

# WHO OWNS THE MEDIA IN BANGLADESH?



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## **PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS**

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## ABOUT THE REPORT

While there has been a significant growth of the media industry during the last two decades, Bangladesh has also experienced serious erosion of media freedom. To unpack the complex relationship between ownership and media, gathering data and understanding the overlapping features of ownership are essential. It is against this background that this report has explored the question: who owns the media in Bangladesh? Relevant information and statistics on the media in Bangladesh—both in terms of numbers of media outlets and their typologies, e.g., print, electronic, radio and web-based etc., the nature of media ownership and the scope of press freedom are presented in this report.

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# WHO OWNS THE MEDIA IN BANGLADESH ?

Ali Riaz & Mohammad Sajjadur Rahman

## INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh, which has seen a dramatic growth of various media in the past decade, is also considered by international media watch groups as a country with a very poor record of media freedom. The country has also witnessed a serious erosion of democracy. This seemingly contradictory trend – media proliferation and weak media freedom - calls for an exploration of the Bangladeshi mediascape, particularly who owns the media and what relationship the media has with politics. Since the media no longer solely *informs*, it also *shapes* politics. As such, media accountability and transparency are vital for the effective functioning of democracies and a vital indicator of a vibrant democracy. A lack of transparency in media ownership implies that vested interest groups may skew public attention by creating media hype. Understanding media ownership in a given country is, therefore, essential to map its political and social trajectory.

It is against this background that this report has explored the question: who owns the media in Bangladesh? Relevant information and statistics on the media in Bangladesh—both in terms of numbers of media outlets and their typologies, e.g., print, electronic, radio and web-based etc., the nature of media ownership and the scope of press freedom are presented in this report. This report is expected to provide insights into the degree of media transparency and accountability in Bangladesh and help chart any potential challenges arising from media ownership patterns.

Emerged in 1971, the Bangladeshi state has experienced both military and non-military rule. Although political turmoil has characterized most of its 49 years of existence, the country is also known as a "development paradox" for its consistent economic growth, particularly during the last decades. The early eighties and nineties saw a wide-ranging reorganization of the administrative structure such that the country now has eight divisions subdivided into 64 districts. Bangladesh experienced a democratic transition in 1991 and since then the two major political parties, the Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) have been alternating in power until 2006. The Bangladesh National Party (BNP) formed the government three times, 1991-1996, 1996,

and 2001-2006 while the Awami League's (AL) reign was 1996-2001, 2009-2014, 2014-2018, and 2018-to date. A plethora of political parties have had a presence in this polity of 160 million people. Since 2014, due to widespread allegations of election irregularities, human rights abuses, and poor governance, the country's political system is increasingly being identified as a "one-party state,"<sup>1</sup> "autocratic,"<sup>2</sup> and "hybrid regime."<sup>3</sup>

## **BANGLADESHI MEDIASCAPE**

Bangladesh has 45 private television channels, 28 FM and 32 community radio stations, 1,248 daily newspapers, and more than 100 online news portals.<sup>4</sup> There is hardly any reliable data available on the economic size of the media industry in Bangladesh. An online report, citing corporate research, states that the media industry in Bangladesh is worth 27 billion taka (2016) with an annual growth rate of 10-12 percent. The same report suggests that during the 2012-2016 period, the television industry saw growth of 200 percent, the print media 150 percent, radio 350 percent, and the digital platform 1500 percent, respectively.<sup>5</sup> However, the Covid-19 pandemic has adversely impacted the media landscape.<sup>6</sup> On July 2, 2020, it was reported that only 86 newspapers were still in business while 254 newspapers had to shut down. Only seven Bangla and four English newspapers were able to pay their staff. Salaries have been held up for months and the printed edition is scaled down in a bid to survive. The Newspaper Owners Association of Bangladesh (NOAB) alleges that the current national budget (2020-2021) did not reflect their demands, and the lives and livelihood of journalists and staff working for the newspaper industry have become more precarious than ever. The Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) confirms that around 1000 journalists lost their jobs or are not receiving wages in the months since the pandemic hit the country and have already applied for a special fund, launched in June 2020, through which each qualified journalist can get Taka 10000 (US \$125). It also reported that most of the district level newspapers have been shut down in this dire situation. Several professional forums, including NOAB, Bangladesh Sangbadpatra Parishad (organization of the newspaper editors), the Association of Television Channel Owners (ATCO), Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ), and Dhaka Reporters Unity have requested protection demands, without any success, from the government.<sup>7</sup>

## **BACKGROUND**

The mediascape in Bangladesh has witnessed various transformations regarding structure, content, consumption, and ownership since the 1990s, when the country entered the democratic era. Apart from the democratic revival in 1991, Bangladeshi media have been impacted by the introduction of new communication technologies and the undeniable impacts of globalization at about the same time. Furthermore, the neoliberal policies transformed the Bangladeshi economy from a closed aid-dependent country to an open economy where competition thrived due to the introduction of new media. Further, the



government is said to have lost its position as the sole arbiter within the media ecology. Consequently, during the past two decades, Bangladeshi media have experienced significant growth. However, while in power, both leading political parties have failed to deliver the promised autonomy for the state-controlled media or to ensure media freedom in general. Various administrative and legal restrictions have historically characterized the culture of control over the media, both public and private, by the state machinery.

Bangladeshi print media had private ownership even before independence, but in the post-liberation period, in 1975, when one-party rule (BAKSAL) was introduced for a brief period, all but four state-owned newspapers were closed. Later, the print media continued to remain the major platform for news and views. According to the 2016 National Media Survey (NMS), print media in Bangladesh enjoys 23.8 percent readership, making it the second most widespread media.<sup>8</sup> It is widely known that the government follows a discriminatory policy in distributing its advertisements to the newspapers as part of its strategy to control and contain press freedom (For a list of enlisted newspapers, see, Appendix 1).

The state-owned single broadcaster, Bangladesh Television or *BTV*, often dubbed as the ruling party's mouthpiece, enjoyed a monopoly until the 1990s. The legalization of Television Receive Only Dish (TVRO) in 1992 enabled a few international channels to be available. Bangladesh entered the era of commercial satellite television with the launching of *ATN Bangla* in 1997, *Channel i* in 1999, and *Ekushey Television* in 2000. The Nielsen 2017 survey shows that TV is the most popular media in Bangladesh as viewership rose to 84 percent in 2016 from 74 percent in 2011.<sup>9</sup> Awarding TV licenses to pro-government politicians and people in business has remained a constant feature since the introduction of commercial satellite television.

The state-owned radio network - *Bangladesh Betar* - also enjoyed a monopoly until the arrival of commercial and community radio stations (See, Appendix 2) after 1998. Although *Bangladesh Betar* has a robust countrywide network with listeners from both urban and rural areas, it has not been able to flourish because successive governments have used this media for state propaganda, which has essentially been an unrequited publicity of the ruling party and the leaders. Consequently, the popularity of its news and other programs have dropped considerably. According to NMS (2016), national listenership is at only 12.4 percent of the population, while it is slightly higher in the urban areas, at 16.7 percent.<sup>10</sup>

The availability of digital technology and push from the government for the wide use of digital technology has also impacted the media industry, compelling most of the media outlets to ensure digital presence along with their traditional activities. According to the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), the number of internet users in Bangladesh exceeded 100 million in March 2020.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, online news

portals are becoming increasingly important sources for news and opinion. The first online news portal in Bangladesh (*bdnews24.com*) started in 2004, and in 2019, eight thousand applications for online news portals were submitted for registration.<sup>12</sup>

## WHAT DO WE KNOW?

Media freedom or ownership in Bangladesh is not systematically and widely studied. Studies based on rigorous research and evidence have highlighted the media's role in elections (Chowdhury 2018), fake news (Ahmed 2018), state control (Ahmed 2020), the impact of laws on digital media (Haq 2019), and the impact of market demand (Shoesmith & Genilo 2013). Rahman (2017 and 2020) is the only exception who examined the media ownership question, initially on news production but later on the media's nexus with politics.

Generally, most semi-scholarly research papers on freedom of the press and political control revolve around the elections. One such study (Chowdhury, 2018) focuses on the role media can play in strengthening democratic institutions. Its arguments are exploratory and, at the same time, normative in nature, which seems to put the burden on the media in ensuring fair elections. Another study (Ahmed, 2020) argues that the Fourth Estate has succumbed to an unparalleled state control like all other private sectors that were compelled to surrender to the ruling class. He brings in some recent examples, such as enacting the draconian Digital Security Act 2018 (DSA), to contend that "News management is no longer required since the news is manufactured and dictated by the state." This was again accomplished when the government claims an unprecedented level of flourishing of privately-owned media. The author explores the issue of political meddling in the media in the last four decades. The evidence suggests that this trend is nothing new. Previous governments, both democratically elected and military regimes, sought to exert control over the media in Bangladesh, often stifling any room for reasonable criticism. Several government bodies, including the law enforcement agencies, the armed forces intelligence, the telecommunications regulatory authority—all were involved in either censoring information or threatening anyone who criticizes the government.

Recently 'fake news', its impact, and political ramifications have also attracted attention within media studies. However, the focus has mostly been on the religion-based parties who "stoke communal tensions and disseminate fundamentalist propaganda" (Ahmed 2018, 910). They attribute the torrent of fake news on BNP-Jamaat's futile attempt to defame the Shahbagh movement (a movement demanding justice for the war crimes in 2013) as 'atheist,' and the role played by *Naya Diganta* and *Amar Desh*.

The Digital Security Act 2018 and National Broadcast Policy 2014, among others, have

created a 'culture of fear' and forced disappearance, 'crossfire' and 'encounter,' wiretapping etc. have facilitated instilling such fear (Haq, 2019). A study focusing on the digital platforms and hence citizen journalism argues that these regulations give the law enforcement agencies enormous power to apply them on the mainstream media houses.

One of the main arguments of some recent studies is that the media industry is now being controlled by market forces and the state has somewhat lost its grip over the industry due to private investments and the introduction of new media and social media. Brian Shoemith & Jude William Genilo's edited volume (2013) on Bangladeshi mediascape is one such study. However, given the politico-business nexus in Bangladesh, it is questionable how far the media industry can choose its paths.

Anis Rahman's (2017) work closely hinges on the question of media ownership, and the role played by political parties. He, however, sought to answer these questions from the perspective of neoliberal deregulation and privatization and analyzes how it affects the production of news. But it seems that one of the limitations of this study is that it explains this 'politico-commercial nexus' between political parties and media houses at a rudimentary level by looking at how political manipulation may occur at the preparatory and licensing stages. However, there are valid reasons to argue that the process of exerting political control may be more complex, and there is a symbiotic relation despite the presence of dependence on the part of the media on the state.

A noticeable research gap on press freedom and media ownership in Bangladesh is easily discernible. Some studies have tacitly sought to show that the press has slowly but persistently been taken over by politics, particularly by the incumbent, but they have not delved into it further. The politics-media nexus has been a general trend in the country for decades, yet woefully absent is the exploration of the extent of politicization of the media. Notwithstanding the general knowledge that political forces directly influence news through ownership structure and that a symbiotic relationship exists between political parties in Bangladesh and media houses owned by various business groups, there is no documented study to show it.

