



A bookstall owner at his shop in Tangail's Ghatail upazila. Sales have dropped drastically since outbreak of the deadly coronavirus.

PHOTO: STAR

## Abuse of DSA worries editors

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media watchdog, 456 people were prosecuted and arrested in 198 cases under the DSA last year. Of them, 65 are journalists of whom 32 are now facing trial.

Against the backdrop, Law Minister Anisul Huq, in a recent interview with BBC Bangla, said the law would be reviewed. He said steps would be taken so that none can be arrested before the end of investigation in a case under the Act.

"Initially, we welcome this statement from our law minister. We demand that steps must be taken immediately to make the statement of the law minister legally effective. We demand necessary ordinance or legal initiative in this regard immediately," the parishad said in the statement.

During and after the formulation process of the law -- from the draft to its cabinet approval, placing before parliament to the president's approval -- different journalists associations, political parties, the Editors' Council, different local and foreign bodies voiced concern over several sections of the law.

"On behalf of the government, several ministers and members of the parliamentary standing committee sat with us and heard our points of concern. But our demands were ignored. Even the speech of the minister concerned while he was placing the bill in parliament and the opinion of the media representatives placed before the standing committee was not taken into consideration," said the statement.

The representative of the media pinpointed the questionable sections of the law and recommended their amendment. Had those recommendations were taken into consideration, today's situation might not have arisen, it said.

The Editors' Council on September 29, 2018, had given a detail explanation as to why it was concerned over the act.

In the explanation, the Editors' Council expressed concern over 9 sections (8, 21, 25, 28, 29, 31, 32, 43 and 53) of the act.

In trying to make a law prevent crimes through digital devices and provide security in the digital sphere, the act ends up policing media operations and controlling the media contents. Sections 8, 21, 25, 28, 29, 31 and 32 are contradictory to freedom of the press, guaranteed by the constitution, it said.

These sections will create a scope for controlling people's freedom of speech and expression. For example, section-8 says the law enforcers can request the BTRC to remove information or block it if it deems any information that are published or circulated in digital media undermining unity of the country or part of it, economic activities, security, defence, religious sentiments, or public rules and order, or creates hatred, hostility towards any ethnicity.

Section-21 says that if any person, through digital media, spreads propaganda or assist it against Liberation War, Spirit of the Liberation War, Father of the Nation, National Anthem, and National Flag, such action will be considered a crime.

Section-25 says if any person using a website or any digital device deliberately or knowingly spreads any information or data that is attacking or intimidating in nature; or if a person publishes or distributes any information, despite knowing that it is false,

to irritate, humiliate, defame or embarrass or to discredit a person, or damages the image and reputation of the state or spreads confusion or with the same purpose publishes or distributes fully or partially distorted information or data despite knowing that it is false, and if any one assists in such actions, then all such actions of the individual will be considered a crime.

Section-28 states that if a person or group with the intention of hurting or inciting religious values or sentiments intentionally or knowingly publishes or promotes something on a website or in any other electronic format, which hurts religious feelings or religious values, then this act of that person will be a crime.

Section-31 states that if a person intentionally publishes or broadcasts something on a website or digital format that causes hostility, hatred or animosity between the various classes or communities concerned or destroys communal harmony or causes instability or disorder or deterioration of law and order or if it happens or is about to happen, then it will be a crime.

Section-32 states that if a person commits or assists in committing any crime under the Official Secrets Act through computer, digital device, computer network, digital network or any other digital means, the person will then be sentenced to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 14 years or a fine not exceeding Tk 25 lakh or both.

The statement also said the DSA will create an atmosphere of panic and intimidation where journalism, especially investigative journalism, will become virtually impossible.

This law will create fear among all the users, including media workers, who uses computers and computer networks.

Section-43 of the act gives the police unlimited powers in terms of entering homes to search them, search offices, search people's bodies and seize everything related to computers, computer networks, servers and digital platforms. The police will be able to arrest any person without a warrant under the powers given by the law. In this case, there is no need to get any kind of approval from any police authorities.

The statement adds that there is ambiguity in this law and many words have been used which can be misinterpreted and easily used against the media.

Another concern of the Sampadak Parishad is that out of about 20 sections of the law relating to crime and punishment, 14 are non-bailable, five are bailable and one is negotiable. This has inevitably created an atmosphere of fear, where the normal practice of journalism has become even more risky.

Those who commit criminal acts on digital platforms must be brought to justice. However, the law needs to be amended immediately to ensure that it is not applied against the media and free-spirited writers, the statement added.

"We demand that all the cases filed against journalists under the Digital Security Act [are withdrawn], all journalists and free-spirited writers who have been arrested and imprisoned under the act be released immediately. We expect the government's due diligence in considering this issue."

# Education insts' closure hits small traders hard in Tangail

MIRZA SHAKIL

Mohammad Fazlul Haque, a bookstall owner in Tangail's Ghatail upazila, could not pay rents of his shop and house for the last few months due to abnormal drop of sales in his shop since outbreak of the deadly coronavirus.

