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Stop Intimidating The Media, Release Journalist Shams And Repeal The Digital Security Act: TIB

Dhaka, 30 March 2023: The detention of journalist Samsuzzaman Shams and his presentation in the court after long 30 hours as well as the filing of a case against him under the Digital Security Act, is a violation of the constitutional right to security of life of any citizen and the constitutional obligation of free media. It sets a dangerous precedent of controlling and intimidating the media, said Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) in a press statement of deep concern that also strongly condemned the incident. The organisation demanded the unconditional release of Shams and immediate repeal of the draconian Digital Security Act to uphold democratic principles.



Shams was produced to court 30 hours following his visibly illegal detention and was claimed as “missing” in the meantime, which violates the time limit stipulated by the law to produce an accused in court even if detained lawfully. Terming this as disgraceful and highly disturbing, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman criticized the law enforcement agencies for unlawfully abducting the journalist and failing to produce him in court within the stipulated time frame.

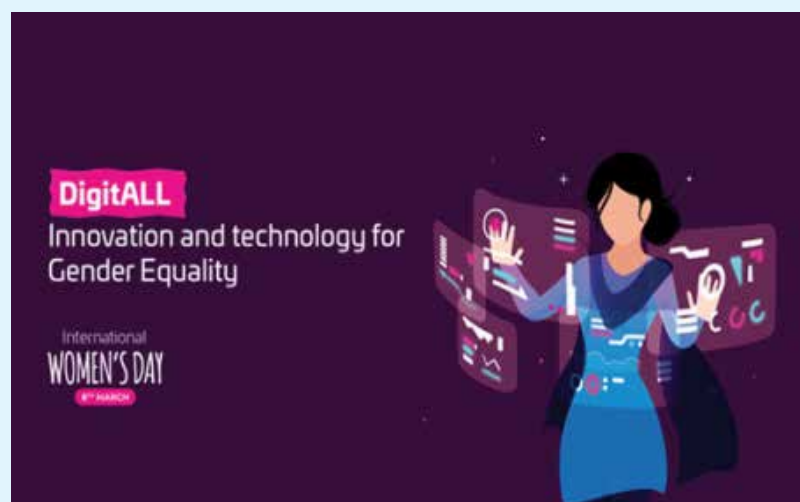
The TIB ED also pointed out that grievances for alleged mistakes or discrepancies in media reporting can be redressed under the Press Council Act. “When the Press Council Act is disregarded to first abduct a journalist and then shown arrested on non-bailable charges under the Digital Security Act, it clearly represents an agenda to intimidate and suppress the media or anyone exercising the right to dissent and freedom of opinion”, he said.

As per media reports, the case against Shams was filed under sections 25(2), 31, and 35 of the Digital Security Act, of which section 31 is a non-bailable offence. Dr. Iftekharuzzaman stated that there are credible evidences that these sections of the Digital Security Act are being misused as weapons to silence dissent and intimidate anyone with a different opinion, especially journalists. “In the past few of days, two more journalists were subjected to violence and intimidation under the Digital Security Act. TIB has expressed its objections to this draconian law since its drafting stage and on numerous subsequent occasions of its abuse. Even the incumbent Law Minister recognized that the law was being abused and promised its amendment. However, media personnel and critics continue to face persecution and violation of fundamental rights by targeted abuse of this law.”

TIB also cited the World Press Freedom Index 2022, where Bangladesh ranked 162nd out of 180 countries, lower even than Taliban-controlled Afghanistan (156th). TIB deems the misuse of the Digital Security Act as a key factor responsible for this poor ranking and called for early repeal of the Act, immediate and unconditional release of journalist Shams and cancellation of the case against him and others including the editor of the relevant newspaper.

TIB Calls For A Roadmap To Include Women In Technology

Dhaka, 07 March 2023: Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has called for a specific roadmap to ensure the active inclusion of women in the mainstream of digital technology and innovation strategy as a tool for achieving gender equality. The organisation also emphasised the need to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of all institutions protecting women from online violence and torture.



In a press release sent to the media on International Women's Day, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman stressed the importance of a specific timeline to include women in technology and innovation. He said, "We believe that a united effort is required to ensure women's social, economic, and political empowerment in technology-dependent Bangladesh. Women risk falling further behind without active inclusion, with technology-driven inequalities exacerbating existing disparities."

