

Self-censorship not by choice

Journos, authors, artists say at Amnesty Int'l event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalists, authors and artists at a programme yesterday said they had to undergo self-censorship in recent years due to shrinking space of freedom of expression in the country.

Fear of reprisal from the state and formulation of repressive laws caused much concern and also limited their creative expressions, they said at an Amnesty International programme, marking World Press Freedom Day.

The rights group in partnership with Edward M Kennedy Center arranged the programme titled "Vent House" on the latter's premises in Dhaka.

Syed Rashad Imam Tanmoy, a cartoonist, said he has to look for alternative ways as restriction over publishing cartoons is more apparent now than a decade ago.

Publishing of political cartoons in newspapers has reduced, he said. "Now, there's little scope for committing 'error'."

Stand-up comedian Yamin Khan said once he used to perform comedies on politics, but he started to avoid that due to shrinking space of free expression.

Addressing the programme, acclaimed photographer Shahidul Alam said the current situation in the country was similar to that of living in a prison as people's freedom had been curbed manifold.

"Living in prison is the worst as one has no freedom there... But if I don't have such freedom outside how can I think I'm not in prison?" he said.

Protests and continuous questions should be put forward whenever there are attempts to curb people's freedom, said the photographer, who was in jail for

107 days last year on charge of "spreading propaganda and false information against the government".

He said Bangladesh has a glorious history of movements, spearheaded by cultural activists.

However, many of them have become "cautious" about what to say and when to remain silent as the time is not in their favour, said Shahidul.

"Favourable time does not come by itself, it has to be created," he added.

He said people have to possess enough courage to achieve freedom. However, one should also adhere to "self-censorship" to avert unwanted circumstances.

'CAMPAIGN TO RECLAIM FREEDOM' Saad Hammadi, South Asia campaigner of Amnesty International, in a statement said the event was part of Amnesty International's continued campaign for reclaiming freedom, which includes the right to freedom of expression in countries where people are met with heavy punishment for peacefully sharing opinions.

"People cannot freely express themselves without protection from the state. Censorship of information and the fear of reprisals dwindle quality of life, integrity and their accountability to the public," he said.

The programme, the first ever campaign event by Amnesty International in Dhaka, reflected on the attacks on media and online platforms, intrusion of privacy and repressive laws, which have been used against people's legitimate rights to freedom of expression, the statement said.

"When people don't know what they

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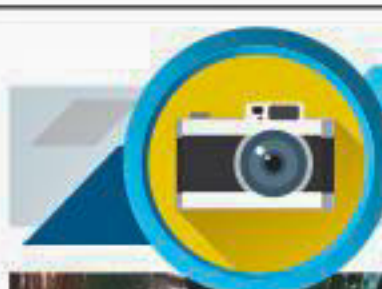


PHOTO OF THE DAY

AMRAN HOSSAIN



While the last couple of days have been full of anxiety due to cyclone Fani, nature sure has a way of blessing us with beautiful surprises. Yesterday's rain accompanied by gusty wind not only brought the temperature down, but also set this walkway in Ramna Park ablaze with crimson petals of Krishnachura. It seems that nature decided to paint the country's national flag with red petals against the rejuvenated greens.

DEATH THREAT FROM MILITANTS

Sultana Kamal files GD seeking security

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent human rights activist Sultana Kamal has filed a general diary with police seeking security, citing death threat from a militant group.

Abdul Latif, officer-in-charge of Dhanmondi Police Station, confirmed to The Daily Star that she filed a GD and sought security.

Cyber-crime unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police has been notified, he said, adding that Sub-inspector Harun-or-Rashid of Dhanmondi Police Station is investigating the matter.

"We have already enhanced security and patrolling to ensure her safety," he added.

According to the complaint, a militant group published a magazine titled "Lone Wolf" in March this year, where it narrated preparations to kill three prominent individuals including Sultana

Kamal.

The rights activist became a target of militant outfits since she was appointed as an adviser to the caretaker government in 2006, reads the complaint.

Sultana Kamal further said in the GD that United Nations and different international rights groups have already wanted to know what measures have been taken by the Bangladesh government to ensure her security as a human rights activist.

Expressing grave concern over the death threat, she sought steps for her safety and that of the other eminent persons named by the militant group.

Besides filing a GD with the police station, Sultana Kamal also submitted an application to the inspector general of police and Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner seeking security.

Loyalty to party has become a bigger priority than teaching

Says University Teachers' Network

DU CORRESPONDENT

University Teachers' Network, a left-leaning university teachers' group, yesterday declared that it could provide an alternative proposal by six months to "protect" universities of the country.

Professor Anu Muhammad of Jahangirnagar University made the declaration at a press conference in Dhaka University Teachers' Club, organised by the platform.

The economics professor alleged that a "polluted environment" has been created

in universities across the country due to different irregularities.

A section of public university teachers presented their observations made at the two-day teachers' convention titled "What kind of university do we want: higher education policy and structure" held on Jahangirnagar University campus on April 11 and 12.

"We speak of increasing allocation to the education and research sector very often. Allocating hundred and thousand crores for different universities is also talked about, and the main characteristic

of this budget is building and shopping," he said.

