

PVT TV CHANNELS

'Govt control a threat to press freedom'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the absence of a media policy, the present government had allowed the ministers and lawmakers of its own party to have satellite television channels, said the speakers at a discussion yesterday.

clear policy in issuing television licenses, he said, adding that none, except the government's own men, got permission for private television channels, which are also compelled to telecast news bulletins of BTv.

Though these satellite channels telecast the news of the opposition parties, they avoid the events of government corruption and anomalies, he said, adding that these channels hardly do any investigative reports.

Talk shows of those are however laudable, he noted.

There are many allegations against the real estate developers, mobile telephone operators and soft drink companies, but neither the television channels nor the newspapers dare to raise voice against them, as they give a big chunk of advertisements, he lamented.

News Editor of Channel I Shah Alamgir said journalists are the victims of media owners.

"There will be obvious problems if journalists become politicians and businessmen and politicians become the owners of the television channels," he added.

The channels will lose their acceptability if their owners fail to run them professionally, he said, adding that there should be some ethics for advertisements, but the businessmen-owners do not understand these things.

Muhammad Jahangir, a media expert, said the failure of the government in formulating a policy on mass media was intentional as it wanted to issue television licenses to the ministers and lawmakers of its own party.

Most of these channels serve the interest of the businessmen, while some channels telecast very low standard programme, he said, adding that there is no mechanism to create pressures on them.

Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, editor of The Bangladesh Observer, demanded declaration of the source

of income of the satellite television channels.

"The way the black money is being invested in the media, there is much doubt about the freedom and respect of the media in future," he said demanding terrestrial facilities for private TV channels.

Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists President Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul, who moderated the discussion, said the court did not cancel the license of the now defunct ETV (the first private and terrestrial television in Bangladesh), rather it said, "Something, somewhere was wrong in the tender process."

"So, why the ETV license was cancelled?" he posed a question. The speakers stressed the involvement of professionals with the electronic media to establish freedom and raise professional excellence.

Jatiya Party Presidium Member GM Quader MP said there is neither democracy nor accountability of the government, as parliament and parliamentary standing committees are inactive.

The major political parties are more concerned over their personal and partisan interests than the interests of the country, he said, adding that the parties also nominate the candidates who can afford money and are experts in vote rigging.

Professor Mannan Chowdhury of Dhaka University, former secretary Mohiuddin Ahmed, Jatiya Party leader ABM Golam Mostafa, journalists Gias Kamal Chowdhury, Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury, Mohsin Abbas, Ruhul Amin Gazi, Harun Habib, Syed Ishtiaq Reza and Sharif Mostafa Helal also spoke on the occasion.

Indian smuggler shot dead in Hili

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) gunned down an Indian smuggler in the Hili bordering areas under Hakimpur upazila of Dinajpur district yesterday, according to BDR and local sources.

The dead was identified as Shourav Poddar 35, son of Zitu Poddar of Dakshin-Para village under Indian Hili.

BDR and local sources said that a gang of smugglers consisting 20 to 25 people swooped on the BDR personnel with sharp weapons after entering 10 meters into the Bangladesh territory near main pillar 284 and 41/42 sub-pillars, also known as Football Playground.

Sensing trouble, BDR men fired a round of bullet for their safeguard, leaving Shourav dead on the spot. Other members of the gang took away the body into the Indian territory, sources added.

Company Commander of 29 Battalion Md Mozammel Hossain confirmed the incident while Lt Col Shamim Ahmed inspected the spot yesterday afternoon, according to BDR officials.

Sources said a commander level meeting between BDR and BSF was held near Dakshin-Para bordering area, but the meeting failed to reach any decision.

List of fugitives almost done

Says Babar

UNB, Dhaka

State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar at a meeting yesterday instructed the law enforcement agencies to ensure that law and order does not deteriorate during the period of caretaker government.

Home Secretary Safar Raj Hossain, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Anwarul Iqbal, director generals of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and ansar, and other high officials attended the meeting.

Talking to reporters after the meeting, Babar said a list of criminals who have been absconding--evading trials or convictions--has been almost finalised.

No names were withdrawn from the list on political consideration, he claimed, saying, "Only the names of leaders and workers of the four-party alliance, who were implicated in cases on political reasons by the previous Awami League government, have been withdrawn."

Babar said if minister Tariqul Islam had not been implicated in the case for Udichi bomb blast in Jessore, Islamist militant Harkatul Jihad leader Mufti Hannan would have been arrested much earlier.

Comilla varsity, PUST urge UGC to announce its decision about them soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Following media reports that affiliations of the University of Comilla and Pundra University of Science and Technology (PUST) are going to be cancelled soon over the allegation of non-compliance with the regulations of University Grants Commission, the authorities have urged the UGC to announce its formal decision about the universities soon.

At a joint press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity Auditorium on Tuesday, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of PUST, M H M Shahjahan said due to uncertainties resulting from the press reports, the authorities are facing problems in running the universities.

Urging the UGC, regulatory body of public and private universities of the country, to take a quick decision he said, "If the UGC declares its decision and we get its gazette notification, we shall go for legal battles in the courts."

UC Project Director Architect Rahsedul Huq Anu said affiliation of any university can be cancelled on two charges- if allegation of issuing forged certificates is proved or if the institution fails to maintain the standard set by the UGC.

But these two universities do not belong to any group, he added.

Since July 2003, the UGC has formed three committees to investigate the compliance of different private universities with its requirements.

All the three probe committees reported that six private universities including UC and PUST lack some basic infrastructural facilities and impart low quality of education.

When asked about the probe-committee reports Shahjahan said a vested quarter is conspiring against the universities.



Sammlita Samajik Andolon forms a human chain in front of the High Court in the city yesterday demanding electoral reforms for a free and fair election.

VIOLATION OF HEALTH RIGHTS

Lack of accountability blamed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health service consumers' rights are violated in the country mainly for the indifferent attitude of the government and lack of proper monitoring system and accountability of the health service providers, speakers at a roundtable said yesterday.

Lack of regulatory mechanism, awareness and watchdog, incompetence of health service providers, complexities in legal framework, unofficial fees and unnecessary tests prescribed by the doctors also negatively affect consumer rights, they added.

Health Consumer' Rights Forum (HCRF) and Consumers Association Of Bangladesh (Cab) organised the discussion titled 'Health consumers' rights: Where do we stand?' following its survey report conducted on January 2005-June 2006.

"The rights of health service consumers would not be ensured unless the state policy is accurate," said Prof Rashid-e-Mahbub, former president of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA), adding that in the age of globalisation the corporate hospitals have been abusing

people in the name of providing health service and persuading the doctors to be involved in business.

Vice Chancellor of South-East University and Convener of Bangladesh Shuchikitsha Andolon Prof M Shamsheer Ali stressed the need for decentralising the health system as the people living outside the capital are mostly deprived of better health service.

"The acts related to health services have been losing effectiveness and it is important to pass consumer protection act immediately," said former chair of Bangladesh Press Council Justice Habibur Rahman Khan.

Speakers said the price of essential drugs has increased much whereas only 20 big pharmaceutical companies control 90 per cent of the total drug market.

The patients are also deprived of proper treatment in commercial clinics and diagnostic centres, they added.

According to the report of HCRF and Cab, the barriers to peoples' health service include lack of logistics in the hospitals, low standard of the treatment system, corruption

and partisanship in administration, indifferent attitude of concerned authorities and adulterated and low quality medicine in the market.

It suggested to update the health policy and make it people-oriented, keep the health sector free from political influence, pass an act so that people could get compensation in case of the negligence of the doctors and reform the drug policy.

The suggestions also include encouraging the doctors for institutional practice, establishing central referral laboratory for appropriate pathological test and ensuring responsibility, accountability and monitoring at all the governmental health institutions.

Professor Dr Mohammad Saiful Islam moderated the discussion while Managing Director of AC Nielsen Dr Khalid Hasan, Associate Prof of BSMU Prof Sayedur Rahman, Vice President (programme) of ATN Bangla Nowajesh Ali Khan and President of Cab Borhan Ahmed were present on the occasion.

DU teacher gets death threat

DU CORRESPONDENT

Prof Dr Harun-or-Rashid, dean of social science faculty of Dhaka University (DU), has received a letter with death threat.

According to the letter, he was given the death threat for "destroying lives of 11 students who were trying to get admitted in a department with fake documents".

The letter signed by one Abu Syed reads: "You (Prof Harun) took Tk 5,00,000 from us for admission of the 11 students in the Department of Public Administration."

"We don't want you to die like Prof Aftab Ahmed. You must withdraw the allegation of fake admission through media within seven days," the computer-composed letter said.

Prof Harun yesterday said the letter was delivered to his office on Monday and he opened it the next day. He then informed the university authorities and Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) of the letter.

Duta leaders condemned the death threat and demanded immediate arrest of and punishment to the persons responsible.

DU Acting Registrar Anwar Hossain filed a general diary with Shabbagh Police Station in this regard.

Prof Harun said it is really difficult to perform duty under such circumstances. "I urge the authorities to ensure security of all teachers of the university."

