

# Law governing cable TV to be enacted soon

UNB, Dhaka

The government is formulating a law to regulate the cable television networks of the country. A preliminary draft of the proposed legislation titled "Cable Television Networks (Regulation and Management) 2002" has already been prepared by the Ministry of Information.

"An inter-ministerial consultation on the draft law will take place soon and after that the draft law is likely to be finalised within 8-10 weeks," Information Secretary Mirza Tasaddiq Hussain Beg told UNB yesterday.

The draft would be finalised after discussion with all the stakeholders, he said.

The law will bring the satellite channel distributors and operators under government registration and they will be levied a new license fee.

A separate advertisement policy will be made for the programmes to be broadcast through the cable services. The policy will have guidelines to guard against the screening of vulgar and violent actions as well as anything that will go against the culture and heritage of the country.

Asked about the cable operator's strike across the country since Thursday, the information secretary said the key demand of the cable operators relates to the imposition of additional supplementary duty. This does not fall within the purview of the ministry of information, he said.

He suggested to the cable operators to sort out their problems with the distributors of pay channels since, according to them, some of those problems are related to the distributors.

Beg felt that operators should initiate a dialogue with the distributors in order to reach a mutually acceptable settlement.

"Distributors and operators must make an effort to bring the crisis to an end in their own interest as well as in the interest of the viewers," he said adding that the government is conscious of their problems and will do everything possible to resolve the crisis.

Official sources said the satellite cable operators rarely paid the license fee to the government

exchequer, causing loss of huge revenue over the years.

A very small number of cable operators have paid the license fees, and as there was no law to catch them, the government did not take any steps to collect the fees, said a top official of the Information Ministry requesting anonymity.

## Tremor jolts Ctg again

UNB, Dhaka

An earthquake measuring 4.14 in the Richter scale jolted the port city of Chittagong yesterday (Saturday) at 1:38 pm. It lasted 27 seconds.

The epicenter of the tremor was 253 kilometres from Chittagong. Its intensity was light, said a press release of Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

## ETV transmission Writ seeking HC order for continuation

BSS, Dhaka

A writ petition was filed yesterday with the High Court seeking its order for continuation of Ekushey Television's transmission.

Fifteen petitioners including former Chief Justice Kemal Uddin Hossain and writer Humayun Ahmed jointly filed the petition, lawyers said.

The petition will move before the court on Saturday next.

A division bench of the HC had earlier declared the licensing agreement between the government and ETV illegal upon a writ petition which challenged the agreement.

ETV filed petitions of leave to appeal before the Appellate Division challenging the High Court judgement.

After hearing the petitions, the Appellate Division rejected leave to appeal.



Violating traffic rules, rickshaws use the opening in the road divider on the busy Dhaka-Chittagong highway to get on the other side of the road. On-duty policemen are also bribed into looking the other way.

## Charges framed

FROM PAGE 12

Hearing both sides, the court rejected the petition and framed charges against the accused.

Nasim, also joint convener of Awami Sechchasebok League, was arrested from ZIA on February 27 on charge of smuggling foreign currency.

Later, he was shown arrested in a case filed with Madaripur Sadar thana on charge of firing gunshots on the motorcade of the then opposition leader Khaleda Zia.

The investigation of the case submitted a charge sheet against Nasim to the CMM's Court, Dhaka, on April 12.

Meanwhile, a sedition case against Nasim was filed with the CMM's Court on March 11.

## Newsman

FROM PAGE 1

hoodlums after the Prothom Alo published a report exposing the ruling party thugs who were involved in land grabbing in the area.

On July 9, a gang of about six youths, led by Ekjal Hossain, picked Ratan from near his home and took him away in a white microbus at around 5:00pm. The abductors took the young journalist to Manikganj where he was tortured until 1:00am. Ekjal Hossain then took Ratan to his (Ekjal's) house at Losmanganj in Zinzira and confined him inside a room with his hands and legs tied.

The following morning Ekjal and his nephews, Azad and Selim, came to the house and tortured the reporter again. In the afternoon, the armed trio dragged a limping Ratan to a secluded spot near the river Buriganga and allegedly tried to slaughter him.

"When the three men tried to slaughter me I lost my consciousness and when I regained sense I found myself at the Mitford Hospital," Ratan narrated the story while sitting in his hideout.

The hoodlums are now threatening the parents and relatives of Ratan to withdraw the case or face dire consequences.

