

10-year-old girl raped in Pabna

Suspect arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A 10-year-old girl was allegedly raped by her co-villager in Bera municipality of Pabna on Tuesday evening.

Police arrested the accused, Aminul Islam, 32, at night. He was sent to jail when police produced him before a Pabna court yesterday.

The victim, of Teghari village, is a class-III student at Hatigara Government Primary School. She is undergoing treatment at Pabna Medical College Hospital.

Aminul, of the same village, took the girl to his house and raped her there after Maghrib prayers when everybody was busy distributing sweets and homemade food on the occasion of Shab-e-Barat, said the victim's mother while talking to journalists at Pabna Medical College Hospital yesterday.

When her daughter was returning home from a mosque with sweets and homemade food, Aminul asked her to go to his house and raped her in absence of his family members, the mother said.

When her daughter reached home, she was bleeding heavily. They then took her to Bera Upazila Health Complex and doctors referred her to Pabna Medical College Hospital for better treatment, the mother added. Hospital sources said the girl was seriously injured and she had to undergo surgery. The victim was out of danger, but she was in trauma, they added.

Mozaffar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Bera Police Station, said police arrested Aminul in his house on Tuesday night.

"In primary interrogation, the arrestee confessed to the crime," the OC said, adding that victim's father filed a case against Aminul yesterday.

The villagers are demanding punishment of the culprit.

Experts

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All of it was information that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) already had and has already commented on," said Mark Fitzpatrick, executive director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies and an expert on nonproliferation.

Echoing Fitzpatrick is Jeffrey Lewis, another nonproliferation expert and scholar the Middlebury Institute of International Studies. "Everything Netanyahu said from the name of that [Iranian nuclear development] plan down to the fine details was described in the IAEA's final report about Iran's nuclear weapons program, so there was nothing new about the scope of that program."

Both experts agreed on the most surprising element of Netanyahu's presentation -- that Israel had managed to acquire what appeared to be a large portion of Iran's nuclear archive in what Netanyahu called one of the country's greatest "intelligence achievements."

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo endorsed the authenticity of the materials.

Hindu teacher

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Circular, they wrote that I intend to perform Hajj. I am in deep discomfort. Please do something to save my honour with the issuance of a corrected circular," he said.

Prof Motiar Rahman, principal of the college, told The Daily Star that he forwarded the leave application in which it was mentioned that Arun wanted to visit India.

A professor of a government college, wishing to go on leave, needs to submit his application, along with seven other documents, to the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE). After processing the file, the DSHE sends it to the ministry for its approval after which they prepare a government order for the applied leave, said a ministry official, wishing for anonymity.

This mistake might have taken place as many teachers were applying for lengthy leaves to perform Hajj, he said.

The circular issued on April 30, which was available on social media, showed that he was granted leave from July 25 to September 12 to perform Hajj. It was, however, not found in the ministry website yesterday.

Murshida Sharmin, deputy secretary of the ministry, who signed the circular, could not be contacted despite numerous attempts.

Mollah Jalal Uddin, additional secretary of the division, said he was unaware of the issue and would be able to make a comment once he is notified.

Bangladesh's rose

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Military spending in 2017 represented 2.2 percent of global gross domestic product (GDP) or \$230 per person, according to the report.

The report mentioned that the United States continued to have the highest military expenditure in the world with China coming in at second. China also leads continued spending increase in Asia and Oceania.

It also showed that Russia's military spending fell for the first time since 1998 but military expenditure rose in Central and Western Europe while higher spending by Saudi Arabia drove the increase in the Middle East.

"Continuing high world military expenditure is a cause for serious concern," Ambassador Jan Eliasson, chair of the SIPRI Governing Board, said. "It undermines the search for peaceful solutions to conflicts around the world."

"The increases in world military expenditure in recent years have been largely due to the substantial growth in spending by countries in Asia and Oceania and the Middle East, such as China, India and Saudi Arabia," said Dr Nan Tian, a researcher with the SIPRI Arms and Military Expenditure (AMEX) programme.

The report showed that military expenditure in Asia and Oceania rose for the 29th successive year.

China, the second largest spender globally, increased its military spending by 5.6 percent to \$228 billion in 2017; India spent \$63.9 billion on its

military in 2017, an increase of 5.5 percent compared with 2016 while South Korea's spending, at \$39.2 billion, rose by 1.7 percent between 2016 and 2017.

At \$66.3 billion, Russia's military spending in 2017 was 20 percent lower than in 2016, the first annual decrease since 1998.

