



**Skepticism and Conspiracy: The Dangers of Misinformation and
Disinformation | BoBC2023**

Panelists:

Anurag Acharya, Director, Policy Entrepreneurs Inc., Nepal

Cuihong Cai, Professor, Centre for American Studies, Fudan University, China

Leo Wigger, Editor, Zenith Magazine, Germany

Nurul Kabir, Editor, New Age, Bangladesh

Parveen F Chowdhury, President, Commonwealth Journalist Association, Bangladesh

Faruq Faisel, Former Regional Director, South Asia and Bangladesh, Article 19, Bangladesh

(Moderator)

About: At the moment, 5G towers and vaccine misinformation are only the tip of an iceberg of conspiracy. Society has long grappled with the dissemination of false information, but the arrival of the internet age has proved a dangerous tinderbox. The wide range of themes targeted by false information online, including particularly sensitive areas such as politics, climate change, religion and health, makes misinformation's potential negative impacts even more dire. Arguably, the most significant and widespread impact of false information online, irrespective of the theme or target audience, is the growing mistrust of institutions and the disruption of democratic processes worldwide. Now, the impacts of false information on the internet are being acutely felt in Bangladesh and other nations in South Asia. This could have dire consequences for social cohesion and inclusive progress in affected communities and wider society in the long term. This session will discuss the need for targeted efforts by the appropriate stakeholders, specifically tailored towards combating misinformation and disinformation online. Perhaps, through collaborative effort, we may find the potential to address the problem and cultivate a safer, more enriching digital experience for all internet users.

Faruq Faisal, “My pleasure to moderate this session here, but we have very limited time it’s from 2:30 pm to 3:50 pm. so I think this session is on- “skepticism and conspiracy: the danger of misinformation and disinformation”. We are facing this problem including hate speech spreading hatred, etc. I'm proud to introduce the panelists. We have- Anurag Achariya, Director policy entrepreneurs Inc, Nepal, we have Cuihong Cai (she has another name is Sherry which is convenient we are allowed to call her), we have Leo Wigger, editor, Zenith magazine, Germany and we have Nurul Kabir, editor, NewAge Bangladesh, and Parvin F Chowdhury, president, commonwealth journalist Association Bangladesh. We will only have each speaker (panelist) can

speaking up to 10 minutes and then we'll open up the floor if there are any questions from the audience, our speakers (panelists) will try to address those. For the panelist you are free to speak from where you are sitting or you can go to the standing microphone. and I will describe the where we will run this question-and-answer session. so, each of the speaker as I said will have maximum 10 minutes but we'll try to make it as precise as possible. and I would like to invite Anurag Acharya director policy entrepreneurs Inc from Nepal."

Anurag Acharya "Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, let me Begin by thanking Centre for Governance Studies and congratulating them for organizing this wonderful event with important issues at hand for discussion and none so important as this one that we are discussing about the dangers of misinformation and disinformation. To begin with misinformation has always been around we know I mean like always a concern for society especially in the developed developing world, where sources of information were limited in the past often controlled by the state. it was easy for somebody to be misinformed or be manipulated which sometimes spiraled out of control and often influenced public opinion. Earlier it was more due to how information was shared that misinformation spread. I can give you an example of how public were misinformed about the risk of HIV in back in my country resulting in stigma against those infected and survivors I'm like we've had that experience in other parts of the world as well. Of course, there were also some deliberate attempts in other cases to disinform people. Example in South Asia we have heard about God statues drinking milk, which made large headlines in the media and UFO sightings I think many in western part of the world or even predicting apocalypse I mean like that happens in any part of the world. Very rarely did that kind of disinformation become a challenge or a tragedy for our societies at the scale that we are seeing now. The states or the government back then could at least control or incept intercept such disinformation and take counter measures. But the kind of

disinformation that we are seeing in the new age of internet and social media with photoshops deep fakes, it's a completely different beast. It has come to become an effective or even an acceptable tool or a technology powered weapon in the hands of individuals interest groups or even those in the government to serve their vested or ulterior motives, and the risk or the consequences transcend not just are not just confined within the country they transcend the boundaries. And like for instance we talk about the campaign for climate change denials targeted disinformation against the vaccine or even the conspiracy theory around 5G technology that we have seen in different countries but the impacts and consequences are greater for developing countries where public awareness or literacy levels can be lower especially regarding the technological sophistication about how the disinformation spreads. I mean I can give you an example from my own country where it would be easier for me to talk to people from my generation about disinformation but it is extremely difficult to convince people of elderly citizens to convince them about the genuine news or the fake news. It's very difficult for them to comprehend how a photo or even a video can be doctored, and there are lot of people that are not highly literate. So, it's very easy to manipulate that section of the population so things get more challenging when political interests also come into play over here. Like a few years back in Nepal there was a kind of communal violence which was incited by spreading of fake videos or fake photos of that hurt religious sentiment of one community. Like now we are seeing those kinds of incidents repeated only in the last few months we have had three or four incidents where the attempt to incite hate against the minorities by spreading videos or photos of content which were not necessarily happening in Nepal. They were happening somewhere in the neighborhood somewhere definitely not in our country that were doctored and shown as if it is happening in Nepal and then it kind of riled up the population. Next door India is also witnessing similar kind

