

SOCIAL, OTT PLATFORMS

Proposed rules will infringe on global principles

Irene Khan tells govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United Nations Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression Irene Khan has written to the government stating that the proposed regulations on digital, social media and over-the-top (OTT) platforms will infringe on internationally recognised rules and principles.

In a letter, dated February 6, 2023, she wrote, "I am concerned that your Excellency's Government is adopting a model of regulation where government agencies and private companies, rather than judicial authorities, effectively would become

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19 Bangladeshi students taken to Ankara from quake-hit zone

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Nineteen Bangladeshi students have been moved to Ankara from earthquake-hit Gaziantep in Turkey since Monday.

"The students were relocated to Ankara and our consulate there is taking care of them," Seheili Sabrin, spokesperson for the foreign ministry, told a weekly press briefing yesterday.

Turkey and Syria are struggling to conduct rescue operations amid freezing cold and snow. The authorities of the countries are seeking in-kind assistance like winter clothes, medical and non-medical items.

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Rescue officials search among the rubble of collapsed buildings in Kahramanmaraş, yesterday, three days after a 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck southeast Turkey.

PHOTO: AFP

Global chatbot race heats up

China's Alibaba joins competition to match ChatGPT; Bard's blunder causes Google's share price to tank

AGENCIES

Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba yesterday said it was working on a rival to ChatGPT, joining a flurry of global tech firms rushing to match the popular AI-powered chatbot.

ChatGPT has sparked a gold rush in artificial intelligence technology, with Microsoft, Google and China's Baidu all working to develop chatbots that can mimic human speech.

The service, created by San Francisco company OpenAI, has caused a sensation for its ability to write essays, poems and programming code on demand within seconds, sparking widespread fears of student cheating or professions becoming obsolete.

Alibaba is now working on a ChatGPT-style conversation bot of its own that is

being tested by employees, a company spokeswoman told AFP yesterday.

She declined to offer details on when the service would be launched or whether it would be part of Taobao, China's biggest online shopping platform.

The announcement comes days after Chinese search giant Baidu said it would complete testing of its AI chatbot in March.

Microsoft has announced a multibillion-dollar partnership with ChatGPT maker OpenAI and plans to integrate the powerful capabilities of language-based artificial intelligence with its Bing search engine.

The maker of the Windows operating system is staking its future on AI through billions of dollars of investment as it directly challenges Alphabet Inc's Google, which for years has outpaced Microsoft in

search and browser technology.

Working with the startup OpenAI, Microsoft is aiming to leapfrog its Silicon Valley rival and potentially claim vast returns from tools generally that speed up content creation, automating tasks, if not jobs themselves.

On Monday, Google said it will release a conversational chatbot named Bard, setting up an artificial intelligence showdown with Microsoft. Google also announced a slew of features powered by AI on Wednesday.

But astronomers on Twitter quickly noticed that Google's Bard had given out an error in an ad on Twitter touting its new technology.

In the ad, the bot was asked what to tell a nine-year-old about discoveries from the

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Number of voters

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Besides, many students failed to go abroad for studies because of the Covid-19 pandemic and they became voters, he added.

Election Commissioner Anisur Rahman also said the latest data was correct.

The list is updated through door-to-door visits, something that hasn't been done in 2020 and 2021, he said, explaining why the number did not rise significantly in those two years.

Enumerators went door-to-door from May to November last year to gather data on voters.

Meanwhile, demographers expressed surprise over the "unusual" rise and election experts said there should be an independent review of the list, and if needed, the list should be made again so as to avoid controversies.

"The 5.10 percent growth is surprising. Population growth rate is not high. The Election Commission must explain and investigate the matter," Brig Gen (retd) M Sakawat Hussain, a former Election Commissioner, told this newspaper.

"The sudden rise in voters might become a political issue. Voter lists have earlier caused political debates," he said.

WHY UNUSUAL?

Prof Mohammad Mainul Islam, a teacher of population sciences at Dhaka University, said the latest Sample Vital Registration System (SVRS) report showed 32 lakh children were born and around 8.57 lakh people died every year.

The 57 lakh increase in just a year is unusual, he added.

The preliminary report of Population and Housing Census 2022 shows that 61.36 percent or 10.24 crore people are aged 20 years and over, he said, adding that the total number of people aged over 18 will presumably be around 10.55 crore.

But according to the EC data, the total number of voters – that is, people aged over 18 – is 11.90 crore. "Voter listing is connected to elections. You have to perform every duty impartially. The candidates as well as the general public must have trust in the Election Commission. We saw controversies over voter lists on several occasions in the past. To avoid debates and to earn the trust, the commission can get the data reviewed independently," he added.

In 2006, there were widespread criticisms of more than 1 crore fake voters in a voter list which was corrected ahead of the election in 2008.

