

No more pvt TV, radio channels before passage of new law

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

More private television and radio channels are unlikely to get permission to go on air until the Private Broadcast Media (Radio and Television) Bill 2004 is passed in parliament aiming to control the electronic media, officials said.

"Preparation of uniform guidelines has become urgent as the information ministry continues to receive applications for permission to run private radio and satellite television channels," said AMM Nasiruddin, information secretary.

Sources in the ministry said they have so far received around 30 applications for private satellite television channels and 15 for radio.

The permission for satellite TV channels has been snaggled in red tape for a long time after the government granted permission to seven channels -- Channel i, ATN Bangla, International Television (ntv), Inquilab Television (ITV), Universal Television (UTV), Jamuna Television (JTV), and Ekushey Television (ETV).

At present, ATN Bangla, Channel i and ntv are on air while ITV, UTV and JTV have failed to start telecast within 365 days of getting permission as per rule. ETV's contract was cancelled in line with a Supreme Court order.

Two separate policy guidelines were prepared in 1998 for private radio and television channels but the government later decided to formulate a comprehensive policy to encourage competition and ensure professionalism in the electronic media.



"We have already collected the policies and regulations of other Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation) countries and a committee is working on the proposed regulations," the information secretary said.

New radio or TV channels may get permission before the passage of the Bill if government decides to permit any on urgent basis, he said.

Currently, Bangladesh has no law for private radio and television channels. The authorities use some acts including the Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1885, the Telegraph Act, 1933 and Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC) Act, 2001, to allocate frequency for and oversee technology

cal aspects of the channels.

After the ETV scandal, the information ministry worked out a draft regulation aiming to give it a legal form. The draft was referred to the parliamentary standing committee on information ministry for further scrutiny.

According to the draft, all private satellite channels would require licence, a provision that does not exist in the existing guidelines. It says the channels already on air -- ATN Bangla, Channel i and ntv -- would require fresh licences under the new law.

The draft also proposes government permission for transfer of shares and licences, strict enforcement of Bangladesh Telecommuni-

cations Act 2001, suspension and cancellation of licences, investigation into violation of the law and punishment to the offenders under the criminal laws and fines of up to Tk 20 lakh.

The draft law provides for compulsory licensing, a system for scrutiny of applications, issuance of first time licence for five years and renewal of licences.

According to the draft, the government will invite applications from people interested in setting up radio and TV channels and a six-member committee headed by the chairman nominated by the government will issue the licence.

Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission and

directors general Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television will nominate one each member and the government will nominate two under technically skilled person category.

The committee will consider the financial and technical capability of the applicants, location of the stations and skills of the manpower. It will also examine whether the applicants have anti-state or anti-people roles or attitudes.

Foreign nationals, firms not registered under Companies Act, registered companies with less than Tk 1 crore paid-up capital and people or companies defaulting on loans from government or private financial institutions will not be eligible to apply for the licence.

According to the draft, broadcast of news, special programmes and advertisements by private channels will be controlled by the act. The programmes of national importance such as speeches, news broadcast by state-owned BTB and Betar and government handouts, must be aired or rerun by the channels for free.

Violation of some provisions of the proposed law will be considered as criminal offence. For the first time offence, offenders will be fined Tk 10 lakh and in default will have to serve a three-month jail term. Each offence after the first one will carry a fine of Tk 20 lakh and six months imprisonment, in default.

Failures to pay any outstanding amount for a licence, transfer of more than 50 percent shares without permission and violation of any

term will result in cancellation and suspension of licence, says a draft.

The organisations so far applied for permission to run private satellite channels include Media One, Liberty Television, Dhaka TeleFilm, Telebangla, Bishal Multimedia, KTV, Bengal News, Janata Television, Daffodil Multimedia, Bishal Music, Bijoy Broadcasting Univision, Bangla Television, Maxel Multimedia, Development Media TV Channel, SAS World, TV Bangla, Bangladesh Channel USA, Nationwide Communication, Bangla TV London, Probashi Television Network, National Television, Baishakhi Television, Sonali Television, Gazi Satellite Network, and Movie Tone Media Communication.

The entrepreneurs are from various professions -- they include industrialists, former vice chancellor, newspaper editor and expatriates. Many of them do not have strong economic background. "To establish a satellite television channel it needs about Tk 60 crore," said marketing manager of an existing satellite television channel.

There is an allegation that some are lobbying with the ministers and influential persons in the government to get permission on priority basis. But the existing entrepreneurs think more channels may distort already crunched market unless the market itself gets bigger.