It was learnt that Ekjal and his gang are well connected with the police and regularly hold meetings with them inside the Keraniganj Police Station. The local people think it is unlikely that he would ever be caught and tried for his crimes. Ekjal is also wanted on charges of rape and murder.

When telephoned, the duty officer of the police station said the officer-in-charge was out of station and that he did not know anything about Ratan's abduction.

## UNDP tele-scam

FROM PAGE 12

representative rejoins office tomorrow.

Meantime, the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has ordered the BTB to "redress expeditiously" the inflated UNDP telephone bills.

In a July 17 notice, BTRC Commissioner Muhammad Rezaul Haque quoted a Star report the commissioner asked the state-run telecom monopoly to "investigate with special attention" the UNDP complaints. The regulator's directive came "as a part of its responsibility to look to the interest of the customers".

BTRC Chairman Syed Marghub Morshed has also expressed his concern while talking to The Daily Star late last week.

"I am highly embarrassed by the misdeed of some BTB functionary who are responsible for tampering with the UNDP telephone," he said.

According to Section 68 of the Telecom Act, such offenders should be sentenced to prison for a term not exceeding five years or to a fine not exceeding Tk five lakh or to both, he said.

# BUET bans student politics

FROM PAGE 1

the campus situation improves when the university reopens on August 3," Prof. Ahmed said. He added that the authorities would review the campus situation from time to time and act accordingly.

Asked whether the decision had anything to do with the recent remarks of the prime minister in the parliament and the reports of the Education Reforms Committee that recommended banning campus politics, he said the members of the academic council might have been influenced by these.

Sources said some members of the academic council however debated whether student politics should be banned. They expressed deep frustration over the long closure of the university.

The meeting also decided to prepare separate IDs for teachers, students, officers and employees. "We have already sanctioned nearly Tk 13 lakh for the project," said the VC.

Crisis at BUET stemmed from

the killing of Sabequn Nahar Sony during a gunfight between two factions of the ruling BNP-backed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) over capture of a tender schedule on June 8.

On June 9, the authorities suspended the academic activities till July 3 and vacated the residential halls following mounting tension among the students and teachers.

As the situation remained unchanged, the closure was extended twice till July 31.

Ban draws flak

Meanwhile, the decision to ban political activities and suspend the EUCSU has drawn scathing criticism from student bodies.

President of the BUET unit of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) Moniruzzaman has slammed moratorium on student politics.

"They (the authorities) have taken the decision to mask their failure to punish Sony's killers and restore normalcy on the campus," he regretted.

He added that the ban would not

do any good to the university as long as the masterminds of the BUET shoot-out on June 8 roam freely.

Assistant General Secretary of EUCSU Md. Nurul Hasan termed the decision to suspend the EUCSU ridiculous. "They just cannot do it since EUCSU is a non-political platform and not responsible for crisis."

Central Vice-president of the JCD Selimuzzaman Selim said such a decision should have been taken after consultation with the BUET student bodies. "Nobody can assure that the situation will be peaceful after the decision. Rather, the situation might deteriorate."

Former elected Vice-president (VP) of EUCSU Tariq bin Aziz said the authorities can close everything but not the EUCSU as it is 'permitted' in the ordinance. "EUCSU is a platform for general students and academic activities of BUET has never been affected by its activities," he added.

# Admin promotion

FROM PAGE 12

several times and framed a policy to give promotion to over 400 senior assistant secretaries to the post of deputy secretary.

Meantime, officials said the senior assistant secretaries of 1985 batch of the administration cadre have also started hectic lobbying to get promoted as deputy secretaries. Even officials who joined the 1990 batch are also lobbying for promotion.

Officials alleged that one of the assistant private secretaries (APS) of the prime minister, who exercises a great deal of influence since the BNP came to office, is dictating who is to be promoted and who is not to be.

They said most of the senior and junior officials are highly annoyed with the activities of the APS for his interference with administrative activities, particularly promotions, transfers and postings of officials.

The officials said the APS is trying to get his own men promoted at the cost of officials who deserve promotion since long. Officials said they came to know that arrangements have been made to promote officials from batches between 1982 and 1990 so that the APS can accommodate his own men.

A senior bureaucrat, who preferred not to be named, said he has suggested to the government to create more vacancy for the posts of deputy secretary and joint secretary by giving some promotion in the higher tier levels.