Girls cement South Asian

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wins and a draw against the Himalayan nation. And yesterday's dominating performance throughout the match clearly justified the confidence head coach Golam Rabbani Choton had.

It is often said that Bangladesh's present youth teams lack quality since the golden generation of women footballers – the likes of Maria Manda, Krishna Rani Sarker, Monica Chakma, Sanjida Akhter, Akhi Khatun, Masura Parveen among others – are no longer eligible to play the age-group tournament. However, their successors proved that they have been heading in the right direction.

Nepal did pose a threat, especially after putting up a brave performance against India to storm into the final. But Shamsunnahar, Aklima Khatun, Ripa, Aleida Khandokar, Swapna Ripa, and Mahfuza Khatun were unbreakable on a familiar ground with a cheering home crowd supporting the girls throughout the match.

The first 15 minutes of the game was fought on level terms as the two sides aimed to take control of midfield before the home side stamped their authority. The Nepalese girls were cornered time and again and remained busy thwarting quick counter attacks one attack after another.

Ripa was outstanding on the night as she was pivotal to the build-up of most attacks, apart from scoring the opener. In the 17th minute, the girl from Cox's Bazar ran down the right flank to whip a cross for Aklima, who saw her low drive parried by goalkeeper Kabita BK.

Nepal attempted to initiate sporadic attacks, creating an opening in the 36th minute. Amisha Karki received the ball in the box and turned around quickly around her marker to drive a low shot that narrowly missed the near post, much to the relief of Bangladesh goalkeeper Rupna Chakma.

Ripa had a go from distance and she too missed the target by a fine margin in the 38th minute. The BKSP student, however, did not make a mistake to pounce on a poor clearance from defender Kumari Tamang as Ripa's shot from outside the box caught the keeper off-guard to break the crucial deadlock in the 42nd minute.

Shamsunnahar then doubled the lead in the stoppage time of the first half. Capitalising on yet another fumble from the Nepal defence, the Bangladesh captain made a darting run before placing the ball past the advancing keeper.

After resumption, Bangladesh kept their intent intact on widening the margin by pressing from both flanks. 11 minutes into the second half, Shamsunnahar, who kept leading by example, came close to making it 3-0 but her tap in off a free-kick from Aleida was nicely blocked by the Nepal stopper.

Nepal then came close to reducing the margin in the 80th minute but Rupna made a brilliant save, diving low to her right to thwart a drive from Amisha. Substitute Unnoti then sealed off the match by tapping in a goal-bound free kick from Ripa three minutes from the final whistle.

Murder in guise

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Narsingdi court, saying they were involved in the planned killing.

At the press conference, Enayet Hossain Mannan, superintendent of police of Narsingdi PBI, said Biplob, one of the deceased, was accused in 10 cases, including four for murders. No one dared to testify against him.

The officer said the accused had planned to kill Biplob 15-20 days before the incident, and finally succeeded after two failed attempts.

They followed Biplob's movement after he walked out of Narsingdhi SP's office and was heading to his home in Raipura with Monir on a motorcycle.

He was called to the SP's office to discuss a complaint he had filed with police against PBI Sub-Inspector Nasim for torturing him in custody. SP Mannan said one Dulal Gazi

was hacked to death at Lochonpur Bazar in Narsingdhi's Raipura on February 6, 2019.

Dulal's son Robin Gazi filed a murder case against Biplob. Later, SI Nasim arrested Biplob in Dhaka on April 10, 2021.

After being released from jail, he filed the complaint against Nasim.

Sohag Mollah, Biplob's elder brother, said his brother was accused in eight cases, six of which were political ones, while one was filed for beating two robbers to death, and one for theft, according to our Narsingdi correspondent.

In 2016, Biplob contested for chairman in the Bakharnagar Union Parishad polls with the "sheaf of paddy" electoral symbol, while Monir was the social welfare secretary of the district Jubo Dal, said Narsingdhi Jubo Dal President Mohsin Hossain.

Hopes turn to despair

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a tent.

Some people have found sanctuary with neighbours or relatives. Some have left the region. But many have nowhere to go.

"When we sit down, it is painful and I fear for anyone who is trapped under the rubble in this," said Melek Halici, who wrapped her two-year-old daughter in a blanket as they watched rescuers working into the night.

International rescuers have said the intense cold has forced them to weigh whether to use their limited fuel supplies to keep warm or to carry out their work.

"Not a single person has failed to mention this, the cold," Athanasios Balafas, a Greek fire official, said in Athens. "Obviously we chose to keep operating."

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, after mounting criticism online, acknowledged on Wednesday

"there are shortcomings. The conditions are clear to see. It's not possible to be ready for a disaster like this."

Monday's quake was the largest Turkey has seen since 1939, when 33,000 people died in the eastern Erzincan province.

