

‘Rejection not the solution’

Article 19 concerned over Bangladesh’s steep decline in World Press Freedom Index

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Human-rights organisation Article 19 has expressed concern about Bangladesh’s steep decline in the World Press Freedom Index.

It also responded to the information minister’s dismissal of Bangladesh’s poor performance by saying that “rejection is not the solution”.

The World Press Freedom Index, which categorises how conducive a country is towards free and independent journalism, ranked Bangladesh 162nd out of 180 countries.

It demoted the country by ten points, rank-wise, compared to last year. In response, Information Minister Hasan Mahmud called the index “malicious”. He had said that those who are continuously spreading propaganda against Bangladesh abroad collect information from sources that are hostile towards the country and prepare reports.

“A blanket rejection of the index, or any other human rights related statement, step and report from the international community by the minister concerned is not the solution. It is rather the government’s responsibility to carefully review the issues raised by the index and if necessary, take appropriate steps to improve the situation,” said Faruq Faisel, regional director of Article 19 South Asia, in a statement circulated among the media.

“We are worried about the misuse of Digital Security

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Like his father and grandfather, Dipankar Chandra Pal (40) has been in the ancestral profession of making clay pots for sweet shops and festive occasions almost all his life. He sells each of the pots for Tk 18-20. Although his business took a hit during the pandemic, after the gruelling two years, it has gained a new life as festivities have returned. This photo was taken recently in Sirajdikhan upazila’s Daniyapara area, on the outskirts of the capital.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

DEATH ON ROAD

Motorbike crashes the leading cause

543 killed, 612 hurt in 427 road accidents in April

REASONS	RECOMMENDATIONS
Faulty vehicles	Improving drivers’ skills
Lack of skilled drivers	Fixing work hours for drivers
Slow-moving vehicles on highways	Increasing capability of BRTA
Poor traffic management	Separate highway lanes for slow-moving vehicles
People’s disregard for traffic laws	Full implementation of Road Transport Act

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 543 people were killed and 612 injured in 427 road accidents across the country in April, with road crashes involving motorbikes being the leading cause of the deaths, according to Road Safety Foundation.

A total of 206 people were killed in 189 accidents involving bikes, which accounted for 37.93 percent of the total deaths, it said in a statement yesterday.

The country’s major highways saw huge pressure of home-goers in the last week of April centring Eid-ul-Fitr, and many people left Dhaka by motorbikes in absence of public transport, which can be a major reason behind the crashes, said experts.

Among the deceased, 67 were women and 81 children, said the organisation, which collected the data from news reports. Some 116 pedestrians and 87 drivers and helpers were killed in accidents during this period.

Besides, at least eight people were killed and six remained missing in six waterway accidents, while 23 were killed and five injured in 21 train-related accidents.

The organisation blamed faulty vehicles, reckless driving, lack of skills, drivers suffering from physical and metal illnesses, operation of slow-moving vehicles on highways, youngsters riding bikes, poor traffic management, extortion, and people’s disregard for traffic laws.

They also made a 10-point recommendation to reduce road crashes, which include creating awareness to

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‘Govt rewarded oil syndicates instead of taking action’

CPB alleges at rally protesting price hike



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Protesting the decision to hike edible oil price, left-leaning political parties yesterday alleged that syndicates that control the oil market and the government are reasons behind the hike.

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), while holding a protest rally in the capital’s Paltan, demanded removal of the commerce minister and warned that left-leaning parties would enforce a hartal if the price of soybean oil is not decreased.

CPB general secretary Ruhin Hossain Prince said today, the country and government are “in the hands of looters”.

“Syndicate traders are running the country and the present government is their protector,” he said.

He said during the Eid vacation, the price of edible oil was unusually increased by holding people hostage and creating an artificial crisis.

“This government did not take action against

the syndicate and hoarders but instead rewarded them. It [the government] contributed to increasing the oil price.”

Former CPB president Mujahidul Islam Selim said if the incumbent government were the people’s government, it would have taken opinions from people before increasing the price.

“Instead of doing so, a meeting with traders was held on the day right after Eid holidays, and the price of oil was increased in an unusual manner. This proves that this government is not the government of the people, but of the syndicate traders,” he said.

Meanwhile, the politburo of Workers Party of Bangladesh (WPB) termed the recent record price hike “a naked manifestation of the government’s secret coordination” with the syndicates that control the so-called oil market.

WPB, a member of the ruling-party alliance,

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‘One of the most successful finance ministers’

Say speakers about Muhith at doa mahfil

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the 50 years since the country’s independence, former finance minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith was one of the most successful finance ministers, said speakers at a doa mahfil yesterday.

They said Muhith was the key player in Bangladesh’s process of graduating from a least developed country to a developing one.

Muhith’s family and colleagues organised the programme at Gulshan Central Mosque in the capital.

Muhith passed away on April 30. He was 88.

Speaking at yesterday’s event, former finance minister M Syeduzzaman, one of Muhith’s oldest friends, said Muhith was one of those people who had illuminated the discrimination between east and west Pakistan in the 60s, and was very active in all the movements later on.

“When he started serving as the finance minister, the country’s financial situation was poor. But his presence brought massive changes to this sector,” he said. “We will miss him, and we hope his successors will follow his rules and dreams.”

Former secretary M Mokammel Haque, who was a junior of Muhith at Dhaka University, said Muhith had initiated many changes. “I met Muhith’s family when I was serving in Sylhet. I found a family in which everyone was famous; each had their own identity. And Muhith was the best among his brothers.”

He said Muhith was a good soul, a man

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Ashraful the eagle!

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Family members knew Ashraful Islam as a textile engineer.

But police diaries state that Ashraful is the ringleader of a mugging gang, which specialises in swiftly snatching away valuables from people.

Detectives said the gang members used to mug people using expensive motorbikes.

In the gang’s own lingo, the pillion rider is called “eagle” and the rider “pilot”. The “eagle” is supposed to snatch away bags from passersby or rickshaw passengers.

As they used to ride expensive bikes, no one



The pillion is called “eagle” and the rider “pilot”. The “eagle” is supposed to snatch away bags from passersby or rickshaw passengers. Ashraful has been playing the role of an “eagle” for a long time, said police.

would suspect them to be muggers. Ashraful has been playing the role of an “eagle” for a long time.

Police’s Detective Branch (DB) claimed to have arrested the ringleader and three associates of the gang from the capital on May 1.

Detectives learned about the gang while investigating two mugging incidents that took place in the capital recently.

The arrestees are Ashraful and his associates Lelin Shaikh, Zillur Rahman Khan and Saiful Islam alias Shaon. Lelin used to work as a pickup-

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Container catches fire at Kamalapur

UNB, Dhaka

A fire that broke out in a container at Kamalapur Railway Station yesterday afternoon has been brought under control.

The fire started around 3:40pm and five firefighting units managed to bring the flames under control around 6:30pm, said Shahjahan Shikdar, deputy assistant director (media cell) of fire service.

Origin of the fire and extent of damages could not be ascertained yet.



In the last couple of days, Dhaka Power Distribution Company (DPDC) started construction work for setting up cables by digging out large sections of Tongi Diversion Road at Moghbazar, near FDC intersection. The construction work has taken over both sides of the road, making vehicular and pedestrian movement extremely perilous. With monsoon approaching, things can only get worse if work is not finished as per schedule. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

PRAYER
TIMING

MAY 8

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-15	12-45	4-45	6-21	7-45
JAMAA 4-50	1-15	5-00	6-24	8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION