

Extremism often

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Kaye noted that most CVE programmes fail to provide definitions for key terms, such as "extremism" or "radicalization", says a press release.

"In the absence of a clear definition, these terms can be used to restrict a wide range of lawful expression," he said.

"Some governments target journalists, bloggers, political dissidents, activists and human rights defenders as 'extremists' or 'terrorists', criminalizing and detaining them, using legal systems to counter broad and unclear offences," Kaye warned.

"The harm is felt not only by journalists but also by...the public that deserves the right to know and to access information of public interest," he said.

He also cautioned that CVE-inspired efforts – including content removal, surveillance, the blaming of security tools like encryption – risk undermining the potential of digital technologies to foster freedom of expression and access to information and to provide avenues for counter-speech.

"Freedom of expression plays a critical role in promoting equality and in combating intolerance, and the role the media, the Internet and other digital technologies play in keeping society informed is essential," said Kaye.

For him, "limiting the space for freedom of expression and restricting civic space advances the goals of those promoting, threatening and using terrorism and violence".

In another declaration marking the day, the European Union condemned the increasing level of intimidation and violence individuals, including journalists, human rights defenders and media actors, face worldwide when exercising online and offline the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

EU High Representative Federica Mogherini said the EU was determined to fight laws or practices that impose censorship, encourage self-censorship or provide legal penalties, including criminal, financial and administrative sanctions, misuse of market powers and poor economic conditions.

"The EU reaffirms its determination to promote and support, freedoms of opinion and expression as rights to be exercised by everyone everywhere, based on the principles of equality, nondiscrimination and universality - through any media and regardless of frontiers," she said.

Mogherrini noted that the rights include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and are a key component of democratic governance and development.

People need to be fully informed to be able to form an opinion and participate in decision-making processes affecting their lives, she said.

Freedom of information also contributes to better governance as it enhances transparency in public affairs and can be used as a tool to make governments accountable for their actions, in particular when access to information results in the exposure of human rights violations or corruption practices, she said.

Ensuring access to information can serve to promote justice and reparation, in particular after periods of grave violations of human rights, says the declaration received here yesterday.

In another statement, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged governments, politicians, businesses and citizens to commit to nurturing and protecting an independent, free media.

"Without this fundamental right, people are less free and less empowered. With it, we can work together for a world of dignity and opportunity for all," he said.

UK Foreign Office Minister Baroness Anelay also issued a statement, saying many journalists were still forced to operate in dangerous environments and routinely faced violence and intimidation from extremists, criminal gangs and governments.

Female journalists are disproportionately harassed for their work, particularly online. "We must do more to tackle the impunity that goes with these crimes," she said.

Anelay said they recently saw some very disturbing instances of people under attack for sharing their opinions, or for the views and communities they represent.

"In promoting human rights and equality, they are as much on the 'frontline' as the traditional war reporter – and I commend their bravery," she added.

"Promoting freedom of the press and the right to access information is not just the right thing to do; it is also the smart thing to do," she said.

"Where it is denied, we see a stifling of healthy debate and innovation, harming a country's long term social and economic prospects," she added.

She said the Foreign & Commonwealth Office spent over £500,000 in 2015 on nine freedom of expression projects, including mapping threats to journalists and journalists and informing bloggers and online activists about rights and protection issues.

Rejoinder, our reply

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there was a rush of voters. He was using the official seal on the back side of the ballot paper," Rahim said in the rejoinder.

He termed the news (actually a photo caption) on fake voting "false, baseless and fabricated."

Our reply
When The Daily Star correspondents went to the centre in question around 1:30pm on April 23, at best three voters were seen in the polling centre. The presiding officer was heard to announce it was lunchtime and voting would resume after a break (under the law, voting should continue without a break). There was no voter in booth No. 3 of the centre at that time.

The agents of BNP and independent candidates were heard complaining to police and the presiding officer of fake votes cast by agents of the ruling party candidate. But neither the police nor the presiding officer seemed to act on the complaints.

