

Environmental News Reporting in Grass-Root Bangladesh: Content Analysis of Six Regional Newspapers

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ABSTRACT

Bangladesh is a disaster-prone country. Also, it is one of the most vulnerable countries to global climate change. As such coverage of environmental issues is utterly important for Bangladeshi media, especially newspapers as they can create awareness and shape public opinions. However, despite its importance, coverage of environmental issues has not been very significant in Bangladeshi newspapers, especially in regional newspapers. Also, there is a lack in comprehensive research on the issue, especially focusing on regional newspapers. To understand the current trend in coverage of environmental issues in regional newspapers, this study examines the coverage of environmental issues in six regional newspapers of Bangladesh, published from six divisional headquarters – Chittogram, Khulna, Sylhet, Rangpur, Rajshahi, and Barishal – during a disaster-free period (1–15 March 2025). Using a mixed-method approach combining quantitative content analysis and qualitative thematic analysis, the research assessed attention, emphasis, prominence, sources, photographs, and thematic focus of 97 environmental news stories among 4,575 published items in the above-mentioned newspapers. The findings reveal that the coverage of regional newspapers was not much focused on the local communities, rather they prioritized national and international issues over-pressing local challenges such as waterlogging, drought, saline intrusion, irrigation crises, and air pollution. Of the total stories, 44.62% addressed environmental problems, 9.7% focused on public protests, 15.52% on government drives and actions, and 25.22% on awareness programs. Despite their potential role in raising community awareness, regional newspapers provided largely event-based, elite-centered reporting with little investigative or research-based depth. Editorials and stories were often influenced by political and administrative interests, while contributions from experts and research institutions were almost absent. Visual presentation was weak, with no use of infographics or data visualization, and only a limited number of byline reports. The study concludes that environmental journalism in local newspapers in Bangladesh remains under-resourced and surface-level, with inadequate attention to grassroots realities. Strengthening professional standards, ensuring appropriate recognition and remuneration of local journalists, and encouraging research-driven, visually engaging reporting are essential for enhancing the role of regional newspapers in addressing Bangladesh's acute environmental challenges.

Keywords: Bangladesh, Environmental Journalism, Media Coverage, Regional Newspapers

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh, a country in South Asia is a home to about 170 million people. The country has a long history of colonization. The current territory of Bangladesh was part of Bengal Presidency under British India. When the British left in 1947, it became East Pakistan, a part of Pakistan. In 1971, Bangladesh was established as a sovereign country through a bloody war of independence. Despite the poor war-torn economy, the country started with, frequent natural disasters and global challenges like COVID-19, Bangladesh has made remarkable strides in growth and development. Once known as the “bottomless basket,” Bangladesh established its identity as the New Asian Tiger with its accelerated economic growth in the recent years and graduated from the list of Least Developed Countries (Quarmal, 2020) with improved human development outcomes such as reduced infant mortality, increased literacy, and expanded access to electricity (World Bank,

2022). Yet, challenges remain, inequality persists, and poverty continues to affect millions, with 4.17 crore people living in extreme poverty under severely dire conditions (The Daily Star, 2024).

Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to the global climate change (Quarmal and Kabir, 2025). Situated in the delta of the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna basin, Bangladesh faces rising sea levels, salinity intrusion, flooding, and other ecological crises that threaten livelihoods and socio-economic stability. The country was ranked seventh globally in the Global Climate Risk Index 2021, having lost over 11,000 lives and incurred economic damages over \$3.7 billion due to extreme weather events between 2000 and 2019 (The Business Standard, 2021). Forecasts suggest that climate change could displace 13.3 million people, cost the country one-third of its agricultural GDP by 2050, and disproportionately impact the poor and women (World Bank, 2022).

In such a context, media have a crucial role to play in translating environmental complexities into accessible narratives for both policymakers and the general public (Ajman, 2024). Media's role is not just confined to informing people (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002), rather they act as discursive spaces (Genilo & Shafi, 2013) facilitating discussions and debates (Ettema, 2007) that help people to understand their surroundings and construct their worldview (Goffman, 1974) on one hand and create "pressure" for the responsible people or entities to act accountably on the other (Maia, 2009). Likewise, media coverage of environmental issues helps foster awareness and collective action (Khatun, 2020; Pompper, 2004).

Print media, in particular, remains a powerful channel due to its depth of analysis and long-lasting impact on readers' perceptions (Roba, 2012). Bangladesh has a diverse newspaper landscape, with 1,311 daily newspapers registered nationwide, of which 781 operate outside the capital, Dhaka (Press Information Department 2024, December 4). Regional newspapers are particularly significant for reaching rural and semi-urban populations, where electronic media often have limited access. By covering environmental challenges and local development issues, they contribute to knowledge-sharing and community engagement (Akter & Azad, 2021).

