

OFFENSIVE CONTENT Malaysia takes TikTok to task

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia has ordered TikTok to take immediate steps to improve how it regulates harmful content following the circulation of posts deemed “grossly offensive” to the country’s royals, the communications regulator said yesterday.

The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) said the social media platform owned by China-based ByteDance failed to “take sufficient and timely action” on a fake account that carried the allegedly defamatory posts against Sultan Ibrahim, the country’s current king.

The content included material deemed “grossly offensive, false, menacing and insulting in nature, including AI-generated videos and manipulated images”, the regulator said.

“MCMC take serious view of any misuse of online platforms to disseminate content that is grossly offensive, false, menacing or detrimental to public order, particularly where it involves the institution of the king and the Malay rulers,” it said in a statement.



Prime Minister Tarique Rahman listening to Ramisa's family members at their home in Pallabi last night. Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed, Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman, State Minister for Youth and Sports Aminul Haque, among others, were present.

PHOTO: BNP MEDIA CELL

Suspect held after 10-yr-old dies by suicide

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Bera zapila in connection with the death of Abdullah, a student at the same madrasa.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Hasibuzzaman passed the order after police produced him before the court and sought a seven-day remand.

During the hearing, Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Omar Faruq Faruqi and investigation officer Saiful Islam, a sub-inspector of Rampura Police Station, argued in favour of the remand.

Faruqi told the court that rape incidents tarnish the dignity of society and the education system, and those responsible must be brought to justice.

“In the name of service, the hujurs [teachers] make little children massage their hands and feet. Eventually, they become attracted to the children. At one stage, such incidents [rape] occur,” he said.

No lawyer appeared on behalf of the accused during the hearing.

According to case documents, a team from Rampura Police Station went to the madrasa on Tuesday night after receiving reports that a child had died by suicide.

The body was later sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

During the inquest, officers found signs of sexual assault. This led to extensive questioning of madrasa

authorities, who then revealed earlier allegations that Shihab had sexually abused four other students at the institution, according to a press release issued by Motijheel Division Police.

On Wednesday, Abdullah’s mother, Tuku Ara Khatun, filed a case with Rampura Police Station against Shihab and an unnamed individual under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act.

According to police, Shihab fled the madrasa before Abdullah took his own life. A team from Rampura Police Station later tracked him down to his village home in Pabna and arrested him.

State enterprises bleed Tk 88,200cr every year

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sector, the need for a TCB is not obvious – the TCB cannot be a substitute for a strong and vibrant social protection programme,” said the study, which was prepared with the support of the Policy Research Institute.

Social protection to the poor should be provided through a large number of social protection programmes, including food distribution, income transfers and employment guarantee schemes.

Several SOEs like the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC), the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA), the Bangladesh Telecom Regulatory Commission (BTRC) and the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) earn modest profits, but most other enterprises either make very small profits or incur losses.

The energy sector is the biggest source of financial losses, with the Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB), Petrobangla and the Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board (BREB) accounting for more than 90 percent of the losses.

Most of the manufacturing enterprises also make losses, even though they operate in a competitive market structure where a flourishing private sector prevails.

As of fiscal 2023-24, the SOEs showed a substantial negative rate of return on assets of -5.2 percent, found the study, which was unveiled yesterday at a workshop titled “Financial Performance and Fiscal Risk of SoEs in Bangladesh”.

In comparison, India obtained a ROA of 9.7 percent in 2024 while Vietnam secured an ROA of 11.9 percent in 2020.

Owing to this poor financial performance, the treasury had to provide a subsidy in an amount of Tk 44,100 crore (0.9 percent of GDP) in fiscal 2023-24 just to keep the SOEs afloat.

Total net fiscal transfers, including capital transfers, amounted to Tk 120,000 crore (1.7 percent of GDP).

Although the treasury provides investment funds to SOEs as loans, owing to a weak financial situation, most SOEs do not service the debts, making them effectively transfers to SOEs.

“The opportunity cost of this poor financial performance of SOEs is large.”

To put things into perspective, Bangladesh spends 1.6 percent of GDP on healthcare and social protection and 1.8 percent of GDP on education.

The deteriorating financial condition of public enterprises has become “unsustainable” at a time when Bangladesh is already facing falling revenue collection, slower economic growth and mounting pressure on public finances, the report said.

Subsequently, the study called for an overhaul of the SOE sector.

“The situation calls for a systematic approach to reforms.”