He said if the acting secretaries are promoted as secretary, a good number of posts will automatically be vacant in the joint secretary and additional secretary positions. And, it will help more senior assistant secretaries to get promoted as deputy secretaries.

But, according to him, the senior bureaucrats does not want to give promotion to the acting secretaries through an easy method although a good number of posts for secretary lying vacant.

An influential BNP leader and minister told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity that the policy under which the promotion was given to the post of joint secretary and more promotions to the post of deputy secretary are planned is basically not a policy at all. Many innocent officials are being victimised due to such a discriminatory policy, he added.

He viewed that the promotions should be given through examina-

tions; otherwise, controversies, deprivations and injustices will prevail. He alleged that some senior bureaucrats had created some complexities in the administration, which still creep in time and again.

The minister, however, said promotion to the vacant posts of deputy secretary will be given soon and over 400 senior assistant secretaries will be promoted to the post of deputy secretary.

He said although the number of vacant posts for deputy secretary is about 370, the government has decided to promote an additional 10 per cent of the officials under the prime minister's authority to accommodate more people.

Meanwhile, sources said a good number of senior assistant secretaries of the 1982 and 1984 batches are preparing to take recourse to law should they be superseded by their juniors.

The government is also worried about a possible furore in the administration over the issue of promotion. Senior ministers have suggested to the prime minister to promote officials according to seniority until the examination system is introduced.

# Gas export not now

FROM PAGE 1

The committee also feels that if gas export becomes a reality in future, all international oil companies should be treated equally in this regard.

"Bangladesh cannot side with a particular oil company like Unocal. It should open the door to all to ensure maximum national interest," said the source.

"The committee does not undermine the importance of IOC investment in the energy sector because the country needs them. And that's why we are going to suggest that incremental gas export may be considered in future," said a committee member.

Previously, Executive Director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, who is also a member of the committee, put forward an economic analysis to argue that the country was not in a position to export gas now. He also said export might be contemplated on an incremental basis in case of new gas discovery.

His arguments were contradicted by two BUET professors of the chemical engineering depart-

ment -- M Tamim and Ijaz Hossain. They argued that the US oil company Unocal would be disappointed if the committee did not 'favour 'limited' gas export from its Bibiyana gas field.

Their arguments were countered on the ground that it was not the committee's task to favour any particular oil company or to decide on gas export.

Earlier, Dr Debapriya in his economic analysis said the country has enough financial muscle power to pay for the IOC gas without much difficulty.

At yesterday's meeting, seven members argued that if the country goes for immediate export, it would deplete the reserves before 2015.

Even a proven gas reserve of 15 trillion cubic feet (TCF) -- a figure spelled out by the national committee on gas reserve -- was not enough to meet the domestic demand for the next 20 years.

Finally, against such arguments the two BUET professors shifted their position, sources said. "The report will make it clear that it is more important to keep the current reserves for home than to

earn a few hundred million dollars through pipeline export," said a committee member.

The committee believes that pipeline export would marginally improve the balance of payment situation, contradicting the arguments of the oil companies and international donors.

The committee headed by former energy secretary Azim Uddin Ahmed consists of Petrobangla Director (finance) SR Osmani, Petrobangla Director (operations) Dr M Ismail, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Executive Director Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, chartered accountant MA Hafiz, BUET Chemical Engineering Department professors M Tamim and Dr Ijaz Hossain, Dhaka University teacher Professor Momtajuddin Ahmed and BIDS Research Director Dr KAS Murshid.

The committee also felt that the payment problems faced by Petrobangla were purely due to lack of governance. "If it is not improved, gas exports cannot help the situation," noted a source.

# SI Altaf murder case handed over to DB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The case of murder of Sub Inspector (SI) Altaf Hossain, who was shot dead Wednesday by unidentified gunmen on the Khulna-Mongla highway, has been handed over to the detective branch (DB) for investigation.

A total of 73 people have so far been taken into custody under section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).

But leaders of political parties including the four-party alliance said none of the suspects arrested so far are the real culprits involved in the murder, and brought allegations of police excesses in the name of operations.

A senior officer of the Bagerhat District Police while talking to this correspondent over phone yester-

day said the murder was committed by armed cadres of the Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) in order to demoralise the police as well as terrorise people. He also refuted the allegation of police excesses during combing operations.

