

# Development Journalism in Bangladesh: The Case of BDP 2100

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**How to cite this paper:** Quarmal, S. B., & Kabir, S. M. H. (2025). Development Journalism in Bangladesh: The Case of BDP 2100. *Advances in Journalism and Communication*, 13, 17-36.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/ajc.2025.132002>

**Received:** February 21, 2025

**Accepted:** June 16, 2025

**Published:** June 19, 2025

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## Abstract

The role of mass media in national development is well-established around the globe, and Bangladesh is no exception to that. Mass media not only provide information, but also play a catalytic role in shaping public opinion by providing a discursive space. In Bangladesh, development journalism has a long history, but has been criticized for “dehumanizing” development issues. The paper aims to understand this phenomenon by analyzing the coverage of Bangladesh’s largest long-term development project, Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 (BDP 2100), in five leading Bangladeshi dailies from 2018 to 2022. Employing content analysis as the research method, the study found that coverage of BDP 2100 was “minimal” and centered mostly on event-based reporting. The stories were treated with “low” emphasis in terms of space given and with “low” prominence. There were only a handful of investigative reports; more importantly, the stories did not focus much on the humanitarian aspects. Rather, those focused more on funding, economic impacts, challenges in implementation of the project, corruption, etc. Political elites (especially people in the government), high government officials, and foreign delegates were mostly featured, which resonates with the arguments that media coverage is elite-centered, favors the elites, and serves their interests while undermining the issues of the ordinary people.

## Keywords

Development Journalism, Bangladesh, Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100

## 1. Introduction

Bangladesh—the world’s largest delta, formed by three great rivers: Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna—is a South Asian country adjacent to India and Myanmar.

It is the seventh most populous country with a population of 16,98,28,911 as of the 2023 population census (BBS, 2023). Bangladesh has one of the highest population densities with more than 1000 people living in per square kilometer across the country (UNFPA, n.d.), while the capital, Dhaka, is the sixth most populous city in the world as of January 2022, having a staggering 23,234 people living in per square kilometer (Dhaka Tribune, 2022).

The country has a long history of colonial suppression; it was under the British rule from 1757 to 1947 as a part of the Bengal Presidency in British India (it was known as East Bengal back then), and under Pakistani regime as “East Pakistan” from 1947 to 1971. In December 1971, the country earned its independence from Pakistan through a liberation war that costed millions of lives. In the recent past, the country has emerged as a significant economic potential with one of the largest youth workforces. In 2018, Bangladesh fulfilled the criteria to graduate from the list of LDC countries. The country’s recent economic growth earned itself the title of “Emerging Tiger of Asia” though just half a century ago, this war-torn country was tagged as a “Bottomless Basket” (Quarmal, 2020).

Global climate change is one of the most burning issues globally in the last two-three decades which is nothing different in the case of Bangladesh. Citing the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), UNEP (1989) marked Bangladesh as “one of the most vulnerable countries to the global climate change” triggered by global warming, which is worsening day by day. The country was ranked seventh in the German watch’s Climate Risk Index 2021. According to the report, Bangladesh suffered due to climate change 185 extreme weather events that costed over eleven thousand lives and about four billion US Dollar worth of economic loss in the first two decades of the twenty-first century (tbsnews, 2021). The situation is not getting any better around the globe, it is going otherwise as UN Secretary-General António Guterres mentioned, “The era of global warming has ended; the era of global boiling has arrived”, after July 2023 was confirmed by the scientists as the “Earth’s hottest month” in the known history (Washington Post, 2023).

One of the areas of Bangladesh’s success, despite being among the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), is development of its disaster preparedness and climate change adaptation strategies wherein the country has become a global leader, which enabled it to reduce cyclone-related deaths by at least 100-fold since 1970, as World Bank report says (World Bank, 2022). However, it continues to face severe and increasing climate risks. According to forecasts made by the World Bank, Bangladesh loses about \$1 billion annually due to tropical cyclones, and has even worse reality to face—in the next 25 years or so, the country will lose one-third of its agricultural GDP due to climate variability and extreme events, and the adversities of climate change such as draughts, floods, sea level rise, crisis of drinking water, intrusion of salinity in farmlands, etc., which may also dislocate about 13.3 million people from their habitats. The forecasts also speculated that the poor will be affected more than well-offs, as well as the women (World Bank, 2022).

Climate change is such a reality that it cannot be reversed. The only way is to

adapt to the situation with proper strategies; the United Nations mandates the same as well. As per the guidelines provided under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), many countries have developed their National Adaptation Plan (NAP). Bangladesh took its initiative though it was not well organized. Moreover, the NAP was under the Ministry of Environment (MoE), which cannot act in everything related to climate change issues ([The Daily Star, 2020](#)). Alongside, Bangladesh inherited [from colonial era] and enacted several laws, regulations and plans addressing environmental protection and preservation, such as Bangladesh Water Development Board Act 2000 (BWDB Act 2000), Embankment and Drainage Act 1952, National Water Policy 1999, Guidelines for Participatory Water Management (2000), National Water Management Plan (2001), Bangladesh Water Act (2013), Water Rules (2018) and related Guidelines (2019), Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (2009-2018), National Water Management Plan (WARPO) 2001, the Irrigation Act, 1876, etc.

