Be tough, proactive

FROM PAGE 1

leave the trivial jobs with others and focus on how to conduct of the upcoming national election in a peaceful and fair manner.

President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed in his address stressed the importance of creating an atmosphere conducive to holding a free and fair election. "The peaceful atmosphere that followed the winning of Nobel peace prize must continue," he said adding, "We will have to be careful so that the peace is not disturbed".

Iajuddin observed, "As a small and developing nation, Bangladesh received a lot from the developed world while in return it gave the concept of microcredit."

He said he hopes that all discord, division and conflicts would be resolved through peaceful means.

He underscored the need for continuing the democratic progress and giving it an institutional shape. "Only then we can build a happy and prosperous country for the future generations," the president added.

The president also thanked the Nobel committee for awarding Dr Mohammad Yunus and Grameen Bank this year's peace prize.

Yunus also observed that the activities of the caretaker government should be available to the media so that there remains no room for rumour or controversy.

He requested the interim government to be pro-active, rather than reactive.

"You will have to take a tough line ignoring the criticism and prove your point right."

The first noble laureate of the country regretted that the enthusiasm created among the people after liberation of the country was not used properly.

He said, "We will have to use the power of enthusiasm this time and be careful so that the peace is never hampered. The whole nation is looking forward to the next election and the people do not want disorder."

Prof Yunus attributed the winning of the Nobel Peace Prize to the 67 lakh clients of Grameen Bank.

In his half-an-hour speech, Prof Yunus described the background of Grameen Bank and its difference from other banks. The Grameen Bank has changed the very concept of banking system as it provides loans to its clients without any mortgage while other banks provide loans only to those who have money and assets. Besides, Grameen Bank gives priority to women for giving the loans.

"There is hardly any country in the world now, which is yet to introduce the concept of microcredit innovated by Grameen Bank," Prof Yunus said. Referring to his recent visit to China, he said the Asian giant has also decided to allow Grameen Bank's activities there.

Among the dignitaries who attended the reception include Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassir Husain, Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad and his wife Roushan Ershad, former chief adviser to a caretaker government Justice Habibur Rahman, former ministers Moudud Ahmed, Abdul Moyeen Khan, KM Obaidur Rahman, Kazi Zafar Ahmed, JP Secretary General Ruhul Amin Howlader, former caretaker government advisers Rokia Afzal Rahman, Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud and Monjur Elahi. None of the top leaders from the 14-party combine was, however, seen at the function.

Oli asks Iajuddin to relinquish post of CA

UNB, *Dhaka*

Executive President of Liberal Democratic Party Col (retired) Oli Ahmed yesterday urged President Iajuddin Ahmed to relinquish the post of the chief adviser.

"Mr President, don't be controversial serving the purposes of BNP at this stage of your life. Relinquish the additional charges of chief adviser and nine ministries in the greater interest of the nation," Oli said.

Oli was addressing a programme marking the joining of former Health Minister Dr Aftabuzzman and engineer Abul Kashem to the newly formed LDP.

He alleged that Bangabhaban has become an extension of Hawa Bhaban.

"All the transfers and postings in the administration are now being done at the dictates of Khaleda Zia and her son Tarique Rahman."

"The president and caretaker chief is only signing the transfer papers. All the transfers and postings are finalised as per Hawa Bhaban's directives. Khaleda and her son Tarique are pulling the string from behind," he said.

LDP President B Chowdhury said that the chief adviser would have to shoulder the responsibility if the coming elections become uncertain due to his partisan activities.

He urged Prof Iajuddin to prove his neutrality by immediately fulfilling all the demands of the political parties to hold a free and fair election.

Khaleda's portrait

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did not allow any journalist in the EC until 11:45am yesterday. The journalists were allowed in the EC after Election Commissioner SM Zakaria's intervention.

The EC secretary apologised to the journalists for the inconvenience. However, he did not explain the reason behind the directive barring the journalists from the EC.

14-party asks

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said otherwise non-stop blockade programmes across the country will be started.