Superintendent of Police of Bagerhat expressed his optimism about finding the real motive behind the murder of SI Altaf Hossain. He, however, did not rule out the possibility of involvement of a Mafia group linked with 'Hundi Kajoj' of Kotchandpur. Also, it has been suggested that SI Altaf was himself involved in the hundi business and had invested a huge amount of money in it. But his relation with Kajoj's cadres soured when he pressed them for returning his money.

# Colombo Test

FROM PAGE 1

Mashud, however, put up a brave face against a poor track record that included a defeat inside three days at the hands of the islanders during the Asian Test Championship last year.

But the question is how good they will do against the wounded lions, who are taking the two-match series as an ideal opportunity to regain some of their lost pride after being battered by England.

The islanders lost the three-Test series 0-2. On top of that they also lost five of their six preliminary round matches of the tri-nation one-day series.

Bangladesh, who arrived here ten days ago and already played two practice matches, however, did not look worried about that after they came back brilliantly in the practice matches from losing positions.

"The players are now more sensible about their career than the past. They have proved that they can rectify their errors and play better. That is giving me the confidence to say that we will do better this time," said Mashud while talking to reporters at the net yesterday afternoon.

He added that his team was developing day by day and it was the right time to show their worth.

But what Mashud did not say was his inexperienced bowling depart-

ment where he has only two dependable bowlers in Enamul Hoque and Monjurul Islam.

With two fast bowlers, Mashrafe-bin-Mortuza and Mohammad Sharif, missing out for injuries, Bangladesh have been forced to call in the services of new bowlers Talha Jubair and Alamgir Kabir.

"We are going to give importance to our batting. If we can score big total, I think the bowlers will have some thing to fight with," said Bangladesh captain.

When reminded that Sri Lanka would try their best to get back their confidence, Mashud gave hardly any importance to that.

"I don't think in that way because we have improved a lot these days. If my players can play according to the demand of the situation, I think it would be a good match to watch," said Mashud without giving any clear idea on his target.

But his Sri Lankan counterpart Sanath Jayasuriya made no bones about his intentions.

"It's a good chance for us to get back into the winning ways after we badly lost to England and we are very much looking forward to this match," he said.

**Teams**  
Bangladesh: Khaled Mashud (captain), Hannan Sarkar, Al-Shahriar, Ehsanul Haque, Habibul Bashar, Amimul Islam, Akram Khan, Enamul Hoque, Monjurul Islam, Alamgir Kabir and Talha Jubair.

Sri Lanka (from): Sanath Jayasuriya (captain), Marwan Atapattu, Mahela Jayawardene, Aravinda de Silva, Russel Arnold, Hashan Tillekeratne, Kumar Sangakkara, Muttiah Muralitharan, Dilhara Fernando, Thilan Samarawijera, Hashantha Fernando, Sujeewa de Silva, Upul Chandana and Charita Buddhika.  
Umpires: Steve Bucknor (West Indies) and David Shepherd (England).

Match Referee: Wasim Raza (Pakistan).

# Shomi Kaiser sues former husband

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Actress Shomi Kaiser has filed a family suit against her former husband Ringo with the Fourth Assistant Judge's court, Dhaka yesterday claiming Tk 11,50,001 as demohr and alimony.

Judge (in-charge) SM Ershad Alam took the lawsuit into cognisance and ordered it to be transferred to another court for disposal.

In her complaint, Shomi Kaiser alleged that Ringo, her former husband, converted to Islam on March 19, 1999, and changed his name to Redwan Rashid alias Arnab Banerjee alias Ringo, and they married before the "Notary Public of Dhaka, Bangladesh" on April 15 of the same year. Later, the demohr amount was settled at Tk 10,00,001 and their marriage solemnised in a befitting manner at a Kazi office on May 31, 1999, and afterwards the marriage was consummated. But before long, she learnt about Ringo's previous marriage with his first wife Kakoli Banerjee and also a child from that marriage.

When she (Shomi) wanted to know about the matter from Ringo, he became very angry with her and abused her both physically and mentally. Finding no other alternative, she then sent Ringo a bill of divorce on January 17 this year. The divorce came through on May 26 in accordance with the Muslim Law. Moreover, Shomi served a legal notice through her mother demanding her demohr and alimony from Ringo on June 30, but Ringo refused to pay the money.

Shomi Kaiser is a well-known actress in Bangladesh. She has acted in several films and television serials. Her husband Ringo is also an actor and a director.

The divorce case was filed in the court of the Fourth Assistant Judge, Dhaka, on June 10, 1999. The court has fixed the date of the trial for July 10, 1999.

