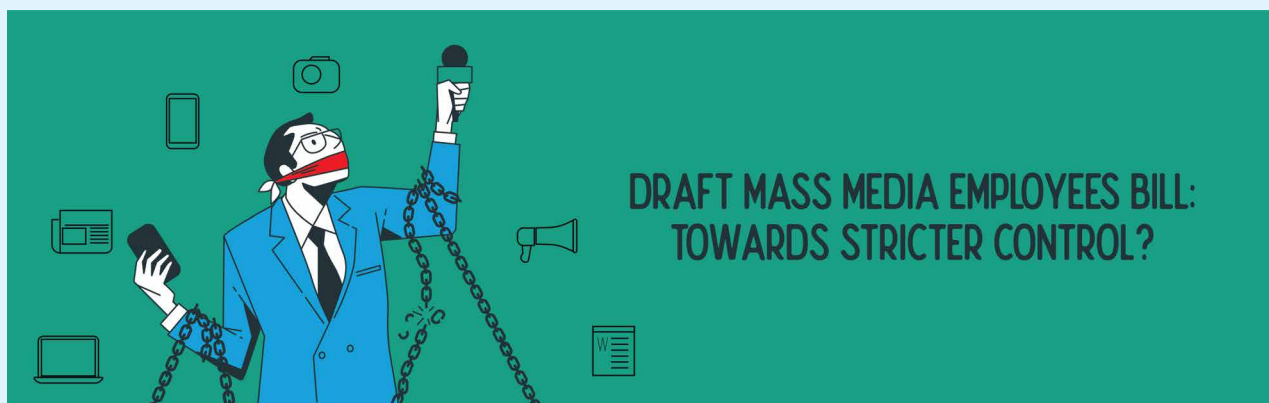


Observation

No job security and rights for media workers in Media Employees Bill: TIB



Dhaka, 31 March 2022: The proposed "Mass Media Employees (Services Conditions) Bill 2022" doesn't ensure job security, related to benefits, and the rights of media workers, said Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB).

In its initial response to the bill placed in the parliament recently, the organisation demanded the bill to be amended to ensure the active participation of media personnel and stakeholders, without relying solely on the owners for amendment.

"Although the bill mentions the need to ensure legal protection and rights of media workers, it is not reflected in reality, rather the draft law is discriminatory," said TIB

Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman in press statement issued on 31 March 2022.

Considering the role and duties of the media, there is no reflection of the special attention to the job of media workers' demands, he said, adding that section 12 of the bill gives media owners the right to lay off additional staff, and section 14 contains a dangerous provision to dismiss workers for misconduct without providing any definition.

He also points out that article 25 does not make the formation of a minimum-wage board compulsory; it is at the government's discretion. Similarly, the formation of future funds has been left to owners' discretion.

In such a scenario, TIB hopes that the ministry concerned will start work on drafting the bill afresh, and the active participation of journalists and other stakeholders in this process must be ensured.

Regulation for Digital, OTT Platforms: Social media and tech companies will practice self-censorship, says TIB

Dhaka, 10 March 2022: Several sections of 'The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission Regulation for Digital, Social Media and OTT Platforms-2021' is in conflict with the constitution. Also, the policy will compel the social media and tech companies to practice self-censorship, making way to suppress freedom of expression, said Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) in a statement released on 10 March 2022.

Terming the draft policy non-practical and contradictory, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman in the statement demanded the scrapping of the draft and proposed to form a new policy incorporating the opinions of the stakeholders and experts.

"The application of the regulation is not limited within the boundary of Bangladesh. Internet service providers, services, and applications are not defined. The draftsmen did not realise that they had given a fundamentally flawed definition of specialised services. It seems it was an attempt to measure everything in a single standard to control multiple services at once, even though they are completely different in terms of usage, technology, and operation," Dr. Zaman said.

Explaining the draft policy TIB said, in order to comply with message traceability or source identification requirements, end-to-end encryption privacy features must be violated, which undermines the constitutionally recognised right to privacy of personal communication. This will put journalists, dissidents, and rights activists at extra risk. The lack of legal protections for intermediaries and the provision of fines for their employees will also encourage self-censorship.

"Like the Digital Security Act, the regulation uses the terms 'insulting', 'harmful', 'offensive' or 'breach of official privacy', for which we have no universal definition. In such a situation, the obligation to block content for these reasons would create the risk of serious misuse (of the policy). And the deadline set for blocking content is inadequate; which will only increase the harassment," Dr. Zaman reasoned.