Furthermore, local newspapers can strengthen community attachment by bridging grassroots concerns with broader policy discourses (Rose, 2014). Despite their importance, local newspapers in Bangladesh face structural challenges, including financial crises such as lack of investment and advertising-revenue, limited infrastructural and human resources, weak management system, increasing production costs, weak distribution, and declining readership (Rahman, 1999; Manju 2015; Ray, 2015; Sardar, 2023). These constraints limit their ability to provide in-depth, investigative environmental reporting. Existing research shows that national newspapers often dominate environmental discourse, while local issues remain underrepresented by all means (Seema, 2015). This imbalance raises questions about whether regional newspapers adequately reflect the environmental concerns of their communities. The current study will try to answer the question. There have been a few studies in the recent years on the coverage of environmental news in national dailies (Khatun, 2020) and in regional/local broadsheet dailies (Akter & Azad 2021; Rahmatullah et. al. 2021, 2024; Islam et. al., 2020). However, these works did not present a comprehensive picture. The studies on regional/local dailies were focused only on one/two newspaper(s) from a certain locality providing a fragmented view of the issue. Present study includes newspapers from different corners of the country to provide a comprehensive view.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to examine the coverage of environmental issues in local newspapers across six regions of the country, with a focus on the selection, representation, and ethical responsibility of reporting. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- To analyze the coverage of environmental issues in the select regional newspapers in terms of attention, emphasis, prominence, and themes.
- To examine the framing of environmental issues through language, visuals, and narrative structures.
- To evaluate the extent to which newspapers fulfill their social responsibility in reporting on environmental issues, particularly in terms of preparedness, community voice, and accountability.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND STUDY FRAMEWORK

Literature Review

Several studies on the coverage of environmental issues in newspapers have been done in the context of the Indian Sub-continent which Bangladesh is a part of and shares similar realities with the other countries in the regions – India and Pakistan.

In recent studies, coverage of environmental issues in newspapers in Indian and Pakistan has been found to be limited, event-based and urban focused. Lucas (2013) studied prominent Indian newspapers The Hindu and the Times and concluded that the coverage on environmental issues limited and though ‘increasing’. Also, their coverage was more event-based than analytical.

In another study on 31 prominent Indian newspapers Dutt, Garg, & Bhatta (2013) concluded the same. Similarly, the study by Yousaf, Huma, & Ali (2013) on Pakistani dailies revealed that the coverage on environmental issues were more urban-focused and reactive – mainly during crises.

Studies conducted on Bangladeshi newspapers revealed similar patterns which has been almost the same for the last 15 years. Miah et. al. (2011) saw through their content analysis of three national dailies – The Daily Star, Prothom Alo and Ittefaq – that coverage of environmental issues was not continuous, rather “seasonal” – disaster or climate event centered. Studying the same sets of newspapers, Islam (2015) reported the same. They also found the coverage to be ‘lacking’ in terms of follow-ups and solution-based reporting. Almost a decade later, Khatun (2020) found it to be similar, that is, such coverage in major national dailies (The Daily Star, Prothom Alo, New Age, and Bangladesh Pratidin) was more focused on disasters than crucial environmental issues like deforestation and pollution. Akter and Azad (2021) reported that Daily Azadi and Daily Purbokone, regional newspapers from Chittogram – the “Commercial Capital” of Bangladesh focused more on local development issues (infrastructure, water, agriculture) with limited in-depth analysis. Earlier Hasan et al. (2019) analyzed the coverage of the same newspapers from Chittogram and reported that their coverage peaked around international observances and declined sharply afterwards. In their comparative analysis on national dailies vs local dailies from Khulna – a city in southern Bangladesh, Islam, et. al. (2020) found that the local dailies highlighted some of the community-specific concerns. However, their overall coverage was dominated by capital-centric issues. Studies on local newspapers of Rangpur, a city in Northern Bangladesh, Rahmatullah (2021) and Rahmatullah et. al. (2024) reported that their coverage of environmental issues were limited and less prominent – mostly in the inner pages, with less space, reporting events – mostly.

The above review may be summarized as Islam and Sarker (2020) reflected: environmental reporting often remains superficial, with articles focusing on immediate events rather than underlying causes or long-term implications. This tendency towards shallow reporting is attributed to factors such as editorial priorities, resource constraints, and a lack of specialized environmental reporters.

In the context of Bangladesh, where environmental challenges are acute due to its geographical location and dense population, the role of the media in environmental reporting is particularly significant. The review of the existing literature suggests that while Bangladeshi newspapers do report on environmental issues, coverage is often limited, event-based, and lacking in investigative or interpretative analysis. Local newspapers, despite being closer to community realities, face resource and institutional challenges that restrict their ability to highlight region-specific environmental problems (Sardar, 2023). However, as mentioned in the Introduction section, no comprehensive work could be found that provide a comprehensive comparative analysis among the coverage of newspapers across all regions at the same time.

This study seeks to address that gap by examining environmental news coverage patterns in six regional newspapers across Bangladesh during a “disaster-free period” (March 2025), to better understand how environmental issues are represented in local media when crisis-driven reporting is less dominant. The researcher believes this will help understand the trend better.

Brief identity of six regional newspapers

- **Daily Purbokone**, a broadsheet daily, is publishing from Chittogram, South-Eastern divisional headquarters of Bangladesh since 40 years with 8 pages including two colour pages (front and back page) sold at Tk 7 and with modern e-paper or online version.
- **Daily Purbanchol** is a major regional widely and popularly known local newspaper in the southwestern part of Bangladesh, especially in Khulna. Its daily circulation is claimed of 55,000 copies. The newspaper also has an online edition / e-paper available via its website. The newspaper has started its journey over 59 years back. Now the broadsheet daily is publishing in 4 pages and front and back pages are colored is sold at Tk 4.
- **Daily Sylheter Dak**, a 4 pages broadsheet daily is publishing from North Eastern divisional city Sylhet. The 41 years old popular daily is sold at Tk 5 and also available in internet.
- **Daily Poribesh** a 34-year-old daily is sold at Tk 2 is published from northern divisional headquarter Rangpur. The 4 page broadsheet has also online version.
- **Uttara Pratidin** an 11-year-old local newspaper, 4-page daily (Tk 5) published from North Western division Rajshahi maintains an updated e-paper.
- **Ajker Poribortan** a 25-year-old daily (4 pages, Tk 5) has been publishing from Southern divisional city Barishal. The broadsheet newspaper has online version but irregular in print version.