# Trisha

FROM PAGE 1

hold a mass rally in this connection.

Trisha, a student of class four at Madhyapara primary school in the town, while returning home from school was chased allegedly by local youths Mehdi Hasan, Shaheen, Ashraf and some others. In a bid to save herself from their grip, the only daughter of Abdus Sattar jumped into a roadside pond and drowned. The accused were caught by local people and handed over to police.

The main accused, Mehdi, has confessed before a magistrate his involvement in the offence.

# Shahriar

FROM PAGE 12

Later, the court directed the government to return his passport for four weeks from the date of his departure from the country.

On behalf of Shahriar, Barrister Amir-ul-Islam submitted arguments in the court.

Shahriar Kabir was arrested by the government on November 22 last year from the Zia International Airport and later implicated in a treason case.

# Migration cost

FROM PAGE 12

Mohammad Qamrul Islam would chair the meeting to be held at the ministry.

Almost half of the more than 700 recruitment licence holders in the country are now inactive. Many of the inactive ones often create problems by sending people abroad without government approval or without getting specific job orders, sources mentioned.

Under the new guidelines, a recruiter would have to send abroad a specified minimum of number of workers for retaining his licence. If he fails, his licence would be cancelled, sources said.

When contacted, Qamrul Islam said a new guideline is needed because the existing one was formulated about 20 years ago. If necessary, major changes would also be made in the Manpower Export Ordinance 1982, incorporating the latest changes in the overseas employment process,' he added.

The state minister however noted that changes in the ordinance can be made by the parliament. But a guideline can be formulated and declared by the ministry. "We would decide the whole thing after discussion with the recruiters and take stringent measures to enforce the

decisions," he said.

The government wants to ensure at least two lakh fresh overseas employment during the current fiscal as against around 1.80 lakh in the past fiscal, he mentioned.

The state minister further said the government is also taking steps for development of the skill of workers seeking job abroad. "There would be a clause in the new guidelines that the recruiters must give the minimum required training to the workers before sending them abroad."

Recruiting agencies would be asked to set up training centres and skill development projects. Otherwise, their licences might not be renewed, he said.

Asked about much higher amounts charged by recruiting agencies for sending workers abroad, the state minister said this would come under control after the introduction of a 'data based system'.

The Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) has been given the task of developing a computer software for this and almost half of the work has already been done, Qamrul said. "We hope to get the system within six months."

# Talks: Cable TV

FROM PAGE 1

account of their problems. The ministry of information will review the application, comply with any logical demand, and then forward it to the ministry of finance and planning for approval, the secretary told BSS.

The government is also drafting a set of new rules to streamline the cable TV business, which is likely to be finalised in the next two months. The ministries of information, finance, law, and cultural affairs are preparing this report. The final draft of the report will be reviewed by the ministry of law, BSS added.

Meanwhile, the shutdown by 1500 cable TV operators has left the viewers with only two terrestrial television channels to choose from the state run Bangladesh Television (BTV) and the private Ekushe Television (ETV).

Nearly one million viewers of cable TV are deprived from enjoying the about 100 foreign entertainment and news.

The cable operators of Bangladesh (COAB) and the Bangladesh Satellite Cable Network Owner's Association (SCNOA) jointly enforced the strike to press home their demands including formulation of a national policy for cable business, withdrawal of the supplementary taxes on pay channels, declaration of tax holiday on cable business for the next five years and the imposition of unlimited imports of pay channels

by the distributors.

Critical of the monopolistic attitude of the two cable channel distributors-Translink International and Nationwide Communications Limited, the COAB and SCNOA representatives have been seeking government's intervention to resolve the matter.

They also demanded that the government form a 'satellite channel censor board' to regulate the cable channels. The two organisations unanimously decided to stop telecasting cable channels at a rally Wednesday.

However, one cable operator, Prisma Digital (PDL) has started its service at Banani, Gulshan, New and Old DOHS area in the city from Monday morning.

In a statement signed by PDL's managing director M. Shawkat Husain yesterday said that they are under severe pressure and threats for its operation in the area.

The statement alleged that a group of unidentified cable operators with two microbuses and two private cars damaged its sophisticated fibre optic network on Monday night. They cut the wires in different places to disrupt PDL's network service.

Nationwide Communications Limited will hold a press conference today to explain their position about PDL's claim, said a press release yesterday.