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Acting President's call to APSU

Help interim govt to hold free, fair polls

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DHAKA, Dec 13 (BSS) : The Acting President, Mr. Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, today called upon the student community to maintain their unity and help his interim government to hold free and fair elections within the stipulated time.

Addressing the leaders of All Party Students Unity (APSU) at the International Conference Centre (ICC) he said irrespective of opinions, the students had forged a greater unity among them to establish democracy and a representative government accountable to the people.

The Acting President said the first phase of the mass movement had earned victory but a greater responsibility still remained there-

with regard to holding free and fair polls. He underscored the imperative need for restoring fully the law and order which, he said, was a pre-condition for holding free and fair election.

The Acting President paid tributes to those students who embraced martyrdom in establishing the rights of the people during the current movement and said the nation would always remember them. He urged the students to contribute their mite in maintaining peace and discipline and said the illegal arms had to be recovered so that none could disturb the democratic process by using unauthorised arms.

In this context, Mr. Justice Shahabuddin said his government

had already amended the Arms Act providing stringent measures against those who were responsible for unauthorised possession of arms.

The Acting President, however, said 14 days time had been given for the surrender of unauthorised arms and added those who would comply with the order would be paraded.

Mr. Justice Shahabuddin said election campaign would start soon in the country and it was the duty of all to ensure that all the parties get equal opportunity. He said the students were selfless and they did not want to become Minister, Ambassador or wanted licence and permit. He said it was

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the student community which spearheaded the current mass movement. Therefore, he urged them to maintain their cooperative spirit and unity and help uphold democratic values and norms during the election.

He said the coming election would be a vital one for the nation to establish democracy and it had to be completely free and fair.

Referring to the students demand for trial of former President he said all actions had to be taken under law. He said the former President had already been put under "protective detention."

Mr. Justice Shahabuddin said a commission of enquiry headed by a Supreme Court Judge would be set up to enquire into the allegations against him (Ershad) as the first step towards formal trial according to law.

The student leaders who spoke on the occasion expressed their full support and cooperation to the interim government in restoring law and order as well as towards holding free and fair elections. They, however, demanded confiscation of the wealth accumulated by former President Ershad, his Ministers, MPs, Jatiya Party leaders and some bureaucrats through corrupt means.

They urged the Acting President to impound the passports of those people so that they could not leave the country. The student leaders also appealed to the Acting President to take into task the officials of virious agencies who did excess during the regime of Gen. Ershad.

The student leaders who spoke on the occasion were Amanullah Aman, Habibur Rahman Habib, Nazmul Huq Pradhan, Saifuddin Ahmed Moni, Mostafa Faruq, Jahangir Sattar Tinku and Miss Mashresa Mishu.