

Govt list of 29 organisations questionable

TIB says about 'Critical Info Infrastructures'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh has questioned the rationale for 29 organisations being listed and declared as "Critical Information Infrastructures" by the post, telecommunication and information technology ministry.

The corruption watchdog raised the question in a statement sent to the media yesterday.

The listing, not supported by any laws of the country, is questionable and misleading, the statement said.

Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of TIB, said the Digital Security Act empowered the government to declare any computer network, system and infrastructure as "critical information infrastructure".

But in the recent gazette, only 29 organisations were declared as critical information infrastructures.

"It is not clear what consideration led to the listing. For example, it talks about national security but the defence and home ministries, along with the armed forces, were left out of the list. Likewise, the parliament, judiciary, department of audit, health sector, customs and ports were also not listed as information infrastructures."

The current list plays down the importance of the other government organisations in terms of national security, he added.

Underscoring the need to formulate a policy relating national and public security, he said there is a lack of conceptual clarity in the discourse of state security.

"When there is no clarity, the law could be misused instead of [being used for] ensuring security. Apart from this, it could create obstacles in the process of collecting information under the Right to Information Act, as whole organisations were declared as critical information infrastructures in lieu of their computer networks or systems," he said.

The declaration of such list exposed another weakness of the DSA, which, he said, has already proved to be a tool for stifling dissent instead of ensuring digital security.



Employees of an energy company inspect an electrical transformer substation destroyed by Russian missiles strike on the outskirts of Kharkiv, yesterday, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

PHOTO: AFP

Russia set to incorporate 18 percent of Ukraine

Putin to sign bill cleared by parliament; Zelensky issues decree against talks with Putin; Modi offers to contribute to peace efforts

AGENCIES

Russian President Vladimir Putin was set to finalise his plan to annex four Ukrainian regions yesterday, even as his forces are being pushed back by Ukraine on two separate battlefield fronts, shrinking the amount of seized territory he controls.

Russia, which has escalated its seven-month war with its annexation drive, a mobilisation and warnings of nuclear weapons use, looks to be in a hurry to complete a process that Ukraine and the West say is illegal and won't be recognised.

The upper house of Russia's parliament earlier yesterday voted to approve the

four regions' incorporation, which taken together represent around 18 percent of Ukraine. The Kremlin said that Putin's signature, the final stage in the process, was likely later in the day.

In Brussels, the European Union summoned Russia's envoy to the bloc to reject Moscow's "illegal annexation" and urge it to unconditionally withdraw all of its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine.

Russia does not completely control any of the four regions it says it is annexing — Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson — and the Kremlin has said it has

yet to determine the final borders of the annexed territory.

Russian forces in the eastern Donetsk and southern Kherson regions have been forced to retreat in recent days and appear to be struggling to halt a well-equipped Ukrainian army.

Moscow is hoping a "partial mobilisation" it announced two weeks ago could help turn the tide.

Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu was cited by the RIA news agency yesterday as saying that Moscow had so far called up more than 200,000 reservists out of a planned 300,000 men.

Rajshahi man gets 7 years in ICT case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A Rajshahi court yesterday sentenced a man to seven years in prison in a case filed under the controversial section 57 of the Information and Communication Technology Act.

Mominul Islam, 27, had created a fake Facebook account using the plaintiff's photo and posted indecent comments about her.

He also sent fake photos of her to her relatives, said Prosecutor Ismat Ara.

In April 2017, the plaintiff filed a case against him under the ICT Act with Rajpara Police Station.

Mominul was also fined Tk 1 lakh, in default of which he will have to spend three more months in jail.

4 get bail in case filed over 'disappearance' of Rahima

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A Khulna court yesterday granted bail to four people who were arrested in a case filed over the disappearance of Rahima Begum.

The four are Moin Uddin, Golam Kibria, Rafiqul Islam Palash, and Md Jewel, said Abul Kalam Azad, bench assistant of the court.

Rahima Begum's second husband Belal Howladar was not granted bail at the hearing.

Helal Sharif, another arrestee in the case, is also yet to get bail.

Rahima was rescued after remaining missing for nearly a month since August 27.

After she was rescued on September 24, Rahima claimed that she was abducted, a narrative which was later proved to be false by police.

Court denies bail to man accused of attacking journos

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A Rajshahi court yesterday denied bail to an accused in the case filed over last month's attack on two journalists on the premises of Barind Multipurpose Development Authority.

Jiban Ahmed, a storekeeper and general secretary of the BMDA Employees' Union, was sent back to jail while the court granted bail to another accused named Abdus Sabur, also an employee of the organisation.

Earlier on September 19, police arrested them at a BMDA rest house in the capital.

On September 5, ATN News cameraperson Rubel Islam and reporter Bulbul Habib were assaulted when they were taking the employees' comments on the new office timings.

Businesses dealt a blow

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offices and other establishments running. Many returned without diesel after waiting for several hours.

