

## We can be repressed

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to restrict the media. The media in Bangladesh will not allow even an iota of restriction imposed on them.

We understand what is national interest, what is good for our people and how people's rights can be better served. We also know our responsibilities and how to be restrained, if necessary. The fact that those in power felt the need to start the discredited and hateful system of issuing press advisory over the phone is not only shameful but also suicidal. Such advisory only protects those who are afraid of transparency and openness. They cannot be friends of Dr. Fakruddin's government, not for that matter of Bangladesh or of anybody who has the country's interest at heart.

It is a well-known experience and one that is globally applicable that media restrictions only serve the corrupt and the vested interest groups. Anybody or any group devoted to serving public interest has nothing to fear from a free press. In the past when media censorship existed in the country whom did it serve? Never the public. We accept that free media have not always succeeded in eliminating the corrupt and the criminal elements from the society. But that has been so because the people in power never used the media reports in investigating further and finding out the truth. The government of the day, irrespective of any party, in fact blamed the media for maligning them and as such protected the corrupt simply because of the nexus that grew between the politicians and the criminals. Even under such constraints, whatever little public interest has been served it was due to the relentless pursuit of the journalists to expose corruption. Few other groups did as much for public interest as the media.

Take the most recent political crisis. The nation would have had to suffer a one-sided election, with the most flawed voter list and partisan bureaucracy imaginable but for the media. If President Iajuddin really pursued public interest he would have gotten our full backing even after assuming power unconventional, according to some illegally. But he got the very opposite from the media as a result of which people have been better served.

With the declaration of emergency, an overall legal cover has been brought into effect within which the government now has the power to institute some restrictive rules for the purpose of maintaining law and order and related governance issues, including restricting some fundamental rights. But it does not automatically mean that a government will have to issue restrictive rules in all the fields covered by the emergency provision of the constitution.

Therefore we urge Dr. Fakruddin not only NOT to go in the direction

## HC asks law enforcers not to harass Mamun, his wife

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a rule asking the law enforcement agencies not to arrest or harass Gias Uddin Al Mamun, managing director of a private television channel, Channel 1, and his wife Shahina Yesmin without following the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).

The Division Bench comprising Justice Syed Mohammad Dastagir Hossain and Justice Mamun Rahman passed the order following a writ petition filed by Mamun and his wife seeking a direction from the court, according to a press release.

The HC also directed the agencies not to raid their residence without following the CrPC provisions.

Senior Advocate Khondker Mahbubuddin Ahmed moved the petition on behalf of the petitioners.

### EC to invite

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In reply to a question, he said the separate meetings with the two political alliances may take place by tomorrow (Tuesday).

"As meetings and processions are not allowed now, the EC has decided to postpone the local government elections," Sarkar said.

On the nearly two-hour meeting, he said, "We discussed how to address the present prevailing situation and hold a free and fair election by overcoming the present problems."

But they did not discuss the reconstitution of the EC, Sarkar said.

After rescheduling the upcoming election several times, the EC was firm to hold the election on January 22 amidst a boycott by the Awami League-led grand alliance that demanded preparation of a correct voter list and a fresh election schedule.

The CEC and EC secretary earlier said they had no alternative to holding the election within the stipulated 90 days set for the interim caretaker government.

### AL wants

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party held a meeting to review the latest political developments and give the combine's formal reaction on the state of emergency declared on January 11 following the resignation of President Iajuddin Ahmed from the post of chief adviser. AL presidium member Abdur Razzak chaired the meeting.

"We believe in constitution, democracy, election and fundamental rights," Jallil, also AL general secretary, said in his short speech. Termin Iajuddin's quitting the post of the chief adviser "people's victory," Jallil said. "His [president] speech has proved the legitimacy of our demonstrations."

Senior 14-party combine leaders Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Suranji Sengupta, Sheikh Fazil Karim Selim, Rashed Khan Menon, Hasanul Haque Inu, Biman Biswas, Nurul Islam, Dilip Barua, Pankaj Bhattacharya, Syed Zafar Sazzad, Hazi Abdus Samad, Latif Siddiqui were present at the briefing among others.

### 3 JMB cadres

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picked up Mojibor Miah, 42, from his house at the same place.

The council of advisers, which was reconstituted following resignation of President Iajuddin Ahmed from the post of CA on Thursday night amid a growing political crisis over the next parliamentary election, decided to sit every Monday and if necessary more frequently, formally and informally.

On the first day in their offices after allocation of portfolios, the advisers hoped they will be able to create an atmosphere suitable for holding a free and fair election.

