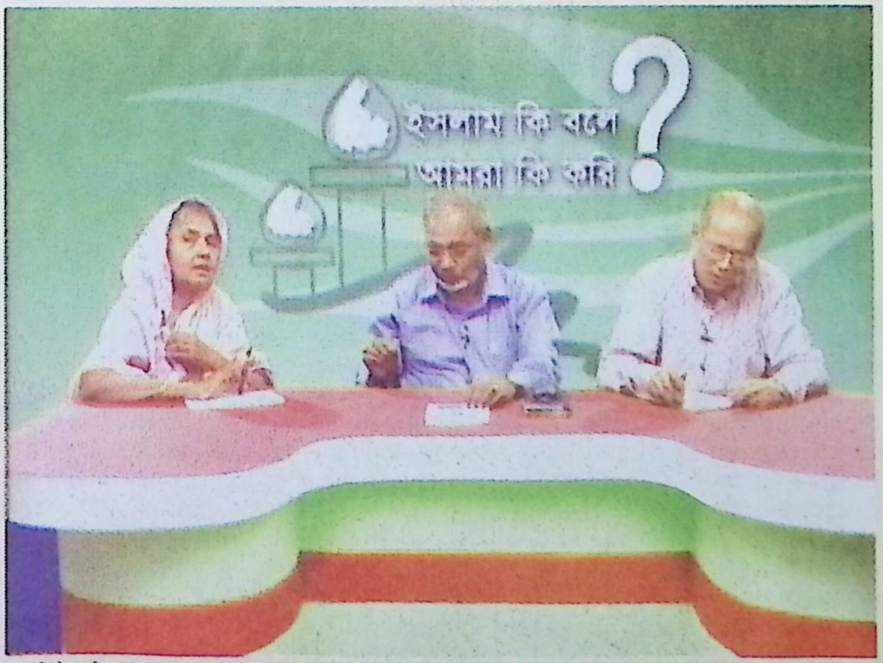
whom are, interestingly, immediate past government lawmakers while one or two of them seem to support the opposition. You can tell by the angle they take on political news items, especially with the elections coming up and all the turmoil surrounding it."

It is alleged that objectivity and democracy are lacking even on private television channels. Media experts, academicians and politicians have pointed out that in the absence of proper media policy, licences for launching new channels are given based on political consideration. Thus the launching of at least five channels during the immediate past government's tenure, owned by its party members and cronies. And, with the upcoming elections, a change in power -- or not -- may be reflected on the silver screen. The closing down of ETV in 2002 -- allegedly due to political reasons -- is still fresh in people's minds, especially now that the channel has begun test transmission under the current caretaker government, on its way to being re-launched.

The threat of politicians and businesspeople becoming journalists is a grave one to press freedom and objectivity. There is always the question of just where these politicians got the estimated 60 to 70 crore taka to effectively run a television station. In addition, the dark deeds of the owning politicians -- as well as large advertising sponsors -- will be conveniently covered up by the media. Those of their adversaries will be highlighted and the audience will be left at a loss, trying to piece things together and figure out for themselves what exactly is happening.



On "Meet the Press", politicians take questions from journalists in the different media.



On Islamic programmes Muslim clerics discuss and answer audience queries on religion.

Overall, however, the response to private television channels has been positive.

"There is no inbuilt mechanism for rating programmes in our country," says Mustafa Kamal Sayed of ntv, "but audience response in the form of letters, emails, etc., is good."

Kha Ma Harun, however, refers to the ratings of Sirius, an organisation which rates the top 25 programmes of each day for advertisers. "Many of Rtv's programmes are often on their list," says Harun, "including 'R music', 'Hi tension', 'Prithibir Pothe Pothe' (a travel show) and 'Just Band'."

A proper system of rating programmes is, however, necessary, says Harun, and organisations should come forward to do this.

Television has entered a new era where its purpose is not merely to entertain. Today, not only does it inform the audience about the latest in what is happening, but it gives them the opportunity to express themselves by voicing their own thoughts and opinions. The glamour of the silver screen combined with its education-information value and, most recently, its interactivity, has made television more popular and more important than ever before. ■