"As they [BNP] appointed the CEC on political grounds, they are now trying to protect him to hold a blueprint election to retain power," Jalil said, referring to Bhuiyan's mention of the constitutional bar to the CEC's removal.

Jalil said, "Bhuiyan turns to the constitution whenever he smells success of their conspiracy. But, when President Iajuddin Ahmed took charge of the caretaker government violating the constitution, Bhuiyan forgot the constitution."

Jalil categorically said the CEC committed contempt of court by violating the directives of both High Court and Supreme Court and is known as a controversial person both at home and abroad.

Terming the recent reshuffle in the administration an "eyewash" that has made the situation even worse, the AL leader demanded immediate changes in both civil and police administration as it had been done ahead of the 2001 election.

He also demanded cancellation through a single notice of all contractual appointments made during the previous government's tenure.

Jalil said the law secretary, high commissioners in the US and UK, and director general of Bangladesh Institute of Administrative Management (Biam) among the contractually appointed, and the home and establishment secretaries--beneficiaries of the previous government, are still working.

The 14-party alliance demanded that the officers-in-charge, assistant commissioners and deputy commissioners, who led the beating up of AL leaders during the BNP government's tenure, be transferred, and all beneficiaries be made officers on special duty (OSD), while deprived officials be given duty to create a ground for a free and fair election.

Senior 14-party leaders Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Rashed Khan Menon, Suranjit Sengupta, Matia Chowdhury, Obaidul Quader, Hasanul Haque Inu, Mohammad Nasim, Abdul Mannan, Abdur Rahman, Dilip Barua and Nurul Islam were present at the press conference.

Later, the 14-party alliance held a rally at city's Lalbagh, reiterating that if Iajuddin does not implement its 11-point demand within November 11, people will take to the streets with oars and poles to press home the demands.

Addressing the rally, AL Presidium Member Abdur Razzak said CEC MA Aziz will have to follow the way of Justice KM Hasan.

Jalil urged Iajuddin to show respect to the people's demand for reconstituting the EC and thus prove his neutrality.

He directed the 14-party workers to be united to forge a vigorous movement if their demands are not met within November 11.

Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haque Inu, AL leaders Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Mohammad Nasim, Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Hazi Mohammad Selim and Dilip Barua also addressed the rally.

AL TEAM MEETS AKBAR

A four-member delegation of Awami League yesterday met Adviser to the Caretaker Government Dr Akbar Ali Khan and emphasised the need for depolitisation of the administration for holding a free and fair national election.

After the meeting delegation member Abul Mal Abdul Muhit told reporters that Awami League submitted its demand for reconstituting the Election Commission and recovering illegal firearms.

The AL leaders also pressed for the cancellation of the projects approved at the fag end of the immediate past government.

The adviser told reporters that the AL delegation would also meet other advisers and place the same demands to them.

About the administrative reshuffle, he said different councils would be formed to look into the matter. "A notification will be issued over the formation of the councils by today (yesterday)", he added.

Awami League delegation also included HT Imam, Faruk Chowdhury and AKM Mokammel Haque.

EU asks

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German envoy expressed the EU's concern over the political violence in Bangladesh and urged the political leaderships to restrain from any further violence.

Meyke appealed to the leaderships of major political parties to help holding of free, fair and credible election by showing some flexibility about their demands.

He hoped that the caretaker government would be able to successfully implement the decisive and effective measures that are necessary to hold a free and fair election.

During the meeting, they discussed opposition proposed electoral reforms and updating of voters' list.

Sheikh Hasina's Political Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury told the reporters that they remain firm about their demands. He said their demands for removal of CEC Justice MA Aziz, reconstitution of the Election Commission, updating the voter's list and termination of district level election officials appointed by the BNP-Jamaat government are essential for free and fair elections.

AL leader Salman F Rahman, former Ambassador Mohammad Ziauddin and Dr Hasan Mahamud were present in the meeting.

Jamaat case

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and Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon.

Paltan unit Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer ATM Sirajul Huq filed the case with Paltan Police Station on October 29, a day after the fierce street battles between the 14-party workers and Jamaat cadres that left six people dead and many wounded.