**PORTFOLIOS**  
The chief adviser kept under his custody the Cabinet Division, the establishment and home ministries, and the Election Commission Secretariat and also kept to himself the portfolios which remain to be distributed, according to a government notification.

Barrister Mainul Hosein was given the ministries of law, justice and parliamentary affairs, Parliament Secretariat, and the ministries of housing and public works, and land.

Dr AB Mirza Azizul Islam got the responsibility of running the finance ministry, the Finance Division, Economic Relations Division, Internal Resources Division, the planning ministry, the Planning Division, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division, and the commerce ministry.

As it was the first meeting of the newly formed council of advisers, they discussed a wide range of issues from law and order to the upcoming election including reconstruction of the EC, sources said.

"We will have to examine some legal matters on different issues including the constitutional provision for holding the election within 90 days of dissolution of the last parliament," an adviser said adding that the meeting however did not assign any adviser to examine the legal provisions. "Actually, we will collectively examine all the issues," he said.

Another adviser said they felt the people's confidence in the caretaker government and the EC should be reinstated for holding a free and fair election, but they did

"The ministries and divisions not allocated yet will remain under the chief adviser until further notice as per section 3(IV) of the Rules of Business 1996," says the notification.

"The ministries and divisions not

## BDR, BSF

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feared the situation might escalate. The local and officials sources said the Indian side used automatic weapons along the borders of these three districts to fire hundreds of bullets at Bangladeshi villages and nearby BDR outposts from yesterday midnight. They said the BSF triggered the exchange of fire.

BRD, police and local public representatives said the BSF troops of Pukhrani camp under Noyabari Company of 10 BSF Battalion suddenly opened fire at Bangladesh from a place opposite to Majhipara BDR outpost in Tentulia upazila of Panchagarh.

The on-patrol BDR men of Majhipara outpost retaliated. The exchange of gunfire continued till 5:30am yesterday, creating panic in the area.

In another incident, both the border forces exchanged gunfire this morning when the BSF troops of Adadanga camp of 172 BSF Battalion opened fire in the early hours yesterday towards Hapania BDR outpost of Naogaon without any provocation.

"We have already lodged strong protests against the BSF actions and atrocities and asked our BSF counterparts to hold flag meetings and explain the reasons behind this kind of provocation," they told BSS.

Earlier, the BSF side sought apologies on Friday to the BDR authorities during three flag meetings when the BDR men strongly protested the killings of four Bangladeshi villagers and injuring four others on Tentulia, Porsha and Joypurhat borders.

The BSF side also assured the BDR authorities that they would not repeat such incident in the future.

## Toxic ship barred

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They asked the Bangladesh Bank not to allow opening of an LC in favour of the importer and asked the Chittagong Port Authority not to allow the ship to beach.

The letter read, "The department has obtained information that MT Apsheron carries hazardous materials onboard and scrapping of the ship will cause environmental pollution."

"Now the importer will not be able to bring the ship into Bangladesh territory unless it is decontaminated," said Ashraf.

Apsheron and her sistership Guderme, are on the list of 50 ships in the spotlight created by Greenpeace International, an environmentalist watchdog fighting against potential threats to the world's biodiversity and environment.

Both the ships are in the Indian Ocean sailing for Bangladesh and are believed to have hazardous wastes such as asbestos, PCB, toxic paint and fuel residues on board.

Bangladesh Ship Breakers Association (BSBA) does not comply with even basic minimum standards for safety and environmental protection, said Rizwana.

"According to Bela's investigation, 13 workers died in ship breaking yards of Bangladesh," she said.

Director General (DG) of the Department of Shipping Captain AKM Shafiqullah said the department has various constraints particularly of adequate resource to institute a full-fledged ship inspection system.

The department has been as it was in 1983 but the volume of shipping business has increased twenty times.

"We even cannot carry out what we feel is needed," said Shafiqullah.

Regarding the HC directive to frame a set of rules to regulate import of ships for scrapping, Shafiqullah said, "It is at the drafting stage."

Meanwhile, various environmentalist organisations including Young Power in Social Action (YPSA) formed a human chain yesterday, and Bangladesh Parishab Andolok (Bapa) also protested the move to bring toxic ships in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh lacks specific laws

## Court accepts

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different dates of the case.

Dr Kamal and 11 others were present in the court during the passing of the order regarding exemption from appearing in person.

After scrutinising the case docket (CD) and other relevant documents, Metropolitan Magistrate Towfiqul Islam accepted the charge sheet and issued an arrest warrant against another accused Habibur Rahman, an outsider, as he has been absconding since the incident.

Earlier on December 22 last year, Detective Branch (DB) Inspector Naimur Rahman, who is also the investigation officer (IO), pressed charges against 13 including Dr Kamal, Amir and Rokan, showing 28 people as prosecution witnesses.