of communal tensions which is fueled by this kind of disinformation. I'm sure in other parts of the world and the region also this kind of thing is happening we saw how us aid program a simple development aid program in Nepal and in Sri Lanka led to a massive protest because there were a targeted disinformation campaign supposedly making people believe that accepting a simple development aid would result in de facto U.S establishing an air base or a military base in the country. I can't speak for Sri Lanka; Sri Lankan friends will talk about it but in my country, it resulted in an unfortunate death of a person and there was large scale widespread protest across the country and many properties were damaged. So, the biggest risk and initial consequences we are witnessing as a result of this kind of disinformation is erosion of public faith or trust in the institutions or Democratic processes itself including elections. There is a growing cynicism especially among the young population of voters who don't know what to believe in or what to believe in whom to believe, and this has given a rise or increase in the populism, groups and individuals who feed on such cynicism and disillusionment and there is no Silver Bullet solution to this kind of challenges we face. I mean some call for tighter restrictions on social media or media as a whole but then it's a double edge sword where we see governments misusing control of quote unquote disinformation to silence dissent so it's a kind of a double-edge sword. Instead, I think what we have to propose is a more upheld task of restoring public trust back on the institutions, media, governance, government, think tanks, Scholars. Restore trust in the institution but also seek information transparency and accountability demand accountability from the institutions and it is easier said than done. I stand over here fully realizing this fact but it is up to our institutions and I a former journalist so I especially think media has a greater role to play but as somebody who's leading a think tank or a scholarly work. I also think that Scholars and think tank also have an immense role to reclaim the agendas from here says social media disinformation

mongers back and restore the credibility of the institution itself and the processes the values the democratic values that we also cherish. I will end on that note because this is an ongoing conversation. I think I'm sure my esteemed panelists will contribute to this and I'll be able to take questions later on. Thank you so much ladies and gentlemen.”

Faruq Faisel, “Thank you, Anurag. This is a good initiation of this discussion today and he mentioned about this disinformation misinformation is not new but because of the social media, because of the internet it's spreading more and it has also relationship with disturbing the social harmony and spreading hatred. So, the next speaker is Sheri. I would like to call her Sheri that's easier for me she is the professor for Center for American studies in fan University in China. Sheri, please”

Cuihong Cai, “thank you I think I would like to speak from chair. That is much easier. So, I really think is um a very important topic. I start with this one. I got this from outside of the room and the topic is the “Unending Nightmare: Impacts of Bangladesh Digital Security Act 2018”. I think it is very nicely written and the unending nightmare also suits with our topic, our theme, dangers of misinformation and disinformation. So, my first point is that, we are living in an era rampant with misinformation and disinformation and this trend shows little sign of eying. So, the keyword here is proliferation. So, we see in the last several years, we see a lot of proliferation of misinformation and disinformation or mal information or force information. And there is actually the world economic Forum in 2018 the global risks report, it classified the spread of online misinformation among the world's top global risks. So, I think it is a very significant trend that we have to notice. About and then before reaching more ideas I think I would like to mention several definitions related. First is disinformation. Disinformation is a kind of a force information of course and that is deliberately created and spread with the intention of misleading or causing harms. So, it involves

a kind of a purpose for deception and this is a disinformation. And misinformation is force information that is spread unintentionally or without malice. So, we often maybe see other related words such as pseudo-science. It's referring to the kind of beliefs or practices that present themselves as a science but lack the rigorous testing and evidence associate scientific methodology. So pseudo-science usually cloaks itself in a in a scientific legitimacy so it can be more effective. And then during Trump Administration we got a new word fake news everyone here in this room I believe that it is known to all. So, it can entirely made up of or involve drastic distortions of real events is often and it is often propagated to serve a specific agenda or to gain financial profits. So here one key word is proliferation another one is viral sharing because we are living in a digital era and social media platforms and it is a kind of a spread with a viral speed viral proliferation speed. For fake news, it has a deliberate and sensational nature. And of course, for this theme we also have the conspiracy. I think it is a go beyond misinformation and disinformation because it has a kind of nature of clandestine. So, this is my first point and definition and second, I would like to say that these, all these misinformation and dis information, it has its history. And we as I mentioned during Trump Administration or especially from the end of 2016 to the beginning of 2020 fake news demonstrated very high volumes of mentions in that period. And then after a pandemic, we see a lot of other misinformation and disinformation gained more momentum rapidly in the latter half of 2020. And then another point I would like to mention is that, misinformation and disinformation are now more in some cases have become political tools. And this is more noticeable and have to be cautious. And then why they are produced? I would like to say first is about the technology we see the, as I said social media and especially social media it has instantaneous reach allows Force information to travel faster and further than ever before. And it's there's another effect called Echo chamber effect so these social media they have