At this, agents of BNP and the independent candidates left the polling centre. Despite presence of journalists at the centre, fake voting continued. The Daily Star correspondent and the photographer were present at the centre

for about an hour. At least two other TV journalists were present at the time and witnessed the whole incident. This newspaper is not disclosing their names as they do not want to be identified.

Our photo clearly shows a man stamping ballot papers as a policeman looks on.

In the rejoinder, the presiding officer claimed that the man seen in the photo was Nasir Uddin who was a "polling officer" and was "helping" the assistant presiding officer by stamping the official seal "on the back page" of ballot papers.

Our photo shows the man was stamping on the symbol printed on the front of the ballot papers. In the photo, symbols of the candidates are seen to his right and the back pages of the ballot papers are to his left.

About the "rush" at the centre, as already stated, when the series of photos were taken there were hardly any voters.

A close look at the photo published in The Daily Star on April 24 will make it clear that there is a seal on the "boat" symbol [symbol of the ruling party candidate] on the ballot paper the man was holding in his hand.

We stand by our photo.

No compromise

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programme to mark the World Press Freedom Day 2016 yesterday.

"We can't vehemently deny that people are afraid to speak up. We can't accept this situation in a country that gained its independence through a liberation war," human rights activist Sultana Kamal said at the seminar.

It would be a great blow to the spirit of the Liberation War if people were denied their right to freedom of expression, she said.

Referring to the bloggers who have been attacked for exercising the right, the former caretaker government adviser also said it was a matter of sorrow that they, instead of being provided with protection, were being held responsible.

Since February 2013, several secular online activists and a publisher were hacked to death with sharp weapons by suspected militants.

Quoting a local rights body, Prof AJM Shafiq Alam Bhuiyan, chairman of Dhaka University's Television and Film Studies department, said there were 244 incidents in the country last year in which people, including journalists, were harassed, attacked or murdered.

He, however, criticised the organisation for not "providing an analysis of when, where, why and how these incidents happened and what measures had been taken by the government to address the issues".

Replying to a query, the teacher, who presented the keynote paper "Fostering Freedom of Expression in Bangladesh", also expressed concern as activists of a party filed cases against a newspaper editor across the country over the same issue.

Freedom House, a global organisation working for the expansion of freedom and democracy, in its 2016 report ranked Bangladesh 49 on the freedom status and identified it as partly free country with partly free press and online media.

The report observed, "Bangladesh received a downward trend arrow due to a series of high-profile murders by Islamic militants, increasing restrictions on critical journalists and censorship of media context," mentioned the keynote paper.

In its report, the Reporters Without Borders said there was a "disturbing" decline in respect for media freedom at global and regional levels last year.

University teachers

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general of FBUTA, demanded speedy trial of the murder case, and requested prime minister's directives to law enforcement agencies to have the killers arrested quickly.

FBUTA will submit a memorandum to the home ministry tomorrow.

Prof Rezaul's daughter Rizwana Hasin Shotovi called for an end to the culture of impunity. "I said many things in the 11 days but I want to say only one thing -- justice for my father's killing," she said.

Rajshahi lawmaker Fazle Hossain Badsha, Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology (Ruet) Teachers' Association President Prof Nirendranath Mustafa, Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur Teachers' Association General Secretary Tabir Rahman, and VC of Bangladesh Open University Prof Mukaddam Hossain also spoke.

The RU English department, where Prof Rezaul taught, has been abstaining from holding classes for the last 11 days and brought out a silent procession yesterday.

Ruta held a candle-light vigil in the evening.

Meanwhile, police claimed that a certain Islamist group orchestrated the killing and ideological differences were the reason behind the murder, reported our Rajshahi correspondent.

Bangladesh ranked 144 among 180 countries in terms of press freedom in 2015.

"In Bangladesh, it is a bad idea to criticise the constitution or Islam, the state religion," the report said.

Prof Shafiqul also called for creating a culture of tolerance to ensure press freedom, protecting those holding dissenting opinions and trying the incident in which journalists were attacked.