## **HOW DID WE GATHER DATA?**

This report is largely informed by similar media ownership surveys conducted elsewhere and makes use of similar data collection methods, such as Media Ownership Monitor (MOM) of Reporters Borders (RSF), which had published in-depth reports on several countries including India and Sri Lanka; and Resource Centre on Media Freedom in Europe project of Italy-based European Centre for Press and Media Freedom.<sup>13</sup>

Primary data for understanding the nature and scope of ownership of the media and its

relationship with politics are gathered from the various media entities, government, and non-government sources in Bangladesh. The report identifies the major news outlets—print, television, radio, and news portal. In the case of print media, the focus has been given to the daily newspapers with national readership, and which also happen to be associated with large business groups. Regional dailies were not included in the study. Electronic media outlets were also selected based on their affiliated business interests.

A brief history of selected media, for example, when it started and if there were any change of ownership, was traced. Mapping of the interrelationship of various media if a group has both television stations and newspapers, and web portals, has been identified through network mapping. A casual observation of media ownership reveals that most of the media owners also own other business entities. Thus, their business interests have the potential to influence media content. The connections between various business entities have been explored in this report. The goal is to understand the political affiliations of the media. The details about the Board of Directors were collected from all major television, print, and online media outlets. The data related to change in leadership and ownership were useful to understand how these changes are often precipitated by political power transition.

This report includes information about selected 48 media outlets (newspapers, radio, television and web portals) of 32 business entities (Table 1). The list of the sample does not reflect the media's reach or significance; they are listed by business conglomerates in alphabetical order. Data were gathered between November 2019 and October 2020. While analyzing the patterns of ownership, we, however, have used a few examples beyond these lists that are well known cases.

Additionally, individual profiles of the owners of each of the outlets with information about their background, education, political or business affiliation, and family ties are presented. The board of directors, organogram, CEOs, and editors of each of these media outlets were collected from their official websites, other official sources, and personal communication. Relevant legal case materials on the respective individuals, where available, are mentioned. These pieces of information were correct as of November 2020. Secondary sources, including government publications, academic journal articles and media reports, are used to describe the overall mediascape in Bangladesh.

**Table 1 Selected Business Groups and their Media Outlets**

Name of the Media Outlet	Company Name	Business Conglomerates	Media Type
1. Asian TV	Asian Telecast Ltd.	Asian Group	TV
2. Asian Radio	Asian Radio Ltd.	Asian Group	Radio

3.	News24	East West Media Group Ltd.	Bashundhara Group	TV
4.	Kaler Kantha	East West Media Group Ltd.	Bashundhara Group	Newspaper
5.	Bangladesh Pratidin	East West Media Group Ltd.	Bashundhara Group	Newspaper
6.	The Daily Sun	East West Media Group Ltd.	Bashundhara Group	Newspaper
7.	Banglanews24.com	East West Media Group Ltd.	Bashundhara Group	Online
8.	Radio Capital	East West Media Group Ltd.	Bashundhara Group	Radio
9.	RTV	Bengal Media Corporation Ltd.	Bengal Group	TV
10.	Independent TV	Beximco Media Ltd.	Beximco Group	TV
11.	Daily Independent	Independent Publications Limited	Beximco Group	Newspaper
12.	Somoy TV	Somoy Media Ltd.	City Group	TV
13.	Gazi TV	Gazi Satellite Television Ltd	Gazi Group	TV
14.	Sarabangla.net	N/A	Gazi Group	Online
15.	Dhaka Tribune	2A Media Ltd.	Gemcon Group	Newspaper
16.	Bangla Tribune	2A Media Ltd.	Gemcon Group	Newspaper
17.	Janakantha	Janakantha Ltd.	Globe Janakantha Paribar	Shilpa Newspaper
18.	Channel 24	Times Media Ltd.	HaMeem Group	TV
19.	Samakal	Times Media Ltd.	HaMeem Group	Newspaper
20.	The New Age	Media New Age Ltd.	HRC Group	Newspaper
21.	Jaijaidin	Jaijaidin Publications Ltd.	HRC Group	Newspaper
22.	Channel i	N/A	Impress Group	TV
23.	Radio Bhumi	Gangchil Media Ltd.	Impress Group	Radio
24.	Jamuna TV	Jamuna Media Ltd.	Jamuna Group	TV
25.	Jugantor	N/A	Jamuna Group	Newspaper
26.	Desh TV	Mediascene Limited	Karnaphuli Group	TV
27.	Bhorer Kagoj	Mediascene Limited	Karnaphuli Group	Newspaper

28.	Daily Bonik Barta	BizBangla Media Limited	LankaBangla Securities Limited	Newspaper
29.	Ekattor TV	N/A	Meghna Group	TV
30.	Nagorik TV	Jadoo Media Ltd.	Mohammadi Group	TV
31.	The Business Standard	The Horizon Media and Publication Ltd.	Orion Group	Newspaper
32.	Desh Rupantor	N/A	Rupayan Group	Newspaper
33.	Ekushey TV	N/A	S Alam Group	TV
34.	SA TV	SA Channel Pvt. Limited	SA Paribahan	TV
35.	Maasranga TV	Maasranga Communications Ltd	Square Group	TV
36.	The Daily Star	Media World Ltd.	Transcom Group	Newspaper
37.	The Daily Prothom Alo	Media Star Ltd.	Transcom Group	Newspaper
38.	ABC Radio	Media Star Ltd.	Transcom Group	Radio
39.	Amader Somoy	New Vision Media Ltd.	Unique Group	Newspaper
40.	Banglavisian	Shamol Bangla Media Ltd.	N/A	TV
41.	NTV	International Television Channel Ltd.	N/A	TV
42.	DBC News	Dhaka Bangla Media and Communication Ltd.	N/A	TV
43.	ATN News	Multimedia Production Company	N/A	TV
44.	ATN Bangla	Multimedia Production Company	N/A	TV
45.	The Daily Observer	Observer Ltd.	N/A	Newspaper
46.	Naya Diganta	Diganta Media Corporation Ltd.	N/A	Newspaper
47.	BDNews24.com	Bangladesh News 24 Hours Ltd	N/A	Online
48.	The Daily Ittefaq	Ittefaq group of publications Limited	N/A	Newspaper

Although information about various dimensions of ownership was gathered, financial statements of print and electronic media outlets could hardly be found. This means that we could not always scrutinize audit reports, revenue, or annual statements given out to shareholders. There is also no reliable database for understanding the market share of the

media outlets or determining the Television Rating Point (TRP). Although the Department of Films and Publication of the Ministry of Information publishes an annual list regarding the circulation numbers of newspapers and magazines enlisted with the government as a basis for determining the rate of government advertisement,<sup>14</sup> the list has been considered unreliable<sup>15</sup> for various reasons.<sup>16</sup> The circulation numbers are provided by the respective newspapers and are not independently verified. In many instances, these numbers are inflated by the newspapers to secure a higher rate of advertisements. Besides, the report includes newspapers and magazines which have a very low level of circulation or exist only in name.<sup>17</sup> There are also allegations that political considerations play an important part in being included on the list and securing government support in the form of advertisements. This can be described as a patronage dispensation mechanism to keep the media in line with government policy. The 2008 policy<sup>18</sup> of the government regarding the distribution of advertisements (amended in 2010)<sup>19</sup> set out five criteria which include, the number of circulations; publicity of the government development programs; and upholding the spirit of the liberation war, not publishing news contrary to state principles and policies, news which may demean the state's image and undermine the national security. The last two criteria are open to different interpretations. Considering these issues with the government policy, we decided not to use the government-produced circulation lists as the basis for selecting newspapers.

## **ARGUMENTS ON POLITICS OF THE MEDIA FREEDOM AND OWNERSHIP**

Discussions on media freedom and transparency in Bangladesh generate two conflicting strands of arguments: one underscores the increasing attenuation of freedom of the press as the country witnessed the decline of democratic space, while the other points to the increased number of electronic and print media under the present government. On several occasions, the ruling party leaders, including Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, have claimed that the Bangladeshi media is enjoying "complete freedom."<sup>20</sup> However, Bangladesh does not fare well in the media freedom index. Reporters Without Borders' Press Freedom Index ranked Bangladesh 150 out of 180 countries in 2019 and 151 in 2020—the lowest among South Asian nations.<sup>21</sup> A recent Freedom House report showed that physical violence and threats against journalists are perpetrated with impunity. Murders and other forms of violence against journalists, reporters, and bloggers have often gone unpunished in Bangladesh. The report also revealed that the country's journalists face the risks of sedition, defamation, and harsh legal consequences. This has led to a growing and alarming trend of self-censorship among journalists, and the government remains a major source of this fear.<sup>22</sup> The space for valid criticism of people in power is shrinking. The global media watchdog, Reporters Without Borders, reported that at least 25 journalists and several hundred bloggers and Facebook users were prosecuted under the ICT Act in 2017 alone.<sup>23</sup>

Freedom of the media and expression has been curtailed through the enactment of stricter

laws. Internationally acclaimed photojournalist Shahidul Alam was arrested in August 2018 under the Information and Communication Technology Act (ICT, 2006 as amended in 2013) for posting a video of student protests on Facebook that criticized the government and commenting about the same protest on *Al Jazeera*. This, however, is not an isolated event. Arrests by plainclothes police under the ICT Act became common in Bangladesh until a few provisions of the law were annulled and replaced with the DSA 2018. There have been several instances of news portals being blocked by the country's telecom regulatory body – BTRC. The Digital Security Act (DSA) became law in October 2018 and under this new law, "obtaining papers, information, or pictures from government offices without official consent" have been penalized which "would make investigative journalism on corruption, human rights abuses and bad governance very tough, if not impossible."<sup>24</sup> This problem is exacerbated by the fact that most television channels and print media are owned and controlled by individuals who appear to be close to the ruling party. The current government issued permits for more than a dozen television channels in the last few years. Out of 45 licensed private television channels, over 25 are in operation. But applications for new channels and media outlets undergo a background check by the intelligence agencies and are accompanied by legislators' recommendations before they are permitted to operate.<sup>25</sup>

Given this strict background check, it is no wonder that many media outlets remain in the hands of individuals and/or groups close to the ruling party. A few examples further shed light on how tightly the media ownership is controlled. Five of the television channels are directly owned by current ruling party MPs. They are Morshed Alam (*RTV*), Golam Dastagir Gazi (*Gazi TV*), Kamal Ahmed Majumdar (*Mohona TV*), Saber Hossain Chowdhury (*Desh TV*) and Shahriar Alam (*Duronto TV*). Besides, Salman F Rahman, who is appointed as the Private Industry and Investment Advisor to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, owns a major share of a private television channel *Independent TV* and a daily newspaper *The Daily Independent*. Until his recent appointment, he was the president of the Association of Television Channel Owners (ATCO)—the organization that determines the popularity of TV channels through TRP.<sup>26</sup> It is also alleged that media outlets critical of the government risk losing their revenues as government agencies instruct private companies not to advertise in these media. The direct intervention of the government agencies to shape the media content and treatment of news became blatant during the military-backed government in 2007-2008. The editor of *The Daily Star*, Mahfuz Anam, acknowledged in 2016 that during the emergency period Directorate General of Defense Forces (DFGI), the country's most powerful intelligence agency, provided 'unsubstantiated' information of corruption about political leaders including Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia which were published by the media. These pieces of information were not 'independently verified.' He admitted that publishing these in his newspaper was 'a big mistake.'<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, media owners seem to be willing to be connected to political parties. A draft 'Private Television Channel Establishment and Operation Policy 2012' proposed that political parties and individuals



affiliated with them be barred from owning a television channel. This provision, however, was opposed by Mosaddeq Ali Falu—the then president of ATCO and a former BNP legislator.<sup>28</sup>

The second strand of arguments comes from government officials, ruling party leaders, and their supporters. They argue that enormous achievements have been made over the last decade in the media sector. The conducive government policies, it is claimed, have helped create new media outlets. As mentioned before, there are more than 25 privately-owned television channels currently operating in Bangladesh, out of 45 licenses already issued by the government. This trend is matched by an equally increasing number of print media. The government has also launched a communication satellite from which electronic media is already reaping benefits. However, this line of argument seems to conflate the number with the quality and the extent of freedom.

