

DIGITAL SECURITY ACT Govt to ensure best practices Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq has said the government has taken necessary steps to ensure the best practices of the Digital Security Act, as this law has been misused and abused "to some extent".

"I have spoken to the home minister in this regard. He has issued a directive in front of me to ensure that if anybody files a case under the Digital Security Act, it will be sent to a cell, established in 2006 under the Information Communication and Technology Act, for examination.

"If the cell finds it to be a prima facie case [that has enough elementary evidence], it will be sent to the court concerned for trial. If there is no necessary [or sufficient] information or data, it will not be accepted," he said while speaking as the chief guest at a programme arranged by the Law Reporters' Forum at a city hotel on Tuesday night.

He added, "Earlier, those accused would be arrested immediately after the filing of a DSA case and it had become a practice. But steps have been taken to ensure that an accused is arrested only after the court accepts the case and considers the charges as punishable offences. Otherwise, summons will be issued."

The minister said it was stated in an editorial published recently that journalists have not seen any directive from the home ministry regarding sending of DSA cases to the cell.

"When any departmental directive is issued, its copy is not [always] circulated," he said.

He said the DSA has been formulated in order to tackle cybercrime and not to curtail the freedom of press and expression.

There are some offences, mentioned in the penal code, which are committed digitally but cannot be tried as this code only permits trials of physically committed crimes.

Anisul said the government has drafted the Personal Data Protection Act after consulting with the stakeholders to ensure press independence.

"I have already spoken to the information minister and will continue the conversation to ensure that the OTT platform regulations are not contradictory to the constitution or freedom of press and expression."

Outgoing president of LRF, Mashudul Haque, presided over the meeting, where Law and Justice Division Secretary Md Golam Sarwar, its Joint Secretary Bikash Kumar Saha, newly elected LRF President Ashutosh Sarkar and its General Secretary Ahmed Sarwar Hossain Bhuiyan and outgoing general secretary Muhammad Yeasin, among others, spoke.



A car struggles to ply a waterlogged Green Road in the capital yesterday afternoon. While the sudden downpour may have brought relief from the unbearable heat to many across the city, others had to suffer while wading through knee-deep contaminated water in many areas.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

TAKING UP DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Keep in mind ecology, environment

PM tells authorities concerned

UNB,Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed authorities concerned to pay attention to environment and ecology while taking up any development project.

"Everybody has to pay attention to environment in any project. The project has to be implemented keeping water reservoirs, adequate green area and rainwater harvesting system in it," she said.

The PM gave the directives to the authorities concerned while witnessing the designs of four projects at the Gono Bhaban. The designs were presented by the housing and public works ministry and the Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk), said a press release of the Press Wing of the Prime Minister's Office.

The four projects are: Keraniganj Waterfront Smart City, Conservation of Flood Zone at Turag River and Compact Township Development, Construction of Sheikh Hasina International Convention Centre

at Zajira end of the Padma bridge and Construction of Multistoried Residential Building for Government Officials and Employees at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in Dhaka.

Hasina asked the authorities to make sure that industries can't be developed in an unplanned way. She said industrial establishments will have to be set up at a specific industrial zone in every area.

Emphasising the enhancement of diversity in setting up new industrial enterprises, she said importance should be given to development of agro-processing and IT device-related industrial firms.

The premier also stressed the need for increasing exports and providing subsidies to small industries in this regard. Jatiya Sangsad Chief Whip Noor-E-Alam Chowdhury, Awami League Publicity and Publication Secretary Abdus Sobhan Golap, PMO Senior Secretary Md Tofazzel Hossain Miah, and Housing and Public Works Secretary Shahid Ullah Khandaker, among others, were present.



Time, cost gallop even Better targeted

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Expressway -- is being constructed to link the airport to the Dhaka-Chattogram highway at Kutubkhali point. The revised schedule for opening the 20km expressway is June 2023.

Once both elevated expressways are operational, people from the country's northern, western and south-western regions will be able to avoid the capital's perennial traffic jam as they will go from one side of the city to another without having to enter city streets.

Trucks and lorries, which are now barred from entering the city during the day to curb traffic jams, will also use the expressways.

Under the project, 10.83km of ramps, two 1.95km long flyovers, 14.28km of four-lane roads and 18km of drains on both sides of the expressway will be built, said project officials.

WHY THE REVISION?

