

## Coverage of Local Development Issues in Regional Newspapers of Bangladesh

Dilruba Akter<sup>1,\*</sup> and Siddique Ahmed Azad<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>**Faculty, Department of Journalism & Media Studies,  
Port City International University, Bangladesh**

<sup>2</sup>**Public Relations Officer, Ibn Sina Trust,  
Chattogram Centre, Bangladesh**

**\*Corresponding author e-mail: dilrubarenu07@gmail.com**

**Received: June 19, 2021 Revised: September 5, 2021 Accepted: October 19, 2021**

### **Abstract**

By making one area of a country aware of other regions, their people, arts, customs, and politics, the mass media, an important conduit of local development, can convey knowledge and services about the latest information. Local development is the process of improving the living conditions of the local people by coordinating efforts among many local agents, social, public, and private, in order to make the most efficient and long-term use of available endogenous resources. Regional newspapers can play a significant role in the advancement of a region's local development by emphasizing the publication of news about local development. The goal of this study was to find out how local development issues were covered in regional newspapers of Chattogram, often known as Bangladesh's Port City, a major coastal city and economic center. According to the findings, during the study period, regional print media in Bangladesh covered roughly 12% of local development issues on average, rather than non-development news. The *Daily Daily Azadi*, as compared to *The Daily Purbokone*, focused on local development issues the most. Both newspapers underlined the importance of local infrastructure as a topic for local development.

**Keywords:** Mass media, Local development, Regional newspapers, Chattogram

### **Introduction**

Local media refers to news organizations that have a unique ability to connect and empower their audiences by informing them about their communities and providing them with the information they need to become active participants, ranging from legacy players like newspapers and television and radio stations to emerging actors like hyperlocal news websites. (Harte, 2017).

Regional daily papers ought to have particular zones, specifically, have long possessed overwhelming positions in their media situations, confronting small competition - for readers

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or advertisers- and in numerous cases offering information not available anywhere else (Nielsen, 2015). The media influence us in numerous ways: as a major socializing impact, a carrier of culture, a source of data, instruction, amusement, a key player in political communication and participatory popular government and a communicator of ideological values, standards, qualities and convictions (Dennis & Merill, 1999).

*Development journalism is the concept for advocacy and communication amongst persons. It takes the advancement of national development into account by making one part of a nation aware of other parts, their individuals, expressions, tradition, and legislative issues; by keeping the national objectives and national achievements constantly in the public thus allowing the public to be aware of the national objectives and national achievements (Schramm, 1964).*

The Daily Azadi, a historically important newspaper from Chattogram, is considered as one of the first newspapers published on December 17, 1971, after Bangladesh's independence (Ananta, 2015). It wasn't easy to print such newspapers at that time. The country had just gained its freedom and the Pakistani force was yet to surrender their weapons. Ananta (2015) said "During the tumultuous time of December 16, 1971, we decided to publish a one-page newspaper the following day. The text was written in red ink to signify the bloodshed and lives that the country had lost," says the editor of The Daily Azadi, Abdul Malek (Ananta, 2015).

According to Asemah, 2011, the press or mass media are obliged to display thoughts and data that will illuminate and extend the skylines of the citizens. To plan for the citizens' needs requires free and judicious choices for self-actualization. Another vital part of the media is that the media are obliged to supply contemplated information freely to the citizens while carrying out the role of watchdog on the government.

The local newspapers of Chattogram can play a dynamic role in the society like regional newspapers in many other countries do. For example, few years ago, all the local newspapers, online portals along with the national newspapers as like Prothom Alo, Samakal, Kalerkantho published simultaneously the same news as a campaign against the 'illegal bill boards'. Subsequently, the city corporation went into action against the mafias and eradicated all 'illegal bill board'. It is a good example of development journalism on a local issue of development in Bangladesh

## **Objectives of the study**

The study is set to achieve the following objectives:

1. To investigate the quantity of local developments and non-development contents of newspapers,
2. To categorize the local development issue covered by regional newspapers,
3. To look into the treatment (front and back page) of local development stories given by local newspapers.