Dr. Iftekharuzzaman noted that women's participation in technology-based economic activities has increased, with many women becoming entrepreneurs using online platforms. While this is promising, women still lag behind men in accessing technology, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics Information and Communication Technology (ICT) usage survey in 2022.

TIB also highlighted the urgent need to combat online violence and harassment against women, which has increased with the development of technology. Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, "Sending obscene, sexually harassing messages and pictures online, being a victim

of violence by creating fake IDs are constantly coming to the fore through the media. About 64 percent of women are victims of online violence, causing emotional trauma, depression, anxiety, and trauma. If women are not protected from online violence, it will not be possible to achieve women's empowerment or equality."

Corruption is also a significant obstacle to protecting women's rights, with women at greater risk than men. According to the National Household Survey 2021 conducted by TIB, 43.2 percent of women as service recipients have been victims of corruption. The survey also shows that women have been victims of corruption at a higher rate than men while receiving services from local government institutions, healthcare, and other sectors. Dr. Iftekharuzzaman called on the government to prepare and implement a specific national framework to control and prevent corruption, stating that "corruption undermines the commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment by obstructing justice instead of preventing violence against women. Ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment is vital to sustainable development, and corruption must be tackled to achieve this goal."

In conclusion, TIB's press release highlights the urgent need to include women in the mainstream of technology and innovation, combat online violence and harassment, and prevent corruption to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment in Bangladesh.

TIB Trustee Board Welcomes Monsur Ahmed Chowdhury And Philip Gain

Dhaka, 23 March 2023: Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has recently elected Monsur Ahmed Chowdhury and Philip Gain as new members of its Board of Trustees for a three-year term. The announcement was made following the 115th board meeting held on February 28, 2023.

Mr. Chowdhury is an advocate for the rights of people with disabilities and has worked tirelessly as a development practitioner to promote policies and laws that benefit the disabled community despite being visually impaired himself. From 2009 to 2012, Mr. Chowdhury served as a member of the Committee of the UN Human Rights Commission on the Rights of the Disabled People. He played an instrumental role in establishing the National Forum of Organisations Working with the Disabled (NFOWD) and has led various organisations, including the Center for Services & Information on Disability (CSID) and the Center for Disability in Development (CDD). Additionally, he has made a significant contribution through the creation of Jibon Tori, a renowned floating hospital that



provides medical services to underprivileged individuals, including those with disabilities living in remote areas of Bangladesh.

Mr. Philip Gain, on the other hand, is a prominent figure in the field of human rights and environmental issues in Bangladesh. For the past 30 years, he has used investigative journalism to bring attention to the plight of marginalised groups such as tea plantation workers and indigenous peoples. His work has resulted in several widely-read and highly-regarded books, reports, films, and photography exhibitions. His notable works include- “Stolen Forest” and “Survival on the Fringe: Adivasis of Bangladesh”. He is also the founder director of the Society of Environment and Human Development (SHED) and the programme director of Brattyajan Resource Centre (BRC).

With the addition of Mr. Chowdhury and Mr. Gain, the Board now has a total of 10 members. The number of individuals on the board can range from a minimum of 8 to a maximum of 11 members.

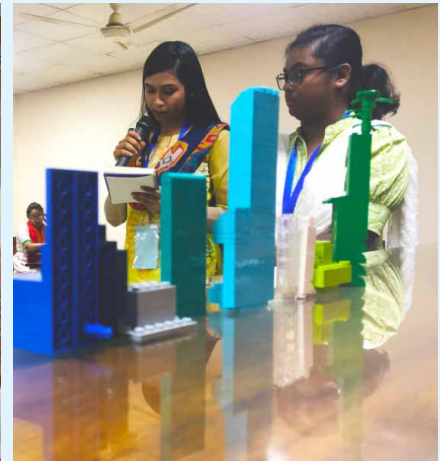
The Board of Trustees of TIB is the highest policy-making body of TIB. At present, the Board is chaired by Professor Dr. Perween Hasan, Vice Chancellor of Central Women’s University, and the Secretary-General is Professor Dr. Tasneem Arefa Siddiqui of Dhaka University.

