



CPJ urges Yunus to free journos in jail

Says murder charges ‘lack credible evidence’

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has called on Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus to take “urgent action” to release four journalists imprisoned in Bangladesh, saying the charges against them appear retaliatory and unsupported by credible evidence.

In a letter sent on Monday, the New York-based press freedom group said the journalists – Farzana Rupa, Shakil Ahmed, Mozammel Babu, and Shyamal Dutta – are being held on murder accusations that “lack credible evidence and appear to be in retaliation for their reporting and perceived political affiliations.”

Citing accounts from families, CPJ described severe conditions at Kashimpur Central Jail. According to the letter, the journalists are confined to “tiny 36-square-foot cells with metal bars instead of doors, leaving them exposed to cold weather and mosquito infestations”. They reportedly sleep on concrete floors “without mattresses”, receive insufficient food, and face “severely inadequate” medical care.

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The streets in Babu Bazar bridge area have been dug to install underground electricity lines for Dhaka Power Distribution Company, creating intense traffic jams on the bridge over the past few days. This photo was taken from Kadamtali in Keraniganj yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Our misfortune is that we couldn’t create another Rokeya in 100yrs

Says chief adviser

BSS, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday called for building a post-uprising Bangladesh anchored in women’s leadership, drawing inspiration from Begum Rokeya’s lifelong struggle for equality and education.

“Women in today’s society are totally different. The journey of the new Bangladesh has started with them. They are a source of inspiration not only to women but to everyone. We need to uphold this,” he said, after conferring the Begum Rokeya Padak 2025 at a ceremony at the capital’s Osmani Memorial Auditorium.

Describing the Padak as an epoch-making honour, he said the awardees had taken Bangladesh “to a new height in the globe”, adding that they were capable not only of leading the nation but “the entire world”.



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MOHAMMADPUR DOUBLE MURDER

Cops struggling to trace suspect

DMP advises caution in hiring domestic workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prime suspect in Monday’s double murder is still at large with law enforcers struggling to trace her as she left almost no digital footprint.

Laila Afroze, 48, and Nafisa Nawal Binte Aziz, 15, wife and daughter of schoolteacher AZ Azizul Islam, respectively, were murdered inside their home on Shahjahan Road allegedly by a part-time house help who identified herself as Ayesha to the family.

“No information on the woman is available,” said Jewel Rana, additional deputy commissioner of Tejgaon Division.

She did not give her original name and actual address to her employer, making the investigation challenging.

Her face was not captured clearly by the building’s CCTV cameras either as she was always wearing a burqa, Rana said.

Besides, many of the CCTV cameras in the surrounding areas were not functioning, which has made it difficult to determine the direction she fled, according to Abdullah Al Mamun, assistant commissioner of Mohammadpur zone.

Different agencies, including Rab and detectives, are hunting for her, Rana said, adding that police have also sought help from the army.

Azizul, who was at work when the murders took place,

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Tobacco use costs society Tk 87,544cr

Finds DU study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tobacco consumption and production cost the country Tk 87,544 crore last year, more than double the tax collected from tobacco companies in fiscal 2023–24, according to a recent study.

In fiscal 2023–24, the country earned approximately Tk 40,000 crore in revenue from tobacco companies.

Health-related costs were about Tk 73,063 crore and environmental costs – such as damages to the marine ecosystem, greenhouse gas emissions, waste clean-up – amounted to Tk 14,525 crore, according to the study by the Institute of Health Economics at Dhaka University in association with the Economics for Health programme at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Ashraf Kibria, one of the study’s authors, presented the findings at a programme organised by the Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) at its Dhanmondi office yesterday.

The study was carried out to estimate the total economic costs of tobacco use and production, which include the costs of deforestation, waste clean-up, fire hazards and pollution.

Previous studies mostly

estimated losses due to health and productivity losses, Kibria said.

For instance, a 2019 study by the Bangladesh Cancer Society found the economic losses due to tobacco consumption – covering treatment costs and productivity losses – amounted to Tk 30,560

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crore in fiscal 2017–18. That year, the government earned Tk 22,810 crore from tobacco.