Granting the bails upon a petition filed by Jalil and others, a Division Bench comprising Justice MA Matin and Justice Syed AKM Dabirusshan issued a rule upon government to explain why the petitioners should not be granted a regular bail.

Moving the petition, Barrister Amir-Ul Islam submitted that the case was filed against the petitioners with political motives of harassing and humiliating them.

Amir told the court that the complainant had implicated the petitioners in the murder case "out of political rivalry and vendetta".

The petitioners became the "political victims of the circumstances, as they were not at all present during the occurrence according to the time mentioned in the FIR," he said.

Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud, Abdul Baset Majumder, AM Amin Udin, Abdul Matin Khasru and Jahangir Hossain Selim were also present during the hearing.

UP polls

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1998 made it mandatory to hold Upazila Parishad elections within six months of its enactment, no election has been held as yet.

An amendment of the Act in 1999 extended the time to hold Upazila Parishad election by 330 days, they pointed out.

In another amendment in 2001, the government, instead of the Election Commission, was empowered to determine the time of holding the elections, they said.

Upon hearing the petition, the HC bench issued the rule to the secretaries of Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Ministry of Establishment; Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs and the Election Commission.

BNP divided

FROM PAGE 16

they do not have enough access to the party high command.

However, the hardliners are allegedly misguiding the party top brass in this regard. Earlier, the BNP top tier had shown positive response to reconstitute the EC.

The sources said after handover of power to the caretaker government, the hardliners insisted on changing party position on the CEC. As a result, the BNP high command decided to back Aziz.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan even went to Bangabhaban and asked the president not to take action against the EC.

Bhuiyan at a press briefing at party's central office in Naya Paltan said, "Even it will be unconstitutional to request the CEC to resign."

Echoing the same, party standing committee member Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain said there is no provision in the constitution to remove the EC commissioners.

CG to disburse

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During yesterday's meeting, the central bank governor explained the country's current economic condition to the finance and planning adviser.

World Bank Country Director Christine Wallich paid farewell call on the adviser at the Ministry of Finance yesterday.

Comptroller and Auditor General Asif Ali also called on the finance adviser.

Nothing to be done

FROM PAGE 1

political parties to achieve this assigned objective.

He urged the European Union to send an election observer team to Bangladesh to monitor the polls.

The diplomats assured the chief adviser of the caretaker government of extending all cooperation in holding free and fair elections.

They said they would send election observers to Bangladesh as they did during the past elections.

High commissioners and ambassadors of Germany, the European Commission, France, Denmark, Sweden, Italy, the Netherlands and charge d'affaires of the UK were in the delegation.

EU CONFIDENT CG WILL HOLD FAIR POLLS

The European Union yesterday expressed its confidence that the caretaker government (CG) of Bangladesh, in consultation and cooperation with the democratic parties and forces, would be able to take necessary measures to ensure free and fair elections.

The heads of mission of the EU member-states and the Delegation of the European Commission expressed the views when they met the chief adviser.

The high-powered delegation met with the president for exchanging views on the present political situation in Bangladesh and the measures of the CG for ensuring "successful and democratic elections," said a EU spokesman.

During the meeting, the heads of mission expressed their appreciation and respect to the president and chief adviser in view of the complex and most important task ahead of him as chief of the interim government.

They conveyed the views of the EU on a wide range of key electoral issues and confidence-building measures, specifically the issues of Election Commission, voter list, security, media, transparency, financial disclosure, minority and women voters, complaints and appeals and political dialogue.

They reiterated that "the EU hopes and expects that all democratic parties and forces of Bangladesh demonstrate the requisite leadership and responsibility and offer their support to the caretaker government in its efforts to address the key electoral issues by decisive and effective measures".

They urged the political leaders of the country to restrain their supporters from any further violence and to ensure that political demonstrations take place in a peaceful and orderly manner, in respect to law and order, democracy and human rights.

