

Journos face deadliest time 'in recent history'

AP, United Nations

Extremist groups and the governments that restrict liberties to combat those militants have created "the most deadly and dangerous period for journalists in recent history," according to a new report released yesterday.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists' annual report on press freedom is a collection of essays that spotlight Syria's deadly reporting landscape, censorship during the Ebola outbreak, the jailing of journalists in Egypt and Ethiopia, and even how journalists last year were used in extremists' propaganda films.

"These organizations are not merely producing videos," the report warns of groups like the Islamic State. "They are acting as competing media outlets."

The report also points out the inherent dangers as a rising number of freelance journalists cover wars with little protection or pay.

"At stake are not only journalists' lives but also the public's ability to know what's going on around them," CNN correspondent Christiane Amanpour writes in the forward. She notes that over 1,000 journalists around the world have been killed since 1992, when the CPJ started counting. Many were freelancers or local journalists.

The media, like governments, are now hurrying to adapt to a world where almost anyone, including perpetrators, can live-stream the news. "There is now near-instant access to atrocities taking place across the world," the report says.

The Islamic State group may have made its name with dramatic videos of beheadings and other killings, but the report says other groups around the world are using similar approaches to show off and intimidate.

Boko Haram has promoted itself on YouTube, and some Mexican drug cartels started doing the same years ago.

Some videos appear to be explicit threats to the media. "The decapitated head of one online journalist killed in 2011 in the border city of Nuevo Laredo was posed wearing headphones and set next to a keyboard," an essay by CPJ's Joel Simon and Samantha Libby says.

Boko Haram even turned a hugely popular social media campaign into political messaging. After the group's abduction of more than 200 schoolgirls in Nigeria last year led to the #BringBackOurGirls outcry, one Boko Haram video showed the group's leader laughing and dancing while saying, "Bring back our army."

Only an SMS

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National ID number will have to write PC, enter space, write their four-digit year of birth and (no space here) type the 13-digit number before sending it to 16103.

If you are a new voter having no National ID number but only the voter registration slip, type PC, give a space, type the voter registration slip number, enter space, type your date of birth in the dd-mm-yyyy format (28-04-1990) and send it to 16103.

For more information, visit www.ec.org.bd or www.nidw.gov.bd

HC directives

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Salma Ali read out the press statement, which also included seven demands made by BNWLA.

The demands include forming a judicial probe committee to investigate the alleged negligence by police in the Pahela Baishakh incident, making the probe report of Dhaka University public, revising Section 509 of Penal Code 1860, and enacting a complete law to prevent sexual harassment.

ICT contempt

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But these sections do not provide any person with a right to move an appeal against the tribunal's conviction of contempt, and therefore the sections are "discriminatory, arbitrary and irrational" since they have "violated" the constitutional right to get equal protection of law, the counsel added.

The 12 petitioners include CR Abrar, Shireen Huq, Shahidul Alam, Lubna Marium and Anusheh Anadil. The ICT-2 had issued contempt of court notice against the petitioners and several others for issuing a statement criticising the conviction of Dhaka-based British journalist David Bergman.

On December 2 last year, the tribunal found Bergman, editor (special reports) of The New Age, guilty of contempt for two of his blogs on the verdict of Abul Kalam Azad, also known as Bachchu Razakar.

The journalist was sentenced to imprisonment "till the rising of the court" that day and fined Tk 5,000.

Nepalis spend third night

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teams with sniffer dogs raced to find survivors buried in rubble, and teams equipped with heavy cutting gear and relief supplies landed at the nation's only international airport.

Elisabeth Byrs, a spokeswoman for the UN's World Food Programme, told AFP the agency would launch a "large, massive operation" with the first plane carrying rations set to arrive today.

Pledging \$10 million in relief to help the victims, US Secretary of State John Kerry said he had been shocked by the "gut-wrenching" images of the death and destruction.

HUNKERED IN TENT CAMPS

Across the capital, Nepalis were hunkered down for the night in makeshift tents in parks and other open spaces, many having lost their houses and others too terrified to return home after several powerful aftershocks.

