

DIGITAL SECURITY ACT Despite some abuse, I don't support repeal

Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq has admitted that the Digital Security Act has been misused and abused to some extent.

"But I won't support repealing the Digital Security Act. It was found earlier that a journalist was arrested immediately after the filing of a case under the Digital Security Act. In this situation, I have ensured that nobody is arrested immediately after the lodging of a case under this law. The courts concerned will take necessary steps if anyone commits any punishable offence," he said.

The minister was speaking at a views-exchange meeting with government pleaders and public prosecutors at the capital's Bangabandhu International Conference Centre yesterday. The meeting

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Police use tear gas to disperse Higher National Diploma (HND) students during a demonstration demanding the resignation of Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa over the country's crippling economic crisis, in Colombo, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

JP doubtful about free, fair election under this govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader has said holding a free, fair and credible election under the authoritarian government is uncertain as the administration or constitutional institutions become helpless in front of it.

Speaking at a programme in the capital yesterday, he said the head of government has already announced that the next national election will be held using electronic voting machines (EVMs).

"Even if EVMs are not used in all electoral constituencies, the machines may be used in those where the ruling party candidates will not be able to dominate," he added.

Quader, also the deputy leader of the opposition in parliament, said his party does not want to see a farcical election.

The event was organised marking the joining of a group of women entrepreneurs to the JP. The group, led by Nazmin Sultana Tuli, founding president of voluntary organisation Alokito Manush Foundation, joined the opposition party giving flowers to Quader at the party chairman's Banani office.

The JP chief said there is no democracy in the country. Administrators have been appointed to all sectors and the politicians have no authority. That's why no one is accountable to the people of the country, he added.

Quader said although there are

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Erdogan puts conditions on support for Nordic nations' Nato bids

AFP, Istanbul

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday said Turkey would not look "positively" on Sweden and Finland's Nato bids unless its terror-related concerns were addressed, despite broad support from other allies including the United States.

Turkey has long accused Nordic countries, in particular Sweden which has a strong Turkish immigrant community, of harbouring extremist Kurdish groups as well as supporters of Fethullah Gulen, the US-based preacher wanted over the failed 2016 coup.

Erdogan's threat throws a major potential obstacle in the way of the likely membership bids from the hitherto militarily non-aligned Nordic nations since a consensus is required in Nato decisions.

Bank borrowing

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"But that would mean private savings would be diverted from banks. Given the cap on the bank interest rate, the law of demand and supply cannot take the course here," Hussain added.

And the interest rate spread, which is the difference between the interest rate a bank pays to depositors and the interest rate it receives from loans to consumers, is not favourable for the banks either to be able to compete with the government for deposits.

In simple terms, net interest rate spreads are like profit margins. The greater the spread, the more profitable the financial institution is likely to be. In March, the interest rate spread stood at 3.02 percent.

On the other hand, there is ample room to scale up foreign borrowing.

Of the budget deficit, foreign borrowing would cover Tk 120,046 crore (about \$13.95 billion), which

is an increase of 3.8 percent from this fiscal year's original budget.

There is \$48 billion in the pipeline and that could be used, Hussain said.

"Why don't the government accelerate the implementation of foreign-aid projects?"

In that way, the much-needed projects would get momentum and the pressure on the foreign currency would ease.

Besides, the International Monetary Fund has offered \$3 billion in budget support to Bangladesh provided the country undergoes some reforms in tax administration and tax policy.

"The reforms would have been good for us," Hussain said.

Instead, the government has chosen a method that would hamper recovery to some extent to finance the budget deficit, which has been brought down to 5.5 percent in the upcoming fiscal year.

Rohingyas sneaking in from India now

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a UNHCR card along with 200-300 other Rohingya families, law enforcers said, citing Selim.

Selim claimed that recently the situation in the Jammu area became volatile. He then communicated with his sister-in-law Tomida Khatun, who lives in Kutupalong camp in Cox's Bazar.

"My sister-in-law told me that the Rohingya camp situation in Bangladesh is good and that the Bangladesh government is very kind and helpful. Then I decided to move," he said.

Selim later communicated with an Indian broker and made a deal to cross the border.

As per the deal, Selim along with his wife and two children went to Delhi from Jammu by bus on May 8. From Delhi, they came to Agartala by train, which took them 72 hours.

Around 2:00pm on May 13, they entered Feni district of Bangladesh

through an opening of the wire fence of Agartala border.

An unknown broker received them and then they went to Ramu in Cox's Bazar and reached near the camp.

"After arriving here, I phoned my sister-in-law and then she came and took us inside the camp through an opening of the barbed-wire fence," he told law enforcers.

But based on a tip-off, the Armed Police Battalion took them from the camp and sent them to the office of the Camp in-Charge (CIC) in the Rohingya camp.

Naimul Haque, commanding officer of Armed Police Battalion (APBn) 14 said it is difficult to say exactly how many Rohingyas entered Bangladesh from India.

"But in my camp, we have arrested some 25 Rohingyas and they were sent to the CIC office," he said.

He also said that some of the Rohingyas who

came from India said they crossed the border as they have relatives here.

Others cited the poor law and order situation in India and better living conditions in Bangladesh camps.

They said Rohingyas with the help of brokers first come to Kolkata by train. Then another group of brokers take the Rohingyas and then they were taken to Bangladesh borders in Sylhet, Cumilla and Moulvibazar by train.

There, another group of brokers near the border divide them into groups of 5-6 and help them enter Bangladesh through the barbed-wire at the border.

Rohingyas who have already entered Bangladesh told the law-enforcing agencies that some 2,000-3,000 Rohingyas are waiting in bordering areas to trespass into Bangladesh.

Intelligence sources said many of the Rohingyas have already spread in many parts of the country.

Md Mamunur Rashid,

Deputy Commissioner of Cox's Bazar, said, "It is a concern as Rohingyas are coming from India. They are now in the transit camps and the decisions about them will be taken soon after reviewing the overall situation."

According to Human Rights Watch, an estimated 40,000 Rohingyas are in India, at least 20,000 of whom are registered with the UNHCR.

Since 2016, ultranationalist Hindu groups have targeted Rohingya refugees in Jammu as part of growing attacks on Muslims in India and called for their expulsion from the country.

After October 2018, the Indian government deported 12 Rohingyas to Myanmar, claiming that they left voluntarily. However, the government denied repeated requests by the UNHCR to gain access to them to independently assess whether the decision was voluntary.

The victim was then allowed to take shelter in the station master's room.

When the trio told railway police they were headed to Dhaka, they were allowed to board the train with the help of the officials. ATM Musa also said

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