Chief Information Commissioner Prof Golam Rahman termed any attempt to control the media a negative attitude. He also said the new media was a "new challenge" and suggested socially boycotting the culprits who are out to spread hatred online.

Journalist Selim Samad said formulation of laws restricting expression of opinion was unnecessary as "people themselves reject anything that is false".

The speakers also criticised section-57 of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act.

According to the section, if any person deliberately publishes or transmits false, obscene and derogatory information in a website or in any other electronic form, he or she could be imprisoned and fined.

Many who oppose the section say it violates the constitutional provisions regarding equality before law, freedom of thought, and free speech.

bdnews24.com Editor-in-Chief Toufique Imrose Khaliqi chaired the programme. Head and representative of Unesco Bangladesh Beatrice Kaldun, columnist Syed Badrul Ahsan, among others, spoke.

Shameem Ara Sheuli, executive director of Institute of Communication Studies, and Kamrul Hasan Monju, executive director of Mass-line Media Centre, were also present.

Meanwhile, Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu yesterday told BBC Bangla service that the government did not pass any law that interfered with people's freedom of expression. Also, the government did not consider the media an opponent but a friend of democracy, he said.

The media is under threat from militants, terrorists and the mafia gangs, which are outside the country, he said, adding that "the government

"The information police gathered so far reveals that there were more ideological, social and cultural differences than any personal enmity that motivated his killers," said Sardar Tomizuddin Ahmed, additional commissioner of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police.

"The killers also intended to let the society and the state know that they are active in the country," he said, without naming any outfit.

He said police identified some three killers and things would become clear when they are caught.

Another senior police official, seeking anonymity, told The Daily Star that police were looking for a student of the English department who had been missing from home for the last one and a half years.

Police claimed that they had interrogated his father and brother who said Shariful did not communicate with them.

Meanwhile, police are also interrogating three arrested persons in the murder case. They are Raihan Ali, the imam of Prof Rezaul's village mosque, and two Islami Chhatra Shibir men Khairul Islam and Hafizur Rahman.

Unknown assailants hacked Prof Rezaul to death near his house in Rajshahi city on April 23.

The Detective Branch of RMP is investigating the case.

Nisha Biswal

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During her two-day visit, Biswal is expected to call on Hasina, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal and other high government officials.

Biswal will meet government officials to discuss the broader bilateral relationship and issues of shared concern regarding security, according to a media note issued yesterday by the Office of the Spokesperson of the Department of State, Washington, DC.

"She will also meet with the embassy community, and hold discussions with local human rights and civil society organisations," the note added.

Ahead of her visit, the US on Monday urged the Bangladesh government to ensure more secure environment for all citizens of the country.

Responding to a question, State Department Spokesperson John Kirby said the US is watching the Bangladesh situation "very closely".

"...our focus remains on urging the government of Bangladesh to provide a more secure environment for all of its citizens, one that nurtures the spirit of the people of Bangladesh and the pride with which they guard their own traditions of tolerance, peace, and diversity," he said during the daily press briefing.

Earlier, Secretary Kerry offered US support for the investigation into the attack that killed Xulhas and Tonoy on April 25.

J&J loses

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Shower Powder on her genitals for decades. According to her lawyers, she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer and had to undergo a hysterectomy and related surgeries. Her cancer is now in remission.

Jere Beasley, whose firm represents Ristesund, said his client was gratified with the verdict. The jury's decision should "end the litigation" and compel J&J to settle the remaining cases, he said.

J&J shares were down 18 cents in after-hours trading to \$112.57.

The verdict followed a \$72 million jury award by the same court in February to the family of a woman who died from ovarian cancer after years of using talc powder for feminine hygiene.

That verdict, which J&J is appealing against, sparked renewed interest in talc-powder lawsuits among plaintiffs' lawyers as well as consumers of J&J powder products. But scientists have told Reuters that the evidence of a real danger is inconclusive.

