

# **News Production in a Private TV Channel in Bangladesh: An Insider's View**

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## **Introduction**

When I got admitted to BRAC University I had not clear notion of what I wanted to be. I did not know what I would do as my major. However, I was always fascinated by electronic media from my childhood. Following my interest I decided to do my major in media and culture studies at the Department of English and Humanities of BRAC University for my graduation. I did courses on print media, copywriting, editing, globalization and media, cultural studies and translation studies. When an opportunity to do an internship in Boishakhi TV came my way I did not want to lose it. I did my 3 months internship in Boishakhi TV. In Boishakhi TV I worked with the news production team. Working in an electronic media was completely a new experience for me.

At Boishakhi TV, I was given an option to work either with their news section or programme department. I preferred to join the news team. The Head of news in Boishakhi TV, Syed Ishtiaque Reza, was my supervisor. He introduced me to the news production team. News preparation and telecasting can be very challenging and I developed a liking for the job, so much so, that now I want to join the electronic media after my graduation. This experience opened up new possibilities for me and gave me an eye-opening understanding of the electronic media. This may not have been possible for me and I would like to thank my department and BRAC University for giving me this opportunity.

This report will provide a general overview of the structure and operation of the newsroom at Boishakhi TV and will discuss the news production process in detail. While doing so, the report will also provide an insider's perspective on the nature of news selection and production at Boishakhi TV.

## **Boishakhi TV**

### **Background:**

Boishakhi Media Ltd is a private sector venture, and an entertainment and news channel for Bangla speaking people all over the world. The tagline of the channel is “Muktijuddher Chetonay” (In the Spirit of Liberation War). The company has 24 hours satellite television channel with programmes depicting Bangla culture, history, geography, people, language, and faiths responding to the needs of both national and international audience. The name of the channel is "BOISHAKHI", which came from the first month of Bangla year, “Boishakh”, associating the ideas of being ‘new’ and being ‘ahead’ to the channel. Boishakhi TV started its journey from the 27th of December, 2005. At the beginning, it was lagging behind in technological skills; but recently it has changed all its applications to launch a software-based system. Boishakhi TV broadly telecasts soap-operas, movies, talk shows and news. It also features special programmes during festivals like Eid, New Year, Nababarsho, among others.

### **News:**

News is “a report of recent events or previously unknown information.”<sup>1</sup> News comprises one of the most important parts for a 24 hours entertainment TV channel. In the absence of many news channels in Bangladesh<sup>2</sup> all the TV channels known as

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<sup>1</sup> Potter, Deborah. *Handbook of Independent Journalism*. State: Apr 10, 2008.

<<http://www.america.gov/st/democracyhr-english/2008/April/20080416211618eaifas0.8870203.html>>



entertainment channels telecast news and there is strong competition between all those to update the audience with the latest and most comprehensive news of the day. To that end, Boishakhi TV telecast news at regular interval. Boishakhi news time is 8 am, 10 am, 2 pm, 7pm, 10 pm, 1am and 3 am. Recently they have added English news too, which they telecast at 9 am and 6 pm regularly. Boishakhi TV telecasts *Ortho o Banijjo shongbad* (business) at 3 pm, *Sharadesh* (national) at 5 pm, *Boishakhi CNN abong Sharabisho* (world news) at 5-15 pm. They also have sports news at 7-40 pm, Entertainment and Cultural news at 8-30 pm. They have another attraction-they telecast news headlines every hour. Boishakhi TV tries to focus on the latest news of the country and the world. Besides they keep adding new information in their upcoming news for their viewers. They also telecast breaking news from home and abroad.

In Boishakhi TV many teams work continuously for successfully broadcasting this continuous stream of news. Reporters, producers, editors, broadcasters, video editors are directly responsible for making a news. In my internship I worked in the news production team as a junior news producer.



## **News Production at Boishakhi TV**

News production is a very lengthy and complex process. It is a pre-planned technique. Just as in a factory, any product goes through a part-by-part production process, news production goes through several stages. News gets constructed, manufactured, affected and unaffected by several issues or events. This report will try to throw light on some of these factors that influence news production, thereby giving an insiders' perspective to the whole news production system at Boishakhi TV.

In Boishakhi TV, many teams work for making news. The 'Production Team' is one such team at Boishakhi. People of this team work 24 hours for serving people with the latest news. They need to collect and select the news, then record and telecast it. News is collected from different sources, selected through various processes and then broadcast in different ways. Thus, it can be said that news production happens in three broad phases- collection, selection and broadcasting.