Driven, in part, by the perception of a growing threat from Russia, military spending in both Central and Western Europe increased in 2017, by 12 and 1.7 percent, respectively. Many European states are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and, within that framework, agreed to increase their military spending.

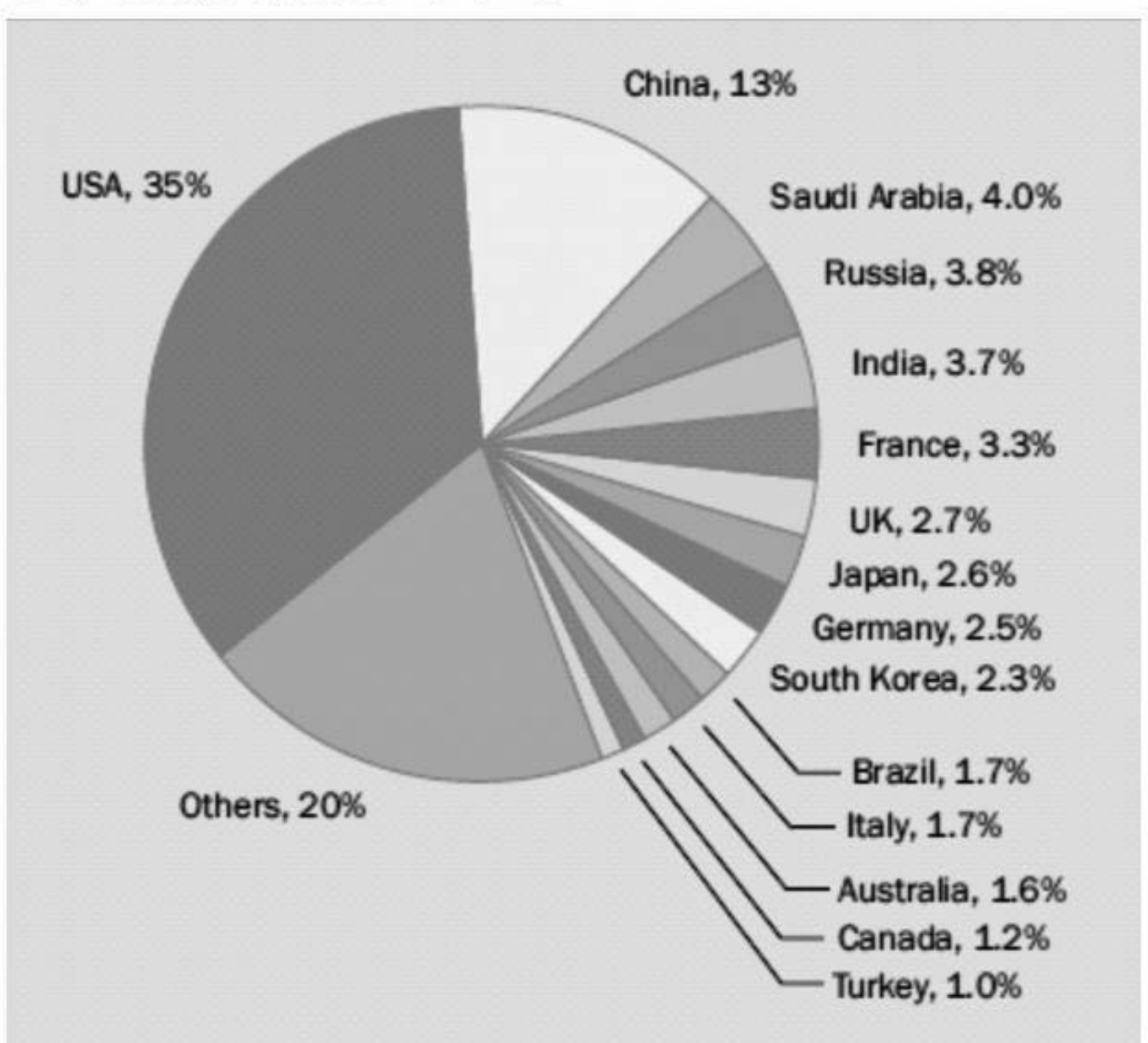
Total military spending by all 29 NATO members was \$900 billion in 2017, accounting for 52 percent of worldwide expenditure.

Military spending in the Middle East rose by 6.2 percent in 2017 and spending by Saudi Arabia increased by 9.2 percent in 2017 following a fall in 2016.

With a total outlay of \$69.4 billion, Saudi Arabia had the third highest military expenditure in the world in 2017.

Iran (19 percent) and Iraq (22 percent) also recorded significant increases in military spending in 2017.