He has been keeping his shop open after the lockdown was lifted following government directives but the sales have not increased as the educational institutions still remain shut.

"How can I pay rents of my shop and house maintaining the cost of my family as I cannot sell books more than Tk 500 to Tk 1000 in a day," Fazlul said.

"I have heard that the educational institutions will reopen in the end of March but it will be very tough for me to turn around as I am already in debts," he added.

Not only Fazlul but also hundreds of small traders involved in education related business have been passing hard days for the last one year due to slump in their sales

Although normalcy has returned after the lockdown was relaxed but the traders who are involved with education related business could not turn around so far.

due to shutdown of educational institutions due to coronavirus pandemic.

Those who run shops of educational equipment, tailoring shops making uniforms for students, stationary shops, small cyber cafes, hotels, snacks and fast food shops and photocopyers adjacent to the educational institutions have incurred heavy loss due to the countrywide shutdown of educational institutions.

Although normalcy has

returned after the lockdown was relaxed but the traders who are involved with education related business could not turn around so far.

Many of the traders are still struggling to continue their business while a number of them have already shut their business.

Many of the employees who had jobs at the small shops were also laid off by the shop owners. Many of them have returned to their villages.

Mozammel Haque, who runs a shop at GBG College Intersection area, was passing idle time by browsing social medias as he didn't receive any customer since the morning.

"What can I do? I have no work but sitting idle at the shop. My business is related to educational institutions. So, the people engaged with business like mine have almost become unemployed," he said.

"The deadly corona virus outbreak has almost destroyed my business as well as my financial stability. Now I can neither pay the

rent of the shop nor can shut the business," Mozammel added.

Abu Taher, owner of a shop in the same area that produces and sales different types of crests, said sales of crests have dropped abnormally as such programmes and events have remained suspended due to the pandemic.

"It has become difficult for me to buy food for my family," he said.

Shiplu Miah, a fast food shop owner near a private but busy school at Biswas Betka area in Tangail town said he left the business few months ago due to failing to pay the shop rent.

"I will not able to reopen my shop after re-opening of the school as I don't have the capital required for it," he said.

"No one including the government or any other institutions provided me any incentives or loans for sustaining my business in the crisis period.

After my little savings ended, I have been running my family for the last few months by taking loans from relatives and friends," he added.



PHOTO: STAR

People from indigenous Rakhine community form an hour-long human chain in front of Seema Buddhist Temple at Misrepara in Patuakhali's Kalapara upazila yesterday, demanding removal of all the illegal structures and business establishments from the temple premises. The century-old temple was established on 1.86 acres of land in 1911.

## EXPLOSION AT FENI BUILDING 3 of a family injured

A CORRESPONDENT, Feni

A woman and her two daughters sustained burn injuries in an explosion inside their rented flat in Feni municipality area early yesterday.

The injured were first taken to 250-bed General Hospital, from where victims Meherun Nesa, 40, and her elder daughter Hafsa Islam, 15, were shifted to the Burn Unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) as their condition deteriorated.

Meanwhile, after giving primary treatment Meherun's younger daughter was released from the hospital, Resident Medical Officer (RMO) of 250-bed General Hospital Iqbal Hossain Bhuiyan said, adding that Meherun and Hafsa, who sustained 60 percent burn injuries, were referred to DMCH.

According to police and fire service officials, the explosion took place on the fifth floor of the six-storey building on Shaheed Shahidullah Kaisar Road in the municipality in the early hours of yesterday.

The explosion damaged the third, fourth and sixth floors of the building, police said, adding that the reason behind the incident could not be known immediately.

## CU student takes own life

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

A university student allegedly took his own life in Khagrachhari's Ramgarh upazila early yesterday.

The deceased, Naimul Hassan Mission, 21, was a second year student of Chemistry Department at Chattogram University (CU), Inspector (Investigation) of Ramgarh Police Station Monir Hossain said.

Police said Mission had been suffering from mental depression for the last two years.

## Teen held for rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Police arrested a teenage boy yesterday in a case for raping a minor girl in Dumuria upazila on Friday.

The law enforcers detained the 14-year-old after father of the five-year-old victim filed a case with Dumuria Police Station, police said.

According to the case statement, on Friday evening, the accused lured the neighbouring girl with chocolate, took her to his house and raped her.

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**e-Tender Notice 02/2020-2021**  
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following package:

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Name of works	Last date and time of tender security submission	Tender closing date & time
1.	553753	Procurement of Generator & Air-conditioner	22-Mar-2021 2:00pm	22-Mar-2021 3:00pm

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.  
The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches up to 21-Mar-2021 4:00pm. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

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This is to notify all concerned that the following tenders are invited in the National e-GP Portal:

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Last selling date	Opening date
1	533008	14/03/2021	15/03/2021

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