



Draft amendment to CSA criminalises fundamental rights

Media personalities, analysts, civil society members say at TIB roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Media personalities, legal analysts and civil society representatives demanded the repeal or amendment of repressive clauses in the draft "Cybersecurity Act, 2026", warning that it seeks to criminalise fundamental rights, free speech and press freedom under the guise of curbing fake news.

They made the call at a roundtable yesterday, jointly organised by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), Cyber Support for Women and Children (CSWC) -- a coalition of 17 rights organisations -- and partner organisations (comprising 19 organisations in total) at the TIB office in the capital's Dhanmondi.

Members of the government-formed media committee, whose task is to review the draft act, also participated in the discussion.

In his opening remarks, TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said successive governments have increasingly used cyber laws to criminalise freedom of expression and the press.

Although this trend paused briefly during the interim government, it has now returned.

"The priority is on how to further consolidate power to keep rights -- especially freedom of speech and expression -- under control. In reality, people's rights are being criminalised in the name of controlling disinformation and misinformation," he said.

Disclosing that 101 people were accused

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PHOTO: **RAJIB RAIHAN**

Breaking away from conventional Durga Puja decorations, an unusual mandap themed "Raktanjali" at Khalifapatti in Chattogram city highlights violence against women and girls through sculptures, murals and protest slogans. Organised by the Khalifapatti Sarbajanin Puja Udjapan Parishad, the mandap replaces traditional colourful displays with stark depictions of rape, torture and oppression, demanding justice for victims and punishment for perpetrators. The theme symbolically offers the blood of victims instead of flowers at Goddess Durga's feet, urging people to speak out against injustice and violence against women. The photo was taken yesterday.

2 BANGLADESHIS EXECUTED

KSA shared prisoner list, concealed death penalties

Dhaka summons envoy over executions

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Two Bangladeshis executed in Makkah on October 14 were included in a list of prisoners that Saudi Arabia had shared with the Bangladesh mission in the kingdom, but the list did not mention that they had been sentenced to death.

In September, the consulate general in Jeddah had sought information from Saudi authorities about Bangladeshi prisoners in the region, The Daily Star has learnt from foreign ministry officials in Dhaka and Riyadh.

"They sent us a list that included the names of the two Bangladeshis -- but there was no information about the verdicts," said one of the officials posted in the consulate general in Jeddah.

The list mentioned 'adultery' as the alleged offence against one person and 'ICT' against the other.

"It was impossible to link the entries to the executions based on that list alone."

Receiving a list of prisoners does not enable the consulate to provide immediate consular assistance to everyone named.

"We periodically visit jails in the kingdom to provide consular services. We have had many successful cases in which sentences were reduced," the official said, adding that the consulate had received no requests for consular assistance from the two Bangladeshis.

Saudi Arabia did not notify Dhaka before executing the two Bangladeshis, said Shama Obaed Islam, state minister-2 for foreign affairs, on Saturday.

Bangladesh is yet to receive a full account of the incident.

Subsequently, Saudi Ambassador to Bangladesh Abdullah Zafer H bin Abiyah was summoned on Sunday for details.

The ambassador was handed a physical copy of the note verbale sent earlier through electronic channels.

The two Bangladeshis were accused of engaging in adultery inside a mosque in Makkah, according to a message sent to the foreign ministry by the Labour Welfare Wing of the Bangladesh mission in Saudi Arabia after the execution.

The Saudi authorities subsequently arrested, tried, sentenced and executed them.

Dhaka learned of the executions after they took place on October 14.

Govt to buy 5,830 vehicles for police

Tk 6,609cr procurement proposals await Ecnec nod

REJAUL KARIM BYRON *and* **MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN**

The government is set to purchase 5,830 vehicles for Bangladesh Police at an estimated cost of Tk 6,609 crore to address a transport shortage that has left the country's 639 police stations with fewer than two vehicles each on average.

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Secretariat moving to Agargaon

Cabinet approves relocation; foundation laying planned for Dec 16

BAHARAM KHAN

The government aims to lay the foundation stone of the new Secretariat at Agargaon in the capital's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar on December 16, Victory Day, following a decision to relocate it from Abdul Gani Road.

The decision was taken at a cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman at the Secretariat yesterday afternoon.

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31ST DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF

LATE AL-HAJJ JAHURUL ISLAM



The 31st death anniversary of the founder Chairman of Islam Group **Al-Hajj Jahurul Islam** is being observed today.

A Doa Mahfil will be held at his birth place Bhagalpur, at 11 a.m. October 19, 2026 in the mosque of Jahurul Islam Medical College & Hospital. All relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to pray for his eternal peace.

On behalf of Islam Group
Begum Suraiya Islam
Manzurul Islam
Syeda Islam
Mafida Islam
Kaneta Islam
and Members of the Family

EU condemns settler attack on delegation in West Bank

AFP, *Brussels*

The European Union said yesterday that it "strongly condemns" an attack the previous day by a group of Israeli settlers on visiting European diplomats.

"The EU strongly condemns the latest attacks by violent settlers in the West Bank, including on European diplomats," the foreign service said in a communique.

The communique also urged "full accountability as well as effective measures to prevent continued acts of violence and violent harassment against Palestinians, including during the ongoing olive harvest season, as well as against journalists.

"We urge Israel to fully abide by International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, and to cease the expansion of settlements," the statement concluded.

Saturday saw Israeli settlers attack a convoy of European diplomats in the West Bank and beat up a visiting French mayor, witnesses said, while US Secretary of State Marco Rubio warned against a brewing "crisis" in the territory a day after an American photojournalist was injured in a brutal attack.