Theoretical Framework

This study seeks to examine the coverage of environmental issues in the regional newspapers published from six specific regions of Bangladesh with a focus on the ways regional newspapers select, frame, and present environmental and disaster-related issues to their readers.

This study adopted the following communication theories as the theoretical ground:

- Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) explains how newspapers influence public priorities by emphasizing certain environmental issues over others.
- Framing Theory (Entman, 1993) highlights how the presentation of news through language, visuals, and narrative structures shapes community perceptions, either as uncontrollable disasters or as manageable hazards with proactive responses.

- Social Responsibility Theory (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956) underlines the ethical responsibility of the press to provide accurate, balanced, and socially useful information. In the context of disasters, this includes promoting preparedness, amplifying community voices, and holding authorities accountable.

Together, these theoretical perspectives demonstrate how local journalism not only reflects but also actively shapes environmental journalism.

The study also adopts the following hypotheses:

1. Local newspapers give higher priority to immediate flood impacts (loss of life, damage, relief activities) than to long-term preparedness and adaptation strategies.
2. Newspapers mainly use photographs highlighting disaster damage and human suffering, with fewer visuals showing preparedness activities (e.g., early warning systems, community training).
3. Local newspapers rely predominantly on government officials and relief agencies as sources, while community voices and experts on disaster preparedness remain underrepresented.

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 environmental issues in regional newspapers of Bangladesh in terms of Attention, Emphasis and Prominence. There was a qualitative part as well wherein the news items were thematically analyzed.

Six regional newspapers were included in the analysis – all Bangla language broadsheet dailies – published from six regional divisional cities of Bangladesh – Northern city Rangpur (Poribesh), Western city Rajshahi (Uttara Pratidin), South-Western city Khulna (Purbanchol), Southern city Barishal (Ajker Poriborton), North-Eastern city Sylhet (Sylheter Dak) and South- Eastern city Chottogram (Purbokon).

The inclusions were based on their print circulation as presented in the website of Ministry of Information (MOI, 2021). However, they have both print and e-paper and/or online version. The print versions contain 4 to 8 pages, priced between Taka 2 and 8. The front and back pages are four colored and inner pages are black and white. The newspapers have long experience of publication between 11 and 59 years. The timeline of inclusion was 15 days from March 1, 2025, to March 15, 2025.

A coding sheet was developed to analyze the coverage of the abovementioned newspapers. The news items were identified by the presence of the words/phrase পরিবেশ [Environment], জলবায়ু পরিবর্তন [Climate Change], প্রাকৃতিক দুর্ঘটনা [Natural calamities], বায়ু দূষণ [Air pollution], জলাবদ্ধতা [Water logging], লবণাক্ততা [Salinity], জলাভূমি ভরাট [Filling of water bodies], দুর্ঘটনা প্রস্তুতি [Disaster preparedness], সুন্দরবন [Sundarbans], ভূমিকম্প [Earthquake], পানীয় জল [Drinking water], সেচ সংকট [Irrigation Crisis], উচ্চ তাপমাত্রা [High temperature], বন্যা [Flood], সাইক্লোন [Cyclone], ইটভাটা [Brick kiln], মোবাইল কোর্ট [Mobile court], বনভূমি উঁচু [Deforestation], বন্যা আশ্রয়কেন্দ্র [Flood shelter], গৃহহারা [Displacement], অভিযোজন [Adaptation], তাপ-প্রবাহ [Heat wave], ফারাক্কা প্রভাব [Farakka effect] etc.

Afterwards Attention, Emphasis and Prominence were measured wherein:

1. Attention refers to the number of times the stories related to environmental issues appeared in the selected regional newspapers.
2. Emphasis relates to the space allotted (in terms of number of words per story) to stories on environmental issues in regional newspapers.
3. Prominence refers to the section placement of environmental issues in the said newspapers. In this study contents of Front page and Editorial pages of the newspapers were considered as **High Prominence Section**; stories of Back Page were considered as **Medium Prominence Section** and contents of Inside pages were considered as **Low Prominence Section**.

The stories published on Environmental Issues corresponded to the following themes:

- Environmental Problems
- Public Protest / Demand to save environment
- Drive/ Action to save Environment
- Awareness programs to save environment

The themes will be discussed in detail in the qualitative part of this article.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study employed content analysis method to analyze the news coverage of environmental issues in six regional dailies in Bangladesh. The section presents the findings of the content analysis by dividing them into four themes.

