

DSA misused to some extent

Law minister tells US ambassador

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Though the Digital Security Act has been formulated to prevent cybercrimes, it has been misused to some extent, Law Minister Anisul Huq said yesterday.

He was speaking at a meeting with US Ambassador to Bangladesh Peter D Haas at his secretariat office. The ambassador made a courtesy call to him.

“He [US ambassador] wanted to discuss the Digital Security Act. I told him that the act has been formulated to prevent cybercrimes, not to curtail the freedom of speech or independence of the press.

“However, we have seen that the act has been misused to some extent. I have explained to him what steps we have taken to this effect after talking to the home minister,” said the law minister.

The government is holding talks with the UN Human Rights office and the European Union’s consultant to ensure the best practices of the law, added Anisul.

He said, “I told him that our constitution is different than those of other countries as our constitution has guaranteed freedom of the press as a fundamental right.”

“I have clearly told him [US ambassador] that I have a demand. Rashed Chowdhury, a convicted killer of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family, has been hiding in the USA. He needs to be sent back to Bangladesh,” Anisul told reporters after the meeting.

“He said this is a burning issue which should be settled quickly.”

The ambassador does not want this issue to negatively impact the relations, he said, adding, “We have discussed the modality regarding this issue. I will not disclose much about it now. We have decided that we will go ahead in accordance with the modality.”

The US will provide training to cyber tribunals’ judges and lawyers to prevent the human trafficking in Bangladesh, he said.

The law minister said they also talked about a case filed by then US ambassador to Bangladesh Marcia Bernicat, which is now pending.

“We will ensure that the prosecution carry out their responsibilities properly,” Anisul said.

“However, we have seen that the act has been misused to some extent. I have explained to him what steps we have taken to this effect after talking to the home minister.”



This photograph taken on Wednesday shows a toy and personal belongings amongst rubbles in front of a destroyed residential building in Borodianka. The Russian retreat last week has left clues of the battle waged to keep a grip on Borodianka, just 50km north-west of the Ukrainian capital Kyiv.

PHOTO: AFP

Take ‘last chance’ to flee

Ukraine urges its residents in the east as Russia prepares attack; Kyiv seeks heavy weaponry from Nato

AGENCIES

Ukraine yesterday urged its residents in the east of the country to take their “last chance” to flee mounting Russian attacks, after devastation around the capital Kyiv shocked the world.

Six weeks after they invaded, Russian troops have withdrawn from Kyiv and Ukraine’s north and are focusing on the country’s southeast, where desperate attempts are under way to evacuate civilians.

The retreat from Kyiv revealed scenes of carnage, including in the town of Bucha, that Ukraine said were evidence of Russian war crimes, and which triggered a fresh wave of Western sanctions against Moscow.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday warned that Russia – which denies responsibility for the killings of civilians – was undeterred and continued “to accumulate fighting force to realise their ill ambitions in (eastern) Donbas”.

“They are preparing to resume an active offensive,” he said, while officials in Donbas’ Lugansk and Donetsk regions begged civilians to leave.

“These few days may be the last chance to leave,” Lugansk regional governor Sergiy Gaiday wrote on Facebook, saying that all cities in the

region were under fire and one person had died in the town of Kreminna.

“Do not wait to evacuate,” he said, adding: “The enemy is trying to cut off all possible ways of getting people out.”

Gaiday said previously that more than 1,200 people had been evacuated from Lugansk on Wednesday, but that efforts were being hampered by

“They are preparing to resume an active offensive.”
Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky

artillery fire, with some areas already inaccessible.

For those unable to leave, he said, tonnes of food, medicine and hygiene products were being delivered as part of a massive humanitarian effort.

The head of the Donetsk Regional Military Administration said strikes had targeted aid points.

Large areas of Lugansk and the neighbouring Donetsk region have been controlled since 2014 by pro-Russian separatists.

Shells and rockets were also slamming into the industrial city of Severodonetsk, the easternmost city held by Ukrainian forces.

More than 11 million people have been displaced since Russia invaded on February 24, with the stated aim to “demilitarise” Ukraine and support Moscow-backed separatists.

It is currently believed to be trying to create a land link between occupied Crimea and the statelets in Donbas, reports AFP.

Ukrainian forces are also regrouping for the offensive, including on a two-lane highway through the rolling eastern plains connecting Kharkiv and Donetsk.

Western allies have already sent funds and weapons to help Ukraine, but Kyiv’s Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba yesterday made a fresh appeal to Nato for heavy weaponry, including air defence systems, artillery, armoured vehicles and jets.

Nato members have agreed to strengthen support to Ukraine and are providing a wide range of weapon systems to the country, Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said, following a meeting of foreign ministers.

The evacuation calls are being fuelled by fears of fresh atrocities, after chilling discoveries in areas from which Moscow’s troops have withdrawn.

