



DIGITAL REGULATIONS ‘Free speech, privacy will be imperilled’ 45 groups urge BTRC to scrap draft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Forty-five organisations wrote to the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission to drop the draft regulations for digital and social media, and OTT platforms, saying, it “imperils people’s freedom of expression and the right to privacy, undermines encryption and weakens online safety”.

The organisations include Article 19, Human Rights Watch, Committee to Protect Journalists, Internet Society, Open Knowledge Foundation, Wikimedia Foundation, Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, Association for Progressive Communications, PEN America, Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), The Tor Project and others.

The letter urged the BTRC to protect people’s rights and freedoms and enable an open, free and secure internet in Bangladesh.

“If enforced, the regulations will have a deleterious impact on human rights, and put journalists, dissidents, activists and vulnerable communities, in particular, at greater risk,” the organisations wrote.

“The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission Regulation for Digital, Social Media and OTT Platforms’ seeks to implement a content governance framework devoid of adequate judicial oversight, clarity and predictability, and integration of human rights and due process,” the letter read.

It stated that the “traceability” requirement in the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6



Disregarding safety, two schoolgirls and a man jaywalk amid an onrush of traffic on the capital’s Mirpur road around 12:00pm yesterday, even though a footbridge was just a few yards away. This shows how the frequency of road fatalities does not register with many.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

UKRAINE WAR

Bangladesh’s position fairly balanced

Says ex-foreign secretary

UNB, Dhaka

Former Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque yesterday said Bangladesh’s position on the Russia-Ukraine issue was “neutral and fairly balanced” but it might require a review in the coming days.

“Neutrality may not always be the preferred path,” he said as he felt the necessity for revisiting the policy when required.

Bangladesh is still watching how the war evolves and has apparently taken an “interim” position. “In every aspect we’ll feel the impact whatever position we take.”

The former foreign secretary was addressing a seminar titled “Russia-Ukraine War: Whose Profits and Whose Losses?” organised by the Centre for Peace Studies (CPS) of the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance at North South University.

Haque said the “global military complex” will be the most beneficiary of the Russia-Ukraine war while everyone will be affected more or less, including the loss of lives.

PRICE HIKE OF ESSENTIALS

The poor plumb the depths of misery

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN and
SHAHEEN MOLLAH

No matter how hard Md Shaon, a day labourer, and his wife, a domestic help, work, their attempts fall short against the skyrocketing price to make ends meet for their family of five.

“Name any item – rice, oil, vegetable – they are getting costlier,” said a crestfallen Shaon.

While Shaon is struggling to keep his head above water, he came to know that a hike in house rent is coming into effect from June.

“We don’t know how we would survive in this situation,” he added.

Shaon’s concern is shared by a good number of people, especially the fixed income

group and those at the lower rung of the society.

The prices of oil, onion, potato, beef, mutton, chicken, flour, cardamom and sugar have increased within a week, according to the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh.

The logical price chart of the Department of Agriculture Marketing shows that the average prices of 39 daily items have shot up almost 17 percent from last year.

However, there are instances where the government rate is not reflected at the retail level, leading to long queues in front of the open market sales trucks.

One such long line was found in front of a truck in the Motijheel’s AGB Colony area where over a hundred people were waiting to buy essentials.

Over at Kawran Bazar, Dhaka’s wholesale hub, Monir Hossain, a resident of Moghbazar’s Pearabag, was hoping to buy loose soybean oil at a low price but had to make do with palm oil at Tk 160 a kg.

“I know that the price of per kg palm oil is Tk 133 – I was told it was an old price,” he said.

The hike in soybean oil price has also had an impact on mustard oil as people are buying it as an alternative.

Within 10 days, the price of mustard oil (general quality) shot up from Tk 186 a litre to Tk 250. Last year, the price of mustard of the same quality was Tk 140.

Onion, which sold at Tk 40 per kg last week, now costs about Tk 70 though this is the harvesting season of the tuber.

EDIBLE OIL

Stock sufficient, price still high

Says DNCRP in a meeting with
dealers, refiners

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country has sufficient stock of edible oil to meet the demand till Ramadan, but the market remains volatile, said the Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection (DNCRP).

The consumers’ rights body DNCRP made the statement in a meeting with the edible oil refiners and dealers in the capital’s Karwan Bazar area yesterday.

DNCRP Director General AHM Shafiquzzaman said the country had around 6 lakh tonnes of edible oil stored which was enough to meet the demand till Ramadan.

Another 183,000 tonnes are on its way to Bangladesh while 175,000 tonnes are waiting to be processed at refineries, he added.

Referring to the stock, he said the oil was imported at a cost of \$1,400 per tonne and the government fixed the rate in line with the price.

“So, there is no scope of oil price hike till Ramadan,” he said.

“The current price of edible oil in the international market is \$1,900, but no one opened any LC (letter of credit) to buy it. So, why this crisis?” he asked.

He also said a blame game was ongoing as dealers were blaming the refiners for not supplying oil as per their supply order and refiners were blaming dealers for an exorbitant price.

Meanwhile, Dokan Malik Samiti President Helal Uddin urged the DNCRP to check the flow of supply in the market.

He doubted the DNCRP’s information on stock was correct.

“Each day we need around 10,000 tonnes of supply. DNCRP and business body representatives can monitor the refineries at the mill gate.”

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6



Large scrap-laden trucks, illegally parked on Chattogram’s Airport Road, cause immense sufferings to locals and foreign-bound passengers. The already-narrow road becomes almost unusable for these vehicles. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Int’l Women of Courage Award for Rizwana

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Syeda Rizwana Hasan has been crowned with the International Women of Courage Award for her excellent contribution in leading the fight to conserve the environment and defend the dignity of marginalised people of Bangladesh.

Syeda Rizwana, an environmental lawyer, is among the 12 women to win the award.

United State’s Secretary of State Antony J Blinken will host the annual award in a virtual ceremony at the US Department of State.

The 2022 ceremony will honour a group of 12

SEE PAGE 6 COL 8