## Research questions

To identify, explore, and find out the local development issues covered by the selected regional newspapers in the study will address following research questions:

**RQ-1:** Which type of local development issues do local newspapers cover?

**RQ-2:** What is the amount of local development issues published by regional newspapers of Chattogram?

**RQ-3:** Which regional newspapers published the most local development news?

## Literature review

This research has been designed to study the space given to local development news in the daily newspaper in Chattogram. It has been observed that there is a shortage of literature on the study of content analysis of local development issues covered by regional newspapers of Bangladesh. Keeping the above aspects in view, the relevant literatures have been reviewed and presented below:

Because millions of people suffer from poverty, starvation, unemployment, illiteracy, ill health, and a lack of drinking water, development is the topmost priority on the national agenda. The press has an obligation to assist the government's efforts to meet people's basic needs, as stated in the government's priorities plan (Murthy, 2016).

Looking at the mass media as instruments of rural development, Uche (2002) speculates that the mass media play the leading role of promoting the political, social and economic aspiration of rural folks.

Development Journalism is a type of reporting that focuses on ideas, policies, programs, actions, and events aimed at improving people's lives. The potential and power of the media to influence the development process by covering development concepts, policies, programs, actions, and events is a key assumption behind the concept of development journalism (Ediani, 1993).

Development journalism includes detailing thoughts, programs, exercises and occasions, which are related to advancement of the living standard of individuals. In other words, the media need to be committed to contributing to the generally objective of improvement, to advance social and enlightening independence, to back popular government and solidarity with other developing countries (McQuail, 2005).

Local daily papers, like their national and international counterparts in the private sector, are constantly adjusting their publication and trading models to stay relevant and financially viable in the sophisticated media environment, according to Cornia and Nielson (2016).

Concurring with Nwuneli (2004) numerous governments and countries within the developing world over a long time have utilized the mass media broadly at one point or the other for the headway of their development objectives.

Ogan (1987) in his article titled 'Coverage of development news in developed and developing countries' suggested developing countries' media have been found to rely heavily

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on government sources in reporting of development news. This study of the scope of one event by 22 newspapers and magazines in five created and six creating nations showed the Western media concentrating more on political issues and less on the populace issue at the International Conference on Population.

Sarkar (2015) conducted a comparative study of rural development news in Assam's regional dailies. He classified Family planning, Health & Hygiene, Agricultural Development, Irrigation and Drinking Water, Educational Development, Energy and Power, Children & Women Welfare, Youth Welfare & Development, Tea Industry, and Infrastructure as rural development news categories after conducting a content analysis between Assam Tribune and The Sentinel.

After reviewing the above literatures, we can infer that several studies on development journalism have been undertaken in various nations, particularly in developing countries. However, there is little research on how the print media in Bangladesh covers the development news. As far as we can tell, there is no other study on the coverage of local development concerns in Bangladeshi regional publications. This study is expected to fill a research gap in the field of development journalism in Bangladeshi regional newspapers.

### **Operational definition**

**Development news:** The significance of development plans, programs, policies, difficulties, and issues should be critically examined, evaluated, and interpreted in development news. Development news denotes to the people's needs, which differ from country to country or region to region, but generally include primary requirements like food, housing, and jobs; secondary needs like transportation, energy sources, and electricity; and tertiary needs like cultural diversity, recognition, and dignity (Wimmer & Wolf, 2005).

**Local Development news:** Local development news refers to events, plans, or programs that help people in a certain region or community improve their living standards. As a local development issue, the researchers in the study highlighted development events related to infrastructure, health, business, tourism, and the environment.

**Non-development news:** Non-development news is defined as news that is not directly related to a region's development process, such as crime, law, sports, and other topics.

### **Methodology and sampling**

Quantitative content analysis was employed as a research method. The scientific examination of communication content is referred to as content analysis. Bernard Berelson's publication of Content analysis in Communication Research in 1952 marked the technique's recognition as a versatile tool for social science and media academics. During World War II, the United States government funded a project to examine enemy propaganda under the direction of Harold Lasswell, which led to the development of content analysis as a full-fledged scientific method. (Das & Bhaskaran, 2008). According to Berelson (1952), content analysis is a research approach for describing the manifest content of communication in an objective, systematic, and quantitative manner.

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Systematic sampling was used as sampling technique. Systematic sampling is a sort of probability sampling in which representatives of a bigger population are chosen at random from a larger population, but at a fixed, periodic interval. This interval, also known as the sampling interval, is computed by dividing the population size by the sample size desired (Somer, 2021). The term “systematic sampling” denotes to the notion that each selected unit in the sample has a gap, or interval, between them.

