Also more or less absent, notes Harun, are game shows. "The Bangladeshi audience just do not take to game shows as much," he says. Harun recalls a time when game shows were introduced, but they did not strike a chord with our audience.

Shykh Seraj of Channel i believes that what is missing in many of the existing shows is specialisation. "Daily news and events are covered, news-related issues are discussed, but they are not very in-depth," he says. "They could be more research-oriented. More background work is needed, but this requires a lot of time, dedication and training, which most of us lack or are unwilling to give."

As for the issue of there being too many channels, Kha Ma Harun believes that there are as many channels as are needed, with room for more. "It's the demand of the times," says Harun. "We have some 10 channels. Neighbouring India and China have around eight and 10 times our population respectively. Accordingly, India has over a hundred channels, and China has over a thousand. And these are not only for entertainment. In China, for example, official instructions are aired on the channels telling people what to do, many of the channels being specific to different cities or municipalities."

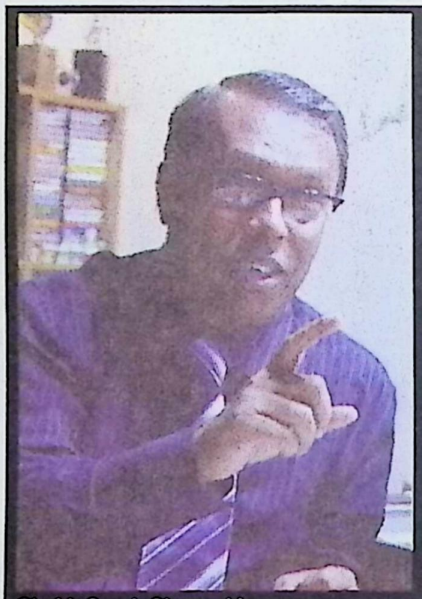
Despite the spread of television, people still read newspapers, says Harun, which just goes to show that no one medium can take over another. "Each will run at its own pace," he says. "Newspaper circulation has actually risen. This is due to increasing literacy and a growing middle and upper class who get the latest news on television but read the paper the next morning for the news in detail."

In addition, says Harun, the television industry has contributed to the economy. "Where there was only BTV, now some 10 private channels and hundreds of production houses employ lakhs of employees who provide for thousands of families. They include producers, directors, writers, editors, technical crew, etc., all of whom have helped build the industry."

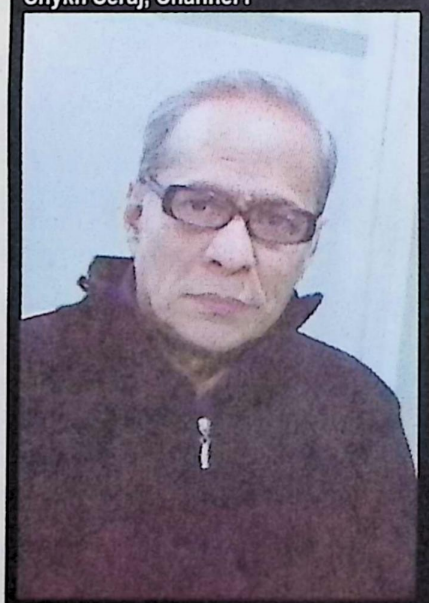
And indeed, the Bangladeshi television industry is a growing one, with new channels going on the air every few months. There are currently 10 private channels in operation and a few on test transmission, with 69 more reportedly awaiting government permission to launch. Also due to go on the air soon is Bangladesh's first 24-hours news channel, CSB TV News. It seems that in our country, television channels have become like any other commodity for sale. How else does one explain an ad in a national daily asking the reader to "Own a TV Channel" for as little as $USD 9,950?

Yet, even with all the competition, credibility is still an issue.

"I don't trust the news even on private channels," says Riaz Ahmed. "They seem to be a bit slanted. BTV may be the government mouthpiece, but private channels also seem to be the mouthpiece of their owners, many of


Shykh Seraj, Channel i


Nawazish Ali Khan, ATN Bangla


Mustafa Kamal Sayed, ntv


Kha Ma Harun, Rtv