The reliability of news depends on the credibility of the provider. It is also crucial to understand how the media are controlled in Bangladesh, how its ownership has changed over time, and how closely the media outlet owners are affiliated with major political parties. However, both arguments critically hinge on one issue—media ownership and reliability and transparency of the information they provide. Although the number of news providers is mushrooming, we observed that they remain in the hands of few conglomerates or individuals close to the ruling party and the government. Not only has the media sector witnessed changes in ownership in the last decade after the Bangladesh Awami League came to power, but the government has ensured effective control over media houses through various legal and extralegal measures. Anis Rahman has claimed:

With a combination of conglomerate and non-conglomerate television ownership, Bangladesh shows elements of both non-consolidated and consolidated industry formation. The industry started with a non-consolidated pattern when licenses were allocated on an ad hoc basis at the discretion of political parties. With the growth of conglomeration in the media industry, television has become a site of corporate financialization, in which the government remains the key enforcer of political power. Intriguingly, all the companies received their licenses from the Awami League regime. This indicates that the Awami League, as the ruling political party of the hybrid regime, has an elaborate alliance with the richest domestic conglomerates, and are forging a unique form of politico-commercial power.<sup>29</sup>

Another study that has probed into this phenomenon of the politico-commercial nexus by looking at the historical relationship between entrepreneurship and weak state, observes that:

To survive under a weak State with a rent-seeking culture, businesses had to create links with the State to secure access to government concessions to expand their enterprise. The family members of large firms had either direct connections with the State through

political involvement or indirect ties through lobby groups. For example, in the 9<sup>th</sup> Parliament of Bangladesh (2009–2013), 59 percent of its members were businessmen (Chowdhury, 2009). These ties would later allow these business groups to influence policies in their favour. However, in return for these lucrative concessions, business groups had to provide the State actors, particularly political parties and politicians, donations and other services during elections.<sup>30</sup>

The space for free journalism is also shrinking in the country in the face of "arbitrary arrests of journalists" (RSF 2020). The 2020 annual report of the Reporters Without Borders write, "Bangladeshi journalists have been among the leading collateral victims of the tougher methods adopted by the ruling Awami League and its leader, Sheikh Hasina, the country's prime minister since 2009. The campaign leading up to her re-election in late 2018 was accompanied by a disturbing increase in press freedom violations, including violence by political activists against reporters in the field, the arbitrary blocking of news websites, and arbitrary arrests of journalists."

Political considerations, especially the government's penchant for silencing its opponents' voices, have led to the shutting down of various media. For example, during the army-backed Caretaker Government of the 2007-8 period, the first 24/7 news channel of the country, CSB, was shut down on September 6, 2007, for allegedly airing "provocative news" against the government. The channel telecast the Dhaka University students' protests demanding an end to emergency rule in late August 2007.<sup>31</sup> Later, during the AL regime, the print version of the *Amar Desh*, a newspaper edited by Mahmudur Rahman and previously owned by Mossadek Hossain Falu of the BNP, was closed down in April 2013; the online version was shut down in August 2016. Rahman spent years in prison before leaving the country. In a similar vein, in the wee hours of May 6, 2013 – two television channels were taken off the air by the BTRC. *Islamic TV* and the *Diganta TV* were owned by Said Iskander, a brother of former PM Khaleda Zia and Meer Qasem Ali, a prominent leader of the Jamaat-i-Islami. Ali was later convicted of war crimes and executed in September 2016. In 2015, government agencies allegedly blocked advertisements that led to a massive revenue loss for the *Daily Prothom Alo* and the *Daily Star*. Both newspapers published reports on 16 August 2015 about an army operation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) region in which five indigenous youths were killed. Although state agencies denied such allegations, Al-Jazeera reported that both the newspapers' "guilt" was to describe the dead men as "indigenous" people instead of "terrorists."<sup>32</sup>

On the one hand, there have been numerous cases of harassment of reporters, including unlawful detainment of reporters for as long as a year (RSF).<sup>33</sup> Reporters regularly face intimidation. On the other, the government has used its state apparatus to ensure that the media's control remains in its hands. The government has reportedly maintained editorial control and 'monitors' the content of various news reports. In July 2020, the Editors Council in a statement said, "In the last few months, close to 40 journalists have been charged

under the Digital Security Act (DSA) out of whom 37 have been arrested. These arrests have created an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, making normal journalistic work extremely risky if not nearly impossible."<sup>34</sup> According to the Digital Security Act Tracker of the Center for Governance Studies (CGS) at least 15% of the 147 individuals charged under the DSA between January and early December were journalists.

Bangladesh has a range of broad media laws to address issues ranging from defamation to fake news and propaganda. Many in the local media complain that these laws are now being used to curtail freedom of expression and curb freedom of the country's press. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government announced just before the 2018 election that it was going to propose a new Broadcast Act that would grant a government-appointed commission wide-ranging control over media outlets. More than 30 senior editors and other journalists, through digital, print, and television platforms in Bangladesh, claimed that they fear that this legislation, in addition to the Digital Security Act 2018, would further undermine the country's freedom of the press.<sup>35</sup> The country's media is highly regulated through laws originating mostly during the British colonial era or the Pakistan period. One of the most critical Constitutional guidelines can be found in Article 39, which states:

1) Freedom of thought and conscience is guaranteed.

2) Subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence -

(a) The right of every citizen to freedom of speech and expression; and (b) freedom of the press are guaranteed.

The state has used the following Acts, Laws, and Policy documents, among many others, to regulate, control or contain information flows within Bangladesh (Table 2)

**Table 2. Selected Laws, Acts and Policy Documents Regulating Bangladeshi Media**

1.	The Penal Code 1860
2.	The Telegraph Act, 1885
3.	The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898
4.	The Official Secrets Act 1923
5.	The Contempt of Court Act 1926 (Repealed in 2013)

6.	The Foreign Relations Act 1932
7.	The Wireless Telegraph Act, 1933
8.	The Indecent Advertisements Prohibition Act 1963
9.	Printing Presses and Publications Act 1973
10.	Newspaper Employees Act 1974
11.	Special Power Act 1974
12.	Press Council Act 1974
13.	Bangladesh Government Servants (Conduct) Rule 1979 [Repealed in 2018]
14.	Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act 2006 [amended on October 6, 2013]
15.	Policy Guidelines for Advertisements and Supplements 2008
16.	Community Radio Policy 2008
17.	Right to Information Act 2009
18.	The Censorship of Films Act, 1963
19.	The National Broadcast Policy 2014
20.	The Digital Security Act (DSA) 2018

Among these laws and regulations, as has been indicated earlier, the ICT Act 2006 (as amended in 2013) and the Digital Security Act 2018 have received the most attention lately. The ICT Act was originally enacted by the Government of Khaled Zia in November 2006 to regulate digital communications. In 2013, the government of Sheikh Hasina strengthened the ICT Act, removing the need for arrest warrants. The effective prison sentence for crimes under the law has been extended from 10 years to 14 years with the 2013 amendment, and offenses under Section 57 of the Act have been made non-bailable. Section 57 of the Act authorizes prosecution of any person who publishes material considered false, obscene, defamatory, or any material that seeks to deprave or corrupt his or her audience in electronic form. It also requires prosecution if any substance causes any breakdown of law and order or impairs the reputation of a state or a person or causes or may cause damage to religious beliefs. In 2018, a Human Rights Watch study noted that

the law's "broad and sweeping" words invite its misuse. It found that police filed 1,271 charge sheets under the law between 2013 and April 2018, most of them under Section 57 of the Act.

The DSA, enacted by the government of Hasina in October 2018, incorporates the Official Secrets Act of the colonial period with stringent new provisions. Prime Minister Hasina defended the law as appropriate to control cybercrime.<sup>36</sup> The government also claimed that it is intended to replace the vagueness of ICT Section 57, but rights activists say that the DSA is even broader and even more troubling. Fourteen of its twenty provisions are non-bailable and police can arrest on suspicion and without a warrant. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has witnessed an upsurge in cases under the DSA. One human rights organization, *Odhikar*, claimed that 59 journalists had been harassed during the first three months of 2020.<sup>37</sup> While criticizing the vague nature of the reasons for arrests under DSA (for instance, criticizing local administration, covering protests, making defamatory remarks or harming religious harmony etc.), the *Sampadak Parishad* (Editors' Council) issued a statement<sup>38</sup> on June 30, 2020, saying:

Sampadak Parishad feels that DSA has become a plaything in the hands of a vested quarter who use this anti-press and anti-freedom of expression law whimsically and at will to harass and intimidate journalists and to prevent them from exposing corruption and misuse of funds that the government is presently allocating for the people, especially the poor.

Therefore, a culture of fear and self-censorship has been instilled in all kinds of media in Bangladesh during this decade. Journalists are not the only victims, but their plight is influencing the social and political landscapes.