The above-mentioned legal instruments could not be much effective due to contradictions and repetitions among different laws and regulations and lack of coordination among the planning, executing and enforcement agencies. To overcome this and to have a comprehensive strategy for mitigating climate change impacts to continue with the country's economic growth, the government of Bangladesh formulated the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 (BDP 2100, hereafter), which is mandated by the constitution of the country as its article 18A states "The State shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment and to preserve and safeguard the natural resources, bio-diversity, wetlands, forests and wild life for the present and future citizens" (Bangladesh Constitution—Article 18A, 1972).

Bangladesh's National Economic Council (NEC) approved BDP 2100 on 4 September, 2018. It was formulated in cooperation with the Netherlands government. Grounded in a long-term vision, BDP 2100 integrates planning from all delta-related sectors from across the country. The plan is significantly important for Bangladesh as it will allow adaptive and dynamic planning based on the ever-changing uncertainties in future developments, e.g. climate change, socio-economic development, population growth and regional cooperation ([UNDP & GOB, 2021](#)). This is seen as a big leap towards sustaining Bangladesh's economic growth as well as mitigating the challenges of global climate change for about 80% of this delta is made of 1008 rivers ([NRCC, 2023](#)) and their floodplains which are the main sources of livelihood for its people as well as a significant contributor to the country's economy. As mentioned earlier, the country faces major delta challenges like water safety, food security, displacement of people, which are inter-related, and are common in deltas. Alongside, Bangladesh is also a natural disaster-prone country wherein floods, cyclones, and droughts are regular events [[dutchwatersector.com](#)] ([dutchwatersector.com, 2019](#); [Choudhury et al., 2012](#)).

It is important to integrate the people into the BDP 2100 as the lives and livelihoods of two-third of Bangladeshi people depend on the delta. Also, the increasing

risks of climate change adversely affecting the delta must be addressed collectively, which government alone cannot do. As such, making people aware of the scenario should be prioritized. Otherwise, the future seems bleak as the World Bank projected declining GDP growth to 5.6% in less than two decades, which will force about thirty-one million people to live in moderate or extreme poverty (World Bank, 2022).

Media is a great catalyst in societal processes and national development. Scholars, including Lerner (1958) and Rogers (1963), in the mid-twentieth century, suggested using mass media for national development, which was resonated again by Malikhao and Servaes (1991) towards the end of the century. McPhail (2009) stated that all types of mass media can play a crucial role in addressing development challenges by making development happen through interventions like educating people as well as by making the development “visible” to them. Media acts as a discursive space (Genilo & Shafi, 2013), and the role of media is way beyond just informing people (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002). Media portrayals of different social and national issues, including development, initiate and encourage discussions and debates (Ettema, 2007; Norris, 2000; Schudson, 1995), which—on one hand, help the audience construct their worldview (Goffman, 1974: p. 21), and “enforce” accountability on the other (Maia, 2009: p. 376) though Kabir (2023) argues that such coverage “favours the elite but dehumanizes and ignores the circumstances of underprivileged people”.

Media’s role is even more important in addressing crisis and emergencies as media can create direct link between the public and the authority and help disseminate information before, during and after the crisis, and facilitate discussions on such issues (Dave, n.d.).

Bangladeshi media have been playing important roles in development as well as in crisis mitigation and can play similar role in reducing the negative impacts of climate change by increasing people’s consciousness regarding the issue (Demeritt, 2006). However, coverages on climate change should not be just random articles on newspapers and broadcast segments, Demeritt (2006) argued it to be “a social relationship among scientists, policy actors and the people mediated by such news packages” as they consider such environmental changes/crises not as an isolated phenomenon. Knowledge of this and other aspects of the physical world are interpreted in the context of the “social chambers” of the people, which are influenced by their social values and cultural norms.

At any rate, the importance of media in development and making people aware of it cannot be ignored, which triggered the idea of this study focusing on BDP 2100 as this project is of immense importance for the country’s future.

### **Objectives of the Study**

Considering the above, the researchers aim to investigate the way Bangladeshi dailies providing coverage on the issue to understand the role Bangladeshi media in disseminating information and raising awareness on the BDP 2100, which is

considered as a “game changer” for the country’s future. The objective of the study was:

To analyze the coverages of Bangladeshi leading national dailies—Prothom Alo, The Daily Star, The Business Standard, Bangladesh Pratidin and Kaler Kantha—from 2018 to 2022 on BDP 2100 in terms of attention, emphasis, prominence, story-types, themes, and photographs accompanied with.

## 2. Literature Review and Study Framework

### 2.1. Literature Review

The term development journalism and development communication are quite familiar in academia and in industry. Ogan (1982) identified development journalism/communication as a concept at the heart of “the new information order” during the 1980s. However, the concept was not much clear to all. According to Ogan (1982), “it appears that both the proponents and the critics of the establishment of this “new” kind of journalism are not always clear about the concept’s meaning or method of application in any particular setting”.

Nora Quebral, one of the pioneers in the field defined development communication as the “art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country and the mass of its people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth that makes possible greater social equality and the larger fulfillment of human potential” (Quebral, 1975). However, irony is that the countries that need this more—the less developed countries—have lesser ability to practice it as Schramm (1964) argued that the less developed countries have less developed mass communication systems too.