In October 2017, the Ecenc gave the go-ahead to the project at the cost of Tk 16,901.32 crore.

This project was one of 27 for which China assured of providing a loan of \$20 billion as per a memorandum of understanding signed during Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Dhaka in October 2016.

In August 2017, Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA) signed a contract with China National Machinery Import and Export Corporation to implement the project.

But the project work could not begin as the loan application sent to the Chinese authorities in

October 2018 remained pending.

The loan agreement was finally signed in October last year and the loan was activated early this month, Shahabuddin Khan said.

However, the contractor firm -- which already hired three Chinese sub-contractors -- will formally start work once the disbursement of the loan starts, the PD said.

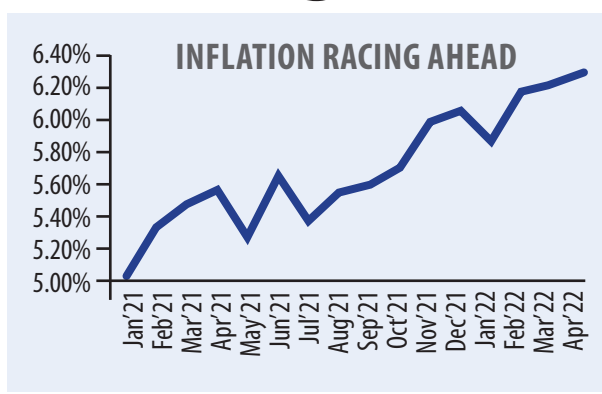
"We hope the loan disbursement will start from next month and thus the 62-month contract period will start from then," he added.

He, however, said the contractor has already done preparatory works and 90 percent of the land required for the project has already been acquired.

Although the Chinese government was supposed to give loans for all commercial contracts and three other components, they will provide loans for 85 percent of commercial contracts and would not provide loan for the three components, reads the project document.

So, China is providing Tk 9692.08 crore as loan instead of Tk 10,949.91 crore. The government therefore has to spend around Tk 1,909.54 crore more from its own fund, warranting revision of the project.

Besides, the rise in the US dollar exchange rate to Bangladeshi taka is mentioned as another reason behind the project's revision. Changes in price contingency and increase in salary and other expenditure for the project staffers and related issues are the other reasons.



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safety net schemes would increase by about 23 percent in the upcoming budget from this year's Tk 107,614 crore. Yet, it would hover in the neighbourhood of 3.1 percent of GDP.

Rahman said the allowance of Tk 500 should be raised in light of the spiralling costs of living.

In April, inflation hit an 18-month high of 6.29 percent.

"The amount is simply not enough given that the beneficiaries' purchasing capacity has shrunk," he said, while calling for price stabilisation of essential commodities by way of lower import duty and favourable exchange rate.

The open market sales can be expanded and the trucks may be located more strategically, Rahman added.

"Inflation is a livelihood crisis for the poor and the low-income people and an annoyance for the middle-income people," said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office.

Last year, their income shrivelled; this year, they are working but their purchasing power has shrunk.

For them, the family card would not be too helpful as those are prone to irregularities.

"Cash transfer would be most effective and bring them a little relief. The platform is already there and there would be lots of savings as trucks would not need to be hired and the items packed," he added.

Kamal, in his letter to the WB, indicated that the government would be deploying direct cash

transfers through mobile financial services more and more.

"The shift towards mobile money for last mile payments also significantly improves accessibility in withdrawing program entitlements and the possibility of benefiting from other value-added services," he added.

The system is ready for all transfers under the social safety net schemes to be made through direct cash transfer, said M Shamsul Alam, the state minister for planning.

About the meagre allowance, he said: "Those under the social safety net do not get by on just Tk 500. They also get 30 kg rice at Tk 10 and other commodities at heavily subsidised rates -- about one crore people would also be getting this handout."

The latest edition of the Household Income and Expenditure Survey would be ready by December, he said. Together with the information provided by the NHD, the government would take up more programmes.

"Nonetheless it is a good initiative," said Selim Raihan, a professor at the University of Dhaka's economics department.

Time, cost gallop even

Better targeted

BCL men brag on Facebook

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Their involvement in such an attack ahead of the council will be considered feathers in their caps, they told this newspaper.

"If anyone involved in such an attack gets the media spotlight, he will try his best to use it to get a better post," said a central BCL leader.

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader, after a recent meeting of the party's central working committee, instructed the associate organisations, including the BCL, to prepare for the next national council.

It has created enthusiasm and excitement within the organisation, said the sources.

Teachers and some former student leaders said it has been a common practice that for key positions, the political parties select those who can take part in such attacks.

That's the reason the leaders were posting photos and writing posts on Facebook, bragging about their involvement, they added.

On Tuesday, BCL men armed with sticks, iron rods and machetes swooped on JCD leaders and activists who were trying to enter the campus. At least 30, including a few female activists, were hurt.

Photos and video clips, doing the rounds on social media, showed female activists of JCD being

beaten up by BCL men.

The Daily Star found at least 10 BCL leaders uploaded their photos and wrote on Facebook mentioning their involvement.

Of them Saifulla Abbasi Ananta, former member of BCL central committee; Surap Mia Sohag, vice president of Shaheed Sergeant Zahurul Haque Hall unit; and Amir Hamja, joint secretary of the same hall unit, were seen with sticks in their hands in the photos they uploaded on Tuesday.

Amir, who was noticeably aggressive during the attack, approached this correspondent enquiring why he wasn't named in the news though he was "active".

"If you run any news about the attack, please include my name. The documents will help me get a better post," he said.

Amir also made a similar comment while talking to the DU correspondent of another national daily, this newspaper has learnt. Besides, some other leaders in their Facebook posts proudly wrote about their "participation", saying they "successfully resisted" JCD.

They are central BCL Vice President Rakib Hossain, Private University BCL Secretary Al Amin Rahman, Shaheed Sergeant Zahurul Haque Hall President Rubel Hossain, General Secretary

Kamal Uddin Rana, Sir AF Rahman Hall President Reazul Islam and General Secretary Munem Shahariar Moon, and Kabi Zashimuddin Hall General Secretary Lutfur Rahman.

Tanzimuddin Khan, a professor at DU international relations, said if the political parties consider such attacks as a qualification, it will never be possible to root out the use of muscle power from educational institutions.

"It seems that muscle power is becoming more important than good politics. And in this situation, the silence of the university authorities will encourage more power practice," he said.

Prof Kaberi Gayen of DU mass communication and journalism said, "The pro-ruling party student organisation always uses muscle power in politics ... I demand trial for those involved in the attack, especially on women."

This correspondent tried to contact central BCL President Al Nahian Khan Joy and General Secretary Lekhak Bhattacharjee several times over phone, but they didn't respond.

Contacted, BCL Vice-President Syed Md Arif Hossain said, "Hitting an opponent is not considered an achievement in our organisation."

"However," he added, "those who stay with the party during a crisis are recognised."

Police constable sued for rape

A CORRESPONDENT, FENI

A police constable was sued in Feni on Tuesday over raping a 22-year-old woman after promising to marry her.

The accused, Sharif Uddin Bablu, 26, is now working at Khagrachhari Police Lines.

The women filed the case with Feni Sadar Model Police Station under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act.

According to the case statement, the plaintiff was in a relationship with Sharif. He raped the complainant on several occasions with the false promise of marrying her. The accused later refused to marry her.

BCL man booked for attacking journo in Sylhet

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A Chhatra League activist was sued along with four to five unnamed people on Tuesday night over assaulting journalist Moin Uddin Monju in Sylhet city's Chowhatta Point on Monday afternoon.

The incident happened when activists of Chhatra League and Chhatra Dal clashed there.

The accused BCL man, Habibur Rahman Habib, is a student of MC College. He hails from Kaima village in Sunamganj's Derai upazila.

Moin Uddin, Sylhet bureau chief of UK-based television station Channel S, lodged the case with Kotwali Police Station. He came under attack while broadcasting a Facebook Live during the clash.

He later received treatment at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital.

The live video showed Habibur attacking the journalist with a stick, said BCL sources.

Youth held over gang rape of woman

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Police arrested a youth in Savar's Kalma area on Tuesday night over the gang rape of a 25-year-old woman in the upazila three days ago.

The arrestee, Robi, 25, is among the six accused named in a case filed in connection with the incident.

According to the case statement, the woman was acquainted with Robi. On Monday night, Robi called her to go to Kalma area. Later, the accused and his friends tied her hands and mouth and raped her.

The victim lodged the case with Savar Model Police Station accusing six people, said Kazi Moinal Islam, officer-in-charge of the police station.

The woman was sent to the One Stop Crisis Centre of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday for medical tests.