

Bangladesh: High Court Issues Directive to Cut Cell-Phone Tower Radiation

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The High Court of Bangladesh issued an 11-point directive to protect health and the environment from mobile phone-tower radiation that includes stopping the installation of towers on residence rooftops, schools, and in populated areas. It also requires eliminating towers with high levels of radiation. There are an estimated 35,000 telecom towers in Bangladesh. -GEG

The High Court (HC) yesterday (Thursday) issued an 11-point directive to protect public health and environment from mobile phone tower radiation. An HC bench also directed the Bangladesh Telecom Regulatory Commission (BTRC) to submit a feasibility study report before it within four months, on the impact of radiation from mobile-phone towers on people and environment. In a final verdict on a seven-year-old writ petition, the HC bench, comprising Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed and Justice Md Iqbal Kabir, came up with the directive.

The bench directed the authorities concerned not to install any mobile phone tower on rooftops of

residences, schools, colleges, playing fields, populated areas and heritage areas. Those installed earlier in such areas should be removed.

The HC bench also directed the authorities concerned to take steps to reduce the radiation of mobile phone towers by 1 per cent out of 10 per cent.

It also directed the authorities concerned to take steps so that mobile operators do not cross the specific radiation limit.

It asked the authorities concerned to inform the HC whether there is any restriction on acquisition of land for installing mobile phone towers.

The bench directed the BTRC to form a monitoring cell on public health risk caused by radiation from mobile phone towers. It also asked the authorities concerned to replace all mobile phone towers with high radiation.

The HC bench also directed the BTRC to make the verification mandatory for installing mobile phone towers.

It also directed the authorities concerned to take steps for writing the SAR on the mobile phone.

The HC bench said that it would give further directives in this regard after the report is submitted by the authorities concerned in line with its orders.

Advocate Manzill Murshid, president of Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB), a human rights body, filed the writ petition seven years ago. It sought court directive to the government to stop radiation from mobile phone towers.

The HRPB filed the petition as a public-interest litigation before the HC on October 29, 2012, following a report broadcast by Ekushey Television on October 18 that year. The report said equipment in mobile-phone towers emit radiation that is harmful for the human body.

In response to the petition, the HC on October 30, 2012, ordered the government to examine the level of emission from mobile-phone towers, assess its effect on health and environment and submit two separate reports to it. It also issued a rule upon government officials concerned to explain why they should not be directed to stop radiation emission from mobile-phone towers set up across the country.

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