Researchers selected two daily newspapers for content analysis published from Chattogram in 2018. Those were The Daily Azadi and The Daily Purbokone, the most circulated local newspapers in Chattogram at that time according to the Department of Films and Publications (DFp) of the Ministry of Information of Bangladesh.

In the study researchers divided newspapers into three groups of 12 months in the year 2018. They divided tripartite of the year of 2018 into group A (January, February, March, April), group B (May, June, July, August) and group C (September, October, November, December). Took the first month of group A, the second month of group B, and the third month of group C in order. The researchers selected January, June and November for the study. The Days were selected systematically. Selected dates were 8, 15 and 21 of January, 9, 16 and 22 of June and 10, 17 and 23 of November, 2018 for analysis. Analyzed 18 copies and 36 pages.

## Data analysis

### Amount of coverage in local development issues in regional newspapers

The main objective of the research was to find out the coverage of development stories in the local newspaper to address regional development issues. For that, we divided all selected news stories into two criteria -nondevelopment and development news. Then we used two variables of both criteria, the number of news articles and the length of the article were looked at, and the results are presented in Table 1.

Among the 528 sampled news articles from both newspapers, 66 (12.35 percent) of them were categorized as development news while 446 (87.47 percent) as non-development news. This number also indicates that the ratio of the difference in development and non-development news coverage significantly high. The percentages are 87.47 percent for non-development news and 12.35 percent for development news.

**Table 1** Percentage of development and non-development news

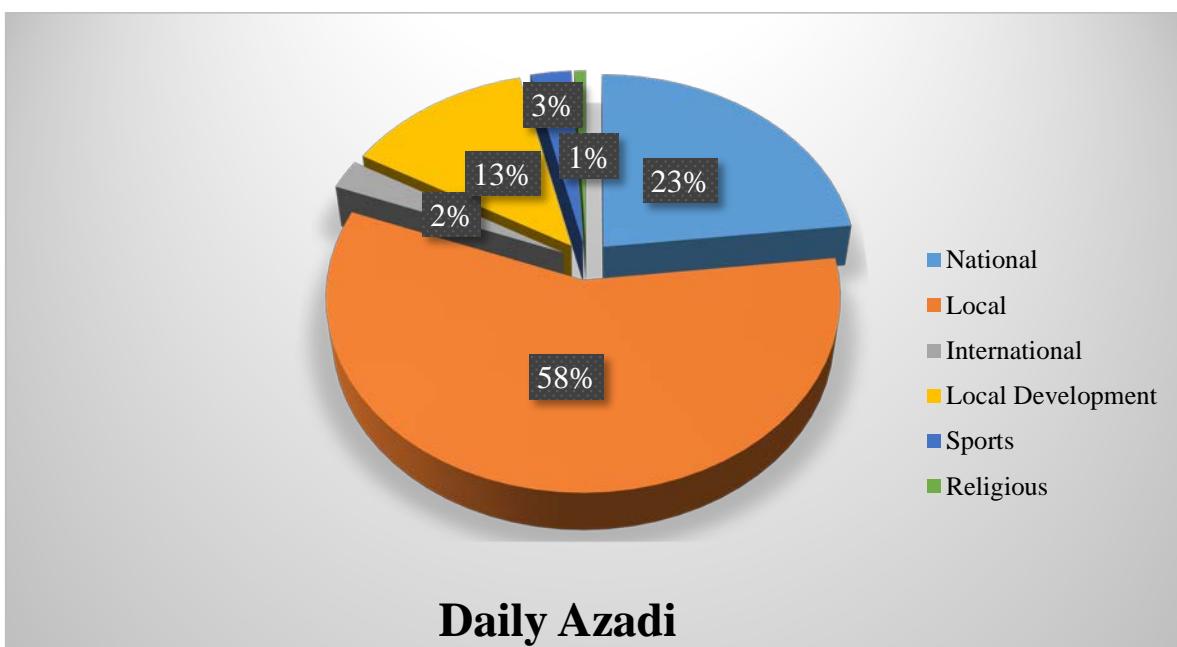
Newspaper	Total news		Percentage of NDN		Percentage of DN	
	(fo)	(fe)	(fo)	(fe)	(fo)	(fe)
The daily Azadi	246	5110.5	86.99	84.94	13.01	15.06
The daily Purbokone	282	4858	87.94	81.38	12.06	18.62