The late 1960s is marked as the beginning of “development journalism” (Stevenson, 1994). Citing Stevenson (1994), Gunaratne (1996) mentioned that the term “Developmental Journalism” was “born” in the Phillipines in 1968 during the “The Economic Writers’ Training Course” wherein Alan Chalkley (the seminar chair) first used the term “development journalist” and described them as the ones who should make the readers know the development problems/issues, think about them seriously, and identify solutions to come out of the “vicious cycle” [of poverty] (Gunaratne, 1996). Chalkley (1968) also pointed out that this kind of journalism was to focus on general people, not the elites. Also, the stories should avoid technical terms and jargon and should be written in a language understandable to ordinary people (Chalkley, 1968). Gunaratne (1978) described this “new” kind of reporting as an “integral” part of journalism and characterized by “analytical interpretation, subtle investigation, constructive criticism and sincere association with the grassroots (rather than with the elite)” (Gunaratne, 1996).

Scholars, for example Gunaratne (1996), argued that development journalism needs to be described and understood in the light of a new theoretical contexts than those described by Siebert et al. Gunaratne argued that it was not compatible with either of the libertarian concepts and authoritarian concepts (Gunaratne,

1996) presented by Siebert et al. However, the western concepts differed as Aggarwala (1978) argued western critics considered “development-oriented” news as “government-controlled”, i.e. “authoritarian” in nature—which in his view—is a mistake (Aggarwala, 1978). Gunaratne (1996) criticized Stevenson (1994) for the same reason. But Ogan’s (1987) view presented in their article “Coverage of development news in developed and developing countries” is also not easily deniable. They suggested that developing countries’ media relied heavily on government sources to report development news (Ogan, 1987) which has been a weakness, especially in countries like Bangladesh, as Fraser and Restrepo-Estrada (1998) identified Communication and Public participation as the main determinants of success and failures of development projects. This is consistent with the main thesis of Siebert et al., “the press has always taken on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates”. Hence, it is debatable whether development journalism is a “new form or just a variation in the traditional four theories” (Ogan, 1982). Despite all these debates, development journalism has evolved as an important and integral part of the media ecology as Ediani (1993) described it as “a type of reporting that focuses on ideas, policies, programs, actions and events aimed at improving people’s lives”. Ali (1980) saw the approach of this “new journalism”, is to present news “that reflected social relevance and underlined a sense of commitment of Asian journalists to economic development in the broadest sense of the term”.

Development journalism has a long history in Bangladesh though it is difficult to mark the exact time of its beginning in Bangladesh. Bangladeshi Development journalist Seraj (2016) reported that development Journalism in Asia begun at the end of 1960’s, and it was considered as blessings for national development back then. Development journalism is important especially for developing countries like Bangladesh as it helps the development process by reporting the progress and identifying the areas for improvement. However, it is quite challenging as Mahfuz Anam, Editor of The Daily Star—Bangladesh’s most reached English-language daily, mentioned: “the media’s biggest challenge is to help establish a functioning democracy which is central to the achievement of all other development goals” (Anam, 2002).

Kabir (2023) argued, based on his study on the coverages of development issues in The Daily Star (English language daily with highest circulation in Bangladesh), opined that media’s attention to the development issues—e.g. education and agriculture—is inadequate, and often absent despite the issues being among the most concerning issues for the society, especially to the underprivileged part of it.

Talukder and Hossain (2021) marked the coverage of economic news in leading Bangladeshi newspapers as “not satisfactory”. Akter and Azad (2021) had similar point of view as they found only 12% coverage was on development news in a local newspaper in Chattogram. Ajman (2024) recommended that Bangladeshi print media should work towards raising awareness, fostering accountability, and driv-

ing policy reforms on environmental issues through their coverage.

A sizable number of research articles on BDP 2100 were published in different journals and research papers. The topics of most articles were based on modeling of BDP 2100, its concept, theory, aligned with environment, forestry, ocean governance, salinity challenges of implementation etc. However, after exploring different platforms, no academic study was found on coverage/appreciation of BDP 2100 in the print media. As Kabir (2023) found that one of leading Bangladeshi dailies, The Daily Star provided much less attention and even remained silent on development issues. This might be the same in the case of newspaper coverage on BDP 2100.

## 2.2. Theoretical Framework

Agenda setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), framing (Goffman, 1974) and priming theory (Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996) were consulted to design the study. The theories are among the most frequently used frameworks to understand the ways mass media can influence shaping public opinion by providing curated coverage on particular issues. It is well-established that news media can influence public opinion by drawing the readers' attention to particular issues with coverage highlighting some interpretations and culling down others (Entman, 2007), be those related to politics (Strömbäck & Kioussis, 2010; Pedro-Carañana et al., 2020), war, conflicts and social movements (Matusitz & Ochoa, 2018; Singh, 2018; Stobaugh & Huss, 2024; Egbunike, 2015), gender, religion and human rights (Khraiche, 2017; Kabir & Hamid, 2015; Genilo, Quarmal, & Hossain, 2018) or development (Schweinsberg, Darcy, & Cheng, 2017; Riek, Muthotho, & Mohamed, 2022; Kabir, 2023). According to Laughey (2007), the media's stance is not "unbiased" in covering different issues though media outlets pretend to be so. They argued that the media serves the interests of the elites and the media. Contrastingly, McQuail (2010) argued otherwise, that is, the media can also challenge the elites and can have influence over their decision-making process. McNair (2011) posited that media help political actors sustain their agenda on national development which often ignores the issues related to the underprivileged part of society or remain silent where media's voice may favor the ordinary (Kabir & Hamid, 2015). Thus, many important issues for ordinary people receive low or no media attention.

