

‘Our sovereignty not under threat’ Says home adviser

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh's sovereignty is not under any threat, said Home Affairs Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday.



The adviser made this remark while briefing the media after inaugurating an event organised by the Fire Service and Civil Defense on the occasion of International Volunteer Day 2024 at the Fire Service and Civil Defense Multipurpose Training Ground.

“But the Indian media has been spreading misinformation about Bangladesh. Indian media is an example of how a country can spread false information about another country,” he said.

He also urged the country's media outlets to counter this misinformation.

In response to the recent comments by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee about Bangladesh, the adviser said United Nations peacekeepers should be deployed in her country instead due to the persecution of minorities there.

In his keynote address, Jahangir said the Fire Service and Civil Defense is working towards the goal of training 62,000 volunteers across the country.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Dust clouds are a common sight on Dhaka's streets during winter. According to the Air Quality Index, Dhaka's air ranked as the most polluted in the world with a score of 392 yesterday morning. The photo was taken in the Kamalapur area.

He inspired critical thinking, intellectual growth Say speakers on Prof Abdur Razzaq marking his 25th death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Professor Abdur Razzaq inspired inquisitiveness, intellectual growth, and critical thinking among his students and those around him, said speakers at an event.

Despite having immense knowledge, Prof Razzaq did not write much, which is a loss for the nation, they added.

They made the remarks at a two-day event, marking the 25th death anniversary of Professor Razzaq, on November 28 and 29, organised by Abdur Razzaq Foundation.

The first day's event was held at the Abdul Karim Sahityabisharad Auditorium of Bangla Academy.



Delivering the keynote speech, Prof Abul Kasem Fazlul Haq, president of Bangla Academy, said, “The ability to create civilisation sets humans apart from all other creatures. Humans possess an inherent power that enables them to achieve their goals.”

“While individual efforts often fall short, collective efforts succeed. Many achievements are not realised within a single generation but through the sustained efforts of successive generations,” he added.

Dr Shafiqat Hossain Khondaker, a trustee of Abdur Razzaq Foundation, said, “He [Razzaq] was a guide and an active presence among the generation that led

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Low wages, external interference hinder investigative journalism

Senior journos tell TIB discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lack of editorial policies, political interference, low wages, and the growing influence of advertising agencies are some of the key obstacles to investigative journalism in Bangladesh, said speakers at a panel discussion yesterday.

Senior journalists, media trainers, and academics took part in the event organised by Transparency International Bangladesh on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the TIB Investigative Journalism Award.

The discussion, titled “New Bangladesh: What Kind of Media Do We Want?” highlighted the major challenges facing the media industry.

Senior journalist Kamal Ahmed, also head of the Media Reform Commission, pointed out that over 540 newspapers are currently published from Dhaka, but questioned how many of them genuinely serve the public.

“There should be an assessment to check whether the media is serving public interest,” he said.

He also criticised the previous Awami League government for neglecting editorial policies and allowing political influence to seep into the media landscape.

“It was the previous government's strategy to create barriers between news outlets practising objective

journalism and those spreading misinformation. There were no measures to assess how many media outlets were needed or what their capacities were,” he added.

Kamal also highlighted the increasing lack of distinction between editors, owners, and management, including advertising

is inherently political, not bi-partisan, and cannot thrive with low pay.

When a proposal was made to implement the ninth wage board, Kabir said that the proposed wage board is insufficient to meet journalists' needs. He stressed the importance of introducing a new wage board that accounts for current inflation and economic conditions.

He further stressed the need for journalists to have a deep understanding of political, economic, cultural, and historical contexts. “If journalists lack this knowledge, they are easily misled or confused,” he said.

Shafiqul Alam, press secretary to the chief adviser, called for clearer ethical boundaries for journalists.

He argued that there should be a system of redress when media harms individuals, such as when someone is wrongfully labelled as a terrorist.

“There should be penalties for such instances, and the victim should be compensated and have their dignity restored,” he said.

He also highlighted the importance of strong copyright laws to protect investigative journalism. “Without protection, the media's economic model has collapsed,” he said. He added that copyright protection could attract more investment into the industry.

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KAMAL AHMED
Head of the Media Reform Commission

staff, which he argued is eroding the independence of journalism. “When this distinction is blurred, independent journalism no longer exists,” he said.

