

Law and Our Rights

Right to Information: A Key to Integration

by M Amir-Ul Islam

ACCESS to information is a key issue in the concept of our Republic. Our Republic is: "a democracy in which fundamental human rights, freedom and respect for the dignity and worth of the human person shall be guaranteed and in which effective participation by the people through their elected representatives in administration at all levels shall be ensured." In order for the people to effectively participate through their elected representatives, it is necessary that they be aware of the facts and information relating to the affairs of the Republic.

They should have adequate information not only about the candidates whom they are going to vote for, but must also have knowledge about the agenda and the performance of the government, the political parties, the legislators, and the government leaders. In order for false propaganda and false innuendo not to dominate the judgement of the people so that the people may form their own independent judgment it is important that people should be provided with accurate information about the matters which concern them. Such access to information is a precondition to the working of a democracy. This right to information is more pertinent in a country like ours where a big chunk of the population is illiterate and uneducated. There may, however, be a preconceived notion that people who are not educated do not have the appetite for information. Such a notion is not only incorrect, but is also dangerously misleading.

Access to Information and The Role of Media
Access to information is a primary concern. In a country where a majority is illiterate, and reading population is not sizeable, it is very important for the electronic media to play the pioneering role more effectively. As we have a neutral caretaker government during elections, similarly, the media must also have a panel of experts on various subjects, and a panel of questioners. Through various question and answer sessions the people must be able to get the relevant answers to relevant issues. Like in the parliament, people may also have alternative way to access information through question hour on TV & radios. These question answer sessions can

also have ministers and party leaders on the panel to answer questions. They can participate along with the experts. Such exercise could be a continuous process throughout the whole five-year term and during the entire tenure of any particular government. During the election campaign the question answer session can be edited

the press. These rights are interdependent and as concept they are also interconnected. All of these rights are linked with the right to information. Without the free flow of information and exchange of opinion there cannot be the formation of any free and honest opinion. Without such opinion there cannot be the public sharing nor would there be any participation of people in the policy making area. Even a newborn baby has a number of rights, such as the right to food, to clothing, to shelter, to healthy and friendly environment so on and so forth. But all these rights cannot be devoid of nor can be isolated from the first birth cry that it makes, which is the genesis of the right to expression. As the child grows, his manner of expression develops into better articulation. With age and maturity it gets even more sophisticated. The concept can be applied in respect to the freedom of expression in its individual, social and political dimension. In articulating this right, the skill and the mechanism is also developed with practice in a particular society. Such practice is of utmost importance. The media policy ought to be able to include a methodology as to how the media can be used as an instrument for the empowerment of people, because only the media can play the role in meeting the need of a society for articulating the views, the concern, the care and the aspiration of the people. It is in this process the people can be well integrated in a system, as society and summarized and the issues properly identified. The political parties and the leaders could be asked to give their views and opinions as well as their agenda and work plan on the basis of their stands and performance on these matters so identified. They could be examined and cross examined by the media experts, panel members and questioners. Summarized facts and figures and the presentation before the electorates for their verdicts. So the people could have adequate information regarding the party agenda and the performance of the political parties and the government in power and their future programme and action plan. Information about the matters which concern the people is vital and important for the

innuendo may easily blur the vision and judgment of the electorate. Unless the people are well informed and have regular access to correct and objective information duly tested, verified and scrutinized through various media and communication mechanism, false propaganda and restrictions which are imposed in the interest of the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign state, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement for committing any offence.

time publication of *Lajja* and *Nari* have been banned. These are the instances of application of the repressive laws restricting the freedom of the press and publication. The test of reasonable restriction is yet to be determined by the Supreme Court. Similarly the laws under the colonial era also need to be reviewed in order to make them

vacy is also guaranteed under our Constitution. Thus the Right to Privacy and the right to reputation go hand in hand. The social value and the culture in the West, for instance, do not resent free publication of gossip or scandal of private life of the members of the royalty or a celebrity in public life. This, no doubt, may create immense interest among the readers to an extent almost justifying such publication. In the Eastern culture, on the other hand, it will not be such a welcome reading. Private life of people, therefore may not become the subject of information business as much as it thrives in the West as an industry quite easily. Yet, media has of course the capacity to create an appetite for such private scandal. Hence, opinion or even choosing the media also needs to make a value judgment and exercise its own choice and discretion in playing its role. It should also practice a self censorship, a restraint, a moderation and a balance in projecting a news or formulating an issue or in ventilating an opinion and even choosing the subject or a topic for publication. Media makes the choice whether an issue or a topic is a matter of public concern or interest. Does it help people to gather information, forming objective opinion etc. It is continuously deciding the issue as to whether a particular subject ought or ought not be subject matter of public concern and if it is what importance it should deserve and how the same be treated.

Journalists and the media therefore play the role of an investigator, a prosecutor and of a judge. In doing so it must also act as a strong lawyer for the defence in case the immediate target of a particular news or views likely to affect, may have something to say on the topic however strong or feeble, acceptable or not to the writer-publisher or even the reader but it must be given due weight and the same must find its place along with the other side of the story.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.

Under our laws there are restrictions imposed on the freedom of expressions most of which are contained under Bangladesh Penal Code and Contempt of Court Act. The reasonableness of those laws has not been tested as yet. Publication of speech which was considered as sedition under a colonial regime may have lost its significance in an independent country.