

A targeted ‘disinformation campaign’ over Sajeeb Wazed’s recent Dhaka visit

November 27, 2023

Online Desk: While the appearance of Prime Minister’s ICT Adviser Sajeeb Wazed Joy, who spearheaded the Digital Bangladesh campaign, at the recently held Joy Bangla Youth Award – celebrating young changemakers – generated positive response on and off line, a targeted disinformation campaign is also seemingly underway.

Starting from speculations over Sajeeb Wazed’s personal life to unsubstantiated stories about corruption charges to spreading rumors regarding his visit to Dhaka, social media and online video sharing platforms – mainly Facebook and YouTube – have been rife with such disinformation.

Referring to examples such as senior BNP leader Rumeen Farhana, in a YouTube video, speculating whether the US is “sending back the Prime Minister’s son,” political analysts were of the view that “disinformation circulated by the opposition” is a scheme to create confusion among the public.

Mushfiqul Fazal Ansarey, who was the assistant press secretary of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, has also perpetuated disinformation on several occasions, they say.

Offshore portals seem to be in overdrive to spread such disinformation. One such portal, Northeast News, published a report claiming that the US had asked PM Sheikh Hasina to step down by November 3.

During his recent stay in Dhaka, Sajeeb Wazed handed over Joy Bangla Youth Awards among young changemakers, yet Chandan Nandy – who earlier came up with the claim about Washington giving the Sheikh Hasina government a deadline – termed the arrival as “mysterious”.

“Bangladesh PM to flee the country,” “Hasina seeking shelter in India,” “plunging the country into a disaster, Sheikh Hasina will leave the country,” “country headed for a civil war”, “Sheikh Hasina has made the country into a vassal state of India” are some of the titles and taglines used for videos on the YouTube channel of one NagorikTV (not to be confused with the Bangladeshi TV channel, Nagorik).

As Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s ICT adviser, Sajeeb Wazed has guided and overseen the digitalization of all spheres of life — from online schooling to financial transactions.

Bangladesh benefited from that digital transformation during the Covid-19 pandemic. It managed to keep the economy going through a wide spectrum of digital activities, including e-commerce, telemedicine, virtual court, and delivering money to the poor through mobile platforms.

As the chairperson of Centre for Research and Information (CRI), Sajeeb Wazed is working on grooming the next generation of Bangladeshi super-achievers.

Joy Bangla Youth Award has helped showcase the silent but transformational initiatives — from educating street children in Dhaka to helping the poor and vulnerable tea worker communities in Sylhet.