## KEY OBSERVATIONS

Based on the gathered data, we observe that three key *overlapping* features dominate the media ownership landscape of Bangladesh. First, many outlets are controlled by family members. Second, most owners of media outlets are directly or indirectly affiliated with political parties. And finally, almost all the media outlets are owned by big business groups with diverse financial interests. These observations are further explored below:

### FAMILY NETWORK

Family businesses in Bangladesh are growing faster than the international average.<sup>39</sup> Although family connection and nepotism is a well-known factor in the ownership as well as management of media companies in Bangladesh, due attention has not been paid to the extent and depth of this phenomenon. A few examples are in order. One of the most influential media companies in the country is the East-West Media Group Limited, which owns three national dailies: *Kaler Kantho*, *Bangladesh Pratidin* and *The Daily Sun*. Besides,

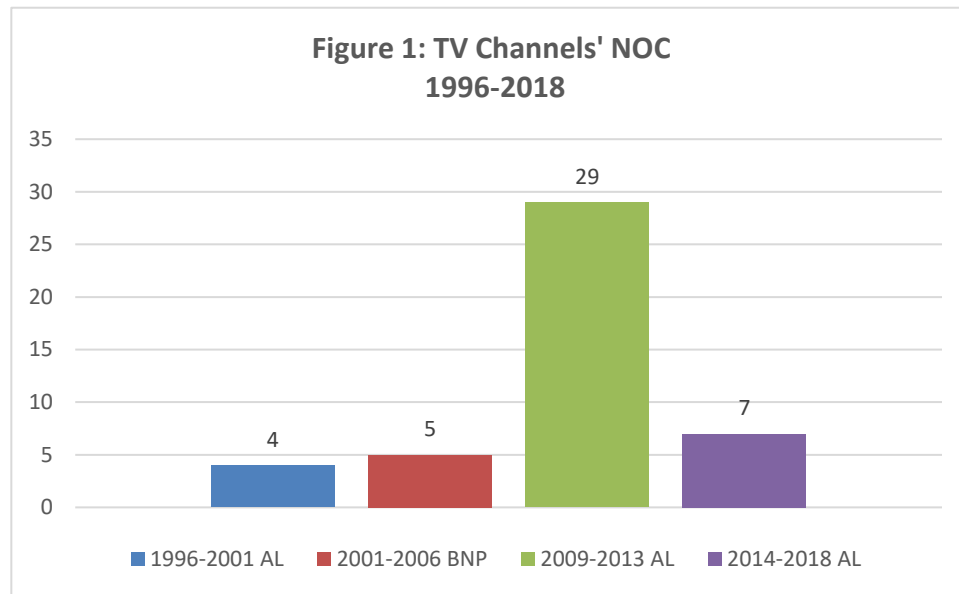
this media group has an online news portal - *banglanews24.com*, an FM radio station – *Radio Capital* and a TV channel - *News24*. Recent reports indicate that another TV channel called *Titas Sports 24/6* has been added to this company.<sup>40</sup> Mr. Sayem Sobhan Anvir is the founding managing director of this media company. His father, Ahmed Akbar Sobhan (also known as Shah Alam) is the Chairman of Bashundhara Group, and the East-West Media Group Limited is its media arm. Sayem Sobhan is also the managing director of several companies of Bashundhara Group.

It is also observed that members of the same family control multiple media outlets as owners of different business groups. For example, Sayeed Hossain Chowdhury, the owner of HRC Group, one of the leading business groups in the country, is the publisher of the Bangla daily *Jajaidin*. An influential English newspaper, the *New Age* is published under the Media New Age Limited, which is associated with the same business group - HRC. On the other hand, Sayeed Hossain Chowdhury's brother Saber Hossain Chowdhury MP is the managing director of Karnaphuli Group whose media arm - Mediascene Limited, publishes another important Bangla daily *Bhorer Kagoj*. The Karnaphuli Group also owns a TV channel *Desh TV*. What is noticeable here is that members of the same family own not only different media outlets, but also represent different strands of political affiliation. For example, Sayeed Hossain Chowdhury owns the *Jajaidin* newspaper that is widely known to be anti-AL, while his brother, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, is an influential MP of the Awami League. The case of a Bangla daily *Jugantar*, owned by the Jamuna Group, illustrates the family ownership pattern. Salma Islam, the publisher of the daily *Jugantar*, is the wife of the late Nurul Islam Babul, the group's founding chairman. Salma Islam is currently the Chairman of the Jamuna Group following her husband's death on July 13, 2020, and a National Assembly member in the reserved woman's seat.

Similarly, in the case of the relatively new national daily *Desh Rupantar*, its publisher, Mr. Mahir Ali Khan Ratul, is the son of Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan alias Mukul, the owner of Rupayan Group, and Vice-Chairman of the group. This same business group also has investments in *Asian TV* and *Desh Radio*.

## **POLITICAL AFFILIATION**

The involvement and influence of party politics in the media's ownership is another open secret in Bangladesh.<sup>41</sup> Four forms of association are noticeable in this regard. First, whether a media outlet will get a license largely depends on the government's relationship with the entrepreneur. Second, politicians themselves become involved in media ownership. Third, influential ruling party politicians lobby for different business groups to help attain licenses for media outlets. Fourth, ownership of the media changes hands to those who are connected to the incumbent political parties. The close relationship between the entrepreneur and the incumbent can be easily detected from the list of the TV Channels approved under various governments since 1996.



Source: Appendix 3

Figure 1 amply demonstrates which government has issued how many NOCs (No Objection Certificates) to TV channels. Since 2009, the ruling AL has been providing TV licenses to individuals directly involved with its party or whose loyalty to the regime is unquestionable. In October 2009, ten TV licenses were distributed in one day alone.

This pattern can be traced in the print media as well. For instance, both the *Dhaka Tribune* and the *Bangla Tribune* are owned by 2A Media Limited - a business concern of Gemcon Group, whose vice-chairman is the Awami League lawmaker Kazi Nabil Ahmed. *Mohona TV* and *Duronto TV*, which received licenses in 2010 and 2017 respectively, are owned by ruling party MP Kamal Ahmed Majumdar and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam. Interestingly, a significant number of people who were initially listed as the owner of the *Mohona TV* sold their shares to the people close to Majumdar. In February 2010, four months after receiving the license, Belal Hossain Bhuiyan, Syed Bazlul Karim, Mohammad Iqbal Hossain and Robin Siddique sold all their shares to M Amanullah, Chairman of Aman Group and director of Mercantile Bank. Kamal Ahmed Majumder is the Chairman of the channel. His two sons Shahed Ahmed Majumder, Ziauddin Ahmed Majumder, their wife, and Awami League MP Hamida Banu, and Sajib Corporation owner MA Hashem are the directors of the channel. As for *Duronto TV*, the channel is run by Barind Media Limited, a subsidiary of Renaissance Group owned by State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam.

It is not only that the licenses are given to the supporters of the incumbents, but the existing channels' ownerships also tend to change to the hands of the people who either belong to the ruling party or are at least considered safe by them. For example, a license

was issued to Sajjat Ali in 1999 for a television channel named *Ten TV*. After the BNP came into power in 2001, the ownership changed hands. On January 30, 2003, BNP leader and a close confidant of then Prime Minister Khaleda Zia Mohammad Mosaddak Ali bought the TV Channel's license from Sajjat Ali and renamed it *NTV*. Former BNP leader Mushfiqur Rahman MP was awarded a license for *Desh TV*. Later, Awami League MP Saber Hossain Chowdhury bought most of its shares.

Perhaps the most glaring example of using the government apparatuses to shut down a channel and also the change of ownership due to political reasons is the fate of *Ekushey Television (ETV)*. The channel came into existence in April 2000 under the AL government. It was established as a joint venture by British journalist Simon Dring and local businessman Farhad Mahmud. The government issued a 15-year terrestrial license. Soon after the BNP came into power, a case was filed regarding the technicalities of the issuance of the channel's license. The case filed by a journalist union leader was surprising. But "in 2002, in a decision widely viewed as orchestrated by the BNP government, a Bangladeshi court ordered the private *Ekushey Television (ETV)* off the air for technical violations in its license application."<sup>42</sup> The work permit of Simon Dring was canceled after the Home Ministry began an inquiry.<sup>43</sup> After lengthy court battles, in 2007, the channel was allowed back on the air.<sup>44</sup> The ownership of the channel remained with largely pro-government individuals. However, various combinations of the Board of Directors landed the channel to Abdus Salam, reportedly a pro-BNP businessman. On January 6, 2015, the Chairman of the ETV, Abdus Salam was arrested and sent to jail after a case under 'the pornography act' was filed. The case and the arrest came after the channel was taken off the air "for allegedly giving too much coverage of [Opposition leaders Khaleda Zia's son and an exiled leader of the BNP] Tarique Rahman's speech where the BNP leader called out to his supporters not to return home until toppling the government of Sheikh Hasina."<sup>45</sup> The country was witnessing political upheaval since January 5, the anniversary of the controversial election boycotted by all opposition parties. By November 25, 2015, the ownership changed, and S Alam Group bought the channel.<sup>46</sup>

*Bijoy TV*, a channel located in the port city of Chittagong also experienced a change of ownership, more than once and under different political circumstances. In 2006, the former Mayor of Chittagong and a prominent AL leader Mohiuddin Ahmed was awarded a license. During the army-backed government of 2007-2008, a case was filed against him and the license was revoked. However, the license was reissued in 2009 when the AL returned to power. The directors included Ahmed's wife Hasina Mohiuddin and their son Chowdhury Muhibul Hasan. At one point, they handed over their shares to Mahfuzur Rahman and his wife Eva Rahman, the owners of the *ATN Bangla*. Reportedly 35% of shares were handed over free. But later, these shares were brought back under the control of the Ahmed family around 2013. In 2019, Chowdhury Muhibul Hasan became the Deputy Minister for Education.<sup>47</sup>



## BUSINESS INTERESTS

One of the significant features in Bangladesh's mediascape during the last two decades is the overwhelming presence of large business groups or conglomerates as the owners of multiple media outlets. These outlets have not only helped them secure various financial interests but also have enabled them to exert influence over policymaking. For instance, the two most influential Bangla and English dailies of the country, the *Prothom Alo* and the *Daily Star*, are owned by companies (Media Star Ltd. & Media World Ltd.) associated with the Transcom group whose business interests range from beverage to insurance. Recently, these two newspapers claimed that Eskayef Pharmaceuticals Ltd, a part of Transcom Ltd, was the first company to produce Remdesivir, a drug reportedly used for the treatment of COVID-19 patients in the country which was later contradicted by its business rival Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd.<sup>48</sup>

Most of the 48 media outlets that we have analyzed are run by conglomerates. While this trend is not unique to Bangladesh compared to other countries of the world, a more in-depth look may reveal the complicated interest-based relationship between the media outlets and the business groups that own them. The most significant element of the business interests and media interconnection is the overwhelming connections between several business sectors and the business groups and/or their directors. The limited survey of the media ownership scene that this report is documenting shows that media owners have a significant presence in four sectors: banks and financial institutions; insurance, energy, and real estate. Each of these sectors has attracted attention in the past years for shoddy deals and political connections with the incumbent.