Officials and medics said 17,406 people had died in Turkey and 3,317 in Syria from Monday's 7.8-magnitude tremor, bringing the confirmed total to 20,723. Experts fear the number will continue to rise sharply.

Despite the dimming hopes for rescues, thousands of local and foreign searchers have not given up in the hunt for more survivors.

Two dozen children and some of their parents from northern Cyprus – 39 Turkish Cypriots in all – were on a school trip to join a volleyball tournament when the quake hit their hotel in southeast Turkey's Adiyaman.

Their home region's government

Unelected govt no longer possible

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country's production and created a scary situation. "Do they want to take the people back in the frightening situation?"

Referring to the recently concluded six parliamentary by-polls and the Rangpur City Corporation election, Hasina said the government has proved that the elections were held in a free, fair and neutral manner.

She said not a single person could raise questions about the six by-polls. "Does this not demonstrate the ability of the Election Commission to conduct free and fair elections under the Awami League's rule? The Awami League government does not interfere and will

not do so."

The leader of the House said the government does not listen to people's telephone conversations and that law enforcement agencies do that only to stop militancy.

Hasina said the government made "Digital Bangladesh", but now information on how to make bombs and carry out militancy is being exchanged via different apps.

"How can we curb militancy and terrorism and how will we get their information if these things can't be tapped?" she said.

The PM said many people are now speaking about phone tapping. "But what is the reason? What secrets would

has declared a national mobilisation, hiring a private plane so they could join the search-and-rescue effort for the children.

Ilhami Bilgen, whose brother Hasan was on the volleyball team, looked at the frightening pile of concrete slabs and heavy bricks that used to be the hotel.

"There's a hollow over there. The children may have crawled into it," Bilgen said. "We still haven't given up hope."

Dozens of nations, including China and the United States have pledged to help, and search teams as well as relief supplies have already arrived.

In Brussels, the EU is planning a donor conference in March to mobilise international aid for Syria and Turkey.

The bloc was swift to dispatch rescue teams to Turkey after the massive 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck the country on Monday close to the border with Syria.

they reveal? And it will be a problem if the government listened to them?" she said.

Hasina assured people that there would not be any scarcity of essential commodities during the upcoming Ramadan as enough quantity of food is in stock and more are being imported.

She said the country has enough stock of chickpea, sugar, edible oil, onion, date, and pulse, but it was still importing more.

The PM said there is no problem for honest businesses importing essentials for Ramadan. She added that there are no obstacles to opening letters of credit for importing commodities.

normally after 30 minutes of cardiac massage, according to Prof Banik of the department of anaesthesia, analgesia and intensive care medicine at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University.

He added that the cardiac arrest could have happened because of an abnormal reaction to the drugs. "It can happen to anybody."

Prof Banik said he had not noticed any negligence by the surgeons.

Sorhab Ali, assistant general manager of the hospital, said, "A team of senior physicians, including one on behalf of the patient's family, investigated the incident. They concluded that it was an accident. There was no negligence by the physicians."

Law passed to prevent unauthorised haat, bazar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Haat and Bazar (establish and management) Bill, 2023 was passed in parliament yesterday to replace an ordinance of 1959.

As per the new law, no one can set up any haat and bazar without permission from the government.

Land Minister Saifuzzaman Chowdhury placed the bill in the House which was passed by voice vote.

If any unauthorised haat or bazar is set up in any area, the government will take that over as khas land.

The district administration and government will manage the lands of haat or bazar, and no land can be transferred permanently.

As per the proposed law, if anyone or a group of people illegally occupies khas land of any haat and bazar, and construct any establishment, will be fined not more than Tk 5,00,000 or face one year of imprisonment or both.

Fire guts a dozen Marma homes in Ruma

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

A dozen homes were gutted by fire in a Marma village in Ruma, Bandarban yesterday.

The fire broke out as a battery pack of a solar power system exploded at the home of Samong Marma, 56, in Rikhaing Para village.

"I was cooking in the kitchen when I heard the sound of the explosion coming from our bedroom. I rushed there and saw the fire had spread out. So, I quickly ran out of the house," said Memah Marma, 53, wife of Samong.

Stored food items, valuables, cash, and important documents were destroyed in the fire, victims said.

Titas disconnects over 600 illegal lines

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Titas Gas officials disconnected over 600 illegal gas lines in Munshiganj's Gazaria upazila in a special drive yesterday.

The drive, led by GM Rashedul Islam, assistant commissioner (land) of the upazila, began around 10:00am from Vitikandi bus stop in Gazaria section of Dhaka-Chatogram highway and ended at Paiksharpara, which is about 9 km from the starting point, said Saruj Alam, deputy general manager of Titas (Sonargaon marketing division).

More such drives will be conducted in the future, he added.