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Adopt data protection measures

Demands ARTICLE 19

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

As the interim government moves toward finalising a Data Protection Ordinance, rights organisation ARTICLE 19 has called for the proposed framework to be firmly rooted in international human rights law and constitutional safeguards.

In a statement yesterday, it warned that poorly drafted provisions could weaken privacy rights and centralise excessive power in the hands of the government.

The UK-based rights body welcomed the government's initiative to introduce a comprehensive data protection regime but stressed that the ordinance must balance security, innovation, and fundamental freedoms.

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Covered with advert and political posters, this community-built Shaheed Minar in the capital's Dayaganj area lies in a dilapidated state. Locals said the tribute to the Language Movement martyrs deserves more respect. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

HEAT INITIATIVE

UGC to ink deals for 151 sub-projects with universities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The University Grants Commission (UGC) will sign agreements with public and private universities today for 151 sub-projects under the Higher Education Acceleration and Transformation (HEAT) initiative.

The signing ceremony will be held at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the capital's Agargaon, UGC officials announced at a press briefing yesterday at the commission's auditorium.

At the welcome speech, UGC Chairman Prof SMA Faiz said the selection process was conducted with "100 percent transparency".

Responding to allegations of nepotism or political favouritism, Prof Faiz said the commission took all necessary measures to ensure accountability and fairness throughout the evaluation process, which he personally monitored at every stage.

He said individual submissions were not allowed. "Sub-project proposals were submitted by faculty members through academic committees and with approval from

BREAKDOWN	
9 pandemic-related projects	
40 projects focus on teaching-learning infrastructure	
102 advanced research projects	
INITIATIVE AIMS TO	
Improving teaching and learning	
Expand digital infrastructure	
Ensure quality assurance	
Foster research and innovation	
Promote women's leadership in higher education	

From homes to streets, sexual violence persists

Children and young women face threats even within family and school circles, says Mahila Parishad report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Among victims of various forms of sexual violence whose ages were known, girls in grades 1 to 5 were the most frequent targets of rape in 2024, according to a new media monitoring report by Bangladesh Mahila Parishad.

The report found that these young girls also faced attempted rape, child marriage, dowry-related abuses, and sexual harassment and were highly vulnerable to cybercrime.

They also faced exploitation while working as domestic workers.

Sexual abuse was most prevalent at the high school level, among girls in grades 6 to 10, while university students were also frequently targeted, as they faced rape, attempted rape, gang rape, and cybercrime.

Alarmingly, 60 percent of rape victims were children under 18, and the majority of victims across all forms of violence were also under 18, highlighting the widespread abuse of girl children.

The findings of the report, titled "State of Violence Against Women and Girls – 2024", were presented at an event yesterday at Bangladesh Mahila Parishad's central office in the capital's Segunbagicha.

Afroza Arman, senior training and research officer at Mahila Parishad,

Girls in grades 1–5 most frequent rape victims
60% of rape victims under 18
Perpetrators mostly known: relatives, neighbours, classmates, boyfriends
42% by gang rape committed by strangers; harassment often by criminals (31%) or teachers (24%)
28% of rapists aged 11–30; 24% gang rapists aged 16–25

Parishad, presented data compiled from 14 national dailies.

She noted that there was no fundamental professional distinction in the risk of abuse.

"Women from all walks of life --

schoolgirls, housewives, working women, and labourers -- fall victim to horrific crimes like rape," she said.

While schoolgirls constituted the majority of victims, adult women across all professions were also affected, with housewives being targeted most frequently.

Analysis by location showed the highest percentages of sexual violence occurred at the upazila level, followed by the district level.

At the upazila level, 57 percent of rapes, 44 percent of gang rapes, 44 percent of attempted rapes, 48 percent of dowry-related abuses, and 63 percent of child marriages were recorded.

Most perpetrators were known to victims, including close relatives and neighbours.

Classmates and boyfriends were responsible for 14 percent of rapes, as well as 3 percent of gang rapes, 3 percent of attempted rapes, and 2 percent of harassment cases.

For gang rape, strangers were responsible for 42 percent of cases,

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Formulate 'Journalist Protection Act'

Action plan by MRDI, IMS seeks stronger press freedom safeguards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Legal reform is essential to ensure journalists can work without fear of censorship, harassment, or arbitrary detention, said speakers at the launch event of a strategic action plan yesterday.

The Media Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) and International Media Support (IMS) launched the "Strategic Action Plan on Advocacy for Media Reform in Bangladesh", which proposes enacting a "Journalist Protection Act" and repealing criminal defamation laws. The launch event was held at The Daily Star Centre.

According to the plan, the proposed law would serve as an umbrella for safeguarding journalists against threats, attacks, surveillance, misuse of legal tools, and other physical, digital, and psychological risks.

It would also address exploitation by employers, including denial of formal contracts, identity documents, fair wages, and benefits.

Repealing defamation laws would strengthen press freedom, enabling journalists to report independently and without fear, the plan added.

Moderating the event, MRDI Executive Director Hasibur Rahman said a legal framework is needed, as journalists

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ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Fortify Rights calls for accountability, reparations

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

On the first anniversary of Bangladesh's Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances, rights group Fortify Rights urged the interim government to ensure accountability for past abuses and provide reparations to survivors and families of the disappeared.

"Enforced disappearances were a hallmark of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's despotic rule and should never be allowed to happen again

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BNP and Jamaat lawyers urge SC to reinstate CG system

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Counsels for BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday pleaded before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court to turn down its verdict that scrapped the non-party caretaker government system, saying that this system ensured democracy in the country through holding free and fair elections.

The 2011 Appellate Division verdict that cancelled the non-party caretaker government

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25 new High Court judges sworn in

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-five newly appointed High Court judges took oath yesterday at the Supreme Court, marking the first appointments under the Supreme Court Judges' Appointment Ordinance, 2025.

Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed administered the oath at a ceremony in the Judges' Lounge, attended by judges from both divisions of the Supreme Court, Attorney General Md Asaduzzaman, Supreme Court Bar Association President AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon, and Secretary Mahfuzur Rahman Milon.

High Court Registrar Mohammad Moazzem Hossain conducted the proceedings.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin approved the appointments on August

PATHAO AND SHOMVOB Bangladeshi startups earn spot on Forbes Asia list

STAR REPORT

Bangladeshi startups Pathao and Shomvob have been named in the prestigious Forbes Asia "100 to Watch" list for 2025, marking a significant recognition for the country's burgeoning technology ecosystem on the regional stage.

This year's list includes companies from 16 countries and territories, with India leading with 18 entries, followed by Singapore and Japan with 14 each. Bangladesh's representation, though modest, signals its gradual ascent in the regional startup landscape.

Pathao is a multi-service platform offering ride-hailing, food delivery, logistics, e-commerce, and fintech solutions.

"The company says its app has been downloaded more than 6 million times and it has fulfilled more than 70 million trips and orders across Bangladesh and Nepal," according to Forbes.

Founded in 2015, Pathao was listed under the

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A worker repairs electric lines in South Keraniganj yesterday without proper safety gear. Using bare hands and without a helmet, he risks both his life and that of passersby.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

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