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of criticising one party and giving support to another. "In the recent election coverage in the US, we have noticed that several newspapers and TV channels officially announced support to a particular party. So, what's wrong if a channel shows support towards any candidate or party?"

But, political leaders, teachers and media personalities differ with his view and insist that self-censorship does not always work. They demand that there must be a satellite television rule in Bangladesh and they at the same time, demand that the Press Council for newspapers be strengthened. Claiming the scenario quite unfortunate, many observe that there must be guidelines for mass media not just during elections but for all the year round.

Awami League leader Begum Matia Chowdhury says, "It's expected that the journalists disclose the fact considering their profession is committed to the welfare of the society. Their duty is to make people aware but not to distort information. There should not be any restrictions on press, but, there must be some guidelines. Why should the press be left out if there are guidelines for every other organisation? CEC's announcement for not imposing guidelines for the mass media in the election is not acceptable in the sense that there won't be any guidelines for press."

"Still, we hope the journalists will be responsible in their election-related reporting and write and publish or broadcast news stories in an objective manner. If any candidate, political party or alliance supporting the candidate makes an allegation against another candidate, party or alliance, the journalists must seek comments from both sides to have a complete picture," Anwar says, "Who is enjoying the freedom in press in Bangladesh: the owners or the journalists? To me it's the owners. And when the media serves the vested interest of the owner it damages politics and creates confusions. Based on assumptions political leaders have been presented wrongly in front of public. It is simply character assassination.

Rejecting Information Secretary's comparison with the US election coverage by the American press, Professor AAMS Arifin Siddiqui, a teacher of Department of Mass Communication and Journalism of Dhaka University, says, "Federal Communications Commissions in US strictly monitors mass media in the US. The editorial policy of a press can give support to a political party. Even a party can advertise in an electronic media. But, in case of hard reporting and spot reporting and in case of news analyses, objectivity and accountability is always maintained there."

"In Bangladesh, the press at present enjoys boundless freedom. Both control and limitless freedom is harmful. If the owner of a mass medium has connection with a political party, I assume, there is the possibility of being biased. And for check and balance there must be some guidelines not only for election period but a permanent one."

Considering that electronic media as more powerful than the print media these days, Professor Siddiqui demands separate guidelines for the private TV channels, since owners of many of these channels have political affiliation, which may lead to manipulation of news.

Professor Sirajul Islam Chowdhury, a former Dhaka