Plaintiffs in talc litigations filed with Missouri and New Jersey state courts have accused J&J of failing for years to warn its customers that talc was linked to an increased risk of ovarian cancer. J&J said it acted properly in developing and marketing the products.

The only other case over talc powder and ovarian cancer resulted in a mixed verdict in South Dakota federal court in 2013. While those jurors found J&J negligent, they awarded no damages to the plaintiff whose cancer was in remission at the time of the trial.

Light at end

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wide, have been constructed to connect the area with old Uttara, Mirpur, Pallabi and Ashulia.

The project includes plots for a police station and an intelligence agency office. Lands have been allocated for fire service and passport office also.

Dhaka Electric Supply Company has installed electricity poles throughout the area while Rajuk is seeking government approval for gas connection, which has remained restricted since 2010 due to gas supply shortfall.

Dhaka Water Supply and Sewage Authority is also installing deep tube-wells to ensure water supplies.

In addition to having designated bus terminal in the area, Uttara third phase is also the starting point for the country's first metro rail project. Rajuk has given 59 acres of lands to facilitate metro rail construction and its storage facilities.

Project director Golam Mostafa notes that once completed, Uttara third phase project would create jobs for at least two lakh people in local business, education and other sectors.

"We had visited several residential projects in Malaysia, Sri Lanka and India before we designed the project...This will be an iconic project if we succeed in achieving the goals," he said.

Located at the north-west corner of the capital, surrounded by the Tongi-Ashulia Beribadh in the north and Ashulia-Mirpur Beribadh in the west, this project was launched in 1999 with the goal to complete it within five years.

Nizami's review verdict

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Defence lawyer Khandker Mahub Hossain on the other side expected "justice" for his client.

During hearing of the review petition yesterday, the attorney general prayed to the SC to uphold Nizami's death penalty, saying the International Crimes Tribunal-1 had sentenced him to death rightly based on relevant evidence and documents and statements of witnesses.

The Appellate Division also properly upheld the ICT-1 verdict after examining the relevant evidence and documents and statements of witnesses and there was no scope for the SC for reviewing its verdict, he argued.

Mahubey Alam also argued that the Jamaat chief had instigated the Al-Badr, an auxiliary force of the Pakistani occupational army, through delivering speeches and writing articles in newspapers to commit the crimes against humanity including killing the intellectuals during the country's Liberation War in 1971.

Defence counsel Khandker Mahub Hossain has meanwhile told

the SC that there is no scope to sentence Nizami to death, as he had no direct participation in the offences mentioned in the charges brought against him.

The prosecution have failed to prove the charges against Nizami, he said, adding that a collaborator cannot be punished, as 195 Pakistani prisoners of war have been released without any trial under a 1974 Indira-Mujib Treaty.

Khandker Mahub Hossain, however, did not place any arguments against the two charges on which the SC has upheld his client's life imprisonment.

The ICT-1 on October 29, 2014 handed down the death penalty on Nizami on four charges of war crimes including murdering intellectual during the war. The 71-year-old was also awarded life imprisonment on four other charges.

The SC on January 6 this year upheld his death sentence on three charges and life term imprisonment on two other charges. The ICT issued the death warrant against him hours after the SC had released its full verdict on March 15.

Long-haul bus fare

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who frequently travels on Dhaka-Khulna route.

Whenever the government increases fuel prices, bus fares are hiked by large amounts. Although the fuel price is now reduced, bus fares are not adjusted proportionately, passengers alleged.

Mozammel Haque Chowdhury, secretary general of Bangladesh Passenger Welfare Association, said, "The fare cut is just eyewash and it will never be implemented because bus owners will charge passengers the previous fares making different excuses."

Communist Party of Bangladesh

(CPB) in a statement yesterday said the fare cut by 3 paisa was nothing but a farce.

Khandaker Enayet Ullah, secretary general of Bangladesh Road Transport Owners Association, claimed: "We will have to incur losses following the government decision to reduce fares."