The following Tables 3 and 4 show the groups and individuals connected to banks and financial institutions:

**Table 3: Sector-wise Business Interests of Media Owners**

Business Sector	Groups that own Media	Company/Project Name	Note	Total
	Rupayan Group	Rupayan LPG and Petroleum Ltd		
	ATN	Blooming Dale Oil Co. Ltd	Director of M&H Telecom Limited H. M. Ibrahim, MP, is also a director and shareholder of Blooming Dale Oil Co. Ltd	
	RAK Ceramics	RAK Power Pvt. Ltd		

Energy	Bashundhara Group	Bashundhara LP Gas Limited		16
	Bengal Group	Power Utility Bangladesh Ltd.		
	Beximco Group	Beximco Petroleum, Beximco Power, 200MW solar-based power plant in Gaibandha, 540MW coal-based power plant		
	City Group	CSI Power & Energy Ltd.		
	SA Paribahan	S.R.S. Gas Company Ltd		
	S Alam Group	S. S. Power I Limited, S. S. Power II Limited, Karnaphuli Prakritik Gas Limited, Shah Amanat Prakritik Gas Co. Limited.		
	Mohammadi Group	Desh Energy Limited, Desh Cambridge Kumargaon Power Company Limited, Desh Energy Chandpur Power Company Limited, Mati Naturals Ltd		
	Meghna Group	Everest Power Generation Co.		
	Impress Group	Impress energy and services Ltd	Next Spaces Limited has signed the first subcontract for the soil stabilization work at Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant Project	
	Gazi Group	Gazi Gas Stoves, Gazi Renewable Energy		
	Orion Group	Orion Power Meghnaghat Ltd, Dutch Bangla Power and Associates Ltd, Digital Power & Associates Ltd, Orion Power Khulna Ltd., Orion Power Dhaka Ltd, Orion Gas Ltd.		
	Gemcon Group	Gemcon Renewable Energy Technology Ltd.		
	Unique Group	Unique Meghnaghat Power Ltd		

Real-estate	Asian Group	Asian Housing Limited		13
	Rupayan	Rupayan Housing Estate Ltd., Rupayan Land Development Ltd., Ratul Properties, Rupayan City Uttara, Rupayan Hotels and Resorts		
	RAK Ceramics	Rakeen Development Company (BD) Ltd, Palli Properties Pvt. Ltd, Ashaloy Housing and Developer Ltd, Marina Property (BD) Limited,		
	Bashundhara Group	Bashundhara City Shopping Complex, East West Property Development (Pvt.) Ltd, Riverview Housing Project		
	Bengal Group	Bengal Concept and Holdings Ltd.		
	NTV	Roza Properties, Roza Industrial Park Ltd		
	Mohammadi Group	MG Properties Limited		
	Karnaphuli Group	Karnaphuli Garden City, HR Bhaban		
	Jamuna Group	Jamuna Future Park		
	DBC	AG Green Property Developments Limited, AG Property Development Limited		
	Unique Group	Borak Real Estate Pvt Ltd., Unique Hotel and Resorts Ltd, Unique Property Development Ltd.		
	Gemcon Group	Gemcon City Ltd		
	HRC Group	HRC Properties Limited, Bangladesh Land Limited, Hamid Properties Limited		
	ATN	Agrani Insurance Company Ltd	Director of M&H Telecom Limited H. M. Ibrahim, MP, is	

Insurance			also a director of Agrani Insurance	11
	RAK Ceramics	Mercantile Insurance Company Limited	Abdul Haque, the Chairman of Bangla Vision, is a sponsor Director of Mercantile Insurance Company Limited	
	Bengal Group	National Life Insurance Co. Ltd., Desh General Insurance Co. Ltd.		
	City Group	Dhaka Insurance Ltd.	Fazlur Rahman's daughter Shampa Rahman is vice chairman	
	S Alam Group	Northern General Insurance Company Limited,		
	Unique Group	Chartered Life Insurance Company Ltd	Noor Ali is a director	
	Karnaphuli Group	Republic Insurance Company Ltd		
	DBC	Swadesh Life Insurance Company Ltd		
	NTV	Union Insurance Company Ltd.		
	Transcom Group	Reliance Insurance Limited		
	Meghna Group	Bangladesh National Insurance Company Ltd		
	Bengal Group	Bengal Commercial Bank (approved in Feb 2020), Mercantile Bank Ltd,		
	Beximco Group	IFIC Bank Ltd.		
	City Group	Jamuna Bank		

Banks	S Alam Group	First Security Islami Bank Ltd		11
	Transcom Group	Pubali Bank Limited	Stakeholder in Pubali Bank	
	Unique Group	Mercantile Bank Ltd	M. Amanullah	
	HaMeem Group	Shahjalal Islami Bank	AK Azad is a director of the bank; previously was the chairman	
	HRC Group	One Bank Ltd		
	Meghna Group	Modhumoti Bank Ltd		
	Gazi Group	Jamuna Bank Limited		
	DBC	Mercantile Bank Ltd, Meghna Bank	Md. Shahidul Ahsan, Managing Director of DBC, is the Sponsor Director of Mercantile Bank Ltd and a shareholder of Meghna Bank	
Other Financial Institutions <sup>49</sup>	RAK Ceramics	Royal Green Securities Limited, RAK Securities and Services Pvt. Ltd, RAK Capital Limited,	Abdul Haque, the chairman of Bangla Vision, is the chairman of Royal Green Securities Limited	12
	Bengal Group	National Finance Ltd.		
	S Alam Group	Reliance Finance Ltd., First Security Islami Capital & Investment Ltd., Reliance Brokerage Services Ltd.		
	Beximco Group	Beximco Securities Ltd		
	DBC	Mercantile Bank Securities Limited, National Credit Ratings Limited		
	Impress Group	Impress Capital Limited		

	Karnaphuli Group	HR Securities, Finvest Financial Services		
	LankaBangla	LankaBangla Securities Limited (LBSL), LankaBangla Investment Limited (LBIL) and LankaBangla Asset Management Company Limited (LBAMCL).		
	Meghna Group	Dhaka Securities Ltd		
	NTV	MAH Securities Ltd	Falu is the Chariman	
	Square Group	Square Securities Management Ltd		
	Transcom Group	National Housing Finance and Investments Limited		

The Banking sector in Bangladesh is now well known for a high degree of default loans. The sky-high default loans are often described as the 'curse.' According to the World Bank's 2019 *Global Economic Prospects* report,<sup>50</sup> Bangladesh has the highest percentage of default loans (11.4 percent) among South Asian nations. One commentator wrote<sup>51</sup>:

[Due to] continued patronage by the political parties in power from time to time, defaulting on loans has become an unhealthy culture. The amount of default loans and the number of defaulters are multiplying, which has turned the banking sector into a bottomless basket and made the bankers collaborators in public money embezzlement.

**Table 4: Individuals Otherwise Connected to Banks**

Business Group	Name of Individuals, Position in Business Group	Name of the Bank
HRC	A.S.M. Shahidullah Khan, MD of Media New Age	Chairman, One Bank
HRC	Zahur Ullah, Director	Director, One Bank
Beximco	Salman F Rahman, Vice Chairman	Chairman, IFIC Bank
Square	Nihad Kabir, Independent Director	Nominated Director, BRAC Bank
Square	Anika Chowdhury, MD of Square Pharmaceuticals	Director, Mutual Trust Bank

Unique	Kazi Mahmood Sattar, Independent Director	Independent Director, BRAC Bank
Unique	Chowdhury Nafeez Sarafat, MD of Unique Meghnaghat Power	Chairman, Padma Bank
Unique	Salina Ali, Chairperson	Director, Eastern Bank
S Alam	Mohammed Arshed (Karnaphuli Prakritik Gas of S Alam)	Director, Bangladesh Commerce Bank
S Alam	Abdus Samad (Labu), Vice Chairman	Chairman, Al-Arafah Islami Bank
S Alam	Mohammed Saiful Alam	Chairman, First Security Islami Bank
Gazi	Gazi Golam Ashria, Director	Director, Jamuna Bank
Gazi	Gazi Golam Murtoza, Director	Director, Jamuna Bank
City Group	Fazlur Rahman, Chairman	Chairman, Jamuna Bank
City Group	Md. Hasan, Director	Director, Jamuna Bank
Karnaphuli	Obaidul Kabir Khan, MD of Republic Insurance Company	Director, Jamuna Bank
Bengal	Morshed Alam, Chairman	Chairman, Mercantile Bank
Bengal	A. S. M. Feroz Alam, Director, RTV	Director, Mercantile Bank
Daily Observer	A. K. M. Shaheed Reza, Director	Director, Mercantile Bank
Meghna	Mostafa Kamal, Chairman	Director, Modhumoti Bank
Meghna	Tanjima Binthe Mostafa	Director, Modhumoti Bank
Meghna	Tanveer Ahmed Mostafa	Director, Modhumoti Bank
HaMeem	A K Azad, Chairman	Director, Shahjalal Islami Bank

In 2019, during the budget session, it was revealed in the Parliament that several media

owners are on the list of top 300 bank loan defaulters. While briefing the media about the proposed budget in 2019, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina strongly reacted to a reporter's question on the government's failure to take action against the defaulters by saying: "I won't have to answer if you (the reporter) look into who the owners of newspapers are, the banks from which they've taken out loans and the amounts they've borrowed."<sup>52</sup> She also mentioned, "go to your owners and tell them to redress the loan defaults."<sup>53</sup> On July 6, 2020, it was reported that the Bangladesh Bank had removed One Bank Chairman Sayeed Hossain Chowdhury, the Chairman of the HRC group that owns two newspapers over loan delinquency.<sup>54</sup> The case of Beximco, which owns a number of media outlets, is worth recalling. Beximco's case had drawn attention since 2016.<sup>55</sup> The group was one of the companies which were given an opportunity to reschedule its loans in 2017 after it defaulted on loans rescheduled in 2015.<sup>56</sup> However, there are other companies that have also defaulted on their loans.

The investment and connection of the media owner with the energy sector is intriguing and needs to be understood by considering the context of the developments in this sector since 2010, especially how the sector has been used as a patronage dispensation mechanism of the government. In the past decade, Bangladesh witnessed a surge in the energy sector, particularly in electricity generation and distribution. Economic growth has fueled the energy demand in a spectacular manner. In 2009, when the current government came into power, the total power generation was 4942 MGW, which has been raised to 23,777 MW by the end of 2020.<sup>57</sup> The increase of the generation was achieved through a controversial measure of allowing rental and quick rental plants. The government's Power System Master Plan 2010 decided to use the quick rental power plants (QRPPs) as its major strategic tool to reduce power shortage in the short run. Under the plan, a total of 20 QRPPs were commissioned by 2012 with a total capacity of more than 1,000 MW.<sup>58</sup> The arrangement in 2010-11 was that these plants will be installed by private entrepreneurs, and the government will buy electricity from these plants for a short period – preferably 3-5 years until the government installs electricity generation plants in a permanent manner. These contracts were issued under a no-bid contract process and an immunity through the Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provision) Act 2010 was accorded to the government, which experts decry as 'unconstitutional'.<sup>59</sup> The World Bank in 2015 urged phasing out the quick rental arrangements.<sup>60</sup> On the contrary, the quick rental arrangement has become the backbone of the power generation. According to the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB), as of 2020, there are 27 rental and quick rental power plants, of which 16 were quick rental plants. A no-bid contract issued to the entrepreneurs smacks a political connection with the incumbent. And the amount of subsidy these units received during the past decade has engendered a debate on whether it has become patronage distribution. In June 2020, the State Minister for Electricity, Fuel and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid informed that the government has provided a subsidy of 52,260 crore taka to the electricity sector.<sup>61</sup> A news report shows



the government had paid 64,000 crores Taka to these plants as a 'capacity charge' without utilizing the electricity from these plants.<sup>62</sup> The amount has increased exponentially in the years since FY 2010, from approximately Taka 1,790 crore (17.90 billion) to Taka 8,029 crore (80.29 billion) in the FY 2019.<sup>63</sup>

In the past decades, the real estate and housing business has thrived in Bangladesh due to massive urbanization, growth of the middle class, and easy availability of loans from private banks. In 2019 it contributed 7.8% of the GDP.<sup>64</sup> These developments paved the way for the rise of a host of real estate companies and the trade body called the REHAB (Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh). However, due to land scarcity, especially in Dhaka and adjoining areas, these companies have allegedly flouted regulations and adopted unscrupulous means to get land. As noted by researchers:

dramatic population growth and limited availability of land create powerful incentives for developers to evade these regulations. Collusion between developers, the regulator and high-level government officials responsible for overseeing the regulator has ensured that both the laws and court orders are unenforced.<sup>65</sup>

The connections between media owners and their companies must be examined against this backdrop. Severe allegations of land grabbing for real estate have also been reported during the last two decades against a number of business groups that own major newspapers and TV channels.<sup>66</sup> Ignoring relevant laws, some of the influential realtors have allegedly been developing private land and housing projects through grabbing wetlands, flood-flow zones in and around the capital city.<sup>67</sup> It is no surprise that very few extensive investigative reports on land grabbing by the realtor are available in the Bangladeshi media.