"We could not run [our] factories even though we have standby generators. Filling stations were not able to meet the demand of the buyers," said Shahidullah Azim, vice-president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

He said the garment sector normally produces items worth \$150 million every day. But yesterday's power failure caused production losses worth \$50 million.

Saiful Islam, president of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said no electricity means no production and stopping of the industrial units.

The cost of doing business has been on the rise in recent months because of load shedding, he said.

Shamsul Haque, director of KSRM Group, a leading steel maker, said that production of steel requires uninterrupted power supply. He said they had to stop production yesterday for some time due to the power outage since noon.

"We continue our production with backup electricity for about two to three hours. If there is any blackout

for a longer period, our production gets affected."

Syed M Tanvir, a director of Pacific Jeans Ltd and director of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said that there was no impact of the blackout on the Chattogram Export Processing Zone as it gets electricity from a specific power producer.

However, productions in the garment and other industrial factories located outside the CEPZ were disrupted. Many continued their production by cutting the duration of shifts.

Md Fazul Hoque, managing director of Plummy Fashions Ltd, a leading knitwear manufacturer and exporter based in Nararyanganj, said power went off around 1:10pm.

"We had to let our second shift workers go home around 6:30pm amid uncertainty over when the power connectivity would be restored. We kept our factory running with standby generators."

Helal Uddin, president of Bangladesh Dokan Malik Samity, said traders in different parts of the country had to shut their stores before the sun went down.

Rizwan Rahman, president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said the government has to find out why the national grid failed.

Patients suffer

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Rehabilitation in Dhaka, Prof Abdul Gani Mollah, director of NITOR, told The Daily Star.

However, services at OT, ICU, CCU, and HDU went on normally due to generator backup, he said, adding that the emergency department also ran as usual.

Our correspondent found nurses administering injections to patients using mobile flashlights at the wards of Bangladesh Shishu Hospital and Institute.

There was no power supply at wards and the general surgery remained shut at the Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital, confirmed Khalilur Rahman, the director of the hospital.

The hospital authorities kept the emergency department and operation theatre open with the help of a generator.

Elsewhere, normal life was disrupted as city dwellers used mobile flashlights to walk on roads while roadside shops and kitchen markets were illuminated by candles.

Many people were found frantically looking for alternative ways to illuminate their homes.

After the national grid line failure, people rushed to nearby refilling stations to purchase fuel to power their generators.

Our correspondents found long queues in at least two petrol pumps with people clamouring for either diesel or petrol to keep their generators operational.

Ashik, a caretaker of an apartment building in Dhanmondi, rushed to Sadek Khan Petrol Pump. "After waiting four hours I could buy only 55 litres of diesel," he said, adding that he needed 55 more litres.

Power outages also disrupted telecommunication and internet services in the country. Mobile phone users around the country claimed to face difficulties in making calls and using the internet.

Due to the sweltering heat, staying at home was not easy for people.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Mominul Haque, an employee of a private bank, said he did not buy candles in the hope that his IPS would provide backup power.

"But it [IPS] did not last long... Now we're sitting in complete darkness amid this hot weather," he said.

ATMs of different banks in many areas were found shut as their backup power died.

Abdur Rahim, employee of a private organisation, tried to withdraw cash from ATM booths in Savar. "Security guards told me they shut booths as backup power ran out," he said.

Blackout hits half the country

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Power Division Secretary Habibur Rahman said the problem began at a substation near Ghorashal when the demand for electricity suddenly dropped, causing a power surge that tripped power stations one after another.

"We will be able to come up with the exact cause very soon," he told The Daily Star.

A power trip happens when an electrical circuit gets a load beyond its capacity, according to experts.

Prominent energy expert Prof M Shamsul Alam said the National Load Dispatch Centre, which is supposed to coordinate the generation, transmission and distribution of power, often remains helpless because it is not provided with proper data by power generators and distributors.

When the dispatch centre fails to ensure coordination, a risk of grid failure arises.

If the voltage is not controlled, the electrical frequency cannot be controlled, and when the frequency rises or falls beyond a certain range, power stations trip one after another.

Also, the frequency stability should be controlled automatically, but it is done manually here, he said.

The Power Grid Company Bangladesh (PGCB) last night formed a five-member committee to find out what caused the failure and asked

it to come up with its findings by Friday.

Contacted, Nasrul Hamid, state minister for power, energy and mineral resources, said, "It was a grid failure. We need a technical report to know what happened. I asked the secretary of the power division to form two separate committees in this regard."

Although the state minister assured that power supply would be restored by 7:00pm in Dhaka, vast areas of the capital were without electricity till 9:30pm.

On September 7, nearly one-third of the country was left without power for about 40-60 minutes because of a grid failure.

On November 1, 2014, the entire country suffered an outage because of a glitch in the Bheramara Power Plant.

Yesterday's outage affected production in garment factories and small and medium industries. Patients suffered in health facilities that have no generator backup, our correspondents reported.

