

Staff Reporter

Defending the recently formulated National Broadcasting Policy 2014, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Wednesday said the government has formulated it to make the media responsible alongside freedom.

“Freedom is good but that freedom comes along with some responsibilities...these responsibilities are to the country and State and society. These responsibilities have to be performed,” she said.

The Prime Minister was speaking at a program at her office (PMO) marking the distribution of financial assistance to the sick, insolvent and injured journalists, and the family members of the journalists killed in various incidents.

Chaired by Information Minister Hasanul Huq Inu, the meeting was addressed, among others, by PM’s Adviser Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, BFUJ president Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, its secretary general Abdul Jalil, DUJ president Altaf Mahmud and its general secretary Quddus Afrad.

Replying to criticisms that the government does not believe in the freedom of media, Hasina said: “Had we not believed in press freedom why we had given permission to so many private television channels and newspapers in the country. We’ve permitted those as we believe in the freedom of press, but freedom doesn’t mean waywardness.”

The Prime Minister went on saying, “While you’ll enjoy the right, you’ ll have to be equally responsible, that’s the reality. That’s why we’ve formulated the policy.”

Hasina said the government would form a Commission that will be constituted through a search committee. “That commission will look after this policy,” she said adding that the government would enact a law in this regard.”

She also mentioned that it was the longstanding demand of journalists to formulate a broadcast policy. “We’ve just fulfilled that demand,” she said.

The Prime Minister said that the BBC, CNN and Al Jazeera are running as per their policies.

“While preparing the policy, we followed the BBC policy,” she said.

Hasina also mentioned that the BBC once presented wrong information and when it was proved that they had provided wrong information, the BBC director general and other officials concerned quit their posts. “They have the policy and that’s why they resigned,” she said.

Talking about criticisms against the policy, the Prime Minister said the policy was posted on the website for a long time so that people could see it and give their opinions. “You won’t get their any opinion (who are opposing the policy now) on the website.”

The Prime Minister mentioned that when the government decided to give permission for television and radio under private sector at that time it had decided to formulate a policy.

“When you’re enjoying any right, at the same time you have to discharge your responsibilities, too. Rights and responsibilities are complementary to each other,” she added.

Hasina said that some people are opposing the policy just for the sake of opposing. “There’s a class in the country which never sees any good... some people are there who always speak against the government.”

The Prime Minister also cut a joke saying that she was lucky that she had chosen her Information Minister from Jasad. “Or else, we would have faced more criticisms and adversities. Now the criticisms are being shared by Awami League and Jasad.”

Hasina said her government also fulfilled the demand of journalists by forming the Journalist Assistance Fund/Grant Policy-2012 to provide financial assistance to poor, insolvent, sick and

injured journalists.

Referring to 'Bangladesh Journalists' Welfare Trust Bill 2014', she said the bill has been passed by Parliament to establish a permanent system for the welfare of journalists.

To make the trust an effective and successful one, the government is going to form a trustee board with representatives from journalists as its members to ensure multifaceted welfare of the media activists, she added.

Later, the Prime Minister handed over cheques of financial assistance and donation among the sick, wounded and insolvent journalists as well as family members of the journalists killed in various incidents.