## 3. Research Design and Methods

The study was pre-dominantly quantitative content analysis (Berelson, 1952; Holsti, 1969; Krippendorff, 2004; Macnamara, 2011). It analyzed the coverage of BDP 2100 in terms of attention, emphasis, and prominence. There was a qualitative part as well wherein the news items were analyzed thematically.

Among the five newspapers included in the analysis three were Bangla (Bangladesh Pratidin, Prothom Alo and Kaler Kantho) and the other two were English language dailies (The Daily Star and The Business Standard). The inclusions were based on their print circulation as presented to the parliament by then Minister of

Information and Broadcasting Dr Hasan Mahmud in January 2023 (Kaler Kantho, 2023; Bangladesh Pratidin, 2023). According to the data presented in the parliament, a total of 1141 (509 daily, 345 weekly and 287 monthly) newspapers were published from Dhaka (Capital of Bangladesh) back then. Among these the top three Bangla-language dailies were Bangladesh Pratidin, Prothom Alo and Kaler Kantho while The Daily Star topped the circulation among the English-language dailies. The timeline of inclusion was five years since the inception of the BDP 2100 project, that is—from 2018 to 2022.

The authors developed a coding sheet to analyze the coverage of the above-mentioned newspapers. The news items were identified by the presence of the words/phrases “Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100”, “Delta Plan” and “BDP 2100” (English), and “বঙ্গদ্বীপ পরিকল্পনা ২১০০”, “বাংলাদেশ ডেল্টা প্ল্যান” and “ডেল্টা প্ল্যান” (Bangla). Afterwards “attention”, “emphasis”, and “prominence” were measured wherein:

- **Attention** pertains to the number of times stories related to BDP 2100 are featured/printed in the said newspapers.
- **Emphasis** pertains to the space allotted (in terms of number of words) to stories on BDP 2100 in the said newspapers.
- **Prominence** pertains to the section placement of BDP 2100 stories featured/printed in the said newspapers. Front page, Back page and Editorial/Opinion page considered as “high prominence” section, Science and Health, International, Arts and Entertainment, Nation/Country, Business pages are considered as “medium prominence” section, and other pages—for example, Education, Food, Travel, City etc.—are considered as “low prominence” section.

The stories on BDP 2100 were categorized under different themes as below:

- **Importance/relevance of BDP 2100 for Bangladesh.** Pertains to the news stories focusing on the importance of BDP 2100 for Bangladesh, that is, why Bangladesh needs to implement this project.
- **Funding related issues of BDP 2100.** Pertains to the news stories focusing on funding related issues, that is, how much money will be needed, who will provide that money, whether government needs to seek financial aid from development partners or who might be potential partners for funding etc. Below are some example phrases that led the story to put under this theme.
  - 1) PM seeks ADB support to implement BDP (The Daily Star, 2022).
  - 2) First phase involve Tk 2,97,800 crore.
  - 3) WB, ADB, JICA agreed to co-sponsor [in BDP 2100].
  - 4) 80 projects of BDP involves \$37 billion.
  - 5) Invest \$13.4 billion [in BDP 2100], earn \$362 billion by 2044: WB.
- **Prospects/potential positive impacts of BDP 2100.** Pertains to the news stories focusing on the positive impacts of BDP 2100 speculated by different stakeholders, for example, increasing climate resilience, protecting land and reclaim-

ing land through coastal embankment, mitigating land salinity in coastal region, improved flood management, river network, enhancement of blue economy, Nature-Based Solutions (NBSs), creating employment opportunities, GDP growth, etc.

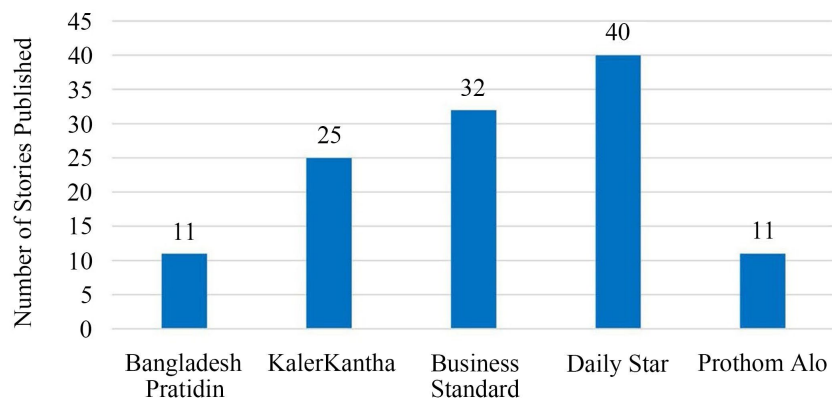
- **Criticisms of BDP 2100.** Pertains to the news stories criticizing the initiative as a whole or parts of it, possibilities of corruption, possibilities of increased liabilities of foreign loans, etc.

