

## Govt doing it out of fear of losing power

### Says Fakhrul on forced retirement of officials

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday alleged the government is removing the government officials from their jobs out of anxiety.

"The government of (Sheikh) Hasina is so anxious that they have started removing the officials... out of fear of losing power," he said.

Fakhrul made the remarks while addressing a rally in front of the BNP's Nayapaltn central office in the capital.

BNP's Dhaka south and north city units organised the rally to protest against the police attacks on party leaders and activists, their arrests and harassment in "false" cases.

The protest was also meant for registering the

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Hundreds of BNP supporters participate in a rally in front of the party's Nayapaltn headquarters in the capital yesterday. BNP's Dhaka south and north city units organised the event protesting the police attacks on party leaders and activists and their arrests and harassment in "false" cases.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## BANGLADESH-INDIA TIES

# Media can help untangle complexities

### Say journalists from 2 countries



#### SUGGESTIONS

- Set up specialised centres on two countries
- Address issues through friendly, cooperative approach
- Nurture people-to-people ties
- More collaboration between journo's of 2 countries

#### DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The proactive, collaborative roles of media in Bangladesh and India can help address the complexities in their bilateral ties, said senior journalists from the two countries.

They observed that many a time, misreporting or not pointing out problems leads to tension between the two neighbouring countries, whose relationship is special because of their common history and culture, and owing to India's contribution in Bangladesh's fight for independence.

Therefore, the ties are more people-to-people, which should be nurtured. This is where the critical role of journalists comes in to enhance the ties. To do this, they should not become victims of politics.

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# IT WAS AN EYEWASH

### Stakeholders' consultation mostly ignored in final draft of social media, OTT regulation

ZYMA ISLAM and ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Even though Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) had invited feedback on the draft of its new social media regulation, the finalised version shows that little or no heed was paid to the major stakeholders.

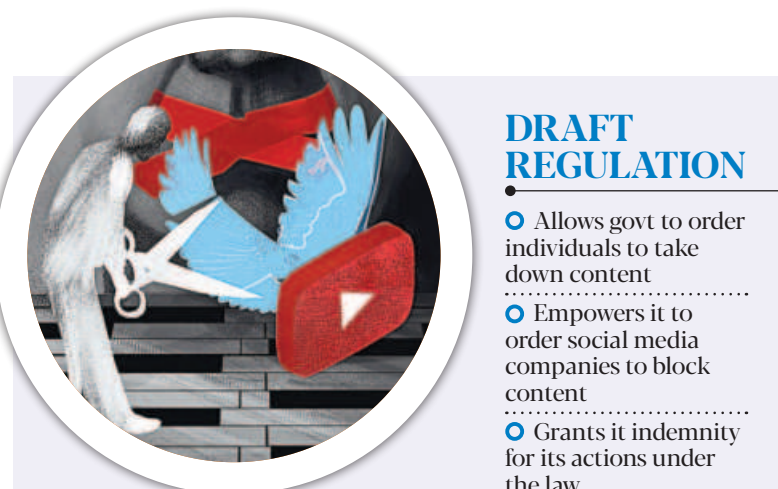
Last Wednesday, BTRC gave the High Court the meeting minutes of the last three sessions held by the Regulation Formation Committee when finalising the draft of the regulation. The minutes portray that crucial feedback given by stakeholders was not even discussed, let alone adopted.

The finalised "BTRC Regulation for Digital, Social Media and OTT Platforms" was submitted to the High Court on the same day.

The final draft allows the government to order individuals to take down content, empowers it to order social media companies to block content, and grants it indemnity for its actions under the law.

Over the months, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust (BLAST), Global Network Initiatives and others sent feedback ringing alarm bells about the government constricting the space for free expression.

BLAST, in its recommendations, had told BTRC that "imposing restrictions on the creation and dissemination of online content will create a chilling effect on freedom of expression concerning issues of rights and justice, including by and



#### DRAFT REGULATION

- Allows govt to order individuals to take down content
- Empowers it to order social media companies to block content
- Grants it indemnity for its actions under the law

The grounds on which social media intermediaries are required to take down content are similar to certain Digital Security Act provisions that have already been identified by commentators as arbitrarily restricting freedom of speech and expression.

BLAST, in its recommendations on the regulation

about marginalised communities, and will inhibit democratic debate and discourse."

"The grounds on which social media intermediaries are required to take down content are similar to certain Digital Security Act provisions that have already been identified by commentators as arbitrarily restricting freedom of speech and expression," read the recommendations by BLAST.

This includes content that threatens the "unity, integrity, defence, security, or sovereignty of Bangladesh, [and its] friendly relations with foreign states" or

"is against the Liberation War of Bangladesh, the spirit of the Liberation War, the Father of the Nation, the national anthem, or the national flag," "threatens the secrecy of the government" or "creates unrest or disorder or deteriorates the law and order situation" or "threatens public order".

TIB had pointed out that requiring all social media intermediaries, tech companies, internet service providers, OTT platforms and online news publishers to get locally registered,

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# Rooppur to get powerful reactors

### Says Rosatom DG at meeting with the prime minister

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh will get high-powered reactors for Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant (RNPP) for optimum generation of electricity, said Rosatom Director General Alexey Likhachev yesterday.

Fresh nuclear fuel for the country's first ever nuclear power project will come in October next year, Likhachev said.

Likhachev said this during a call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her official residence Gono Bhaban, according to the prime minister's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim.

Rosatom is the Russian contractor for the implementation of the US\$12.65 billion nuclear power project.

The meeting took place a day after the prime minister inaugurated the installation of the final reactor at the second unit of the 2400 MW plant being built at Rooppur in northern Pabna district.

The Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant will have two units each having the electricity generation capacity of 1200 MW.

Likhachev said Russia is also interested in conducting research on nuclear science and technology in Bangladesh. He mentioned that they are training the Bangladeshi manpower for the RNPP.

The prime minister thanked Russia, particularly the Rosatom DG, for extending support and continuing the construction work in full swing even during the Covid-19 pandemic.

# A true patriot with exceptional integrity: speakers

## Commemorative event on Akbar Ali Khan held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite being at the centre of the establishment, Dr Akbar Ali Khan was always an outspoken and objective person, speakers at a webinar said yesterday.

As a civil servant, he was exceptional during a period when integrity and objectivity were fading in bureaucracy, they said.

Brac Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) and Brac University jointly organised the webinar to commemorate the eminent economist, luminous scholar and former caretaker government advisor.

The webinar titled "Dynamics of Statecraft, Governance Reform & Public Intellectualism in Bangladesh: The Legacy of Dr Akbar Ali Khan" was joined by scholars and colleagues who have known him and his work for decades. Akbar Ali Khan passed away on September 7, after suffering from cardiac complications.

Prof Rehman Sobhan, chairperson of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and former member of the advisory council of the caretaker government, said, "We need to explore his life as a civil servant. He stood firm and had to pay the price for it."

Analysing Akbar Ali Khan's writings, Prof Rounaq Jahan, CPD distinguished fellow, said Khan was a true patriot.

"It is visible in his writings that he was an academic at heart. He believed in promoting reforms and was very objective about it. He always encouraged discussions and debates and was a believer in public reasoning," she added.

Dr Ahrar Ahmad, director general of Gyanapras Abdur Razzaq Foundation, said, "Dr Khan was

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## DMP chief Shafiqul to retire Oct 30

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Md Shafiqul Islam is going to retire from government services on October 30.

A notification of the Public Security Division of the home ministry issued yesterday confirmed the matter. Deputy Secretary Dhananjay Kumar Das signed the notification on the orders of the president.

The tenure of Shafiqul was extended for another year in 2021. On September 13, 2019 he took the charge as the 34th commissioner.

Meanwhile, at the monthly crime review meeting at the DMP yesterday, Shafiqul instructed the policemen to perform their duties professionally and serve people in accordance to law.

"Some people will work to fuel the clashes in the political programme in the coming days, police should be careful about it," Shafiqul said.

# Dengue cases cross 28,000, 2nd highest since 2000

### Four more die in 24 hours

HELEMUL ALAM

Dengue has still not loosened its grip on the country, as infections keep piling up. Cases this year reached 28,698 yesterday, the second highest since 2000, when the country witnessed the first-ever outbreak.

According to Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), at least four dengue patients died, while 896 were hospitalised across the country in 24 hours till yesterday morning.

Experts fear the situation will persist throughout this month, but cases may start decreasing from the beginning or middle of November.

According to DGHS data, of the total 28,698 cases, 12,606 were recorded in just 20 days of October, while 55 out of the 110 deaths were witnessed during the same period.

A total of 1,01,354 people, the highest ever, were hospitalised and 179 died in 2019.

When the first outbreak occurred in 2000, 93 died and 5,551 were infected.

Entomologist Manzur Chowdhury said the government will



**The authorities are sufficiently prepared to provide dengue treatment if cases increase further. However, it must be kept in mind that the health ministry can only provide treatment, not kill Aedes mosquitoes.**

Zahid Maleque, Health minister

have to conduct a massive campaign to destroy Aedes mosquito breeding grounds and kill adult mosquitoes.

"Everyone will have to spray insecticide in their homes twice a day. Every citizen of the country, not only residents of Dhaka, will have to remain cautious, so that mosquitoes don't bite them," Manzur said.

Rainfall is still being witnessed, so daily dengue infections may not decline till mid-November, he said.

Entomologist Kabirul Bashar said

it is essential to conduct crash programmes to control Aedes mosquitoes across the country.

Using mosquito nets is crucial, no matter whether it is day or night, he said, adding that children will have to wear full-sleeved clothes.

Meanwhile, Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday said the authorities are sufficiently prepared

to provide dengue treatment if cases increase further.

"We have readied Dhaka North City Corporation Hospital, the new wing of BSMMU and Lalkuthi hospital," he said at a programme at Bangladesh Shishu Hospital and Institute.

However, it must be kept in mind that the health ministry can only provide treatment, not kill Aedes mosquitoes, the minister said.

Stressing the need for city corporations and municipalities to kill mosquitoes, Maleque said dengue patients will go down when the Aedes mosquito population goes down. At a programme in

Dhaka yesterday, Nazmul Islam, director of DGHS' disease control wing, said they are expecting dengue cases to decrease from early next month.

He said many factors are behind the high dengue cases. "This year, the monsoon came late. There has

been intermittent rain, barely any torrential rain, then regular rain due to low pressure. These issues have played a very important role."

"We believe no one person can deal with all the impacts of climate change; everyone in the country has to deal with it together... Each citizen has a responsibility to keep the city clean. If we are aware, then of course, breeding areas of mosquitoes will go down, and so will their population," added Nazmul.

Dhaka North City Corporation started a seven-day, anti-mosquito crash programme on Wednesday, which will continue till Tuesday.

Dhaka South City Corporation also started an initiative in five vulnerable wards - 6, 2, 3, 56 and 15 - on October 16, which continued till yesterday.

"We are also taking special measures besides the routine work, which include drives around houses of dengue patients," said Md Abu Nasher, public relations officer of DSCC.