NDN=Non-development news and DN=Development news

fo=Number of frequency, fe=Number of length

### Covering local development issues by the daily Azadi

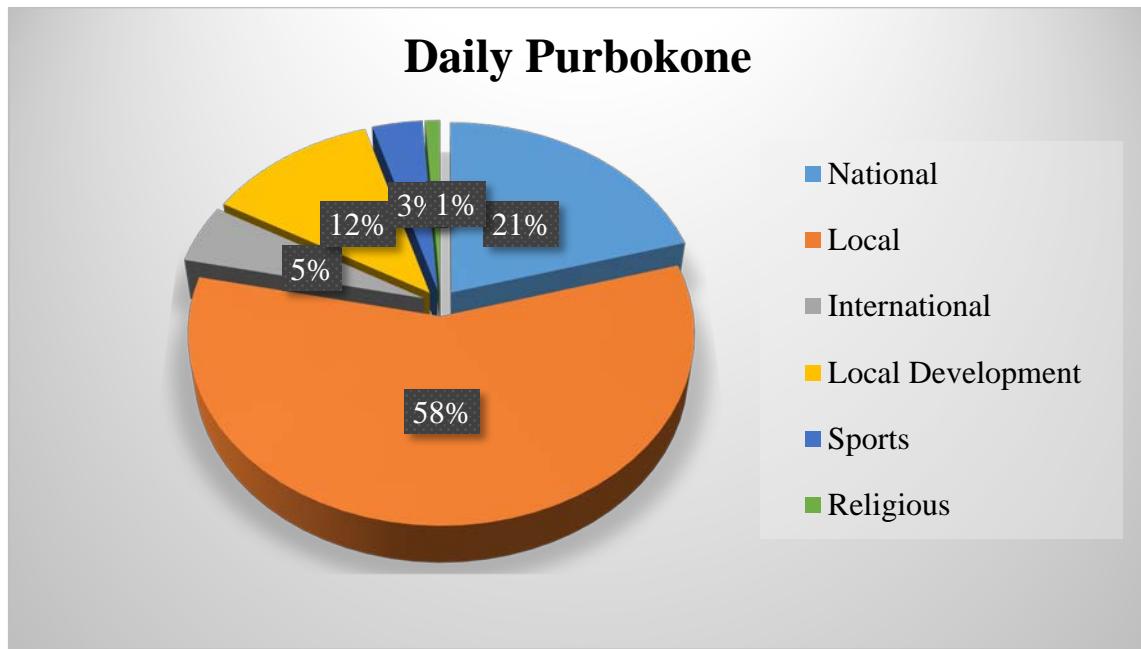
The Daily Azadi is one of the top-ranked newspapers in Chattogram. They published 246 news items on front and back page. Comparatively, The Daily Azadi published more news on the back page than the first page, because advertisements were occupying much spaces on this page. Figure 1 in the following pie chart shows the percentage of total news coverage of The Daily Azadi during the period of study. The Daily Azadi published 58 percent of local news (all categories except local development issues), 23 percent of national issues, and 13 percent of local development concerns. Sport news (3%) received less attention, as did international news (2%), and religious topics (1%).



