

Protecting press freedom

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29
after the war against Iraq. The Bush Administration rationalised the Iraq War by saying that the country possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). And that Saddam Hussein's government was an imminent threat to the US and its allies. Based on intelligence information, the US and its allies also accused Saddam of patronising Al-Qaeda. CIA fed the press this cooked up story to justify the Iraq invasion. And the press spent no time to verify these false stories. By the time it understood that it was all a lie, the damage had already been done – the press lost its credibility. In the subsequent years world press invested to regain the credibility it lost. So it is evident that like any other sector the press needs to be governed by state laws and policies conducive to its freedom and freethinking.

Being a democratic country, Bangladesh must do more to ensure press freedom. The challenge before press freedom has been reflected in a number of international studies commissioned by different press freedom watchdogs. In Press Freedom Index 2016 of Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) Bangladesh was placed in 144th position among 180 countries.

Sadly, we see a different picture in Bangladesh. Recently, the government has introduced drafts of National Online Mass Media Policy 2015 and Digital Security Act (2016). In the past we have witnessed similar policies including National Broadcasting Policy (NBP) 2014, Bangladesh Information Security Policy Guideline 2013 and Information and Communication Technology (Amendment) Act 2013. Sadly, many parts of these policies and acts are contrary to freedom of expression and press freedom. Journalists and freethinkers are being framed, attacked and killed for reporting corruption and while on duty to cover news. Ruling party men often, feeling aggrieved or defamed, filed cases against journalists. According to Deutsche Welle, more than 100 arrests have been made under the ICT Act for alleged defamation of Bangabandhu and his kin. None of these cases were filed by the victim; rather, party men took the matter to court. The tendency is quite worrying. If not checked immediately, this tendency will turn out to be a political monster that may result in permanent damage to democratic values, freedom of expression, press freedom and the country's development.

Being a democratic country, Bangladesh must do more to ensure press freedom. The challenge before press freedom has been reflected in a number of international studies commissioned by different press freedom watchdogs. In Press Freedom Index 2016 of Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) Bangladesh was placed in 144th position among 180 countries. In the Freedom of the Press Index 2016 by Freedom House, Bangladesh's media was demoted as "not free" from its previous "partly free" position. Although Bangladesh moved two notches up in RSF's index from its previous position, the state of press freedom did not witness any significant improvement. Journalists and institutions that reject censorship and self-



ensorship risk different types of attacks either from the state itself or from powerful quarters who have the capacity to influence and use state institutions against the journalists. Those deemed too secular are also the target of Islamist groups. If the government is really committed to improve the scenario and ensure press freedom, it should not only formulate laws and policies conducive to press freedom but also establish new institutions and strengthen the existing ones that are closely related with press freedom. It should be mentioned that an independent National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) is yet to be established as per government's commitment made in August 2014 when it officially gazetted the National Broadcasting Policy 2014.

In the age of communication technology and digital media, one thing that cannot be done is barring the flow

of information and hindering people's access to information. This is the power of media, new media and press in this century that bombards us every moment with huge amounts of information. The media has evolved and become more active over the years with the help of technological innovation and access to information that has revolutionised the concept of freedom of expression. Free media constitutes the fourth pillar of democracy.

In the beginning of the last century we witnessed the birth of socialism and its rapid expansion till the 80s. Communism in the Soviet Union eventually also saw a downfall. Did its leaders ever know that the decline was evident? Either they were unaware or they tried to cover it up by curbing press freedom. The media was never free and could never report on the real state of development efforts by the socialist government. State media

became nothing but a propaganda tool of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). But absence of free media turned socialism into a complete failure as the people of Mother Russia had no access to information. Soviet leaders in turn had no scope to know the harsh realities and looming dangers that contributed to their downfall.

We can strengthen our fourth pillar and achieve target 16.10 that will ultimately guide our leaders and policymakers by freely monitoring SDG targets and thus letting them know whether they are on the right track or not. This will be possible only if we believe from the bottom of our hearts that press freedom is a key element for development and for attaining SDG targets for all.

*The writer is a communication for development professional.
E-mail: riyadh_ju@yahoo.com*

Heartiest Felicitations and Best Wishes on the 26th Anniversary of The Daily Star



Graduate Admission Summer 2017

NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY

Full time faculty members with Ph.D. degree from world's reputed universities are engaged in NSU's graduate education and research.

Values NSU Upholds: • Pluralism • Universality • Compassion • Interdisciplinarity • Sustainability

Graduate Programs

School of Business and Economics

Master of Business Administration (MBA)
Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA)
MS in Economics
Master in Development Studies (MDS)

School of Engineering and Physical Sciences

MS in Computer Science and Engineering (MSCSE)
MS in Electronics and Telecommunications Engineering (MSETE)
MS in Electrical and Electronics Engineering (MSEEE)

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

MA in English
- TESOL, Linguistics, Literature

School of Health and Life Sciences

MS in Biotechnology
MS in Environmental Science and Management
MPharm in Pharmacology and Clinical Pharmacy (MPharm PCP)
MPharm in Pharmaceutical Technology and Biopharmaceutics (MPharm PTB)
Master of Public Health (MPH)
Executive Master of Public Health (EMPH)

Application Requirements

Four-year bachelor degree or equivalent with at least Second class or GPA 2.75 on a scale of 4.00. Three-year bachelor degree with honors.
Students with inadequate coursework background may be advised to take additional prerequisite courses.

Admission test is waived for candidates with CGPA 3.0 from NSU or adequate score in GMAT or GRE and TOEFL.

Application Deadline
March 29, 2017, 5:00 pm

Admission Test
March 31, 2017
Friday 10:00 am
at NSU Campus

Financial Aid

Graduate students have access to NSU's financial support system (up to 100 % based on academic performance) as well as opportunity to work for faculty and institutional research projects.
NSU offers scholarship over Tk. 10 crore per year for wards of freedom fighters, meritorious and students in need.

Application submission steps:

- Download application form from NSU website
- Deposit Tk. 1500 at any of the following banks: Southeast Bank, UCBL, DBBL, IFIC Bank, Bashundhara branch or One Bank Jagannathpur Branch, Dhaka
- Submit the application form with documents at GSR Office, NSU.

For more details, please contact

Office of Graduate Studies and Research (GSR)
ADM 620, Level-6, NSU, Bashundhara, Dhaka 1229
Tel: +880 2 55668200, **Ext:** 1062, 1072
Email: graduate.admissions@northsouth.edu



SCHOOL BANKING
TEACH THEM YOUNG

It is time to change the glass jar!



Your kids have a natural propensity to collect their little gifts in glass jars or plastic containers. Standard Bank brings banking that is only for them.

From today, let Standard Bank be their savings partner.



Standard Bank Limited

www.standardbankbd.com