act-2018.

Cabinet Secretary Shafiqul said the wages and benefits of journalists, employees and press workers, artists of broadcast, online, and print media outlets would be fixed under the proposed law.

Once the new law is passed in parliament, jobs of media employees will no longer be regulated under the labour law, he added.

Currently, journalists and employees of media houses are regarded as "workers" under the labour law.

"Once the law is passed, they will be regarded as media personnel, not workers," Shafiqul said.

According to the proposed law, a wage board will be formed for the media personnel. There will be an inspection committee under the wage board. On the basis of inspections by

the committee, each media house will formulate a service rule of its own in line with the proposed law.

The wage board will fix salaries and allowances of media personnel in line with the salary scale of the government employees and it will be applicable to the owners of all media outlets.

Every media house will have a provident fund which will be applicable to a new employee after one year in service instead of two years. An employee will contribute 8 to 10 percent of his basic salary, currently 7 percent, and an equal amount will be deposited in the fund by the owner of the media house, the proposed law states.

The weekly working hour of the media personnel will be brought down to 36 hours from 48 hours. If anybody works beyond the stipulated time, he or she will be entitled to overtime pay.

The proposed law says a media employee will enjoy 15 days of casual leave every year instead of 10 days. For a female employee, the maternity leave will be six months.

Violators of the law will be punished with fines ranging from Tk 50,000 to Tk 5 lakh. The government can shut down the media outlet concerned and suspend its various privileges for committing an offence, adds the proposed law.

'Drug dealer', PBCP leader shot dead

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sensed their presence and began shooting at the law enforcers. When police retaliated, one of the criminals was left with bullet wounds while the others fled, he added.

Payel was rushed to a local hospital where he was declared dead.

Sources from Payel's family said he was sent to jail in a drug case around one and half years ago and was bailed out on September 25 of this year.

Police claimed to have recovered 100 yaba pills and 100 grams of heroin from the spot.

Payel's family alleged that police had picked up Payel earlier and cooked up the story of a shootout after killing him. Police, however, denied the allegations.

Payel's family has also claimed that Payel was not a drug dealer but was,

however, once addicted to drugs.

"My son was never involved with drug dealing, but he used to take drugs before," said Payel's mother Parul Begum.

Parul said she learned from local witnesses about plainclothes men picking her son up from Digarkanda by-pass area on Sunday afternoon.

Earlier in May, Payel's cousin, Rajon Mia, was killed in a similar "shootout" with police, his family said, adding that they demand fair investigation into the killing.

With Payel, at least 240 suspected drug peddlers and dealers have been killed since the anti-narcotics drive began on May 4. Most of them were killed in so-called shootouts involving police or Rab.

PBCP LEADER KILLED

A Purbo Banglar Communist Party

(PBCP) leader was killed in a so-called gunfight with Rab in Tangail Sadar upazila.

The dead was identified as Sharif alias Farhad, 33, son of late Chan Miah of the upazila.

Major Rabiul Islam, a company commander of Rab-12, said the incident took place at Dainna Chowdhury Madhyapara area around 2:00am when criminals opened fire at Rab men who retaliated, leaving Sharif with bullet wounds.

He was taken to a local hospital where doctors declared him dead, Maj Rabiul said, adding that they recovered a pistol and four bullets from the spot.

Sharif was the regional commander of PBCP (ML/Red Flag) and was accused in five criminal cases, including for robbery and murder, Rab sources said.

Dhaka, Riyadh

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would hold a meeting with the Saudi king tomorrow and the two countries would strike another deal on cooperation in the ICT sector.

He said the PM would inaugurate the newly constructed permanent Chancery building of Bangladesh Embassy in Riyadh tomorrow afternoon and was also scheduled to attend a business seminar to be organised by the Council of Saudi Chambers.

Hasina will leave for Madina tomorrow night and will offer Fatehah at the "rouza mubarak" (sacred chambers) of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) on Thursday morning.

The PM will then depart Madina for Makkah and perform Umrah on Thursday night.

