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DRAFT DIGITAL, OTT RULES

TIB warns of a surveillance-based state

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

If the proposed regulation for the digital, social media and over-the-top (OTT) platforms is enforced, there will be a risk of Bangladesh becoming a "surveillance-based" country, Transparency International Bangladesh Executive Director Dr Ittekkharuzzaman said yesterday.

Addressing a virtual press conference, the TIB boss said the proposed regulation largely contradicts the government's high-profile goal which is to build a Digital Bangladesh.

TIB organised the conference to brief the media about its position on the draft "Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) Regulation for Digital, Social Media and OTT Platforms-2021".

The government published the first draft of the regulation in February for comments on it from different stakeholders.

The graft watchdog raised concerns over a number of clauses in the draft regulation, stressing the need for bringing significant changes to them before going for the enforcement.

According to clause 6.01 (d) of the draft regulation, either BTRC or a court with competent jurisdiction can issue a content removal request on grounds related to sovereignty, integrity or security of the country, decency or morality, friendly relationship with foreign

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Traders from across the country gather at Natun Bazar's Fishery Ghat in Chattogram to buy and sell both freshwater and saltwater fish. There are at least 200 major wholesalers at the fish market, who operate from 3:00am-8:00am. The fish from this market goes to the port city, Dhaka and several other districts. This photo was taken yesterday morning.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Boro on 700 hectares submerged

DWOHA CHOWDHURY and MD AMINUL ISLAM

Hundreds of haor farmers in Sunamganj, Netrakona and Kishoreganj are left distraught after about 700 hectares of paddy fields became inundated in the last four days.

About 200 hectares of Boro paddy fields are submerged in Sunamganj's Tanguar Haor after the Nazarkhali levee broke due to a sudden rise in water level.

As much as 548 mm of rainfall was recorded in India's Meghalaya in the last two days, which caused the water level in Sunamganj rivers to soar two metres in two days, according to the Bangladesh Water Development Board in Sunamganj.

The sudden rise in water level triggered the early flash flood in the haor.

"We are in fear of losing our harvest if the water level keeps rising this way," said Sajidur Rahman, a

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Ukraine-Russia war will affect food security

FAO director general tells the Star

MAHFUZ ANAM

While the world was already passing through various challenges including Covid-19 pandemic, climate change that affected food production and supply chains, Ukraine war has further complicated the global situation in the food



sector. This is more so as Russia and Ukraine are major food suppliers of the world. The Daily Star reached out to UN Food and Agriculture Organization Director-General Qu Dongyu, who toured Bangladesh early March, via email to understand the crises and ways out.

DS: With Russia-Ukraine war, energy supplies are being disrupted and prices are going up. What are its implications and what is FAO's strategy to face this new situation?

Dongyu: Russia and Ukraine play a substantial role in global food production and supply. Together, they provide 19 percent of the world's barley supply, 14 percent of wheat, and 4 percent of maize, making up more than one-third of global cereal exports. The global fertilizer supply is also highly concentrated, with

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CRISIS IN SRI LANKA

Protesters defy curfew

Western diplomats express concern as social media platforms blocked

AFP, Colombo

Armed troops in Sri Lanka yesterday blocked an opposition march that defied a weekend curfew to protest the island nation's worsening economic crisis, after authorities imposed a social media blackout to contain public dissent.

The South Asian nation is facing severe shortages of food, fuel and other essentials, along with record inflation and crippling power cuts, in its most painful downturn since independence from Britain in 1948.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa imposed a state of emergency on Friday, the day after a crowd attempted to storm his home in the capital Colombo, and a nationwide curfew is in effect until this morning.

The Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB), Sri Lanka's main opposition alliance, denounced a social media blackout aimed at quelling intensifying public demonstrations, and said it was time for the government to resign.

Troops armed with automatic assault rifles moved to stop a protest by opposition lawmakers and hundreds of their supporters attempting to march to the capital's Independence Square.

The road was barricaded a few hundred metres from the home of opposition leader Sajith Premadasa and the crowd engaged in a tense stand-off with security forces for nearly two hours before dispersing peacefully.

"President Rajapaksa better realise that the tide has already turned on his autocratic rule," SJB

lawmaker Harsha de Silva told AFP at the rally.