Attention given to the issue

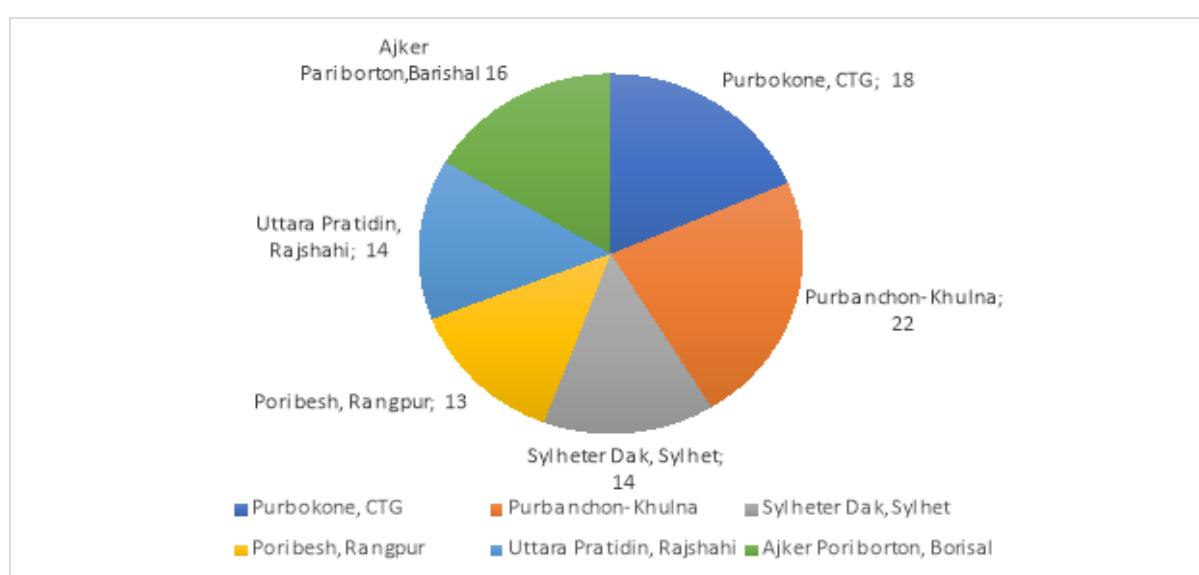


Figure 1. Coverage of Environmental issues in six regional local dailies of Bangladesh

As can be seen from Figure 1 that the highest number of stories were published during the study period in Daily Purbanchol (Khulna) followed by Daily Purbokone (Chottogram) and Ajker Poriborton (Barishal). The numbers are not big considering the total number of stories published during that time. Table 1 presents a comparative view of the total number of news published and the number of stories related to environmental issues in the selected newspapers.

Table 1. Comparison of the total number of news stories and stories on environmental issues

Title of Newspapers	Published News	Stories on Environmental Issues	Percentage of Environmental News
Purbokone, Chottogram	1710	18	1.05
Purbanchol, Khulna	885	22	2.48
Sylheter Dak, Sylhet	480	14	2.91
Pribesh, Rangpur	390	13	3.33
Uttara Pratidin, Rajshahi	525	14	2.66
Ajker Pariborton, Barishal	585	16	2.73
Total	4,575	97	

As per the data presented in Table 1, attention on environmental issues was nothing significant as the highest coverage was 3.33 percent of the total published news in daily Pribesh. It clearly shows that environmental issues are not treated with much importance in the regional newspapers in Bangladesh.

Emphasis given to news stories

Table 2 presents emphasis given to the stories on environmental issues in the selected newspapers.

Table 2. Emphasis on Stories related to Environmental issues in terms of Words/story.

Name of the daily newspaper	Number of pages of Newspaper	Number of Environmental Stories	Number of Words	Average Words/story
Purbokone, Chottogram	08	18	7281	442
Purbanchol, Khulna	04	22	5255	239
Sylheter Dak, Sylhet	04	14	5158	368
Poribesh, Rangpur	04	13	4873	375
Uttara Pratidin, Rajshahi	04	14	2794	199.5
Ajker Pariborton, Barishal	04	16	2439	152
Total		97	27800	287

As can be seen from Table 2, like attention, emphasis was low on environmental issues as well though some regional newspapers gave relatively higher emphasis in terms of average words per story. Daily Purbokone of Chottogram gave most amount of space with an average of 442 words per story followed by Daily Poribesh from Rangpur (375 words/story) while Ajker Poriborton from Barishal's coverage averaged only 152 words per story. Many stories were counted between 100 and 200 words, mostly spent writing the names of political leaders and administrative personalities. It was hard to identify the main issue of the story. No investigative report on environmental issues was published in any newspaper during the study period. It is really sorry state of the regional newspapers.

Treatment of Stories on Environmental Issues

As described in the methodologies the placement of the stories on environmental issues were categorized as High Prominence (Front page and Editorial Page), Medium Prominence (Back page) and Low Prominence (other pages) areas. Figure 2 presents the findings on this.

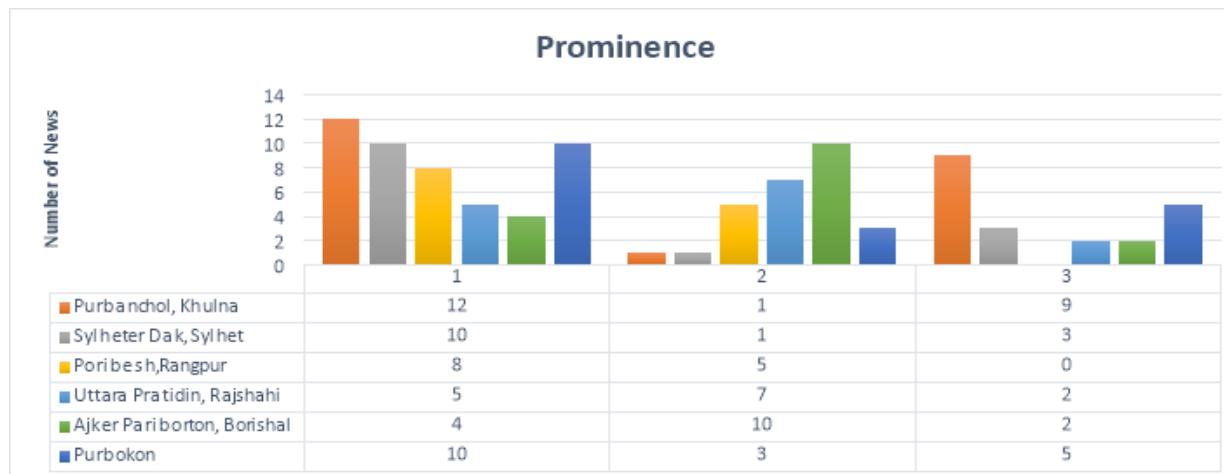
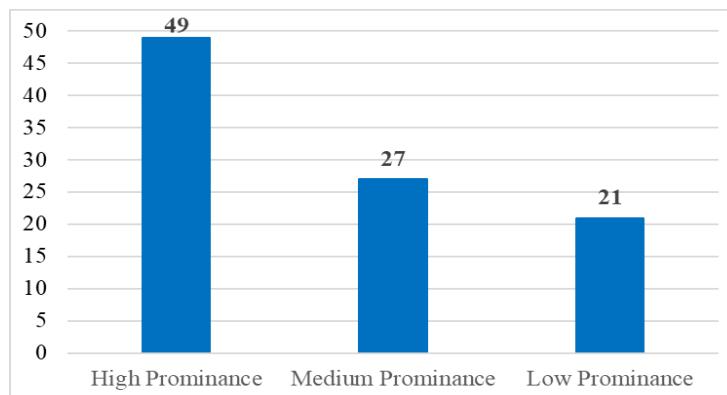


