

Bangladesh shuts 'objectionable' news sites

DHAKA: Bangladesh has shut down dozens of online news services including those of pro-opposition media, an official said on Friday, sparking accusations of government censorship.



123RF

The head of the national telecoms regulator said he ordered the closures late Thursday night, citing "objectionable contents".

"We've shut down 32 news portals and websites following instructions from an intelligence agency," Bangladesh Telecommunications and Regulatory Commission (BTRC) chairman Shahjahan Mahmood, said.

He said the list included Sheershanews.com, a popular website known for its fast news coverage, and amardeshonline, a news portal linked to a pro-opposition Bengali daily that the government shut down in 2013.

The crackdown comes after the government banned live television coverage of Islamist extremist attacks in the wake of last month's deadly assault on a cafe in which 22 people were killed including 18 foreigners.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina publicly criticised the coverage of the attack and told private broadcasters to be more responsible.

The head of Sheershanews Ekramul Hoque said he was stunned by the move, which would mean about 100 journalists losing their jobs.

"We think it's a direct assault on the country's freedom of press. The government is shutting down the news organisations they don't like. They want total control of the media," Hoque said.

"By closing down these news portals, the government is sending a clear message to all media firms that they won't tolerate any news organisation that does not follow their line," he said.

Sheershanews was drawing up to 200 million hits a month this year.

Source: AFP

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>