Need a specific road map for election time responsibilities: TIB to Election Commission

Dhaka, 22 March 2022: The election commission organised a dialogue to take advice from different professional bodies and political parties to hold the next 12th parliamentary election in a free and fair manner. TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman presented TIB's recommendations at the dialogue to the Election Commission (EC).

- a. Short and medium-term strategies and specific roadmaps should be formulated for the successful completion of the responsibilities entrusted to the Commission by involving the organisations, or individuals who have been conducting continuous research and consultative activities on EC, election, and electoral process in Bangladesh;
- b. The practice of government allegiance should be avoided and the practice of state allegiance must be practiced.
- c. Propose to reform the related laws and regulations of Election Commission and review whether these are enough to conduct a free and fair election with the participation of all the legal political parties as well as gain the confidence of the people.
- d. The Election Commission does not conduct elections alone. In this case, various stakeholders, including the election-time government, administration, law enforcement agencies, and political parties, play an important role. In the interest of legally fair elections, these institutions stay under the jurisdiction of the Election Commission for a specified period of time. Therefore, the commission must play a bold and central role with due diligence.
- e. All domestic and foreign election observers interested in election observation must be guaranteed the opportunity to participate freely.
- f. Previously civil societies appealed to the President to remove the election commission in the wake of allegations of financial irregularities and failure to fulfill its constitutional responsibilities. Taking it into account, there should be a concrete step so that this doesn't happen again.
- g. Ignoring nationally and internationally reliable precise data and analysis and the practice of making unrealistic claims, such as-- "free and fair elected has been held", should be avoided.

Workshop

TIB organises a three-day long training workshop on climate financing for journalists

Dhaka, 16 March 2022: Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has organised a three-day long training workshop for journalists who work in reporting on climate change, disaster management, climate financing, and mitigation projects. The workshop, focusing on project monitoring and investigative journalism, was held at BCDM, Savar, from 13-15 March 2022 with 29 journalists from TV, newspapers, and online news portals.



On the first day of the workshop, Md. Mahfuzul Haque, TIB Programme Manager for Climate Finance Policy Integrity (CFPI), introduced the participants. In his session, he emphasised on the use of specialised language needed to report on the environment, climate change, climate financing, and disaster management. He also briefed journalists on TIB's initiatives on establishing good governance in climate financing. In the second session, Deputy Managing Director of PKSF, Dr. Fazle Rabbi Sadeque Ahmed, explained adaptation, mitigation, and technology transfer on climate financing in international and

local contexts. He also explained how climate projects are managed in Bangladesh and the challenges faced in project implementation, fund collection, and management.

On the following day, Professor Gowhar Naeem Wara, convener of the Disaster Forum, explained laws and policies related to climate change and financing while informing on climate projects related to floods, river erosion, cyclones, and disaster shelters, dam projects, forestation, agriculture and warning systems. In the second session of the day, the chief reporter of The Daily Star, Pinaki Roy, described how reports on the environment and climate financing could be prepared by collecting information from different sources. The last day of the workshop focused on aspects and fields that have to be considered while preparing investigative reports on the environment and climate financing. The session conducted by Badruddoza Babu, head of the Investigative Journalism Help Desk, MRDI, focused on pragmatic reporting on climate financing and explained how information could be collected, organised and presented to the audience. In the group exercise, journalists were asked to plan what type of reports they wanted to prepare, following the guidelines given in the workshop for the following year.

The three-day workshop ended with TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman awarding certificates to the participants. He said that journalists are vital members of the fight against corruption and expressed his gratitude for their hard work amidst all adversities.

CCCs and YES celebrate International Women's Day

Corruption hindering the process of women's development

With the theme of 'Ensuring Sustainable Development and Good Governance: Need Empowered Women, Awakened Conscience', Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCCs) celebrated International Women's Day on 08 March 2022 with various awareness-raising activities. CCC, SWAJAN, Youth Engagement and Support (YES), and YES Friends groups organised rallies, discussions, orientation, human chain, seminar, and quiz/essay/debate competitions across 45 locations on this occasion.

CCCs observed the day jointly with District and Upazilla administration. Deputy Commissioners, Additional Deputy Commissioners, Mayor of Municipalities, Upazilla Chairman and Vice-Chairman, Upazilla Nirbahi Officers (UNO) along with locally elected representatives, public officials, different professionals, civil society members, media representatives, and young people attended these events.