Another aspect is that business groups often use their media outlets to criticize and vilify rival business groups. For example, the rivalries between the Jamuna Group and Bashundhara Group have often been reflected in their media outlets' choice of news reports against each other.<sup>68</sup> The fact that ownership influences media content for securing business interests has recently been revealed by a Bangladeshi media-watch organization called the Bdfactcheck. It reported that the reason behind the underreporting of the suspension and the arrest of two students of the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) by the two newspapers owned by the Gemcon Group is the fact that the Chairman, as well as his family members, sit on the Trustee Board of ULAB.<sup>69</sup> The university suspended the two students for staging demonstrations seeking a 50% tuition fee waiver for the period of the Covid-19 pandemic. There is also an increasing tendency in the newspaper industry that owners themselves become the editors of newspapers. In 2016, the Information Minister revealed that among the 1078 newspapers, 1005 of these are owned by the editors.<sup>70</sup>

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This report documents a snapshot of media ownership in Bangladesh in late 2020 and identifies its major patterns. By no means is this report exhaustive nor does it cover all aspects of ownership of media in Bangladesh. In the absence of baseline data, our primary objective was to build one with the possibility of further addition and exploration. The information provided in the report should allow researchers to examine these media and others which remained outside the ambit of this report.

Drawing on data about selected 32 business entities and associated 48 print and electronic media outlets, this report has shown that family ties, political affiliation and business interests largely shape the ownership patterns in the mediascape. The fact that large business groups are dominating the Bangladeshi mediascape is not a unique phenomenon. But a combination of these three factors points to an alarming picture and raises concern. These do not augur well when the legal and extralegal measures are used rampantly to curtail freedom of speech and when the democratic space is shrinking fast. The overall political environment has created a situation where the pattern of media ownership facilitates ongoing democratic backsliding. The current pattern of ownership also warrants exploration of media content. It is necessary to examine whether the extent of the monopoly of the few groups over the industry and the incumbent government's politics impact media content. If and how legal measures and favorable business opportunities offered to individuals by the incumbent influence the agenda of the media and its treatment of news must be considered. These explorations are needed not only for understanding the connections between the content and patterns of ownership but also for underscoring accountability, a prerequisite for a democratic polity and governance.

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## APPENDIX 1

### List of Media Enlisted Newspapers

Description	Dhaka	Town	Grand Total
Daily Newspapers	254	297	551
Weekly Newspapers	70	36	106
Fortnightly Newspapers	16	04	20
Monthly Newspapers	24	03	27
Quarterly Newspapers	01	00	01
Half-yearly Newspapers	00	01	01
Total=	365	341	706

### Circulation of English Dailies

Name of Newspaper	Circulation
The Daily Star	44,814
The Financial Express	41,000
Daily Sun	41,000
Dhaka Tribune	40,600
The Independent	40,550
The Daily Observer	40,550
The Daily Bangladesh Post	40,550

The Asian Age	40,500
The Daily Tribunal	40,500
The Bangladesh Today	40,010
New Age	40,000
The Daily Citizen Times	39,998
Daily Our Time	39,998
Daily Industry	39,990
The Bangladesh News	39,000
The New Nation	38,970
The News Today	38,500
The Daily Evening News	35,000
The Daily Morning Glory	30,000
The People's Time	28,000
The Good Morning	25,000
Daily News Mail	24,000
The Muslim Times	21,000
The Daily Voice of Asia	20,500
The Daily State	20,000
Daily Morning Observer	16,000
The Daily News Star	12,000
The Daily Earth	6,340

The Daily Banner	6,090
The Daily Capital News	6,010
The Daily Bangladesh Tribune	6,010
Daily Present Times	6,005
The Daily News Line	6,002
The Daily Echo	6,002
Daily Financial Post	6,000
The Daily Times of Bangladesh	6,000

#### Circulation of Bangla Dailies

Name of Newspaper	Circulation
Bangladesh Pratidin	5,53,300
Prothom Alo	5,01,800
Kaler Kantho	2,90,200
Jugantar	2,90,200
The Daily Ittefaq	2,90,200
Dainik Amader Shomoy	2,90,200
The Daily Janakantha	2,90,200
Samakal	2,71,000
Sangbad	2,01,100
Bhorer Kagoj	1,61,160

Amader Notun Shomoy	1,61,160
Daily Manobkantha	1,61,150
Protidiner Sangbad	1,61,140
The Daily Inqilab	1,61,110
Bangladesher Khabor	1,61,110
Daily Amar Sangbad	1,61,105
Amader Orthoneeti	1,61,101
Daily Manabzamin	1,61,100
The Daily Bhorer Dak	1,60,500
Name of Newspaper	Circulation
Amar Barta	1,60,000
Alokito Bangladesh	1,52,000
The Daily Vorer Pata	1,51,800
The Daily Nobochatona	1,51,750
Dhaka Protidin	1,51,000
The Daily Bartoman	1,50,500
Mukta Khabar	1,50,000
Daily Ajkaler Khobor	1,43,000
Bizness Bngladesh	1,42,000
Daily Bonik Barta	1,41,500
The Dainik Janata	1,41,110

The Daily Khola Kagoj	1,41,100
The Daily Gonaokantho	1,41,000
Daily Janobani	1,41,000
Daily Sokaler Somoy	1,40,600
Daily Hazarika Protidin	1,40,600
Daily Swadhin Bangla	1,40,500
Sangbad Pratidin	1,26,100
The Daily Bhorer Darpan	1,26,000
The Daily Shomoyer Alo	1,16,500
Jai Jai Din	1,16,000
The Daily Amar Somoy	1,15,000
Daily Lakhokantho	1,10,010
The Daily Bangladesh Kantha	1,08,000
Daily Bangladesher Alo	1,00,050
The Daily Share Biz	1,00,005
Dainik Khobor	1,00,000
Dainik Shamaj Shangbad	1,00,000
Daily Nayadiganta	90,650
Daily Sonaly Khobor	90,100
Swadesh Pratidin	90,000
Torunkantho	85,000

Daily Ganomukti	83,000
Dainik Somachar	83,000
Desh Rupantor	82,700
Banglar Nobokontho	82,500
Doinik Agrasor	80,200
Dainik Alor Barta	80,100
Daily Kalbela	80,000
Daily Ajker Darpon	80,000
Pollibangla	75,500
Daily Prothom Kotha	75,100
Dainik Bangla	75,000
Dainik Chitro	75,000
Deshbarta	75,000
Din Poriborton	74,000
Sangbad Sarabela	72,010
Daily Nawroj	71,000
Daily Nabaraj	70,500
Daily Deshkal	70,010
Dainik Sakalbela	70,000
Daily Tritiya Matra	65,500
The Daily Eai Bangla	65,000

Daily Jagaran	65,000
The Daily Dhakar Dak	62,500
The Dhaka Times	61,000
Daily Aajker Probhat	60,000
Amader Bangla	60,000
Janatar Sangbad	60,000
Daily Asia Bani	60,000
Notun Din	59,000
The Daily Darpan Pratidin	58,000
Ajker Sangbad	55,000
Sobuj Desh	55,000
Amader Kantha	50,500
Swadhin Sangbad	50,200
Nikhad Khobor	50,010
Nobojibon	50,000
Jaijaikal	50,000
Dainik Gono Manusher Awaj	50,000
Dainik Ajker Satyer Alo	42,000
Dainik Bhorer Somoy	41,000
Daily Jobabdihi	40,600
Bhorer Sanglap	40,500

The Daily Amar Kagoj	40,100
Sorejomin Barta	40,050
The Daily Ajkerprottasha	40,010
Daily Pokkhokal	40,000
Prothom Bhori	40,000
The Daily Banglar Doot	40,000
Sangbad Mohona	35,000
Daily Bartoman Kotha	35,000
The Daily Sangram	33,020
Daily Sonali Kantha	32,000
Daily Shubhodin	30,010
The Daily Sonali Barta	30,010
Uttordokkhin	30,000
The Daily Swadesh Bichitra	30,000
Dhaka Dialogue	30,000
Bhorer Awaj	30,000
Daily Matrichaya	28,000
Ghoshona	25,170
Daily Ain Barta	25,100
Dainik Jatiyo Orthoniti	25,000
The Daily Alokito Protidin	25,000



Poygram	25,000
Bangajanani	22,000
Bangladesh Journal	21,200
Provat	21,000
Dainik Dhaka	20,320
Daily Bangladesh Somoy	20,310
Bangladesh Bulletin	20,050
Daily Khoborpatra	20,000
The Daily Provati Khobor	20,000
Dainik Orthoneeti Protidin	19,950
Dainik Gonojagoron	18,320
Prothom Suradoy	16,000
Daily Dinkal	15,590
Dainik Business File	15,020
Amader Alokito Somoy	15,000
Dainik Alor Jagat	15,000
The Daily Vorer Chetona	15,000
Daiik Dhaka Report	12,100
Dainik Arthoneetir Kagoj	12,000
Tarbarta	11,000
Dainik Ajker Jibon	10,510

Dainik Anupama	10,500
The Daily Shakti	10,230
The Daily Alor Diganta	10,110
The Daily Shandha Bani	10,020
Dainik Bangabani	10,010
The Daily Annadiganta	10,000
Shomabesh	10,000
Dainik Shadhinmot	7,050
Dainik Dinersheshey	6,630
The Daily Destiny	6,500
The Daily Choukas	6,500
Anandabazar	6,300
Dainik Gorbo Bangladesh	6,300
Al-ih-san	6,200
The Daily Amar Din	6,200
Daily Banglar Muk	6,200
Ekushey Sangbad	6,170
The Daily Rupalidesh	6,170
Bhorer Kontho	6,150
Daily Nabo Abijan	6,150
The Daily Amar Praner Bangladesh	6,150