On the same day, she will also lay the foundation stone of the Bangladesh Consulate in Jeddah on the land

Bangladesh has recently purchased.

Hasina will then head for Dhaka in the early hours of Friday.

Ali said at the press conference that Hasina would highlight Bangladesh's socioeconomic development and the successes and achievements of different sectors in recent years to the Saudi leadership.

She will also discuss Saudi Arabia's partnership and cooperation in various sectors in Bangladesh for establishing a poverty- and deprivation-free Bangladesh.

Issues regarding labour recruitment from Bangladesh, trade and investment, development cooperation, and prosperity of the Mulsim Ummah, and cooperation in regional and international forums would dominate talks with the Saudi king during the official meeting.

Dhaka is also expected to sign several MoUs, related to public and

private sectors, during the visit.

Speaking to The Daily Star over the phone, Bangladesh Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Golam Moshi said that the PM would prioritise new labour recruitment from Bangladesh as the Kingdom takes up new mega projects.

"The PM will stress on streamlining the labour migration process through relevant ministries of the countries.

"She will also seek more investments in Bangladesh, including in solar power, cement, special economic zones, and oil refining," he said.

In April, Bangladesh Armed Forces for the first time took part in a 22-nation joint military exercise in Saudi Arabia.

Hasina attended the concluding ceremony of the month-long military exercise styled "Gulf Shield -1" in which an 18-member delegation from the Bangladesh Armed Forces participated.

DU

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On Saturday, DU's Chief Security Officer SM Kamrul Ahsan filed a case with Shahbagh Police Station, accusing the six and some others, under sections 22 and 33 of the Digital Security Act, and the Public Examination Act. The case statement said that the questions were leaked through digital devices prior to the exam.

Last year, the university authorities published the results of "Gha" unit admission test within the shortest period of time amid protest and outcry over allegations of the exam paper being leaked.

Meanwhile, some students of DU yesterday demonstrated on the campus, demanding resignation of the Dean of the Social Science faculty Sadeka Halim over her failure to prevent the leak of question.

Under the banner of "Students Against Repression", around 30 students formed a human chain at the base of Raju Memorial Sculpture, in which some admission seekers also took part.

Speaking at the gathering, Abu Raihan Khan, a student of the mass communication and journalism department, said some journalists presented evidence of the leak before the exams had begun. But the university administration denied the allegation without an investigation.

The protestors also demanded a retake of the admission test.

"We want proper evaluation of our talent. The examination was nothing but a farce. We urge the university authorities to retake the admission test," said an applicant who appeared in Friday's Gha unit intake test.

Those gathered later brought out a procession from the spot which paraded through different streets of the campus.

Turkey to search

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operation with Saudi authorities, was expected to "take place towards the evening" yesterday.

Dozens of media organisations -- some of whom had set up tents -- have kept a constant vigil outside the consulate in the expectation that the search would finally begin.

Cleaners were seen entering the building around lunchtime, causing a minor flurry of excitement, an AFP reporter said.

And the Saudi delegation which is due to join the search arrived at the city's police headquarters, Turkish television said.

NO-ONE CAN UNDERMINE TIES

Trump's conversation with King Salman, father of the crown prince, was the first such talks since the crisis erupted.

"Just spoke to the King of Saudi Arabia who denies any knowledge of whatever may have happened to our Saudi Arabian citizen'," Trump tweeted.

Riyadh's most recent comments have focused on having no knowledge of any killing or denying any such order had been given.

"The denial was very, very strong," Trump later told reporters at the White House. "It sounded to me like maybe these could have been rogue killers. Who knows?"

Trump said Pompeo was on his way to Saudi Arabia within the hour to discuss the controversy.

News that the consulate was to be searched emerged after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and King Salman also had their first telephone talks since the controversy erupted, in what appeared to be a conciliatory conversation according to official readouts.

While lurid claims have appeared in Turkish media -- including that Khashoggi was tortured and dismembered -- the Turkish leadership has so far refrained from pointing the finger directly at Riyadh in public comments.