Chronic pain for exporters

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After the EDS became non-functional on March 9, exporters incurred a loss of over Tk 125 crore, according to Bangladesh Fruits, Vegetables and Allied Products Exporters’ Association (BFVAPEA).

As per the recommendations of the UK authorities, Caab installed two EDSs at the HSIA in 2017 for improving the safety standard of the airport to the level of the European Union.

However, of the two installed EDS, one has not been working properly since its installation because of maintenance issues, said airport sources.

The problem in scanning intensified over the last two years when both the machines failed to run

properly due to laxity in maintenance.

Besides, Caab took almost 14 months to make operational the two other machines, funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica).

Caab had been assuring exporters for almost a year that the two JICA-funded EDSs would be operational soon.

Caab Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Malidur Rahman said the two US-made EDSs cost Tk 17 crore each and their warranties expired in 2020. Since then Caab has been operating them by “maintaining them regularly”.

The Caab chairman also said the two EDSs were supplied by a local business group who had no in-depth knowledge regarding

their maintenance, which caused delays in fixing them when they broke down.

“We had to bring in technical experts from Malaysia or India to fix the problems,” said the Caab boss.

Asked, Group Captain AHM Touhid-Ul Ahsan, immediate-past executive director of HSIA, said the EDSs break down were due to issues with their parts.

“We cannot fix them immediately as it is hard for us to manage spares.”

Meanwhile, a top official at Caab said they were taking measures so that the EDSs could serve without interruption.

“We are planning to procure spare parts which are frequently needed,” he said, wishing anonymity.

For vegetable exporters, who fetched \$164 million in fiscal 2019-20, Europe is the second biggest destination after the Middle East.

According to BFVAPEA, which has over 200 members, 120 tonnes of agricultural products and perishable items from Bangladesh are exported to different countries of the world daily. Of this, 80 percent goes to the UK.

BFVAPEA General Secretary Mansur Ahmed said, “If we can’t export on time, buyers won’t wait for us. They will import from other countries.

“India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, who are entering the EU and the UK markets, continue to take this opportunity.”

Mansur added that

export of betel leaf to Europe have already stopped.

“And if the situation continues, buyers will not want to import perishable goods from Bangladesh,” he said in a note of warning.

Leaders of BFVAPEA said they are now exporting very little to the EU countries by scanning the freight in Qatar, which costs a lot.

They said Qatar Air can carry a maximum of two tonnes.

Surviving in a competitive market this way was unrealistic, they added.

Seeking anonymity, an official said two shipments of vegetables were exported to UK yesterday using the two EDSs.

Plaintiff had little say in case

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even know who asked him to be the plaintiff.”

The complaint seen by this paper said Hriday had been making derogatory comments about Islam. But Asad yesterday said that the allegation was not true and that he never heard Hriday making such comments about the religion.

On March 20, Hriday had a conversation with students about the difference between science and religion. Later that day, a group of students handed the head teacher a written complaint, stating that Hriday made derogatory comments on Islam.

On March 22, police detained Hriday.

Stalker assaults teacher in Brahmanbaria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A stalker has assaulted a schoolteacher for trying to stop the harassment of one of his female students in Nabinagar upazila.

The incident took place in Jallikandi village around noon on Wednesday. A complaint was filed with Nabinagar Police Station later in the day.

According to the complaint, Mahbub Rana, 20, of the same village, had long been harassing a 10th grader on her way to and from the school.

After the girl informed her teachers of the matter, English teacher Sabuj Mahmud, on behalf of the school authorities, shared it with Rana’s parents, which made Rana furious.

While Sabuj was going to school on Wednesday, he attacked the teacher with a stick, injuring several parts of his body. He was taken to Nabinagar Upazila Health Complex, according to the complaint.

OC Aminur Rashid of Nabinagar Police Station said they were looking into the incident.

I was not arrested in Satkhira

Shahed tells court

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Regent Group Chairman Mohammad Shahed yesterday told a Dhaka court that he was not arrested in Satkhira.

He added that he did not personally know former director general of the Directorate General of Health Service (DGHS) Abul Kalam Azad.

Shahed told these to Special Judge Court-6 of Dhaka which was holding a hearing on a petition seeking Shahed’s bail in a case filed for embezzling Tk 1.37 crore, said court sources.

Earlier, Rab said they arrested Shahed, a prime accused in the Covid-19 certificate scam, from the border area of Satkhira’s Debhata on July 15, 2020. Rab claimed that Shahed was trying to flee to India.

During yesterday’s hearing, Judge Al Asad Md Asifuzzaman refused to grant him bail. He, however, granted bail to Azad and the other accused in the case.

The court also set May 12 for holding a hearing on framing charges in the case.

Madrasa teacher sent to jail over rape in Chuadanga

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A court in Chuadanga yesterday sent a madrasa teacher to jail following his arrest in a case filed for raping a third-grader of the educational institution.

The accused, Golam Kibria, 55, also a director of the madrasa in Alamdanga upazila. He was arrested around 2:00pm yesterday, hours after the victim’s father lodged a rape case with Darshana Police Station.

