



Noab and Editors' Council members pose for a group photo at the Media Convention 2026, held yesterday at the Krishibid Institution Bangladesh auditorium.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



Regardless of whether you agree with the editorial stance of The Daily Star, you must realise that if this attack is allowed to happen today, it will be your turn next.

NURUL KABIR, president of Editors' Council and editor of New Age



The fight for press freedom is often lonelier and more dangerous beyond the capital. The previous government was responsible for torching of our offices ... we have never received justice.

MAMTAZ SHIRIN BHAROSHA, Editor of Dainik Juger Alo from Rangpur



We should not think that when a newly elected government comes, all our problems will be solved. It did not happen in the past, and it will not happen now either.

MATIUR RAHMAN, editor and publisher of Prothom Alo



The information ministry has become the main impediment [to implementing media reforms]. They said that their power will be curtailed.

SYED ABDAL AHMED, executive editor of Daily Amar Desh and member of Media Reform Commission



We must remember that we have no true friends outside of our own community when the freedom of the press is at stake.

KADER GANI Chowdhury, secretary general, BFUJ



Many of us claim to be independent, yet our professional unions remain deeply and overtly divided along political lines.

REZWANUL HAQUE, chairman of Broadcast Journalists Centre



Your party people will not tell you the truth. Bureaucrats will not tell you the truth. Intelligence agencies will not tell you the truth. Only independent journalism tells the government the truth.

MAHFUZ ANAM, editor and publisher of The Daily Star

Search on Indonesia plane missing with 10 people on board

AFP, Makassar

Indonesian authorities are searching for a plane carrying three government workers and seven crew members after contact with the aircraft was lost on Saturday, officials said.

The Indonesia Air Transport turboprop plane left from Yogyakarta and was headed to the city of Makassar on Sulawesi island, according to rescuers.

Three employees of the ministry of marine affairs and fisheries were on board, on a mission to conduct aerial monitoring of resources in the area, Minister Sakti Wahyu Trenggono told a press conference.

Unite to shield press freedom

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“The chief adviser’s press secretary claimed that by the time the government could send law enforcement, the damage was done. Are we simply expected to take the press secretary at his word? Did they not have access to intelligence reports that might have predicted or even prevented such violence?”

“If these high-profile institutions in the capital can be targeted with such impunity, who will be there to protect us if we are attacked in the districts and remote areas?”

Mamta Shirin Bharosha, editor of Dainik Juger Alo from Rangpur, reminded journalists that the fight for press freedom is often lonelier and more dangerous beyond the capital.

“The previous government was responsible for setting fire to our offices, yet to this day, we have not received justice.”

Kaler Kantho’s Brahmanbaria Correspondent Gowranga Debnath said local journalists live under constant threat.

“I faced four cases during the Awami League era, but now I am being tagged. For those of us working in the districts,

the threat is constant and the protection is minimal.”

Kamal Ahmed, head of the Media Reform Commission and consulting editor of The Daily Star, said that a specialised law to protect journalists is urgently needed, but it has yet to be enacted or implemented.

“The government has committed to enacting this law and protecting journalists, and so the government will have to take responsibility for all the repression that journalists have faced since this commitment was made.”

Faruk Wasif, director general of the Press Institute Bangladesh, said though the draft law for journalist protection was finalised after extensive stakeholder consultations, there is no explanation for why it has not been enacted yet.

Syed Abdal Ahmed, executive editor of the Daily Amar Desh and a member of the Media Reform Commission, expressed frustration that none of the commission’s recommendations has been implemented. “The information ministry has become the main impediment. They said their power will be curtailed.”

Dhaka Tribune Editor Reaz Ahmad said, “The government had a fantastic opportunity to reform the sector. They could not do that. Instead, they have made us more vulnerable.”

Senior journalists said that in the absence of external allies, unity within the profession is essential.

Kader Gani Chowdhury, secretary general of the Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists, urged media workers to put aside internal divisions. “We’ve seen the consequences of divisions – one group remained silent when the Sangram editor was arrested, while another group celebrated when figures like Matiur Rahman and Mahfuz Anam were targeted.

“We must remember that we have no true friends outside of our own community when the freedom of the press is at stake.”

Veteran journalist Shafik Rehman said, “Matiur Rahman and Mahfuz Anam have certainly played a big role behind this convention because they saw their offices burned ... The target was to destroy Prothom Alo and The Daily Star by any means.

“In this case, two or three podcast speakers played a very bad role. This was wrong.”

He added that he, like all journalists here, want to be united.

Matiur Rahman, editor and publisher of the Prothom Alo, warned that any conflict among journalists weakens journalism.

“No matter what our opinions, thoughts, ideas, or political beliefs are, we must stay united on issues related to newspapers, journalism, and personal safety. We must understand one another and stand by each other.

“We should not think that when a newly elected government comes, all our problems will be solved. It did not happen in the past, and it will not happen now either.”

Rezwanul Haque, chairman of Broadcast Journalists Centre, said, “Many of us claim to be independent, yet our professional unions remain deeply and overtly divided along political lines.”

He added that journalists must work to remove partisan affiliations from within the profession.

Mozammel Haque, editor of

the Bogura-based Daily Karotoa, said that although the number of press clubs outside Dhaka has increased significantly, journalistic quality has not improved at the same pace.

AHM Mushtaqur Rahman, president of the Laxmipur Press Club, criticised the practice of treating editorial positions as political appointments, saying it erodes press independence and credibility.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, warned that reducing media to a purely profit-driven enterprise would destroy public trust and democratic values.