The US spent more on its military than the next seven highest-spending countries and at \$610 billion, its military spending remained unchanged between 2016 and 2017.



Air pollution

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in terms of the presence of fine particulate matter with a diameter between 2.5 and 10 micrometres (PM10) in air.

While the acceptable levels of PM10 in every cubic metre is 60, in Dhaka's air it is 147. It is 292 in Delhi and 284 in Cairo.

The data focuses on particulate matters with a diameter between 2.5 and 10 micrometres (PM10 or less) and particles with a diameter of less than 2.5 micrometres (PM2.5).

The PM2.5 includes toxins like sulphate and black carbon, which pose the greatest health risks as they can penetrate deep into the lungs or cardiovascular system.

Non-communicable diseases are the leading causes of deaths globally and air pollution contributes significantly to NCDs such as cardiovascular diseases, respiratory diseases and lung cancer.

Cleaning up the air will help prevent NCDs, particularly among women and vulnerable groups such as children, those already ill and the elderly, Poonam Khetrapal Singh, regional director, WHO South-East Asia, said in a press release issued from Delhi on Tuesday.

The WHO recognises that air pollution is a critical risk factor for NCDs, causing an estimated one-quarter (24 percent) of all adult deaths from heart disease, 25 percent from stroke, 43 percent from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and 29 percent from lung cancer.

According to the WHO, Dhaka is ranked as one of the top megacities in the South East Asian region where residents are exposed to pollutant air particulates.

More than 4,300 cities in 108 countries are now included in WHO's ambient air quality database, making this the world's most comprehensive database on ambient air pollution. Since 2016, more than 1,000 additional cities have been added to the database, which shows that more countries are measuring and taking action to reduce air pollution than ever before.

The WHO is the custodial agency

for the Sustainable Development Goal Indicator to substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from air pollution by 2030.

The distribution of the seven million deaths is largely uneven with the vast majority of the pollution-induced deaths being taking place on the poorer countries.

"Air pollution threatens us all, but the poorest and most marginalised people bear the brunt of the burden," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director-general of WHO, said in a statement.

"It is unacceptable that over three billion people -- most of them women and children -- are still breathing deadly smoke every day from using polluting stoves and fuels in their homes. If we don't take urgent action on air pollution, we will never come close to achieving sustainable development."

More than 90 percent of air pollution-related deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries, mainly in Asia and Africa, followed by low- and middle-income countries of the Eastern Mediterranean region, Europe and the Americas, the WHO said.

2 die inhaling

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At around 2:30pm, Hasan fell unconscious when he was pickling rawhide in a tank, where it is processed in a mixture of chemicals, Abul Kalam Azad, president of Tannery Workers' Association, said.

Mahabub and Moazzem had fallen sick when they went to help Hasan, he added.

Later, other workers rushed to the scene and took the three to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, where Hassan was declared dead.

The other two were referred to DMCH, said Azad, adding that Mahabub was declared dead after being taken there.

Mohsinul Kadir, officer-in-charge of Savar Model Police Station, said they are primarily suspecting that poisonous gas inhalation and chemical toxicity are the causes of death, adding that they are currently investigating the incident.

Project

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They hope that they will be able to illustrate the dangers of climate change by watching to see how long the sculpture takes to melt.

"Global warming is one of the most important issues and topics of today, There are still people who ponder whether it's a real issue," Nicolas Prieto, the chairman of the group, said in a statement on the association's website.

"We want to build the monument for all of us, so we can see how long the sculpture lasts before melting," the statement reads. "Often people only believe something when they see it with their own eyes."

Trump has previously doubted whether climate change exists, and has at times even said that parts of the world would benefit from the effects. At other times he has claimed that climate change was "created by and for the Chinese in order to make US manufacturing non-competitive".

The president has acted accordingly during his time in the Oval Office as well. He has appointed a head of the Environmental Protection Agency who had previously sued that same agency over greenhouse gas emissions guidelines. He has also overseen a government that is poised to approve offshore drilling in areas that had previously been off limits.

If "Project Trumpmore" raises enough money, the group says that they will install a live stream of the sculpture as it melts.

Trump has previously mused about being added to Mount Rushmore -- the rock sculpture carved into the side of a mountain in South Dakota featuring several prominent American presidents. He even said during a rally in Ohio last year that he thinks there's a possibility he could be added.

Heritage

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Amir Uddin, who died about eight years ago, is a controversial figure. He is the father of the property's current occupants. Fazlur says he was an anti-liberation leader from adjacent Algapara.