"This is a nightmare. Why don't these aftershocks stop?" asked 70-year-old Sanu Ranjitkar, clutching her dog and with an oxygen mask strapped to her face as she sat under a tarpaulin.

With just plastic sheets to protect them from the elements, many were desperate for aid and information on what to do next.

"There is just too much fear and confusion," said Bijay Sreshta, who fled to a park with his three children, wife and mother when the quake hit.

Fears were rising of a disease outbreak in the multitude of tent camps that have sprung up around the city.

"Right now, it is important to prevent another disaster by taking precautions against an outbreak of diseases among the survivors," army official Arun Neupane told reporters.

Long queues formed outside petrol stations while supermarkets were seeing a run on staples such as rice and cooking oil.

A government official said tonnes of clean water and other essential supplies were needed for survivors as well as stepped-up search and rescue efforts outside the capital.

"We need more helicopters for our rescue operations in rural areas," home ministry spokesman Laxmi Prasad Dhakal told AFP.

"We also need supplies of essential goods such as food and clean water to provide relief for survivors."

RESCUE ON EVEREST

The quake triggered an avalanche on Mount Everest which buried part of base camp in a cascade of snow and rock, killing at least 18 people Saturday on the world's highest mountain.

The US State Department confirmed Monday that two of its citizens were among those killed on the mountain, adding that they were aware of reports that two other Americans had also died.

Rescue helicopters on Monday airlifted climbers from higher altitudes on the mountain where they were stranded above crevasses and icefalls, after evacuating scores of seriously injured from base camp the day before.

Hundreds of mountaineers had gathered at Everest at the start of the annual climbing season, and the real

Even president

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ago during the Rana Regime with British style architecture.

Known as Sheetal Niwas, the house was earlier used by the foreign ministry. Some parts of the building, including the kitchen, developed cracks following the earthquake.

"President Yadav is still in his tent," said the official who is not authorized to speak to the media.

A powerful earthquake measuring 7.9 on the Richter scale shook Nepal

Voters 'offered money'

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"We will pay Tk 200," said one of them. "Only money won't work. You must see we get transport," replied another.

Asked, the group said the conversation had nothing to do with Chittagong City Corporation Election. None of them was willing to talk about the election.

ARRESTS FOR 'VOTE BUYING'

Some 15 BNP and Jamaat activists were detained yesterday allegedly for "buying votes" for mayoral and councillor candidates in Dhaka on the eve of the city corporation elections, police say.

Police also seized about half a million taka from the detainees.

After a tip-off, police nabbed Sharfin Akter and her five associates from Mirpur's Paikpara around 1:40pm, said Jahangir Alam Sarkar, acting deputy commissioner (media) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Sharfin was carrying Tk 3 lakh in her handbag while buying votes for Dhaka North City Corporation's BNP-backed mayoral candidate Tabitha Awal, according to Mirpur police.

Around 3:00pm, Paltan police detained BNP man Abu Sufian and Jamaat-e-Islami activist Abu Taleb in Shantinagar area with Tk 2,700. The two were "purchasing votes" for Mirza Abbas, BNP's mayoral hopeful in Dhaka South City Corporation, police said.

scale of the disaster there has been difficult to evaluate so far.

Reconstruction efforts in impoverished Nepal could cost more than \$5 billion, or around 20 percent of the country's GDP, according to Rajiv Biswas, Asia Pacific chief economist at business research firm IHS.

Nearly a million children living in affected areas are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, UNICEF said.

Much of the historic centre of Kathmandu and Nepal's army said crews trying to rescue those trapped in the rubble of high-rise buildings were being hampered by a lack of specialised equipment.

"We need more equipment that can detect sounds and help track survivors," Colonel Naresh Subba told reporters.

'SHE WAS MY EVERYTHING'

In Kathmandu's Balaju neighbourhood, one father endured the agony of watching police pull the body of his daughter from the rubble of their home after using a combination of hammers and bare hands.

"She was my everything," said Dayaram Mohat as he collapsed in grief on hearing the news of his 14-year-old daughter Prasamsah's death.

The Nepalese rescuers were being joined by hundreds of foreign aid workers from countries including China, India and the United States.