He cautioned media owners against treating journalism like any other commercial industry. “If you invest in media with the same mindset as other industries, that media will never earn people’s trust.

“Experience tells us that societies where independent journalism is strong are democratic, less discriminatory and more respectful of people’s rights.”

He said independent journalism is the only institution that spoke uncomfortable truths to those in power. “Your party

people will not tell you the truth. Bureaucrats will not tell you the truth. Intelligence agencies will not tell you the truth.

“Only independent journalism tells the government the truth.”

CODE OF CONDUCT

Speakers also called for internal accountability and a code of conduct for the media.

Rezwanul said an industry-wide code of conduct should be formulated and enforced.

Reaz Ahmad said, “We need to clean our houses and the best way is through self regulation. If we can’t do that we cannot earn back the trust of the people. An industry-wide code of ethics is needed.”

Munima Sultana, general secretary of Nari Sangbadik Kendra, also recommended implementing industry standards. “We are demanding that the government will reform the media but can we not implement some of the reforms ourselves?” she questioned.

Kamal Ahmed pointed out that while everyone acknowledges that professional standards are not being upheld in the industry, more needs to be done to identify the reasons

behind it and get rid of the obstacles.

Nurul Kabir also called for the formulation and implementation of a code of conduct.

Mahfuz Anam said, “Those of us who have the privilege of being an editor, it is our moral, ethical duty to uphold the highest standards both in our personal and professional lives. “Every decision of our personal lives affects our media organisations.”

He also stated that owners too must have a code of conduct. Media leaders also said they were considering conventions like this at regional level.

Leaders of journalist organisations, including the Association of Television Channel Owners, Broadcast Journalist Centre, Jatiya Press Club, Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists, Dhaka Union of Journalists, Dhaka Reporters Unity, Diplomatic Correspondents Association Bangladesh, Economic Reporters Forum, Photo Journalists Association, and the Crime Reporters Association of Bangladesh, attended the convention.

Affordable care must be next govt’s focus

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management, including restructuring the system under three separate directorates – clinical, academic, and public and primary healthcare – along with higher budgetary allocations to improve coordination, efficiency, and accountability.

The country goes to the polls at a time when the health sector faces major challenges, including inadequate funding, shortages of health workers, high out-of-pocket expenses, unequal access to services and weak governance.

As thousands of people continue to be deprived of quality treatment, the rise in the total fertility rate for the first time in 50 years has fuelled fresh concerns.

Public health expert Prof MA Faiz said that primary healthcare has not

received due importance, particularly in urban areas, where services remain very poor. It should be given priority regardless of whether the area is rural or urban.

He suggested that a doctor-led team should provide services to a defined population size, ensuring that no one is left behind.

In Bangladesh, the universal service package exists only in name. It should be gradually expanded – both in terms of the number of services and the population covered – to ensure universal health coverage. Individuals should bear costs according to their financial capacity, said Prof Faiz, also former director general of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

“This needs to be done

to reduce people’s out-of-pocket expenditure that remains very high in the country. Excessive healthcare costs are pushing many people into poverty while depriving many others of services.”

He also stressed the need for skill-driven medical education to produce the required manpower capable of providing quality primary healthcare.

“The health budget must be increased to achieve these goals,” he added.

Outlining the major tasks for the next government, Prof Liaquat Ali, a member of the Health Sector Reform Commission, said it will need to review the commission’s report and set priorities for implementing the recommendations.

The first priority should be to enact a law declaring primary healthcare a

constitutional obligation and provide these services free of cost, said Prof Liaquat, also a former vice chancellor of Bangladesh University of Health Sciences.

At least 15 percent of the national budget, or five percent of the country’s gross annual income, should be allocated to the health sector in phases, he said, adding that the allocated budget must be fully utilised.

He also recommended reorganising the healthcare system under three directorates – clinical, academic, and public and primary healthcare – to ensure better coordination and service delivery, with adequate manpower assigned accordingly.

Stressing the need to reduce out-of-pocket healthcare expenditure,

EXPERTS’ SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT GOVT

- Strengthen quality primary healthcare, especially in urban areas
- Reduce out-of-pocket healthcare expenditure
- Integrate health into all government policies, activities
- Allocate at least 15% of national budget to the sector
- Improve governance, functionality of govt hospitals
- Bring private healthcare facilities under an accreditation council
- Ensure quality education, training for health professionals

Mohib Ullah Khondoker, a member of the executive management committee at Gonoshasthaya Kendra,

said the next government must properly regulate the medicine market. It must ensure that all

stakeholders adhere to the updated National Essential Drug List once the prices of the 295 medicines on the list are fixed, he noted.

“Priority should be given to ensuring quality education for health professionals and strengthening primary healthcare services, particularly in view of the growing burden of non-communicable diseases, which involve high treatment costs,” he added.

Emphasising the importance of preventive and promotive healthcare, Prof Syed Abdul Hamid from the Institute of Health Economics at Dhaka University said these areas should be prioritised so that fewer people fall sick.

All ministries must play a role by giving priority to health issues, which means health should be integrated into all government policies

and activities, he said.

The country has a large network of government hospitals to provide curative care, but these facilities are not functioning properly mainly due to poor governance and shortages of funds and manpower, he said, calling for effective measures to make them functional.

Private facilities, which charge higher fees but often fall short of quality service, must be brought under an accreditation council to ensure standards, said Prof Hamid, also convener of Alliance for Health Reforms Bangladesh.

Steps must be taken to improve the quality of medical education and promote professional development for doctors so that they stay aligned with global advancements in healthcare, he added.