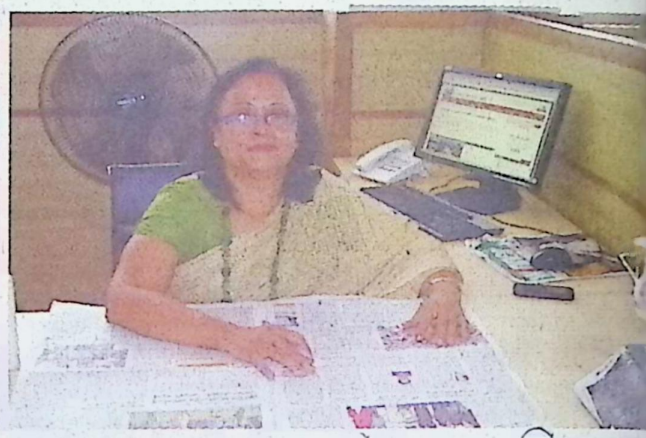


Nasimun Ara Huq

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Parveen Sultana Jhuma

The percentage of women in the news room is significantly lower than that of men. A H M Moazzem Hossain, Editor of the Financial Express says, "The remuneration package offered to journalists is significantly lower than that in other professions. Many highly skilled, English-medium educated women would join journalism if attractive salaries and benefits were offered to them."

Women need freedom and security and equal opportunities to realise their full potential as journalists. But conditions are far from ideal. Parveen Sultana Jhuma, Assistant editor, *Shokaler Khobor* and General Secretary, *Bangladesh Nari Shangbadik Kendra* says, "I know about an executive editor who does not want to hire women because they may need maternity leave for six months. In some media houses, women are laid off when they reach a certain age. An editor, well known for his progressive mindset said after interviewing a woman, "Why do they send these older women to us? We want young women." Another editor used to harass women sexually but stopped when confronted by the victims. A female journalist of a TV channel was invited by her boss to his residence while his wife was away. When she did not agree, she was harassed and forced to leave her job. There are very few women in decision making positions in the media. When there is a downsizing, women journalists are the first ones to be laid off. Women are encouraged to report on child development and other "soft" issues. The High Court issued a writ directing each and every organisation to form a cell to hear complaints of sexual harassment. I do not know any media houses that complied."



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Lack of security is something they face on a daily basis.

Lack of family support is another problem. Latefa Ansery Runa, staff reporter, of *Machranga* TV, Chittagong Bureau says, "I had full support of my parents when I started as a journalist. After I got married, members of my husband's family supported me initially. But as I started doing well as a journalist, they became jealous and stopped cooperating with me."

Journalists who are women are called "female journalists" in Bangladesh. "We do not say women architects, women bankers. Then why do we use the term 'female journalists'?" asks Munni Saha, Head of News, ATN News.