

CASE UNDER DSA

Prothom Alo has the right to get justice

Observes HC; Matiur Rahman gets 6-week anticipatory bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday said the Prothom Alo has the right to get justice because it had corrected the mistake it made in an online report on March 26.

“Everybody has the right to get protection of law. The complainant could have gone to Bangladesh Press Council if he was aggrieved by the report.

“As far as we know, Prothom Alo publishes objective reports. They have a slogan – in search of truth. They are a pioneer in news publishing. But how will it work if you publish this kind of news?” asked the court referring to the March 26 report.

The bench of Justice Mustafa Zaman Islam and Justice Md Aminul Islam made the observations while hearing a petition filed by Prothom Alo Editor and Publisher Matiur Rahman seeking bail in a case filed under the Digital Security Act.

The bench granted him anticipatory bail for six weeks



As far as we know, Prothom Alo publishes objective reports. They have a slogan – in search of truth. They are a pioneer in news publishing. But how will it work if you publish this kind of news?

A High Court bench while hearing the Prothom Alo editor's petition for bail.

and asked him to show up at the metropolitan sessions judge's court in Dhaka after six weeks and seek fresh bail.

The courtroom was packed with lawyers and journalists. Matiur appeared virtually before the bench from the Supreme Court premises during the hearing.

Lawyers Fida M Kamal, Zi Khan Panna, Imtiaz Mahmood, Syeda Rizwana Hasan and Prashanta Kumar Karmoker appeared for Matiur while Additional Attorney General Mohammad Mehedi Hassan Chowdhury and Deputy Attorney General Sujit Chatterjee Bappi opposed the bail petition.

Matiur, Prothom Alo staff reporter Shamsuzzaman Shams, an unnamed photographer, and unnamed others were sued over a report published on March 26, the Independence Day.

While posting the said report written by Shams on social media, Prothom Alo made a “card” with a quote of a labourer named Zakir Hossain. Though the card contained Zakir's quote, it had the photo of an adolescent boy taken from behind.

It was noticed within 17 minutes, and the card was removed. Besides, corrections were made to the report and the news was again published online mentioning the corrections.

Around 4:00am on March 29, Shams was picked up from his home in Savar by plainclothes men claiming to be CID officers. His whereabouts were unknown until he was taken to a Dhaka court around 30 hours later. The court later sent him to jail.

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Prothom Alo Editor and Publisher Matiur Rahman waving at journalists after the High Court granted him an anticipatory bail for six weeks yesterday. The photo was taken on the court premises.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

PROTHOM ALO REPORT Media outlet's licence would've been scrapped elsewhere

Says Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said if a report like the one published in the daily Prothom Alo appeared anywhere in the world, licence of that media would have been revoked.

“You took a quote from a seven-year-old child by bribing him Tk 10 and later said it was a mistake In any advanced democratic country of the world, if this kind of child exploitation happened, licence of the media would have been cancelled. Prime Minister Sheikh has shown her patience,” he said.

“Some say that a mistake is not a crime Can the crime be considered a mere mistake? It was a heinous crime. It was child exploitation,” Quader said while addressing a discussion organised by Chhatra League's Dhaka University unit at the TSC to mark the birth anniversary



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New Kalurghat bridge to cost Tk 14,000cr now

Initial estimate of 2018 was just Tk 1,163cr

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

A new rail-plus-road bridge at Kalurghat in Chattogram is going to cost almost 12 times the initial estimate because the authorities spent nine years doing multiple feasibility studies and designing and redesigning the bridge.

In 2014, the government decided to build the new bridge and de-commission the British era single-lane rail and road bridge there.

In 2018, a Detailed Project Proposal (DPP) was prepared for a single rail line and double-lane road bridge that would cost Tk 1,163.27 crore.

Now, the bridge would have double-line dual-gauge rail lines and a double-lane road on the same deck. The bridge is going to cost about Tk 14,000 crore and South Korea, last month, gave consent for a loan.

Apart from the design changes, multiple feasibility studies, delays, the high price of construction materials, and having to give vessels plying the Karnaphuli more clearance are blamed for the cost escalation.

Since it would take 2028 to build the new bridge, Bangladesh Railway will also have to keep footing the old bridge's repair bills, which can be over Tk 50 crore.

BR has hired a Buet team to give

recommendations for the restoration of the bridge as later this year it is going to open the Dhaka-Chattogram-Cox's Bazar rail line, of which the bridge is part.

The bridge built in 1931 over the Karnaphuli has become almost unsafe and the authorities have to repair the bridge occasionally to keep it usable. Trains have a speed limit of 10kmph on the bridge.

In 1962, the metre-gauge single-line rail bridge was reconfigured so



that vehicles could use it too.

People from Boalkhali upazila, east of Patiya and south of Rangunia upazilas, and Chandgaon and Mohora areas have no alternative to the bridge to cross the river.

SAGA OF INDECISIONS

In April 2014, the government decided to build the new bridge in cooperation with South Korea.

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RENTING AMBULANCE AT GOVT HOSPITALS

Patients forced to pay double

Two associations of ambulance operators hold them hostage

SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

Patients across the country are forced to pay almost double the usual fares for ambulances because of a cartel of ambulance owners at public hospitals.