Ahsania Mission gets Dr Ibrahim Gold Medal

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Ahsania Mission, a voluntary organisation, yesterday received 'Dr Mohammad Ibrahim Memorial Gold Medal - 2006' for its outstanding contribution to healthcare and social work.

Kazi Rafiqul Alam, president of the organisation, received the gold medal on behalf of the organisation at a ceremony organised by Doctor Mohammad Ibrahim Smriti Parishad at Birdem Hospital at Shabbagh in the city.

The gold medal awarding ceremony was organised to mark the 17th death anniversary of National Professor Dr Mohammad Ibrahim, also founder of Bangladesh Diabetic Samity.

Former chief justice and chief advisor of caretaker government Mohammad Habibur Rahman, Secretary General of Bangladesh Diabetic Samity Prof Dr AK Azad Khan and Malaysian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Abdul Malek Bin Abdul Aziz were present.

Addressing the ceremony, Mohammad Habibur Rahman said people remain immortal in the hearts of people who engage themselves for the welfare of the nation and mankind.

"Their ideology and spirit give direction to the next generation and Mohammad Ibrahim was such a personality to whom we are so indebted," he said.

President of Dr Mohammad Ibrahim Smriti Parishad and Director of Ibrahim General Hospital Dr CM Dilwar Rana presided over the ceremony.

ATTACK ON JOURNOS

Punishment to culprits demanded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Journalists at a rally demanded immediate arrest of the absconding terrorists involved in the attack on eight journalists including Bhorer Kagoj Bureau Chief Omar Kaiser on October 15.

They also declared to submit a memorandum to the prime minister today.

They expressed their disappointment over the inaction of the law enforcement agencies in arresting the culprits even after 48 hours of the incident.

The rally was jointly organised by Chittagong Press Club (CPC) and Chittagong Union of Journalists (CUJ) in front of the Chittagong Press Club.

Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) Secretary General Abdul Jalil Bhuyian was the chief guest at the rally with CPC President Abu Sufian in the chair.

Leaders of Chittagong Union of Journalists (CUJ), Chittagong Press Club (CPC) and Chittagong Metropolitan Union of Journalists (CMUJ) alleged that the linchpin of the gang Rezaul Karim Azad and few others are still at large.

President Editor of the daily Prothom Alo Abul Momen, CUJ President Shahid Ul Alam, Anjan Kumar Sen, CUJ General Secretary Reaz Haider, CMUJ General Secretary Mohammad Shahinawaj, Engineer Delwar Majumder, and ward commissioner MA Naser spoke at the rally.

A gang of terrorists on Saturday night attacked and injured Omar Kaiser, also the vice president of BFUJ, staff reporter of Bhorer Kagoj Alamegir Sabuj, editor of Weekly Ekushe Azad Talukdar, photographer of Channel-5 Sajib and staff reporter of Janakantha Azad Moineddin.

NDI launches website for Study Circle programme

UNB, Dhaka

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs has launched an innovative website for its Study Circle programme -- www.studycirclebangladesh.info or www.studycirclebd.info.

The Study Circle method, pioneered in Sweden about 100 years ago, was adopted by Bangladesh through NDI with the assistance from Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

The Study Circle uses a dialogue approach to examine a problem, test the facts and ideas, and try to find a solution or arrive at a consensus, said a press release.

"NDI hopes that this method will empower and enlighten the public on democratic practices in the future, act as a strong democratic base, and be a useful mechanism for citizens at the grassroots level," said Owen Lippert, Resident Director of NDI Bangladesh.

The site features information on the Study Circle method in Bangladesh, including programme activities, Maps of the Study Circle working areas, PDF versions of in-house study circle publications, photo galleries, SC resource library and newsletter.



Death anniversary of Jahurul Islam today

Today is the 11th death anniversary of Alhaj Jahurul Islam, founder-chairman of Islam Group, says a press release.

On the occasion, milad and doa mahfil will be held at all the organisations and educational institutions established by him at his home village at 11:00am.

Friends, relatives, well-wishers and employees of the Islam Group have been requested to attend the milad.

Offices of all units of the Islam Group will remain closed today to mark the death anniversary of the late chairman.