"Amir was a local Peace Committee leader during the Liberation War," agrees Itna upazila's freedom fighter commander Nazrul Islam Thakur.

"At first Amir took a 'lease' on the property," Fazlur states. "During the mass upsurge of 1969 the community briefly evicted him; during Yahya Khan's rule he returned."

"Many valuables were looted from the home during the Liberation War," he continues. "Hundreds of books from Bose's library were burned. There used to be two large ponds in front of the home but those were filled in over the years." Many people in the community want the Bose property preserved as a public heritage site. "On various occasions there have been protests to free the homestead," says Roushan Ali Rossow, a writer and retired schoolteacher from nearby Chilni village. "As influential quarters have an interest, it has never happened."

"If there is any lease it should be cancelled," agrees Moazzem Hossain Babul, former vice-president of the Ananda Mohan College Students' Union and Awami League's district-level secretary. "The Bose property should be freed from occupation. That land is priceless heritage for greater Mymensingh and should be used for public purpose. We will soon launch an agitation to free it."

Kishoreganj district's freedom fighter commander Md Asad Ullah likewise calls for the property to be recovered and developed as a museum.

"A memorandum demanding release of the homestead was submitted to the prime minister last year," says Kamrul Hasan Khan Jewel, convener of local organisation Jagorito Itna.

Abul Hye, one of Amir's sons and also Jaysiddhi union AL president, refuted the allegation that his father worked against liberation. "My father took out a lease on around two acres, including the Bose homestead, in 1967," he says. "After the Liberation War, the lease was renewed for 99 years. My father wasn't involved with the local Peace Committee. There is no such report in the area."

Md Mohiur Rahman Khan, Itna upazila nirbahi officer, says no allegation concerning the legality of the lease has been raised. "As far as I know the two-acre land was taken on lease, so it is not land grabbing," he says. "As no allegation has been made I have no scope to investigate."

Rakhi Roy, regional director at the archaeology department, says the property is not listed with the department. "We will send a team to the site soon to submit a report to the cultural affairs ministry. If the place is deemed to have preservation merit we will proceed accordingly."

Carry out a proper probe

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of southern Bangladesh as well as homes they fled in Myanmar, Security Council members called for them to be allowed a safe return.

Speaking at the press conference at the end of a four-day visit to Myanmar and Bangladesh, UNSC members on Tuesday highlighted the need to establish conditions within Myanmar that allow the "safe, voluntary and dignified return" of refugees as well as accountability for the human rights violations that prompted the exodus.

Myanmar must carry out a "proper investigation" into the alleged crimes against its minority Rohingya population, Britain's Permanent Representative to the UN Karen Pierce said.

She called for the "root causes" of the crisis -- which has seen hundreds of thousands of Rohingya flee Myanmar for neighbouring Bangladesh as a result of what the UN has described as a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing" by government security forces -- to be addressed.

"In order to have accountability there must be a proper investigation," said Pierce adding, "It doesn't matter whether it is international or domestic, as long as it's credible." The probe could be carried out either by the International Criminal Court or Myanmar's own government, she said.

She suggested the UN Security Council could consider helping Myanmar collect evidence of crimes committed during a military crackdown on the Rohingya people. "What we've got to do on the council is to think how best to turn that into something operational, so that the evidence gets collected and given either to the Burmese authorities or to some sort of international mechanism."

During her meeting with the UNSC envoys in Naypyidaw on Monday, Myanmar's de facto leader Suu Kyi pledged investigations if credible evidence was provided.

However, Sen Gen Min Aung Hlaing denied his force committed crimes against the Rohingya people like rape and sexual violence as he addressed UNSC delegates separately in Naypyidaw on the same day.

The army chief posted a summary of his meeting with the UN envoys on his official Facebook page, in which he attributed the refugee crisis to "terror acts of extremist Bengali terrorists".

Responding to questions from UNSC ambassadors, the senior general said the army is always disciplined and takes action against anyone who breaks the law.

He denied that soldiers under his command had committed sexual

violence during the crackdown contradicting hundreds of testimonies recorded by international organisations, UN officials, experts and human rights activists.

"No sexual violence happened in the history of Myanmar Tatmadaw [armed forces]," he added and urged the UNSC envoys to carefully study firm documents and documentary photos supplied to them by the military in order to learn the truth.

During the meeting, the army distributed documents and photo albums related to the Rakhine issue to the members of the UNSC team.

Reuters reported last week that US investigators have been documenting accusations of murder, rape, beating and other possible crimes through more than 1,000 interviews with Rohingya men and women in Cox's Bazar refugee camps.