### **News Collection:**

The sources from which news gets collected can also have their own politics and limitations. Boishakhi TV collects news from three sources:

- (1) APTN, AP (Associate Press),
- (2) BBC, CNN
- (3) Reporters

In the previous night news editors decide the assignments for the news reporters and the next morning reporters and cameramen start their assignment. Their task is mainly to visit and collect news from the spot. When they come back from the spot, they collect video tapes from the production team and with the help of the video editors they download their reports in those video tapes. The video editors' job is mainly editing the visual scene. Reporters bring the reports that are generally 20-30 minutes long but for news a report time duration is maximum 1 minute. Usually most of the reports are telecast in 30 seconds and for that the selection process is very important. In these cases video editors edit and select the scene which is related to the news, with the help of the reporters. The reporters also write their scripts and submit them to the news editors for correction. There are also some reporters and cameramen who are available 24 hours in the studio for some emergency reporting. For example: A few days ago garments workers came out in the Mohakhali road and broke the glass walls of many adjacent buildings; in that time the reporters went there to cover the news from the spot. National and international desk reporters usually stay in the head office and collect news from different sources. National desk reporters collect news from their local correspondents who are working in the different regions of country. These journalists collect news from their areas and send



them to the head office through email. They also send video clips by email. On the other hand, International desk reporters collect news from different agencies. Mainly they collect news from BBC, CNN and local news channel from different countries. Sports reporters sometimes physically visit the sports ground and collect news and sometimes they collect from BBC, CNN or different sports channels.

Even a simple action like news collection becomes complex in the case of news. Why, how and what news is collected can also be an issue for news production.

Reporters have their own perception that comes into play while reporting news. They describe what they see and how they see it. If there is a road accident in front of a university and a student dies on the spot, then one reporter may say that it is the fault of the driver, he was drunk or he may not be an expert driver. Another reporter may say that it is a fault of the government. They should make a speed breaker in front of the university. Another reporter may focus on the carelessness of students. They should be careful in the time of road crossing. So this is how the reporters' ideology also gets reflected in their reports.

Another point to note in this regard is that news collected from outside sources like BBC and CNN are in English and during translation in Bangla all news in English may not be translated as the original. All the English expressions do not have corresponding Bangla words and vice versa. For example: 'Actions speak louder than words' there is no exact Bangla meaning of this sentence. It means 'what a person actually does is more important than what he/she says he/she will do.' So during translation there may be some changes in language.

### News Selection:

News selection is a very important process. All news is not important for everyone. When a dog bites a man it is not news but when a man bites a dog it becomes news. Similarly when a group of people meet and discuss about something it is not news but if a minister or the Prime Minister joins that meeting it becomes news. Internationally many things happen in a day but a channel in Bangladesh does not cover all these news. Selection of news is a very important part of news production.

News professional Potter agrees on at least seven main factors that help them determine if an event has consequence, if it is news.

- a) **Timeliness:** “News is what is new; it’s what’s happening. News is a report of recent events or previously unknown information.”<sup>3</sup> The news must be timely to be of use to readers. The news should be news; it should be new, fresh. The news of general election in 2009 is not news right now but it was hot news at that time.
- b) **Impact:** How many people does the event affect? How seriously does it affect them? The news writer or the reporter has to think about the importance of the news for the audience through such questions. They have to think about the acceptance of the audience, what they want to know and to be informed about. When there is a devastating flood in our country, the mass people would not be interested to know what is happening, or what day is being celebrated outside the country.
- c) **Proximity:** An event will be more important if it is closer to the readers. An earthquake abroad is not as concerning as one that is at home. For some instance,

<sup>3</sup> Potter, Deborah. *Handbook of Independent Journalism*. State: Apr 10, 2008.

<<http://www.america.gov/st/democracyhr-english/2008/April/20080416211618eaifas0.8870203.html>>



the mass audience of our country would be eager to know about the most recent facts and happenings about the Asian countries: India, Pakistan, Nepal etc, which are closer to our country.

- d) **Controversy:** Audience wants to involve all time in different types of conflicts. They always want a debate and take a position on those conflicts. There is always a conflict between audiences in our country about two political parties. They always have a debate on which party is better.
- e) **Prominence:** Names make news and big names make big news. Ordinary people are intrigued by the doings of the rich and the famous. In our daily life many accidents are happening and if a famous person is in the victim list then it instantly becomes news.
- f) **Currency:** People always like to talk or ponder on significant events. After pilkhana massacre people became interested to know about BDR<sup>4</sup>. A talk show or an additional report about the life of the soldiers will get viewers acceptance.
- g) **Oddity:** If the news is unusual then it becomes news. In our country, a baby boy born with two heads made news because it is an unusual phenomenon.

