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SM Ali still unmatched in Bangladesh journalism

Speakers tell *Star* Itihas Adda marking his 97th birth anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has yet to see another journalist who matches SM Ali, the founding editor of *The Daily Star*, in regional stature or in the depth of his writing on politics, economics and culture, speakers said at a discussion yesterday.

They said Ali envisioned a progressive, democratic and humane Bangladesh, and fulfilling that vision would be the most meaningful tribute to him.

The remarks came at the sixth edition of *The Daily Star Itihas Adda*, titled "SM Ali's Journalism and Worldview," organised at *The Daily Star Centre* to mark his 97th birth anniversary.

Nurul Kabir, editor of *New Age* and president of the Editors' Council, said SM Ali's hard work defined him as much as his talent. "He was an exceptionally hardworking man. Talent alone does not produce results unless it is

matched by effort," he said.

He said Ali's readiness to endure financial hardship showed how deeply he was committed to journalism. "If he had chosen any other profession, he would not have accepted this degree of struggle."

Kabir said Ali valued training from the outset, believing professional education worked only when joined with hard work and judgement.

He said Ali's earlier writings revealed "how perceptive he was," combining experience, knowledge and vision to understand events with unusual clarity. "Many would be surprised to see how accurately he could grasp what was coming."

Kabir said SM Ali developed a liberal political consciousness early in life, influenced by thinkers like Bentham and John Stuart Mill, and matured during a period of rising global

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From left, Editor of *Charcha* Sohrab Hassan, Editor of *New Age* Nurul Kabir, former ambassador Farooq Sobhan and Joint Editor of *The Daily Star* Aasha Mehreen Amin at the sixth edition of *The Daily Star Itihas Adda* yesterday. The event titled, "SM Ali's Journalism and Worldview," was organised at *The Daily Star Centre* to mark SM Ali's 97th birth anniversary.

PHOTO: STAR

Onion imports resume today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The agriculture ministry has announced that onion imports will resume today in order to stabilise the domestic market.

According to a press release issued yesterday, 50 import permits will be issued daily, with each permit allowing the import of up to 30 tonnes of onions.

Only importers who applied for permits since August 1 will be eligible to reapply, and each importer may submit only one application.

The ministry said the measure will continue until further notice to keep onion prices at a reasonable level.

Yesterday, onions were sold at Tk 150 per kg in Dhaka's retail markets, up Tk 20-30 per kg from last week.

Traders said prices have risen sharply because early-harvest onions have not yet arrived and no new import permits have been issued in recent weeks.

The Department of Agricultural Extension estimates last season's harvest at over 39 lakh tonnes, enough to meet domestic demand. However, it projects that an additional 6-7 lakh tonnes of imports will be needed to offset post-harvest losses.



89% journos fear assault during 2026 polls

Study warns of rising threats, digital harassment, weak safety systems

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An overwhelming 89 percent of journalists anticipate facing physical assault while covering the 2026 national election, according to a new study.

The findings were revealed yesterday in a study titled "High Risks, Low Preparedness: Journalist Safety in 2026 Elections", conducted by Digitally Right under the Media Safety in the Digital Age initiative, in collaboration with the Fojo Media Institute, Sweden, and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

Miraj Ahmed Chowdhury, executive director of Digitally Right, presented the findings at a roundtable at *The Daily Star Centre* in Dhaka, attended by editors and senior media managers.

Based on a survey of 201 journalists from 19 districts and 10 in-depth interviews, the research points to a highly polarised and volatile environment ahead. Beyond physical violence, 76 percent expect verbal harassment, while 71 percent fear intimidation.

Risks are significantly higher for women. According to the study, 50 percent of female journalists fear sexual harassment, and 40 percent fear sexual assault during election coverage.

AT A GLANCE

- » 76% expect verbal harassment; 71% fear intimidation
- » Risks higher for women: 50% fear sexual harassment
- » 75% expect disinformation attacks; 65% fear hacking
- » Over 90% cite political actors as main source of threats
- » Digital safety protocols absent in 77% of newsrooms

The study also warns of intensified digital harassment, with 75 percent of respondents expecting disinformation campaigns targeting them or their newsrooms, and 65 percent fearing hacking attempts.

