



The increased security measures ahead of the BNP rally continued yesterday as well. To their dismay, pedestrians were also searched, along with the frisking of passengers in all Dhaka-bound vehicles. However, police claimed that it was all part of their routine activities. Meanwhile, the number of buses continued to be lower than the day before.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

The checkpoint chronicle continues

Police search pedestrians on top of vehicle frisking

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, ARAFAT RAHAMAN and SAJJAD HOSSAIN

What started as police frisking people and vehicles entering the capital has turned into checking pedestrians at different Dhaka gateways as well.

Ahead of BNP rally that is scheduled to be held today in the capital's Golapbagh field, law enforcers yesterday checked visitors' identity, luggage, and vehicles -- especially bus passengers and motorcycle riders at the checkpoints at Savar, Gabtoli, Abdullahpur, Tongi, Narayangaj and Saidabad.

This newspaper found that law enforcers were asking passengers where they were headed and their purpose of visits as part of stepping up their security measures.

Police at Gabtoli and Abdullahpur said they are frisking people as part of their routine activities.

"We are on high alert to prevent any kind of sabotage centring the BNP rally. We are

searching all the vehicles to see if they are carrying any subversive elements," said Inspector Habibur Rahman of Siddhirganj Police, who was on duty at the Mouchak area check post.

At the Abdullahpur check post, passengers of all long haul buses had to go through checking. Police also checked trucks, pick-up vans, private cars and motorcycles.

Pedestrians who were crossing the area with bags also went through frisking.

"They were indiscriminately searching bags in front of everyone. This is nothing short of harassment," said Jahid Hasan, a pedestrian.

Police took about 6-7 minutes for searching a bus, about 5 minutes for a motorcycle, and 4-5 minutes for pedestrians to search and question suspicious packages and activities, said residents.

Biker Alauddin Bepari said, "I was going to Farmgate from Gazipur Station Road. SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



INTERNATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION DAY

Stricter laws to bring corrupt people to book ACC commissioner tells event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Underscoring the need for stricter laws and punishment, Anti-Corruption Commission Commissioner Jahurul Haque yesterday said corrupt people get away with graft because they are well organised and regarded as influential individuals.

He requested the government to amend relevant laws, with the provision to confiscate all wealth of corrupt people as punishment. "They could retain a little amount [of wealth] to bear daily expenses. Without this provision, it will be difficult to curb corruption," he said.

The commissioner said this at a discussion organised to mark International Anti-Corruption Day (December 9) at the capital's Shilpakala Academy.

This year, the day was observed with the theme "Uniting the World against Corruption". To quickly dispose of graft cases, the commissioner requested courts to not entertain appeals filed by such people for the second time.

"Financial activities in the country have risen and so has corruption. If effective measures are taken against corruption, people will benefit from the ongoing development," he said.

Jahurul said swift steps need to be taken to prevent money from being laundered abroad. "Once the money is laundered

abroad, it becomes difficult to get it back."

At the event, President Abdul Hamid's speech on the occasion was screened at the venue.

Asking people to boycott corrupt people, like those who take bribes, Hamid said, "We must despise bribery, corruption and nepotism. Corruption and development cannot go side by side."

"Once, no one accepted the existence of corrupt people

Financial activities in the country have risen and so has corruption. If effective measures are taken against corruption, people will benefit from the ongoing development.

JAHURUL HAQUE
ACC Commissioner

in society, but that notion has gradually faded. Triumphs of riches are seen everywhere. No one bothers about the source of money -- whether it is ill gotten," he said.

"It seems like money has become the yardstick of social status. Everyone -- including politicians, service holders, businesspeople, farmers and labourers -- is running after

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

An obstacle to data journalism

Speakers point to country's legal framework as barrier

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although investigative journalism around the world has seen a shift thanks to the growth of data journalism, such journalistic endeavours are a challenge in Bangladesh due to the country's legal framework, said speakers at a discussion yesterday.

They said in most government departments, officials wait for the directives of high-ups to release data. Furthermore, important data, such as those on inflation, have been kept confidential "considering political sensitivity".

Despite having a related government policy in place, disclosure and availability of data have not increased in the country, they added.

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) organised the discussion on "Data Journalism against Corruption: Bangladesh Context" at its office in the capital's Dhanmondi, marking International Anti-Corruption Day.

During the programme, the graft watchdog recognised three journalists and one television documentary programme through the

"Investigative Journalism Awards 2022".

