

TANVIR AHMED/ DRIK NEWS

he got invited by the prime minister. The only reporting we have now is on Hasina and Khaleda -- as if nothing else matters. Why is no journalist interested in social reporting? The answer is quite simple: they are a party to the making of the state which is poor. Within Bangladesh there are several states, and journalists do not live in the state where the people live.

Just as the audience was absorbing such hardcore truths about their profession **Mainul Islam** brought before the guests another aspect of the consequences of bold journalism. Since the discussion was on press freedom he wished to commemorate and remember the journalist who was killed on March 5.

Jamaluddin's dead body was found beside the Rangamati Tourism Complex lake, and the official cause of his death was ascribed to suicide. The rope from which he was supposed to have hanged himself was very thin and the tree not strong enough for the purpose. And, typically, journalists were told not to write about this.

The panelists at this point of the discussion reminded all present how journalists found the invisible torture more difficult to deal with than physical ones.

Returning to the main discussion, Tipu Sultan shed insight on the works of contemporary journalists stating that failure to report properly lies with journalists themselves. They hardly try to overcome their lack of ability, talent, ethics, and training. They prefer dealing with issues that hold an appeal. At this point one guest stated the example of the workers protest in Khalishpur which was initially ignored by the media and only brought into focus when the protesters seemed to be succeeding in their attempt.

Andrew Biraj (New Age) next came up with the issue of the politics of the newspapers and electronic media themselves. What are the real issues and what are the things they don't reveal, he questioned. On the other hand, **Momena Jalil (New Age)** focused on the discrimination of photographers on the basis of sex and stated that as such the press is not free.

However, it was towards the end of the round table session that a most interesting view was expressed by **Farooq Wasif (Shamakal).** In his calm voice this individual truly summed up today's media environment.

In media there is always a hero and a villain. For journalists at present the villain is the militant Islamic terrorist. But so far they have never investigated the creation of this villainous figure. When the main newspapers -- the two big Bengali and English papers -- print long stories on these issues, they get translated and circulated in our neighbouring country. There is a new kind of embedded journalism in this country that did not even exist during the 1980s military regime.

We are at present existing in a sphere which resembles the "1001 Nights," and we have to keep telling stories every night so that we can stay alive. So that they cannot do away with us until we tell the truth. Like Probir Sikder said earlier: "Only an honest man can be courageous. I doubt that we are."

Earlier, when I had first taken my seat at the session, I had been prepared to hear the usual naggings of the reverent journalists. But this one turned out to be a real eye-opener, because not only were the panelists intriguing in their perceptions and views, but also the audience was truly spirited, outspoken and capable of offering a wide range of insights about their profession.

Though the discussion ranged from corporate domination of media, harassment, repression, censorship, insecurities to problems with ethics and lack of training yet there were many issues that need to be brought to light.

At least this was a successful attempt in establishing a platform for future grievances that need to be focused on for this session was not restricted amongst the audience present in the room but also open to the whole world through the live web-cast.

On World Press Freedom Day, a round-table discussion and live web-cast was organized by DrikNews, Drik, Givan Bela of Okno (Belgium).