

'Our sovereignty not under threat' Says home adviser

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh's sovereignty is not under any threat, said Home Affairs Adviser Lt Gen (retd) 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 at Purbachal in Dhaka.

Relying to a query, the adviser said there is no tension along the border and the situation is normal.

"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. The people of this country will unite in protesting against that," he said.

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

In response to the recent comments by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee about Bangladesh, the adviser



SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



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, he added.

They made the remarks at a two-day event, marking the 25th death anniversary of Professor Razzaq on November 28 and 29, held by the 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," said Prof Abul Kashem.

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

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Political interference hinders 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 in Dhaka, but questioned how many of them genuinely serve the public.

"There should be an assessment process 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 was no measure to assess how much media was needed or its capacity," he added.

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

It was the previous government's strategy to create barriers between news outlets practising objective journalism and those spreading misinformation. There was no measure to assess how much media was needed or its capacity.

KAMAL AHMED
Head of the Media Reform Commission

good journalism and political, social, and environmental issues.

He also pointed out that journalism is inherently political and cannot thrive with low pay.

Kabir called for the immediate implementation of the wage board for journalists, which was announced eight years ago but remains unimplemented. He suggested that a new wage board be introduced, involving media

professionals. 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.

TIB's Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman said that media organisations must prioritise public interest and welfare for change to happen.

He emphasised the importance of editorial independence and expressed optimism about the future of journalism in a "New Bangladesh".

Dr Saiful Alam Chowdhury, associate professor at Dhaka University's Mass Communication and Journalism department, pointed to the overwhelming influence of advertising agencies on the media.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

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.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



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.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Rizvi burns his wife's saree Calls for boycott of Indian product

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi yesterday called for the boycott of Indian products and encouraged the use of local goods as he burnt an Indian saree.

The incident occurred around 11:30am at a campaign, titled "Buy Local Products, Be Proud and Prosperous," organised by the General Doctors' Society in front of the Jatiya Press Club.

Expressing anger over the attack on Bangladesh's Assistant High Commission in Agartala, Rizvi displayed a red saree and said, "This is an Indian saree. It belonged to my wife,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



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

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.

The 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.