Disclose names

FROM PAGE 16

hearings of these cases instead of issuance of stay orders. It suggested that the benches should notify and consult the banks before issuing any such stay order, if at all.

The interim government should carefully scrutinise all power projects hastily-approved by the immediate past government, before giving them a go ahead, the recommendations added.

Suggesting a test case for demonstrating the central bank's resolve to strengthen the banking sector the CPD document said the interim government should extend its full support towards implementation of the recommendations of the special investigation team of Bangladesh Bank regarding the frauds committed by Oriental Bank officials. It strongly suggested criminal proceedings against the persons accused of fraudulent activities in connection with the bank's functions.

Referring to reported intention of the central bank to give green signal to two new non-bank financial institutions out of 50 applicants, the think-tank suggested that the Bangladesh Bank should seriously scrutinise the merit of the proposals before granting such permissions and should leave the decision for the next elected government's consideration.

In the last three months there has been a decline in revenue collection and inflow of foreign aid while revenue expenditure has increased, forcing the government to borrow from domestic sources extensively, the document said adding that to maintain macro-economic stability, the interim government should curb government spending during its tenure.

A total of 59 projects amounting to Tk 21,059 crore were approved in seven meetings of the Executive Committee of National Economic Council during the first four months of the current fiscal, which is 80 percent of the fund earmarked for the annual development programme (ADP) of the current fiscal.

The non-government think-tank suggested, "The caretaker government needs to take a close look at these projects and reconfirm their justifications before fund disbursement."

Prothom Alo

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sought acquittal of the cases.

Mohammad Rafiqul Islam's court also acquitted Senior Reporter of the Prothom Alo Ashish Saikot and its columnist Hafizuddin Khan of the case.

The four defendants appeared before the court of Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Rafiqul Islam and submitted a discharge petition saying that the charges brought against them were false, fabricated and concocted.

Former chief whip Khondaker Delwar Hossain on April 2 sued the editor, publisher and two others of the Prothom Alo for running 'defamatory' news against him.

In his complaint, Delwar said the Prothom Alo published a news headlined "Chief whip took rice and pulses for his two residences from parliament" on March 13.

The daily also published two reports on March 14 and 16 claiming that the chief whip alone spent half of Tk 27 lakh entertainment allowances allotted for all the whips in parliament for the last fiscal year. The complainant alleged that the news was fabricated and it was published to tarnish his image.

Moving the petition, the lawyers said Delwar took rice and pulses for his family and the daily had run factual news on the basis of documents taken from different places. But the complainant filed the case against the editor, publisher and two others to save himself. So, the editor, publisher and two others should be discharged, the lawyers said.

Opposing the arguments of the defence, Delwar's lawyers said he did not receive the rice, pulses and money.

After the hearing, the magistrate rejected the prosecution plea for framing charges against the defendants and discharged them in the presence of complainant Delwar.

SHIBIR CASE

Metropolitan Magistrate Quamrunnahar discharged Matiur Rahman and Mahfuz Anam from a defamation case filed by Shibir leader Shahadat Ullah Tutul for running a 'defamatory' news item.

In her order, the magistrate said that complainant Tutul was absent from the court for four consecutive dates. Moreover, there was no step on behalf of Tutul yesterday. So, the proceedings of the case were stayed and the defendants were discharged, the magistrate added.

Advocates Syed Ahmed Gazi, Ashraf Ul Alam, Chaitanya Chandra Halder, Mahbubul Haque, Samiul Karim Alamgir, Rafiqul Islam Milon, Belal Hossain Jasim and Prosanta Kumar Karmakar moved the petitions on behalf of the defendants.

JMB man

FROM PAGE 1

The blast on July 21,2001 left one killed and 50 others injured.

Naim alias Hafiz was produced before the court amid tight security. Investigation Officer Sri Ram Dutta of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) prayed for the detainee to be placed on a 10 days' remand but the court granted for eight days.

During the hearing, Naim said he and some other JMB cadres had been assigned to kill Suranjit three months before the blast.

He said he has no regrets for those who were killed or injured during the incident.