More than 90 percent identified

political actors as the main source of violence or harassment. Law enforcement agencies and extreme religious groups were also cited as major threats, particularly by women and regional correspondents.

Despite these risks, newsroom preparedness remains low. Respondents said there is often no designated person or system to manage safety threats.

Fewer than one in four journalists reported receiving safety gear or training from their employers. Digital safety protocols are largely absent, with 77 percent reporting no such measures in place.

The survey also found a gender gap in preparedness, with male journalists being nearly three times more likely than women to have a personal safety plan.

Dhaka Tribune Editor Reaz Ahmad criticised the rapid, unregulated expansion of media outlets, saying many unqualified individuals are running television stations and newspapers.

He said most media owners are

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Bangladeshi mariner stranded on drone-hit tanker

Adrift for 5 days, he remains stuck in Bulgarian waters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chattogram

Initially rescued from his drone-hit oil tanker, a Bangladeshi mariner has become stranded again on the damaged vessel after joining a salvage team.

Mahfuzul Islam Plabon, 4th engineer of the MT Kairos, along with nine other crewmen, has been stuck on the ship for five days. They are facing food shortages and are unable to contact port authorities or the owning firm. During this time, the crippled vessel has drifted close to the Bulgarian coast.

The MT Kairos was reportedly attacked by Ukrainian drones in the Black Sea on November 28. The damaged tanker was later towed near Istanbul anchorage from deep sea on December 1 by a tugboat hired by the ship's Chinese owner.

However, once the tugboat left, the 10 crewmen remained trapped on board as they were unable to drop anchor due to the engine and power system being out of order. The vessel drifted towards the Bulgarian coast amid rough weather, but local authorities have yet to respond, Plabon told *The Daily Star* yesterday afternoon in a WhatsApp call.

Three other Bangladeshi crewmen, who were rescued earlier along with all 25 crew members by

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Mahfuzul Islam

Tarique Rahman may return home anytime: Khosru

UNB, Dhaka

BNP senior leader Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday said the party's acting chairman Tarique Rahman may return to Bangladesh at any time as all preparations for his homecoming have been completed.

"Who is raising questions about Tarique Rahman not returning? I really don't understand. Those who want to talk can keep talking. But we know he will come. He will return home very soon," he told reporters at a hotel in Banani.

He said arrangements, from Tarique's residence to his office, have nearly been completed.

"The work on preparing his office is also almost done. The party has already completed all necessary preparations based on his plans for Bangladesh. So, he can come back to Bangladesh at any time," he added.

He expressed hope that BNP would form the next government with public support and that Tarique Rahman would lead the new cabinet as prime minister.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Street vendors occupy not only the footpath but also a major portion of this road in the capital's Jatra Barri, setting up numerous stalls that force pedestrians onto the street and disrupt vehicular movement. The photo was taken yesterday.

Seven of a family burnt in gas blast in Agargaon

4 suffer burns in Narayanganj

STAR REPORT

Eight people, including seven members of a family, suffered burn injuries in an explosion caused by a suspected gas line leakage at a tin-shed house in Agargaon early yesterday.

The blast occurred around 4:30am at a government quarter on Paka Market Road. The injured were taken to the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The victims are Md Abdul Jalil Mia, 50; his wife Arneeza Begum, 40; their sons Asif, 19, and Sakib, 16; Asif's wife Monira, 17; their granddaughters Eva, 6, and Isha, 6; and neighbour Firozul Alam, 35.

Dr Harunur Rashid, resident surgeon at DMCH, said Firozul suffered 21 percent burns, Jalil 12 percent, and Arneeza 10 percent. Others received burns on their hands and legs. An injured eight-month pregnant woman was treated and referred to the gynaecology department.

Jalil's son-in-law, Arfan Mia, said Arneeza went to the kitchen to cook early in the morning while others were asleep. As she lit a match, a powerful explosion occurred, triggering a blaze and injuring all eight. Neighbours rushed in to rescue them.

Injured Asif said they had been smelling gas inside the house for the past one and a half

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