Thousands of people couldn't make phone calls or access the internet while many ATM machines stopped working as the cell phone towers ran out of battery backups.

In the capital, long queues were formed at the petrol pumps as people sought fuel for generators while Puja celebrations were affected in many places.

4 Rohingyas die as boat sinks

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"However, it could not be determined how many Rohingyas were on the boat and how many are missing."

He said those who helped rescue the refugees saw many people floating at sea, and it was not known if all of them made it to shore.

"We are fearing that the death toll will rise."

The Coast Guard learnt about the incident when locals of Baharchhara union's Harmunia area noticed people swimming up to the coast.

Talking to the rescued, the Coast Guard learnt that the fishing trawler, which was carrying them to Malaysia, sank in the middle of the sea.

They said nearby trawlers three plastic buoys and barrels towards them, which they used to stay afloat.

They added that they saw many more still out at sea till noon, even after some were rescued.

The rescued Rohingyas will be sent back to their camps and handed over to their camp-in-charge, said Mahfuzul Islam, superintendent of police in Cox's Bazar. The

Bangladeshis rescued were taken into police custody for interrogation.

One of the survivors, Shah Alam, 48, said he was a resident of Ukhiya's Balukhali Rohingya camp. "Some of the majhis [fishermen] along with Bangladeshi agents recruit young people from the camps. We pay them 20,000 Malaysian ringgit [around Tk 4.34 lakh] for the passage. We were taken from the camps four days ago and kept in a local agent's home."

Around 85 of them were taken to the coast late Monday. From there, they were made to board three small boats to reach a trawler, they said.

Shortly after setting off on the trawler, its hull cracked and it began to sink.

The refugees on board asked the traffickers to go to shore, but the boat could not turn and the traffickers told them to jump overboard and swim, informed the rescued refugees.

Another survivor, Mohammed Arman, 22, a resident of Balukhali camp, said he was taken out of the camp 20 days ago, and was kept in three different spots, including deep

in the hills for a few days.

He was taken aboard a large fishing trawler on Monday. The hull cracked when they were breaking ice in the storage area below deck with a hammer.

Amjad Hossain Khokhon, Bahararchhara union parishad chairman, said, "This union is often used as a transit point by trafficking syndicates, who are also from this area. They join forces with the fishermen in the camps to send people to Malaysia."

Nur Mohammed, officer-in-charge of Baharchhara investigation outpost, said they were waiting for relatives of the dead to come and identify the bodies.

3 Bangladeshi

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Central African Republic are safe, said the release, adding that the bodies of the three peacekeepers will be brought back home soon.

A Bangladesh Army battalion has been deployed in Bouar since November 9, 2021.

Indonesia probes elite officers as stadium disaster death toll rises

AFP, Malang

Elite Indonesian police officers were under investigation yesterday over a stadium stampede that killed 131 people including dozens of children in one of the deadliest disasters in football history.

As public anger grew, police moved to punish those responsible for the crush in the city of Malang that witnesses say started when officers fired tear gas into packed stands to quell a pitch invasion.

"As the regional police chief, I am concerned, saddened and at the same time I am sorry for the shortcomings in the security process," East Java police chief Nico Afinta told a press conference yesterday.

The terraces of the Kanjuruhan stadium were packed Saturday evening with 42,000 "Aremania", or Arema FC fans, for a match against fierce rivals Persebaya Surabaya.

Telecom, internet disrupted

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is no internet connection either," Md Hasan, a resident of Uttara in the capital, told The Daily Star around 6:30pm.

BTS, which connects mobile devices to a carrier's network, generally rely on the power of the national grid. At the site, each station has three to six hours' battery backups, said officials of telecom operators.

Many BTS, run without backup from diesel generators, went offline yesterday after their battery charge ran out.

According to the officials, about 7,500 BTS went offline by around 7:30pm.

There are around 39,000 BTS sites in Bangladesh.

"Some towers went offline due to the power outage. However, telecom network operators are using all means possible to make the affected towers operational," said Posts and Telecommunications Minister Mustafa Jabbar.

Subrata Roy Maitra, vice chairman of the BTRC, said the service

providers have been instructed by the commission to keep good battery and generator backups.

"But when power outages last longer, it becomes really difficult to keep the sites operational," he added.

Taimur Rahman, chief corporate and regulatory affairs officer at Banglalink, said users in Dhaka faced more troubles than those in other places.

"Battery backup time at the BTS sites in Dhaka is less than that of other areas since the number of power outages in the capital is quite low."

Md Aminul Hakim, chief executive officer at Amber IT Ltd, a broadband internet service provider, said 50 percent of broadband internet links went down soon after 2:00pm yesterday.

"However, 75 percent of broadband links were up as of 8:40pm," he added.

There were 18.40 crore active SIMs and 11.64 crore mobile internet connections in the country as of July. Also, the country had over 1.1 crore broadband internet connections that month, according to BTRC data.