Desh Janata	6,130
Doinik Samachar	6,125
Nobobarta	6,110
Daiik Desher Potro	6,100
The Daily Bhorer Alo	6,100
Daily Banglar Jagoron	6,100
Sarabangla	6,090
Gonosurja	6,080
Al-amin	6,070
Pothjatra	6,070
Muktomot	6,060
The Daily Natun Kagoj	6,060
Deshpotrika	6,050
Daily Rupbani	6,050
The Daily Rupali Bangladesh	6,050
Bangla 71	6,050
Dainik Sandhani Barta	6,050
Dainik Barta Sarani	6,050
Dainik Asian Express	6,040
Diner Alo	6,040
Dainik Mukto tottho	6,030

Desh Bartaman	6,030
The Daily Sabuj Nishan	6,020
Amader Dinkal	6,020
Daily Bartoman Somoy	6,020
The Daily Amader Barta	6,020
Dainik Niropekkha	6,020
Dainik Bhorer Akash	6,015
The Daily Agnishikha	6,015
Bangla Somoy	6,015
Unnayanbarta	6,010
Sonar Alo	6,010
Daily Surjodoy	6,010
Daily Nababani	6,010
Nobo Suchana	6,010
Bartoman Bangla	6,010
Ajker Bangla	6,010
Bijoyer Alo	6,010
Rupali	6,010
Noyashatabdi	6,010
The Daily Bishow Manchitra	6,010
The Daily Ajker Awaz	6,010

Money Times	6,010
Daily Prothom Prohor	6,005
Daily Usharbani	6,005
Ajker Padma	6,005
Ajker Bashundhara	6,005
Dainik Sangbad Sangjog	6,005
Shopnobangla	6,005
Jago Bangla	6,005
Matribhasha	6,003
Aedin	6,002
Khobor Bangladesh	6,002
Daily Mukhapatra	6,000
Daily Khaborer Alo	6,000
Matribhumir Khobor	6,000
Unnoyoney Bangladesh	6,000
Agamir Shomoy	6,000
Dainik Banglar Dak	6,000
Dainik Pratidiner Bangladesh	6,000
The Daily Shadhin Desh	6,000
Daily Amar Desh	98,580

Source: Ministry of Information, Government of Bangladesh

## APPENDIX 2

### List of Radios in Bangladesh

#### Private FM Radios of Bangladesh

Name of the Radio	Frequency	Name of the Owner/Designation	Ownership	Formal Launch Date
Radio Foorti	88.0 FM	Anis Ahmed Managing Director	Radio Foorti Limited (MGH Group)	22 <sup>nd</sup> September, 2006
Radio Aamar	88.4 FM	Samir Quader Chowdhury Managing Director	Uniwave Broadcasting Company Limited	11 <sup>th</sup> December, 2007
ABC Radio	89.2 FM	Latifur Rahman Managing Director	Ayna Broadcasting Company Limited (Transcom Group)	7 <sup>th</sup> January, 2009
Radio Today	89.6 FM	Md. Rafiqul Haque Managing Director	Radio Broadcasting FM (Bangladesh) Company Limited (Bangas Tallu Group)	15 <sup>th</sup> October, 2006
Dhaka FM	90.4 FM	Dolly Iqbal Managing Director	Dhaka FM Limited (Pertex Group)	1 <sup>st</sup> January, 2012
Radio Dhoni	91.2 FM	Rashedul Hossain Chowdhury Managing Director	Radio Dhoni Limited/WEGA ZONE LIMITED)	22 <sup>nd</sup> June, 2015
People's Radio	91.6 FM	Abdul Awal Managing Director	People's Radio Limited	11 <sup>th</sup> December, 2011
Radio Shadhin	92.4 FM	Sara Jaker Managing Director	Asiatic Marketing Communication Limited Group M (Asiatic)	20 <sup>th</sup> March, 2013
Radio Bhumi	92.8 FM	Faridur Reza Sagor Chairperson	Gaanchill Media Limited (Impress Group)	1 <sup>st</sup> October, 2012
Radio Din Raat	93.6 FM	Anjan Chowdhury Managing Director	Vision Technologies Limited (Square Group)	2016
Radio Dhol	94.0 FM	Md. Shahriar Alam Proprietor	Araf Apparels (Radio Dhol Ltd.)	10 <sup>th</sup> December, 2015
Jago FM	94.4 FM	Ahsan Khan Chowdhury Managing Director	AKC Private Limited (Pran RFL)	27 <sup>th</sup> October, 2015
Capital Radio	94.8 FM	Sayem Sobhan Managing Director	East West Media Group Limited (Basundhara Group)	2 <sup>nd</sup> January, 2017
Bangla Radio	95.2 FM	A.K.M. Shaheed Reza Proprietor	Reza Group Limited	12 <sup>th</sup> June, 2016

<b>City FM</b>	96.0 FM	Saidur Aftab Managing Director	Media City Limited	3 <sup>rd</sup> April, 2013
<b>Spice FM</b>	96.4 FM	Shila Islam Chairperson	Radio Masala Limited (Fu-Wang Group)	1 <sup>st</sup> September, 2016
<b>Radio Prime</b>	96.8 FM	Syed Zahirul Islam Chairperson	CIUS Private Limited	31 <sup>st</sup> December, 2017
<b>Radio Ekattor</b>	98.4 FM	M.A. Matin Managing Director	Radio 71 Limited (Maple Leaf Group and Riaz Motors)	26 <sup>th</sup> March, 2015
<b>Colours FM</b>	101.6 FM	Raquib Mohammad Fakhrul Managing Director	Tune Bangladesh Limited (AP Modhu Group)	10 <sup>th</sup> January, 2014
<b>Radio Amber</b>	102.4 FM	Aminul Hakim Proprietor	Radio Masti Limited (Pertex Group)	1 <sup>st</sup> September, 2016
<b>Sufi FM (Experimental Broadcast)</b>	102.8 FM	Mamunur Rahman Chairperson	Gold FM Limited (MJH Group)	
<b>Desh Radio (broadcast hasn't started yet)</b>	98.0 FM	Nader Chowdhury Director	Ratul Media and Communication Ltd. (Rupayan Group)	
<b>Radio City (broadcast hasn't started yet)</b>	99.6 FM	Kazi Mahfuzur Rahman Managing Director	Media Today Limited (Bengal Group- Abul Khayer Litu)	
<b>Radio Active (broadcast hasn't started yet)</b>	100.4 FM	Shomi Kaiser Managing Director	Dhanshiri Communications Ltd.	
<b>Radio Times (broadcast hasn't started yet)</b>	97.2 FM	Abdullah-al-Mamun Managing Director	Broadcast World Bangladesh	
<b>Asian Radio (closed)</b>	90.8 FM	Alhaj Md. Harun-ur- Rashid Chairperson and Managing Director	Asian Radio Limited (Asian Group)	18 <sup>th</sup> January, 2013

<b>Radio Next (closed)</b>	93.2 FM	Abdul Mosabbir Ahmad Managing Director	Enrich Net Private Limited (Niloy Nitol Group Limited)	6 <sup>th</sup> May, 2015
<b>Radio Age (closed)</b>	95.6 FM	Shafqat Samiur Rahman Managing Director	Innovation Ltd.	30 <sup>th</sup> October, 2017

### List of Community Radio

NAME OF RADIO	NAME OF CEO/MD/ED/ CHAIRMAN (DESIGNATION)	INITIATOR ORGANIZATION
Radio Pollikontho	Anna Minj Director, Community Empowerment, Integrated Development and Gender Justice & Diversity Programme, BRAC	BRAC
Radio Naf 99.2 FM	Syed Tarikul Islam Executive Director	Alliance for Cooperation and Legal Aid Bangladesh (ACLAB)
Radio Sagorgiri FM 99.2	Md.Arifur Rahman Chief Executive	Young Power in Social Action (YPSA)
Radio Lokobetar FM 99.2	Monir Hossain Kamal Director	Mass-line Media Centre (MMC)
Radio Boral	Md. Shahriar Bin Mukhles Director & CEO of SBMSS- Radio Boral	Secchasebi Bohumukhi Mohila Samaj-Kallayan Samity - SBMSS
Radio Sagor Dwip 99.2 fm	Md. Rafiqul Alam Executive Director	Dwip Unnayan Sangstha (DUS)
Radio Bikrampur	Arif Sikder Chairman	Ambala Foundation
Radio Meghna	Konika Rani Asst: Station Manager	COAST Trust
Radio Mukti 99.2 MHz	Selim Rahmat Sykie CEO	LDRO (Finance by ASBL International Division)
Radio Krishi FM 98.8	DR. Md. Nurul Islam Director	Ministry of Agriculture
Radio Mahananda 98.8fm	Md. Hasib Hossain Chief Executive Officer	Proyas Manobik Unnayan Society
Borendro Radio	Shohel Ahamed Chair Person	HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION
Radio Sundarban 98.8 FM	Gazi Md. Abdus Salam Managing Director	ADVANCED WELFARE FOUNDATION (AWF)
Radio Sarabela 98.8 FM	Rasel Ahmed Liton Chief Executive, SKS Foundation	SKS Foundation
Radio	Mohammad Enamul Kabir	RDRS Bangladesh



Chilmari 99.2 FM	Executive Director	
Radio Nalta 99.2	Ziaul Haque Chairman	Nalta Hospital and Community Health Foundation
Radio Padma 99.2 FM	Golam Mourtoza Chief Coordinator	Center for Communication and Development (CCD Bangladesh)
Radio Jhenuk 99.2 FM	Dr. M Harun Or Rashid Founder & Chairman	Srizony Bangladesh

### Government-Owned Radio

Centers of Bangladesh Betar	Launch Date
Bangladesh Betar, Dhaka	16 <sup>th</sup> December, 1939
Bangladesh Betar, Chattogram	22 <sup>nd</sup> June, 1954
Bangladesh Betar, Rajshahi	1 <sup>st</sup> March, 1963
Bangladesh Betar, Sylhet	1 <sup>st</sup> September, 1961
Bangladesh Betar, Rangpur	16 <sup>th</sup> November, 1967
Bangladesh Betar, Khulna	4 <sup>th</sup> December, 1970
Bangladesh Betar, Rangamati	27 <sup>th</sup> November, 1978
Bangladesh Betar, Cumilla	18 <sup>th</sup> June, 1988
Bangladesh Betar, Thakurgaon	11 <sup>th</sup> November, 1988
Bangladesh Betar, Barishal	12 <sup>th</sup> June, 1999
Bangladesh Betar, Cox Bazar	24 <sup>th</sup> March, 2001
Bangladesh Betar, Bandarban	11 <sup>th</sup> October, 2006
Bangladesh Betar, Gopalganj	1 <sup>st</sup> November, 2018
Bangladesh Betar, Mymensingh	2 <sup>nd</sup> November, 2018

Source: Obaid, Shams-Ibne (Shams Sumon) (Ed.), 2019, Radio in Bangladesh: The Timeline, Dhaka: Radio Bhumi 92.FM.