The government on April 25 cut fuel prices by Tk 3 to Tk 10. The price of diesel and kerosene had been reduced to Tk 65 from Tk 68 a litre, octane to Tk 89 from 99 and petrol to Tk 86 from 96.

Bus fares in Dhaka and Chittagong metropolitan areas will remain unchanged as almost all the buses in the two cities run on CNG.

23,000 infants

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lakh births, according to official data.

The single factor of prevention of child marriages can ensure a longer period of education, reduction in the fertility rate and an increase in women's participation in jobs, Wahid said.

He stressed the importance of educating adolescents in remote areas on sexual and reproductive health rights, but at the same time cited shortage of manpower for the job.

Two thirds of the population in Bangladesh now belongs to the working age and a large number of them are youths, said Argentina Metavel, country representative of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

The government needs to make more investments in health and education of the young population to reap the benefits of the demographic scenario, she said.

Metavel also suggested looking seriously at certain pockets like Sylhet and Chittagong where maternal and child mortality rates are much higher than other divisions, and emphasised the need for training and recruiting skilled midwives for safe deliveries.

Gallows for 4 Razakars

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"Their role, act and conduct they had shown in accomplishing the crimes, already established, have proven them to be notorious human beings," said Justice Anwarul Haque, chairman of the three-member tribunal, while reading out the summery of the 330-page judgement.

Two other members -- Justice Md Shahinur Islam and Justice Md Shohrwardi -- of the tribunal also read out some portions of the judgement in presence of accused Shamsuddin, his family members, prosecutors, defence lawyers and journalists.

Expressing satisfaction over the judgment, Prosecutor Sultan Mahmud Simon said they dedicated the verdict to Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam who initiated the movement for the trial of war criminals. Yesterday was her birth anniversary.

Masud Rana, counsel for Shamsuddin, and Abdus Shukur Khan, state-appointed defence counsel for the four fugitives, however, expressed discontent over the verdict, saying their clients were deprived of justice.

Masud said a decision for filing appeal against the verdict would be made after consulting with his client.

According to the law, a war crimes convict could file an appeal with the Supreme Court within 30 days from the date of the verdict's pronouncement. If the fugitives are arrested or they surrender after the 30 days and seek the permission of the Appellate Division to file an appeal, the apex court has the discretionary power to consider it, experts say.

CHARGES AND PUNISHMENTS

According to the first charge, the five convicts were involved in the killing of eight people and injuring of another in Ayla, Bidyanagar and neighbouring

localities in Karimganj on November 12 in 1971. Shamsuddin, Nasir and Mannan were given death penalty, while Hafiz and Azharul were awarded jail until death.

Nasir is the lone accused of the second charge which was related to the killing of Miah Hossain of Ayla village on November 13. The tribunal gave capital punishment to Nasir for the offence.

According to the third charge, the five were involved in the abduction and killing of Abdur Gafur of Kalatali on September 26. For the offence, Hafiz was given death sentence, while Shamsuddin, Nasir and Azharul were awarded jail until death. Mannan was acquitted of the charge.

The five were involved in the abduction, torture and killing of Fazlur Rahman of Atkapara on August 23, according to the fourth charge. All the five were given jail until death for the crimes.

Shamsuddin was given death penalty for the fifth charge, which says he was involved in the killing of Paresch Chandra Sarkar of Rammagar on September 7.

According to the sixth charge, Mannan was involved in the torture and killing of Abu Bakar Siddique and Rapali Miah on August 25 and the tribunal handed down imprisonment until death to Mannan for the offence.

Mannan was given five years' rigorous imprisonment for the seventh charge which reads the convict was involved in arson and vandalism in Atkapara on September 15.

The sentences of imprisonment awarded to the convicted people shall run concurrently, and with the execution of the death penalty, other sentences will be merged with it, the court said.

With the latest verdict, two war crimes tribunal so far delivered 23 judgements where 31 people were convicted for the crimes they committed during the Liberation War in 1971.