



We're like pirates... We... land on top of it and we took over the ship... It's a very profitable business.
Donald Trump on US Navy ops in the Gulf

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Harassment of journalists cuts across govts

Star analysis of V-Dem data chronicles harsh conditions faced by country's press

ABDULLAH HEL BUBUN

For much of Bangladesh's history, journalists who challenged those in power have faced harassment, arrest, or intimidation, regardless of who ruled the country.

Data from the Sweden-based Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project shows that for nearly half of Bangladesh's history as an independent country, journalists who reported critically were routinely punished and sometimes forced out of the profession.

The pattern cuts across regimes. Bangladesh recorded hostile conditions for journalists in 27 of the 55 years tracked by V-Dem, with nine of the country's 10



RELISHING THE RAIN ... Unfazed by the downpour, students walking home together, their easy stride and shared laughter turning a grey afternoon into a light and wholesome moment. The photo was taken on the Maulana Bhashani Road near the High Court yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

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Journalists held without trial for up to 620 days

ZYMA ISLAM

As countries around the globe today celebrate the World Press Freedom Day, five senior journalists remain behind bars for between 593 and 620 days in Bangladesh. None of them have been formally charged since their arrest after the 2024 July uprising.

The deaths of the July protesters they are being held over are real, but the charges they face seem unreal.

Farzana Rupa, Shakil Ahmed, Shyamal Dutta, and Mozammel Haque Babu are accused of murdering Mahfuz Alam Shraban, a 21-year-old BNP activist and pharmaceutical worker killed during the protests in Mirpur on August 5, 2024.

The case filed over Shraban's death states that protesters passing through the road between Mirpur Complex and Mirpur Model Police Station were attacked by security forces and Awami League activists

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

- 9 of the 10 worst-ever scores occurred during 2014-2024
- The single worst year was 1975 when Baksal was introduced
- ErsHAD's military rule (1982-1990) was the second major repression period

worst-ever scores occurring during the final three terms of Sheikh Hasina, between 2014 and 2024. During those years, journalists who offended powerful political or state actors were often subjected to legal action, detention, or intimidation.

One such case unfolded in March 2023, when Shamsuzzaman Shams, a correspondent for the daily Prothom Alo, was arrested under the Digital Security Act after reporting on rising food prices. His story quoted a day labourer asking, "What will I do with independence if I cannot afford food?"

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Farmers forced to sell paddy at half its cost

Rain keeps piling havoc on Boro harvest; govt procurement begins

SUKANTA HALDER, JAYDUL ISLAM, MINTU DESHWARA

Farmers in the haor region have suffered a further decline in Boro paddy prices as intermittent rain and clouds continue to prevent proper drying of harvested crops.

Farmers said harvested paddy has become wet, with grains sprouting, making it unsuitable for market sale, forcing distress sales that often fail to cover production costs.

Boro accounts for nearly 55 percent of

Bangladesh's annual rice output, with the season running from December to April.

To ease the crisis, the government has brought forward Boro rice procurement in six haor districts by 12 days from today. The districts are Sunamganj, Sylhet, Habiganj, Moulvibazar, Netrokona, and Kishoreganj. Paddy procurement will also begin across the nation today as per the previous schedule.

Yet many farmers, unable to stock their harvest due to rain, have already sold to millers

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Attack on Star 'heinous'

Speakers call for justice at The Daily Star's 35th anniversary celebrations in Ctg city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chattogram

Politicians, business leaders, academics, civil society members, students and others yesterday joined The Daily Star in celebrating its 35th anniversary in Chattogram city, condemning the December 18 mob attack on the newspaper's Dhaka office last year and demanding punishment for the perpetrators.

Guests extended greetings to the paper, noting that independent and objective journalism is the mirror of a democratic society and that The Daily Star has upheld this principle since its journey began in 1991.

In turn, Mahfuz Anam, the editor and publisher, pledged to continue practising independent and responsible journalism.

The event held at Hotel Agrabad's Ichhamati Hall commemorated

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While rains have damaged crops in different districts, Naogaon has largely been spared. Yet clouds over the past five days kept farm workers from harvesting ripe Boro paddy due to fear of lightning strikes and hailstorms. Yesterday, farmers at Bhasso village in Manda upazila began cutting crops despite the looming threat of thunderstorms.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

DC CONFERENCE

Big projects top agenda as meetings begin today

BAHARAM KHAN

The first DC Conference since the formation of the BNP government is set to begin today, with the four day event featuring several proposals submitted by deputy commissioners from different districts.

The proposals to be submitted, however, lack focus on identifying or addressing the reasons behind disruptions in public services in field administration.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman will inaugurate the conference at 10:30am at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the capital. Following the opening ceremony, ministry-based working sessions will begin.

A total of 498 proposals have been selected for discussion, with 44 -- the highest number -- related to the health ministry.

Ministers, state ministers, advisers, secretaries, and other high-level

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Lively debate, yet much left wanting

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The first session of the parliament ended with the promise of a vibrant House with lively debates but also revealed weaknesses in the failure to adopt reforms.

On one hand, active participation of the opposition together with the prime minister's call for dialogue signalled hope for a more effective and democratic parliament. On the other, procedural failures, and MPs' reluctance to act without the prime minister exposed structural weaknesses.

Expectations are high that the 13th parliament -- elected through broadly accepted polls after years of controversy -- will break from the old pattern of boycotts, hollow debates, and acting as little more than a rubber stamp for ruling parties.

The hope is that the new parliament will emerge as a genuine forum of democratic practice grounded in constructive debate and a stronger role in holding the government accountable.

The maiden session, held from March 12 to April 30, was marked by heated exchanges on issues ranging from the Liberation War (and the main opposition Jamaat-e-Islami's role during that time) to the July charter, reform proposals, the fuel crisis, law and order, and the economic situation. These discussions kept the House vibrant marked by occasional flare-ups. But even the opposition's walk-outs were instances of constructive protest.

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