The DU study finds that the losses are much higher when the full economic impact of tobacco, including its environmental impact, is taken into account.

Of the health-related costs from tobacco use, Tk 30,771 crore were direct costs such as treatment, routine check-ups and other medical expenses, while Tk 42,292 crore resulted from productivity losses.

The authorities should take steps to make tobacco products less affordable as tobacco consumption and production incur a substantial net loss for society, with costs far exceeding revenue, Kibria added.

Also at the event, another study was unveiled that showed that each surveyed school had an average of 5.5 tobacco points of sale (POS) including groceries, tea stalls and street vendors within a 100-metre radius, making tobacco products easily accessible to youths.

The study, carried out by PPRC last month on 121 schools across four divisions, also found that 69 percent of POSs advertised tobacco products, while 21 percent actively promoted them to attract youths.

Mohammad Ihtesham Hassan, senior research associate of PPRC, revealed the findings of the study, which found 84 percent of POSs were selling flavoured cigarettes and 99 percent were selling single stick.

Flavoured cigarettes and the sale of single sticks are considered

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Tangail Saree wins UNESCO heritage status

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has recognised Bangladesh’s Tangail Saree weaving industry as an intangible cultural heritage.

The decision was unanimously adopted at the 20th Intergovernmental Committee meeting of the UNESCO 2003 Convention in New Delhi, India yesterday.

This is Bangladesh’s sixth standalone registration under this Convention and the

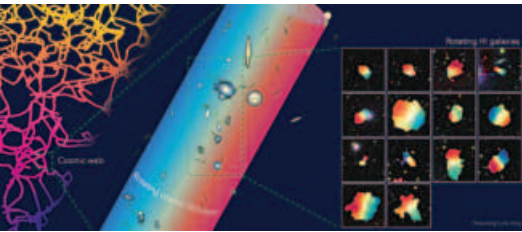


second registration in four years following the country’s election to the committee for the first time, according to a foreign ministry statement.

“This recognition is a matter of extraordinary glory for Bangladesh. It is the global recognition of the unique artwork of Tangail weavers spanning over two centuries,” said Ambassador Khondker M Talha, the leader of the Bangladesh delegation and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to UNESCO, in an immediate reaction during the

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Huge rotating structure in cosmos detected



REUTERS, Washington

Scientists have observed the largest known rotating structure in the cosmos – a gargantuan thread-like assemblage of hundreds of galaxies, gas and dark matter that makes up a filament in the macrostructure of the universe called the cosmic web.

The filament, located about 140 million light-years from Earth, was observed by scientists primarily using the MeerKAT radio telescope located in South Africa, an array of 64 interlinked satellite dishes.

The rotating filament is astonishingly large, measuring about 50 million light-years long and 117,000 light-years wide. A light-year is the distance light travels in a year, 5.9 trillion miles (9.5 trillion km). By way of comparison, our Milky Way galaxy, which itself is part of a filament in the cosmic web, measures roughly 100,000 light-years in diameter.



A vehicle rests on the edge of a collapsed road in Tohoku town in Aomori Prefecture yesterday, following a 7.5-magnitude earthquake that struck northern Japan on Monday night. The quake left at least 30 people injured, damaged roads and cut power to thousands in freezing temperatures.

PHOTO: AFP

Lone genocide museum closed for 17 months

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

The country’s only genocide museum in Khulna has remained closed for visitors for around 17 months.

Initially, the museum was shut down for renovation. Later, security reasons and financial constraints led to its extended closure, said the trustees of the museum.

On July 20, 2024, the museum was closed for renovation work and due to a curfew imposed by the then government. It did not reopen as the political situation deteriorated in the following days, said officials.

During the July uprising on August 4 last year, protesters vandalised a hospital adjacent to the museum over the allegations that gunshot-wounded students were denied treatment there.

The museum’s main gate was also damaged during the incident. A group of agitators then broke some windows and threw brick chunks at the museum.

Visitors’ entry has been prohibited since then.

According to the museum authority, there are 192 categories of relics, including documents related to the Liberation War,

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