He said infrastructure allocation is being decided without checking whether that budget is suitable for education or even necessary for teachers and students.

"Without increasing the budget for education and research, a "polluted atmosphere" has been created in universities by increasing allocation [for infrastructure]," added Prof Anu.

Anu Muhammad said that loyalty to the ruling party has become a bigger priority

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Anisuzzaman to receive Saarc Lit Award



BSS, Dhaka

National Professor Anisuzzaman has been nominated for the Saarc Literature Award 2019.

The award will be handed over on May 21 in Bhutan, according to a Bangla Academy press

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Homebound people, mostly from southern region, wait at Sadarghat launch terminal. No vessels left the terminal for three days due to rough weather triggered by the cyclone Fani. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

The incredible POTATO

Potatoes are one of the most commonly consumed vegetables in Bangladesh and around the world. This starchy, tuber crop can be diced and added to curries, fried to crisp in delicious shapes and sizes, mashed, roasted, grounded to make flour... the possibilities are endless. Apart from its uses in savoury dishes, in many modern cuisines, chefs also use this vegetable to make delectable desserts.

Potatoes are an excellent source of Vitamin C and those consumed with the skin are a great source of potassium. Potatoes may also reduce the risk of high blood pressure and stroke. Moreover, potatoes contain a variety of phytonutrients, an element found in plant-based foods, that help prevent several diseases and also boost antioxidant activities. Unfortunately, most people eat potatoes in the form of greasy French fries or potato chips. Even baked potatoes are typically loaded down with fats such as butter, sour cream, melted cheese and bacon bits which can nullify its health benefits. Such treatment can make baked potatoes a potential contributor to heart attack. But take away the extra fat and deep frying, and a baked potato is an exceptionally healthy low-calorie, high-fibre food that offers significant protection against cardiovascular diseases and cancer.



An initiative of:
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Alim Uddin, a potato farmer from Shahbazpur, Jessore, shares his experience of growing this vegetable. Growing potatoes usually requires three ploughings, along with frequent harrowing and rolling, before the soil reaches a suitable condition: soft, well-drained and well-aerated. The potato crop typically grows from "seed potatoes", small tubers or pieces of tuber, sown to a depth of 5-10 cm. Farmers determine the spacing in between the seed tubers and the adjacent rows on the basis of soil quality and potato variety. As the potato plants become mature and the tubers are fully formed, the leaves gradually become yellowish and then brownish. It is always better to harvest the crop after these signs become evident in the field. Most varieties of potato are harvested in Bangladesh during winter.

Alim, along with many farmers of the area, provides vegetables for Shwapno under the Shuddho project. According to Alim, this initiative has helped him adopt the right agricultural practices for growing potatoes, especially in terms of learning about how much fertiliser or pesticide should be used. Farmers also have an opportunity to learn about the interval period between pesticide application and harvesting, known as the Pre-Harvest Interval (PHI).

Potatoes are grown in more than 100 countries, under temperate, subtropical and tropical conditions. It is a vegetable that can be paired up with almost any dish or consumed on its own to satiate one's taste buds. However, one should be careful as to not eat it in excess amounts, as it may bring adverse health effects.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

DHAKA TODAY

ART EXHIBITION
Dawn of Black
Organiser: Edge, The Foundation
Venue: Bay's Edgewater, Gulshan-2
Time: 10am

Venue: The Junction Dhaka, Gulshan-1
Time: 7pm

WORKSHOP
Intermediate Photography Workshop
Organiser: US Embassy
Venue: US Embassy
Time: 12pm

CELEBRATION
Birth Anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore
Venue: Bangladesh School of Harmony, Indira Road
Time: 7pm

MOVIE SCREENING
Films on Poets: Sylvia
Organiser: Red Shift Event, The Junction Dhaka

DRAMA
Janani Shahoshika
Organiser: Department of Theatre, Jagannath University
Venue: Jagannath University
Time: 6:30pm

Country committed to biosafety: minister

BSS, Dhaka

Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Shahab Uddin yesterday said the country is determined to implement action plans on biosafety according to the provisions of the Cartagena Protocol.

"Bangladesh has signed the Protocol on biosafety and thus, is committed to implement the provisions... Action plans have been adopted for its proper implementation," he said.

The minister was addressing an event titled "International Workshop on Biosafety" as chief guest at Brac Centre. The workshop was organised by the Department of Environment (DoE), said a ministry press release.

The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty governing the movements of living modified organisms (LMOs), resulting from modern biotechnology, from one country to another. It was adopted on January 29, 2000 as a supplementary agreement to the Convention on Biological Diversity and entered into force on September 11, 2003.

At the workshop, the minister mentioned that 170 countries including Bangladesh have signed the Cartagena Protocol on biosafety.

He said the country has enacted "Biosafety Rules of Bangladesh, 2012", "Biosafety Guideline of Bangladesh, 2008", "Biosafety Clearing House", "Guidelines for safety assessments of foods derived from genetically engineered plants", the press release added.

DoE Director General Dr Sultan Ahmed presided over the workshop where Environment Ministry Secretary Abdullah Al Mohsin Chowdhury was present as special guest.

Biosafety specialists from Bangladesh, India, Bhutan, Maldives, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippines participated in the workshop.

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