Hospitals have been overwhelmed, with morgues overflowing and medics working flat out to cope with an endless stream of victims suffering trauma or multiple fractures.

The quake's epicentre was around 45 miles (73 kilometres) east of the town of Pokhara, the country's centre for adventure sports. An AFP correspondent reported the town had been largely unaffected and tourists were continuing their holidays.

Nepal and the rest of the Himalayas, where the Indian and Eurasia tectonic plates collide, are particularly prone to earthquakes.

A 6.8 magnitude quake hit eastern Nepal in August 1988 killing 721 people, and a magnitude 8.1 quake killed 10,700 people in Nepal and India in 1934.

Money transfer

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The rapid growth of mobile phone users and countrywide coverage of mobile operator's network has made their delivery channel an important tool of the trade for extending banking services across the country.

Currently, 28 banks have been given permission to operate mobile banking financial services, of which 19 have started the services. BB data show there are over 2.56 crore registered customers and 5,43,420 agents for the services.

In a separate statement, the central bank said all banks and financial institutions in the election areas would remain closed on election day to allow the employees to cast their votes.

on Saturday, leaving more than 2,200 people dead and caused widespread destruction.

Similarly, Nepal Prime Minister Sushil Koirala's residence was also badly affected by the quake, the official said.

The main entrance to the prime minister's residence was damaged. Koirala was in Indonesia when the quake rocked the nation.

Several government offices have also been badly hit.

4th US-Bangla partnership dialogue on April 30

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The two-day long fourth Bangladesh-US Partnership Dialogue will begin in Dhaka on April 30, focusing on the expansion of security, trade and development ties between the two countries.

The dialogue aims to advance growing bilateral relationship between the two nations and provide it with strategic direction, a US diplomat in Dhaka said.

Initially, the discussion was scheduled to be held on April 29-30, but will now be held on April 30-May 1.

Diplomatic sources in Dhaka and Washington confirmed that the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs of the US Wendy R Sherman will lead the US delegation.

Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Nisha Desai Biswal will also attend the dialogue.

US Embassy Spokesperson Monica L Shie told The Daily Star yesterday that Wendy Sherman would lead a large US delegation at the talks.

"The two sides will discuss the full range of our bilateral activities, including development and governance, trade and investment, and security cooperation," she said.

There will be 12 officials from the US side, plus others in supporting roles, Monica said. Delegates will arrive at different times beginning today and the delegation leader will arrive on Thursday.

Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque will lead the Bangladesh delegation, comprised by representatives from the ministries and divisions of foreign, commerce, energy, home, food and disaster management, economic relations ministries and the armed forces.

Issues related to labour, regional connectivity, climate change, counter-terrorism and food security will come up during the dialogue.

HC hearing

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Mahbub Hossain and Moudud Ahmed represented Abbas during the proceedings.

On April 21, the HC bench of Justice Md Moinul Islam Chowdhury and Justice JBM Hassan had fixed April 27 [yesterday] for hearing a bail petition of Abbas in a corruption case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission.

On Sunday, the bench of Justice Md Ruhul Quddus too fixed yesterday for hearing two bail pleas of the BNP leader in two more cases.

One of the two cases was filed with Paltan Police Station on December 29 last year while the other was filed on January 4 this year with Motijheel Police Station on charges of vandalism and setting fire to vehicles.

Earlier, an HC bench had given split verdict in response to Abbas' bail plea in these violence cases. The matter was then taken to the Chief Justice who appointed a separate bench to hear the bail petitions.

Man forms

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a new one instead.

He revealed that while his initial intention was just to protest against his own country's policies, he later realised that he and those who share his libertarian views would probably never succeed in changing things in the Czech Republic.

So he founded 'The Free Republic of Liberland', a nation that functions with a single motto: 'Live and let live'.

The new nation has a new flag, new national anthem, and a provisional government, which is currently collecting donations to assist in drafting the constitution.

According to an official statement, "The objective of the founders of the new state is to build a country where honest people can prosper without being oppressed by governments making their lives unpleasant through the burden of unnecessary restrictions and taxes."

Vit currently serves as the president of Liberland, and will be granting citizenship to about 3,000 to 5,000 people in the next few weeks.