Besides these factors, there are other determinants that influence the production and selection of news. In the book, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of The Mass Media*, Herman & Chomsky describe a propaganda model and point out that money and power are able to filter out news and they also say news can be filtered through five determining processes. These are: ownership, advertising, sources, flak and anticommunism.

The channel owner always has a priority in news. If he/she supports any political group his/her channel will telecast that group's news in a positive way. Their negative news will be avoided for telecast or get telecast in a positive way.

A TV channel focuses on its advertisers' news all the time. Boishakhi TV also telecasts their advertisers' news. If they launch any new product or arrange any programme it will be telecast in their news.

Sources are another important filter. These entertainment channels collect news from different sources and they do not collect all the news. The news from neighbour countries gets more priority than those from the other countries. For example, news like 9/11 or tsunami in Indonesia gets more priority as international news. People of Bangladesh are very concerned about this kind of news as they directly or indirectly influence the Bangladeshi scenario.

Sometimes some negative news is highlighted as concerning or important news. The news of bird flue and anthrax are news that was captured and awareness against them was promoted by the news channels.

### **Broadcasting:**

Broadcasting is an extended procedure and requires a closer look. It also is divided into different steps.

#### **i) Choosing the right style:**

Broadcasting or presentation of news is always driven by an urge to achieve a level of authenticity, credibility and objectivity. To achieve these benchmarks the news production team has a pool of news presentation styles to choose from, such as

News can be presented in five ways:

- a) OOV
- b) Package
- c) OOV sink
- d) In vision
- e) Phono

**OOV(out of vision):** It is a kind of presenting news consisting of map, still pictures, graphics and so on. The news presenter remains outside of the screen and reads out the news. At the same time a video footage related to that news is shown. An OOV is maximum 20 to 30 seconds long. If there is a serious road accident or plane crash where a lot of details are available, editors and reporters may prefer to make the news as OOV with graphic images and footages available.



The famous photographer Ansel Easton Adams said “There are always two people in every picture: the photographer and the viewer.”<sup>5</sup> In the time of image selection the news production team selects those scenes which elicit more responses or engage audience emotionally. For example in Nimtoli fire tragedy news they mainly focus on women and children victims in their images. Viewers become more emotional from these images. In another way image also adds to the authenticity and credibility of the news.

**Package:** In a package, presenters start the news with two or three important sentences and then reporters start their packages and they describe every important information. Presenters are out of vision and reporters continue in their own voice and sometimes at the end of the packages reporters give PTC (piece to camera) where they are visible and they conclude the packages with an overall opinion. Mostly for international news it is not possible for reporters to give PTC if he/she is not present at the place. Generally reporters make packages for selected national, international or sports news which has relevant footages and still pictures. Package is also used for news which is considered more important. Pilkhana massacre, 9/11 and football World Cup 2010 final are this kind of news. This news is considered more important than other news, therefore they get telecast as packages. Following is an example of news presented in package style:

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<sup>5</sup> Bizcommunity.com: “Daily Media, Marketing and Advertising News”.  
< <http://www.bizcommunity.com/Quotes.aspx?l=196&c=17&ct=13&ndt=15+Sep+2005+12%3a00%3a00>



আর্মস নীতিমালা/প্যাকেজ/লাবলু

.....

বৈধ আগ্নেয়াস্ত্রের অবৈধ ব্যবহার ঠেকাতে, মালিকদের তালিকা তৈরি করছে, গোয়েন্দারা। তাদের ওপর বাড়ানো হয়েছে, নজরদারি। আর বৈধ অস্ত্রের সংখ্যা কমাতে, ব্রিটিশ আমলের পর, এই প্রথমবারের মতো 'আগ্নেয়াস্ত্র ব্যবস্থাপনা নীতিমালা' পরিবর্তন করছে, সরকার। ছোট-বড় দু'টি অস্ত্রের বদলে, একটি অস্ত্রের লাইসেন্স দেবার বিধান রেখে, প্রস্তাবিত নীতিমালার খসড়াও চূড়ান্ত করা হয়েছে। বৈধ অস্ত্রের মালিকরা বলছেন, ব্যবহারের নিয়ম-নীতি না জানার কারণেই বৈধ অস্ত্রের অবৈধ ব্যবহার বাড়ছে। মাহবুব আলমের বিশেষ রিপোর্ট।

**OOV sink:** It is another form of OOV along with significant interviews of related people. Sink is something to support anyone's word either by video or audio footages. When a video or audio is added with OOV then it becomes OOV sink. If there is any video or audio footage of the interviewee and the significant people or people related to the respective news, the editors add that with the OOV and that footage is known as sink. It is also to earn credibility in the eyes of the audience. These are all news techniques to increase authenticity and credibility of news. Here is an example of a news presentation in OOV sink style:

প্রধানমন্ত্রী-জাপান/উভ/সিঙ্ক/নজরুল

.....