A concept note with a 9-point demand was circulated among relevant stakeholders and citizens giving importance to developing a concrete plan towards 2030 for reducing corruption and repression of women, developing a visionary plan for increasing transparency and accountability, curbing corruption, and ensuring good governance

according to the Perspective Plan 2021-2041. TIB stated that lack of accountability in the power structure increases corruption that prohibits social justice, rule of law, and equal rights which are pre-requisite for establishing women empowerment.

IER-DU YES Group observes IWD

YES Group, Institute of Education and Research (IER), University of Dhaka organised a day-long campaign supported by TIB on 09 March 2022 to mark the day at its university campus aiming to create awareness. More than a hundred students along with the teachers of the institution attended the campaign that included anti-corruption game shows.



Sharing CCC's monitoring reports on COVID-19 vaccination programme

Health authorities pledge to ensure COVID-19 vaccine for all

Health authorities of 45 locations across the country made a commitment to implement Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCCs) recommendations for ensuring the COVID-19 Vaccine vaccines for all age groups. CCCs shared a set of recommendations with the local level health authorities learnt from the experience of community monitoring under a project titled 'Governance Challenges in Health Sector: Towards Effective COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery'.



CCCs recommended strengthening the information flow for motivating citizens to take vaccines from institutional and non-institutional resources; creating easier and alternative options for being registered instead of using only online platforms; ensuring the supply of vaccines on time; strengthening campaign on side effects of COVID-19 vaccines; setting priority for marginalised people for getting vaccines; and ensuring options for submitting complaints and redressal mechanism promoting transparency and accountability.

CCCs and YES campaign on the RTI Act, 2009

Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCCs) organised a 10-day-long campaign on the Right to Information Act, 2009 during March last year. A large number of citizens including youth got orientation on the act to practice their rights to information. Citizens also submitted applications seeking necessary information from different institutions with the support of



Youth Engagement and Support (YES) members through the campaign.

Members of the (YES) Groups under CCCs organised the orientation guided by the members of their respective CCCs. Few CCCs conducted right-to-information campaigns participating in the 'Celebration of Liberation and Golden Jubilee Fair' organised by the local administration.



Campaign by SAU YES Group

With the support of TIB, a daylong RTI campaign was conducted by YES Group, Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University (SAU), on 06 March 2022 for creating awareness on people's right to information.



From the RTI Desk, the trained YES members provided orientation to the visitors, especially, the youths regarding RTI Act, 2009, on how to apply for RTI and seek information. More than 100 students participated in the campaign.

CCCs celebrate the birth anniversary of Bangabandhu

CCCs celebrated the birth anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 17 March 2022 with due importance. CCCs organised discussion meetings, essay writing, and drawing competitions on the life and works of Bangabandhu. Teachers, students, civil society representatives, members of School Management Committee, journalists along with CCC, SWAJON, YES & YES Friends, and Active Citizens Group (ACG) members participated in these events.



In Brahmanbaria, CCCs organised a discussion titled 'Dream of Bangabandhu and Corruption-free Bangladesh' at its CCCs office. In Madaripur, CCCs and ACG organised a discussion meeting along with essay writing competitions and drawing competitions separately on the life and works of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Anti-corruption cartoon exhibition for the youth

An anti-corruption cartoon exhibition was organised by YES Group, Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University (SAU), on 06 March 2022 to create greater awareness and motivation among the young generation to promote Say No to Corruption. Through this exhibition, the participants got an opportunity to communicate their understanding of corruption and raise their voices against it.

Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University Vice-Chancellor Dr. Md. Shahidur Rashid Bhuiyan and YES Group Chief Moderator inaugurated the exhibition.



Extempore speech competition on corruption

With an aim to inspire the youth in the anti-corruption social movement, Dhaka University YES group of Development Studies department organised an extempore speech competition with the theme 'Invincible Youth Will Surely Resist Corruption' on 27 March 2022 with the support of TIB.

A total of 38 students from different universities completed registration for this competition. Among them, 16 students (08 Male and 08 Female) were invited to participate in the competition. Mr. Mehedi Hasan, University of Dhaka, Md. Imam Hossain, University of Asia Pacific and Smrety Akter, University of Dhaka, secured 1st, 2nd and 3rd position respectively in the competition.



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