Figure 2. Placement of Environmental issues in the selected newspapers

Though the attention and emphasis on the environmental stories were relatively lower in the selected regional newspapers, their placements were mostly in high and medium prominence areas. Interestingly half the stories (50.51 percent, 49 out of 97) were published in the high prominence areas while 27.84 percent in the medium-prominence areas and 21.65 percent stories in the low prominence areas. While the Sylheti newspaper daily Sylheter Dak positioned almost three-fourths (71.43 percent) of their environmental stories in the high-prominence areas while the Ajker Pariborton from Barishal placed only 25% of their stories on environmental issues. More details are provided in Table 3.

Table 3. Treatment given to the stories on environmental issues

Title of Newspaper	News	High Prominence	Medium Prominence	Low Prominence
Purbokone, Chottogram	18	10 (55.55%)	3 (16.67)	5 (27.78%)
Purbanchol, Khulna	22	12 (54.54%)	1 (4.55%)	9 (40.90%)
Sylheter Dak, Sylhet	14	10 (71.43%)	1 (7.14%)	3 (21.43%)
Poribesh, Rangpur	13	8 (61.54%)	5 (38.46%)	00
Uttara Pratidin, Rajshahi	14	5 (34.71%)	7 (50%)	2 (14.29%)
Ajker Pariborton, Barishal	16	4 (25%)	10 (62.50%)	2 (12.5%)
Total	97	49 (50.51%)	27 (27.84%)	21 (21.65%)

Table 4 presents the issue further by accumulating the placement of environmental issues on different pages.

Table 4. Placement of environmental news on different pages

Title of Newspapers	Front Page	Back Page	Inside Page	Editorial Page	Opinion	Letter	Total Issues
Purbokone, Chottogram	06	03	05	04	00	00	18
Purbanchol, Khulna	09	01	09	03	00	00	22
Sylheter Dak, Sylhet	04	01	03	05	01	00	14
Poribesh, Rangpur	06	05	-	02	00	00	13
Uttara Pratidin, Rajshahi	05	07	02	0	00	00	14
Ajker Pariborton, Barishal	02	10	02	02	00	00	16
Total	32	27	21	16	01	00	97

It can be gleaned from Table 4 that 60.82 percent (59 out of 97) of the news stories were placed on the front page and back page. Moreover, one-third of all news stories on environmental issues were placed on the front pages. Such placements may be interpreted as a “good treatment” of environmental issues in regional newspapers. Considering the ratio of total number of stories on environmental issues and news stories placed on the front page, Rangpur's Poribesh was at the top that published 46.15 percent (6 out of 13) of environmental stories on the front page followed by Purbanchol from Khulna (40.90 percent) and Purbokone of Chottogram (33.333 percent). The Ajker Pariborton from Barishal placed the lowest portion (12.5%) of environmental news on the front page. However, they placed most of them (62.5%) on the back page.

Table 4 also reveals that the regional newspapers published a good number of editorials (16.5 percent) which may be interpreted as their effort to promote environmental issues. However, only one opinion column and no letter was published on environmental issues during the study period which is really low. It apparently portrays the lack of readers' engagement on this issue though it's difficult to draw a concrete conclusion on this as there is no information on whether it was the newspapers side who did not publish or encouraged readers/people to write or whether the readers/people did not write on environmental issues.

Though the number of editorials in comparison to the number of total news stories was good, it is noteworthy that most of the editorials on national or international issues. For example, Daily Poribesh from Rangpur published an editorial on March 12, 2025, titled – **বায়ু দুর্বলে ধূঁকছে রাজধানী সতর্ক হোন** [The capital is suffering from air pollution, be careful]. Another editorial, published on the same day on Daily Purbanchol from Khulna was titled **অভিন্ন নদীগুলির স্বার্থ সংরক্ষণে জোর কৃটনীতি পদক্ষেপ নিন** [Take strong diplomatic

steps to protect the interests of shared rivers]. Undoubtedly, such issues are important. However, these are well-presented in the national level newspapers. Regional newspapers are expected to focus on the local issues but that is not the reality. It again proves that the mainstream media, be it at national level or regional, do not present the voice of the grass roots nor emphasize the local issues. Rather, they act as ‘cheaper’ (in terms of price) extension of the national level outlets. Furthermore, apart from the editorial and the lone opinion piece, all other news stories were “straight jacket” – more of “reporting events”. Among the 97 news stories there was not a single investigative or human-interest stories. That means, the coverage of environmental issues in the regional newspaper is also “mostly event based,” “elite-centered,” and “elite-favoring” which undermines the issues of the general people at the grassroots as shown by Quarmal and Kabir (2025) in case of development journalism in Bangladesh.

