



HRW slams ban on AL activities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Recent legislative initiatives by Bangladesh's interim government risk undermining fundamental freedoms, said Human Rights Watch yesterday.

Instead of pursuing its pledge to reform the criminal justice system and bring accountability for serious abuses, the government, led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, is attempting to "suppress the rights" of supporters of the deposed leader, Sheikh Hasina, and the Awami League party, it said in a report.

On May 12, the interim government ordered a "temporary" ban on the Awami League using newly introduced powers under a draconian amendment to the Anti-Terrorism Act, it added.

Meanwhile, draft legislation to address enforced disappearances, which were widespread under the previous government, does not meet international standards and scarcely addresses accountability for past crimes.

"Sheikh Hasina's government

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A farmer harvesting half-ripe paddy at Goalpara village in Rajshahi's Mohanpur upazila yesterday out of fear that water would completely ruin the crops after hours of incessant rain inundated fields in different upazilas of the district on Wednesday night.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Govt to amend NBR ordinance

Employees to continue protest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the face of turmoil amid continued protest by employees, the government yesterday backtracked from its position and stated it would bring "required amendments" to the new ordinance that split the National Board of Revenue.

It will consult the NBR and other important stakeholders before bringing the changes to the ordinance on tax reform, the finance ministry said in a statement.

"Since implementation of the ordinance is time-consuming after bringing the required revision, activities of the NBR will continue, and officials of customs and income tax cadres will accomplish their duties," the ministry said, urging the protesters to withdraw their ongoing strike.

The statement came hours after the protesters submitted a memorandum to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, pressing a four-point demand that includes repeal of the ordinance bifurcating the NBR and the resignation of its Chairman Abdur Rahman Khan.

The protesters say they are not opposed to the separation itself, but their principal grievance lies in a clause that allows civil servants from the general administration cadre to lead the two new divisions, sidelining experienced officers from the revenue cadre.

The ministry statement said the government has no plan to reduce the number of member posts for customs and tax cadres at the NBR. On the contrary, the number of posts for them is expected to increase after the

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India pushed 109 more into Bangladesh

STAR REPORT

At least 109 people were pushed into Bangladesh from India through various border points in eight districts between Wednesday night and yesterday, according to Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

BGB officials detained them along the Bangladesh-India border in Panchagarh, Lalmonirhat, Thakurgaon, Dinajpur, Moulvibazar, Feni, Cumilla and Khagrachhari, said our local correspondents.

Over the past month, at least 500 people have been reportedly pushed into Bangladesh from India.

BGB officials, quoting the detainees, told this newspaper that India's Border Security Force (BSF) pushed the individuals in. However, BSF officials during flag meetings with BGB in at least two districts yesterday denied their involvement.

Meanwhile, Dhaka has sent multiple letters to New Delhi requesting a stop to actions that pose risks to security and undermine mutual understanding.

In Panchagarh, 21 individuals, including women and children, were detained near the Joydharbhanga Borobari border in Sadar upazila early yesterday. They are all from Khulna and Narail.

Lt Col Sheikh Md Bodruddoza, commanding officer of BGB-56, said the detainees had been living in various parts of Gujarat, India, for a long time.

They said they were handed over by Indian police to the BSF, who then pushed them into Bangladesh, he added.

BSF officials, however, denied their involvement during a flag meeting.

In Lalmonirhat, 20 individuals, including women and children, were detained near Dhabalsuti and Jhalangi borders in Patgram upazila on Wednesday night.

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Call all-party meeting to resolve issues

Jamaat chief urges Yunus



STAR REPORT

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman has urged Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus to convene an all-party meeting to resolve the country's ongoing political crisis.

He made the call during an emergency meeting of the party's executive committee held at its central office in the capital's Moghbazar yesterday, reports UNB.

Shafiqur emphasised the need for inclusive dialogue and urged Yunus to take the initiative to unite all political parties

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NEW CYBER ORDINANCE

Stronger shield for women, children

9 controversial sections of old law dropped

MD ABBAS

The government has replaced the much-criticised Cyber Security Act 2023 with the Cyber Safeguard Ordinance, fully defining child abuse and sexual harassment on digital platforms.

A gazette notification confirmed that nine controversial sections of the act -- sections 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, and 34 -- have been repealed.

These sections were often criticised for curbing freedom of speech and being used to harass journalists and citizens.

These provisions included punishment for criticising or sharing content deemed offensive about the Liberation War, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, or national symbols; identity fraud and impersonation; spreading false or threatening information online; collecting personal information without consent; and publishing or sharing defamatory content.