On repatriation issue, the UNSC envoys stressed the necessity of UN involvement in the process and negotiations between Myanmar and the UN refugee agency on potential cooperation. They also called for speeding up the process of safe, voluntary and dignified return of the Rohingyas.

"We are not asking the Myanmar government something new. They are a member of the United Nations and they are a member and state party to many UN conventions. The return of refugees should be in conformity with international standards," said Kuwait's representative, Mansour Al-Otaibi.

He told reporters Tuesday that the Security Council wanted refugees to return to their homes in Rakhine, but this couldn't take place until Myanmar officials removed conditions and restrictions on their return.

"Basically the message we convey is it is very important to improve the security conditions for the return of the refugees, and also collaboration with the international organisations, particularly the UN," said Gustavo Meza-Cuadra, ambassador of Peru. "And we also mentioned the importance of the investigation regarding what happened here before the refugees went to Bangladesh."

The UNSC delegation has also asked the Myanmar government to sign the memorandum with UN agencies in regards repatriation.

"We believe that if the memorandum of understanding can be signed quickly and the UN agencies given unconditional access, that would be the best thing to do with the scale of the problem," said Karen Pierce, Britain's ambassador to the UN.

The report is based on the reports of Reuters, AP, AFP, UN News, Aljazeera and Frontier Myanmar.

Attacks against journos

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activists in Bangladesh are raising serious concerns over the proposed Digital Security Act-2018.

They have been arguing that several sections of the proposed law would hamper freedom of speech and independent journalism.

The draft law has already been placed before parliament.

The United Nations declared May 3 as World Press Freedom Day in 1993. This year's theme of the day is "Keeping Power in Check: Media, Justice and The Rule of Law."

UN Secretary General António Guterres, in a statement, said, "I call on governments to strengthen press freedom, and to protect journalists. Promoting a free press is standing up for our right to truth."

BANGLADESH'S SITUATION

In a statement marking the occasion, Article 19 said the nature of violations of the right to freedom of expression was changing significantly.

"Over the last five years, criminalisation of expression and the use of laws to restrict expression have been a rising trend, while physical violence has been less employed to silence communicators."

Cases of legal harassment of communicators rose from 33 in 2013 to 169 in 2017 while the use of physical force and assault as a silencing tactic dropped from 173 in 2013, to 113 in 2017, it said.

"The problem of physical violence is still urgent. There were nearly twice as many physical attacks on journalists and human rights defenders in 2017 as there were the previous year, and attacks on journalists occurring with impunity, with investigations slow and convictions of perpetrators rare."

Almost 70 percent of violations were against grassroots and local journalists.

It observed that women journalists were not adequately protected from gender-specific threats, particularly on online platforms.

Local leaders and activists of the ruling party emerged as dominant groups acting against the safety and security of journalists. In a number of cases, the student wing of the ruling Awami League, were directly involved in violations, it added.

In many other cases, state actors including law enforcers were responsible for violations.

"Our new research reveals an urgent truth about the environment for expression in Bangladesh: violations of this crucial human right are more prevalent than ever. With elections on the horizon, we are deeply concerned about the situation," Tahmina Rahman MBE, ARTICLE 19's regional director for Bangladesh and South Asia, was quoted as saying in the statement.

"This spike in attacks on the rights of journalists and activists nationwide and continuing restrictive legal framework create fear and self-censorship, and prevents people in Bangladesh from speaking out, or exercising their human rights."

We call on the authorities to act to ensure that laws are brought in line with international human rights standards and attacks on our free speech do not continue to go unaddressed."

Although Bangladesh's position, according to World Press Freedom Index 2018 compiled by the RSE, remains 146th, the same as last year, self censorship among journalists was growing.

Instead of amending the ICT act, the government proposed a new digital security law in early 2018 "with vaguely-worded provisions that would allow the authorities to clamp down even more on dissent."

Transparency International Bangladesh yesterday urged the government to review some sections of the proposed act and repeal Section 57 of ICT Act.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE
RSE said the World Press Freedom Index reflected a growing animosity towards journalists.

"Hostility towards the media, openly encouraged by political leaders, and the efforts of authoritarian regimes to export their vision of journalism pose a threat to democracies."

It said hostility towards the media from political leaders is no longer limited to authoritarian countries, rather more and more democratically-elected leaders no longer see the media as part of democracy's essential underpinning, but as an adversary to which they openly display their aversion.

Verbal violence from politicians against the media is also on the rise in Europe, although it is the region that respects press freedom most, it said. It is the Middle East and North Africa region that has registered the biggest decline in Media freedom.