The nation's immigration office, consisting of seven employees, is currently sifting through applications.

Surprisingly, a whopping 1,60,000 people have applied for citizenship! Vit said that he expects the Liberland to eventually have about 35,000 citizens.

It is still not clear whether Liberland is officially recognised as a real nation, or how it might even become one. With no army to defend its boundaries, there's always the threat of either Croatia or Serbia threatening them with force.

In such a scenario, Vit says that Liberland will only resort to 'passive defence'. "We will move, but we will keep our claim to the country," he explained.

Ensure tough

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charge sheets are framed against them following filing of the cases, Hasina told her audience.

In this regard, she asked the law enforcement agencies and local administration to frame the charge sheets speedily. "Or else, the criminals would repeat their misdeeds after coming out of jail on bail."

She also suggested continuing mobile courts in this connection.

The PM directed the local administration to give proper attention towards implementing the development works.

Agricultural produce in rural areas should have to be processed, preserved and marketed properly, she said, adding, "Cold storages, chilling system, processing and marketing system

should be developed either in public or private initiatives."

Hasina also directed the district administrations to look for suitable places to build mini stadiums at upazila level.

Responding to a request from the Bogra district council administrator to set up a railway track from Bogra to Sirajganj, Hasina said she would consider the matter later.

About water logging problem in Satkhira, the PM directed the authorities concerned to continue dredging of the Kapatakha properly and adopt a measure so that the coastal embankments in the region were not affected for using water for shrimp enclosures.

At the videoconference, she also hinted about setting up the Rabindra University at Shahjadpur in Sirajganj.

EC pledges

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In addition, more than 50 allegations of police harassment have been filed with the EC over the last one week, but the commission has not examined any allegation yet, according to sources in the EC secretariat.

Meanwhile, BNP leader Moudud Ahmed yesterday evening alleged at least 69 leaders and activists of the BNP, including five councillor aspirants, were arrested by police over the last 20 days.

Police are raiding the houses of polling agents of BNP-backed candidates so that they could not make it to the polling centres, Moudud said during a press conference at the party's Naya Paltan office yesterday.

Police, however, denied having raided the houses and campaign offices of any BNP-backed candidate.

"We've heard of such allegations only from journalists, but no candidate or their supporters have lodged any complaint with us in this connection as of yet," Jahangir Alam Sarkar, acting deputy commissioner (media) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star last night.

Talking to this correspondent yesterday, at least 30 BNP-backed candidates of both the city corporations in Dhaka alleged they had faced harassment from law enforcers.

Around 12 of them said they could not conduct their electoral campaign and had to go into hiding to evade arrest as they have cases filed against them.

Apart from police, the candidates alleged Awami League activists gave threats to and carried out attacks on some BMP-backed councillor candidates.

After visiting the Mirpur-10 roundabout around 9:00pm last night, this correspondent found out that all posters of the BNP-backed mayoral candidate Tabitha Awal and the councillor aspirants were torn down by AL activists. The whole area had only publicity materials for the AL-backed candidates.

Ferdousi Ahmed Misti, a BNP-supported candidate of Ward-8 in Dhaka North City Corporation, said on Sunday Shah Ali Police arrested 10 of her female supporters in two raids while they were campaigning for her. Later, they were sent to jail.

Contacted, Officer-in-Charge Selimuzzaman of Shah Ali Police told The Daily Star that they had arrested the campaigners on charges of causing anarchy.

Saidur Rahman Sayeed, BNP-backed councillor of Ward-17 in Dhaka South City Corporation, alleged to this correspondent that a team of police raided his campaign office twice on Sunday between 3:00pm and 4:00pm. During the raid police picked three of his supporters from his office.

Claiming he has no case filed against him, Saidur also alleged that police on Thursday raided his residence at Sukrabad around 5pm and asked him to step aside from the polls

Real test begins today

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discussion not just because the Tigers have suddenly become a very good side but for the confidence and the momentum they are carrying into a more difficult and complex format of this game.

The first of the two enduring Tests starts at Khulna today. A maximum of 15 sessions, unless a few fall victims of bad weather, will contain the whole package, which will define if the Tigers can act like grown men against those vastly experienced professionals of Pakistan.