Table 5. Presentation of Environmental News Stories

Title of Newspapers	Total News	Banner News	Lead news	Box News
Purbokone, Chottogram	18	00	03	00
Purbanchol, Khulna	22	00	00	00
Sylheter Dak, Sylhet	14	00	00	01
Poribesh, Rangpur	13	00	00	00
Uttara Pratidin, Rajshahi	14	00	01	00
Ajker Pariborton, Barishal	16	00	00	00
	97	00	04	01

Though the treatment of environmental news stories in terms of placement was apparently good, their presentation was not as such.

Only four of the stories became lead news – three in Purbokone of CTG covering public demonstration on saltwater intrusion in river Halda, Water Logging in Chottogram city and Fire in the homesteads, and one in Uttara Pratidin of Rajshahi while there was just one box news (single column), published in Sylheter Dak (Table 5). These numbers clearly tell the treatment of news stories on environmental issues was not well-emphasized.

Credit Line and Sources of Stories on Environmental Issues

It can be seen from Table-6 that most of the news stories on environmental issues in the regional newspapers were credited to the staff reporters (74.23 percent) while a few of those (10 out of 97, 10.30 percent) were ‘byline’. Though the number of byline was not high, the high percentage of credit to the staff reporters is commendable that despite the weaker human resources (which is usual in regional newspapers in Bangladesh) they tried to cover the stories themselves and did not rely much on agency reports.

Table 6. Credit line of the Environmental news

Title of Newspapers	Total News	Byline	Staff Reporter	Desk Report	Agency Report
Purbokone, Chottogram	18	04	10	02	02
Purbanchol, Khulna	22	02	20	00	00
Sylheter Dak, Sylhet	14	01	12	01	00
Poribesh, Rangpur	13	03	05	00	05
Uttara Pratidin, Rajshahi	14	00	11	03	00
Ajker Pariborton, Barishal	16	00	14	02	00
	97	10	72	08	07

It can be concluded from Table 7 that regional newspapers rely more on the government officials than any other sources in case of reporting environmental issues. As the table shows, in 42.27 percent news stories the main source was government officials. The next most cited source was mass people (39.17). Experts were cited in only 18.56 percent news stories.

Table 7. Sources cited in the news stories on environmental issues

Title of Newspapers	Total News	Mass People	Government office	Expert Opinion
Purbokone, Chottogram	18	11	03	04
Purbanchol, Khulna	22	09	07	06
Sylheter Dak, Sylhet	14	05	08	01
Poribesh, Rangpur	13	04	05	04
Uttara Pratidin, Rajshahi	14	04	09	01
Ajker Pariborton, Barishal	16	05	09	02
	97	38	41	18

Photographs Published with the news stories

Table 8. Main contents of the photographs published with environmental news stories

Title of Newspaper	Total Photographs	Environment related	Workshop	Mobile Court /Drive	Photo Credit
Purbokone, Chottogram	14	09	05	00	09
Purbanchol, Khulna	03	01	01	01	02
Sylheter Dak, Sylhet	00	00	00	00	00
Poribesh, Rangpur	10	06	04	00	00
Uttara Pratidin, Rajshahi	08	06	00	02	06
Ajker Pariborton, Barishal	01	01	00	00	00
	36	23	10	03	17

Most (62.89 percent) of the stories related to environmental issues was not accompanied by a relevant photograph. Among the 97 stories on environmental issues 36 had photographs. However, many of the photographs have no relevance to the story. As Table 8 shows, 23 of the 36 photographs were found to be related to the environment including dried river, storm, sand lifting, filling of water bodies etc. Three photographs were on operating drives related to environmental law violations including drive against use of polythene, mobile courts on illegal brick kiln etc. and 10 photographs were related to different workshops, advocacy meetings on environmental issues like disaster preparedness day, save Sundarbans, awareness building on environment which basically presented the politicians and/or high officials as the main content of the photographs. It is noteworthy that 17 out of the 36 photographs (47.22 percent) were published with photo credit line or source of photo while rest of 52.77 percent photographs were published without photo credit or sources. This is not good practice and portrays a lack of awareness of the copyright issues and/or seriousness about following that.

Thematic Analysis of the News Stories on Environmental Issues

Thematic analysis is essential part in newspaper content analysis because it provides pictures of newspapers house policy and systematically identify and interpret recurring issues, frames, and narratives within news coverage. Moreover, newspapers often present diverse and complex information, and thematic analysis organizes this content into meaningful themes. This method allows to go beyond counting articles and instead carries answers of *how* and *why* certain topics are portrayed. It also reveals underlying patterns, biases, and agenda-setting tendencies in media reporting. However, by providing a structured and transparent approach to interpreting textual data, thematic analysis enhances the depth, reliability, and explanatory power of newspaper-based research.

As mentioned in the methodology section, the stories published on environmental issues were categorized under four broad themes: Environmental Problems, Public Protest, Government Drive, and Awareness Programs. Here Table-9 presents a quantitative view of the thematic analysis.