Addressing the discussion, TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said a state of fear has been created in the country regarding freedom of speech and disclosing information.

ISSUES

Officials not releasing data without high-ups' approval
Important data kept confidential due to "political sensitivity"
Law enforcers empowered to remove, block data

RECOMMENDATIONS

Fulfil political pledges
Keep anti-corruption bodies away from political influence
Hold corrupt people accountable

Political pledges are required to fight corruption, and such pledges should not just remain on paper, he said.

Those who are identified as corrupt should be tried and brought under a system of accountability, he added.

Besides, institutions responsible for fighting corruption should be facilitated to enhance their capacity and be kept away from political influence, said Iftekharuzzaman.

In his paper on the topic, TIB Outreach and Communication Coordinator Mohammad Tauhidul Islam said the existing legal framework is a big obstacle to pursuing data journalism in Bangladesh.

He said under the Digital Security Act, law enforcement agencies have been given power to remove or block data that they feel are a threat to digital security, national unity, the country's economy, and public security.

Tauhidul said the government's latest classification of different agencies and institutions as "critical information infrastructure" is another challenge in this regard.

Miraj Ahmed Chowdhury, Bangla editor of Global Investigative Journalism Network, said there is a high potential for data journalism in Bangladesh. It can add a new dimension to ensure accountability.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

'Ensure impartial probe of rights violation' Demands Ain o Shalish Kendra

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Recommendations

Impartial commission to probe extrajudicial killings
Amendment of digital laws, NHRC Act
Introduction of victim, witness protection act
Formation of independent Election Commission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) yesterday made a 13-point demand marking International Human Rights Day today to ensure the human rights of the people and ensure justice for all.

The demands include impartial investigation of allegations of human rights violations -- such as extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, torture and death in custody of law enforcement agencies and punishment of the responsible persons as per law.

On December 10, 1948, United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to protect and promote human rights worldwide.

This year the theme of International Human Rights Day is "Dignity, Freedom, and Justice for all".

In a press release, ASK said justice must be ensured by forming an impartial commission to investigate the allegations of extrajudicial killings committed so far.

State forces should fully comply with the directions of the High Court in detaining or arresting any citizen of the country. In case of any violation, all parties concerned should be held accountable.

The release also mentioned that digital security laws that conflict with media and citizens' right

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

A day of nostalgia and pride

St Gregory High School celebrates 140th anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"It's like returning home for me. I have always taken pride in my identity as a Gregorian," said Arfan Ali Rashid, a former student of St Gregory High School.

Arfan, who came back to his alma mater yesterday to celebrate its 140th anniversary from Pakistan's Karachi, said all the boys in his family went to St Gregory.

"We also formed an alumni association in Pakistan where we arranged a programme last month," he said.

The day-long anniversary programme was organised by The Gregorian Association (TGA), the alumni organisation of the school, in the capital's Laxmibazar.

Ajay Kumar Sarker, a former student and retired teacher at the school, said, "On January 6, 1947, I set foot in St Gregory for the first time. My five brothers went to the same school. After graduating, I joined my alma mater as a teacher."

"I was supposed to retire in 2000, but the school authorities gave me an extension of 21 long years. I went on retirement on my own accord but I still feel nostalgic whenever I come here," he added.

Ajay's youngest brother Lt Col (ret'd) AK Sarkar was also present with him. "We all have many memories

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



It was a day full of nostalgia and pride as the former students gathered on St Gregory High School premises to celebrate its 140th anniversary. From left, Ujjal Placid Pereira, principal of the school; Munadir Islam, president of The Gregorian Association; Kamal Corraya, chairman of the school's governing body; Bejoy Nisphorus D'Cruz, archbishop of Dhaka Archdiocese; Taqsem A Khan, managing director of Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority; Nitopal Sarker, chief coordinator of The Gregorian Association, and Arfan Ali Rashid, a former student of the school, were present at the event, among others. A vibrant cultural programme was also arranged on the occasion, inset.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Star journo wins Dudok Media Award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Daily Star's senior reporter Mohammad Jamil Khan yesterday received "Dudok Media Award-2019" for his outstanding report on graft.

The investigative report titled "YABA, CHARITY hand in glove?", which exposed drug abuse, was published in the newspaper on February 11, 2019.

A total of six journalists received the award at a ceremony organised by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to mark International Anti-Corruption Day.

Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique handed over the awards to the winners, each receiving a crest and prize money.

The other award recipients (print category) are Tofazzal Hossain Rubel, senior reporter, Daily Desh

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8