Nurul Kabir, editor of New Age, emphasised the close link between good journalism and the understanding of political, social, and environmental issues.

He also insisted that journalism

Prevent communal division, ensure harmony in country Chief justice urges all

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed yesterday urged the country's people to make utmost efforts to prevent communal splits and to establish Bangladesh as a country of communal harmony.

“I would request all of you, as responsible citizens of the state, to do your best from respective positions to prevent communal fractions and to present the Supreme Court Bar Association as an example of communal harmony through our collective efforts before the countrymen,” he said.

The chief justice was speaking as chief guest at a programme organised by the SCBA at its auditorium on the SC premises. The event was arranged on the occasion of “Bijaya Punarmilani”, a reunion after Durga Puja celebrations.

Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed said, “Religion teaches us generosity, humanity, secularism, and tolerance. At the same time, misinterpretation of religion often creates conflicts among people. So, we have to take humanitarian lessons from religion to build Bangladesh as a country of communal harmony, for which the martyrs of our July Uprising sacrificed their lives.”

He said various communal conflicts of the past century have taught us that communal harmony and coexistence are two of the cornerstones of our national progress.



EXTORTION, LAUNDERING Aman, Gias Uddin acquitted by HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday acquitted BNP leader Aman Ullah Aman and businessman Gias Uddin Al Mamun from two separate criminal cases.



The HC also scrapped the trial courts' verdicts that convicted Aman and Gias Uddin, sentencing them to seven years imprisonment each in an extortion case and money laundering case, respectively.

The bench of Justice AKM Asaduzzaman and Justice Syed Enayet Hossain delivered the verdicts after holding hearings on two separate appeals filed by Aman and Gias.

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28 EU envoys to hold talks with Yunus

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Diplomats from 28 European countries, including 20 stationed in New Delhi and the rest in Dhaka, will meet Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus on December 9 to explore new areas of cooperation with Bangladesh.

This is the first time ever that 28 ambassadors from the EU will come together to discuss bilateral issues with Bangladesh.

“Both sides will explore new areas of cooperation -- how to address the Rohingya crisis, climate change, GSP+ facilities in the post-LDC era and how to take forward the comprehensive partnership with Bangladesh,” Foreign Ministry Spokesperson and Director General (Public Diplomacy Wing) Md Rafiqul Alam said at the weekly briefing at the ministry yesterday.

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IRRATIONAL ENERGY DEALS 2009–2024

CAB seeks trial of those responsible

UNB, Dhaka

The Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) yesterday urged the interim government to prosecute “energy criminals” for looting state wealth from 2009 to 2024 through various irrational deals with local and international companies.

Dr M Shamsul Alam, adviser to CAB, made this demand during a “Dialogue with Media on Reforms in the Energy Sector: Perspectives of CAB Proposed Bangladesh Energy Transformation Policy 2024” held at Bishwo Shahitto Kendro in Dhaka.

He said the trial of these criminals should be conducted under the Consumers Protection Act and BERC Act 2003.

The interim government must investigate and determine the extent of wealth looted from different segments of the power sector, including imports, generation, transmission, and distribution, he added.

“CAB wants to establish the consumers' right to access energy and ensure energy security,” he said, adding that the energy sector should be viewed as a service sector rather than a commercial one.

The CAB advisor suggested that the

prices of all energy products should be set through public hearings, as stipulated in the BERC Act.

CAB specifically named former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, ex State Minister Nasrul Hamid, ex-Adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, and former Power Secretaries Abul Kalam Azad, Monwar Islam, and Dr Ahmed Kaikaus as the main energy criminals.

CAB General Secretary Advocate Humayun Kabir Bhuiya, Organising Secretary Prof Dr Mizanur Rahman Razu, and Research Coordinator Subho Kibria also addressed the event.

During the discussion, reporters in the energy sector emphasised that the interim government should focus on reforms in the energy sector to prevent vested interest groups from exploiting political influence.

Although the government is prioritising renewable energy, there is no specific, time-bound plan or roadmap to implement such projects, they said.

They also advised CAB to engage with political parties to understand their plans and encourage them to include energy-related issues, especially energy transition, in their election manifestos.



A line of illegally parked motorcycles takes up all of the footpath in front of this commercial building, leaving little space for pedestrians. Besides, employees who work in these offices usually park their two-wheelers on this footpath in the morning and then leave after work. The photo was taken in the Gulshan-2 area yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN