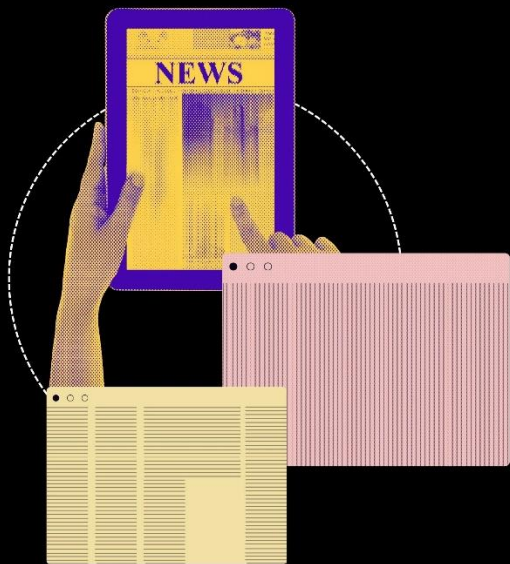




New Voices, Fragile Foundations

An Assessment of Emerging Media Outlets in Bangladesh

New Voices, Fragile Foundations: An Assessment of Emerging Media Outlets in Bangladesh

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Foreword

The media landscape in Bangladesh is witnessing a swift and intriguing shift, as information and communication technologies continue to evolve and social media and video platforms increasingly outpace traditional media-forms as credible sources of news and information. More mainstream media outlets are now turning to digital platforms for audience engagement and outreach. Social media is also at the forefront of political discourse in Bangladesh, playing a significant role in increasing access to information and civic and political participation across a wide demographic of citizens, and shaping socio-political narratives, particularly in the wake of the July 2024 Uprising.

This assessment centers on ten media outlets and startups that have emerged amidst this shifting landscape, with the aim to offer an alternative to mainstream media, by seeking to change the way information is understood, designed, disseminated, and ultimately consumed. These outlets are ‘digital-first’, prioritizing social media and digital platforms to reach their target audiences, and transforming the coverage of issues, content design and production, and dissemination and distribution strategies along the way. These outlets are also independently founded, led by journalists and media actors, and free of the constraints and censorship of traditional corporate ownership. As such,

these media organizations have, and exercise, the freedom to focus on specific issues of public interest, amplify voices and concerns that are under-represented, and generate discourse that seeks accountability from actors and institutions occupying positions of power and responsibility.

However, operating through non-traditional structures, relying solely on digital presentation, and banking on platform-based distribution come with a set of challenges that threaten the sustainability of these alternative media outlets. This report identifies these challenges across each media outlet assessed, and outlines key areas where media startups may be supported to have better operational, administrative, technical, institutional, and financial capacities as they take on an information landscape that is constantly changing and affecting the way people interact with news and those who create it.

We hope this publication will serve as a valuable resource for stakeholders in the media and information ecosystem, offering them crucial insights into the current capacity needs, challenges, and opportunities for media startups and alternative media outlets in Bangladesh.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Tanim Ahmed and Muhammad Saurav Rahman for their dedicated contributions as the authors of this study. We extend our sincere appreciation to IMS (International Media Support), and to the Royal Danish Embassy for supporting this assessment, to all the institutions and individuals who generously shared their time, experiences, and insights throughout the study.



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Executive Summary

The political transition following the July Uprising in 2024 brought significant changes to Bangladesh's media landscape, triggering a new wave of media entrepreneurship. Alongside established newspapers, television stations, and online portals, a number of media startups have now emerged to harness the potential of social media. This study examines 10 such startups, identified through desk research, and assessed using insights from a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with key stakeholders and In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) with founders, editors, and senior executives, and through analyses of published content, distribution strategies, and target audiences of these outlets. The assessment focuses on the outlets' editorial independence, commitment to public-interest journalism, organizational orientation, and sustainability.

The study finds that media startups occupy a distinct position in Bangladesh's evolving information ecosystem, where social media has become the primary arena for news and information. As news consumption and public discourse increasingly take place on social media,

these outlets rely on social media-based distribution to generate user interest, amplify content, and shape conversations. They also play an important role in helping users make sense of current affairs and events as they unfold across platforms. This places significant responsibility on emerging media spaces to influence narratives while upholding information integrity, editorial independence, and autonomy. At the same time, they must cater to the diverse information needs and consumption habits of different audiences. Most of these startups are also independently founded, outside traditional corporate ownership structures, which means that they are not required to align their reporting with a company's wider interests, or limit coverage of politically and commercially sensitive topics and contexts, and issues affecting communities that are underrepresented. While this positions them as alternatives to mainstream media, free from many forms of political and corporate influence, it also presents challenges for their operational and institutional development.

The startups assessed in this study are diverse in both editorial structure and focus. They range from bilingual general-interest news platforms and English-language geopolitical commentary to investigative journalism, fact-checking, explainers, climate reporting, public-

interest journalism, and feminist perspectives. Most rely heavily on social media distribution to generate revenue, using videos, podcasts, and other audio-visual formats alongside text-based reporting. Facebook and YouTube are the principal distribution channels, with a smaller presence on Instagram, TikTok, and X/Twitter. As a result, there is growing demand for journalists who can produce text, video, photography, podcasts, and platform-specific content across multiple formats.

In exploring the current positionalities and operational, technical and structural capacities of the selected startups, the study outlines the following key observations:

- Most of the media startups assessed correspond to an emerging 'third stream' of media—beyond corporate-backed legacy institutions and individual content creators—which encompasses smaller outlets, 'digital-first' startups, and hybrid organisations. While these outlets receive external and, in some cases, corporate, funding, they retain editorial autonomy and engage in journalism on a range of issues, including socio-political commentary, investigations, media accountability, climate, gender, and public affairs. However, there is limited transparency as to ownership, investment, and funding structures.*
- Most outlets are committed to producing content in the public interest, with participants defining this as raising public awareness on issues related to rights, security, health, education, politics, economy, and democracy, empowering people to seek accountability from those in positions of power, countering misinformation through building alternative and informed narratives, amplifying marginalised voices and bringing in perspectives from across political and socio-cultural spectrums to promote greater civic participation.*
- Most of these media startups have yet to clearly define their target audience. At this stage, editorial decisions are driven more by the type of content an outlet wishes to produce than by audience preferences, behaviour, or feedback. Audience engagement is monitored largely through existing platform analytics,*

resulting in limited understanding of readership and viewership patterns and weak and inconsistent audience engagement, which directly affects revenue generation and threatens the long-term viability of many outlets.

- *There is a heavy dependence on social media platforms, which creates a significant structural vulnerability. Most outlets rely on Facebook and YouTube for distribution, audience access and anticipated revenue, while few have developed direct audience channels or innovative business models that could reduce their exposure to changes in platform algorithms, policies and monetisation systems.*
- *Journalists leading these organisations mostly have limited experience in operational, administrative, and financial and business management, creating additional institutional challenges. While larger outlets have more resources to invest in direct sales and marketing, smaller outlets are struggling to establish a separate operational process independent of editorial*

responsibilities. As such, the outlets require support with organisational development, including through operational planning and financial management systems, and access to funding, resources, and networks.

- *Financial sustainability remains the most significant challenge for the outlets assessed. Most currently depend on a combination of investor support, platform monetisation, advertising, sponsorships, partnerships, and grants, none of which provide a source of reliable and sufficient long-term funding.*
- *Revenue-generation strategies remain underdeveloped. Very few outlets have contingency plans or strategies to gradually introduce subscription models, membership programs, or paywalls, leaving many at risk of exhausting their initial funding within a few years.*

In response to these crucial findings, this report recommends, firstly, strengthening the organizational and administrative capacity of startups and media outlets by building proper operational processes,

including with the support of media development organizations where necessary. This report also identifies the need for media outlets to develop editorial strategies and clearly defined value propositions that identify target audiences. Next, outlets must diversify their funding and revenue sources beyond social media monetization to ensure long-term financial viability, and this would require building increased capacity in grant writing and business planning, and legal knowledge to help these organizations to access existing funding opportunities. Media outlets must also establish strong transparency mechanisms and ownership structures that are immune to political and business influence; and

finally, they must invest in human resource development and leadership training.

Bangladesh's post-2024 media startup sector reflects a rare period of experimentation and innovation. While many outlets demonstrate strong editorial ambition and a commitment to public-interest journalism, their long-term success will depend on developing clearer audience strategies, stronger audience engagement practices, sustainable business models including reducing dependency on social media platforms and a workforce equipped for convergent digital media.

1. Introduction

Bangladesh's media journey, in many ways, aligns with its political system and government. Each major political transition has brought momentum or shifts in the country's media landscape, not only in regulation and ownership but also in the nature and practice of journalism. The new wave of media that emerged after the July 2024 Uprising needs to be understood within its historical context.

Bangladesh's press tradition predates independence. Newspapers such as the daily *Ittefaq* and the daily *Sangbad*, with their influence and prominence in the 1960s, illustrate the tradition of an independent, 'politically engaged press'.¹ This tradition became central to the country's national identity, particularly because of the press's role in the events leading up to and during the 1971 liberation war.² However, in the post-independence era, the newspaper industry was further shaped differently by political developments and operated in a constrained environment under post-independence government and military regimes by imposing repressive laws, censorship, and direct bans, including the suspension of hundreds of newspapers and the consolidation of state control over media.³

The repressive martial law during Hussain Muhammad Ershad's regime spawned a wave of critical newsprint periodicals with *Jai Jai Din* leading the way. It introduced a new style of journalistic commentary and analysis without compromising substance. Others like *Bichinta* imitated the format but stepped up their incisive criticism.⁴ It was also a time when *Khoborer Kagoj* (belonging to the same newsprint periodical format) hit the market. Some of these lost their relevance with the fall of Hussein Mohammad Ershad's military regime.

¹ Rahman, A. (2017). *Television Journalism, Market-orientation, and Media Democratization in Bangladesh* (Doctoral dissertation, Simon Fraser University).

² Bhuiyan, A. J. M. Shafiul Alam. (2002). The political economy of mass communication in Bangladesh. *The Journal of International Communication*, 8(2), 118–136. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13216597.2002.9751934>

³ Rahman, A. (2017). *Television Journalism, Market-orientation, and Media Democratization in Bangladesh* (Doctoral dissertation, Simon Fraser University).

⁴ Halim, J. A., & Salam, M. A. (2013). *Bangladesher gonmadhyam o sangbadikatay poribortoner dhara*. *Jagannath University Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(1–2), 1–14. Halim, J. A., & Salam, M. A. (2013). *Bangladesher gonmadhyam o sangbadikatay poribortoner dhara*. *Jagannath University Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(1–2), 1–14. [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcjpcglclefindmkaj/https://jnu.ac.bd/journal/assets/pdf/1_1_79.pdf](https://jnu.ac.bd/journal/assets/pdf/1_1_79.pdf)

Following the fall of Ershad's regime in 1990 and the return to democracy, Bangladesh saw the emergence of its modern newspaper era, reshaping the media market.⁵ From 1991 onward, political and economic liberalization created the conditions for rapid growth in the newspaper market, with outlets such as *Ajker Kagoj* and *Vorer Kagoj*⁶ in Bangla and *The Daily Star* in English reflecting a shift toward more professional, market-oriented journalism.⁷

The 1990s were perhaps the most vibrant in terms of press freedom. With a spate of new media outlets, the 1990s were a time when journalists, no longer restricted by political influence, began to engage in journalism that was more professional, exercising investigative rigor and exploring contexts and nuanced reporting. The boom is often attributed to an amendment of the Special Powers Act of 1974, which omitted three sections relating to 'prohibition of prejudicial acts', 'proscription etc., of certain documents' and 'regulation of publication of certain matters',⁸ which prevented media outlets from reporting freely on state affairs and critiquing government and policy level decision-making.

This trend of a reasonably free press came to a halt again when a military-controlled government with a civil façade took power in 2007 and declared a state of emergency. The two-year state of emergency was notorious for the government's efforts to control the press and curb its freedom. The elections at the end of 2008 saw an immediate resurgence of a vibrant media landscape which continued for a few years.⁹

The post-2008 shift sparked a wave of broadcast media. Although television had existed earlier, the Awami League government issued 30 to 40 new television licenses within a short span of time, helping turn broadcast into a dominant medium for communication.¹⁰ However, this state-led licensing wave also introduced new problems. The licensing process became increasingly political, with approvals often aligned with partisan interests.¹¹ As a result, the growth of Bangladesh's television industry coincided with

⁵ Begum, F. & Bhuiyan, A.J.M.S. Alam (1999). "Media policy and social development: Bangladesh perspective." *Social Science Review*, 16(2), 247–254.

⁶ Rahman, A. (2017). *Television Journalism, Market-orientation, and Media Democratization in Bangladesh* (Doctoral dissertation, Simon Fraser University).

⁷ *The Daily Star*, "About Us," <https://www.thedailystar.net/about-us>

⁸ Rahman, A. (2017). *Television Journalism, Market-orientation, and Media Democratization in Bangladesh* (Doctoral dissertation, Simon Fraser University).

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ Chowdhury, M. S. A. (2023). *Challenges to media freedom in election reporting in Bangladesh* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Sussex.

¹¹ Rahman NN, Begum M, Razzaque Khan A (2023). *Freedom in Journalism: Analyzing the Current Media System in Bangladesh and Its Impact on Journalists' Job Satisfaction*. *SunText Review of Economics & Business*, 4(4): 196

its politicization, creating a tension that has persisted ever since and was further documented by the interim government's Media Reform Commission in its 2025 report.¹²

A 2021 study by the Centre for Governance Studies, covering 48 outlets and 32 businesses, similarly found that Bangladeshi media outlets were frequently controlled by members of business conglomerate families, that most owners had direct or indirect political affiliations, and that nearly all outlets were owned by large business groups with diversified interests in sectors such as banking, insurance, energy and real estate. The study showed that corporate ownership did not necessarily ensure stronger investment in journalism; instead, it often became a structural burden, with news outlets expected to serve the business and public relations interests of their owners.¹³

The shift in political contexts following the July 2024 Uprising, which brought down the Sheikh Hasina regime, has facilitated a new wave of media start-ups. These new outlets differ from earlier media organizations in several important ways. They are not primarily conventional newspapers or television channels, but social media-based, digital-first platforms. Unlike the corporate or politically connected ownership that shaped earlier waves of media expansion, several outlets have been initiated independently by individual journalists, activists and citizen entrepreneurs.¹⁴ These smaller, more independent and native digital outlets offer a different response to the ownership question that the Reform Commission had identified as the country's most serious structural media problem.¹⁵

By 2025, Bangladesh had 3,270 registered print publications, of which 1,340 were daily newspapers, 53 private TV channels, with around 40 currently active, and 28 FM radio stations licensed. A total of 228 online portals are officially registered, while more than 3,000 operate without registration according to the Commission report.¹⁶ However, the number of outlets is indicative of an independent or free press environment. Bangladesh

¹² Ali Riaz & Mohammad Sajjadur Rahman. (January 2021). Who Owns the Media in Bangladesh? Centre for Governance Studies.

¹³ Riaz, A., & Rahman, M. S. (2021). *Who owns the media in Bangladesh?* Centre for Governance Studies (CGS). https://bdmediaowners.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Full-Report_Who-Owns-the-Media-in-Bangladesh.pdf

¹⁴ Ali Riaz & Mohammad Sajjadur Rahman. (January 2021). Who Owns the Media in Bangladesh? Centre for Governance Studies.

¹⁵ The Report Of The Media Reform Commission | বিবিধ তথ্য | গণমাধ্যম সংস্কার কমিশন mrc.portal.gov.bd/pages/miscellaneous-infos/the-report-of-the-media-reform-commission-9ad021-695e3eccc4774958d7b725f2

¹⁶ The Report Of The Media Reform Commission | বিবিধ তথ্য | গণমাধ্যম সংস্কার কমিশন

ranks 152nd out of 180 countries in the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) World Press Freedom Index and is classified in the "very serious" category.¹⁷

In a challenging press freedom context and a competitive media business environment, this study assesses independent online media outlets that emerged in Bangladesh after August 2024. It examines what content they produce, how they define public interest, and how they approach sustainability. It also asks who these outlets are, what journalism they practice, how independent they are, and what their strengths, limitations, and challenges are.

¹⁷ Reporters Without Borders (RSF). (2026). *Bangladesh: World Press Freedom Index – country profile*. <https://rsf.org/en/country/bangladesh>

2. Objective and Methodology

2.1 Objective

This assessment is aimed at mapping emerging independent media initiatives across Bangladesh, with a focus on outlets that demonstrate a commitment to public interest journalism, editorial independence, civic engagement, and/or youth-led leadership, or are linked to rights-focused civil society groups.

It also identifies the key gaps and challenges faced by emerging and independent media outlets, including gaps in editorial capacity, sustainability, technology use, audience engagement, safety, and institutional development. The findings of this assessment are intended to inform realistic and targeted support for outlets with the potential for growth, public interest impact and long-term relevance.

2.2 Methodology

The assessment followed a qualitative approach, combining a desk review, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD), in-depth interviews (IDIs), and content and distribution analysis. The methodology was designed to identify emerging and innovative news outlets in Bangladesh, verify their relevance through stakeholder input, and assess their editorial orientation, public interest value, reach, and institutional development. The selection of emerging media outlets is not exhaustive and does not reflect a ranking or endorsement of the outlets assessed.

The study was conducted in five main stages: desk review and initial identification of emerging media outlets; validation through FGD; further review and final selection of outlets for detailed assessment; IDIs with editors or key personnel; and analysis of content, distribution channels, and social media presence.

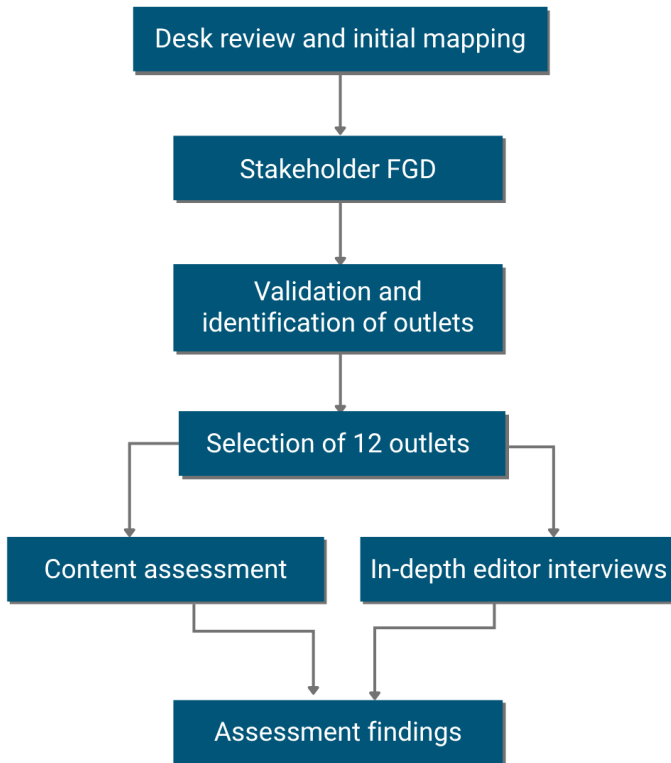


Image 1: Research methodology flowchart.

Desk Review and Initial Mapping

The first stage involved a desk review of available literature, media reports, online directories, public records, and existing knowledge of Bangladesh's media landscape. The research team also

conducted a detailed review of a range of news outlets operating across Bangladesh, with particular attention to startups and newer initiatives launched or gaining visibility in the last two years. Based on this review, the research team prepared a preliminary list of 14 potential outlets for further consideration.

Focus Group Discussion

The desk review was followed by an FGD with relevant stakeholders, including journalists, editors, and academics, to validate the preliminary list and identify any additional outlets that may not have been sufficiently visible through online research. The discussion helped test whether the selected outlets were seen by informed participants as relevant, consistent in putting out content, meaningfully visible across digital platforms, engaging a range of audiences, innovative, credible, and useful within Bangladesh's evolving media ecosystem. The inputs from the focus group were used to refine the final list of outlets selected for a detailed assessment.

Selection of Outlets

Following the desk review and FGD, 10 outlets were selected for the final assessment. The selection was purposive rather than statistically representative. The aim was to present a reasonably broad and diverse picture of emerging media initiatives operating in the country, reflecting a range of characteristics, including editorial focus, geographic location, ownership or institutional background, audience strategy, engagement of public discourse, use of digital platforms, level of visibility, and commitment to public interest.

In-depth Interviews

After the outlets were finalized, the research team conducted IDIs with the editors and/or founders of the selected organizations, or other representatives occupying key positions. These interviews were designed to understand the outlets' editorial vision, institutional structure, business and sustainability models, audience engagement strategies, newsroom capacity, and any existing challenges.

The assessment was guided by several key questions:

- How independent and transparent is the outlet editorially and institutionally?
- What makes the outlet innovative in the context of Bangladesh's media landscape?
- What kind of content do they produce and why?
- Who are its main audiences, and how does it reach them?
- What is its level of organizational and editorial capacity?

- What are its main strengths, limitations, and sustainability challenges?
- How do they define public interest?

Content, Distribution, and Audience Analyses

In the final stage, the research team examined the published content, distribution channels, and social media presence of the selected outlets. The

content review focused on editorial priorities, story formats, thematic coverage, frequency of publication, originality of reporting, use of multimedia, and evidence of public interest orientation. The distribution analysis considered how the outlets reach their audiences, including their use of social media, messaging platforms, video, newsletters, or community-based networks. These indicators were not treated as direct measures of editorial quality, but as useful signals of reach, visibility, and audience engagement.

Limitations

The findings of this assessment are not nationally representative, and the list of emerging outlets identified and assessed as part of this study is non-exhaustive. It is a list outlining diverse and alternative media types that emerged in a very specific context, in the aftermath of a people's uprising that had, among other things, significantly changed how citizens across different demographics engaged in civic and political participation, and signaled an immense shift to the digital domain for dissemination, access, and consumption of different kinds of information and ensuing public discourse.

A large number of similar media outlets have been established in Bangladesh in the time between the July 2024 Uprising and the start of this assessment. The current report covers only a selection of this, based on the researchers' observations, available public information, review of selected content across the most widely-used digital platforms in the country, conversations with relevant actors in the media landscape, insights from the FGD undertaken with key stakeholders to review and validate an initial list of outlets, and subsequently, on participant insights from the IDIs conducted as part of the assessment. As a result, not all emergent media outlets could be independently assessed within the scope of this study.

The startups that have been selected for the final assessment were chosen because they consistently produce and publish content that caters to a new type of audience, and

consequently, have greater and a specific kind of visibility across online spaces. Some smaller or less visible initiatives may have been missed, particularly those with limited online presence or irregular publication. Two newly emerging media outlets that had initially made it to the list were subsequently excluded following further review, as these outlets officially started their operations after the assessment period had concluded; a third startup was not assessed as researchers were unable to independently reach those in charge.

3. Identifying Emerging Outlets

The FGD served as an initial mapping exercise to develop a working understanding of emerging independent media in Bangladesh and to identify outlets for further assessment. The discussion brought together editors and senior journalists from both established and emerging media organizations. Participants examined how independent media should be defined, the gaps these outlets seek to fill, their emerging editorial and distribution models, and the constraints affecting their development. The outlets identified through the discussion were considered alongside those found through the desk review before the final selection for assessment.

3.1 Defining Independent Media

Participants broadly associated independent media with editorial autonomy, public-interest journalism, and freedom from interference by owners, political actors, government authorities, and funders. However, they found it difficult to establish a single definition that could encompass the range of outlets and individuals operating outside conventional media structures.

One participant described an emerging “third stream” between corporate-backed legacy media and largely unstructured, individual content creation. This space includes small institutional outlets, digital-first startups, and hybrid organizations that may receive corporate or other external funding but seek to maintain editorial autonomy and uphold a defined, public-interest mission. Participants identified investigative reporting, hyperlocal coverage, explanatory journalism, and reporting on underrepresented issues as

In my opinion, “content creators succeed where journalists struggle,” stepping in to break sensitive stories or add omitted context that mainstream media avoids due to regulatory, corporate, or political pressures.

—FGD Discussant 1

common features of this stream of media.

We think that individual commentators lack formal editorial accountability, structured verification processes, and original news-gathering capacities, often relying on aggregating existing headlines or delivering subjective commentary rather than producing hard-news reporting.

– FGD Discussant 3 & 5

Others were reluctant to describe individual commentators as journalists or independent media outlets. They distinguished institutional journalism from content creation on the basis of original newsgathering, verification procedures, and editorial oversight and accountability. In their view, creators who primarily aggregate published reports or offer personal commentary should not be treated in the same way as organisations producing original journalism.

FGD insights also revealed that perceived/seemingly financial or organizational independence does not necessarily guarantee editorial independence. Some participants raised concerns about the limited availability of publicly accessible information on the ownership and financing of emerging outlets. They cautioned that undisclosed support from political or business interests could influence editorial decisions even when an outlet appeared independent of conventional corporate ownership. Funding transparency was therefore considered an important factor in assessing editorial autonomy.

They are saying, in effect: 'Just because someone says something with authority does not automatically make it true.' There may be another interpretation. There may be another layer. There may be another explanation...

-FGD discussant 4

The discussion did not resolve this disagreement. It nevertheless demonstrated that individual creators form part of the wider information environment in which emerging outlets operate. For the purposes of this assessment, the selection was limited to organizations with identifiable editorial structures and evidence of original content production. Individual creators were therefore considered part of the broader landscape but were not assessed as media outlets.

3.2 Institutions and Individual Creators

Views differed over whether individual digital creators and commentators should be included within the independent-media landscape. Some participants argued that creators have now become important alternative sources of news, analyses, and context, particularly where established outlets avoid sensitive subjects because of political, regulatory, or commercial pressure. They observed that audiences may regard established media as recognizable institutions while developing a more personal sense of trust in individual creators.

3.3 Gaps in Mainstream Coverage

Participants broadly agreed that emerging outlets were seeking to occupy spaces left open by established media. They identified declining investment in investigative reporting, limited hyperlocal and niche coverage, insufficient context in daily reporting, and the effects of political and commercial pressure as significant gaps within the mainstream news industry.

Several participants shared that established outlets frequently present events through conventional news formats without providing enough explanation, interpretation, or follow-up reporting. One participant described that there is a gap “between how news is delivered and how it is understood.” Emerging outlets were seen as responding to this gap through investigations, analyses, explainers, commentary, and other forms of contextual reporting.

Participants also linked the growth of independent outlets to weaknesses in the ownership and financing of mainstream media. Dependence on corporate advertising and the owners’

wider business interests can limit coverage of politically and/or commercially sensitive subjects. Political pressure and institutionalized self-censorship were also identified as factors affecting mainstream reporting. According to the FGD, these conditions have created opportunities for smaller outlets to cover subjects, perspectives and communities that receive limited attention elsewhere.

Often, we present events in such a rigid or conventional manner that they require further analysis, context, or a more explanatory treatment, sometimes even a video-based explanation. So, there is clearly a gap here, a gap between how news is delivered and how it is understood.

-FGD discussant 1

Some participants also attributed the opening to established media's confidence in its own institutional authority. As audiences gained access to more sources, authoritative presentation alone became less sufficient to command trust. Emerging outlets and creators have used this shift to question dominant accounts, introduce alternative interpretations and provide additional layers of context.

3.4 Formats and Distribution

Participants described digital presentation and platform-based distribution as defining features of the emerging-media landscape. Rather than reproducing the formats of newspapers and television news, many new outlets use video explainers, graphics, conversational presentation and other forms designed for online audiences. Facebook and YouTube are important channels for reaching these audiences, while websites may no longer serve as the sole—or even the primary—point of publication.

The discussion suggested that this shift involves more than transferring conventional reporting to digital platforms. Emerging outlets are also experimenting with the structure and presentation of journalism. Their content is often organized around investigations, explainers, videos, commentary or specific issues rather than the standard subject categories associated with general-interest news organizations.

Participants viewed this adaptability as important to engaging audiences whose news-consumption habits have moved away from print and scheduled broadcasting. However,

they also cautioned that visually engaging or assertive packaging should not substitute verification, original reporting and editorial accountability.

3.5 Financial and Operational Constraints

Financial sustainability emerged as the most significant challenge for independent outlets. Participants observed that established media organizations continue to command much of the domestic advertising market, while global technology companies capture a substantial share of digital advertising expenditure. Revenue from platform monetization was considered insufficient to support the costs of original newsgathering.

The possibility of paywalls and digital subscriptions was discussed as one potential response. Participants noted, however, that audience willingness to pay for journalism remains limited and would need to be cultivated. The discussion did not identify a single viable revenue model for emerging outlets, but it underscored the need to develop forms of income that do not undermine editorial autonomy.

I broached the possibility of paywalls and digital subscription, emphasising that independent journalism cannot survive without cultivating a culture where audiences understand that "good journalism is never truly free."

-FGD discussant 2

Limited resources also affect staffing and production capacity. Small outlets often keep operating costs low and may be unable to employ video editors, graphic designers, camera operators, and other technical personnel required for digital production. Their size can also restrict the range and frequency of their reporting.

Emerging outlets face additional barriers when seeking information from government bodies and other institutions. Participants observed that officials and institutional sources are often less responsive to unfamiliar outlets than to established media brands. This lack of recognition can delay reporting and make investigations more difficult, particularly for startups that have yet to establish their credibility.

3.6 Collaboration as a Form of Response

Participants identified collaborative journalism as one way for smaller outlets to address resource and access constraints. Joint reporting can allow organizations to share expertise, production costs, sources and distribution networks while increasing the reach and impact of their work. Collaborations involving established and independent outlets were cited to illustrate how organizations with different capacities can contribute to a shared investigation.

Such arrangements may be particularly useful for resource-intensive investigations that a small outlet could not undertake alone. At the same time, collaboration requires clear editorial responsibilities, shared standards and agreement on publication and attribution.

3.7 Outlets for Assessment

The focus group generated an initial list that included structured startups, independent digital platforms and individual creators. The list was not treated as exhaustive or as an endorsement of every outlet or person mentioned. Instead, it provided a stakeholder-informed basis for refining the mapping developed through the desk review.

Outlets identified through the focus group and desk review included:

Alap	Dhaka Papers	Potaka News
Centrist Nation TV	Dhaka Street Journal	The Dissent
Charcha	Dhaka Stream	The Post
Climate Watch	The Deltagram	The Whistle
Daily Waada	Politiscope	Rokeya Collective

4. Assessment of Emerging Outlets

The desk review and FGD had identified 15 emerging outlets for consideration. Ten were finally selected for extended assessment. Of the outlets not assessed, three were not operational at the end of June 2026. Researchers were unable to reach one media outlet independently, while another one did not yet have meaningful presence and visibility at the time of the assessment. As such, these two outlets were also not assessed.

The assessment draws on in-depth interviews with founders, editors or senior executives and a review of each outlet's content, publishing platforms and publicly available information. Where relevant, it also considers the public positions of founders and other key figures to understand an outlet's editorial orientation. The findings highlight recurring patterns across the 10 outlets while noting important differences and exceptions.

Media outlet	Start	Type	Platforms	Followers/Subscribers
Alap Website: https://www.alap.news/	Aug, 2025	Analytical and Opinion-based / Explainer-driven	Facebook	702K followers
			YouTube	50.2K subscribers
			TikTok	30.5K followers
			Instagram	19K followers
			X	59 followers
Centrist Nation TV	Dec, 2024	Geopolitical Commentary /	Facebook	330K followers

Website: https://centristnation.tv/		news / Opinion-based (English-language)	YouTube	49.2K subscribers
			TikTok	140 followers
			Instagram	14.6k followers
			X	13.2K followers
Chaarcha Website: https://www.chaarcha.com/	Apr, 2025	Explainer-driven Content Creator	Facebook	286K followers
			YouTube	81.8K subscribers
			TikTok (N/A)	N/A
			Instagram	3560 followers
			X (N/A)	N/A
Climate Watch Website: https://theclimatewatch.com/	Oct, 2024	Niche Subject-matter Journalism / Evidence-based Reporting	Facebook	24K followers
			YouTube	9.75K subscribers
			TikTok	21 followers
			Instagram	2K followers

			X	524 followers
Dhaka Papers Website: https://dhakapers.com/	Jan, 2026	Left-leaning Narrative and Opinion Platform	Facebook	114K followers
			YouTube	12.5k subscribers
			TikTok	269 followers
			Instagram	135 followers
			X	23 followers
Dhaka Stream Website: https://www.dhakastream.net/	July, 2025	Current Affairs-driven / Conventional News and Feature Platform	Facebook	336K followers
			YouTube	54.1K subscribers
			TikTok	3349 followers
			Instagram	2,268 followers
			X	74 followers
Politiscope (Website's not available)	Dec, 2025	Political Commentary and Analysis / Opinion-based	Facebook	67K followers
			YouTube	1.27K subscribers

			TikTok (N/A)	N/A
			Instagram	56 followers
			X	N/A
The Post Website: https://thepost.bd/	Dec, 2024	Narrative-driven / Human Interest and Opinion-based	Facebook	671K followers
			YouTube	66.6K subscribers
			TikTok (N/A)	N/A
			Instagram	1407 followers
			X	31 followers
The Dissent Website: https://thedissect.news/	May, 2025	Digital Investigative / Fact-checking and Media Accountability Platform	Facebook	370k followers
			YouTube	281 subscribers
			TikTok (N/A)	N/A
			Instagram	137 followers
			X	165 followers
Rokeya Collective		Feminist Niche Journalism /	Facebook	7.2K followers

Website: https://www.rokeyacollecive.com/	Mar, 2026	Women-led News and Opinion Platform	YouTube (N/A)	N/A
			TikTok (N/A)	N/A
			Instagram	115 followers
			X	3 followers

Website links, social media follower/subscriber counts as of 13 September, 2026.

Most of the outlets were established between late 2024 and early 2026, with six beginning operations in 2025. They were therefore at different stages of development when the research was conducted. Differences in their staffing, publishing frequency and audience reach should be understood partly in relation to their age and available resources.

Dhaka Stream, Chaarcha and Alap operate on a comparatively larger scale and have received substantial corporate investment. Most of the other outlets were established by journalists or young creators, often using personal funds or contributions from supporters. The scale and sources of investment could not be fully assessed, however, as founders of two outlets declined to disclose their funding and revenue sources, citing safety concerns.

The outlets do not follow a single editorial model. Several emphasize analysis, commentary or explainers rather than continuous news coverage. Others concentrate on investigations, fact-checking, climate reporting, feminist perspectives or public-interest journalism. Dhaka Stream comes closest to a general-interest news and features platform, while Centrist Nation TV is focused primarily on English-language news updates and geopolitical commentary.

While most have websites, social media remains central to their distribution strategies. Facebook and YouTube are the principal channels, while Instagram, TikTok and X generally play smaller roles. This is also reflected in their formats, with video, visual

explainers and conversational presentation often taking precedence over conventional text-based reporting.

Audience reach varies widely. Based on publicly visible figures collected in June 2026, Facebook followings among the outlets with available data ranged from fewer than 3,000 to more than 600,000. YouTube audiences also differed substantially, from newly established channels with only a small number of subscribers to channels with more than 70,000. These figures indicate uneven levels of visibility rather than a direct measure of editorial impact.

Below are the profiles of the 10 outlets, presented in alphabetical order.

4.1 Alap

Alap began its journey in August 2025, launching with a mission to provide an analytical, opinion-based perspective. A review of its social media platforms indicates that it does not engage in traditional newsgathering. This outlet's most popular content on YouTube and Facebook are podcasts and in-depth discussions. This in-depth discussion format is identified as Alap's niche.

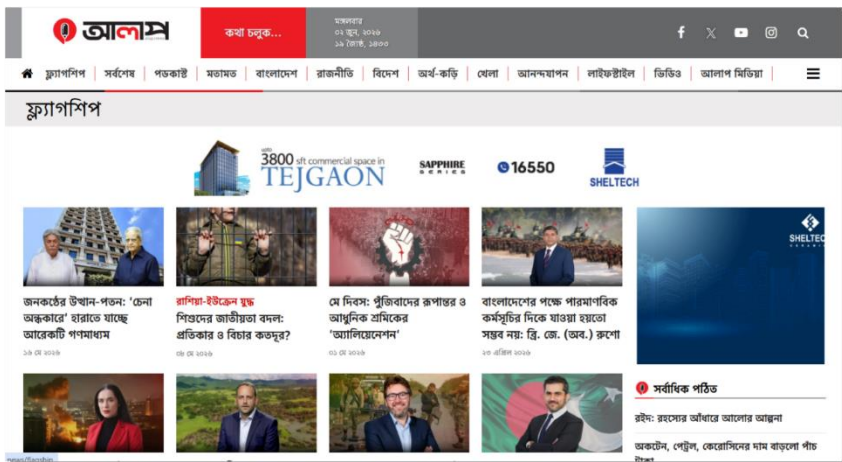


Image 2: Homepage of news portal "Alap".

Alap identifies itself through its Facebook bio as a platform committed to "informing and engaging Bengali-speaking audiences with facts, analysis, podcasts and interviews", a self-description that indicates, from the outset, a deliberate departure from conventional news-gathering. Its YouTube channel description further elaborates this positioning, characterizing the outlet as a "visionary 360-degree media outlet" that aims to "redefine how Bangladesh consumes content," with an explicit emphasis on "impactful storytelling," "fact-based news, sharp analysis, and infotainment" delivered "with integrity and innovation."

As of July 1, 2026, the outlet has accumulated approximately 590,000 followers on Facebook and published nearly 4,900 pieces of content. Beyond Facebook, Alap maintains a presence on Instagram, YouTube, X, and TikTok, as well as a separate website and a Messenger channel with around 1,200 members. However, Facebook remains its primary platform for audience engagement, attracting the highest level of audience interaction across all platforms.

The outlet publishes at least two pieces of content per hour during the daytime. On a representative day, July 1, 2026, 32 contents were published, comprising primarily podcasts, explanatory and analytical videos, and graphics cards. Alap's content profile and self-described mission place it clearly within the opinion, analysis, and infotainment segment of Bangladesh's emerging independent online media landscape.

Alap has put together a relatively small team, which is led by experienced journalists. Its editor, Saiful Hasan, brings experience in both print and broadcast media and is also among the directors of its parent company.

The outlet claims to be devoted to the public interest and defines it as raising public awareness, enabling people to hold power accountable, and encouraging meaningful civic engagement. As the leadership noted, "first it has to be all about the people. Whatever we do must relate to the general people. Our content has to be relevant to the masses".

The leadership believes that engaging in public interest journalism is to explain any issue or incident that is relevant to or related to such things as people's rights, security, education, health, democracy and accountability. Although it also hints at solutions journalism and not just highlights the problem, the outlet does not appear to be striving towards that.

Alap describes itself as a "boutique" outlet. It focuses on creating low-volume, high-impact content with an emphasis on video content on social media. The leadership

indicates an exercise in selecting topics based on their ability, manpower, and the possibility of further expansion into related issues. He stated, “We do a little bit of everything but whatever we cover, we try to delve deep into the issues. There are stories for the website, but we also pay a lot of attention to our audio-visual content, like the explainers and podcasts on Facebook and YouTube.”

Alap devotes time to choosing the topics to explore depending on their ability, human resource, and the possibility of further expansion on particular issues. Its preferred formats are explainers and podcasts for video, and long-form for text. It has no plans to turn into a print publication.

Alap’s thematic focus is concentrated in three areas: people, policy, and politics, with discretion applied in topic selection due to its small workforce and limited capabilities.

The outlet is owned by Alap Holdings Ltd, a company under Sheltech, one of Bangladesh’s largest conglomerates. Besides the editor, seven directors sit on Alap’s board as its owners. The founding editor claims to retain editorial control, while the outlet’s coverage or approach towards certain issues might still be viewed through the lens of indirect corporate interest.

At this level of expenditure, Alap believes its funding is secure for quite some time. However, it is also having a hard time scaling up its content production at this level of human resources, which may benefit from some training or repurposing. One of its core challenges appears to be diversity in capacity: not everyone has a multipurpose skill set within its 28-strong team of journalists. As the Alap representative notes, “It is now becoming increasingly apparent that we need to invest in training, and in repurposing our talent and growing new skillsets. I need a team where everyone has multiple skillsets. The age of single-skill personnel in the newsroom is all but over, I think.”

Alap’s primary source of revenue is social media, specifically Facebook and YouTube, with advertising revenue remaining limited. The management is exploring sponsorship arrangements through sponsored video content and static advertisements within video pieces. It is also exploring possible collaboration with other outlets and content producers, though no long-term partnership with any NGO or CSO has been established.

It appears that Alap would benefit most from a concrete content strategy to secure more traction and currency. A second step would be to develop a revenue plan. Alap has its heart in the right place. In its current form, the outfit may be able to retain editorial independence. However, Alap’s corporate precondition that it should not create trouble would limit it from addressing issues of public interest. Another equally limiting factor

is the inadequate intellectual depth of its leadership, which will invariably reflect in the outlet's choice of content, approach, presentation, and coverage. Alap can be expected to push a moderately liberal agenda without posing too many uncomfortable questions to disturb the status quo.

4.2 Centrist Nation TV

Centrist Nation TV is a Bangladesh-based social media news and commentary platform that emerged in December 2024, primarily to counter what its founder identified as anti-Bangladeshi propaganda circulating in international, particularly Indian, media following the July 2024 political changeover. It was founded by Shafquat Rabbee Anik, a US-based expatriate Bangladeshi who identified a gap in English-language content capable of addressing this misinformation and launched the platform to fill it.



Image 3: Facebook Page of the "Centrist Nation TV".

The outlet self-describes as operating at the intersection of journalism, social media, and digital entertainment, and its founder has publicly characterized it as best understood as a "commentary and geopolitical analysis platform" rather than a fully investigative newsroom, a classification consistent with its observable content output. Its niche is explicitly English-language content aimed at an international audience, seeking to present a Bangladesh-centered perspective and challenge external narratives about the country.

Owned and operated by Centrist Nation Trust, a licensed business entity in Dhaka, the outlet follows a non-profit model, directing all revenue from social media advertising, donations, and corporate sponsorships toward operational expenses.

The founder defines public interest as standing against the misinformation surrounding Bangladesh and countering it through an alternative narrative, a mission reflected in the outlet's self-description as a platform that "brings together voices from across the political and cultural spectrum of Bangladesh to foster understanding, curiosity, and informed dialogue." The outlet aims to stand for the persecuted, but all the while making sure that the centre is well-represented. According to the founder, the centrist ideology, which is necessarily one that is espoused by Muslims, needs to be revived to make sure that the principles being propagated as ideal align with those of Bangladesh's Muslim identity.

As of July 2026, it has approximately 280,000 Facebook followers and around 49,000 YouTube subscribers, having joined both platforms in December 2024, and also maintains a presence across Instagram, X, TikTok, and a separate website. A content review of its Facebook page at 11 am on July 2, 2026, shows 26 pieces of content published within a 24-hour period, of which eight were videos. Among the video content, only one featured reporting with the general public through field-level interviews, while others drew from political leaders' speeches and expert commentary from public events. A significant portion of daily output consists of photo cards, and a notable thematic concentration is visible around Bangladesh's international and bilateral relationships, including with the United States, India, and Iran, on that particular day. While the outlet conducts limited ground-level public opinion gathering, this does not constitute systematic news-gathering.

The outlet's founding followed a Facebook post by its founder, calling for an English-language platform to address what the founder characterized as anti-Bangladeshi narratives in international media. The post generated approximately 2,700 comments. As the founder observed, "It had 2,700 comments, and I realised there was potential here," leading to Centrist Nation TV's official launch within a month.

Funding came from numerous small donors and a couple of large donors, which went into setting up an office and studio. The outlet adopted a bite-sized clip format as its primary content strategy, as the leadership noted, "No one really listens to the whole thing. You need bite-sized content. Clips were what we were going to produce." The Centrist Nation that declared its agenda would always be anti-establishment. The founder further conceptualized it: "We will stand up for whoever is being persecuted."

This TV station positions itself among the leading players in the bite-sized media market in Bangladesh, leading it to receive advertisements from the private sector. But it is still not enough to run a proper newsroom, as the founder remarks. The outlet has nine full-time employees while the editor volunteers his time. The newsroom operations still take a few hundred thousand taka every month. “Even that is difficult to sustain because the advertisement revenue only begins to flow several months after you have aired it,” the founder stated. Beyond the time lag, there is also the obvious uncertainty over the continuity of the advertisements.

Expansion of the newsroom is quite daunting since even at this small scale, the founder is having to pay the overhead out of his pocket, and the outlet has not yet earned enough to pay for its own expenses. The chosen field, bite-sized media, has its possibilities and challenges, which limit the outlet in certain ways.

4.3 Chaarcha

Chaarcha began its verifiable presence in April 2025 with the launch of its YouTube channel and subsequently its Facebook page in August 2025. It distributes content mainly through Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and its own news portal. Despite the professional background of its editorial team, the outlet's content mode leans more toward creator-style production than conventional news reporting. Its self-stated mission, however, signals a journalistic aspiration: its website describes Chaarcha as “a news media, which strives to provide in-depth, investigative reporting...” while its social media bio declares its motto as “Not just news — a search for facts.”

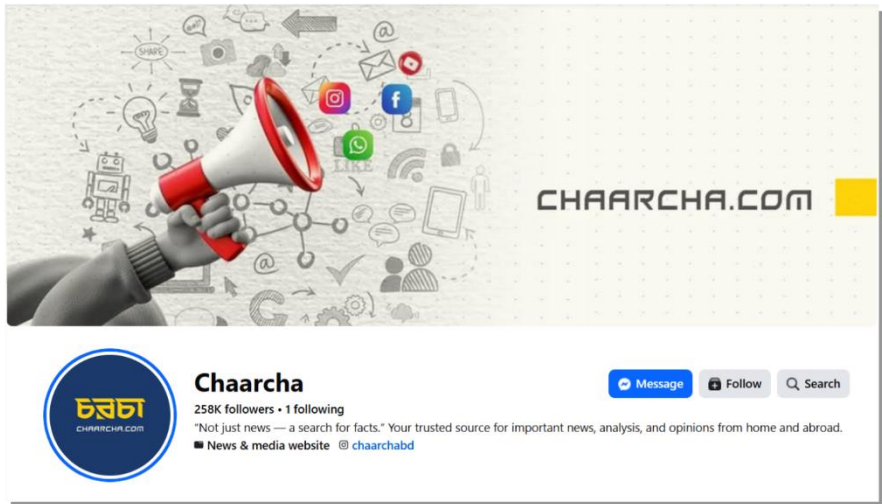


Image 4: Facebook Page of the “Chaarcha”.

Chaarcha defines its editorial responsibility as providing relevant news that touches people’s lives, explaining it in detail and consistently questioning those in power. As per editor, “We believe it is our responsibility to not just provide the news but provide relevant news that touches people’s lives and explain them in detail.” He added, “we will naturally try to avoid sensationalism. We want to ask questions that either seek to improve transparency.” The outlet identifies solid investigations, as well as podcasts and commentaries, as its primary content, acknowledging in an apparent bid to blend traditional journalism with the emerging preference for audio-visuals. The outlet has also brought out special print editions marking special occasions and mentioned an ambition to launch a print version.

The outlet’s YouTube channel has gained 75k subscribers, and its Facebook page has 234k followers.

A content review of Chaarcha's Facebook page at 1:30 pm on July 2, 2026, shows 78 pieces of content published or shared within a 24-hour period. The majority of this output consists of graphics accompanied by links to its website's news articles, alongside reels and short-form video clips featuring statements and comments from individuals or stakeholders on particular topics of current affairs. A smaller but notable

portion includes detailed interviews on subjects related to history, society, culture, and art. Its website reinforces this orientation: it features a segment called “In Short,” which presents news briefly without in-depth detail, alongside longer stories that prioritize discussion-worthy, analytical themes over routine daily coverage. Similarly, its YouTube channel produces short-form content including YouTube Shorts. Chaarcha's content profile places it within the content creator/explainer and analysis category of Bangladesh's emerging independent online media landscape.

Chaarcha is owned by Deep Dive Limited and is led by Sohrab Hasan, the editor-in-chief, a veteran journalist who previously held a senior editorial position at Prothom Alo, Bangladesh's largest newspaper. The digital operations and strategy are overseen by the founder, Selim Khan. The outlet's 40-strong team comprises about 30 people involved in journalistic duties.

In terms of financial sustainability, the editor-in-chief stated, the outlet has sufficient investment to last for the first three years, after which it will need to ensure some steady revenue sources. Additionally, he said to diversify the revenue stream, “We are trying to activate and leverage our network for partnerships and sponsorships.”

The outlets have active priorities to accommodate minorities and their issues. Further, it is keen to produce investigations and in-depth stories, as well as analytical content or commentaries. As such, Chaarcha is looking to get a foothold in the mainstream online news industry of Bangladesh with more dynamism and diversity.

Therefore, the outlet is currently exploring several avenues like advertisement, partnerships, sponsorships and content verticals catering to expatriate Bangladeshis as potential revenue sources. The editor says his main challenge is to make Chaarcha distinct from its competitors and make it obvious to its readers.

4.4 Climate Watch

The Climate Watch is an English-language platform dedicated to in-depth coverage of climate change, the environment, and sustainability issues, with a specific focus on South Asia. It occupies a distinct niche, defined by subject matter rather than a general news or commentary orientation. The outlet began its journey in October 2024.



Image 5: Homepage of news portal "Climate Watch".

Climate Watch maintains an actively updated website that serves as its primary content repository. It also offers a newsletter. In terms of content, Climate Watch produces an average of eight to ten news stories per day. Its reporting is notably less oriented toward opinion and commentary and more toward evidence-based journalism. Its geographic scope extends beyond Dhaka, with attention to climate- and environment-related stories from peripheral regions of the country, covering daily events, court cases, and local developments. It also produces feature videos, further diversifying its content formats, and distributes them through social media like YouTube and Facebook. Its Facebook page functions primarily as a traffic-driving channel, the outlet posts mostly graphics of its news stories accompanied by links directing audiences to the full story on its portal.

The Climate Watch won the SOPA 2026 Award for Excellence in Reporting on the Environment in the Regional/Local category as part of the Earth Journalism Network's cross-border project "Dark Side of the Boom." It also received a special citation in the 2026 Osborn Elliott Prize for its investigation into Asia's rapidly expanding data-center industry.

Founded by Shamsuddin Ilias, Climate Change began its journey in October 2024, with operations mainly run out of Chattogram. It operates with a small staff of five people and about a dozen voluntary contributors from around South Asia. The outlet strives to cover all topics related to climate change with a special emphasis on renewable energy and climate change. It declares its editorial vision "reporting today, for a greener

tomorrow” to be a source of information but also a platform for advocacy and action, protecting biodiversity and amplifying local adaptation efforts. The founder also stated, “we believe in comprehensive reporting that leads to informed action.”

The outlet is envisioned as an online platform with an active presence on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, and has so far managed to get almost ten thousand subscribers on YouTube and 22 thousand followers on Facebook.

While funds are always a constant challenge, Climate Watch identified the challenge of the limited availability of capable journalists who can report on the issue from the field. As the founder Climate Watch observed, “We need capable journalists who can report from the field. Since this is a specialised topic we cover, our reports need to be more in-depth and they need to provide more value for the reader than just any other news outlet.” The outlet has identified hiring and training young reporters as a potential solution to this gap.

As regards business and financial viability, it was not an initial objective for Climate Watch to become a ‘profitable’ organization; it is currently exploring grants, partnerships, and collaborations as potential funding sources and has identified relevant potential funders. Perhaps the weakest side for Climate Watch is that it does not have Bengali content, which narrows its potential audience within Bangladesh. At the same time, this portal is envisioned to cater to a niche audience across South Asia, in which it appears to be successful, with contributions from across the region.

4.5 Dhaka Papers

Dhaka Papers is a left-leaning, opinion-driven news platform co-founded by journalists and activists. Its slogan, “Courage has one color — RED,” openly declares its ideological stance, while its Facebook and YouTube bios, “Their narrative. Our reality. The shift starts here,” frame the outlet as a counter-narrative project rather than a conventional news operation.

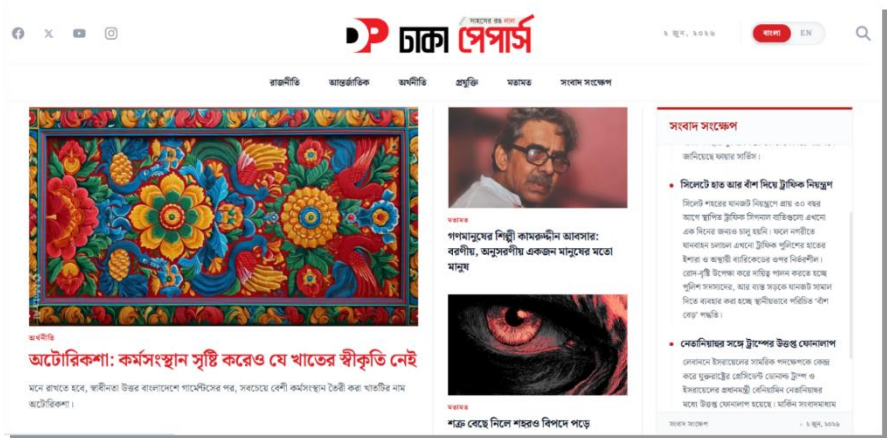


Image 6: Homepage of news portal "Dhaka Papers".

The outlet's primary distribution channel is social media, though it also maintains a website. A review of Dhaka Papers' website and social media content suggests that it is primarily opinion-driven. Since its January 2026 inception, the outlet has published only two investigative news stories on its website. It publishes a very limited number of current affairs updates under a separate segment called "News Brief," while its primary content remains opinion pieces covering politics, power and energy, economy, environment, and international affairs.

Dhaka Papers' content format varies across platforms. On YouTube, it publishes five to seven videos daily, primarily explainers and podcasts, spanning diverse topics including politics, culture, art, religion, history, and mythology, both national and international. On Facebook, it repurposes the same explainers as reels, but a significant portion of its daily content consists of sharing individual Facebook posts from politicians, government officials, activists, and artists, amplifying those voices on particular issues through its platform.

Arifuzzaman Tuhin, a journalist turned entrepreneur is the current editor of Dhaka Papers. The outlet defines public interest as being “the unwavering voice of the people” and believes that journalism is not just about providing people with information, but it is also about pointing towards a direction. He explained, “We will take a stance in our commentary and podcasts, we will also tell people what we think about it. We will say it directly and loudly.”

It is a bilingual outlet and its editorial focus is to cover human rights, ethnic minorities, religious freedom, violent extremism and public money, as the editor stated, “We want to keep questioning the authorities relentlessly.” Dhaka Papers has also outlined a plan to produce collaborative content with marginalized people, including farmers, fishers, honey collectors, weavers, and artisans, who will present their stories in their local dialects, subject to editorial verification and scrutiny.

Besides the website, Dhaka Papers has a range of audio-visual content regularly put up on Facebook and YouTube, besides other social media platforms. Since its inception, Dhaka Papers has gained almost 2900 YouTube subscribers and 61k Facebook followers.

The outlet has secured funding for a couple of years of operations and acknowledged that social media monetization alone will not be sufficient for long-term sustainability. Currently, it is exploring several revenue streams, including grants, subscriptions, premium content monetization, collaboration, and crowdfunding. The organization is currently operating with 16 paid full-time employees and five volunteers.

The management is keeping a watchful eye on overheads, while there are some enthusiastic and committed funders. For now, it is still in the initial expansion stage.

4.6 Dhaka Stream

Dhaka Stream is a news and storytelling platform that, by its own description, goes “beyond breaking news to focus on analysis, emotion, and context, telling the stories that truly matter.” It is a comparatively large outlet in the post-August 2024 independent online media landscape, owned by a trust comprising former journalists and run like a conventional newsroom. The outlet also operates a Bengali-language version, Bangla Stream, that publishes the same content as part of a dual-language strategy. It distributes its content across a wide range of platforms, including YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, X, Pinterest, TikTok, Threads, and a WhatsApp channel.

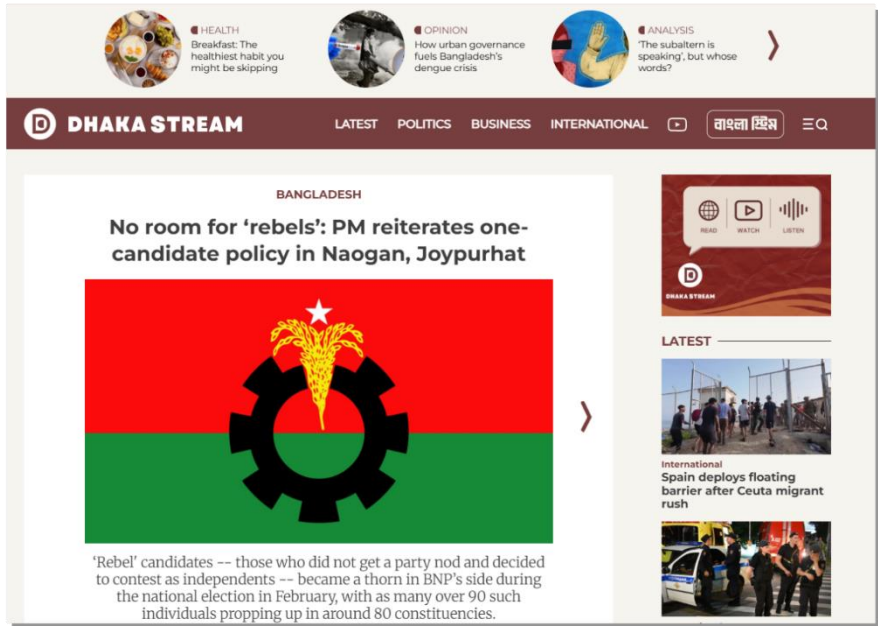


Image 7: Homepage of news portal “Dhaka Stream”.

Unlike most of its contemporaries, Dhaka Stream covers current affairs. Its website operates largely as a conventional news outlet, covering contemporary politics, business, and international news, with a notable emphasis on feature stories and multimedia content. It publishes opinion and analysis, but these are not prominently visible on the website's landing page. On YouTube, its content is primarily long-form: interviews and podcasts that mostly exceed 30 minutes, with no current-affairs news in that format. However, it uses YouTube Shorts exclusively for current affairs content. On Facebook, it shares graphics linked to its website's news content and YouTube videos.

Dhaka Stream began operations in July 2025 and has accumulated 50,000 YouTube subscribers and 295,000 Facebook followers. It is led by editor Iftekhar Mahmud, a veteran journalist formerly of Prothom Alo, Bangladesh's largest newspaper. The outlet defines its target audience as the educated, socially aware youth of Bangladesh. It defines public interest as standing for minorities, holding power to account, and exposing what is being concealed, whether that involves the state or the global power. The editor further conceptualized it, “We pick an issue and go deep into it,” adding that

“there will be explainers, analysis, podcasts, news or feature stories on that specific issue.”

Although a startup, Dhaka Stream operates with a team of over 100 employees, 70 of them journalists. The outlet mentioned it maintains an active policy to hire women in at least a third of its posts and to prioritize the hiring of minorities, and has stated a commitment to UN charters and conventions on human rights and minorities.

Dhaka Stream operates with a monthly expenditure of over Tk 5 million and has sufficient funding for about three years. Its trustee board has six members, who are also its investors and directors of the company. Dhaka Stream does have a former member of the cabinet on its board who has pledged to remain quiet and uninvolved in its operations, according to the editor.

Its business plan includes roundtables, paid content, partnerships, and advertisements, besides social media monetisation. It is actively exploring avenues with international agencies and NGOs/CSOs and has secured a handful of roundtables and some contracts for paid content.

The leadership identifies the key operational challenge as securing government advertisements, which the larger outlets have completely cornered. Understandably, the editor says he desperately needs a dependable and reliable workforce with appropriate skill sets — both reporters and sub-editors.

The outlet is producing content for diverse platforms in keeping with the perceived taste of the youth. There is a strong emphasis on producing in-depth and exclusive content, at the moment, confined to politics, crime, and extremism.

4.7 PolitiScope

PolitiScope is a media and political commentary platform. Its slogan, “politics, up close and unfiltered,” signals its focus on direct, commentary-driven political content. The platform focuses on political analysis, historical breakdowns of national and international politics, and socio-political discussions. It curates information from popular media and social media sources and distributes its narrative through YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, though its Instagram presence remains minimal, with only 8 posts and 52 followers as of July 3, 2026. Its YouTube channel launched in December 2025.



Image 8: Facebook Page of the “PolitiScope”.

As of July 3, 2026, PolitiScope has published 105 videos on YouTube, with 85,827 views and 1,240 subscribers. Its YouTube content consists mostly of podcasts and explainer videos focused on political, societal, historical, cultural, and artistic topics, with no breaking news. It publishes two to three pieces of content per week on YouTube. On Facebook, it has posted at least 10 content per day since its beginning. It posts analysis and opinion videos, as well as current affairs and breaking news, published as graphics and reels. The footage used in its reels is outsourced, and the information in its graphics is drawn from other media outlets, which it acknowledges as sources within the graphics themselves. This indicates that its original content is mostly analysis and opinion-based, rather than conventional news.

Anik Roy is the founder and editor of PolitiScope. The outlet's stated goal is to create greater political consciousness among people. In the context of rising extremism across Bangladesh, the founding editor stated, “The attacks on shrines and Sufis and other minorities who are simply ‘different’ from the mainstream have resulted in attacks and harassment.” The outlet has also aired a series of podcasts about Bangladesh’s 1971 liberation war that challenge and question newer political narratives that have become prominent since July 2024.

PolitiScope also stated a commitment to addressing disparity and inequality and examining the positive and negative aspects of government policies and their impact. The outlet has identified a gap in student-friendly audio-visual content as part of the outlet's founding rationale. The founder conceptualized it further, "There is overall a dearth of good audio-visual content that is student-friendly at the same time."

PolitiScope operates with six full-time staff and two volunteers. Currently, it generates some revenue from social media, but that is insufficient to cover expenses or support expansion, and it is actively seeking advertisements and sponsorships.

The founder's challenge is producing at volume and scaling up his operations. "Post-production is slow, and we need more equipment to make it faster. But that requires more investment, which we do not have right now." A solid source of funds to cover their operations would, for now, appear to be sufficient for PolitiScope till it secures enough traction to be able to attract larger advertisement offers.

4.8 The Post

The Post describes itself as "Bangladesh's first Meta Non-Fiction new media, a human story hub," with a stated mission to "break and redefine the essence of News-Narrative." Its YouTube channel launched in December 2024, and it distributes content across Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, X, and LinkedIn. It does not have a separate website or news portal.

The Post's content is primarily video-based, covering topics such as politics, religion, international affairs, entertainment, and sports. Its content format consists mostly of opinion-based analysis, interviews, podcasts, and explainers. Its sub-channels, including Post Religion and Post International, focus on in-depth analysis, contextual narratives, and perspectives on their respective topics rather than breaking or conventional news. On YouTube, it publishes an average of two to three long-form video pieces per day, primarily interviews and podcasts featuring politicians, journalists, experts, analysts, and artists.

