

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

265 journos attacked last year: Article 19

TIB calls for conducive environment for media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 631 incidences of attacks on journalists and human rights defenders took place in 2020, Article 19 in its annual report yesterday.

A total of 265 journalists were attacked in the process, said the rights body.

The report by the UK-based rights organisation also recorded three major incidents of blocking and filtering of online communications; 36 incidents of suppressing protesters by use of excessive force and six instances of hate crimes.

According to the report, about 16.32 percent attacks were assaults where 11 people sustained grievous injuries and 92 individuals suffered minor injuries while 47 people received threats.

In addition, 71.95 percent of the attacks on journalists and human rights defenders were legal harassment, where journalists and other communicators were implicated in various criminal cases for speaking out or expressing their views online.

Of these, 11 were criminal defamation cases, 410 were against online expressions.

In four cases, communicators were subjected to contempt of court proceedings for being vocal on social media.

The rights body found that almost all the attacks against journalists were due to publication of news or, while they were doing their jobs on the field against corruption, irregularities of government officials or local criminal groups.

Article 19 said as many as 1,600 journalists lost their jobs in 2020 due to closure and loss of income of media outlets during the Covid-19 pandemic and that journalists and the media industry are still trying to cope with this financial burden of the pandemic one year on.

"Article 19 expresses serious concerns about the rising numbers of cases against journalists and online communicators under the DSA [Digital Security Act] and overall lack of security and protection of journalists and online activists and media workers," said Faruq Faisal, regional director of Article 19 (Bangladesh and South Asia).

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Shopping malls thrive amid lax lockdown

Transport workers demand resumption of services

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lockdown imposed by the government to contain the second wave of Covid-19 appears to be in place only on paper, as there are little to no restrictions being implemented in reality.

Roads and shopping malls are crowded with vehicles and people amid the pandemic.

With Eid-ul-Fitr ahead, shopping centres and malls are filled with customers.

Visiting some major shopping malls and markets in Dhaka -- New Market, Chandni Chowk, Gausia, Noor Mansion, Chandrima Super Market, and Bashundhara City Mall -- yesterday, The Daily Star correspondents found customers pouring into the shops from 10am.

At most shopping centres, maintaining the health and safety rules appeared a big challenge due to the heavy flow of customers.

At the entry points of some markets, antiseptic mix was sprayed on customers, instead of providing them with hand sanitisers. Besides, there was not enough space inside most of the shops to maintain



This traffic jam at College gate on Mirpur Road resembles Dhaka as we once knew it -- long before lockdowns were on anyone's radar. The photo was taken yesterday around 10am.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

physical distancing.

During iftar, people were seen sitting in groups on the floors of Bashundhara City to take their meal.

Meanwhile, shop owners

demanding the business hour be extended till 12am, keeping iftar time in mind.

Bangladesh Doka Malik Samity (shop owners' association) sent a letter to the Prime Minister's

Office in this regard.

In the letter, they said that although the shops open at 10am, a good number of customers come in the afternoon from 3pm and do their shopping till 5:30pm before iftar. Many do their shopping after office time, so there is a heavy crowd of customers in malls starting from the afternoon.

On the other hand, as the businesses close by 8pm, few customers visit after iftar.

So the organisation demanded to extend the business hour till 12am ahead of Eid.

In the letter, they claimed that 95 percent people wear masks during shopping at the markets. However, during visits to popular markets and shopping malls, this correspondent found that many shopkeepers and customers wear masks incorrectly, and frequently take the masks off.

WORKERS DEMAND PUBLIC TRANSPORT RESUMPTION

Meanwhile transport workers yesterday brought out a procession in some parts of the city including

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

'It might create more panic'

HC bench refuses to interfere in govt's Covid measures

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A High Court bench yesterday said more panic might be created if it interfered with the government's decisions and actions regarding the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The government has been trying its best to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic. If we interfere in this situation, it might lead to more panic and confusion in the society," the bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Sardar Md Rashed Jahangir said, after a writ petition was filed seeking its directive on the government to formulate comprehensive short, mid and long-term national plans in Covid-19 management and to vaccinate all vulnerable citizens, irrespective of age.

The court refused to pass an order, asking how the government can formulate a comprehensive national plan for a virus whose patterns even national and international experts cannot predict.

The HC bench told the petitioners that the country is yet to reach an emergency situation where the court should pass such an order. It asked Mohammad Humayun Kabir Pallab, one of the writ petitioners, to wait and see how the situation develops and move the same writ petition should

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

HC clears way to hold FBCCI polls on May 5

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday cleared way for holding election to the posts of directors of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) on May 5.

The court discharged the rule it had issued earlier questioning the inaction of authorities to halt the election process.

The bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Sardar Md Rashed Jahangir came up with the order following a petition filed by election board of FBCCI.

Lawyer Imtiaz Moinul Islam told The Daily Star the petition filed by Amir Uddin Bipu challenging the election process is not acceptable as he is not a member of FBCCI.

There no legal bar to hold the elections, he said.

PRE-BUDGET DISCUSSION

Ensure economic incentive for indigenous people: MJF

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government in its next budget must ensure a special economic incentive for indigenous people severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, demanded leaders of indigenous rights organisations yesterday at a webinar organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF).

They also consider it essential to have a specific allocation for the indigenous community to make the development activities more inclusive.

The leaders also demanded a separate paragraph in the national budget while allocating funds for the development of indigenous people.

Even if the budget speech is short, there should be a description of the ethnic people, their identity, rights, culture, lifestyle, development etc. at least in one paragraph, they demanded.

The points were made at the webinar titled "Specific and Inclusive Budget for Ethnic People".

Bangladesh Adivasi Forum President

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Fake currency gang busted in Dhaka

Three arrested with notes worth Tk 46 lakh, equipment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detective Branch (DB) of police claimed to have arrested three persons yesterday in connection with note forgery from Kamrangirchar area of Dhaka.

Of the arrestees, Imam Hossain and Md Pias completed their diploma from the Government Polytechnic College in Barishal. One of them used to work as a network engineer and another as an engineer at a textile mill.

They joined hands with the leader of a note forgery gang, Jiban Hossain, to earn some easy money. Jiban used to pay each Tk 22,000 per month apparently.

Mashiur Rahman, deputy commissioner of Gulshan Division of DB police, told The Daily Star police arrested the three from a house in Kamrangirchar, acting on a tip-off. Police found counterfeit money from under the bed, under the mattress, hidden inside clothes in the closet, and seized around Tk 46 lakh worth of fake notes and counterfeit money-making materials, he said.

The stockpiled equipment was enough to make another Tk 1.5 crore worth of fake notes, said police.

During interrogation, Jiban told police that he was arrested three years back but coming out of jail, he started making fake notes again, said DC Mashiur.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

49

JOURNALISTS KILLED IN THE LAST YEAR

635

PRESS FREEDOM VIOLATIONS LINKED TO COVID-19 SINCE FEB. 2020



International Press Institute

These are global figures collected by IPI

“

A critical, independent and investigative press is the lifeblood of any democracy. The press must be free from state interference.

Nelson Mandela

1994 IPI World Congress in South Africa

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY 2021