Media experts are, however, optimistic to see more channels that would create more job opportunities, more competition, more exposure, and expand market as well.

city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

"We have tolerated enough. We don't want rajakars to be more powerful in this country"

-- Mujahidul Islam Selim

Secretary General, Communist Party of Bangladesh
Told journalists at a press conference on November 18 while announcing simultaneous antigovernment programme.
Source: The Daily Star



"If a person is bad, it is not fair to call him bad directly"

-- M Saifur Rahman

Finance Minister
Said on November 20 before leaving Dhaka for Germany to meet Transparency International executives.
Source: The Daily Star

"NBR (National Board of Revenue) personnel consider us as thieves and themselves as police"

-- Jamal Uddin

President, Shop-owners Association
Said on November 20 at a protest meeting against locking up of shops by NBR authority.
Source: Bhorer Kagoj

"Please do not write anything that will harm us. Write that we need more 100 metric ton of wheat seeds"

-- Aminur Rashid

Deputy Assistant Director (Seed Marketing), BADC, Magura
Told Prothom Alo on November 20 avoiding to comment on selling wheat seeds in black market.
Source: Prothom Alo

"You do not need to know all these things. Go to Sarda for training if you feel like to know everything"

-- Muhammed Nurul Haque

Officer in Charge
Laksmi Police Station
Told Prothom Alo on November 19 when asked about bond to release an arrestee.
Source: Prothom Alo

"How could a student of the university that had students like Buddhadev Basu and others who contributed so much in the Language Movement and Liberation War, commit such a crime!"

-- Niranjan Das

School teacher of Manpura, Bhola
Said on November 19 after a youth mugged him in front of Kala Bhaban of Dhaka University.
Source: Prothom Alo

Fake cosmetics flood market on weak watchdog role

FAIZUL KHAN TANIM

With winter approaching, sale of low quality and fake cosmetics have increased in the city as unscrupulous businessmen are taking advantage of the ineffectiveness of the Bangladesh Standard Testing Institute (BSTI) which does not have a specific law to deal with this problem.

These products are mainly sold on the streets and small shops where raids by law enforcers are minimal. Cosmetics like lip gel, skin balm etc. are not on the BSTI's monitoring list which includes some 142 items. Because of this, fake cosmetic producers are getting away with their business and are exposing the general people to potential health hazard.

Cheap lip gels and balms contain steroids which can cause severe skin disorder.

"The contents of these prod-

ucts can induce different types of allergies including photo allergy which happens when lip gel is applied to the skin which comes in contact with the ray of the sun. This could result in irritation, pimples and rashes," said Dr Shafiqul Islam, assistant professor of dermatology and venereology department of Uttara Medical College.

"During winter, patients with skin diseases caused by use of fake and cheap cosmetics increase by 10 to 20 percent at clinics and hospitals," said another doctor.

The targeted customers of such products are the low-income group with a high percentage of Dhaka's 10 lakh female garment workers being regular consumers.

"We are unaware of the fact that these creams can be hazardous. We cannot afford the brand products with our salary and therefore we are dependent on these cheap

cosmetics for skincare," said Shirin, an 18 years old garment worker from Tejgaon.

With the advent of winter, reputed local and international companies have begun launching their cosmetic products. But items from unknown, nondescript cosmetic houses have also flooded the city's shops and markets.

These products of dubious quality mainly originate from factories situated near the Buriganga River, Tejgaon, Jinjira and Mohakhali according to sources.

"Cheap raw materials are used and unrefined petroleum is often applied to the creams and gels to give them a sticky feel while limestone powder is added to develop whiteness," informed Rahmatullah who works in one such factory in Jinjira.

Another employee said that no one ever comes to check what they



were making. But while the stuff is being sold on the streets, patrol police often evict vendors. Still cheap and fake cosmetic business

is a profitable and largely hassle-free venture, claimed sellers.

A large number of bottles and containers of brand creams, body

sprays and lotions, both foreign and local, are sold in the open at Chawk Bazar in old Dhaka. They are suspiciously less price than the rates mentioned on the bottles.