**Figure 1** Covering local development issues by the daily Azadi

### Covering local development news by the daily Purbokone

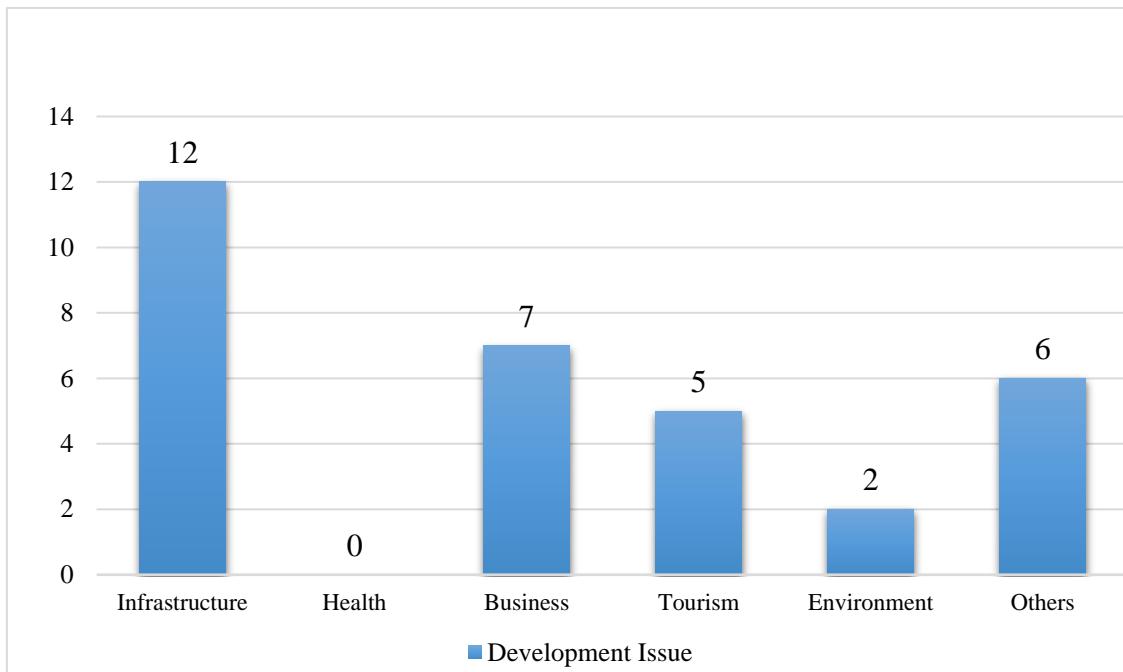
The Daily Purbokone is one another top-ranked newspapers in Chattogram. They published 282 news items on the front and back page. Comparatively, The Daily Purbokone also published more news on the back page than the first page, because the advertisements were occupied many spaces on this page. Figure 2 in the following reveals the percentage of total news coverage of The Daily Purbokone during the period of study. The quantity of published local news (all categories of news except local development issues) at The Daily Purbokone was 58%, national issues 21%, and local development issues 12%. It gave less priority to sports news (3%), international news (5%), and religious issues (1%).



**Figure 2** Covering local development issues by the daily Purbokone

#### **Categories of local development issues in the daily Azadi**

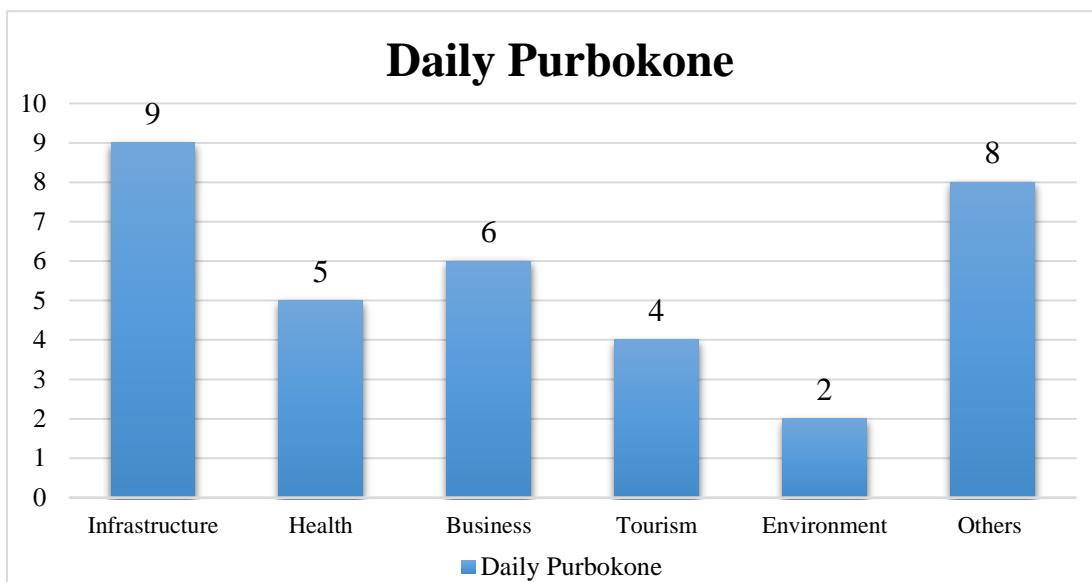
Column chart (Figure 3) illustrates the categories of the local development issues covered by Daily Azadi. It gave the highest coverage on local infrastructure (12 out of 32 items). On the other hand, there was no coverage on health issues. It covers 7 items on business, 6 items on others, 5 items on tourism, and 2 items on the environment.



**Figure 3** Categories of local development issues in the daily Azadi

### Categories of local development issues in the daily Purbokone

Column chart (Figure 4) shows the categories of the local development issues covered by Daily Purbokone. It gave the highest coverage on local infrastructure and others local development issues (9 out of 34 items and 8 out of 34 items). On the other hand, they gave less coverage on environmental issues (2 out of 34 items). It covered 5 items on health, and 6 items on business and 4 on tourism.