Table 9. Central themes of the news stories on environmental issues

Title of Themes	Purbokone	Purbanchol	Sylheter Dak	Poribesh	Uttara Pratidin	Ajker Poriborton	Total
Environmental Problems	09	11	09	08	04	05	46
Public Demonstration	02	02	03	00	03	00	10
Government Drive/ Action	01	01	01	01	06	06	16
Awareness Programs	06	08	01	04	01	05	25
Total	18	22	14	13	14	16	97

The thematic analysis shows that most of the news stories on the environmental issues focused on environmental problems (47.42 percent) and awareness programs (25.77 percent) while 16.49 percent reported government actions on environmental issues and the rest (10.30 percent) was on public protest. The following subsections elaborate more on the thematic analysis.

Theme-1 Environmental Problems

Regional newspapers cover on a regular basis environmental issues flood, salinity, storm surges, waterlogging, potable water, draught, air pollution, extreme heat etc. and their impact. As presented in Table 9, the majority (46 out of 97) of the stories on environmental issues was on environmental problems and the challenges those brought to people. It is noteworthy that the regional newspapers reported the local issues as well as the issues across the country. Environmental issues like floods, storm surges, extreme heat, brick kiln, deforestation, filling up water bodies, potable water crisis, agricultural issues related to environment and climate etc. are reported in all regional newspapers while the newspapers from southwestern and southeastern regions reported more on salinity, water logging, crisis of potable water etc. Below are some sample headlines that were included under this theme:

Purbokone 3 March 2025 **শুষ্ক মৌসুমের শুরুতেই লবণের আগ্রাসন হালদা-কর্নফুলীতে** [Salt intrusion begins in early dry season in Halda-Karnaphuli]

Purbokone, 10 March 2025 **চট্টগ্রামজুড়ে আগুনের ভয়াবহতা** [Severe fire events across CTG]

Purbokone, 15 March 2025 **নগরীতে সুপেয় পানির সংকট** [Potable water crises in City]

Purbanchol, 9 March 2025 **জলবায়ু পরিবর্তনে হ্রমকীর মুখে বন্যপ্রাণী ও পাখি** [Climate Change threatens wild animals and birds]

Purbanchol, 13 March 2025 **তাপমাত্রা বাড়ছে- শুরু হচ্ছে কালবৈশাখী** [Temperature on rise- Nor wester begins]

Sylheter Dak, 7 March, 2025 **সেচ সংকটে ৮ হাওরের ২৫৪ হেঁ: জমি ফেটে চৌচির** [Land dried up due to Irrigation Crisis in 8 Haors]

Sylheter Dak, 12 March 2025 **দেশীয় বৃক্ষের দুর্দিন** [Severe Crisis of indigenous Trees]

Sylheter Dak, 7 March 2025 **কৃষিতে অশনি সংকেত - জমির উর্বরতা কমছে** [Grim sign in Agriculture as Fertility of land reduces]

Poribesh 10 March 2025 **কৃষি জমিতে গড়ে উঠছে আবাসন কমছে জমি ও ফসল** [Housing raises on cropland, reduces land and grains]

Poribesh, 12 March 2025 **বায়ু দূষণে ধূঁকছে দেশ, সতর্ক হোন** [Air pollution on the rise, be careful]

Ajker Poriborton, 2 March 2025 **তাপমাত্রা দুই ডিগ্রি পর্যন্ত বাড়তে পারে** [Temperature to rise by 2 Degree Celsius]

Theme-2 Public Demonstration on Environmental Problems:

Public protest on different issues are significant sources of news in the newspaper. The second theme includes stories those involved local people's demonstration on environmental problems. Citizens formed human chains in protest against environmental rule violation by administration, stopping filling water bodies, brick kiln, organized protest rally demanding solve environmental problems like water crisis, salt intrusion, supply of drinking water, remove water logging, irrigation crisis, fire etc. Under this theme, the six regional newspapers published 10 stories out of 97. The newspapers played significant role to uphold voice in favour of public demand. It is one of the essential roles of regional newspapers as part of development journalism as well as development communication. Through such public protect government authorities, media, pressure groups, social organization, stakeholders become more active to press home their demand. Such role should be enhanced more to make people more aware and for a robust development. Some news headlines on this issue can help to understand easily.

Purbokone 12 March, 2025 পানির জন্য ওয়াসা ভবন ঘেরাও – [Stage in demo at WASA Building demanding drinking water]

Purbanchol 12 March, 2025 খুলনা মহানগরীর পুরুর ভরাট না করার আহ্বান

[Call not to fill waterbodies in Khulna]

Purbanchol 12 March, 2025 মোরেলগঞ্জে সুন্দরবন সুরক্ষায় সভা অনুষ্ঠিত [Meeting held demanding Save Sundarbans]

Uttara Pratidin 4 March, 2025 পুরুর রক্ষায় রাজশাহীতে মানব বন্ধন [Human Chain in Rajshahi to save Ponds]

Sylheter Dak 15 March, 2025 বালু পাথর উত্তোলনে পরিবেশ বিপর্যয় মানবিক বিপর্যয়ে রূপ নেবে – মানববন্ধনে বক্তৃতা [Lifting Sand-Stone will bring human disaster- speakers at human chain]

Theme-3 Government Drive/ Action

The third theme includes stories related to the eviction drives and other actions taken by government authorities like Department of Environment or other administrative entities against flouting environmental rules. A good number of news stories are published in the news media on government initiative or action for public interest. Readers have a great interest on it.

