

Report on visit of delegation of Press Council of India to Dhaka, Bangladesh to attend the National Press Day of Bangladesh Press Council

On invitation of Chairman of the Bangladesh Press Council (BPC) Justice MdMamtaaz Uddin Ahmed, Hon'ble Chairman, Mr. Justice Chandramauli Kumar Prasad along with the Secretary, Press Council of India, Mrs. Anupama Bhatnagar and four members of the Council Shri Jaishankar Gupta, Prof.(Ms.) Sushma Yadav, Shri Sayed Raza Husain Rizvi and Shri C. K. Nayak, visited to Dhaka, Bangladesh to participate in the seminar, on the occasion of Bangladesh Press Council Day under the patronage of H.E. the President of Bangladesh from 17th February 2019 to 21st February 2019.

The Press Council of India's delegation reached at Airport, Dhaka on February 17, 2019 and was warmly welcomed with traditional honour by Bangladesh Press Council.

On February 18, the delegation attended the award-giving ceremony arranged on the occasion of Bangladesh Press Council Day addressed by the President of Bangladesh Abdul Hamid. Minister for Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud and Chairman of the Standing Committee, HasanulHuqInu of the Ministry and several dignitaries attended the function.

The President of Bangladesh personally met and greeted Chairman of the PCI and delegates after the meeting. Chairman of the Sri Lanka Press Council and Chairman of the Press Council Nepal along with their delegates and delegates from Bhutan attended the meeting. The Chairman of the World Association of Press Councils Mr Ali Hancerli too attended the meeting on behalf of the World Association of Press Councils. India along with Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bangladesh are Members of the WAPC. For the first time a delegation from Bhutan participated in the meeting.

In his speech, the President of Bangladesh urged media to play a responsible role and follow journalistic codes and prioritize national interests by shunning provocative and yellow journalism. "Media, democracy and development are complementary to each other. One is stagnant without the other." President Abdul Hamid said. "Media can give an institutional shape to democracy if done according to rules and regulations," the President said. "I firmly believe that involvement of highly-educated students in different media houses to make journalism their career will increase the dignity and development of this profession."

The President urged tech-savvy young journalists to utilize their talent, skill, honesty, and neutrality, and to give priority to the interests of their beloved motherland. "You'll have to be the models of a militancy and terrorism free non-communal Bangladesh. You hold the key to Bangladesh's development," the President said.

Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud, President of the standing committee on Information Ministry, Hasanul HuqInu, spoke at the program, held with Bangladesh Press Council Chairman, Justice Md Mamtaaz Uddin Ahmed, in the chair.

A total of seven awards were distributed among five journalists and two institutions. The function began with religious prayers of all faith. The conduct of the meeting from beginning to end only with Bangladesh national language and traditional ways impressed all delegates.

Next day the delegates were taken to the Bangabandhu Memorial and Museum where all offered tributes to late Sheikh Mujibur Rahaman the father of the nation who was martyred.

After this memorable visit, the delegates had a meeting with the Minister for Information & Broadcasting and exchanged ideas. The Chairman presented Mementos of the Press Council of India, copies of the latest Code of Ethics and annual souvenirs to the Minister and the Secretary. The delegates discussed about the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) both Press Council of India and Bangladesh Press Council have signed. The MOU and the bilateral agreement both the Governments have signed should be followed up both sides agreed. The Minister was keen to know how PCI is gradually becoming self reliant and how all the Print Media are cooperating with it.

After the meeting with the Minister the delegates were taken to the office of the BPC where informal discussion took place about the topic of the day –“Freedom of Press-Challenges in Digital Era”. After the discussions exchange of mementos and gifts was done with and among the councils. The meeting was followed by a cultural programme of the participating countries-India, Sri Lanka, Bhutan besides host Bangladesh.

During the meeting of the said visiting, the Press Council of India's delegation discussed on the proposed formation of SAAPC and few delegates of the Press Associations/Councils of the various countries gave an idea to proceed with the formation of the proposed South Asian Alliance of Press Councils excluding Pakistan.

Besides the above discussion, the Bangladesh media fraternity raised the issue that Bangladesh media is willing to telecast their channel in India but as per the Broadcasting policy of Govt. of India uplinking of programmes from Bangladesh and downlinking of the same in India is not permitted. Chairman of the Press Council of India informed that there is no such bar on Bangladesh's TV Channels provided they have to follow laid down procedures and guidelines for the same. Information Minister, Dr. Hasan Mahmud also confirmed that there is no such restriction over Bangladesh TV Channels. However, he stated that annual fee charged by the Govt. of India for downlinking TV contents is Rs. 5 Crore per annum which is quite high therefore it is considered as prohibitive.