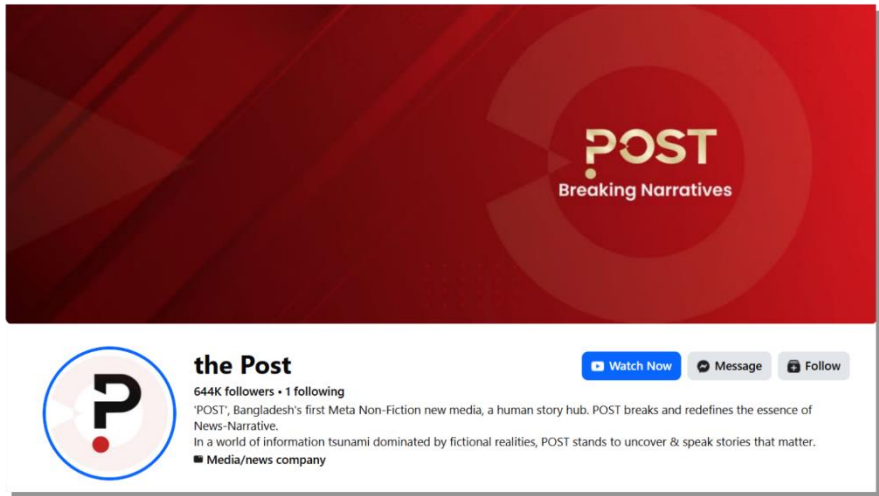


Image 9: Facebook Page of “The Post”.

Additionally, it regularly shares graphics on YouTube compiled from individual quotes drawn from Facebook posts or interviews from other media outlets. On Facebook, it publishes an average of at least 20 pieces of content per day, of which three to four are explainers, analysis pieces, or podcasts, while the remainder are graphics featuring individual comments, quotes, or current affairs information from both national and international contexts. It also publishes philosophical content related to life lessons on its Facebook page.

On Facebook, as of July 3, 2026, it has more than 14,000 posts and 632,000 followers. On YouTube, as of the same date, it has 54,800 subscribers, 2,523 videos, and 4,619,658 views.

The Post is led by Nur Safa Julhaj, a television veteran of many years. The outlet defines its editorial approach as narrative-driven rather than news-driven. The founder explains it further, “We will not be breaking news, but we will be breaking narratives.”

It defines public interest through what the editor describes as a “public interest lens,” with politics, economy, culture, health, and education as its primary editorial focus, and what the editor terms “contextual production of knowledge” as its secondary orientation.

There is also a monthly review of comments besides the regular perusal that is often a factor in editorial decisions on coverage, according to the editor.

The outlet is privately owned, operating under a trade license. Investors have so far been covering the operational expenditure. However, the outlet is looking to expand further and is exploring possibilities of investment in the operations. The outlet has 14 full-time salaried employees, one of whom handles administration and HR.

As for revenues, The Post has a limited income from social media platforms, which management expects to account for about 20% of its expenses, with the remainder to be sourced from product placement, sponsorships, event activation and partnerships. Some event activation has already taken place, though no clear strategic partnerships have been established.

The Post is currently entering its second phase of expansion, focusing on bringing more investment and completing the official formalities of registration. Its third phase includes long-term plans for content verticals in the works, such as Post Academy and Post Studio, that will generate content monetization and revenue.

Besides the perpetual challenge of securing funds, The Post desperately needs people with the right skills for running a nimble new media outlet. More than ever, journalists need to have versatility in this fast-changing media landscape. This outlet has a clearly defined content niche and has fast become an inspiration for other startups. The outlet's content, like that of several other startups, is limited to audio-visuals and distributed through social media platforms. The outfit's planning behind its flagship podcasts is reflected by the line of questions and the direction of the conversation as well as its set design. The Post will benefit from skills training and perhaps a proper mapping of the availability of resources. They also need a large team of researchers to be able to remain diverse and relevant. It appears to have a fair bit of idea about potential revenue sources, although there may not be a comprehensive business strategy as such. In light of its present coverage, The Post may be expected to push a bold progressive agenda.

4.9 Rokeya Collective

Rokeya Collective is a women-led journalism organization that, according to its own description, exists to “amplify women’s voices, strengthen ethical and inclusive journalism, and foster informed public dialogue,” inspired by the legacy of Begum Rokeya. It brings together women from diverse backgrounds, including journalists, academics, activists, entrepreneurs, and community leaders. The outlet has a formally documented editorial policy that covers 13 chapters, including accuracy and verification, fairness, women and children, source protection, trauma-informed journalism, conflicts of interest, and editorial independence.

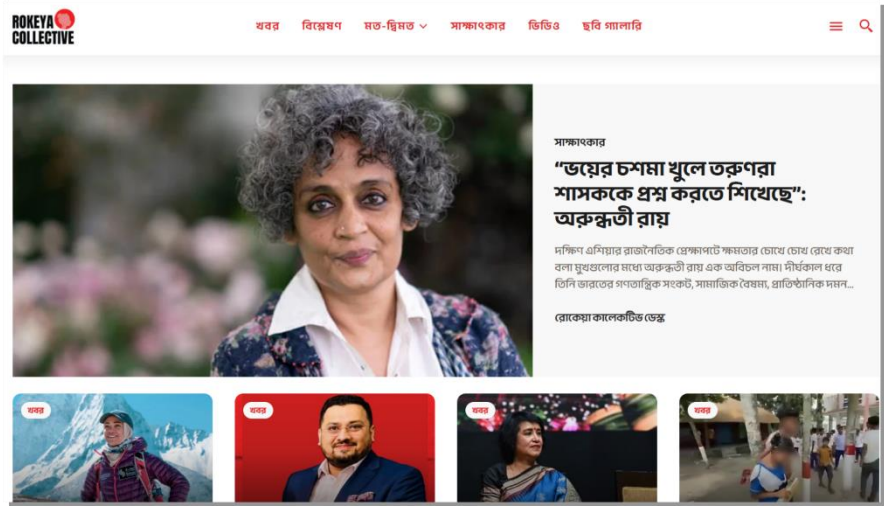


Image 10: Homepage of news portal “Rokeya Collective”.

It covers conventional news, primarily from a feminist perspective. Alongside current affairs coverage, it provides analysis, opinion, or commentary on contemporary issues. When it features the voices of the general public, those contributions are also mostly opinion-based. It has its own website, which serves as its primary content platform, and distributes its content through Facebook, Instagram, X, and LinkedIn. On Facebook, it has more than 4,700 followers as of July 3, 2026. On its social media platforms, it mostly posts graphics of news published on its main portal, with a short description, and

includes a link to the full story in the comment section to direct audiences to its website. It publishes at least eight to ten stories per day on its website and social media.

Rokeya Collective began operations in March 2026. Its content is produced in Bengali. The outlet defines public interest as amplifying marginalised and neglected voices, and has stated that its coverage will include not only women's issues but also other minority and marginalised perspectives, as the founder stated, "But that does not mean we will not be including other minorities or marginalised voices. Rokeya Collective will very much include them." It declares its commitment and aim as providing "a one-stop service for women," covering legal aid, housing for single women, and other issues relevant to women's lives. It has identified organizations working on issues such as SRHR and child marriage as potential platform partners, as the founder noted, "Rokeya Collective would be a great platform to popularise these issues and just contribute to creating awareness on these issues."

The outlet operates with four investors who also serve as the four core personnel and volunteer their time, alongside two full-time staff members and approximately six part-timers. In terms of financial sustainability, according to the founder, revenue generation has not yet started. However, the outlet is pursuing grants, partnerships, and sponsorships from organizations that advocate and support the women's agenda nationally and internationally. Rokeya Collective has also outlined plans to offer paid workshops and skills courses for women, and is exploring paid memberships as a potential revenue source — as the founder noted, "Even modest sums would be welcome."

Another operational challenge that emerges is getting women reporters, given the low participation of women in journalism in Bangladesh.

4.10 The Dissent

The Dissent is a fact-checking and digital investigative media outlet focused on combating misinformation and disinformation, exposing foreign influence, investigating online crimes, and holding media accountable. It was founded and edited by Qadaruddin Shishir, a former Bangladesh Editor at AFP Fact Check and a pioneering figure in Bangladesh's fact-checking landscape. The outlet is a project of Fourth Estate Ltd, a company that also offers digital verification services. Its slogan is "Digs Dignity."



Image 11: Homepage of news portal "The Dissent".

The Dissent website domain was registered in 2022 with the intention of building a media-accountability and disinformation-focused initiative when conditions allowed. The outlet's formal launch followed the August 2024 political changeover, which the founder identified as an enabling environment for independent journalism. Its Facebook page was opened and its first story published in May, 2025, with the website launched in August 2025 and its YouTube channel in July, 2025. The outlet operates a bilingual platform in English and Bangla, with its website serving as its primary content repository, and distributes content through YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram.

Dissent's reporting covers countering disinformation in both social and mainstream media, systematically monitoring media conduct and holding outlets accountable for journalistic malpractice, digital investigation of crimes, and verification-based reporting on contested public debates where mainstream media have failed to produce the truth. Its content is reporting-driven; the founding editor stated that approximately 99% of content is reporting and only 1% is opinion. A review of the Dissent's portal shows only four opinion pieces among over 600 stories published in its first ten months.

Facebook is the outlet's primary audience platform, with website traffic driven largely from Facebook. YouTube ranks third in terms of audience reach, given the outlet's limited video output at this stage. Instagram remains active but has not yet developed a significant audience. The outlet's audience is predominantly young people, particularly those with low trust in mainstream media. In terms of gender distribution, the audience is approximately 30% female and 70% male. Geographically, approximately 80% of the

audience is based in Dhaka, with Chittagong as the second-largest city-based audience. Notably, London ranks as the third-largest city of audience origin, reflecting a significant diaspora readership among Bangladeshis abroad.

The outlet publishes multiple stories daily. On Facebook, it publishes at least five pieces of content per day, consisting mostly of fact-checks drawn from both social media content and mainstream media stories. On YouTube, it posts YouTube Shorts consisting mostly of fact-checking content and current affairs news, rather than regular long-form videos. The founding editor has stated that written content is the outlet's primary format, with multimedia content remaining very limited at this stage, though planned for expansion. On Instagram, it posts graphics exclusively featuring fact-checking content accompanied by links to the full story on its website. As of July 3, 2026, the outlet has conducted nearly 30 digital investigations and regularly publishes media watch content. As of July 5, 2026, its YouTube channel has 131 subscribers, 39 videos, and 12,172 views, and its Instagram page has 38 posts and 14 followers.

The outlet defines public interest through two primary lenses: countering what the founder characterizes as an information war being waged against Bangladesh by foreign actors and those aligned with them, and maintaining accountability coverage of anti-democratic forces of any ideological orientation. The outlet describes its primary innovation as being the media outlet in Bangladesh to systematically conduct investigative reporting on media conduct and practices, alongside its work in digital investigation, which it conducts primarily through digital tools, analysis, and verification methods rather than field reporting.

Dissent was established with a seed fund of TK 40 lakh. It currently operates with nine staff members, including the founding editor, seven full-time employees, and two interns. Till now, its revenue beyond seed funding comes from contractual fact-checking services and two grants related to election fact-checking and journalist training, together accounting for approximately 45% of total revenue, with seed funding accounting for another 45% and approximately 10% remaining as outstanding debt.

Its business plan going forward includes grants, contractual digital verification services, and an open public subscription model, with a monthly subscription revenue target of 20 lakh taka identified as the sustainability threshold.

According to the founder, the editorial policy of not accepting funding from any politically affiliated source has led to the rejection of a couple of investments while maintaining editorial independence.

5. Market dynamics and challenges for new outlets

In 2022, IMS and Digitally Right had conducted a mapping of innovative media initiatives in Bangladesh. While the current assessment also looks at innovative media outlets, these two studies are not directly comparable as they use different samples. This assessment, for example, focuses specifically on media startups that have emerged amidst the changing socio-political contexts following the 2024 Uprising.

The two studies still show some broad changes in the market dynamics. The earlier study had focused largely on local reporting, and covered fields such as health, agriculture, education, and migration. The current assessment includes more locally based outlets covering politics, investigation, media accountability, climate, gender, and public affairs. The earlier study had also identified limited investment as a major barrier to independent public-interest media. The current assessment found several larger, corporate-backed outlets alongside smaller initiatives funded by journalists and creators and their supporters.

Some challenges remain unchanged, however. Both studies found limited audience research, weak organizational and business planning, uncertain revenue models, and dependence on Facebook and YouTube as major challenges that media outlets must contend with. In 2022, these digital platforms were identified as being used mainly for outreach. Most outlets in the current assessment rely on them for publishing, distribution, audience access, and expected revenue, which denotes a significant change in the dynamic between media startups and platforms, with the latter now also influencing the way outlets design and produce content.

The fall of the Awami League regime in August 2024 had also given shape to a media landscape that began to witness greater press freedom than it had experienced in years, leading to the emergence of a number of media outlets on both sides of the political spectrum. Now in 2026, the media market in Bangladesh is in a state of flux. As stated above, several of these new outlets have entered the fray with substantial investments, while others are making acquisitions of existing legacy outlets (both backed by large businesses). This market is set to see new entrants in the second half of 2026 and in 2027.

Looking for a quick way to get their content out to the public, many outlets have chosen social media platforms, particularly Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram, as their main avenue of distribution, since this process remains, as of yet, beyond government control, and does not require registration formalities like a website or a broadsheet. Another notable feature of these new media-forms is that most of these outlets are not looking to provide fast-breaking news. As noted in earlier sections, some have decided to provide in-depth coverage of certain issues, with explainers, analyses and podcasts, while others have decided to limit themselves to investigations only. Others still have decided to approach a few selected, thematic issues with commentary in the form of podcasts and interviews.

5.1 Who Is It For?

In their enthusiasm to launch a new initiative and create ripples, almost none of the new startups appear to have clearly conceptualized their core offering or target group. Most have chosen a certain field where they believe they can create a ripple based exclusively on what they can offer in terms of content. In other words, these media outlets appear to have prioritized their own strengths and their chosen field of content-making, instead of trying to understand their target audience and prioritizing their interests when designing and making content. There are, of course, exceptions, but these are ad hoc rather than a conscious effort on the part of outlets to design content catering to specific feedback or interests. Further, such exceptions in content-making usually apply to a niche audience rather than a broader target demographic.

The Rokeya Collective, with its focus on reporting informed by feminist perspectives, and Climate Watch, with its coverage of climate-related issues, have well-defined verticals. While the remaining outlets assessed have also defined their offerings, in most cases, these offerings fail to cater to any specific group so as to create a loyal readership that returns for more. This, however, is important if the outlets are to move towards a self-sustaining revenue model.

5.2 Social Media Dependency

This lack of foresight, knowledge, and/or skill has left the new outlets floundering for revenue, especially those that have already been in operation for several months with

no sign of a steady revenue stream. It is important to take a closer look at the reasons behind this crisis. Some outlets entered the market presuming that the initial ripple created by their arrival would be sufficient to monetize content on both Facebook and YouTube, which would then start providing them some relief in terms of money. This has not happened for all outlets, as anticipated. Some agencies currently have limited understanding regarding generating revenue either through grants or through subscriptions, or have not devoted enough time towards learning about this.

The FGD had indicated that social media earnings are already declining for media companies due to increasing competition from independent content creators, the larger share of revenue captured by major media outlets due to the sheer scale of their content, and AI slop that is weakening the market and reducing demand for quality content, among other factors. FGD participants further agreed that social media revenue for independent outlets will continue to decline in the coming years because of technological and algorithmic changes.

Therefore, social media dependency creates a structural vulnerability for the emerging media outlets. Changes to platform algorithms and monetization rules can affect their online visibility and reduce anticipated income. Content enforcement, account restrictions, or loss of access to a channel could also disrupt publication and weaken an audience base built over time. For example, during the assessment period, Dhaka Stream had reported that its social media channels were repeatedly restricted following coordinated attacks, and that its accounts were compromised. The outlet had temporarily lost access to its pages and the monetization revenue generated through them.

5.3 Lack of Diversified Revenue and Investment Streams

Most outlets were still relying on initial investment when the interviews were conducted. Their expected revenue sources included further investment, crowdfunding, advertising, platform monetization, and partnerships with NGOs, international organizations and civil society groups. Thematic outlets such as Climate Watch and Rokeya Collective may be better placed to pursue such partnerships, while the options may be more limited for general-interest or politically focused outlets.