The themes are not mutually exclusive, rather the same story is often found to be related to multiple themes. In such cases, the story was categorized under all of them. To ensure the consistency of the coding, intercoder reliability was assessed using [Holsti's \(1969\)](#) method and found to be at 85 percent.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

The study aimed at employing a content analysis method, it analyzed the news coverage of the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 (BDP 2100) in five national dailies of Bangladesh between 2018 and 2022. The following sub-sections present the findings.

### 4.1. Attention Given to the Issue



**Figure 1.** Coverage of Bangladesh Delta Plan-2100 in select Bangladeshi national dailies.

It can be seen from [Figure 1](#) that the leading national dailies in Bangladesh did not pay much attention to the issue of covering Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 during the study period—2018 to 2022. In the five-year study period, the cumulative number of news stories published in the said dailies was only 119 which is negligible considering the hundreds of thousands news stories published during the study period. The total number of stories was not counted during this study. However, [Genilo, Quarmal, and Hossain \(2018: p. 28\)](#) found that Prothom Alo and The Daily Star published an average of 107 stories and 138 stories per day respectively in May 2017. This can provide an idea of the negligibility of the coverage on BDP 2100.

The two English dailies—The Daily Star and The Business Standard—provided

better coverage than others in terms of attention—The Daily Star published one-third (33.6%) of the total stories published while The Business Standard published over one-fourth (26.9%) of the total stories. Furthermore, Bangladesh Pratidin did not at all publish any story on the issue till 2021 which reflects the general lack of attention on the issue till that time. Also, it was interesting to see that Prothom Alo, most reached Bangla daily, published only eleven stories out of 119.

The numbers in 2022 show that the attention is increasing—the total number of stories published this year was 40.33% of the total stories published during the study period, and 267% of the previous two years. Coverage in 2020 and 2021 might be due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but in 2019 the coverage was also not that much. The numbers in 2022 look healthier compared to the thin coverage of the issue though these are also not “big” numbers in general. Altogether, it might be concluded that the leading dailies are yet to pay attention to the issue. Trends in the coverage in the dailies under study are shown in **Table 1**.

**Table 1.** Annual coverage of BDP 2100 in leading Bangladeshi dailies.

Newspaper/Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
The Daily Star	2	12	5	8	13	40
Prothom Alo	2	3	2	1	3	11
Kaler Kantha	8	2	4	3	8	25
Bangladesh Pratidin	1	1	0	0	9	11
The Business Standard	N/A	4	7	6	15	32
Total	13	22	18	18	48	119

Also, **Table 2** shows that majority (68%) of the news stories were hard news/straight jacket news—mostly covering events. On the other hand, only 10 (8.40%) stories were investigative/interpretative reports.

**Table 2.** Types of news stories on BDP 2100.

Newspaper	Hard News/Straight Jacket	Op-Ed	Investigative/Interpretative	Summary of Round Table-Seminar etc.	Total
The Daily Star	27	10	3	-	40
The Business Standard	15	4	7	6	32
Kaler Kantha	20	2	-	3	25
Bangladesh Pratidin	10	-	-	1	11
Prothom Alo	9	2	-	-	11
Total	81	18	10	10	119

Furthermore, most of the news stories were published as “political news” those were published mainly due to the presence of the political leaders, especially the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, while some were published in business

and economy section and a very few in the development section of the newspapers though BDP 2100 is mainly a development issue. **Table 3** shows an analysis of the photographs accompanying the news stories. The focus of the photographs (**Table 3**) also indicates political considerations behind the selection of the stories.

**Table 3.** Subject/main person of the photographs accompanying stories on BDP 2100.

Subject	Frequency	Percentage
Prime Minister (including photographs with foreign delegates)	31	28.97%
Foreign Delegates (without PM)	4	3.73%
Minister and High Govt. Officials	18	16.82%
Speakers of Seminars/Roundtable (except Ministers and High Govt. Officials)	2	1.86%
Reference Photograph (flood, draught, waste materials in ocean etc.)	44	41.12%
Graphics (maps, info-graphs, charts etc.)	8	7.47%
Total	107	100.00%

**Table 3** reveals that more than one-fourth of the total photographs (107) accompanying the stories on BDP 2100 had the Prime Minister as the main person (28.97%). Another 16.82% of the photographs featured other ministers and high government officials. On the other hand, about half the published photographs were “reference” photograph/graphics which often do not have any direct relevance with BDP 2100.

## 4.2. Emphasis Given to the Issue

**Table 4.** Emphasis on stories related to BDP 2100 in terms of words/story.

Newspaper	Number of Stories	Number of Words	Average Words/Story
The Daily Star	40	31,282	783
The Business Standard	32	20,454	640
Kaler Kantha	25	13,083	523
Bangladesh Pratidin	11	5550	505
Prothom Alo	11	8909	810
Total	119	79,278	666.2

Despite their low attention to the issue, the dailies under study provided good emphasis in terms of words per story (shown in **Table 4**) as the average words per story (666.2) suggest them to be long form. Though two English dailies The Daily Star and The Business Standard paid more attention to the issue—published 40 and 32 stories respectively out of 119, daily Prothom Alo—the gave most emphasis on the stories related to Bangladesh Delta Plan issue. While the average number of words/stories was 666.2, Prothom Alo’s average was 810 words/story. Furthermore, despite having more straight jacket news, the average number of words per

story was apparently high (666.2 words/story) probably because summaries of ten roundtable discussions were published in *The Business Standard*, *Kaler Kantho* and *The Daily Star* (Table 3).