The diagnosis of the report suggests that the SOEs as a group suffer from severe operational and efficiency constraints imposed by the underlying corporate governance environment. Price controls further add to the poor financial performance.

The report also highlighted deep corporate governance weaknesses within Bangladesh’s SOE structure. It identified fragmented laws, bureaucratic control, weak oversight and lack of financial transparency as key reasons behind poor performance.

The first step is to classify SOEs by market structure and functions to determine what types of reform are needed.

SOEs that operate in a competitive market structure should be restructured with proper corporate governance to prepare them for eventual privatisation.

These include the Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation, the Bangladesh Steel and Engineering Corporation, the Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation, the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation, the Bangladesh Forest Industries Development Corporation and the Bangladesh Jute Mills

government ownership is considered necessary for strategic reasons – should be restructured through proper corporate governance.

These include the Bangladesh Shipping Corporation, the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation, the Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation, CPA, the Mongla Port Authority, the Bangladesh Land Port Authority, the Bangladesh Bridge Authority, the Payra Port Authority, BTRC, CAAB and the National Housing Authority.

SOEs that mostly perform non-commercial functions should be redefined to take away any limited commercial role and merged with respective line ministries that manage them. Their commercial roles should be reassigned to the private sector.

This includes the five construction-related SOEs Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (RAJUK), Chattagram Development Authority, Rajshahi Development Authority, Khulna Development Authority and Cox’s Bazar Development Authority.

Under this category are 19 service-related enterprises, most of which are tiny to start with: BJC, BADC, BFDC, BEZA, BSTI, BFDC (Film), BFFWT, BPRC, BIWTA, BSCIC, BEPZA, BTB, BSB, BERC, EPB, BITAC, Novo Theatre,

BSRTI, BHB.

SOEs that are purely regulatory in nature – like the BTRC and the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory – should be converted to fully autonomous regulatory bodies with full autonomy as a regulatory entity, with no government interference.

“While the nation as a whole will benefit from SOE reforms, the suggested reforms are likely to face bureaucratic resistance, especially from groups who benefit from the existing inefficiencies or malpractices.”

The danger within

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Another 26 children were killed by close relatives, including stepmothers, uncles, aunts, and siblings.

Familiar neighbours were responsible for 18 deaths, accounting for 14.52 percent of the 124 child homicides, often linked to personal disputes or opportunistic theft.

Laila Khondkar, convener of Shishurai Shob, said, “Global and local experience shows children are mostly abused by known figures – family, teachers, coaches, or neighbours – who exploit easy access when children are unsupervised.

“We urgently need research to understand the psychology of predators and unpack the rising societal brutality behind these crimes. In Bangladesh, that analysis is still missing.”

She added that younger children are particularly vulnerable due to their developmental stage, making them easier to manipulate and less likely to report abuse.

According to a four-month report by Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) covering January to April, 56 out of 81 rape victims of known age – nearly 70 percent – were children aged between 0 and 12.

Similarly, of the 115 children killed during the same period, 63 were aged 0 to 12, highlighting the disproportionate vulnerability of younger age groups.

Shishurai Shob further reported that in around 10 percent of child rape cases in 2025, victims were killed in an apparent attempt to destroy evidence.

From January to April this year alone, ASK recorded 11 cases of children being killed after rape.

Sumaiya Iqbal, assistant professor of criminology at Dhaka University, said perpetrators often attempt to eliminate evidence by killing victims.

“We call this witness elimination. They try to hide the evidence, and in doing so, many victims are killed because they are the primary witness, and the evidence has to be erased.”

She noted that while some cases are premeditated, others occur in panic immediately after the offence.

Sumaiya added, “Offenders look for easier targets. Children are more vulnerable, less aware, and often unable to clearly communicate what has happened.”

She also linked the trend to weak deterrence and broader social attitudes. “If punishment is not

consistent and certain, deterrence fails.

“Alongside impunity, there are deeper social issues – how society views women and children, and how sexual objectification becomes normalised. These create an environment where violence can persist.”

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Sociologist Samina Luthfa said the crisis is rooted in a deeply entrenched patriarchal mindset that objectifies the female body and extends into violence against children.

She said this tendency has been amplified by digital technologies.

“The easy availability of pornography, child sexual abuse material, and illicit online image markets has further normalised exploitation.... The female body is increasingly commodified and weaponised in digital spaces.”

Samina added that sexual violence is often less about sexual desire and more about power and control.

“In conditions of economic stress and social hopelessness, perpetrators may target children as the most vulnerable means of asserting dominance.”

She also warned that legal responses – particularly the death penalty for rape – may have unintended consequences.

“When the law mandates death for rape, perpetrators may be incentivised to eliminate witnesses.... Since it is physically easier to kill a child than an adult, children increasingly become targets of lethal violence.”

TRAUMA, FEAR

Psychiatrist Helal Uddin Ahmed said betrayal by familiar figures or trusted circles causes deep and long-term psychological damage not only to victims but also to peers, parents, and professionals involved in such cases.

He noted that public reaction is initially marked by anger and demands for swift justice, but this gradually shifts into prolonged fear and insecurity.

“The delay in legal processes can lead to deep public despair and hopelessness. Children who witness or learn about such incidents may develop trauma, anxiety, and withdrawal, while professionals including police, doctors, lawyers, and journalists face risks of secondary traumatic stress.”

He also cautioned against excessive parental restriction, saying

Ukrainian drones strike Russia’s oil refinery: Kyiv Two people killed

AFP, Moscow

A Ukrainian drone strike killed two people in Russia’s central Samara region yesterday, the local governor said, as Kyiv claimed a strike on a major oil refinery in the area.

Ukraine has stepped up its retaliatory attacks in recent weeks, hitting Russian cities as far as the Urals.

The governor of the Samara region, Vyacheslav Fedorishchev, said in the early hours of yesterday that the city of Syzran on the Volga river had come under attack by Ukrainian drones.

“Two people were killed as a result of the enemy’s inhumane actions,” Fedorishchev said, adding that others had been wounded in the attack.

Syzran is home to a major oil refinery.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky later claimed the strike as “another Ukrainian long-range sanction against Russian oil refining”.

“This time around, it was the Syzran oil refinery – more than 800 kilometres (500 miles) away from our border,” he said on social media.

Ukraine’s Unmanned Systems Forces said “a large-scale fire” broke out on the refinery’s premises after the strike.

Claiming fair retaliation for the Russian army’s near-daily bombardments of Ukrainian cities across the four-year conflict, Ukraine has regularly launched attacks inside Russia, including on areas thousands of miles away from its territory.

overprotection may hinder children’s social development. Instead, he recommended consistent safety rules that apply to both strangers and familiar individuals.

CANOPY OF IMPUNITY

Out of 124 child murders documented by Shishurai Shob in 2025, only 35 resulted in formal charges, and just two ended in convictions.

Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, said this institutional failure justifies public skepticism.

“The Pallabi victim’s father is absolutely right to doubt the system; our conviction rate in child rape cases is below one percent.

“Immediate arrests happen, but things fade. Even when death penalties are handed down, executions remain stalled for years due to lengthy appeals, letting criminals exploit loopholes. While political pressure might expedite the Pallabi trial, we cannot rely on ad-hoc justice.”

She added, “Every single perpetrator must be brought to the dock of accountability, and they must be made to realise that they cannot escape the consequences of such heinous crimes.”

Laila Khondkar also called for an end to institutional and media inertia.

“This is a national crisis; business as usual will not work,” she said, demanding an independent, permanent National Child Commission to ensure coordinated accountability.

In line with the Children Act 2013, she urged the newly elected government to fulfill its moral mandate by dismantling fragmented sectoral efforts through adequate budget allocations and collaborative, inter-ministerial protection frameworks.

“To combat parental abuse, a robust tracking system must be equipped to detect early domestic warning signs.

“Concurrently, the legal system must be fast, effective, and child-sensitive, paired with mandatory nationwide self-protection education.... Ultimately, the frontline of defence rests with families; parents must supervise safely, teach children the difference between good and bad touch, investigate if a child avoids an individual, and universally prioritise justice and support over ‘family honour’.”

DUET VC finally enters campus

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section of students has been protesting the appointment.

Tension has gripped the DUET campus since then.

Last Sunday, clashes and chases broke out between students supporting and opposing the appointment, leaving at least 23 people injured.

The protesters argue that DUET, as a specialised engineering university, should appoint a vice-chancellor from among its own teachers with experience in its academic and administrative environment.

On Tuesday, the students announced a “complete shutdown” on the campus.

Speaking to this correspondent on Wednesday, Prof Iqbal said he had already started carrying out administrative duties and hoped the situation would be resolved soon.

He said that after assuming office, he cleared unpaid salaries, bonuses, and overtime payments for university staff, and sought updates on students injured in the recent violence.