Few outlets had secured reliable funding beyond their initial investment, and most had yet to develop a clear long-term revenue plan. Advertising is difficult for smaller outlets because they compete with established media organizations, digital platforms and a growing number of content creators.

None of the editors interviewed identified subscriptions, memberships, events or direct sales as established sources of revenue. These models may not be suitable or immediately viable for every outlet, but their absence points to limited experimentation with direct audience revenue. Editorial and format innovation has therefore not yet been matched by similar innovation in how the outlets finance and sustain their journalism.

5.4 Weak Audience Engagement

As far as content is concerned, most of the outlets assessed have a fairly good idea about what they want to produce, with some having well-defined verticals. However, none of these outlets are actively engaging audiences to help generate content. Only a handful proactively monitor their analytics to examine whether they are creating a faithful reader base or whether they have a healthy number of returning visitors to their websites. The extent of reader engagement or traffic monitoring is limited to Facebook analytics and engagement on social media platforms, which is far from adequate if a platform wants to build a steady viewership, as dedicated research into existing audience demographics, behaviour, and feedback would help outlets to design better content capable of attracting a bigger and more diverse crowd.

5.5 Unwitting Convergence

A number of editors interviewed cited the need for journalists to have more enhanced content-making capacities. This stems from the need to have a versatile team that is adept at producing different types of content for multiple platforms, which would help in sustaining the payroll while content production remains diverse. Many outlets are actively seeking reporters who can produce text stories, present a podcast, or write a script, and also take photos and shoot videos. They want their desks to be equally versatile in producing and editing content for multiple platforms. While such demand stems from a need to have control of the payroll, this unwitting shift towards convergent media is certainly positive.

5.6 Lack of Capacity and Inadequate Staffing

Limited financing also affects how emerging outlets recruit staff and organize production. Several editors identified content-production skills as an important institutional need. Small newsrooms increasingly seek journalists who can report and write, prepare scripts, take photographs, shoot video, appear in podcasts or video programs and adapt material for multiple platforms. This reflects a wider shift towards converged newsrooms in which the distinctions among print, broadcast and digital roles are becoming less rigid. For small outlets, multiplatform production allows one reporting effort to be adapted for different audiences and distribution channels. It can also reduce the number of specialized staff required for each format.

The media outlets assessed also do not have the requisite human resources, including an absence of dedicated market and content research teams which would study information consumption patterns across platforms, level of audience engagement with the content produced by the outlet, and demands for the kind of content most social media users are likely to interact with.

5.7 Key Needs and Areas for Support

The long-term viability of these outlets cannot yet be determined. Most had operated for less than two years when this assessment was conducted, and several were still supported by their initial investment. The evidence instead identifies the issues likely to shape their development: whether they can build distinct and loyal audiences, reduce their exposure to platform decisions, strengthen their organizational and multiplatform capacity, and develop revenue models compatible with editorial independence.

Drawing upon findings outlined in the earlier sections, the following table provides a quick summary of the key needs and challenges identified across all assessed media outlets, and the corresponding priority areas where the outlets could potentially be supported to build greater operational, financial, and technical capacities. Possible strategies to address these concerns are discussed in greater depth in the next section.

Cross-cutting challenges	Priority areas for potential support
Absence of structured and diversified revenue models, which affects sustainable revenue generation	Business planning, revenue experimentation through diversifying revenue streams beyond short-term grants, sponsorships, collaboration or partnerships, fundraising and access to specialist advice, building capacity on developing subscription-based models and paywalls.
Lack of clear and concrete content design and production strategies, with a clear sense of target audience and understanding of thematic focus	Developing formal editorial strategies, investing in content research
Limited audience engagement	Increasing audience engagement, including through building dedicated research into audience demographics, analytics, behaviour, and feedback, direct audience development, building and engaging a loyal readership and viewer base to sustain audience engagement
Limited core capacities of key staff, including on content design and multiplatform production, research, editorial processes, and audience engagement	Training and mentoring in thematic content and audience research, convergent reporting, editing, and audiovisual production to build multi-capacity content design and production teams, and increase multi-platform production capacity
Lack of better technology and equipment to enhance post-production and increase efficiency	Allocating funding for tech and equipment, building in capacity to use advanced technology

Limited legal and regulatory knowledge	Shared legal advice and guidance on registration, organisational structure and compliance
Weak organisational, administrative and financial systems	Organisational development through developing comprehensive business models, operational planning, financial-management systems and access to qualified staff, collaboration with media development organisations to build necessary capacities and create greater access to funding, resources, and networks
Heavy dependency on social media platforms for distribution, outreach, and audience engagement	Strengthened platform security through conversation and negotiations, institutionally owned distribution channels and strategies to reduce platform dependency
Weak transparency and accountability mechanisms	Development and adoption of codes of ethics, ownership and funding disclosure policies, and conflict-of-interest policies

6. Recommendations

The ten outlets assessed in this study represent a significant and largely unexplored insight into Bangladesh's emerging media scene. Because these outlets have emerged quickly, most are resource-constrained, and many remain in their formative stages. While they may vary in editorial orientation, content type, and organizational model, these outlets have several shared challenges. This study, therefore, outlines a set of recommendations on building various capacities, applicable for media startups across the board, to support the growth and sustainability of independent online media in Bangladesh.

6.1 Organisational and Administrative Capacity Development

The primary structural challenge identified across the outlets is that most are run by journalists who have little to no formal knowledge of the administrative, operational, and financial infrastructures required to run this new wave of media outlets that are driven by social media engagement. Although the current leadership is veteran and skilled in news management, organizational management is a different skill set, and a lack of it has already become a constraint for new and emerging outlets. Therefore, these outlets need assistance in building organizational frameworks, including administrative systems, financial management structures, and operational protocols.

Such support could come in the form of capacity-building programs, through advisory consultations, or as direct funding to hire skilled personnel. Furthermore, smaller outlets need multitaskers. In response to the need to keep their operations lean, most platforms are also moving towards media convergence. This is also another area where assistance could be useful. Even as newsrooms slowly proceed towards convergence, they are themselves being rapidly redefined. Unlike the bygone days, where sub-editors and reporters were two distinct groups, the more nimble and efficient outlets will have to train or recruit people who can be the reporter, sub-editor, presenter, photographer, and video editor all at once.

6.2 Editorial Strategy and Value Proposition

There is an absence of clearly defined editorial strategies amongst many of the outlets assessed in the study. Most of these outlets know what they want to say, but only a few have a clear strategy and value proposition, such as what the outlet stands for, who it serves, and why it exists. These outlets need to develop explicit editorial strategies that define their target audience, content philosophy, and public interest commitments. Greater capacity can be built in this area through facilitating editorial workshops, and mentoring programs for the representatives of these outlets, and additionally through the development of structured self-assessment guidelines, specifically for independent online media in Bangladesh. A further related area of assistance is to help outlets define their verticals and target audience, and start producing content that resonates with their target audience, building towards a loyal, returning readership. It is almost standard wisdom that outlets will need to build content catering to a certain demographic.

Funding support should be tailored to the size and stage of development of each outlet. Smaller initiatives require flexible seed or core funding to establish basic organizational capacity, hire essential staff and sustain regular production. Comparatively larger outlets may benefit more from targeted structural assistance to professionalize their systems, diversify revenue, strengthen management and scale their operations sustainably. A dedicated grants pool could combine these approaches, offering smaller grants for institutional development and larger, milestone-based support for growth and expansion.

6.3 Funding Diversification and Sustainability

Social media-based revenue, primarily from content monetization, has become the primary, or in some cases, the only, source of income for outlets assessed as part of this study. Founders need a stronger understanding that financial viability requires reliable and diversified revenue streams, with social media monetization serving as only one component.

Therefore, there is a need to build their capacity in planning diversification based on their audience niche and capacity; and test new revenue sources, including but not limited to advertising, crowd-sourcing, reader subscriptions, grants, partnerships with NGOs, event activations, and sponsored content. Most of these outlets lack the capacity to pursue revenue diversification because they lack sales, fundraising, or business development professionals in their organizations. Media development organizations and

donors can help outlets build these capacities by creating access to resources, networks, and collaborative spaces, building capacities on content research, production, design and editorial processes, funding qualified staff, providing technical assistance, and establishing shared specialist services for several outlets.

6.4 A Dedicated Fund for Independent Outlets

Most of the outlets assessed still rely on initial investments and lack steady revenue to build the teams and systems needed for long-term survival. International media development organizations, foundations and other development partners could help close this gap through an independently managed grants fund. Support should reflect each outlet's size and stage of development. Smaller outlets need flexible seed or core funding to hire essential staff, build basic systems and maintain regular production. Larger outlets may need targeted support to improve management, diversify revenue and expand their operations. The fund could provide small institutional grants for early-stage outlets and milestone-based support for more established ones.

None of the outlets identified local philanthropy as a source of funding and neither is there a history of local philanthropies supporting independent media in Bangladesh. Yet, unlocking local capital could offer another path to long-term sustainability. For example, India's Independent and Public-Spirited Media Foundation is a model that pools contributions from local philanthropists while keeping them out of funding decisions. A similar fund in Bangladesh would need an independent anchor organization and efforts to engage local donors by showing why independent journalism is a public good worth supporting.

6.5 Grant Writing, Business Planning, and Legal Capacity

There is currently a knowledge gap amongst media representatives regarding writing grant applications to bring in funding, and developing business plans, which is reflected across most of the outlets assessed in this study. Capacity-building programs in grant writing, business planning, and budget and financial management would be very useful for smaller, independent media outlets. Emerging outlets are also trying to operate in a manner that keeps them beyond regulation, choosing distribution platforms so as not to require formal permission or registration, which invariably takes a long time and

remains unpredictable. Legal advice and assistance on exploring different options for a media company structure could also be considered. It has seldom been the practice of media outlets to consult lawyers or have legal counsel on retainer, and most would not consider this expense worthwhile. However, startups could very well use legal advice about the best model to follow while remaining above board and adhering to relevant legal frameworks and regulations.

6.6 Transparency, and Ownership Structure

Operational transparency is important for building public trust. However, information about ownership, investment and funding was not always publicly available during this assessment. Clear information about an outlet's ownership, governance, funding and editorial safeguards helps audiences, donors and investors assess its independence and accountability. It can also strengthen an outlet's credibility and make it better prepared for funding due diligence.

Emerging outlets should adopt minimum transparency standards that reflect their size, capacity, governance, funding sources, and safeguards separating editorial decisions from business or political influence. Media development organizations and industry groups can help define these standards and provide templates, training and governance support. Disclosure requirements should protect legitimate commercial confidentiality and should not expose individuals or outlets to safety risks.

6.7 Entrepreneurial and Leadership Training

Most outlets are led by strong journalists with limited exposure to organizational leadership, entrepreneurial management, or media business development. Building the leadership capacity of these individuals is equally important. Leadership and entrepreneurial development programs, including fellowships, media visits abroad, and enrollment in leadership training programs, should be available to the founders and editors of these outlets. Exposure to how independent media organizations in other contexts have navigated similar challenges would provide these leaders with practical knowledge.

7. Conclusion

The emergence of media startups after the July Uprising represents an important moment of change in Bangladesh's media landscape. These new outlets are experimenting with different forms of journalism, distribution models, and ways of engaging audiences, reflecting a broader shift in how people access and interact with information. While many of these initiatives are driven by strong editorial ambition and a commitment to public-interest journalism, their future will depend on how effectively they can build sustainable organisations around that vision.

The current period of transition provides an opportunity for meaningful support to help emerging outlets address some of the challenges they face. Strengthening their understanding of financial sustainability, helping them develop clearer audience strategies, and building the skills needed for lean, multimedia newsrooms will be important areas of focus.

At the same time, as these outlets seek to establish themselves in an increasingly crowded information environment, trust will remain one of their most valuable assets. Developing transparent editorial practices, clear ethical standards, and accountable approaches to ownership and funding can help strengthen their credibility with audiences.

The success of Bangladesh's emerging media sector will depend not only on producing compelling journalism, but also on building institutions capable of sustaining that journalism over time.

Appendix

Name of initiative:	Alap
Type of media (<i>print, online, broadcast etc.</i>):	Online
Online presence, if any (<i>URL, Facebook name, Twitter handle</i>):	Website- https://www.alap.news/ Facebook- https://www.facebook.com/news.alap/ (702K followers) YouTube- https://www.youtube.com/@newsalap (50.2K subscribers) X- https://x.com/newsalap (59 followers) TikTok- https://www.tiktok.com/@news.alap (30.5K Followers) Instagram- https://www.instagram.com/newsalap (19K followers)
Country of origin:	Bangladesh
Location (<i>region, city</i>):	Dhaka
Founder (<i>name/organisation/institution</i>):	Saiful Hasan, Alap Holdings
Founded (<i>year</i>):	2025
Language(s):	Bengali
Platforms (<i>including an emphasis on the platform that they rely on the most</i>):	Website, Facebook, YouTube
Staff (<i>number of staff, paid versus unpaid (volunteers), including gender balance xx:xy</i>):	29 (1 non-journalist role) employees. All paid.
Organisational set-up (<i>Composition of the team, incl. the management team - which other profiles than journalists?</i>):	
Business type (<i>private company, corporation, non-profit, joint venture, association etc.</i>):	Private company. Subsidiary of Sheltech.
Specialities (<i>particularly reg. their reporting approach and style, e.g. investigative journalism, fact-checking etc.</i>):	Explainers and analyses of issues that can be expanded on. Podcasts, shorts, interviews.
Primary focus (<i>on a content level, e.g. conflict reporting, environmental reporting, peace and reconciliation etc.</i>):	
Representative example(s) of their content (<i>titles and clippings/links to stories</i>):	https://www.facebook.com/reel/1929855794290914 https://youtu.be/acEA-uMD6GU?si=kDtXyLKw3YAXG-v5 https://www.alap.news/bangladesh/915/attack-on-pirs-explained-kushtia-killing
Approach to and/or understanding of journalism (<i>meaning: what is good journalism to them? What is their understanding of ethics and journalistic values?</i>):	Explain complex issues for the audience.
Approach to and understanding of marginalised groups (<i>including gender and minorities</i>):	Committed to covering minority issues with due attention.
Audience engagement (<i>are they including their audiences? Using them as idea-</i>	No discernible initiative till now.

<i>generators, sources, distributors? What is their understanding of the importance of including audiences?):</i>	
<i>Strategy (Do they have a strategy? And if so, what are the main elements?):</i>	Hybrid. High impact news items that may be expanded upon for explainers and analysis. High profile interviews.
<i>Business plan/business model (what is their key business plan/business model?):</i>	Social media monetisation, advertising, sponsorships, some partnerships being explored.
<i>Primary revenue (advertising, sales, membership etc.):</i>	Seed investment
<i>Latest funding type (Pre-seed (bootstrapping or self-funding), seed, Angel Investor, Venture Capital (Series A, B, C, D etc.), Initial Public Offering (IPO):</i>	Seed investment
<i>Investors (government, media development org., private foundations, venture capital etc.):</i>	Private business
<i>Most important strategic partners (list if any. e.g. civil society, private):</i>	None so far
<i>Collaboration with other CSOs, NGOs and/or media development stakeholders? (If yes, who?):</i>	Not yet.
<i>Biggest challenges (e.g. financial sustainability, management, access to information etc.):</i>	Defining an audience profile and developing a uniqueness as regards content.
<i>Current needs (skill development, business development, safety etc.):</i>	Skills training, leadership training.
<i>Comments and/or observations (please include comments on their potential as a strategic interest to IMS and our other partners – are they e.g. experimenting with something new that other partners could learn from or are they successful in certain areas that could inspire other partners?):</i>	The people running it have their hearts in the right place. Their commitment is genuine and given the opportunity the outlet will certainly strive for public interest journalism. But the leadership may not be up to the task or be able to absorb all that is needed in order to advance the outlet.

<i>Name of initiative:</i>	Centrist Nation
<i>Type of media (print, online, broadcast etc.):</i>	Online
<i>Online presence, if any (URL, Facebook name, Twitter handle):</i>	Website: https://centristnation.tv/ YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/@centristnationtv (49.2K subscribers) Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/CentristNationTV/ (330k followers) X: https://x.com/centristnattv (13.2k followers) Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/reel/DX00z05icDb/ (14.6k followers) TikTok: https://www.tiktok.com/@centristnationtv (140 followers)
<i>Country of origin:</i>	Bangladesh
<i>Location (region, city):</i>	Dhaka
<i>Founder (name/organisation/institution):</i>	Shafquat Rabbee Anik
<i>Founded (year):</i>	2025
<i>Language(s):</i>	English
<i>Platforms (including an emphasis on the platform that they rely on the most):</i>	Facebook, YouTube

Staff (number of staff, paid versus unpaid (volunteers), including gender balance xx:xy):	9 full-time, 1 volunteer (editor)
Organisational set-up (Composition of the team, incl. the management team - which other profiles than journalists?):	All journalists.
Business type (private company, corporation, non-profit, joint venture, association etc.):	Private company.
Specialities (particularly reg. their reporting approach and style, e.g. investigative journalism, fact-checking etc.):	Propaganda
Primary focus (on a content level, e.g. conflict reporting, environmental reporting, peace and reconciliation etc.):	Countering anti-Bangladeshi Indian propaganda with decidedly pro-Muslim tilt.
Representative example(s) of their content (titles and clippings/links to stories):	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ni-0FtpzsiQ&pp=0gcJcd4KAYcqIYzv https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zy12FFyWcZg
Approach to and/or understanding of journalism (meaning: what is good journalism to them? What is their understanding of ethics and journalistic values?):	Journalism is a means to ensuring the interest of a moderate Muslim Bangladesh for Centrist Nation
Approach to and understanding of marginalised groups (including gender and minorities):	Despite its rhetoric, the outlet has not yet taken a stance on behalf of the minorities persecuted by fanatics and fundamentalists, some of whom belong to right wing parties in Bangladesh.
Audience engagement (are they including their audiences? Using them as idea-generators, sources, distributors? What is their understanding of the importance of including audiences?):	No discernible initiative.
Strategy (Do they have a strategy? And if so, what are the main elements?):	Countering Indian propaganda sometimes leads to an anti-Hindu bias. In terms of format, it is keen to distribute through clips and static content on Facebook
Business plan/business model (what is their key business plan/business model?):	Social media monetisation and advertising.
Primary revenue (advertising, sales, membership etc.):	Crowdfunding. Advertising and privately financed.
Latest funding type (Pre-seed (bootstrapping or self-funding), seed, Angel Investor, Venture Capital (Series A, B, C, D etc.), Initial Public Offering (IPO):	Same as before.
Investors (government, media development org., private foundations, venture capital etc.):	Crowdfunded.
Most important strategic partners (list if any. e.g. civil society, private):	None so far.
Collaboration with other CSOs, NGOs and/or media development stakeholders? (If yes, who?):	None so far.
Biggest challenges (e.g. financial sustainability, management, access to information etc.):	Remaining relevant with its own niche offering and dogmatic content.
Current needs (skill development, business development, safety etc.):	Moral compass
Comments and/or observations (please include comments on their potential as a	Should be kept aside for any assistance.

<i>strategic interest to IMS and our other partners – are they e.g. experimenting with something new that other partners could learn from or are they successful in certain areas that could inspire other partners?):</i>	
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Name of initiative:	Chaarcha
Type of media (<i>print, online, broadcast etc.</i>):	Online with print special issues
Online presence, if any (URL, Facebook name, Twitter handle):	Website- https://chaarcha.com/ Facebook- https://www.facebook.com/chaarchabd/ (286K followers) YouTube- https://www.youtube.com/@chaarchabd (81.8K subscribers) Instagram- https://www.instagram.com/chaarchabd (3560 followers)
Country of origin:	Bangladesh
Location (<i>region, city</i>):	Dhaka
Founder (<i>name/organisation/institution</i>):	Selim Khan
Founded (<i>year</i>):	2025
Language(s):	Bengali
Platforms (<i>including an emphasis on the platform that they rely on the most</i>):	Website, Facebook and Youtube
Staff (<i>number of staff, paid versus unpaid (volunteers), including gender balance xx:xy</i>):	40 with 30 people who are journalists. All full time.
Organisational set-up (<i>Composition of the team, incl. the management team - which other profiles than journalists?</i>):	
Business type (<i>private company, corporation, non-profit, joint venture, association etc.</i>):	Private investment. Deep Dive Ltd.
Specialities (<i>particularly reg. their reporting approach and style, e.g. investigative journalism, fact-checking etc.</i>):	In-depth, exclusives. Some investigations. Podcasts and videos.
Primary focus (<i>on a content level, e.g. conflict reporting, environmental reporting, peace and reconciliation etc.</i>):	Green content, special stories.
Representative example(s) of their content (<i>titles and clippings/links to stories</i>):	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1CrmeYAwBR/ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjrE0pPrCnA
Approach to and/or understanding of journalism (<i>meaning: what is good journalism to them? What is their understanding of ethics and journalistic values?</i>):	So far Chaarcha has not displayed anything that indicates it will stir up a storm. Rather coverage and reporting style has been quite conventional.
Approach to and understanding of marginalised groups (<i>including gender and minorities</i>):	There will be some emphasis on minorities. The outlet will take a stance in cases of persecution. But it is unlikely to pick one of those issues for a sustained campaign or give a specific issue special importance through the year.
Audience engagement (<i>are they including their audiences? Using them as idea-generators, sources, distributors? What is their understanding of the importance of including audiences?</i>):	No discernible initiative.
Strategy (<i>Do they have a strategy? And if so, what are the main elements?</i>):	There is some effort at producing evergreen video content. The outlet seems to want to make a name for itself with its

	exclusives and specials. But none of its verticals cry out for attention.
Business plan/business model (<i>what is their key business plan/business model?</i>):	Advertisement, partnerships and sponsorships.
Primary revenue (<i>advertising, sales, membership etc.</i>):	Seed investment
Latest funding type (<i>Pre-seed (bootstrapping or self-funding), seed, Angel Investor, Venture Capital (Series A, B, C, D etc.), Initial Public Offering (IPO)</i>):	Ditto
Investors (<i>government, media development org., private foundations, venture capital etc.</i>):	Private company
Most important strategic partners (<i>list if any. e.g. civil society, private</i>):	None
Collaboration with other CSOs, NGOs and/or media development stakeholders? (<i>If yes, who?</i>):	None
Biggest challenges (<i>e.g. financial sustainability, management, access to information etc.</i>):	A typically conventional mindset that might refuse to adapt.
Current needs (<i>skill development, business development, safety etc.</i>):	Devising a content strategy, defining its audience and putting together a revenue strategy.
Comments and/or observations (<i>please include comments on their potential as a strategic interest to IMS and our other partners – are they e.g. experimenting with something new that other partners could learn from or are they successful in certain areas that could inspire other partners?</i>):	Unlikely to shake things up. But if successful, it will prove to be a stable and upstanding outfit.

Name of initiative:	Climate Watch
Type of media (<i>print, online, broadcast etc.</i>):	Online
Online presence, if any (<i>URL, Facebook name, Twitter handle</i>):	Website: https://theclimatewatch.com/ Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/@theclimatewatch (9.75k subscribers) Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/theclimatewatch (24k followers) TikTok: https://www.tiktok.com/@theclimatewatch (21 Followers) Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/theclimatewatch/ (1854 followers)
Country of origin:	Bangladesh
Location (<i>region, city</i>):	Dhaka
Founder (<i>name/organisation/institution</i>):	Shamsuddin Ilias
Founded (<i>year</i>):	2024
Language(s):	English
Platforms (<i>including an emphasis on the platform that they rely on the most</i>):	Website
Staff (<i>number of staff, paid versus unpaid (volunteers), including gender balance xx:xy</i>):	5 paid (all journalist roles)
Organisational set-up (<i>Composition of the team, incl. the management team - which other profiles than journalists?</i>):	

Business type (<i>private company, corporation, non-profit, joint venture, association etc.</i>):	Private company.
Specialities (<i>particularly reg. their reporting approach and style, e.g. investigative journalism, fact-checking etc.</i>):	Climate change and environment
Primary focus (<i>on a content level, e.g. conflict reporting, environmental reporting, peace and reconciliation etc.</i>):	Climate refugees, effect of data centres on water and the climate, etc.
Representative example(s) of their content (<i>titles and clippings/links to stories</i>):	https://theclimatewatch.com/bangladesh-youth-celebrate-every-newborn-with-two-trees-in-grassroots-climate-initiative/ https://theclimatewatch.com/barishal-slowly-sinking-as-scientists-warn-of-long-term-flooding-risk/
Approach to and/or understanding of journalism (<i>meaning: what is good journalism to them? What is their understanding of ethics and journalistic values?</i>):	Provide a platform that covers climate change and environment from a South Asian perspective.
Approach to and understanding of marginalised groups (<i>including gender and minorities</i>):	The outlet, by definition, covers marginalised sections and appears committed to furthering their casue.
Audience engagement (<i>are they including their audiences? Using them as idea-generators, sources, distributors? What is their understanding of the importance of including audiences?</i>):	No such discernible initiatives.
Strategy (<i>Do they have a strategy? And if so, what are the main elements?</i>):	It is simple. Provide all things related to climate change and environment in South Asia and Bangladesh.
Business plan/business model (<i>what is their key business plan/business model?</i>):	Grants, partnerships, donation from development agencies.
Primary revenue (<i>advertising, sales, membership etc.</i>):	Seed investment.
Latest funding type (<i>Pre-seed (bootstrapping or self-funding), seed, Angel Investor, Venture Capital (Series A, B, C, D etc.), Initial Public Offering (IPO)</i>):	Ditto
Investors (<i>government, media development org., private foundations, venture capital etc.</i>):	Privately owned.
Most important strategic partners (<i>list if any. e.g. civil society, private</i>):	None so far.
Collaboration with other CSOs, NGOs and/or media development stakeholders? (<i>If yes, who?</i>):	None so far.
Biggest challenges (<i>e.g. financial sustainability, management, access to information etc.</i>):	Sustainability.
Current needs (<i>skill development, business development, safety etc.</i>):	Business development and perhaps some skills training.
Comments and/or observations (<i>please include comments on their potential as a strategic interest to IMS and our other partners – are they e.g. experimenting with something new that other partners could learn from or are they successful in certain areas that could inspire other partners?</i>):	They have a solid potential to attract funding and grow further with the right inputs and guidance.

Name of initiative:	Dhaka Stream
Type of media (print, online, broadcast etc.):	Online
Online presence, if any (URL, Facebook name, Twitter handle):	Website- https://www.dhakastream.net/ Facebook- https://www.facebook.com/dhakastreamfb/ (336K followers) YouTube- https://www.youtube.com/@Dhaka_Stream (54.1K subscribers) TikTok- https://www.tiktok.com/@dhaka_stream (3349 followers) Instagram- https://www.instagram.com/dhakastream (2268 followers)
Country of origin:	Bangladesh
Location (region, city):	Dhaka
Founder (name/organisation/institution):	Iftekhar Mahmud
Founded (year):	2025
Language(s):	Bengali and English
Platforms (including an emphasis on the platform that they rely on the most):	Website, Youtube, Facebook
Staff (number of staff, paid versus unpaid (volunteers), including gender balance xx:xy):	100 (30% women). 70 journalists.
Organisational set-up (Composition of the team, incl. the management team - which other profiles than journalists?):	
Business type (private company, corporation, non-profit, joint venture, association etc.):	Still evolving. But operates under a trade licence. Has a board of directors who are also its investors.
Specialities (particularly reg. their reporting approach and style, e.g. investigative journalism, fact-checking etc.):	Focused coverage of certain issues. Investigations and in-depth stories which appear to be centred around revealing extremism in Bangladesh due to the outfit's liberal stance.
Primary focus (on a content level, e.g. conflict reporting, environmental reporting, peace and reconciliation etc.):	Politics. Explainers. Analysis.
Representative example(s) of their content (titles and clippings/links to stories):	https://youtu.be/AtW43LaakXA?si=vkFJVOY-Z_J63jUa https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1B31R8pCtb/
Approach to and/or understanding of journalism (meaning: what is good journalism to them? What is their understanding of ethics and journalistic values?):	Provide relevant news in a format that is attractive and digestible for the youth.
Approach to and understanding of marginalised groups (including gender and minorities):	Follows UN principles. Committed to covering minority issues with due importance so long as they are relevant. Has so far taken a strong stance in covering persecution of minorities around Bangladesh.
Audience engagement (are they including their audiences? Using them as idea-generators, sources, distributors? What is their understanding of the importance of including audiences?):	No discernible initiative.
Strategy (Do they have a strategy? And if so, what are the main elements?):	Focus on a certain issue and exhaust every angle for young readers.
Business plan/business model (what is their key business plan/business model?):	Advertisement, partnerships, paid content, roundtables and collaboration.
Primary revenue (advertising, sales, membership etc.):	Seed investment
Latest funding type (Pre-seed (bootstrapping or self-funding), seed, Angel	Ditto

Investor, Venture Capital (Series A, B, C, D etc.), Initial Public Offering (IPO):	
Investors (government, media development org., private foundations, venture capital etc.):	Board of directors. Private individuals. However, nature of ownership is still not clear.
Most important strategic partners (list if any. e.g. civil society, private):	None
Collaboration with other CSOs, NGOs and/or media development stakeholders? (If yes, who?):	None
Biggest challenges (e.g. financial sustainability, management, access to information etc.):	High overhead
Current needs (skill development, business development, safety etc.):	Skills training. Revenue strategy
Comments and/or observations (please include comments on their potential as a strategic interest to IMS and our other partners – are they e.g. experimenting with something new that other partners could learn from or are they successful in certain areas that could inspire other partners?):	Will add to the diversity and resilience of Bangladesh's media landscape.

Name of initiative:	Dhaka Papers
Type of media (print, online, broadcast etc.):	Online
Online presence, if any (URL, Facebook name, Twitter handle):	Website- https://www.dhakapapers.com/ Facebook- https://www.facebook.com/dhakapapers/ (114K followers) YouTube- https://www.youtube.com/@DhakaPapersNews (12.5k subscribers) X- https://x.com/dhakapapers (23 followers) TikTok- https://www.tiktok.com/@dhakapapers (269 followers) Instagram- https://www.instagram.com/dhakapapers (135 followers)
Country of origin:	Bangladesh
Location (region, city):	Dhaka
Founder (name/organisation/institution):	Arifuzzaman Tuhin
Founded (year):	2025
Language(s):	Bengali and English
Platforms (including an emphasis on the platform that they rely on the most):	Website, Youtube, Facebook
Staff (number of staff, paid versus unpaid (volunteers), including gender balance xx:xy):	16 full time employees and five volunteers
Organisational set-up (Composition of the team, incl. the management team - which other profiles than journalists?):	
Business type (private company, corporation, non-profit, joint venture, association etc.):	Private company.
Specialities (particularly reg. their reporting approach and style, e.g. investigative journalism, fact-checking etc.):	Anti-establishment.