### 4.3. Prominence of Published Stories

Different pages of the dailies have been categorized as **High Prominence** (Front Page, Back Page and Editorial Page), **Medium Prominence** (National Page, News Page, City Page, Bangladesh Page, Country Page) and Business, sports, special supplement, Governance, country, climate, culture, economy, Development, Diplomacy pages were identified as **Low Prominence** areas. The explanations are provided in the Methodology section.

As can be seen from Figure 2, the stories on BDP 2100 did not get a “good” treatment in terms of prominence either. Two in every five stories (49 of 119; 41.2%) were published in low prominence areas. On the other hand, only one in every four stories (30 of 119; 25.2%) was featured in the high prominence areas which again reflects that the issue was not perceived as “important” by the dailies under study to provide better coverage and/or treatment, or it was not a worthy issue for them to set agenda on.

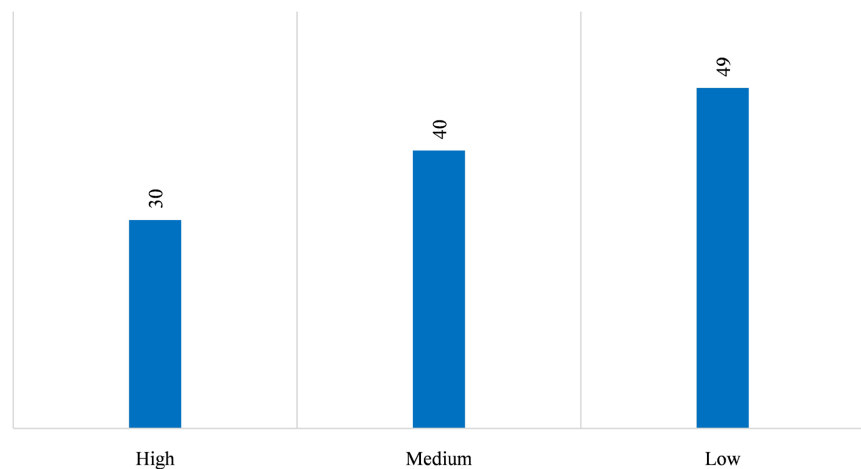


Figure 2. Prominence given to the BDP 2100 stories.

Apparently, *The Daily Star* provided better treatment in terms of prominence as eleven (36.67%) out of the 30 stories that received high prominence were published by *The Daily Star*, though considering the number of total stories (40) published by the daily, it was not that high (27.5%)—just a little better than the general trend (25.21% high prominence). Also, 40% of their stories were published in the low prominence area. On the other hand, the number of stories published by *Kaler Kantha* (25) was much lower than *The Daily Star*, but 36% of their stories were published in high prominence areas and 44% in medium prominence areas. Similar trend is found in the coverage of *Bangladesh Pratidin*; published only eleven stories, but more than half of (54.55%) their stories were published in high prominence areas. The related data are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Treatment of BDP 2100 related news stories in different dailies.

Newspaper	High	Medium	Low	Total Stories
The Daily Star	11	13	16	40
The Business Standard	3	12	17	32
Kaler Kantha	9	11	5	25
Bangladesh Pratidin	6	1	4	11
Prothom Alo	1	3	7	11
Total	30	40	49	119

Furthermore, only 30.25% of reports were covered as bylines. Among the rest half came from the agencies and published as “desk report”. This may be another reflection of the lack of perceived importance of the issue among the news managers, that they did not dedicate much resources to cover it. The details are shown in **Table 6**.

**Table 6.** Proportion of Bylines in BDP 2100 stories.

Newspaper	Byline Report		Non-Byline Reports		Agency Report		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.
Daily Star	15	37.50%	13	32.50%	12	30.00%	40
Business Standard	11	34.38%	12	37.50%	9	28.13%	32
Kaler Kantha	8	32.00%	8	32.00%	9	36.00%	25
Bangladesh Pratidin	0	0.00%	7	63.64%	4	36.36%	11
Prothom Alo	2	18.18%	0	0.00%	9	81.82%	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>30.25%</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>33.61%</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>36.13%</b>	<b>119</b>

Interestingly, apart from the stories covered on the Prime Minister’s visit to the Netherlands on BDP 2100 issue, the location of all news stories was in Dhaka (the capital of Bangladesh) except for one which was reported from Chattogram (formerly known as Chittagong), the “Business Capital” of Bangladesh.

#### 4.4. Themes of the Stories

As mentioned in the methodology section, the stories published on BDP 2100 were categorized under four broad themes: **Importance/relevance of BDP 2100 for Bangladesh, Funding related issues of BDP 2100, Prospects/potential positive impacts of BDP 2100, Criticisms of BDP 2100.**

As presented in **Table 7**, the most emerged theme was the importance/relevance of BDP 2100 (142, 33.65%) followed by prospects/potential positive impacts of BDP 2100 (123, 29.14%). On the other hand, Criticisms of BDP 2100 (64, 15.16%) appeared least frequently among the four themes. This trend seems natural as the implementation of the project started in 2018 and the media would focus more on introducing the people with the project, its relevance, and long-term impacts, especially the positive sides of it. Also, at the beginning of such a project there would be less

discussions on corruption. Furthermore, the stories focused more on infrastructural development and monetary gain/loss than the humanitarian aspects.

