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Unregulated pay channels cost Tk 100cr revenue a yr

PORIMOL PALMA

The government is being deprived of an annual revenue income of Tk 100 crore as pay channel businesses remain unregulated, while some cable operators allegedly remit money abroad for using devices smuggled in from India.

Leaders of Cable Operators' Association of Bangladesh (Coab) say they have 3,200 members who connect 2.5 lakh households across the country. But businesses and experts estimate that only Dhaka and Chittagong have over 10 lakh customers of pay channels.

This estimate is substantiated by national media survey 2002 by The Communication Initiative Network that says 83 percent people of 15-49 age group in urban areas and 50 percent in rural areas watch television.

A few cable operators even admitted they declare less number of households connected with

channels to evade taxes. They claimed they have to do this as the government has not addressed the issues that increase their business costs.

As per the government rules, cable operators charge each customer Tk 300 and pay 15 percent VAT (value added tax). On the other hand, distributors of channels pay the government 32.25 percent VAT and supplementary duty.

Considering taxes and duty payable by operators and distributors, the government is supposed to get around 40 percent of the money collected by operators. This means if the operators collect Tk 30 crore from 10 lakh subscribers, the government is supposed to get Tk 12 crore a month and Tk 144 crore a year.

But considering 2.5 lakh connections, the government does not get more than Tk 3 crore or 40 percent of Tk 7.5 crore per month.

According to the National Board of Revenue (NBR), it collected Tk 2.4 crore as VAT and supplementary duty from the cable operators and pay channel distributors in 2006-07 fiscal year. This amount will slightly increase in current fiscal year, an NBR official said.

"Dodging the taxes is possible because the government does not have a mechanism to estimate the exact number of connections, though Coab declares it to be 2.5 lakh," says a pay channel distributor.

Contacted, Coab President SM Anwar Parvez said there might be cases that cable operators may declare the pay channel connections less than the actual number. But the government should not play dual role about the matter, he added.

"The government directed cable operators to charge each client Tk 300 monthly, but it did not fix our

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



Agitating students of Khulna University vandalise a signboard of a community police office on Khulna-Satkira highway during their road blockade early yesterday. The students wreck and roll over an ambulance on the highway during agitation. Story on page 1.



PHOTO STAR

DISCUSSION WITH SCF No electoral alliance with anti-liberation elements, says AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) yesterday announced it would not enter into any electoral alliance with the anti-liberation war forces.

The announcement came after a view-exchange meeting with the Sector Commanders' Forum (SCF), a platform of those who led the war in all sectors.

Held at the Forum's central office at Banani, the meeting was the first in a series of discussions planned to convince political parties not to ally themselves with war criminals.

The war heroes said they along with other freedom fighters would oppose the parties siding with anti-liberation forces and urge people not to vote for them.

In response, AL leaders pledged they would try the war criminals if they come to power through the next general election.

Led by president member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, a six-member delegation of the party took part in the talks that lasted about one hour.

"We are committed not to form any electoral alliance with anti-liberation war forces and not to nominate anyone who had worked against independence," AL acting General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam told journalists after the meeting chaired by Sector Commanders' Forum President air vice-marshal (ret'd) AK Khandker.

"We also gave word to the sector commanders that we will try the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Patronise good filmmakers, create greater market

Roundtable at The Daily Star told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Termining cinema a strong medium for reflecting life and the society, filmmakers and cultural activists yesterday called for launching a film movement in the country in collaboration with the government and private entrepreneurs.

There are plenty of good ideas and good filmmakers, but there is a lack of patronisation and initiatives for collaborative work with other countries, which could have created a greater market for cinema, they said.

The observations came out of a roundtable discussion on 'Films we want made', organised as a part of an ongoing contest of movies, photographs, and lyrics titled Celebrating Life 2008, sponsored by Standard Chartered Bank and The Daily Star.

The roundtable was held in the conference room of The Daily Star.

"If our market is only Bangladesh, we will have problems. In Europe some countries involve other countries in directing and producing films, and it helped in creating a larger market for films there," said eminent filmmaker Tareque Masud.

