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ARTICLE 19

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Bangladesh: Government’s Vision for Digital Bangladesh Must Include Community Radios

As part of its vision for Digital Bangladesh, the Government of Bangladesh has committed to issuing licenses for community radio stations.

Yeafesh Osman, Minister for Science and Information and Communication Technology (ICT), said: *“I can assure you that the government will be issuing licenses for community radio soon. This will be a major step towards achieving the government’s vision for a Digital Bangladesh.”* Osman was speaking during an interview with a community radio station broadcasting from an ARTICLE 19 and partner BNNRC exhibition stall at the World Telecommunication and Information Society Day event, held in Chittagong on 16-17 May.

As part of this event, ARTICLE 19 and partner organisation Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC) promoted the theme of community radio and access to information through an exhibition stall and fully-fledged community radio station, broadcasting on FM.

The two-day event was organised by the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) and comprised a national seminar on “Digital Bangladesh” and “Vision 2021”, as well as an ICT exhibition displaying different information and communication innovations. With over 20 stalls, various ICT-based organisations took part in the event, including those promoting software, call-centres, internet services, telecommunication infrastructure services, video conferencing, mobile telecommunication services, vehicle tracking and community radio.

There was significant interest in the ARTICLE 19/BNNRC stall and visitors included Minister Osman, BTRC Chairperson Brigadier General (Retired) Zia Ahmed and Member of Parliament Akram Hossain Chowdhury.

“In a country like Bangladesh, low-cost tools and information technologies such as community radio will usher in a new era in promoting the right to information,” said Tahmina Rahman, ARTICLE 19 Bangladesh Country Director, in a live radio interview. *“I hope the Government will take the necessary steps for speeding up the approval of licenses allowing for the first time, fully functional community radio stations in Bangladesh.”*

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- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.