After screening 97 stories published in the regional newspapers, 16 were found relating to action taken by government authorities. The public pressures, stakeholders movement, social movement or newspaper reports, the government authorities takes initiative against illegal activities on environmental issues. For example demolition of illegal brick kilns, imposing fine for violating environmental laws, initiative for water logging, opening drive against polythene bags, opening plastic exchange corner etc. Below are a few examples of such stories:

Purbokone 8 March, 2025 পরিবেশ রক্ষায় প্লাস্টিক এক্সচেঞ্জ কর্নার চালু- [Plastic Exchange corner opened to save environment in CTG]

Purbokone 11 March, 2025 জলাবদ্ধতা থেকে মুক্তি পেতে সব ধরণের উদ্যোগ নিচ্ছি-মেয়র [All initiatives being taken to get rid of waterlogging- CTG Mayor]

Uttara Pratidin 12 March, 2025 বাগমারায় চার ইটভাটা গুড়িয়ে দিল পরিবেশ অধিদপ্তর

[Department of Environment Demolishes 4 Brick kilns in Bagmara]

Uttara Pratidin 13 March, 2025 পবায় অবৈধ ইটভাটায় এক লাখ টাকা জরিমানা

[Taka 1 lakh fined for illegal brick kiln in Paba]

Poribesh 7 March, 2025 নীলফামারীতে পলিথিন বিরোধী অভিযান [Drive against Polythene in Nilphamari]

Theme-4 Government Initiatives to Make People Aware

Local newspapers have much interest on cover governmental initiatives to make people aware on environmental issues by organizing seminars, drives, workshops, meetings. In the news media stories on public awareness by government has a big attention to readers. A good number of coverage was found based on government initiatives to make people aware on environmental issues. The issues are identified as holding workshops and seminars, observing disaster preparedness day etc. As presented in table 9, the second majority (25 out of 97) of the stories were published under this theme in 15 days. It is significant roles of regional newspapers to make people aware on environmental issues. Some examples of the stories included under this theme as followed:

Purbokone 12 March, 2025 প্লাস্টিক দূষণ, জলাবদ্ধতা নিরসনে জনসচেতনতা বৃদ্ধির আহ্বান

[Call to stop Plastic Pollution, Water logging]

Purbanchol 11 March, 2025 জাতীয় দুর্যোগ প্রস্তুতি দিবস পালিত [National Disaster Preparation Day Observed]

Sylheter Dak 2 March, 2025 - হাওরের পরিবেশ রক্ষা করেই কৃষি উৎপাদন বাড়াতে হবে- বিশেষজ্ঞগণ

[Agro-production to be raised keeping Haor Environment – Scientist]

CONCLUSION

During the study period a total of 97 stories on environmental issues were found from the six regional newspapers included in the study. The stories were on (1) **Environmental problems** like salt intrusion, crisis of drinking water, climate change, irrigation crisis, air pollution, declining land fertility, and loss of indigenous trees (46 stories, 44.62%); (2) **Public Protest/Demand** that reported citizen demonstrations, human chains, and meetings demanding solutions to crises like water scarcity, water-body filling, illegal sand lifting, and environmental conservation, for example conservation of the Sundarbans (10 stories, 9.7%); (3) **Government Drives/Actions** that informed about administrative measures such as demolishing illegal brick kilns, drives against polythene, and initiatives to reduce water logging (16 stories, 15.52%); and (4) **Awareness Programs** that informed about workshops, seminars, and awareness campaigns against pollution (25 stories, 25.22%). Apparently, the regional newspapers provided some coverage of environmental issues. It is good to see that each of the selected newspaper had at least one news story on environmental issues almost every day though in terms of depth, the coverage was not so significant that most of the news stories were straight jacket and short and there was no investigative report or opinion column. It is noteworthy that majority (60.82 percent) of the environmental news were placed on either front page (32.99 percent) or the back page (27.83 percent). It is also praiseworthy that a good number (16 out of 97) of editorials on environment issues were published during the study period – each of the selected newspapers published at least two Editorials during the study period, except Uttara Pratidin from Rajshahi.

However, the other aspects of the coverage, for example headline type (banner, lead), breadth (number of columns) were not very significant. Most of the news published in the local dailies during the study period was event-based featuring national and/or local political figures, administrators (e.g. high position civil servants), civil society members etc. but people's stories were not portrayed. The photograph accompanying the news stories were the same in nature – feature more the events and elites than the environmental issues and people suffering from it. Also, other visual aids like infographics were completely absent. There were hardly any bylines – only about 10 percent which reflects a lack of recognition of the grass-root level journalists. Editorials were mostly on national issues. Altogether, the coverage does not indicate a strong focus on promoting environmental issues, especially at the local level. Though the regional newspapers covered some local environmental issues alongside national issues, it is hard to differentiate the coverage of national and local newspapers as the news published by the local dailies were mostly on national issues.

Furthermore, the coverage was mostly to inform more of the activities of the people in position and power and less to create awareness, present the stories (sufferings) of the people and offer solutions. So, the trend in

coverage of environmental issues that was found in the literature review is still the same – event-based, elite-centered, national issue-focused. Similar trend was found by Kabir (2023) and Quarmal & Kabir (2025) in the case of development journalism in Bangladesh.

To improve the coverage of environmental issues, the regional newspapers need to focus on presenting grassroots realities. They need to take initiatives to strengthen professional standards, ensure recognition of local reporters, and encourage research-driven, visually engaging reporting. This is very important for Bangladesh to address the acute environmental challenges it is facing and will face in the future.

As such all stakeholders should join hands together to improve the quality of reporting in the regional newspapers. At the same time, it is important to recognize the contributions of the grassroot level journalists and ensure their financial security alongside helping them improve their professional standards.

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