Khulna might not have been a destination for the Tigers if a bustling Chittagong had not decided to vote for a new Mayor like Dhaka on what promises to be an eventful Tuesday. But this laidback southern city can be a prime example of how the Tigers should go about a serious business for the next five days. After all Test is not a piece of literature in a hurry; it's all about patience; the enjoyment of merely staying there in the middle.

Bangladesh Test captain Mushfiqur Rahim perhaps put it in the most appropriate way when he was asked to differentiate between Test and ODI. "(In Test) I would love to stay in the middle more instead of sitting in the dressing room," quipped the premier Bangladesh batsman.

The Tigers have made it a habit of

and not to send any polling agents in the booths.

Mohammad Iqbal, officer-in-charge of Kalbagan Police Station, denied the allegations saying his force had not conducted any such raids.

Farid Uddin Farhad, BNP-backed councillor candidate of Ward-31 in Mohammadpur area, alleged Sub-Inspector Mahbubur Rahman arrested one his supporters named Bachchu from Shershah Suri Road on Saturday while he was distributing leaflets.

He was later implicated in a "false" case of torching a vehicle which had been filed earlier.

Admitting the arrest, SI Mahbubur said he had arrested him in connection with a vehicle torching case filed in January. Although Bachchu was not named in the First Information Report, he was arrested as his name came during the investigation of the case.

Ariful Islam Arif, a councillor candidate of Ward-19 of Dhaka South City Corporation, alleged AL activists had beaten six of his supporters while they were hanging posters around 9:30pm on Sunday.

However, police filed a case against him and his son alleging that they had attacked AL-backed councillor's vehicle which was used for campaigning, said Arif, a resident of Siddheshwari.

Adarsha Dhaka Adnolan, a pro-BNP platform, alleged that AL cadres snatched ballot papers from different polling stations last evening and forced presiding officers of those centres to sign those papers, which is a violation of electoral rules.

In a statement, ADA convenor Prof Emajuddin Ahmed and member-secretary Shawkat Mahmud said the snatched ballot papers are of mayoral candidates.

The polling centres included Dhaka University, Dhanmondi, Mohammadpur and Segunbagicha, the statement mentioned.

However, The Daily Star could not verify ADA's claims.

CHITTAGONG CITY CORPORATION
In Chittagong, BNP leaders said raids were conducted on the residences of most of their leaders and councillor candidates.

To dent the image of the BNP-backed mayoral candidate, colourful posters were pasted in almost all parts of the port city. In the poster, M Manjur Alam, who was the mayor for the last five years, is standing in water, seeking apology from the people for water-logging.

CEC BRIEFING

The CEC at a press briefing at the EC's media centre last evening said the army has been kept as a reserve force to boost mental strength of the voters.

All officers who will carry out electoral duties including the presiding officer and the polling officer have been asked to work impartially, he said.

The CEC also directed law enforcers to ensure security of voters so that they can return home safely.

throwing new faces into the deep end before every series and this one will not be an exception. Soumya Sarkar, who impressed in the ODI series, will be one of the two players to don the Test cap. But the one-day opener will have to bat at number six or seven with Tamim Iqbal expected to open the innings alongside Imrul Kayes. Rubel Hossain however is set to get a new ball partner in a gangling Mohammad Shahid.

The team will comprise six batsmen, one all-rounder in Shakib Al Hasan and four bowlers - a leg spinner and a surprise off-spinner Shuvagata Hom ahead of an impressive left-arm spinner Tajul Islam. Tajul can however, be in the side if he is chosen ahead of Jubair.

Whether Bangladesh are capable of taking 20 Pakistan wickets on a pitch that has not changed a bit (a hard and bald surface that is likely to hold firm even on the fifth day) remains the key question.

Tigers' coach Chandika Hathurusingha's answer won't help much: "I can tell you after the game." Chandika, who is increasingly becoming dominating with the success of the Tigers, however said that the first session today will be very crucial for his side.

The first morning of a Test match is always crucial as it actually sets the trend. But whoever wins the first session, it's the team that wins most of