They also pick story lines that are multi-cultural and multi-ethnic, he said adding that filmmakers of Bangladesh should also collaborate with India, Nepal and Pakistan to create a larger market for cinema.

He also suggested expanding the market for art in the country and improving the environment in movie theatres to attract viewers.

There are young Bangladeshi entrepreneurs working in the film industry in Britain, Masud said

adding, "We should communicate with them, we should be smart."

Chandra Shekhar Saha, a designer, said movie goers' attitudes and tastes also changed in line with the developments of technology, resulting in a decrease in their numbers.

The media can play a very important role in popularising cinema, he said adding that good movies sometimes are not considered good because of a lack of media coverage, while low quality movies sometimes hit the box office due to media attention.

In Bangladesh, there is a serious shortage of documentary films, which sometimes may have serious positive effects on viewers, he said.

Young filmmaker Animesh Aich said there is no lack of rich ideas

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



PHOTO STAR

People started placing containers in this queue for water at Moghbazar Wireless Gate in the capital as early as 4:00am. The area has been suffering an acute water crisis for 20 days.

100 killed in new Nigeria pipeline inferno

AFP, Lagos

An oil pipeline explosion killed about 100 people on Thursday near a primary school in a suburb north of Lagos, the Red Cross said.

An earth-moving excavator at a road construction site accidentally burst the pipeline causing the explosion and an inferno which engulfed adults and children stood nearby. Red Cross official Sule Mekudi told AFP from the site of the disaster.

The blast erupted near a primary school in the suburban town of Ijegan, and the area was littered with shoes and bags belonging to pupils, a journalist at the scene told AFP.

Local people threw sand and water at the flames in a bid to help firefighters extinguish the blaze, witnesses said.

"About 100 people were confirmed dead in the explosion. We have also evacuated about 20 others to the Ikeja general hospital," Mekudi told AFP. Most of the injured had suffered serious burns, he added.

Pipeline fires are commonplace in Nigeria, Africa's biggest oil producer, in part because of poor pipeline maintenance but also because of thieves who vandalise pipelines to siphon off petrol to sell on the black market.

On December 25, around 40 people died in a fire at a pipeline in a creek in Lagos after it was

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

'Most units in city have no ETP, discharge waste into rivers'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Most industries in the capital are yet to install Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) for safeguarding the city's surrounding rivers from further pollution although the deadline for mandatory installation of ETP in all industries ended six months ago, environmentalists said yesterday.

Out of 7,000 industries, only 102 have installed ETP while the rest are still discharging waste water into the rivers, they revealed at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity.

"The decision to install ETP in all industries by October 31, 2007 was made at a meeting between two advisers and associations of industry owners on March 22, 2007. But only 102 industries said they have set up ETP," said Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon President (BAPA) Prof Muzaffer Ahmad.

He also said 35 out of 200 industries under Bangladesh Jewellery Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BJMEA), 47 out of 131 industries under Bangladesh

Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) and 20 out of 200 industries under Washing Industries Association (WIA) have installed the ETP. But the government is not monitoring whether the ETP set up in the industries are working properly or not.

He urged the government to recover the encroached areas on river banks to restore the original size of the rivers.

Muzaffer, also the chairman of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) also made suggestions for recovering the encroached areas along the river

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Prayer Timing

May 17

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-10	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-36	6-40
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation



PHOTO STAR

The arms, ammunition and firearms-making equipment recovered at Ugoichhari in Rangamati yesterday. Story on page 1.



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Gas cylinders of two vehicles explode after collision: 10 hurt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Ten persons were injured as a microbus and a private car collided head-on on Brahmanbaria-Comilla Road in sadar upazila of the district yesterday. Cylinders of both the CNG-run vehicles exploded after the collision, badly damaging the vehicles.

Of the injured, Jahidul Islam, 35,

assistant vice-president of One Bank, and his brother Arfan, 32, were sent to Dhaka Square Hospital in a critical condition.

Five more injured--Abul Khair, 50, Mohammad Alamgir, 50, Moudud, 25, Anwar, 60, and Mominul, 50--all from Chandpur, were admitted to sadar hospital.

The rest were given first aid at

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The Daily Star

Coming out tomorrow - Star Campus

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