

Staff reporter

The cabinet on Monday approved the draft of the 'National Broadcasting Policy' aiming to restrict the airing of programs that satirize national ideals and objectives, undermine people, harm unity and solidarity of Bangladesh as an independent state.

It is also aimed at prohibiting the broadcasting of programs that might unleash separatism and unrest in the country as well as create hatred among different castes, creeds and religions. The approval was given at the regular weekly meeting of the cabinet held at the Bangladesh Secretariat with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

After the meeting, cabinet secretary M Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan briefed reporters.

He said the 'National Broadcasting Policy' will ensure the freedom of speech, free flow of information and social responsibility of the media as well as flourish independent and responsible mass media in the country.

Musharraf said the cabinet approved the comprehensive policy to ensure development and better performance of the mass media so that they could provide effective services to people enabling the government to play the role of facilitator.

The policy will also restrict airing news or programs which will invade personal privacy and impede the state security and hurt religious values and non-communal spirit.

The policy will not allow any news or programs in favor of any country which would be harmful to other countries as well as affect the relations with friendly countries.

The news which can encourage mutiny, anarchy, and violent acts as well as inspire corruption directly or indirectly will have to be avoided, as per the policy. It will not allow any news or programs to be aired ridiculing the Armed Forces and law enforcement agencies.

A draft committee, headed by the information secretary, was formed with maximum members from mass media, NGOs and other professional bodies to prepare the policy, the cabinet secretary said. It also held consultation meetings with various stakeholders before compiling the draft.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Ministry reviewed the draft and gave its recommendation before finalizing the draft.

Musharraf Hossain said the policy would be come into effect through a gazette notification and would be applicable for both the government and private media.

He said the policy would be implemented gradually through an independent 'Broadcasting Commission' and it will be a statutory body.

The commission would later be constituted through enacting a law and its chairman and members would be selected through a Search Committee, comprising members of mass media and other professional bodies.

The independent commission will formulate necessary rules and regulations to implement the policy and will have the authority to issue licence for mass media.

The Information Ministry will implement the policy until the formation of the independent commission, the cabinet secretary added.

The main features of the policy included upholding the spirit of great war of liberation, protecting the country's own language, culture and values as well as broadcasting the development news.

Besides, special programs on national events like the birthday of father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, national mourning day 15 August, Independence and National Day 26 March, Victory Day 16 December should be aired through befitting manner.

The cabinet secretary said the second quarterly (April-June) report of 2014 regarding the implementation of the decisions taken in the cabinet meeting was placed before the cabinet. The meeting was apprised of the visit of a Bangladesh delegation led by the Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister to Sweden, Denmark and Switzerland from May 12-23.

Besides, the participation of a Bangladesh delegation led by the Environment and Forest Minister in a conference titled 'Our Ocean' held in Washington in the USA on June 16-17 and the participation of the state minister for information and communication technology in a conference titled 'Ministerial Forum on ICT' held in Singapore on June 16-17 were apprised. Ministers, state ministers and secretaries concerned attended the meeting.