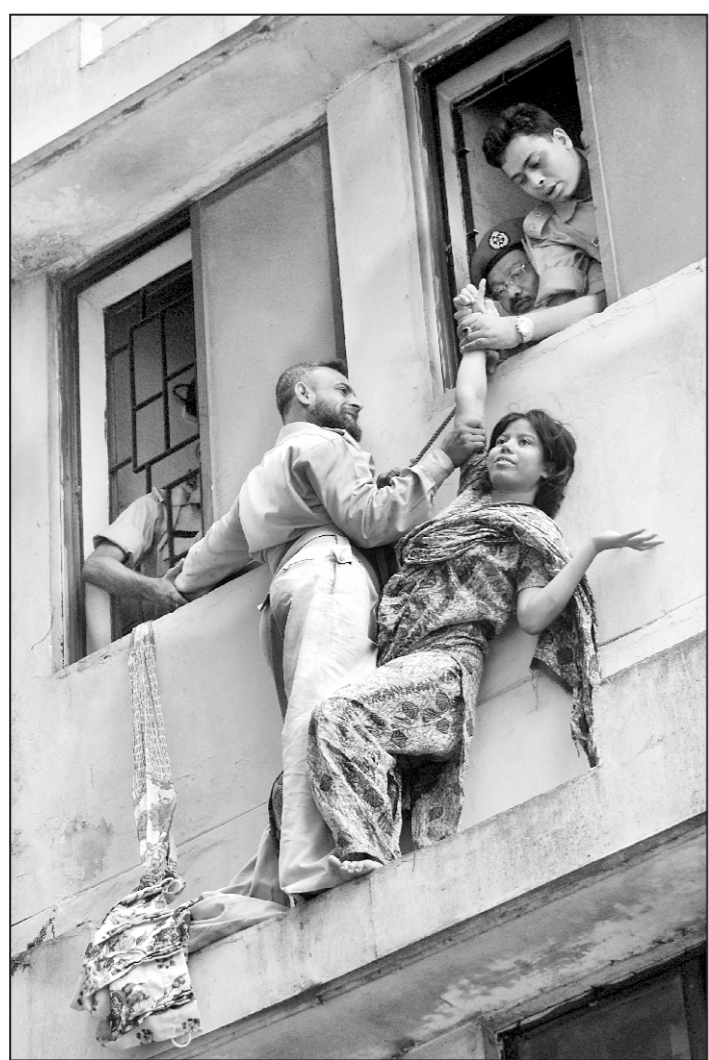
Obituary



Jafreen Naz Musshak, a famous designer, passed away due to meningitis at the age of 36 at Ibne Sina Hospital in the city on Tuesday, says a press release.

She is survived by her husband, a son, a brother and a sister.

A Qurankhwani and doa mahfil will be held at her 687/C Malibagh Chowdhurypara residence in the city after Asr prayers tomorrow.



STAR PHOTO

Members of Fire Service rescue a domestic help from a sunshade of a building at Eskaton in the city yesterday after she jumped out of a window of the bathroom in a flat where she worked. She tried to commit suicide due to torture by her employers.

Weather Today Thundershowers likely UNB, Dhaka. Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at one or two places over all the divisions in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

'Repression on minorities on the rise'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Repression on minorities has increased in recent months ahead of the upcoming parliamentary elections, said speakers at a press conference yesterday.

The press conference was organised by Bangladesh Human Rights Defenders Group (BHRDG) at the National Press Club in the city as the International Khatme Nobuwat Movement has declared to launch a fresh attack on an Ahmadiyah mosque at Nakhalpara in the city tomorrow.

The religious thugs tried to launch attacks on the mosque twice on October 6 and 13 but failed due to police resistance.

"We are worried over the frequency of attacks on minorities including Ahmadiyah community. The religion-based cliques are inciting these attacks to bring election to their favour," said Sharif A Kafi, director of Bangladesh Development Partnership Centre.

He regretted that Bangladesh which has a long tradition of religious tolerance to minorities is being pushed towards fundamentalism by some vested quarters.

"These are the people who are trying to tarnish the image of the country and encouraging the western nations to put a tag of 'fundamentalism' on Bangladesh," he added. Citing examples of Nakhalpara and Ashkona in the city, Dhanikholra under Trishal in Mymensingh and Jyotindranagar in Sakthira, Sharif said the attacks were carried out by people from outside the locality.

He urged the government, home ministry and police administration to ensure protection of the Ahmadiyah and all other minority communities. The speakers also called on International Khatme Nobuwat Movement to discard fanaticism and communalism.

Afroza Akhtar, member-secretary of Nari O Manobadhikar Foundation, Benjira Shaheen, member-secretary of Bangladesh Coalition for Child Rights, Farida Hossain, member of Nari Pakkha, and Ajmol Hossain, director of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, also spoke on the occasion.

Dr Siddique new PIB DG

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dr Abdul Hye Siddique took over as director general of the Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) yesterday, said a PIB press release.

Before joining the PIB, Dr Siddique had been working as intake editor of 'Bangla Vision' a private satellite television channel.