রাশিয়া, বেলজিয়াম ও জাপানে ১২ দিনের সফর শেষে-- আজ দেশে ফিরছেন, প্রধানমন্ত্রী-শেখ হাসিনা। সন্ধ্যায় তাঁর ঢাকা পৌঁছানোর কথা রয়েছে। স্থানীয় সময় সকাল পৌনে

এগারোটায়, টোকিও বিমান বন্দর থেকে ঢাকার উদ্দেশে রওনা দেবেন, প্রধানমন্ত্রী। এদিকে, বাংলাদেশকে জাপানের মতো শিল্পোন্নত দেশে পরিণত করতে, আরো বেশি বিনিয়োগের জন্য প্রবাসী বাংলাদেশিদের প্রতি আহ্বান জানিয়েছেন, শেখ হাসিনা। জাপান প্রবাসী বাংলাদেশী কমিউনিটি আয়োজিত সম্বর্ধনা সভায় তিনি আরো বলেন, সামরিক স্বৈরশাসক দিয়ে দেশের উন্নয়ন হয়না।

সিংক: শেখ হাসিনা,

প্রধানমন্ত্রী।

This report was accompanied by an audiovisual footage, where the Prime Minister's words were delivered directly to the audience.

**In vision:** In this situation the news presenter remains in front of the camera and read the very recent news to the audience. When there is no time to make any OOV or package and the news is very important, editors pass the very raw news to the news presenters directly.

**Phono:** When a reporter is present at the news spot, the broadcast station tries to communicate with the reporter live and the reporter talks with the news presenter, it becomes phono. It is another way to convince the viewers of the level of credibility the news has.

## ii) Recording:

After the right style is chosen the news gets recorded. There is always a senior news producer who instructs the whole team and a news presenter during news broadcasting.



The video tapes are provided to the news reporters to record their packages or OOVs. These video tapes are re-recordable. At Boishakhi, there are 5 rooms for video panel where the video editors help these reporters to make the packages or OOVs.

**iii) Headlines making:** The news editors give the hard copy of headlines to collect the video tapes of those reports. With the help of video editors, the visual headlines are made and recorded in a cassette. Finally, with these cassettes and video tapes from the reporters the news is broadcast. There are some fixed video tapes, which do not need to be recorded over and over again. These are sting cassettes.

**iv) Stings:** Apart from various stings made for current events or new happenings, there are special news stings. For example, on the occasion of the national poet, Kaji Nazrul Islam's birthday, a special sting was made. The sting consisted of music of Nazrul with his still pictures. The sting duration was maximum 5-10 seconds. It was used in the beginning of the special segments on Nazrul. Many kinds of stings are used in news, such as sports, commercial, international etc. There is also a common news sting which is used at the beginning of the regular news at 7 pm and 9 pm.

After broadcasting the news the video tapes are kept separately and when the news gets old and there is no chance of that being broadcast again, the cassette is used for re-recording.

#### **v) Live Report and Phone Call Telecasting:**

News is basically divided in two categories, hard news and soft news. Hard news is essentially the news of the day, and is telecast in the beginning of news. These news stories are usually written in such a way that the audiences get the most important information as quickly as possible. For example, in the time of *hartal* people want to know what happened during the *hartal*, if anyone died or if anything unexpected happened etc. The news channel gives the most updated important information in this time. This news may be telecast as breaking news or in the beginning of the news.

Boishakhi TV always tries to give the updated news to the viewers and for that they telecast the live news sometimes. Their reporters visit the places of event and report from there.

These live reports and phone call telecasting are considered authentic. Therefore all news channels, including Boishakhi TV, try to present live news. While working as a news producer, I have observed that this fascination for live reporting sometimes becomes a technique for the production team to engage the viewers.