It means more misery for those who have just taken a financial hit for their treatment or are about to.

Members of two ambulance owners' associations form a syndicate in every public hospital. That syndicate does not let any ambulance from other districts take patients away. For this, the ambulances charge patients double since they have to make the return trip empty.

If an ambulance from outside the district wants to carry a patient out of a hospital, the syndicate takes half the fare as its cut.

The Daily Star learnt this after talking to ambulance owners, drivers and relatives of patients.

For instance, Belal Hossain, 45, of Noakhali, admitted his son to Dhaka Medical College Hospital on February

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‘DSA necessary, here to stay’

Govt working to remove scope for its abuse, says law minister

STAR REPORT

The government is examining a “technical note” from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to see what changes could be made to the Digital Security Act, said Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday.

Acknowledging that the law has been misused and abused “to some extent”, he said they are continuing discussions with OHCHR on how to plug the holes.

He, however, added, “The reality is the DSA is necessary and will remain in force like in other countries. Such a law, though in different names, is in place all over the world to control cybercrimes.”

A method has been put in place to protect journalists from unnecessary harassment, the minister said.

He made the comments while replying to queries from journalists after a seminar titled “Revisiting the Arbitration Act for Promoting FDI in Bangladesh”. Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry organised the seminar at its office in the capital.

Huq also said he held a discussion with civil society members on March 14, where they talked about amendments to the DSA, the Data Protection Act, and voluntary funds by the NGOs.

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Remittance up on Eid cheer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Remittance inflows hit a seven-month high in March as expatriate Bangladeshis sent more money home for Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr.

Last month, non-resident Bangladeshis sent \$2.02 billion, up 8.6 percent from a year earlier, according to data from the Bangladesh Bank.

The development will bring some relief to the government, which has a minimum foreign currency reserves

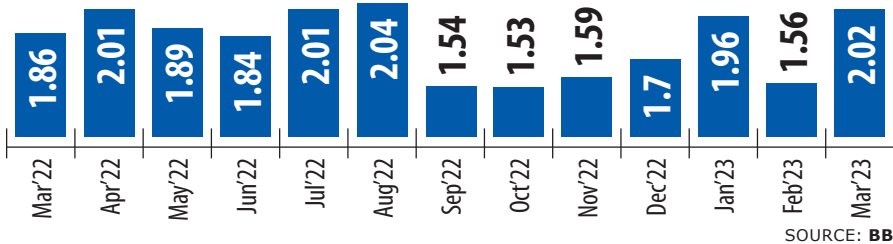
to Payra Port Authority and the below-investment-grade securities.

Bangladesh's NIR cannot be below \$22.9 billion in March, \$24.5 billion in June, \$25.3 billion in September and \$26.8 billion in December.

As of March 29, gross international reserves stood at \$31.1 billion, down 29.9 percent from a year earlier, according to data from the BB.

For Bangladesh, exports and remittances are the two main sources of foreign currency.

REMITTANCE INFLOW (IN \$B)



SOURCE: BB

target hanging over its head as part of the conditions for the \$4.7 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund.

The IMF has set a floor on net international reserves (NIR) for every quarter. The floor must be met for getting the approval of successive tranches.

For programme monitoring purposes, the NIR is defined as gross international reserves minus reserve-related liabilities.

As per the lender's balance of payments and investment position manual (BPM6), gross foreign reserves calculation does not include the various funds that the Bangladesh Bank has formed from the reserves as well as the loan guarantees provided for Biman, the currency swap with Sri Lanka, the loan

Remitters now get Tk 107 for each dollar, about Tk 2 more than exporters, along with a 2.5 percent cash incentive.

But on the kerb market, each dollar is selling for more than Tk 110, compelling many to send money home through the illicit channel of hundi despite the risks involved.

So an uptick in remittance, which has been underwhelming in recent months for multiple exchange rates, despite the wide difference between the official and kerb market rates is a welcome development.

“This will bring some respite,” said Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director of Mutual Trust Bank.

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“Bangladesh is maintaining its continued development under your fearless and commendable leadership–Thank you, Honorable Prime Minister”

-Tarique Afzal, President and Managing Director, AB Bank Limited

Over 1500 marginal farmers get ‘AB Bank Smart Agri Loan’ at Madhupur, Tangail



AB Bank

AB Bank Limited disbursed agricultural loans to over 1500 small and marginal farmers under own supervision through smart cards at Madhupur, Tangail. The program was organized at Madhupur

Auditorium, Madhupur, Tangail. Dr. Muhammad Abdur Razzaque, Honorable Agriculture Minister, People's Republic of Bangladesh was present as chief guest. Mr. Jasim Uddin

Haider, Deputy Commissioner and District Magistrate, Tangail, Mr. Md. Soruar Alom Khan Abu, Upazila Chairman, General Secretary, Awami League, Madhupur, Harunar

Deputy Upazila Dhanbari, Chairman, Ms. Shamima Yasmin, Nirbahi Officer, Madhupur, Mr. Md. Siddique Hossain Khan, Mayor, M a d h u p u r Municipality were present as special guests

with Mr. Tarique Afzal, President and Managing Director of AB Bank Limited presiding. Local senior leaders of Bangladesh Awami League along with other officials of the bank also attended the program.