Fellow SJB legislator Eran Wickramaratne condemned the state of emergency declaration and the presence of troops on city streets.

"We can't allow a military takeover," he said. "They should know we are still a democracy."

Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp were among the platforms shut down yesterday on the orders of defence authorities, internet service providers told their subscribers.

Private media outlets reported that the chief of Sri Lanka's internet regulator resigned after the order went into effect.

Western diplomats in Colombo expressed concern over the use of emergency laws to stifle democratic dissent and said they were closely monitoring developments.

The streets of the capital stayed largely empty yesterday, apart from the opposition protest and long lines of vehicles queued for fuel at service stations.

Mass protests had been called on social media before the ban went into effect, and organisers have since postponed the rallies until after the curfew is lifted today.

Small crowds defied the curfew on Saturday night to hold peaceful demonstrations in various neighbourhoods around Colombo which broke up without incident.

Cracks in the government have emerged, with the president's nephew Namal Rajapaksa announcing he had urged the government to

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LAND FOR ADMIN CADRE

SC blasts govt for not rehabilitating occupants

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday blasted the government for acquiring a piece of land at Moghbazar in Dhaka as a vested property for the BCS Administration Multiple Welfare Cooperative Society without rehabilitating its current occupant.

"The issue of settlers has to be considered and disposed of first before their land is acquired. If we allow such acquisition of the land, then what is the necessity of this court," said Chief Justice Hasan Fozz Siddique.

Siddique's comments came while presiding over a three-member bench of the Appellate Division of the SC during the hearing of the leave to appeal petition filed by the government challenging a High Court verdict on the matter.

In 2012, the HC had declared illegal and scrapped the acquisition of 19.5 katha of land in Moghbazar, which was mutated in the name of one Sirajul Haq based on the power of attorney in 1946 by its original owner, one Birendranath Roy who had gone to India.

Haq, a freedom fighter commander, has died.

The HC verdict came following a writ petition filed by his wife Maleka Siraj and their five sons and daughter challenging the land ministry's decision to acquire the plot in favour of the BCS Administration Multiple Welfare Cooperative Society.

Such acquisition of the land will violate the

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Healy fires Aus to 7th WC title

REUTERS

Opener Alyssa Healy smashed a record 170 as Australia routed England by 71 runs to claim their seventh Women's World Cup win in Christchurch on Sunday.

Healy's belligerent 138-ball innings, the highest total in a World Cup final, helped Australia set a mammoth victory target of 357 at Hagley Oval which proved beyond the defending champions despite a fighting century by Nat Sciver.

Sciver's unbeaten 148 entertained the crowd but she played a lone hand as England were bowled out for 285 with six overs to spare.

"That was pretty special from our group," said wicketkeeper-batter Healy, player-of-the-match as well as the tournament.

"Our team sets out to win events like these.

"We have done it all but to do it on the biggest stage, I never imagined in my wildest dreams."

Meg Lanning's Australia finished unbeaten in nine matches, erasing their 2017 World Cup disappointment when they were stunned in the semi-finals by

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Australia's wicketkeeper-batter Alyssa Healy holds the trophy as she poses for photographs with the crowd following their 71-run victory over England in Women's World Cup final at Hagley Park Oval in Christchurch on Sunday. PHOTO: AFP

Ukraine accuses Russia of war crimes

Mass grave of nearly 300 people found in Bucha

AGENCIES

Ukraine yesterday accused Russian troops of war crimes after the discovery of mass graves and civilians apparently "executed" in the streets of Bucha, near the capital Kyiv.

The claims came as explosions rocked the Black Sea port city of Odessa, which has largely been spared in the conflict, with air strikes apparently targeting key infrastructure.

In Bucha, AFP reporters saw at least 20 bodies, all in civilian clothing, strewn across a single street. One had his hands tied behind his back with a white cloth, and his Ukrainian passport left open beside his body.

"All these people were shot," Bucha's mayor Anatoly Fedoruk said, adding that 280 other bodies had been buried in mass graves elsewhere in Bucha.

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba called it a "deliberate massacre" and urged G7 countries to impose "devastating" sanctions

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