Boishakhi TV also telecasts live phone calls. It some times happens that, the production team lets the graphics team know the number of calls to be taken during the allotted time and provides them with the reporters' number. Then during the telecast the news presenter pretends to contact the reporter, claiming him/her to be in the spot. Producers call the reporter and let him/her know who the presenter is, and it is telecasting live. The presenter asks his/her question to the reporter. Viewers can see a photo of the reporter and can listen to their discussion. This has a serious impact on viewers' minds. All the time they want to know about the latest situation and this phono give them the latest



information. Viewers are able to see that the reporter is in the place and he/she is talking from there so it is the current news. The channel that gives latest information on new happenings, are followed by the viewers more frequently for news. Since it is also a matter of competition between all channels, they have to use techniques like this to hold on to their viewers.

**vi) Logistic support:**

Last but not the least, logistic support makes news production possible. The production team at first collects video tapes from reporters and news scripts from news editors and then makes visual headlines, recording them in a cassette. They also record cassettes for news that is coming up or as recap cassettes. The runner, which is the sequence of news to be cast, is decided by the news editor.

In the news room a senior news producer leads the whole news production team. One person operates the VTR player and another one operates the autoscript. There are two people in the news room, who are from the broadcasting team. The senior producer has a microphone, which is used for communicating with the news presenter and the presentation team. When the news starts, the presentation team hands over the telecasting task to the production team and after the telecasting it is again handed over to the presentation team. The presentation team also gives the commercial advertisement cassettes to the production team which is telecast during the breaks. The person who controls the VTR player always remains ready with all the cassettes. He plays the cassettes according to the instructions of the senior news producer. He gives a warning when the cassettes are about to finish. In the upper side of the cassettes the reporters write

the duration of their reports. There are two VTR players in the news room and the VTR operator also gives direction to the broadcasting team about which VTR player to use to play the cassette. Another producer controls the autoscripts. The news presenter reads the news from a monitor where all the news is written. The news presenter has a talkback in his/her ear so that he/she can listen to all the instructions from the senior producer. Sometimes the news presenters are prompted about any problem or something coming on the way of the camera and the producer gives the instructions through the talkback. If any news arrives during the telecast, then the editor gives two hard copies to the producer who keeps one for himself and gives the other to the news presenters. The senior producer gives instructions to the presenter while he/she reads the news. Sometimes, when the autoscript is stuck and nothing can be seen by the presenter, the senior producer asks the presenter to read the news from his/her scripts. Similarly, if the hard copy of the news does not reach the presenter, the senior producer asks to read his/her news from the autoscript.<sup>6</sup> This machine may get stuck sometimes and the presenter cannot see anything on the screen. It needs a restart then and during this time the presenter has to read from his script.

At first the news producer collects the written copies of the upcoming news and recap, and takes them for editing. The video editing panel number 8 is permanent for making headlines, upcoming news and the recap. Half an hour before the news the panel is inaccessible to any reporter. The video editor first finds out the number of pockets for the day's headlines.<sup>7</sup> Then the video editors count the number of news to be covered in the

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<sup>6</sup> **Autoscript:** It is a machine which help news presenter to read the news. It is a monitor which stands in front of the presenter. A news producer controls it from the news room.

<sup>7</sup> **Pockets:** In the headline the space for each news is called a pocket.



headline that day. Then he watches the cassettes of reports and selects some scenes that match the headlines. A news producer and the video editor select the scene. If the news is on the Prime Minister's meeting, the scene will be her pictures then the meeting's place and a scene of meeting. When the headline is ready it is recorded in the cassettes. If the recording is complete the video editors give the cassettes to the producer to attach the topic and the time of telecast and the time of display in the VTR player. Then it is passed on to the news room. In the production desk one producer stays all the time. When the reporters come for cassettes he/she hands them their cassettes and notes their names, cassette numbers and the subjects of their reports. The reporters also collect their room numbers for work and the producer finds out the available room numbers and place them there for video editing. He/she also notes down the video editor's name and the room number in a script.

### **After Thoughts**

This report focuses on the news production of Boishakhi Television. My experience in Boishakhi TV has been like a journey into the news world and it has been a very enlightening and fulfilling experience for me as reflected in the report. Three months is a short time for an internship but I have tried my best to learn from my experience. Initially I was confused about the kind of work the news production team does. I thought that it is a complicated and boring job, but now I realize that the news production team plays a very important role in reaching the news to people. During my internship I found my job so interesting that I see a bright future for me in this sector. This job also changed my perspective on news. Previously, I had no interest in watching news; but after some days of my internship, I started taking interest in it. Now I know why every new event is not news and why different channels present the same news in different ways. After these three months, I am able to say why everything does not hit the headline.



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