

Four years of muzzling dissent

Article 19 on Digital Security Act

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Yesterday marked four years since the Digital Security Act (DSA) bill has been passed in parliament. Activists pointed out that over the past four years, the law has primarily been used to muzzle dissent and criticism of the government.

A statement by Article 19 sent yesterday termed the act "a law that has been mostly used as a tool for curtailing freedom of expression of the citizens" and said such an act cannot exist in any democratic system.

Faruq Faisal, regional director of Article 19 South Asia, said, "Since 2018, Article 19 has been demanding reforms into the provisions of DSA, which were identified as curbs to the right to freedom of expression."

Admitting the fact that the law has been misused and abused, several responsible ministers in the recent past have promised to reform the law with an assurance to check its application more carefully.

Faisal said the reality, however, is different with

DSA has been mostly used as a tool for curtailing freedom of expression of the citizens. Such an act cannot exist in any democratic system.



Guardians patiently wait outside Motijheel Govt Girls' High School, fanning themselves in the heat, chitchatting and praying, while their children take their SSC exams. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

We are with Bangladesh on this one

ASEAN diplomats assure Dhaka on tensions along Myanmar border

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

ASEAN diplomats in Dhaka have assured Bangladesh of strongly raising Myanmar's unlawful actions on the Myanmar-Bangladesh borders at the UN General Assembly after Dhaka sought their cooperation in preventing violence on the borders, said foreign ministry officials.

At a briefing by the foreign ministry at the state guesthouse Padma yesterday, the diplomats said they were also frustrated about the way the Myanmar junta has been handling the country's situation since it took control of the country by overthrowing the democratically elected government in February last year.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Must ensure transparency in spending
President tells govt officials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President Md Abdul Hamid yesterday called on all concerned to ensure transparency and accountability in government spending.

The president said that every office must take necessary steps to ensure that public money

is properly spent in accordance with laws and regulations.

President Hamid also urged the officials to take strict action against those who object to auditing. The president made this call when Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) Mohammad Muslim Chowdhury presented the annual audit and accounts report of 2019-20 and the previous fiscal year to the president at the Bangabhaban in the capital.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

PRAYER TIMING		SEPTEMBER 20	
Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:40	12:45	4:30	6:05 7:30
JAMAAT 5:15	1:15	4:45	6:10 8:00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

An obstruction to nation's growth

Say experts on violence against children

NILIMA JAHAN

Violence against children not only obstructs the growth of children but also contributes to slowing down a country's economy and social development, said child rights experts.

Recent research conducted on 150 children under the age of 16 belonging to a lower-income background from five areas of the capital, found that 100 percent of them experienced at least three types of violence -- physical, sexual and domestic.

The findings of the research were revealed yesterday at the "National Symposium on Child Protection in Bangladesh", jointly organised by Unicef and the European Union, at a city hotel yesterday.

The study also found that 73 percent of them received primary treatment or stayed in clinics or hospitals after the incident, while 52 percent of them got involved in violence after they experienced that themselves.

Around 48 percent of the children do not live with their parents afterwards and live off of robbery and begging. A hundred percent of them are school dropouts, with no intention to rejoin formal education.

However, the study, conducted by Prof Rahmatullah of the American International University of Bangladesh, found that 90 percent of them are interested in



The government aims to build a professional social services workforce that enhances efficient delivery of child protection services such as child helpline 1098, child protection allowances, and community-based outreach services involving volunteers, adolescent children, and community people so that no child is left behind.

vocational education or training. According to Prof Rahmatullah, on average Tk eight lakh was spent on these children after their birth to till 16 years, considering the minimum cost of living and education provided.

"Roughly Tk 12 crore was

invested on these 150 children. If we assume the multiplier effect, we can expect Tk 96 crore revenue or economic return from the respondents, which is called the opportunity cost that we lost due to the violence committed against them," he said.

"However, the expected positive economic return will be zero unless we bring them back to the formal sectors. Strengthened investment in child protection and violence prevention is the only vaccine to put an end to the pandemic of violence against children," he said.

He also recommended the need to promote good practice, a focus on research and advocacy and scaling up the funding in this regard.