a kind of algorithms. These algorithms create a so-called Echo chamber effect. So, this effect consistently exposing users to content that aligns with their interest their own interest and beliefs. So due to such Echo chamber effect and also illusory truth effect repeated exposure results in the misinformation appearing more credible. And then my third point is about how it is connected to conspiracy or how it is received or accepted by different people. And we see that it is worldwide misinformation dis or Force information. But for generally speaking we see that education level economic status and political ideology greatly influence and individual susceptibility to this force information. And also of course thinking style and personality traits also contribute to the reception or susceptibility of these force information. For example, people leaning heavily on intuitive thinking or gut fit lens when determined to some more predisposed to conspiracy beliefs. We also see a different trend in among different regions. It is very interesting; it varies the risk perception of these, the risks of misinformation disinformation vary across regions. The concern is highest in Latin America and Caribbean. That is about 74% and the lowest in South Asia. So, congratulations. South Asia has the lowest perception of risks of misinformation and disinformation. I have not done research on that about the reasons behind that but it is a good sign I think it's of the confidence of maybe media and maybe government etc. And yeah, for the United States that is 67%, a little bit above average. And for China it is a little bit below the global average that is 50%. And then I'm not going to mention there are so many results of this misinformation and disinformation for economy for politics for security for even culture. For example, for economy um we know we actually have a lot of statistic numbers about that. For example, online fake News Cost the global economy 77 billion annually. So that is as astonishing. Also, the there's a global disinformation index it founds that the annual revenue of at least 235 million is generated from advertisements running on extremist and disinformation websites. So, this is astonishing.

This really reduce consumer confidence and spending and also harming businesses competitiveness and innovation, of course threatening economic growth and development. And there are political effects. And political effects I would like to mention, there's also a keyword here in the last paragraph, it mentioned the 'weaponized'. I think it is a very good word weaponized some are intentional. But some are weaponized intentionally to incite hatred against marginal marginalized group and dissidents etc. So, this really cause a lot of problems such as, polarization and even conflict. And then for National Security it compromises security and nations resilience and also undermining regional stability and cooperation etc. There are a lot of other, maybe my time is almost up. So, I leave the what is what are the strategies to cope with this misinformation and disinformation leave that to discussion, thank you."

Faruq Faisel, "Thank you very much. Sheri has mentioned the definition of the misinformation and disinformation. And also like it's not only the problem with Nepal or Bangladesh, it's Global phenomenon. And when it's used for political reasons, then it goes often against the minority and different beliefs, religious or political beliefs and etc. So, thank you very much. We really appreciate that. Now I would like to invite Leo Wigger the editor of Zenith magazine from Germany, Leo."

Leo Wigger, "Good afternoon. Thank your honorable chair Faruk and thank you to the entire CGS team and especially to Zillur for facilitating this conference and giving space to these important conversations to have. I think the Bay of angle conversation is a wonderful space to make diverse voices from Bangladesh and the region heard abroad and conferences such as this one contributes to Bangladesh growing stake at part as part of global conversations. On a personal level I'm very grateful to be here. Bangladesh is such a young and energetic place coming from a country where roughly 25 1 in four% of the population is above 60 seeing the dynamism of Bangladesh and of

Dhaka as a city where like things change every day is something that is very refreshing and that I really enjoy. So, thank you for the invite and for being here. Well, I mean the topic that I want to discuss with you today is the interplay of fake news generative AI and the effects that this has on freedom of speech, societal polarization and the erosion of democratic practices all over the world. Let me start by sharing a European perspective on misinformation because it's a common misconception that fake news don't affect Europe, they do. Fake news better referred to as misinformation disinformation and malformation is assuming increasingly disturbing dimensions in Europe. Especially smaller EU members are perceived by external actors as soft targets to advance their strategic interests. Especially in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine we observe an increase in disinformation efforts. In this context, fake news is used tactically and strategically by external ex Russian propaganda in particular is stepping up its activities here but other actors are trying to expand their influence through targeted media campaigns as well. Let me share one number with you 71% of Europeans encounter fake news online several times a month, 30% come across news or information they believe misrepresents reality every day or almost every day and fake news destroys mutual trust and thus shakes the basis for cooperation not only with state actors but also within civil society. In 2018, the EU set out an action plan to combat the spread of disinformation I think it was the first plan of its kind in the world. The code as it was called aims to reduce the spread of disinformation by a range of tools such as improving transparency of how advertising is used enhancing the transparency of political and issue-based advertising by limiting and fighting Bots and other manipulative techniques used to artificially spread misinformation and by empowering consumers by improving access to diverse and trustworthy content. And there are other dangers to the media in the digital age. In a recent report, the UN special representative Irene Khan pointed to the erosion of Independence pluralism and economic

viability of media in the digital age, reporters getting killed while chasing a story, online attacks against women journalists including death and rape threats, targeted electronic surveillance to intimidate and silence investigative journalism. In a number of countries, including in Central and Eastern Europe there's a creeping trend toward state control over public media and in favoring privately owned media that serves the political or economic interests of those in power. The decline of media freedom and the rise in threats to the safety of journalists is a worldwide Trend most sharply evident in backsliding democracies and totalitarian States taking over. The consequences for human rights, democracy, public participation. and development are worrying. According to the Freedom House Global Freedom declined for the 17th year in a row globally, 17th year in a row. Infringement on freedom of expression has long been a key driver of global Democratic decline. Over the last 17 years the number of countries and territories that receive a score of zero in the Freedom House ranking out of four in the report indicator has ballooned from 14 to 33, 33 countries in the last category of the ranking. Journalists face persistent attacks from autocrats and their supporters while receiving inadequate protection from intimidation and violence even in democracies. The past year brought more of the same with media Freedom coming under pressure in at least 157 countries and territories, the vast majority of the world. This is also affecting Europe. I mean there are many cases of kill journalists in Europe as well. A US study found that politicians were not being able to distinguish between letters written by concerned citizens or AI generated Bots. This is a huge problem because with the rise of AI all the trends that we've seen before are just exaggerating even more. So, the question is of course how can yeah, the freedom of speech survives in an era of AI generated Bots that we cannot distinguish anymore from reality. This is of course a big question to target and to deal with. In short, I want to want to end here with something that the New Yorker magazine has written recently, Chatgpt will strain a political

system in peril and this is a global phenomenon and this is thus a global conversation to be had. Thank you.”

Faruq Faisel, “Thank you Leo and it’s my great joy that I shared the same panel during the last Bay of Bengal conference and he’s back again. Also like the organization that I was working till last month called Article 19, it works worldwide for freedom of expression and with the do Val Academy from Germany this organization is working on media literacy for general public especially student and young people. So, there are problems everywhere and the relationship between freedom of expression and misinformation. I’m glad that do Val Academy is working on this with the organization that I was involved with. So, thank you very much for raising the relationship between misinformation disinformation and freedom of expression. Next speaker I would like to invite Mr. Nurul Kabir, editor NewAge of Bangladesh from Dhaka. Who are Bangladeshi here they know him very well and it’s a pleasure to have you Nurul Kabir Bhai?”

Nurul Kabir, “Thank you, Mr. chair, honorable panelists and ladies and gentlemen, a very good afternoon to you all well. I’ll be very brief we’ll start from repeating what our Chinese friend has already said, definition of the misinformation and disinformation facts and other things and giving some examples we’ll try to discuss why actually we discuss these kinds of things today. The relevance here within our national boundary and beyond. In fact, we live in a world that we can call infodemic world. You have so much of information, disinformation and misinformation that’s, is something like spreading like epidemic. It’s very difficult to separate at times an information from misinformation from disinformation. And that’s why we need to clearly understand information is information facts that we need to have with sound life, personal, social, national and international. Misinformation is of course false and as our friend said misinformation may not always be ill intended. All of us make mistakes innocently. We can provide you with some

information which is not inadequate. Inadequacy of information may eventually lead us to some to draw some misleading conclusions about facts of life and if not dangerous. I must say is harmful if not even ill intended. Disinformation is the most dangerous thing which is created, generated spread deliberately like a campaign. Say on a grand scale global scale one of the worst disinformation campaigns say Iraq had weapons of mass destruction this was a clear case of serious disinformation because who created and generated knew pretty well that's not fact. Why did they do that? because they had their political geopolitical and economic interest. In the end a huge population was killed. That's the worst case of disinformation on a grand scale in our times. Disinformation at the national level for example when our incumbent in Bangladesh claims that Bangladesh is a democracy or a democracy which is witnessing huge economic development is a clear case of disinformation. Because Bangladesh is not a democracy. The government installed is not a democratic one because there were no proper elections in 2014 and 2018. Because voters couldn't choose their representatives if voters cannot choose the representatives, if the election national election is not inclusive, participatory, and competitive and then a government installed which doesn't have any accountability to the people cannot be a democracy. So, it's a disinformation dangerous the economic development the incumbent is talking about is also dangerous disinformation. Say we have a huge large structure you can see. Daytime you visit those places at midnight you will see homeless people sleeping there none of us sure that they're sleeping with a full meal or not. Due to inequality of so-called development and widespread of poverty different research finding shows that our nutrition intake of a of a huge number of people has been reduced. School dropouts are increasing. Even the female child marriage is increasing due to poverty. But we are told every day that Bangladesh has been is a good democracy, that our incumbents don't need to be educated in democracy, and they have done lot of development. and

if we criticize the lack of it, they will stop and sit idle wait for the next election to come. This is dangerous disinformation why are they doing it. Disinformation has always ill intention to misinform mislead people to legitimize certain crimes be political economic or cultural. So, we discuss this here because we need to fight disinformation effectively. And this is not the case of Bangladesh. Say we are close to in many South Asian countries and beyond that that our friends have already told you there are a lot of disinformation every day produced to mislead people. On the other hand, if we want democracy, development, peace and harmony we have to fight disinformation and disseminate information, public information. We have to make sure that public information flows freely and that's a political struggle. End of the day, democracy is a political struggle, development is a political struggle. And for that to happen, we need proper public information, dissemination of that. And we can force some solidarity at National level, regional level, and international level to fight disinformation against those who wants to deliberately disfranchise people about information and legitimize their animatic roles, thank you.”

Thank you very much Nurul Kabir bhai. He rightly expressed the need of democracy to stop the misinformation and disinformation and the responsibility of the government as well. If it is a democratic country and then with the citizens and election it has very close relationship. I would like to invite now Parveen F Chowdhury, who is the president of Commonwealth Journalist Association in Bangladesh.

Thank you, thank you Mr. moderator and greetings to my fellow participating speakers and distinguished ladies and gentlemen. I would like to begin with a quote from the book ‘The Campaign 2022’ which was edited by Spencer JS Kinan. Social media and alternative news sources which allow any user to produce unverified online content have gained popularity social network and break down physical barriers by connecting geographically dispersed people easing

political and economic constraint. Their rise has changed the paradigm of information production and consumption as they are now the preferred means of staying up to date with news and current affairs while before the reader was a passive agent waiting for a synchronous production of news. there is now an increasing demand for timely near Realtime journalistic coverage. As news organization cannot meet this demand the public itself has taken their role. The intrinsic dynamism of social network is able to fill this gap giving therefore voice to the production of amateur content. Social media platforms offer an environment suited for collective sense making and for the emergence of stories created with the intention of filling information gap left by mainstream media. It can be argued that governments and large corporation use users' data targeting advertising and selective speech to manipulate users of popular social media platforms. They do this in order to achieve their agenda goals at the expense of the users. These goals may range from selling a certain good to service to swaying a certain percentage of voters to cast their ballots one way or another. Regardless of the outcome, people are being taken advantage of it with most not even knowing it. The online world needs to open its eyes to understand the industry that has evolved from social media and how it has been turned into a means of manipulation when due to regulatory restrictions their compliance prevent mainstreams media to provide facts and hard news people are provided with an alternative platform through social networking and internet. People at time lose confidence in established networking platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter etc. as unverified information are routinely used to influence public opinion by the authorities and other organization who could gain commercial advantages. Governments around the world have dramatically increased their efforts to manipulate information on social media over the past years. The Chinese and Russian regime pioneered the use of CPU's methods to distort online discussion and suppress dissent more than a decade ago. But the practice has since gone Global such State led intervention

present a major threat to the notion of the internet as a deliberating technology. When the term fake news comes people usually think of social media post with rather fantastic implausible stories. While post share on social media is most visible aspects there is no much more to fake news than exaggerate article titles on social media feeds. Fake news media may seem new but the platform used is the only new thing about it. Propaganda has been around for centuries and the internet is only the latest means of communication to be abused by spread lies and information. The effects of these rapidly spreading techniques on democracy and civic activism are potentially devastating. The fabrication of grassroots support for government policies on social media creates a closed loop in which the regime essentially endorses itself leaving independent groups and ordinary citizen on the outside. And by bolstering the false perception that most citizens stand with them authorities are unable to justify crackdowns on political opposition and Advance anti-democratic changes to laws and institution without a proper debate. Worryingly state sponsor manipulation on social media is often coupled with broader restriction on the news media that prevent access to objective reporting and render societies more susceptible to disinformation which is now an abated expanding in South Asia. In the absence of a comprehensive campaign to deal with this threat manipulation and disinformation techniques could enable modern authoritarian regime to expand their power and influence while permanently eroding user confidence online media and the internet as a whole. Recently there was a conclusion drawn in a study online content manipulation contributed to a seventh consecutive year of overall decision in Internet Freedom along with a rise in disruption to mobile internet services and increases in physical and technical attacks on human rights defenders and independent media. This content was edited by Sanja Kelly, Mang Torang Andrean Shabas, Madeline AR and Jessica White from Freedom House where conclusion was drawn online manipulation and disinformation taxes played an important role in elections in at

least 18 countries over the past year including the United States. Disinformation tactic contributed to a seventh consecutive year to overall decline in Internet Freedom as did a rise in disruptions to mobile internet service and increases in physical and technical attacks on human rights Defenders and Independent Media. A record number of governments have restricted mobile internet service for political or security reasons often in areas populated by ethnic or religious minorities. For the third consecutive year, China was the world's worst abuser of Internet Freedom followed by Syria and Ethiopia. Thank you.

Thank you very much Parvin Chowdhury. And she has rightly brought the issue up the relationship between freedom of expression misinformation and election. And also, the role that social media plays on this spreading the misinformation disinformation. I'm happy that she has also mentioned about the declining of election neutrality in different countries and how the standard of election is going down below. I'm happy that the speakers are all on time and so we have saved some time. So, I will open up the floor for questions. I would request anyone who has a question should come to the two microphones that we have on two sides and speak to the microphone. And if you are asking that question to a specific speaker or panelist, please mention that and please keep the question short and also like to the point. So, thank you very much. Now we are opening the floor. Okay actually there are three my microphones, I didn't notice that. Can someone help with the microphone please. Good afternoon, this is Nabila and I'm currently pursuing my bachelor's degree at East West University. So, my question is at this time as information are being manipulated or misinformation are spreading so we need a trusted Source right, where we can rely for information. For most of the time it is the newspapers or TV channels that broadcast news. But as our first Speaker has said that many times this news are like, they're filtered by the government or societies or by the powerful people who are in charge of everything. So where do we trust for Reliable

information? Where how can we find this transparency in other medias and us so we can we cannot be manipulated by other misinformation. Thank you. Yes please. Yeah, thank you for the question and it's good to see young people asking this question because back in my hometown or in my country I think it's mostly the youth that are losing their faith or trust in the institutions. So, I'll go back to saying what is said and this will refer to media as well. That we need to restore faith in the institution and to do that the institution itself has to fight back. I've been a journalist before and I've always argued that editors and journalists need to protect the editorial integrity, their news freedom of their news room. I think before we defend the democracy of the country and society the journalist should start defending the democracy of The Newsroom. The democratic deficit that exists within the newsroom. The intolerance against the dissenting views of the journalist that also need to be changed, that needs to be challenged. And when the public sees that The Newsroom itself is democratic then that trust will come back, that will be restored. Because let's face it at least in South Asia not just in Nepal across South Asia our Newsroom are also lacking in public trust and part of the reason. At least in my country is because even the media has been divided the Civil Society has been divided across along partisan line. so that is part of the problem so institutions also need to reflect within themselves to correct themselves to earn that public trust and of course the public also the consumer information also have to be careful about the kind of news they are consuming. You have to be able to differentiate between the fake news and the genuine source of news you have a nationally trusted accredit. News websites and news platforms whereas there are everyday mushrooming YouTube videos, the Facebook that are masquerading as genuine news sources we have to be aware about that and also make people that are not aware about that. Because in our part of the world I said that there are people that are not highly literate and sometime technologically not savvy. So, they don't understand the how the Deep fake works

the they don't understand how the news can be manipulated or tempered with. So, there is need, there needs to be awareness both on the proponent of the news as well as the consumer of the news, thank you.

I hope that answers anyone else from the panel would like to comment on that. yeah, I think this is a great question and I think you relate power and trustworthy. They are not always um linked together but usually because more powerful resources of those news perhaps they have more verification. I think that is the most important that makes the news or information from Power resources more reliable. And I think every country has certain regulations to verify those different sources of news media. For example, in China we have like for social media we have a public account management system, and for official newspapers that is more there are more regulations that are related to verify the sources. And also for the punishment if there is any mistakes etc. For example the exit system etc. So, the trust or confidence is not related to power it is relate to verification systems, I think. Thank you for the great question.

Thank you, Sheri. Anyone else? Yeah, thank you. I just want to add that of course because yeah the digital age and generative AI have fundamentally changed societies has also changed fundamentally the way the environment that information are being processed that reality is being defined in a way. I think defending media freedom and defending yeah Freedom of Information is very crucial among a time of fundamental technological change but it's also a question a task of a generation, is a task of the young generation of the Millennials and the Gen Z to actually fight for that. Because it's their future and their life that is being at stake.

Thank you, Leo. This is the most challenging question that she has put forward to it's for even the professional journalists. Even those who try to find out right information by digging or delving deep into a phenomenon they have the different kinds of constraints. But still for the professional

journalist they have to keep on trying to do that very honestly because every profession has some question of sanity and professional promises to fulfill. On the other hand, the receiving end, I mean it's very important to be aware of the situation and a questioning to develop a questioning mind of the citizens are important too. To learning to put forward with critical questions. Don't trust anyone, any authorities for that matter because who are capable of providing disinformation or conducting misinformation decision per campaign, those who are powerful no matter whether it's a, I'm not talking about the just state power. I mean there are forces in and outside the party at the political level, at social level who controls the means of means of providing information. Question everybody. Keep vigilant mind because as I say it's a is an we are living in a pandemic type of a situation that lot of misinformation and disinformation. So those who are professionally do that, they have the responsibility and the citizen right to know the public information particularly the citizens need to assert their right and remain vigilant. Thank you.

Thank you very much. If Parveen Chowdhury, do you have any comment please. What I understand from her, I think what I have understand from her question the authentication of news. She wants to know authentication of news, how she can trust this news. This is a true or false yeah as a journalist at the moment it is very difficult because last year while I was covering the flood stories in Sylhet, northeastern part of Bangladesh, we covered at least five to six stories of flood. But when authentication from government side, like it has to be police or it has to be a government official or someone to say yes there are casualties of 15 people or four people. But nowadays actually it's my experience I'm just sharing with you if the if that officer and if that authenticated officer like is like government, if they sided with the government, they won't let us know the real facts of the casualties. So, it is my part of duty to find out what is the real casualties, what is the real information so these are the challenges we are meeting at we are facing at present. So, it has

to be your own duty to find out how much casualties, what is the real condition and how you have to present this story. So, all everything lies with a journalist. He or she has to be responsible for not the fake news, the real news, thank you.

Thank you very much. The next question please. Thank you for giving me the floor. So, my question... We can't hear you; can anyone help with the mic. Oh, thanks it's on again. So, my question was for the panel but also, I would like to mention Leo because he said that it's the responsibility of young. Leo or another person, somebody from the panel mentioned that this is the responsibility of younger generation to actually deal with this type of trouble. So, in a country where democracy isn't practiced properly and laws and legislations are imposed on free speech as a way to weaponize fear of spreading misinformation how general young people like us should trade here because we have seen people dying over a Facebook status, we have seen people sharing just a simple information and losing their life. So how we are going to deal with this fact what are we supposed to do even if we know the true fact about something. I understand, thank you. I think I understand the frustration because I think lot of the question that you pose are something that even people back in my country, youths in my country would pose. And there is no Silver Bullet answer like I mentioned in my earlier presentation. I think at least what our younger generation is blessed with is tools the technological knowhow that the older generation may not necessarily have that kind of sophistication. So probably we use our knowledge of technology to at least cross verify information before we share, to at least triangulate information. Many of students, most of the students know the basics of research. The information triangulation is a part of the being a researcher. So even by simple triangulation of information you can verify most of the fake news because most of the time fake news and information is not very sophisticated. They can be very local and they can be very basic kind of disinformation. These days disinformation does not happen

just at the large national level, it can also happen at the very local level. So, if the information triangulation happens at the local level, then that kind of disinformation can be tackled and stopped at the local level. But of course, there are other sophisticated tools as well that our other fellow panelists from China, she was talking about the use of technology. There is now technology which allow you to compare between genuine photos and fake photos, between genuine videos and fake videos. So, we are facing a kind of cyber army trying to spread disinformation. So probably each of us consuming the news consuming the information also have to be an army to fight back this kind of disinformation because let's face it as a younger generation I think the focus is more on young people's skill. With that skillset to actually fight back disinformation. Hope that answers, thank you. It's a massive burden. I don't want to overwhelm but that's a fact.

Yeah, because you mentioned me as well, I want to work on my perspective as well. I think unfortunately this is of course a very crucial question and I don't have one simple answer to that because what you said in my opinion is entirely accurate. And it's also a global phenomenon so kind of like going maybe one step back. In Germany, talking from my experience how information verification worked was through having an extensive and very expensive public media sector that every citizen paid with their taxes and you have like a body that provides citizens with neutral information. A process that is kind of managed by the state but is also critical of the state. So, the public broadcaster would also criticize the government even though it was paid by taxes by tax money. So now in the time that we're living at the moment what we are seeing in Germany and also in other parts of Europe is that this is eroding because there are massive Bots attacking the Integrity of fact Checkers of public broadcasters by questioning their credibility by undermining the Democratic consensus existing. So, like freedom of press is also in danger in Europe because of this massive change due to the rise of bots and which is now exacerbated by AI. So, there is no

simple answer to that. I think this the threats that you you're describing are real and they're there and they are everywhere they're Global in different shapes and forms. So what should we do? Should we give up, should we say okay, like in times of AI? We don't, we have to give up on Free Press. I don't think so. I don't think that's an alternative. That's my personal opinion but do I think it's an easy battle? No, it's a very very difficult battle it's an uphill battle everywhere and I think the only thing that we can do is by like helping by getting out of our own Echo Chambers and try to cooperate even more globally. Because it's a global phenomenon, thank you.

Thank you. anyone else from panel?

Yeah, I do think that everything for young people is very important because we say young people is the future of the world. And I do think this, the response or strategy to cope this with this is a multi-stakeholder effort. So, it must be a multi-stakeholder effort maybe between the government and also between the platform companies. For example, as I mentioned that the government maybe need to strengthen the regulations and legal framework related to this and also for young people. I really think that we have to stress the digital literacy and education program and this is might be integrated to formal and informal education systems and especially maybe targeted as those vulnerable groups such as the elderly the women the minorities and of course young people maybe for their formal and informal education. And also, I think there's also responsibilities from for the platform companies because they can maybe solve this problem technologically and also from other regulations. For example they can improve structures and also detection systems to minimize those likelihood of misinformation etc. And also maybe for example Facebook has a third party factchecking program and Twitter also has a has a bird watch feature that allows users to add notes and contacts to tweets and they think that they think are misleading or force etc. So, there are a lot of efforts that are needed and I think that it must be a multi-stakeholder effort and

also I would like to mention balance here and also a very important equilibrium because we have to consider there's an ethical considerations here how to balance the curbing of force information and also at the same time preserve free Speech rights at the same time. So, this is a delicate equilibrium and this one necessitates a transparent regulation that doesn't inhibit those Divergent opinions and essential criticism. So, for young people we have to cultivate a kind of critical thinking and also the capability to discern or debugging this misinformation disinformation, thank you. Thank you, okay hello I think this, will be the last question. Good afternoon, everyone my name is Nusrat Jahan and I am from Eastern University. As my previous two question has been talked about the Young Generation and my question is the whole speaker panel especially to our Nurul Kabir sir that we have been seen this Young Generation has been known for their malpractice of culture and them dis encouragement to do what our Pioneers or our ancestor has been put legacies on us. So, my question is do you guys really think that this conspiracy about this misinformation or disinformation could be a main reason behind this generation's dis encouragement to do good practice or healthy practice about their culture or their legacies to run in future generation, thank you. I couldn't get the question properly. Is it a question? Yes, this is a question. I want to know whether they think that this disinformation or disinformation will be a main cause for us the younger generation to dis encourage doing healthy cultural practice or encouragement to came forward doing a good work in any field? Please yeah okay very interesting question. Is that correct? Yes, I'm sorry I can't express myself properly. Well, that's very I mean this is a question that relates to political science sociology international relations and cultural studies. Many things involved in this question. Well, why should a nation cannot do anything if their younger generation runs away from any country for that matter. Primarily the cause is much more parochial in the sense that those who are powerful people be it political social economic or

otherwise they won their hegemony on their influence, on other sections of the society. There's a question of domination and to be dominated. So those who want to dominate the majority and who doesn't have genuine causes to be able to dominate, they use misinformation dis information and this shouldn't discourage the younger generation because the younger generations would be fighting forces even, I related to the previous question. Once again, the sociological studies media studies are needed to make sure that how to fight and this disinformation campaigns and other things and get accurate answers to the many questions on about many issues. Well, some people can want you to just go away don't ask nasty questions to the authorities but question is whether you have to abide by those decisions or not. That's our country or any anywhere the citizens have they should have the final say on how things should run. Citizens have to fight for laws that who contracts disinformation needs to be punished we have to raise our awareness and make sure that we have a sound political and cultural environment that we are not deprived of information and drowned with disinformation, thank you.

Thank you very much, thank you. So, we only have 3 minutes in hand. I have a question, I'm waiting. Quickly. Yeah sure, thank you everyone. My question before question I just want to talk about like every panelist are talking about to fact check to fact check or mismatch or crossmatching our any kind of new... don't have lots of time. Yeah, but my question is but when any government itself spreads rumors and misinformation what should we do? And then how come it possible to gain credibility of any kind of news then, if I mention a like a small story a couple of days ago, we have seen that more than 700 plus fake articles were published and all those were regarding to promotes our government and as well as our couple of prominent newspaper were published it. So, what's your observation about this matter for democracy for our young generation, how could

we gain credibility? whatever you can do like when government and the prominent Top Class newspaper of your country is spreading rumors what's your observation? Thank you.

No microphone. first one is what do people do when a government spread lies? There's a famous book called 'All government governments lie' Every government on Earth lie in different forms to the hide information or spreads misinformation. So once again that's a question of question of being whole awareness of the whole citizen. If we except that all governments on Earth or all authorities I would rather say not only this government lie for their own interest so we need to be vigilant that's the that's the only answer. And the second very specific question that I still don't know that government was behind all those 700 articles or not. I'm not sure that the gentleman who has raised this question have written have read all the 700 articles. I myself as an editor public least five-four of those articles but the content of that articles, my editorial judgment was okay with that. For me we don't have to be everything has to be pro-opposition or something that the it depends on the subjects of the content of the writers. The problem was the fakeness of the writers of many articles that I lied. I give go ahead only after reading them. My editorial policy was very much consistent with the content of those newspaper and why I then stopped it because that writer didn't have the moral courage to use his or her genuine name. My problem with the articles that I published is not with the content. I love that content. Why I love those 54 contents of 54 articles we can argue. I'm sure everybody will not be interested in it I personally invite you we'll talk that these are the things that I needed to publish. So, my contention was with the fake names not the fake content, thank you.

Thank you very much. We don't have time. Sorry about that. I will take one minute just to share the one important information. So, the things are the food safety, our honorable editor sir is here I'm working 18 years in this food sector. Too many companies are producing food. They're telling

safe food but if you check and the test the food you will find you will find the sub-standard or like additional flavor or color added. If I want to mention, Mashrafee is telling the water is the best quality in the market. If you taste the product, it will be C Graded product. But our newspapers our media is publishing the ad with the picture of Mashrafee. So young generation is following Mashrafee, Sakib Al Hassan, and others, our stars. Basically, only the food safety and food issues are this is the first basic needs of our life. So how can we control or how can our mass media control this advertisement and TVC not to share the misinformation or colorful information for the Young Generation?

Thank you very much, thank you very much. You can talk to the any of the panelist after this session. Right to life issue, falsehood this and that that needs to be seriously addressed of course and social awareness should be those the newspapers or media outlets should be boycotted by the people if the if they promote dubious food or medicine lifesaving issues, of course, I agree with him. Thank you. thank you very much everybody. Before I came to the podium, my friend Titumir was telling me the speaker of the parliament doesn't speak, so I am glad that I didn't have to speak that much. Thank you for sharing that knowledge with me so it's very good I would like to thank you all who have attended this session and thank you especially for the young people who came up with the questions and I would like to thank our distinguished panelist, Anurag, Sheri, Leo, Nurul Kabir, Parveen Chowdhury. Thank you very much and I know the time was limited and we had to keep our timing in that way. Thank you very much.