The case statement says Kibra raped the girl at his home on March 24 after asking her to go there with a bottle of water. No one else was there at that time.

He also asked her not to disclose the incident. He threatened her with dire consequences if she did not listen to him.

After the victim could no longer bear her pain, she shared the incident with her classmates, who later informed it to her parents.

OC AHM Lutful Kabir of Darshana Police Station said the accused, during primary interrogation, admitted touching the girl inappropriately.

Imran to face

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candidates for interim prime minister and asked the country’s election commission to fix a date for a new national ballot.

The opposition had refused to cooperate.

The 69-year-old Khan, who steered Pakistan to cricket World Cup victory in 1992, came to power in 2018 after rallying the country behind his vision of a corruption-free, prosperous nation respected on the world stage.

But it appears that the firebrand nationalist’s fame and charisma may not be enough to keep him in power. He could not deliver on all of his lofty promises and failed to avert an economic decline partly sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Closer to two defence deals

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Both sides agreed to continue discussions on the issue.

In December last year, the US slapped sanctions on Rab and seven of its current and former officials on human rights grounds, and also didn’t invite Bangladesh to the Democracy Summit though there is strong security cooperation between the two countries.

Masud headed the Bangladesh delegation while US side was led by Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Bonnie Denise Jenkins.

In 2019, Washington sought to sign the two deals, as Dhaka wanted

to buy from the US sophisticated defence equipment to modernise the armed forces as part of Bangladesh Armed Forces Goal-2030.

Dhaka, however, did not initially respond to the US offer.

Talking to this newspaper yesterday, a foreign ministry official said the two deals may be signed next year. A US delegation is expected to visit Dhaka and look at the related laws of Bangladesh before that.

Dhaka’s concern was high prices of US defence equipment, which was raised at the dialogue. The US side said there are scopes for negotiations on the prices, the official told

this correspondent.

The development comes at a time when the world is going through a geostrategic shift amid growing influence of China, which is moving ahead with its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

On the other hand, the US is leading the Indo-Pacific Strategy aimed at ensuring a free, open, secure and international rules-based order.

With the Russia-Ukraine war raging on, US President Joe Biden is drawing clear distinction between the world’s democracies and autocracies.

Since 2015, the US provided Bangladesh with \$66.9 million in foreign military financing

and \$7.29 million in international military education and training assistance.

The US has \$130.59 million in active government-to-government sales cases with Bangladesh.

However, China remains Bangladesh’s principal supplier of defence equipment. Bangladesh also joined China’s BRI.

Foreign policy analysts say the US thinks Bangladesh is tilting towards China.

Former foreign secretary Shahidul Haque said the latest US-Bangladesh dialogue is encouraging, and Dhaka is moving towards the right direction. “While we maintain

balance in diplomacy, we need to recalibrate our relationship,” he told this newspaper yesterday.

Shahidul, also Bangabandhu Chair at Delhi University, said Bangladesh can sign the deals with the US if those help serve the country’s national interest.

At the dialogue, the US side said Bangladesh has emerged as a responsible country in resolving global crises and problems. It also lauded Bangladesh’s successes and leadership in UN Peacekeeping Operations and in sheltering the Rohingyas.

Masud said the US side detailed its priorities in the Indo-Pacific region. It wants the region to be

prosperous.

“We will see what aspects of the strategy are important for us,” he added.

Bangladesh appreciated the US determination of the genocide against Rohingyas, and urged the US to take follow-up measures.

Principal Staff Officer of Bangladesh Armed Forces Division Lt Genl Waker-Uz Zaman, Disaster Management and Relief Secretary Kamrul Hasan, and Law Secretary Golam Sarwar were also present at the dialogue.

US Assistant Secretary Jessica Lewis and Deputy Assistant Secretary Kelley Keiderling, among others, were in the US delegation.

Punish

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and co-operate with the government so that the reputation of the whole business community is not tarnished for some dishonest people,” he added.

The commerce ministry and the Export Promotion Bureau jointly organised the event at the Radisson Blu Water Garden Hotel.

Sharing the examples of some countries across the world, Hamid said the prices of some products go up sharply with the advent of various festivals in Bangladesh, including Ramadan and Eid, while the prices of products usually fall on the occasion of national, religious and social festivals in many countries.

As soon as the festivals begin here, a section of small and big traders wait how to make money capitalising the festivals, he said.

Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi presided over the programme.

PM calls

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pace with the world. And Bangladesh will set an exemplary example for all to follow and I want this,” she was quoted as saying by BSS.

“Why will we be dependent on others when the people of our country have the talent? We can go a long way if we allow it (talent) to develop.”

Directing the authorities concerned to develop the youth as efficient and skilled, the head of government said, “We have to prepare our youths. The young generation needs to be prepared because we are talking about the Fourth Industrial Revolution, not just thinking about it.”