Salman emphasised the importance of the Turkey-Saudi relationship and said no-one should be able to "undermine the strength of this relationship," Saudi's official media reported.

'DAVOS IN DESERT' UNRAVELS

The controversy has troubled Saudi's traditional Western allies -- who are key arms suppliers to the kingdom -- and also undermined efforts by Mohammed bin Salman to present himself as a modernising ruler.

An investment conference seen as a platform for the crown prince and known as "Davos in the Desert" which was scheduled to take place in Riyadh next week, has been hit by a string of prominent cancellations.

Business barons including British billionaire Richard Branson and Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi, as well as media powerhouses Bloomberg and CNN, have pulled out of the Future Investment Initiative (FII).

And in a major new blow for the event, JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon and Ford chairman Bill Ford also cancelled plans to attend, CNBC reported.

A section on the glitzy event website with pictures of the speakers has now been taken down.

Saudi stocks have also been hit, suffering days of heavy losses, but made a strong comeback yesterday with the Tadawul All-Shares Index (TASI) rising over four percent.

Trump has threatened the kingdom with "severe punishment" if it is shown that Khashoggi was killed inside its Istanbul mission.

But Riyadh on Sunday vowed to hit back against any punitive measures while Trump has also made clear he is reluctant to curb all-important arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

Britain, France and Germany also released a rare joint statement saying they were treating Khashoggi's disappearance "with the utmost seriousness" and calling for a "credible investigation".

Oikyafront

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the spokesperson for the Oikyafront, a senior BNP leader said.

Even after inclusion of some components of the 20-party combine in the Oikyafront, the 20-party will function as a separate platform.

"The demands and goals of all the opposition forces are the same. We will chalk out our action programmes in consultation with the Oikyafront leaders. The 20-party alliance will hold the programmes simultaneously with those of the Oikyafront," said Goyeshwar Chandra Roy, BNP's standing committee member.

Senior leaders of the 20-party alliance yesterday in a meeting welcomed the formation of the Oikyafront. In the meeting at the BNP chief's Gulshan office, party's Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and standing committee member Nazrul Islam Khan briefed the 20-party alliance leaders about the aims and objectives of the Oikyafront, meeting sources said.

A senior BNP leader is in communication with the leaders of left-leaning political parties, urging them to take to the streets with a similar demand for a free and fair election under a non-partisan interim government.

After weeks of talks and intense negotiations, the BNP and four other political parties formally launched an alliance called Jatiya Oikyafront on Saturday, excluding Bikalpadhara Bangladesh led by former president Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury, just months before the national election.

The four other parties are -- Gonoforum led by Dr Kamal Hossain, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal led by ASM Abdur Rab, Nagorik Oikya and Forward Party.

Indian minister

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and section 500 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Section 500 of the IPC provides that an accused may be awarded two years jail term or fine or both in the event of conviction.

Akbar's complaint mentions the accusations being circulated "in a motivated manner for the fulfilment of an agenda".

It termed the allegations made by Ramani as "scandalous" and "very tone and tenor" ex-facie defamatory. It also stated that the allegations have not only damaged his goodwill and reputation in his social circle but also affected his reputation in the community and friends, family and colleagues, causing "irreparable loss and tremendous distress."

In a statement released on Sunday evening soon after his return from Africa, Akbar rejected the allegations of sexual harassment and molestation against him as "false and fabricated".

Akbar said Ramani, his colleague in the Asian Age newspaper where he was a senior editor, had written an article last year where she mentioned the alleged incident but not named him. He said that Ramani had not named him earlier "as she knew it was an incorrect story". He recalled that when Ramani was recently asked "why she had not named me", she had tweeted: "Never named him because he didn't 'do' anything."

After Ramani, at least ten more women journalists came out in the open to level the charges against Akbar.

GD against

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"motivated and conspiratorial" remarks against the army chief which was tantamount to sedition.

"The incident warrants an investigation to find out why and influenced by whom a highly educated man like Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury made such a motivated, fabricated and untrue statement," it added.