Primary focus (on a content level, e.g. conflict reporting, environmental reporting, peace and reconciliation etc.):	Everything under the sun.
Representative example(s) of their content (titles and clippings/links to stories):	https://dhakapapers.com/news/press-freedom-1777796241 https://dhakapapers.com/news/auto-rickshaw-1780306624
Approach to and/or understanding of journalism (meaning: what is good journalism to them? What is their understanding of ethics and journalistic values?):	Afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted.
Approach to and understanding of marginalised groups (including gender and minorities):	Being anti-establishment by nature the outlets is committed to covering marginalised sections, in fact there is a plan to bring such people to the forefront by turning them into its newsgatherers and broadcasters.
Audience engagement (are they including their audiences? Using them as idea-generators, sources, distributors? What is their understanding of the importance of including audiences?):	No discernible initiative.
Strategy (Do they have a strategy? And if so, what are the main elements?):	Challenging the establishment has been its main strategy so far.
Business plan/business model (what is their key business plan/business model?):	Private investment, fellowships, grants and limited advertising.
Primary revenue (advertising, sales, membership etc.):	Seed investment
Latest funding type (Pre-seed (bootstrapping or self-funding), seed, Angel Investor, Venture Capital (Series A, B, C, D etc.), Initial Public Offering (IPO)):	Ditto
Investors (government, media development org., private foundations, venture capital etc.):	Private individuals
Most important strategic partners (list if any, e.g. civil society, private):	None
Collaboration with other CSOs, NGOs and/or media development stakeholders? (If yes, who?):	None
Biggest challenges (e.g. financial sustainability, management, access to information etc.):	Tendency to preach to the choir
Current needs (skill development, business development, safety etc.):	Revenue plan. Define the audience. Understand that not everything needs to be serious and journalistic in the race for traction, eyeballs and revenues.
Comments and/or observations (please include comments on their potential as a strategic interest to IMS and our other partners – are they e.g. experimenting with something new that other partners could learn from or are they successful in certain areas that could inspire other partners?):	This outfit offers a great potential for growth and the ability to speak truth to power without compromise. They need a solid platform to shoot from.

Name of initiative:	Politiscope
Type of media (print, online, broadcast etc.):	Online
Online presence, if any (URL, Facebook name, Twitter handle):	Contact - politi.scope247@gmail.com

	Facebook- https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61584783658978# (67K followers) YouTube- https://www.youtube.com/@PolitiScope-247 (1.27K subscribers) Instagram- https://www.instagram.com/politi.scope247 (56 followers)
Country of origin:	Bangladesh
Location (region, city):	Dhaka
Founder (name/organisation/institution):	
Founded (year):	2025
Language(s):	Bengali
Platforms (including an emphasis on the platform that they rely on the most):	Facebook and YouTube
Staff (number of staff, paid versus unpaid (volunteers), including gender balance xx:xy):	Six full-time. Two volunteers. All journalists.
Organisational set-up (Composition of the team, incl. the management team - which other profiles than journalists?):	
Business type (private company, corporation, non-profit, joint venture, association etc.):	Private company
Specialities (particularly reg. their reporting approach and style, e.g. investigative journalism, fact-checking etc.):	Politics and society
Primary focus (on a content level, e.g. conflict reporting, environmental reporting, peace and reconciliation etc.):	Podcasts, explainers, videos, documentaries.
Representative example(s) of their content (titles and clippings/links to stories):	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQv35uESPU&t https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWSvThIA8Jo
Approach to and/or understanding of journalism (meaning: what is good journalism to them? What is their understanding of ethics and journalistic values?):	Send out a strongly liberal narrative countering the fundamentalist political parties and extremist sections. Stand against disparity and inequality.
Approach to and understanding of marginalised groups (including gender and minorities):	Defend the marginalised at all costs. Committed to bold stance in such matters.
Audience engagement (are they including their audiences? Using them as idea-generators, sources, distributors? What is their understanding of the importance of including audiences?):	No discernible initiative.
Strategy (Do they have a strategy? And if so, what are the main elements?):	Not much to speak of.
Business plan/business model (what is their key business plan/business model?):	Nothing to speak of. Hoping to attract advertisement and sponsorship.
Primary revenue (advertising, sales, membership etc.):	Seed funding
Latest funding type (Pre-seed (bootstrapping or self-funding), seed, Angel Investor, Venture Capital (Series A, B, C, D etc.), Initial Public Offering (IPO):	Ditto
Investors (government, media development org., private foundations, venture capital etc.):	Private investment. Friends and acquaintances.

Most important strategic partners (<i>list if any. e.g. civil society, private</i>):	none
Collaboration with other CSOs, NGOs and/or media development stakeholders? (<i>If yes, who?</i>):	None
Biggest challenges (<i>e.g. financial sustainability, management, access to information etc.</i>):	No concrete strategy.
Current needs (<i>skill development, business development, safety etc.</i>):	Strategy development. skills training. Funds.
Comments and/or observations (<i>please include comments on their potential as a strategic interest to IMS and our other partners – are they e.g. experimenting with something new that other partners could learn from or are they successful in certain areas that could inspire other partners?</i>):	This outlet could work well in collaboration with other like-minded operators as content producers. They appear to be lacking strategy or direction on their own. But they might very well develop on their own. It has a potential to become a small but truly independent voice that carves out a niche for itself.

Name of initiative:	The Dissent
Type of media (<i>print, online, broadcast etc.</i>):	Online
Online presence, if any (<i>URL, Facebook name, Twitter handle</i>):	Contact - Facebook- https://www.facebook.com/TheDissent (370k followers) YouTube- https://www.youtube.com/@The_Dissent (281 subscribers) Instagram- https://www.instagram.com/thedissent.news (137) X: https://x.com/TheDissent_News (165 Followers)
Country of origin:	Bangladesh
Location (<i>region, city</i>):	Dhaka
Founder (<i>name/organisation/institution</i>):	Qadaruddin Shishir/ Fourth Estate Ltd
Founded (<i>year</i>):	2025
Language(s):	Bengali and English
Platforms (<i>including an emphasis on the platform that they rely on the most</i>):	Facebook, YouTube, Instagram
Staff (<i>number of staff, paid versus unpaid (volunteers), including gender balance xx:xy</i>):	Total 9 staff (7 full time, 2 interns)
Organisational set-up (<i>Composition of the team, incl. the management team - which other profiles than journalists?</i>):	Editor: Qadaruddin Shishir The team includes specialized technical personnel managing cybercrime investigations, Fact checkers, Researcher
Business type (<i>private company, corporation, non-profit, joint venture, association etc.</i>):	Private company.
Specialities (<i>particularly reg. their reporting approach and style, e.g. investigative journalism, fact-checking etc.</i>):	Investigative Journalism, Fact-Checking, Digital Verification, Disinformation Research, and Media Accountability
Primary focus (<i>on a content level, e.g. conflict reporting, environmental reporting, peace and reconciliation etc.</i>):	Combating disinformation/misinformation, countering foreign influence, and conducting advanced cybercrime investigations, Democracy and Governance, Disinformation and Online Manipulation, Human Rights, Accountability, and Political and Social Issues

Representative example(s) of their content (titles and clippings/links to stories):	1. মিরাজ শেখের গুমকে প্রশ্নবিদ্ধ করতে অভিযুক্ত কোস্টগার্ডের বোটে চড়ে দুই মিডিয়ার সংঘবদ্ধ 'অনুসন্ধান' 2. ১ টাকায় ১টি গালি: যেভাবে 'বট সার্ভিস' কেনাবেচা হচ্ছে অনলাইনে 3. ভূয়া খবর ছড়িয়ে বাংলাদেশের ডিজিটাল পরিসরে প্রভাব তৈরির চেষ্টায় পাকিস্তানিরা 4. More reports are available here.
Approach to and/or understanding of journalism (meaning: what is good journalism to them? What is their understanding of ethics and journalistic values?):	Journalism must be fact-based, precise, and objective. "The Dissent" relies heavily on digital verification and Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) tools to ensure absolute accuracy, operating under the strict legal and ethical framework of The Fourth Estate Limited.
Approach to and understanding of marginalised groups (including gender and minorities):	We prioritize the capacity building of female media professionals. This is actively implemented through our dedicated all-female training programs and regional workshops designed to empower women in investigative and tech-driven journalism.
Audience engagement (are they including their audiences? Using them as idea-generators, sources, distributors? What is their understanding of the importance of including audiences?):	Audiences and regional journalists are engaged directly through interactive fact-checking sessions and capacity-building workshops. This grassroots engagement turns regional participants into vital sources and distributors of verified information.
Strategy (Do they have a strategy? And if so, what are the main elements?):	The core strategy integrates traditional investigative journalism with advanced cybersecurity analysis. We scale our impact by empowering regional journalists through continuous skill-development workshops while publishing high-impact, technically rigorous reports.
Business plan/business model (what is their key business plan/business model?):	The model is sustained through offering specialized digital verification services via The Fourth Estate Limited, executing targeted investigative projects, and securing strategic grants.
Primary revenue (advertising, sales, membership etc.):	Seed funding, partnerships
Latest funding type (Pre-seed (bootstrapping or self-funding), seed, Angel Investor, Venture Capital (Series A, B, C, D etc.), Initial Public Offering (IPO):	Grant-funded
Investors (government, media development org., private foundations, venture capital etc.):	Project partnership: Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), International Media Support (IMS), Star News, MRDI
Most important strategic partners (list if any. e.g. civil society, private):	Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)
Collaboration with other CSOs, NGOs and/or media development stakeholders? (If yes, who?):	British Council (Process ongoing) Local NGO: Khulna Mukti Seba Sangstha (KMSS) and Unnayan Shahojog Team (UST)
Biggest challenges (e.g. financial sustainability, management, access to information etc.):	Financial sustainability, limited resources for investigative journalism, journalist safety, access to reliable information, digital security, and sustainability of independent media.
Current needs (skill development, business development, safety etc.):	Funding and business development, upgraded technological infrastructure for deep cyber investigations, and expanded resources to scale our regional training workshops.
Comments and/or observations (please include comments on their potential as a strategic interest to IMS and our other	The Dissent has strong potential as an independent investigative and fact-checking media platform, particularly in strengthening democratic accountability, combating

<i>partners – are they e.g. experimenting with something new that other partners could learn from or are they successful in certain areas that could inspire other partners?:</i>	disinformation, and developing digital verification capacity in Bangladesh. Continued investment in its institutional capacity, financial sustainability, journalist safety, and technology infrastructure could significantly strengthen its long-term impact.
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Name of initiative:	The Post
Type of media (<i>print, online, broadcast etc.</i>):	Online
Online presence, if any (URL, Facebook name, Twitter handle):	Contact - https://www.facebook.com/thepost360/ Website- http://thepost.live/ Facebook- https://www.facebook.com/thepost360/ (671K followers) YouTube- https://www.youtube.com/@thepost-live (66.6K subscribers) X- https://x.com/thepost_live (31 followers) Instagram- https://www.instagram.com/thepost.live (1407 followers)
Country of origin:	Bangladesh
Location (<i>region, city</i>):	Dhaka
Founder (<i>name/organisation/institution</i>):	Nur Safa Julhaj
Founded (<i>year</i>):	2024
Language(s):	Bengali
Platforms (<i>including an emphasis on the platform that they rely on the most</i>):	Youtube and Facebook
Staff (<i>number of staff, paid versus unpaid (volunteers), including gender balance xx:xy</i>):	14 with 1 non-journalist.
Organisational set-up (<i>Composition of the team, incl. the management team - which other profiles than journalists?</i>):	
Business type (<i>private company, corporation, non-profit, joint venture, association etc.</i>):	Private company.
Specialities (<i>particularly reg. their reporting approach and style, e.g. investigative journalism, fact-checking etc.</i>):	Breaking narratives.
Primary focus (<i>on a content level, e.g. conflict reporting, environmental reporting, peace and reconciliation etc.</i>):	Commentary, podcasts, interviews.
Representative example(s) of their content (<i>titles and clippings/links to stories</i>):	https://youtu.be/GBagqYrn9tg?si=z1FeWra-GYgl4EpP https://www.facebook.com/reel/1506843861026422
Approach to and/or understanding of journalism (<i>meaning: what is good journalism to them? What is their understanding of ethics and journalistic values?</i>):	Provide the lens to understand the world better.
Approach to and understanding of marginalised groups (<i>including gender and minorities</i>):	Committed to minorities and marginalised groups but no specific agenda regarding their coverage. Should issues related to marginalised people come to the fore, this outlet is likely to stand with them.
Audience engagement (<i>are they including their audiences? Using them as idea-generators, sources, distributors? What is their understanding of the importance of including audiences?</i>):	No discernible initiatives.

Strategy (<i>Do they have a strategy? And if so, what are the main elements?</i>):	Carefully build a narrative to counter conservative fundamentalist quarters.
Business plan/business model (<i>what is their key business plan/business model?</i>):	Social media, product placement, sponsorships, events and partnerships
Primary revenue (<i>advertising, sales, membership etc.</i>):	Seed investment
Latest funding type (<i>Pre-seed (bootstrapping or self-funding), seed, Angel Investor, Venture Capital (Series A, B, C, D etc.), Initial Public Offering (IPO)</i>):	Ditto
Investors (<i>government, media development org., private foundations, venture capital etc.</i>):	Private investors.
Most important strategic partners (<i>list if any. e.g. civil society, private</i>):	None
Collaboration with other CSOs, NGOs and/or media development stakeholders? (<i>If yes, who?</i>):	None
Biggest challenges (<i>e.g. financial sustainability, management, access to information etc.</i>):	Capable multiskilled human resource.
Current needs (<i>skill development, business development, safety etc.</i>):	Define audience and devise a revenue strategy.
Comments and/or observations (<i>please include comments on their potential as a strategic interest to IMS and our other partners – are they e.g. experimenting with something new that other partners could learn from or are they successful in certain areas that could inspire other partners?</i>):	This outlet has been one of the few that have become an inspiration for startups. It could well use some support in skills training and revenue strategy development.

Name of initiative:	Rokeya Collective
Type of media (<i>print, online, broadcast etc.</i>):	
Online presence, if any (<i>URL, Facebook name, Twitter handle</i>):	Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/people/Rokeya-Collective/61584414423108/ (7.2k followers) Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/rokeya.collective/ (15 followers) X: https://x.com/RokeyaColl66603 (3 followers)
Country of origin:	Bangladesh
Location (<i>region, city</i>):	Dhaka
Founder (<i>name/organisation/institution</i>):	Jesmin Papri
Founded (<i>year</i>):	2025
Language(s):	Bengali
Platforms (<i>including an emphasis on the platform that they rely on the most</i>):	Facebook and Instagram
Staff (<i>number of staff, paid versus unpaid (volunteers), including gender balance xx:xy</i>):	2 full-time paid, 4 volunteers, all journalist roles
Organisational set-up (<i>Composition of the team, incl. the management team - which other profiles than journalists?</i>):	
Business type (<i>private company, corporation, non-profit, joint venture, association etc.</i>):	Private company

Specialities (particularly reg. their reporting approach and style, e.g. investigative journalism, fact-checking etc.):	Women's issues
Primary focus (on a content level, e.g. conflict reporting, environmental reporting, peace and reconciliation etc.):	One stop centre for women's issues.
Representative example(s) of their content (titles and clippings/links to stories):	https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1CXHEtydZy/ https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1E63T7a7qv/
Approach to and/or understanding of journalism (meaning: what is good journalism to them? What is their understanding of ethics and journalistic values?):	Of the women, by the women, for the women.
Approach to and understanding of marginalised groups (including gender and minorities):	It will be a one stop centre for women and thus by definition be committed to the marginalised sections.
Audience engagement (are they including their audiences? Using them as idea-generators, sources, distributors? What is their understanding of the importance of including audiences?):	Nothing discernible so far.
Strategy (Do they have a strategy? And if so, what are the main elements?):	As mentioned, it has a well-defined content strategy in that it covers everything related to women and targets women as its core readership.
Business plan/business model (what is their key business plan/business model?):	Investment, sponsorship, membership, trainings and fellowships.
Primary revenue (advertising, sales, membership etc.):	Seed investment
Latest funding type (Pre-seed (bootstrapping or self-funding), seed, Angel Investor, Venture Capital (Series A, B, C, D etc.), Initial Public Offering (IPO):	Ditto
Investors (government, media development org., private foundations, venture capital etc.):	Private investors.
Most important strategic partners (list if any. e.g. civil society, private):	None so far
Collaboration with other CSOs, NGOs and/or media development stakeholders? (If yes, who?):	None so far
Biggest challenges (e.g. financial sustainability, management, access to information etc.):	Funds. Lack of a proper organizational structure.
Current needs (skill development, business development, safety etc.):	Revenue strategy and funds.
Comments and/or observations (please include comments on their potential as a strategic interest to IMS and our other partners – are they e.g. experimenting with something new that other partners could learn from or are they successful in certain areas that could inspire other partners?):	Immense potential to grow into a full-fledged women's news hub. Needs guidance and assistance. Also needs a solid management structure.