## APPENDIX 3

### List of Approval Dates for Private Television Channels

#### Approval Period 1996-2001

Number	Channel Name	Address	Date of Approval of No Objection Certificate (NOC)	Current State
1	ATN Bangla	Dr. Mahfuzur Rahman Chairman and Managing Director ATN Bangla, Wasa Bhavan (2nd Floor), 98 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka	04-06-1997	Operational
2	Ekushey Television (ETV)	Mr. Saiful Alam Chairman, Ekushey Television Jahangir Tower, 10, Kaoran Bazar, Dhaka.	09/3/1999 (License agreement between the ministry of information and Ekushey TV)	Operational
3	Channel i	Mr. Faridur Reza Sagar Managing Director Channel I, 40, Shahid Tajuddin Ahmed Sarani Tejgaon, I/A, Dhaka.	26-04-1999	Operational
4	NTV	Mr. Alhajb Mohammad Mosaddek Ali Chairman NTV, BSEC Building (6 <sup>th</sup> Floor) 102 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Kaoran Bazaar Dhaka.	19-9-1999	Operational

#### Approval Period 2001-2006

Order	Channel Name	Address	Date of Approval of No Objection Certificate (NOC)	Current State
5	Jamuna TV	Mr. Md. Nurul Islam Manager Jamuna Television Ltd. Jamuna Television Building Jamuna Future Park Complex A-244, Progress Sarani, Baridhara, Dhaka.	05/02/2002	Operational
6	Boishakhshi TV	Mr. Md. Shaheed Amin Chairman and Managing Director Boishakhshi Media Ltd. (Bashikhi TV) 32, Mohakhali Commercial Areas Level-4, 5, 6 7, and 8, Dhaka.	31-01-2005	Operational
7	BanglaVision	Mr. Abdul Haq Chairman Shyamal Bangla Media Ltd. (Banglavisio) Noor Tower, 1/F, Free School Street, 110, Bir Uttam C and Dutta Road, Dhaka.	31-01-2005	Operational
8	RTV	Mr. Morshed Alam Managing Director RTV, BSEC Building (Level-6) 102 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka.	10-04-2005	Operational

9	Desh TV	Saber Hossain Chowdhury Chairman Desh Television Limited CornfulMedia Point 70, Martyr journalist Selina Parvin Road, Malibag,Dhaka.	29-05-2006	Operational
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### Approval Period 2009-2013

Number	Channel Name	Address	Date of Approval of No Objection Certificate (NOC)	Current State
10	Independent Television	Mr. Salman F. Rahman Vice-Chairman Independent Television Ltd. 149-150, Tejgaon I/A, Dhaka-1208.	11-10-2009	Operational
11	ATN News	Dr. Mahfuzur Rahman Chairman and Managing Director ATN News Limited, Hassan Plaza 53, Kawran Bazaar ba/A, Dhaka-1215.	11-10-2009	Operational
12	Machranga Communications Ltd.	Mr. Anjan Chowdhury Managing Director Machranga Communications Ltd., Square Centre, 48, Mohakhali Ba/A, Dhaka.	11-10-2009	Operational
13	Shomoy Television	Mr. Ahmed Jobair Managing Director Shomoy Media Limited, Nasir Trade Centre, 300/4, Bir Uttam C Datta Road, Dhaka.	11-10-2009	Operational
14	My TV	Mr. Nasir Uddin Chairman and Managing Director, VM International Ltd. (My TV) MyTV Building 150/3, 155, East Ulon, Hatirzil Rampura, Dhaka-1219.	11-10-2009	Operational
15	Mohona Television Ltd.	Mr. Kamal Ahmed Majumdar Chairman, Mohona Television Ltd. Mohona Bhavan, House No.8, Road No.4, Section No.7, Pallavi, Mirpur, Dhaka-1216.	11-10-2009	Operational
16	Bijoy TV	Mr. ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury Chairman, Bijoy TV Chairman, Bijoy TV Ltd. Rahat Tower, 14 Link Road, 9th Floor, Bangla Motor, Dhaka-1000.	11-10-2009	Operational
17	GTV	Gazi Ghulam Ashria (Bappi) Chairman Gazi Satellite Television Ltd (GTV) UCEP Chenye Tower (5th Floor), 115, Segun Bagicha, Dhaka.	11-10-2009	Operational
18	Channel 9	Mr. Enaytur Rahman Chairman, Virgo Media Ltd:(Channel 9) Bashuneshwar City Tower, Level-13, Panthpath, Dhaka-1215.	11-10-2009	Operational

19	Ekattor TV	Mr. Mozammel Haque Managing Director Ekattor Media Ltd., 57, Sohrawardi Avenue, Baridhara, Dhaka.	11-10-2009	Operational
20	Channel Twenty-Four (Channel24)	Mr. A. K. Azad Managing Director Times Media Limited, 136, Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka-1208.	22-02-2010	Operational
21	S. A. Channel Private Ltd.	Mr. Salahuddin Ahmed Managing Director S. A. Channel Private Ltd. 22, Kakrail, Dhaka-1000.	22-4-2010	Operational
22	Asian Telecast Ltd. (Asian TV)	Alhajb Md. Harun-ur Rashid Chairman and Managing Director Asian Telecast Ltd. (Asian TV) and Asian Group of Industries, Dilkusha Centre, 28, Dilkusha Ba/A, 5th Floor, Suite No. 404, Dhaka-1000.	29-6-2011	Operational
23	"Ganbangla"	Kaushik Hossain Tapas Chairman Birds Eye Mass Media Communications Limited (Ganbangla) Areeb Tower, 48, Progoti Sarani, Block J, Baridhara, Dhaka-1212.	24-10-2011	Operational
24	"Deepto Bangla"	Kazi Zahedul Hasan Managing Director "Deepto Bangla" Satellite TV Channel Kazi Media Limited, 84, Dhanmondi, Road No.7A, Dhaka-1209.	22-12-2011	Operational
25	Bengal Television Limited (Channel- 52)	Morshed Alam, Chairman Managing Director Bengal Television Limited (Channel-52) BSEC Bhaban (Level-4) 102, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215.	01-10-2013	Frequency not granted.
26	Bangla TV Limited	Mir Noor Us Sams Managing Director Bangla TV Limited H/42, New Airport Road, Mohakhali C/A, Dhaka-1215.	04-11-2013	Operational
27	Dhaka Bangla Television	Mr Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury Managing Director Dhaka Bangla Media & Communications Ltd Dhaka Bangla Television Aziz Bhavan, 93, Motijheel C/A Floor- 09,Dhaka.	24-11-2013	Operational
28	News Twentyfour	Mr. Naeem Nizam Managing Director East West Media Group Ltd. News Twentyfour Bashuneshwar Residential Area Plot No. 371/A, Block-D, Baridhara Dhaka- 1229.	24-11-2013	Operational

29	Channel 21 (Twenty One)	Abdullah Al Mamun (Kaushik) Managing Director Broadcast World Bangladesh Limited, Channel 21 (Twenty One) Planners Tower, Level-13, Suite No. 4-5, 13/A, Bipanon C/A, Sonargaon Road, Bangla Motor, Dhaka-1000	24-11-2013	Awaiting broadcast.
30	Amaar Gaan	Tarun Dey Chairman Media Bangladesh Limited Amaar Gaan 22/A Faruk Sharani (4th and fifth floors) Nikunj-2, Dhaka, 1229.	24-11-2013	Frequency not granted.
31	Festival	Noor Mohammad Managing Director Millennium Multimedia Ltd. 39, Shahid Tajuddin Ahmed Smorini Tejgaon, Shi/A Dhaka-1208.	24-11-2013	Frequency not granted.
32	Green TV	Syed Ghulam Dastagir Chairman Green Multimedia Ltd., Green TV 102, Kakrail, 3rd Floor, Dhaka-1000.	24-11-2013	Frequency not granted.
33	Duranta TV	Md. Shahriar Alam Chairman Barind Media Ltd. Duranta TV Ahmed Tower (14th Floor) 28-30, Kamal Ataturk Avenue Banani Ba/A, Dhaka-1213.	24-11-2013	Operational
34	Cambrian Television	Lion Mk Bashar PMJF Chairman, BSB Foundation Cambrian Television Plot No.22, Gulshan Circle-2, Dhaka.	24-11-2013	Frequency not granted.
35	Rangdhanu	Mohammad Saiful Alam Managing Director Rongdhanu Media Ltd. Rangdhanu 25/4, Pallavi, Mirpur, Dhaka-1216.	24-11-2013	Frequency not granted.
36	ATV	Mohammad Abbas Ullah Chairman and Managing Director ATV Limited, ATV House No.79, Block-E (2nd Floor), Shahjalal International Airport Road, Banani Chairmanbari, Dhaka-1213.	24-11-2013	Operational
37	TITAS	Dhanad Islam Deepto Managing Director Millennium Media Ltd ( MML) TITAS House No.21, Road No. 68/A, Gulshan-02,Dhaka.	24-11-2013	Awaiting broadcast.
38	Nagarik TV	Anisul Haque Chairman Jaadu Media Limited	24-11-2013	Operational

		Lotus Kamal Tower 10th Floor, 57 Jowar Sahara C/A Nikunj-2, New Airport Road, Dhaka.		
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### Approval Period 2014-2018

Order	Channel Name	Address	Date of Approval of No Objection Certificate (NOC)	Current State
39	'Khela' TV	Mr. Tanvir Abir Chairman AR Media & Mass Communication (Pvt.) Ltd 87, BNS Center, Sector 7, Uttara, Dhaka-1230	12-01-2017	Frequency not granted.
40	Amar TV	Zinat Chowdhury Chairman Amar TV Limited, Dhaka Mymensingh Road, Level 3, Plot 29, Sector 03 Uttara, Dhaka-1230. Ditiyo Syed Haque, Director, Amar TV Limited (Amar TV), Dhaka Mymensingh Road, Level 3, Plot 29, Sector 03 Uttara, Dhaka-1230.	18-01-2017	Frequency not granted.
41	Global TV'	Mr. Md. Mamunur Rashid Kiron-MP Manager Globe Multimedia Limited Corporate & Registered Office: Plot # 3/KA (New), Tejgaon I/A Dhaka-1208.	18-01-2017	Frequency not granted.
42	Citizen TV (CTV)	Mr. Muhammad Shafikur Rahman Chairman Citizen TV (CTV) 1/A Manorma Apartment No. 4 Navratan Colony, New Bailey Road, Dhaka-1000	05-4-2017	Frequency not granted.
43	Prime TV	Mr. Tanzia Siraj Director & CEO Vision Infotainment Limited Prime TV House No.13, Road No.3, Sector-5 Uttara, Dhaka.	05-4-2017	Frequency not granted.
44	Spice Tv Limited	Mr. Sheela Islam Chairman MG Tower (13th Floor) 389/B (Main Road), West Rampura Dhaka-1219.	09-8-2017	Frequency not granted.
45	Bangladesh Broadcasting Business Network (TV Today)	Mr. Abul Bashar Mohammad Rokibul Baset  24/B; Topkhana Road: Flat-11/A, City View Tower Dhaka-1000.	14-05-2019	Frequency not granted.

### Government Owned Television Channels

Order	Channel Name	Address	Date of Approval	Current State
1	Bangladesh Television	Government of Bangladesh	-	Operational
2	BTV World		-	
3	Sangsad Bangladesh Television		12-01-2011	
4	Bangladesh Television Chittagong Centre			

Source: Ministry of Information, Government of Bangladesh.



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