Data Journalism Workshop Held At JU To Promote Evidence-based Reporting



Dhaka, 18 March 2023: As press freedom faces unprecedented challenges around the world, the field of journalism needs to evolve with an evidence-based approach to data collection, analysis, and presentation. This was the focus of the first Data Journalism Workshop organised by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) at the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at Jahangirnagar University.

The workshop brought together 40 students from the department to teach the basics of data journalism, including statistics and information. The five stages of data journalism



from planning to impact assessment were also taught. The session began with a playful exercise using Lego blocks to construct datasets and then delved deeper into how data can be utilised for reporting on various issues.

The students were briefed on how data journalism can be an effective tool to ensure transparency and accountability in public expenditure, elections, procurement, and overall governance mechanisms. Participants were directed on how open-source data can be collected from public domains to make media reports more reliable, factual, and impactful. They were also advised to utilise Right to Information applications where open-source data is not accessible.

To help the students better understand how data can be sorted and classified for specific



tasks, they were also given a copy of the Data Journalism Handbook, published by TIB in February this year. The students also learned about spreadsheet basics and took part in practice sessions during the workshop. The Data Journalism Handbook was developed by TIB as part of its PACTA project, which emphasises anti-corruption advocacy based on data generation and analysis. As data journalism is relatively new in Bangladesh, TIB has taken various initiatives to promote and build the capacity of stakeholders in the sector.

At the closing ceremony, Rakib Ahmed, Chairperson of the JMS Department at JU, highlighted the importance of incorporating data journalism in their course curriculum and expressed his satisfaction that the workshop was able to explore the topic with tools that can help build the capacities of journalists.

Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, the Executive Director of TIB, emphasised how data journalism can help journalists access more information to uncover corruption and irregularities. He stated, "TIB is working to enhance and promote data journalism as a powerful tool in the fight against corruption. We will continue to support more journalists through various capacity-building initiatives."

Overall, the Data Journalism Workshop organised by TIB has played an important role in equipping journalism students with the skills necessary to enhance the use of data in their reporting.

ULAB YES Club programme Stresses Gender Equality For Good Governance



23 March 2023: The Youth Engagement & Support (YES) Club of University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB), patronised by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), organised a discussion programme titled "Gender Equality Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow" at the

ULAB campus on March 23, 2023. The programme aimed to raise awareness among students on the importance of gender equality.

Renowned actress Nazifa Tushi was present as the chief guest to inspire the students and promote gender equality. Besides, Nadira Sultana, Deputy Coordinator of TIB, and Muhammad Hasibul Hasan, Adviser of the ULAB YES Club, were also present. The discussants emphasised the need to promote gender equality in every aspect of people's lives, be it in the workplace, education, or society as a whole, to promote good governance.



The ULAB YES Club works to promote awareness about good governance and engage students in activities that contribute to positive change in society.

Jahangirnagar Uni: Extempore Speech Competition & Anti-corruption Cartoon Exhibition Held

01 March 2023: With the slogan The Invincible Youth Will Surely Resist Corruption, Youth Engagement and Support (YES) Group of Jahangirnagar University organised an Extempore Speech Competition at its campus compound on 01 March 2023 where the students of different departments participated. The competition aimed to raise awareness among the youth about corruption and bring them together to fight against it.



Rubina Jahan Tithi (Philosophy) won the competition, with Maliha Malha (Journalism & Media Studies) and Towhid Siyam (International Relations) as the first and the second runner-up respectively.

At the prize giving ceremony, Government and Politics dept. professor and YES group Chief Advisor at the university, Mr. Bashir Ahmed, was present as the chief guest and conducted the anti-corruption oath session. TIB's Civic Engagement Director, Fernana Ferdous, was also present as the special guest. The discussants at the ceremony urged the youth to take a strong and active role in curbing corruption and acknowledged the efforts of TIB in

implementing the Right to Information Act and anti-corruption social movement in the country.

Cartoon exhibition and miniature library launch: On the same day, the Jahangirnagar YES group also organised the anti-corruption cartoon exhibition to spread the message of TIB among the campus students. Jahangirnagar University Proctor and TIB's Civic Engagement Director inaugurated the exhibition.



In addition to these events, YES group re-launched a Miniature Open Library at the university campus to promote knowledge on anti-corruption among students. YES Group had previously launched the Miniature Open Library on March 8, 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the library did not function as expected. If the response to the library at the Social Sciences Faculty Building is positive, YES group plans to extend the idea to cover more departments.

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