



# Special law proposed to shield journos

Reform commission recommends stock market listing of medium, large media companies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Media Reform Commission has proposed sweeping changes to ownership and supervision in the sector, along with measures to ensure journalists' safety and proper wages.

In its report submitted to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday, the commission recommended a dedicated law to safeguard journalists.

It suggested the repeal of restrictive provisions in the anti-defamation law and the proposed Cyber Security Act, and amendments to the Official Secrets Act, which many argue hinder press freedom.

Additionally, the commission called for the establishment of an independent regulatory body to oversee the media. It suggested that defamation-related charges against journalists be handled by this body rather than through conventional legal channels.

It also recommended reforming the process of announcing newspaper circulation, increasing the rate of government advertisements for newspapers, and abolishing all types of advance taxes and 27.5 percent corporate tax on the newspaper industry.

"A review of audited accounts of various newspapers shows that even if a company makes a small pre-tax profit, it incurs a significant loss after paying taxes. If the high corporate tax rate and the practice of collecting advance taxes continue, many established newspapers will shut down within the next few years," the commission said.

Kamal Ahmed, chief of the commission, spoke to the media at a press conference after submitting the report to the chief adviser at his official residence Jamuna.

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- PROPOSALS
- 'One house, one media' policy
  - Separate regulatory body
  - Repeal of restrictive laws



**TITAS UNDER ONSLAUGHT...** A syndicate of illegal soil traders has constructed a road-like embankment, obstructing the natural flow of the Titas river in Brahmanbaria's Akhaura upazila. They have also carved out roads through farmlands and the river to facilitate the transportation of illegally extracted soil from the riverbed. Story on page 5.

PHOTO: MASUK HRIDOY

## CONSENSUS COMMISSION Some proposals may weaken future govts

BNP flags concern

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP has raised concerns that implementing some recommendations from the National Consensus Commission could weaken future governments by granting undue power to unelected individuals.

Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir outlined the party's views on the reform recommendations at a press

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AL BAN DEBATE

## BNP sniffs ploy to delay the polls

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA and SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The BNP believes the ongoing debate, triggered by remarks from National Citizen Party (NCP) leader Hasnat Abdullah and others pressing for a ban on the Awami League, is part of a strategy to delay the national election.

Party leaders argue these are "attempts to incite tensions between the military and the public, creating political unrest". They believe these actions are part of a calculated move

to disrupt the electoral process.

NCP leader Hasnat Abdullah recently alleged a conspiracy was afoot to bring the AL back into politics at the behest of India. A proposal for accommodating a "refined Awami League" was made to them at a meeting in the cantonment.

Hasnat's remarks touched off a political maelstrom.

While the BNP supports holding AL leaders accountable for misrule and misconduct, it opposes any attempt to

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## Consensus holds key to path forward

Says crisis group chief about Bangladesh

PORIMOL PALMA

The key function for the interim government is now to build consensus among political parties and ensure everybody is carried along in the process and elections, said Comfort Ero, president of the International Crisis Group.

"If there isn't a fair, level playing field, if the key issues to guarantee free and fair elections are not settled, then the outcome will be a disputed election. So, you want to avoid that kind of scenario," she told The Daily Star in an interview on Friday during her visit to Bangladesh.

The ICG, a global think-tank headquartered in Brussels, has put Bangladesh in the spotlight after the July



Comfort Ero

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## 'No question of seeing the army as foe'

Won't stand any move to bring back AL: NCP

STAR REPORT

National Citizen Party Convener Nahid Islam yesterday said the people would never allow another 1/11 to happen.

"On August 3 [2024] at the Shaheed Minar, we declared that the Awami League and its 15-year-long fascist rule originated from the 1/11 political settlement. Because of that settlement, Sheikh Hasina and her party came to power."

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