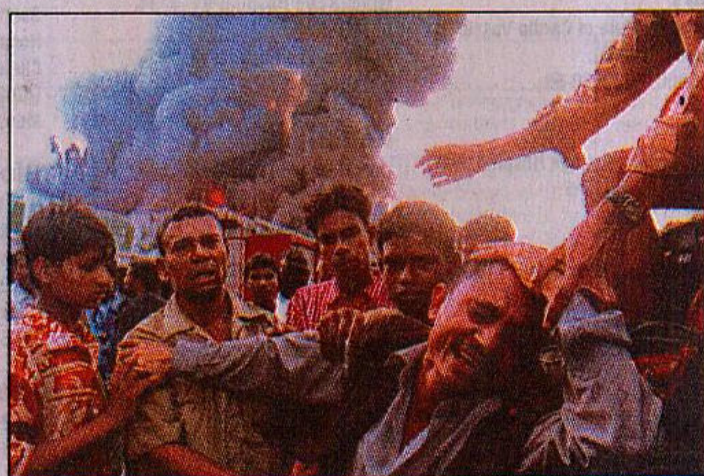
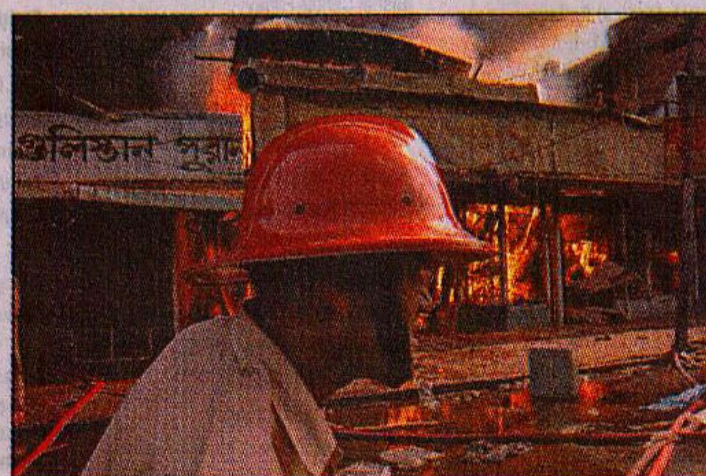
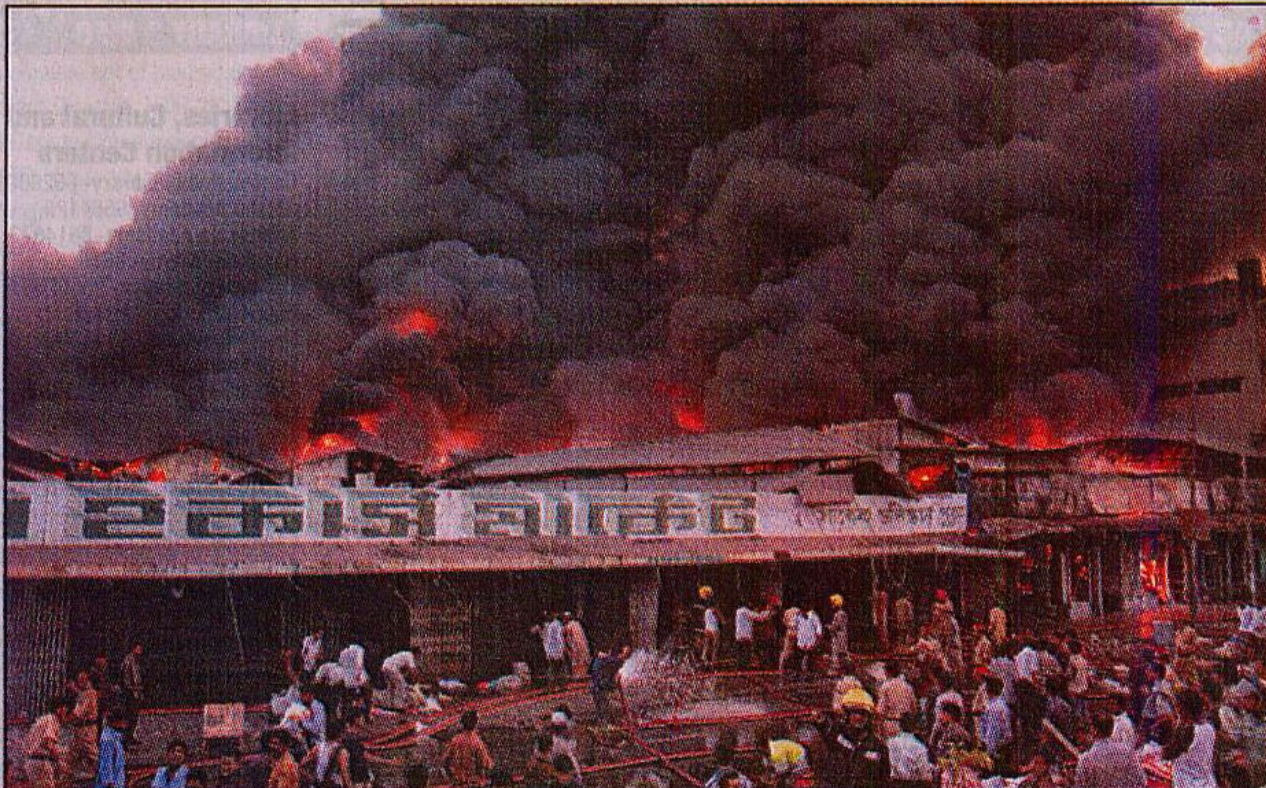
"The stuff inside is definitely fake as they do not have any seal covering the cap and the bottles also look dirty," said Sharif Ahmed a customer.

Some items like 'Nomark body lotion' or 'Sofia cream' had used exactly the same font and style as Johnson's and Nivea products in a clear bid to deceive customers.

"We are aware of such fake products. However, it is the duty of the BSTI's surveillance team and mobile courts to take action against the people and shops selling them,"

said Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) general secretary Quazi Farouque.

LOST TO INFERNO



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN & AMRAN HOSSAIN

A thick column of smokes rises over New Bangabazar Hawkers' Market (right) as fire gutted the market on one acre of land at Gullistan; a fireman looks on with helplessness as flames leap inside the shops (middle); shop owners lament the loss estimated to be around Tk 150 crore.