Considering the broader picture in terms of violence against children in Bangladesh, the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), jointly conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and Unicef Bangladesh Country Office shows that 45 million Bangladeshi children under the age of 15 -- a shocking 89 percent -- are regularly subjected to physical and psychological violence at home.

According to Unicef data, over three million children in the country are trapped in child labour, of whom, 1.3 million are in hazardous occupations.

One in five children does not

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

'Won't allow any more Rohingyas'

Says home minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal yesterday said Bangladesh will not allow any more Rohingya people from Myanmar to enter the country.

"We've already been facing problems with the Rohingyas who are residing in Bangladesh," he said replying to a query from journalists after attending a discussion on the fifth raising day of Anti-Terrorism Unit in the capital.

The minister said Myanmar army is fighting with the Arakan Army and a few of their shells landed in Bangladesh, leaving one dead and several others injured.

"We have strongly protested this... We will continue to protest and if it doesn't work we will raise the issue to the United Nations," he said.

The minister said the prime minister and the foreign ministry will soon take a decision.

"We are a peace loving country and we don't want that peace disturbed," he added.

The minister also said militancy has been brought under control.

Speaking at the event, Inspector General of

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Suspension of Khaleda Zia's sentence extended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



The government has extended for the fifth time the suspension of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's jail sentence for six more months on two previous conditions.

The home ministry yesterday issued a gazette notification to this effect. As per the conditions, Khaleda will receive treatment staying at her residence and she cannot go out of the country.

On September 11, her family applied to the government to extend its order that suspended her jail sentences in two cases.

Then Law Minister Anisul Huq gave opinion in favour of extending the suspension for another six months. Khaleda was freed from jail on March 25, 2020 after the government suspended her jail sentence for six months.

'Incorrect and incongruous'
Says food ministry on TIB statement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The statement of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) was incorrect and has incongruous information, said the food ministry in a statement yesterday.

A day earlier, TIB said the decision of importing wheat at an inflated rate from Russia is a violation of the public procurement act and circular of the Prime Minister's Office and it will benefit the third party.

The statement by the food ministry claimed that they did not include any third party in purchasing wheat from Russia and did not break any law.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



With great attention to detail, an artisan puts down his finishing touches on the idol of Durga. With Durga Puja right around the corner, many like him are passing busy days. This photo was taken in Old Dhaka's Zamindar House.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Mixed tidings for idol artisans

DIPAN NANDY

In Old Dhaka's Northbrook Hall Road, right next to Bangla Bazar, stands Zamindar House.

Although the house has lost most of its charm, during Durga Puja however, the place brightens up with people working day and night, putting finishing touches on idols.

Depicting various shades of emotions on the sculptures is by no means an easy task. The artisans work for months before the puja to collect appropriate soil, then

they mix it with hay and use bamboo sticks to frame it.

The idols are usually painted a week before the celebrations. However, some of the artisans have already started painting the idols.

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw Balai Pal marshalling troops of artisans to Zamindar House.

"Durga Puja is right around the corner. There is no scope for artisans to take a breather at this moment," he told this correspondent.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

USAID **NREL**

Exciting Training Opportunity for Graduates and Professionals
Energy Fundamentals Course
Jointly facilitated by BUET, USAID and NREL

The Institute of Energy and Sustainable Development (IESD) at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) is very delighted to offer a state-of-the-art certificate course on Energy Fundamentals. The 4-day training course has been jointly developed by the IESD of BUET, the U.S. Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), and the Bangladesh Advancing Development and Growth through Energy (BADGE) project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The course will be conducted by faculties from BUET and energy experts from NREL, USAID, and the BADGE during 19-22 October 2022 at the BUET Campus.

Any professional, engineer, or recent graduate interested in a career in energy sector will benefit from this basic course. Lecture materials in this fundamental course are designed to provide background knowledge, explain theoretical concepts, review case studies, and provide global and cross-country perspectives in the broad energy sector. Seats are limited to 40 participants only and will be selected on a first come first serve basis. Interested participants are invited to visit www.bdjobs.com for detailed information and enrollment procedures.

Last date to apply: 3 October 2022.