Meanwhile, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Directorate in a protest notice yesterday said Zafrullah at a press conference on October 13 again "gave false, untrue and misleading information" about the Army chief which was motivated.

In a talk show titled "Sampadokyo" aired on Somoy TV on October 9, Zafrullah said the army chief was the force's Chattogram area GOC when a huge cache of military weapons and ammunitions "went missing, were stolen or sold out" from there, reports BSS.

In a statement issued earlier by the ISPR, the defence force said the comment affected military personnel's morale, the force's solidarity and extremely belittled the army's top position.

"In a different way it misled every serving military personnel and affected negatively their morale. Besides such a misleading campaign harmed the solidarity and unity of a disciplined force like the army which is unexpected," it reads.

Zafrullah on Saturday apologised for his remarks.

"I carelessly presented wrong information about current Army Chief General Aziz Ahmed during a discussion at Somoy TV's talk show on October 9. I sincerely apologise for the improper statement and wrong choice of words," he told a press conference.

He said Gen Aziz was neither a GOC of Chittagong Cantonment nor a commandant. "He is an efficient military official."

Mentioning that Aziz worked as a trainer of artillery at Chittagong Cantonment, Zafrullah said he faced a court of inquiry, not a court martial.

Verification of 8,000

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joint working group at the upcoming meeting.

Myanmar has so far failed to take steps to ensure safe and sustainable return of Rohingyas to their homeland.

"We've taken all the preparations about the next joint working group (JWG) meeting. The meeting is likely to be held on October 30, if not October 28," an official told UNB.

Members of the JWG from Myanmar's side will visit the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar district.

Officials said Bangladesh would seek updates on what steps were taken for the safe and sustainable return of the Rohingyas.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, at the 73rd UN General Assembly, made three recommendations for solving the Rohingya crisis at its root, with the first one being the abolition of discriminatory laws, policies and practices of Myanmar against the minority group.

According to her second recommendation, Myanmar must create an acceptable environment by building trust and guaranteeing protection, rights and a pathway to citizenship for

all Rohingyas. If needed, it should create a "safe zone" inside the country to protect all civilians.

Her third recommendation was about bringing accountability and justice, particularly in the light of recommendations of the UN Human Rights Council's Fact-Finding Mission, to prevent atrocious crimes against Rohingyas in Myanmar.

Meanwhile, Ali emphasised the need for accelerating efforts to create a conducive environment in northern Rakhine State and build houses and villages for the returnees to facilitate their repatriation.

He, along with joint working group members, visited the northern Rakhine State in August this year and saw the trail of widespread devastation, said foreign ministry officials.

Ali also visited Shwe Zar village where around 148 prefabricated houses for returnees are being built, with assistance from the government of India.

Bangladesh and Myanmar formed the Joint Working Group (JWG) on December 2017 to start repatriating Rohingya refugees by January 23, 2018.

PM rules out talks

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When the cabinet meeting was underway at the Secretariat, the Sampadak Parishad, a platform of the editors of the country's leading newspapers, was holding a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club to press for proper amendments to nine sections of the law.

At one stage of the meeting, Law Minister Anisul Huq and Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu drew the prime minister's attention to the editors' concern. In reply, the PM clarified her stance on the matter, said sources at the cabinet meeting.

She said "the same law" exists in the United Kingdom and that the law is "tougher" there, according to the sources.

The Digital Security Act was formulated to deal with those who take positions against the country and the spirit of the Liberation War, she added.

Following the passage of the Digital

Security Bill in parliament on September 19, Sampadak Parishad announced that it will hold a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club on September 29.

But later, the programme was postponed at the request of the information minister, who also promised to bring the law minister and the posts, telecommunications and IT minister to a discussion with the editors on September 30.

The three ministers and one adviser to the prime minister, in the September 30 meeting, committed to take the editors' concerns to the meeting of the cabinet either on October 3 or the next one on October 8.

But no discussion was held about the act at the two meetings.

Later on October 8, President Abdul Hamid signed the Digital Security Bill into law.

