



## Foster enabling environment for civil society

EU calls on Bangladesh, expresses concern over deregistration of Odhikar

UNB, Dhaka

The European Union has called on the Bangladesh government to foster an enabling environment for the civil society to carry out their work without fear of reprisals.

"Freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a vibrant civil society are essential in a democratic society," Nabila Massrali, EU spokesperson for foreign affairs and security policy, said in a statement yesterday.

The Cyber Tribunal sentenced Adilur Rahman Khan, secretary of NGO Odhikar, and ASM Nasiruddin Elan, director of the organisation, to two years of imprisonment in a case filed under the Information and Communications Technology Act 2006.

They were subsequently detained in custody, said the spokesperson.

The EU has followed the Odhikar case closely and has repeatedly raised with the Bangladeshi authorities the need for due process for Odhikar's leadership, according to the statement.

The EU has also expressed concern about the deregistration of Odhikar, which has made it excessively difficult for the organisation to function.



A Bangladesh Railway train testing the speed limit on the newly constructed Mawa-Bhanga rail line yesterday. The train went back and forth between Mawa Railway Station in Munshiganj and Bhanga Railway Station in Faridpur through the Padma Bridge at different speeds. PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Journos worried over new cyber security law

DRU demands omission of 'repressive provisions'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU) yesterday expressed concern over the recently passed Cyber Security Bill for incorporating repressive provisions like those of the Digital Security Act (DSA).

The Jatiya Sangsad passed the bill on Wednesday. In a statement, DRU said the government formulated DSA although journalist community showed their concern regarding the law.

Later, the government decided to formulate the Cyber Security Act replacing DSA in face of concerns over DSA from different quarters including journalists, it said.

DRU said since the drafting stage of the new law, they have been demanding omission of some provisions because of their repressive nature.

During a meeting of the relevant parliamentary committee regarding the proposed CSA, journalists made recommendations to make changes in some of the provisions, read the statement.

However, journalists' recommendations were not reflected in the newly passed bill, it said.

DRU said in provision 42 of the bill, police have been given power to conduct search and arrest people without warrant. "Such repressive provision is an obstacle to freedom of speech," it said.

DRU expressed concern that the new law leaves room for misuse against objective journalism and demanded provisions which are threat to journalism should be removed.

Also yesterday, "DSA Victims Network" expressed concern over the law, saying it is repressive in nature like the Digital Security Act. In a statement, the network said elements from DSA have been incorporated in the new bill overlooking expectations and opinion of people.

## LIBYA FLOOD

# Rescuers search for thousands still missing

Red Crescent puts death toll at more than 11,000; UN launches \$71m urgent appeal for victims

AFP, Derna

Rescuers sifted through mud and rubble yesterday in their search for people missing from the tsunami-sized flash flood that swept the Libyan port city of Derna.

The Red Crescent put the death toll at more than 11,000 people, with nearly 20,000 still missing, the highest estimate yet from an official source. It said almost 2,000 bodies were swept into the sea by the floods.

The enormous surge of water burst two upstream dams late Sunday and reduced Derna to an apocalyptic wasteland where entire city blocks and untold numbers of people were washed into the Mediterranean.

Calling the situation "catastrophic", the United Nations launched an appeal for more than \$71 million to respond to the "most urgent needs of 250,000 people targeted out of the 884,000 people estimated to be in need".

The International Organization for Migration mission in Libya said over 38,640 were displaced in the most affected areas in northeastern

Libya due to storm Daniel.

An AFP journalist in Derna said central neighbourhoods on either side of the river, which normally dries up at this time of year, looked as if a steam roller had passed through, uprooting trees and buildings and hurling vehicles onto

both managed to scramble into an empty building downstream.

"The water was rising with us until we got to the fourth floor, the water was up to the second floor," the unidentified man said from his hospital bed, in testimony published by the Benghazi Medical Center.

"We could hear screams. From the window, I saw cars and bodies being carried away by the water. It lasted an hour or an hour and a half -- but for us, it felt like a year."

Hundreds of body bags now line Derna's mud-caked streets, awaiting mass burials, as traumatised and grieving residents search mangled buildings for missing loved ones and bulldozers clear streets of debris and mountains of sand.

In one shattered home, a rescue team pumped out the water to reveal a woman's lifeless arms still clutching her dead child, the AFP journalist reported.

"This disaster was violent and brutal," said Yann Fridez, the head of the Libya delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross, which had a team in Derna when the floodwaters hit.

the port's breakwaters.

"Within seconds the water level suddenly rose," recounted one injured survivor who said he was swept away with his mother in the late-night ordeal before they

**The International Organization for Migration mission in Libya said over 38,640 were displaced in the most affected areas in northeastern Libya due to storm Daniel.**

## Cave art dating back 24,000yrs found in Spain



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Archaeologists from a UK university have discovered a major palaeolithic cave art site on the east coast of Spain, featuring depictions of horses, deer and wild bulls.

More than 100 ancient paintings and engravings thought to be at least 24,000 years old were found in the 1,600ft (500m) deep cave Cova Dones, or Cueva Dones, in Millares, near Valencia.

Although the site was well known by locals and hikers, the paintings remained undiscovered until the find by the researchers from the universities of Zaragoza and Alicante, who are affiliated to the University of Southampton.

Dr Aitor Ruiz-Redondo, senior lecturer of prehistory at Zaragoza and Southampton, said: "When we saw the first painted auroch (extinct wild bull), we immediately acknowledged it was important."

"Although Spain is the country with largest number of palaeolithic cave art sites, most of them are concentrated in northern Spain. Eastern Iberia is an area where few of these sites have been documented so far."

## Elderly woman murdered at her house

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Police recovered the silt-throat body of an elderly woman, mother of a journalist, from her house in Tangail's Bhuapur upazila early yesterday.



The victim is Sultana Suraiya, 65, wife of freedom fighter late Abdur Rahim Akand of West Bhuapur area. She is also mother of Abu Sayem Akand, a news editor of the English daily The Business Standard.

According to locals, Sultana Suraiya lived alone at the house. On Thursday evening, the neighbours went to the house and saw her body lying on the floor.

On information, a police team went to the spot and sent her to the Tangail General Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

Sayem, the victim's son, told The Daily Star that his mother, lived alone at home, had no enmity with anyone.

"I demand proper investigation of the incident and identification of



People walk amidst the wreckage, in the aftermath of the floods in Derna, Libya yesterday. The floods were caused by hurricane-strength Storm Daniel, compounded by the poor infrastructure in Libya, which was plunged into turmoil after a Nato-backed uprising toppled and killed longtime dictator Moamer Gaddafi in 2011. PHOTO: REUTERS

## HATE NEWS DEBATES

# India's opposition bloc boycotts 14 TV news anchors

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India's opposition alliance has blacklisted 14 TV news anchors, accusing them of spreading "hate-filled" news debates.

The parties in the alliance, which are in power in 11 states, said they will not send representatives on shows featuring the 14 anchors on different news channels.

The media committee of the bloc took the decision to boycott the programmes of these journalists and not send their representatives to debates hosted by them.

"Pursuant to the decision taken by INDIA Coordination Committee in its meeting on September 13, 2023, the INDIA parties will not send their representatives on the shows and events of the following anchors," a statement from the media committee of the opposition bloc comprising 24 parties said while naming the TV journalists.

While the opposition has routinely accused the mainstream Indian media of "biased" coverage, this was the first time that the country saw the list of accused journalists.

Justifying the action, Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera, who is a part of the committee of opposition parties that took the decision in their virtual meeting, said some channels have put up a "nafrat ka bazaar" (marketing of hatred) for the last nine years.