The other charge sheeted defendants are former Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) secretary advocate Enayetur Rahim, former SCBA vice president advocate Subrata Chowdhury, barrister Tania Amir and advocates Sheikh Awfsar Rahman, Subrata Saha, Khairul Alam Pipul, M. o. m. a. m. a. Khasruzzaman, Suhraruddi and Saeed Mamun Mahbub.

Barrister Omar Sadat, son-in-law of BNP leader and former minister Shahjahan Siraj, filed the with the CMM's Court on December 4 namely.

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allocated yet will remain under the chief adviser until further notice as per section 3(IV) of the Rules of Business 1996," says the notification.

Officer-in-charge of Ataikula Police Station CM Shamsul Haque said the dead were accused in several criminal cases, including murder and robbery cases.

Leaders of the 14-party alliance and other political parties filed the writ petitions that also challenged the chief adviser's activities and announcement of the schedule for the next general election.

## DU student strike finally postponed

DU CORRESPONDENT

Chhatri Sangram Parishad (CSP), an alliance of 14-party backed student organisations, yesterday postponed its indefinite student strike at Dhaka University (DU), "taking into account the greater interest of the students."

The university administration, however, resumed the academic activities from Saturday saying that the state of emergency reopens the university automatically as all kind of political activities are banned across the country.

At a press conference at Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU), the alliance leaders called off the strike enforced for more than two months. BCL President Mahmud Hasan Ripon, General Secretary Mofazzal Haider Chowdhury Roton, Shariful Kabir Swapan and Ali Hasan Torun were present at the conference among others.

The CSP, led by Bangladesh Chhatri League (BCL), called the strike from November 20 protesting JCD's attack on its leaders and activists on the campus the previous day and demanding peaceful co-existence of all student bodies.

Jatiyatabadi Chhatri Dal (JCD), student wing of BNP, drove out the leaders and activists of the CSP and barred them from re-entering the campus and holding organisational activities since the previous caretaker government took over on last October.

The alliance leaders and activists returned to the campus after around three months' stay outside at a time when political activities are restricted due to the state of emergency.

At the press conference yesterday, the alliance leaders demanded the authorities ensure and maintain peaceful co-existence of all student bodies on the campus and immediate arrest of the armed cadres of the JCD.

If the university authorities fail to meet their demands within a short time, they will launch movement against the vice-chancellor (VC), pro-VC and treasurer, as they have been patronising the JCD cadres, Ripon said.

According to shipping department sources, the government remains under pressure from those who make money out of the unlawful business of issuing NOCs.

"Even a legal fight in this regard is a big hassle for them, as they don't have adequate support for this," a source said.

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Bangladesh lacks specific laws

## Photojournalists

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trees worth around several lakh taka for only Tk 40,000, said the sources.

The trees were sold to four different buyers through an open bid, but involved under-the-table transactions, a number of university officials alleged.

"Our efforts will not bring any immediate fruit unless the importers and exporters come forward and cooperate with us by taking quick delivery of their containers," said an official seeking anonymity.

The port official alleged many importers and exporters developed a habit of keeping containers in the port yards for weeks instead of taking delivery.

Earlier on Thursday, the government in a circular declared the port service 'indispensable' for the next six months.

Regarding the circular, the port secretary said the government just renewed its 'old order' considering the overall situation.

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through the political horizon," she said.

Rice said she was told during her trip that the United States needed to deepen its involvement in Mideast peace efforts. "You will have my commitment to do precisely that," she said.

The Palestinian people have waited a long time for their own state. The Israeli people have waited a long time to live in security and peace with their neighbors," she said.

Abbas also said he is determined to go ahead with early elections if the latest round of coalition talks fails.

The two rival Palestinian factions have made repeated attempts to form a coalition Cabinet but failed because of disagreement over key posts, such as the interior and finance ministries, and the government's political program.

Hamas, which has dominated the Cabinet since winning parliamentary elections in March, has balked at international demands it

recognize Israel, renounce violence and accept existing peace deals before Western sanctions on economic assistance to the government could be lifted.

The international community, including the U.S., insists that any Palestinian government recognize Israel's right to exist, but Hamas has refused to do so.

Ahead of Rice's visit, Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh of Hamas contended that Israel and the U.S. were trying to fan the flames of a Palestinian civil war.

Fighting between Abbas' Fatah faction and Hamas gunmen has repeatedly erupted in Gaza in recent months.

The U.S. policy of backing Abbas and ignoring Hamas "is doomed to

failure because the Palestinian people are not bought with money, and no one believes that trying to lure some