Merkel's fragile

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borders to a mass influx of refugees and migrants, scored 10 percent.

Their success was cheered by right-wing leaders including Marine Le Pen of France and Italy's Matteo Salvini, who said that "in Bavaria, change has won".

The AfD's Alice Weidel jubilantly declared that Merkel's government "is not a grand coalition but a mini coalition" and demanded she "clear the way for new elections".

The poll debacle cast a dark cloud over Merkel's troubled grand coalition, dubbed the "GroKo", said Der Spiegel.

"The Bavaria election has made an early end to the GroKo much more likely," it said.

"Two of three partners in the GroKo have suffered brutal losses. The third, Angela Merkel's CDU, fears the consequences."

SHATTERED CERTAINTIES

The Bavaria poll result shattered old certainties for the CSU, which has ruled almost single-handedly for decades in the southern state known for its fairytale castles, Oktoberfest and crucifixes on classroom walls.

Since the mass migrant arrivals, in which Bavaria was Germany's frontline state, the CSU has adopted far tougher anti-immigration and law and order positions.

Nonetheless, they and other big parties took heavy losses in 2017 federal elections to the AfD, which became the first right-wing extremist party to enter the German parliament in significant numbers.

The CSU's Seehofer has harshly criticised Merkel and the SPD over their more liberal stance on immigration, twice bringing their alliance to the brink of collapse.

The political battles, one centred on securing German borders against asylum seekers, have distracted Merkel's fourth-term government and angered voters.

After Sunday's election, Seehofer, 69, insisted he would stay on as minister, even as a poll for news weekly Focus said 46 percent of Germans blame him and his brinkmanship for the CSU's historically-poor result.

MERKEL'S 'LITMUS TEST'

The Sueddeutsche Zeitung daily said, following what it labelled a new milestone in the decline of German mainstream parties, Merkel's coalition now has a stark choice: a return to "common sense, or new elections".

The SPD's deputy leader Ralf Stegner told Phoenix TV that "the citizens delivered a resounding slap" to the governing parties and that, unless they change, "the grand coalition won't last much longer".

In Berlin, the GroKo leaders are now nervously looking ahead to another landmark regional vote at the end of the month.

Voters go to the polls on October 28 in central Hesse state, home to the financial hub Frankfurt, where polls say Merkel ally Volker Bouffier will face an uphill battle to stay on as state premier.

Australian ministers under fire for backing 'okay to be white' vote

AFP, Sydney

Australia's indigenous affairs minister and several of his colleagues faced calls to resign yesterday, after they backed a failed parliamentary motion tabled by a controversial senator that declared: "It is okay to be white."

Several government ministers -- including those for trade, communications and indigenous affairs minister Nigel Scullion -- backed a resolution drafted by populist firebrand senator Pauline Hanson which railed against what it described as "the deplorable rise of anti-white racism".

Luke Pearson, the founder of influential anti-racism group, IndigenousX, echoed a string of calls for Scullion to resign after the vote.

"The minister for Indigenous Affairs, voting in support of what is widely known to be a white supremacist slogan, 'It's okay to be white', makes his position as minister entirely untenable. He needs to resign," Pearson wrote.

Scullion, a white senator for the Northern Territory, has held the Indigenous Affairs portfolio since 2013.

During parliamentary debate Hanson defended trying to codify what opponents see as race baiting.

"Such a simple sentence should go without saying," Hanson told the chamber, before her motion was defeated 31 votes to 28. "But I suspect many members in this place would struggle to say it."

Greens leader Richard Di Natale decried the move.

"It's not just okay to be white in Australia, it's actually a ticket to winning the lotto. Look around this chamber and see how many faces aren't white," he said.

"The reality is this 'it's okay to be white' slogan has a long history in the white supremacist movement where both these clowns get most of their material from," he said referring to Hanson and another senator who supported the motion.

Although one-in-two Australians has a parent born abroad, racial inequality and public discourse on the issue is fraught.

Australia's treatment of its indigenous population has long been a festering historical and political sore.