The ordinance states that all ongoing cases under these sections will be dropped, and previously handed down punishments or fines will be cancelled.

In contrast to the repealed provisions, the new ordinance defines and criminalises digital content involving child sexual abuse, sextortion, and revenge porn.

It includes any visual, audio, or written content showing or encouraging children to engage in sexual activity, whether real or simulated.

The ordinance allows law enforcement agencies to act against online content that threatens national security and public order or promotes religious or communal hatred.

However, it makes exceptions for content created for law enforcement, education, medical, or legitimate journalistic purposes.

The ordinance also allows law enforcement agencies to act against online content that threatens national security and public order or promotes religious or communal hatred.

Authorities can also take action to remove or block such content with a tribunal's approval. To

ensure transparency, the government will have to publicly disclose information about any blocked content.

The ordinance has criminalised the use of artificial intelligence to commit any crimes under the new law.

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Mahfuj, Hasnat ask July forces to close ranks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Information Adviser Mahfuj Alam and National Citizen Party leader Hasnat Abdullah yesterday called for unity among the forces that led the July uprising, urging reconciliation and a renewed focus on national interest.

Mahfuj made a Facebook post in this regard around 4:58pm, amid demands for his resignation by BNP leader Ishraq Hossain and his supporters.

"If I remain in government even for another day, I wish to work with respect and sensitivity toward all forces involved in the [July] uprising," he wrote.

Without naming anyone, the adviser acknowledged that some of his previous remarks or choice of words may have caused hurt or contributed to division. He stressed that the need of the hour is solidarity among those committed to a democratic transition.

"Unity among patriotic forces is essential. The country is greater than individual ideals, honour, or emotions ... If we can discard

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Israel kills 52 more Palestinians

Two Israeli embassy staffers shot dead in Washington DC

AGENCIES

Gaza's civil defence agency said Israeli strikes had killed at least 52 people since dawn yesterday across the territory, as Israel allowed 100 aid trucks carrying flour, baby food and medical equipment into the enclave.

Boys and young men gathered after one vehicle arrived in the city of Khan Younis on Wednesday night, but kept back as men, some holding guns, watched over the unloading of sacks.

"Some bakeries will begin receiving flour to produce bread, and we expect the distribution of bread to begin later today[yesterday]," Amjad al-Shawa, director of the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network in Gaza, told Reuters.

"During the ceasefire, 600 trucks used to enter every day, which means that the current quantity is a drop in the ocean, nothing," he said. The International Committee of the Red Cross said it had got one truck of medical supplies through to replenish its field hospital in Rafah, but more was needed.

The Palestinian health minister said 29 children and elderly people had died from starvation-related deaths in Gaza in recent days and that many thousands more were at risk.

The Israeli army issued an evacuation warning yesterday for 14 neighbourhoods in the northern Gaza Strip, including parts of Beit Lahia and Jabalia.

The army told residents in an Arabic-language statement that it was "operating with intense force in your areas, as terrorist organisations continue their activities

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WINGS OF AZURE

An Indo-Chinese roller, locally known as 'Neelkantha', carrying food in its beak for chicks patiently waiting in their nest, built inside the cavity of a tree in Sreemangal. These striking birds, with plumage in varying shades of blue, are found across Asia -- from eastern India to Southeast Asia -- where they prefer open forests, farmland and grasslands. Often seen perched conspicuously, they swoop down to catch insects, frogs or lizards. During courtship, the males, which look similar to the females, perform dramatic sky rolls, an aerial display that gives the bird its name.

UK freezes properties of Salman F Rahman's son

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The UK's National Crime Agency has obtained freezing orders on two London properties owned by the son of an ally of ousted Bangladesh leader Sheikh Hasina, following allegations that her regime embezzled funds, according to a report by Financial Times (FT).

The properties are owned by Ahmed Shayan Fazlur Rahman, the son of Salman F Rahman, a Bangladeshi businessman who acted as an investment adviser to Hasina and founded Beximco, according to company and property filings, the report added.

One is a luxury apartment at 17 Grosvenor Square in London, which was purchased in 2010 for £6.5mn, while the other, at Gresham Gardens in north London, was acquired for £1.2mn the following year, the filings show.

Sheikh Rehana, the sister of Hasina and mother of former UK city minister Tulip Siddiq, has lived at the Gresham Gardens property, according to UK electoral roll records, though it is not clear whether she still resides there.

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PHOTO: NOBLE CHAKMA