**Figure 4** Categories of local development issues in the Daily Purbokone

### Treatment of development news

**Table 2** Treatment of development news in both newspapers

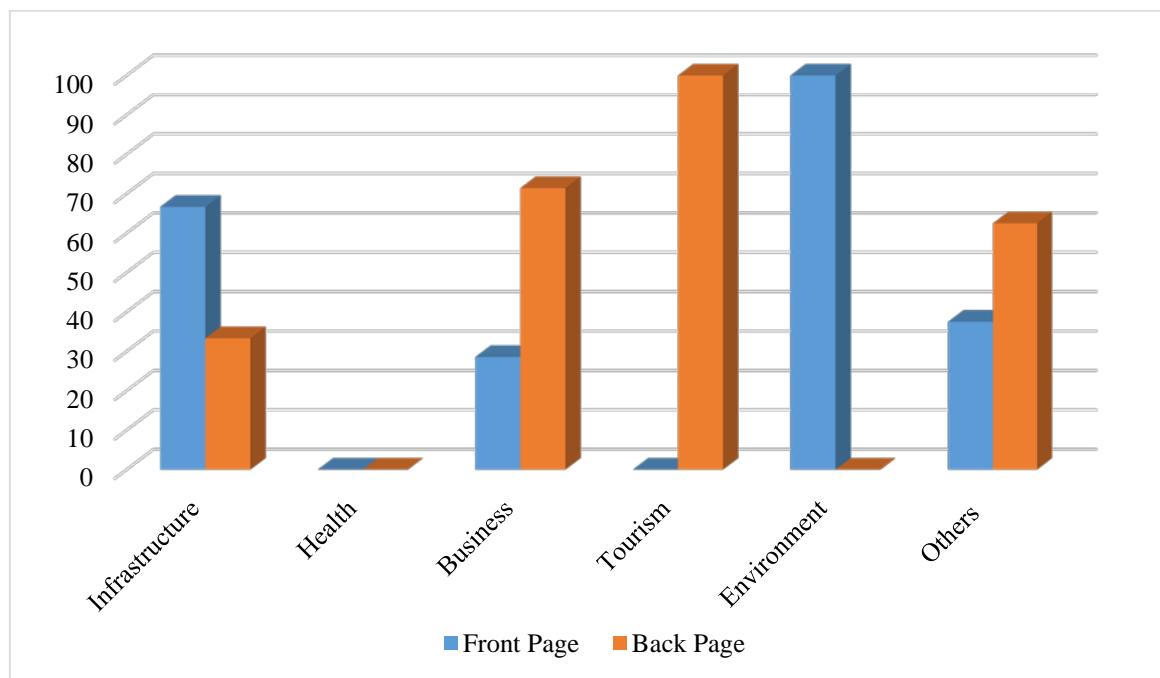
	Front Page	Back Page
The Daily Azadi	46.88%	53.12%
The Daily Purbokone	58.82%	41.18%

The percentage-providing development news at both daily newspapers on the front and back pages were almost similar. Daily Azadi gave good coverage on the front page rather than the back page. They covered 46.88 percent of development news on the front page and 53.12 percent of development news on the back page of the total number of 32 development news (Table 2).

But The Daily Purbokone comparatively presented more development issues on the front page rather than back page. They covered 58.82 percent of development news on the front page and 41.18 percent on the back page with a total number of 34 on both pages.

Column chart (Figure 5) illustrates, the publication of development news, The Daily Azadi gave priority to the infrastructure issue of the whole development item. They provided 66.67% on the front page and 33.33% on the back page of the total 12 items of infrastructural local development news.