The stories brought into discussion various aspects of BDP 2100. **Table 8** provides a snapshot of the issues discussed/paid attention to in the news stories on BDP 2100.

**Table 7.** Thematic division of BDP 2100 stories.

Themes	Daily Star	Business Standard	Kaler Kantha	Bangladesh Pratidin	Prothom Alo	Total
Importance/Relevance of BDP 2100	27	63	22	23	7	142
Funding Related Issues	14	40	19	13	7	93
Prospects/Potential Positive Impacts	34	36	27	13	13	123
Criticisms	14	22	14	2	12	64
Total	89	161	82	51	39	422

**Table 8.** Examples of stories categorized under different themes.

Themes	Quotes/Phrases
Importance/Relevance of BDP 2100	<p><b>Kaler Kantha, 2018 Sept. 7.</b> ৯ শতাংশ প্রবৃদ্ধি অর্জন করতে হলে ডেল্টা প্ল্যান বাস্তবায়ন অপরিহার্য। [Delta plan must be implemented to achieve a 9% GDP growth] <a href="https://tinyurl.com/275ry3e7">https://tinyurl.com/275ry3e7</a></p> <p><b>Business Standard, 2020 January 16.</b> Delta Plan: Negligence to cause 1.3% loss in GDP. <a href="https://tinyurl.com/hvpseake">https://tinyurl.com/hvpseake</a></p> <p><b>Bangladesh Pratidin, 2022 August 7.</b> ডেল্টা পরিকল্পনা বাস্তবায়িত হলে দেশের বন্যা, খরা, নদী ভাঙন, জলাবদ্ধতা ও সমুদ্র পৃষ্ঠের উচ্চতা বৃদ্ধি মোকাবিলায় কাজ করা যাবে। [Implementation of delta plan will enable us dealing with flood, draught, river erosion, waterlogging and sea-level rise] <a href="https://tinyurl.com/3ak8nnbs">https://tinyurl.com/3ak8nnbs</a></p> <p><b>Business Standard, 2022 November 4.</b> About 2.5% of the population (4.1 million people) was displaced due to climate disasters in 2019. <a href="https://tinyurl.com/yy9tvmxe">https://tinyurl.com/yy9tvmxe</a></p> <p><b>Prothom Alo, 2018 May 15.</b> বিশ্বের তাপমাত্রা বৃদ্ধি পাচ্ছে এবং জলবায়ু পরিবর্তন হচ্ছে। এতে ২০৫০ সালের মধ্যে সাগর ভাগের উচ্চতা ২৩ সেন্টিমিটার বাড়বে। এ কারণে দেশের ১৮ শতাংশ ভূমি তলিয়ে যাবে। [Global temperature is increasing and climate is changing. Sea level will rise by 23 centimeters due to this. This will submerge 18% of the country.] <a href="https://tinyurl.com/6hffzk3m">https://tinyurl.com/6hffzk3m</a></p>
	<p><b>Business Standard, 2022 Jan. 30.</b> In the first phase [delta plan] involves an estimated cost of around Tk 2,97,800 crore. <a href="https://tinyurl.com/2kdtb5wj">https://tinyurl.com/2kdtb5wj</a></p> <p><b>Business Standard, 2019 July 30.</b> The Netherlands reassured support for implementing the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100. <a href="https://tinyurl.com/37wbnjfx">https://tinyurl.com/37wbnjfx</a></p> <p><b>Business Standard, 2022 January 30.</b> WB, ADB, JICA agreed to co-sponsor the conference that will highlight the strategies and priorities of the Delta Plan to investors. <a href="https://tinyurl.com/2kdtb5wj">https://tinyurl.com/2kdtb5wj</a></p> <p><b>Kaler Kantha, 2019 October 24.</b> ব-দ্বীপ পরিকল্পনা বাস্তবায়নসংক্রান্ত ২৪৮টি প্রকল্পে এ বছর এডিপিতে ২১ হাজার ৯১৯ কোটি টাকা দেওয়া হয়েছে। [21 thousand 919 crore taka has been allocated to 248 projects related to delta plan in the ADP this year. <a href="https://tinyurl.com/3sxxdj92">https://tinyurl.com/3sxxdj92</a></p> <p><b>Business Standard, 2022 May 26.</b> Prime Minister urged development partners to join hands in executing the Delta Plan-2100. <a href="https://tinyurl.com/mr3rdrh4">https://tinyurl.com/mr3rdrh4</a></p>
Funding Related Issues	