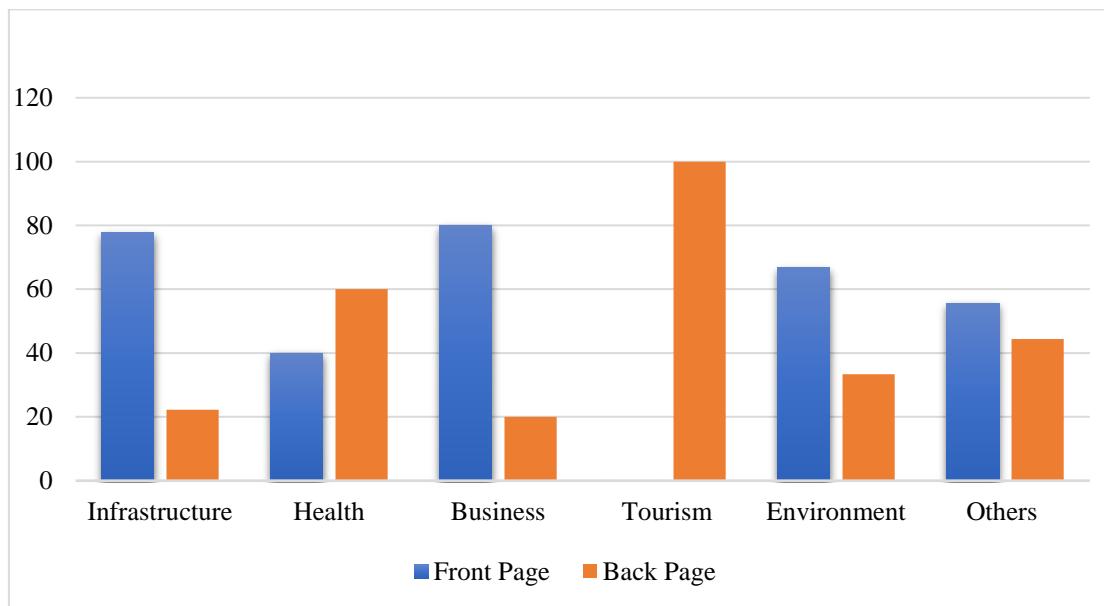
As the following figure, The Daily Azadi published more development news on the back page on tourism and business issues. This amount is small on the front page. It presented more space on Environment on the front page, but no news coverage on environment on the back page. Daily Azadi ignored health issue in the local development coverage on the front and back pages.



**Figure 5** Treatment of development news categorically in both front and back page of Daily Azadi

In Figure 6, the column chart shows, the Purbokone also gave attention to the infrastructure issue of the whole development item in front page. That was 77.78% on the front page and 22.22% on the back page of the total 9 items. On other hand, the Daily Purbokone published more of development news on tourism issues on the back page. The percentage was 100 of the total 4 tourism development items. There was no coverage that issue on the front page. It published 80% business issue on the front page and 20% on the back page.

Moreover, The Daily Purbokone covered 66.67 percent on the front page and 33.33 percent on the back page on Environment issue.



**Figure 6** Treatment of Development news categorically in both front and back page of The Daily Purbokone

### Discussions

Chap, Chetra (2014) at the Coverage of development news in Cambodia found Cambodian newspapers covered development news more than other type of news. The Phnom Penh Post and The Cambodia daily, both papers covered more development news than non-development ones at the ratio of 58 percent to 42 percent.

Researcher Murthy (2000) in his article 'Development news coverage on the Indian press' concluded with the findings that the sample dailies' coverage of developmental news in India was neither noteworthy nor promising. With all the newspapers combined, this category accounted for less than 6% of overall news coverage.

Our research revealed that local development coverage in regional newspapers in Bangladesh is less than 15%, implying that regional media did not cover a significant number of local development stories in their newspapers during the study, which is consistent with the findings of a researcher in our neighboring country, India.

When it came to prioritizing local development categories in newspapers, both media placed a greater emphasis on infrastructure development than on other local development items.

### Limitation and recommendation of study

Some shortcomings need to be mentioned in this investigation. In this study, we only looked at the contents of two regional newspapers in Chattogram, Bangladesh. The findings would be more thorough if we could study more newspapers and copies. We also had challenges reviewing the literature because there isn't enough study on development journalism in Bangladesh. Our findings, on the other hand, may be seen as legitimate, and they may

stimulate other scholars to look into local development news coverage in Bangladesh. Future researchers, non-governmental groups, and media organizations are encouraged to conduct additional research with the goal of advising media policymakers on how to give importance to publish local development news in regional newspapers.

## Conclusions

The media is a country's most essential organ. They should play an important role in shaping the public development process. They also shape development issues in the context of a city or community regional growth, as well as the development of a whole country. Surprisingly, it was discovered that the non-development news account for a far higher percentage of total news items than local development news, and statistical analysis demonstrates that the difference is substantial. As a result, this study proposes that regional newspapers focus on the local development news because it is vital for a country's national development.

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