## Continued

Prospects/Potential Positive Impacts	<p><b>The Daily Star, 2022 May 27.</b> Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the country's development partners to help implement the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 that seeks sustainable development for future generations. <a href="https://tinyurl.com/2csfsn44">https://tinyurl.com/2csfsn44</a></p> <p><b>Prothom Alo, 2019 May 5.</b> Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 will be gateways to maritime development. <a href="https://tinyurl.com/mrp69pps">https://tinyurl.com/mrp69pps</a></p> <p><b>Prothom Alo, 2018 September 4.</b> Country could boost its GDP growth by another 1.5 per cent by 2030 through implementing the [delta] plan. <a href="https://tinyurl.com/3snydd2z">https://tinyurl.com/3snydd2z</a></p> <p><b>Prothom Alo, 2022 January 14.</b> The Bangladesh Delta Plan (BDP) 2100 is a long-term, integrated, and holistic vision of water and land management. <a href="https://tinyurl.com/5f3f98kc">https://tinyurl.com/5f3f98kc</a></p> <p><b>The Daily Star, 2018 September 3.</b> The government would spend \$37 billion by 2031 for ensuring food and water security and fighting disasters, according to the Delta Plan 2100. <a href="https://tinyurl.com/y2shsfsw">https://tinyurl.com/y2shsfsw</a></p>
Criticisms	<p><b>Prothom Alo, 2018 September 21.</b> আগের পরিকল্পনাগুলোর মাধ্যমে গড়ে ওঠা অবকাঠামোগুলো রক্ষণাবেক্ষণই যদি এই মহাপরিকল্পনার একটা কাজ হয়, তাহলে এত ঢাকঢোল পেটানোর দরকার কী? [If this master plan is devised for maintenance of the infrastructures built under the previous plans, why to make such noises?] মানুষের সম্পৃক্ততা বলতে ২৫ মন্ত্রণালয়ের ২৫ ফোকাল পারসন আর ২৫ জন গবেষক কাম বিজ্ঞানীর ৫ হাজার টাকার হাজিরা নয়। এখন পর্যন্ত কজন মানুষের কাছে আমরা পৌঁছাতে পেরেছি, যাদের জীবন-জীবিকার পরবর্তী ছবি আঁকবে আমাদের এই পরিকল্পনা? [Involvement of people does not mean the 5000-taka attendance of the focal persons of 25 ministries and 25 researcher-cum-scientists [involved in the project]. How much people have we been able to reach so far, whose livelihood will be "sketched" by this plan?] <a href="https://tinyurl.com/4jt4htk4">https://tinyurl.com/4jt4htk4</a></p> <p><b>Kaler Kantha, 2019 October 24.</b> এটি বাস্তবায়নে প্রতিবছর বাজেট থেকে যে পরিমাণ টাকা দেওয়ার কথা তাতে প্রথম বছরেই হেঁচট খেল সরকার। [Government stumbled in budget allocation in the very first year of implementing it.] <a href="https://tinyurl.com/3sxxdj92">https://tinyurl.com/3sxxdj92</a></p> <p><b>Business Standard, 2020 August 24.</b> Even if the World Bank money comes through, raising the remainder won't be easy. The country borrowed \$2.7 billion this year to tackle the pandemic. Then in May, the country was hit by Cyclone Amphan, which forced the evacuation of 2.4 million people. The floods in July followed. <a href="https://tinyurl.com/ycyfzuu2">https://tinyurl.com/ycyfzuu2</a></p> <p><b>Business Standard, 2020 May 26.</b> Raising that money was never going to be easy, but now the program to protect the 37 million people who live in the delta is in limbo—hit first by the coronavirus and then by the damage from Amphan. <a href="https://tinyurl.com/4fv4hv4t">https://tinyurl.com/4fv4hv4t</a></p> <p><b>The Daily Star, 2019 January 13.</b> The newly adopted Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 was not prepared following adequate studies and consultation with relevant stakeholders. Bangladesh Environment Network (BEN), in association with 40 other green organisations of the country, said in the special conference. <a href="https://tinyurl.com/5n7dtv45">https://tinyurl.com/5n7dtv45</a></p>

## 5. Conclusion

Overall, the five leading newspapers in Bangladesh provided a little coverage on the Delta Plan-2100 from 2018 to 2022; more attention on this issue was expected

as it is the largest development plan of the country so far and people's knowledge, awareness and engagement are much needed for the success of such a project.

The selected newspapers published more “event-based” news that can increase their selling. The newspapers did not provide adequate space to publish stories to educate people on BDP 2100 despite it being the first ever 100-year mega plan of Bangladesh and thought to be a “game changer”.

Only a handful of investigative reports were found on this issue in the newspapers that were analyzed. They did not set their agenda on BDP 2100 and went for minimal event-based coverage on this. Reports related to investment, funding and foreign loan-seeking for implementing BDP 2100 were given importance in these coverages. However, it is noticeable that coverage on this issue had steadily rising trend in most newspapers except for Prothom Alo. The Daily Star remained steady on BDP 2100 coverage. The Business Standard initially had nominal coverage, but later it increased significantly. During the five years of the study period, the select newspapers published only 119 news stories altogether. The number is poor for such an important development issue. Also, the coverage was less centered on human issues—impact of the plan on environment, livelihood, etc.—rather the focus was on just covering events, especially where people with political positions and power were featured, which resonates with Kabir (2023), wherein he argued that media “dehumanize” the development issues while covering them.

As Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries to the impact of global climate change, and BDP 2100 focuses on the next 100 years of development, including the country's strategies in dealing with the challenges posed by global climate change, it is very important to integrate people in the process. Mass media, especially the leading newspapers, can and should lead the process by providing more coverage on such an important development issue with special focus on making people aware of the issues to face soon with humanitarian perspectives included.

The present study only analyzed the coverage of BDP 2100 in terms of attention, emphasis, prominence and themes, but did not delve into the potential influencing factors (e.g. media ownership). Also, it did not investigate reader engagement or influence of the coverage on readers. Future researchers may explore these issues to generate a better understanding of the dynamics of development journalism in Bangladesh.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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