Immediately after the remand hearing, Naim was brought to the Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC) in Dhaka.

He was arrested at Syedpur village under Jagannathpur upazila on September 3.

Zidane

FROM PAGE 1

former French international's purpose of visit is to inaugurate a food plant of Grameen Danone Foods Limited as the brand ambassador of the French baby food manufacturer.

Zidane, however, will take time off from his duties to enthral the football fans of the country when he will make appearance for both the under-16 sides of local giants Abahani and Mohammedan, who face off in an exhibition football match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium tomorrow afternoon.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police will provide tight security for Zidane who will bring his own security with him during his two-day stay.

Zidane, who visits the Grameen Bank headquarters tomorrow morning, will attend the inaugural ceremony of the Grameen Danone plant -- which will be built in Bogra -- in the capital on Wednesday. He is expected to call on President and Chief Advisor of the Caretaker Government Prof Iajuddin Ahmed also on Wednesday before leaving the capital in the evening.

SC defers

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on behalf of the JMB leaders. But Sarwar expressed his unwillingness to plead for them as a mark of protest as they killed lawyers and judges and showed disregard to the established legal system.

The assistant registrar then appointed another lawyer, who also declined on the same ground.

A sixmember full court of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassir Husain passed the order and asked the attorney general to appoint state defence for the condemned militants.

Attorney General AJ Mohammad Ali sought time for complying with the orders. The court fixed November 12 for hearing.

Six JMB leaders, including Abdur Rahman and his deputy Siddiqul Islam Bangla Bhai were sentenced to death for killing two Judges, Sohel Ahmed and Jagannath Pandey, in a bomb attack in Jhalakathi town on November 14 last year.

19 changes

FROM PAGE 16

Agriculture to Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives; Sigir Ahmed, DC of Meherpur, has been made OSD; Mohammad Shahidul Islam, who was an OSD, has been posted to the President's Office; BM Kamal of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, has been made GM of Jiban Bima Corporation and Zakir Hossain, ADC of Manikganj, has been transferred to Dhaka City Corporation as DG, Transportation.

Six DSs, who were earlier made OSD, have been posted to different ministries.

Sharab Uddin Ahmed and Habibul Islam have been posted to Land ministry; Begum Nasrin Akhtar and Afroza Begum to Education; Abul Bashar and Abdul Hamid to Agriculture.

Ananta Kumar Chowdhury, deputy director of Land Administration Training Centre (LATC) was made director of the LATC and OSD Deputy Secretary Mahmuda Akhter has been appointed as deputy director of LATC.

Al Amin Mustafizur Rahman, who was made OSD, and Abdul Kader, who was posted to the President's Office, have been sent to BIAM (Bangladesh Institute of Administration and Management) Foundation on deputation.

TIB

FROM PAGE 16

organisations were present at the meeting.

After the meeting, the adviser told reporters that he discussed overall situation in the power sector and emphasised setting out strategies to manage any crisis in next three months.

"I have asked the officials to take precautionary measures before any crisis emerges…No negligence will be allowed in this regard," said Mashhud.

He said he would find out the causes of the present crisis in the country's power sector.

Sources in the meeting said the new adviser warned the power ministry officials against any partisan role during the three-month tenure of the caretaker government.

"This is absolutely a neutral and non-party government, so you have to work accordingly… Be free from any fear or favour to anybody," Mashhud told the officials.

He later held similar meetings separately with the top officials of four ministries under his stewardship, including communications, food and disaster management and Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs.

Moudud

FROM PAGE 16

Kalurgaht radio station in Chittagong as a leader of the war of resistance."

Where as, the Proclamation of Independence describes that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman proclaimed the independence of Bangladesh on March 26 and asked the people to save the sovereignty and dignity of the country.

However, the Proclamation of Independence that had been included in the constitution was omitted while printing the new version.

The Proclamation of Independence is a part of the constitution of Bangladesh and nobody can change it or omit any section of it without amending the constitution, Abdul Matin Khasru told The Daily Star yesterday.

In a statement, Abdul Matin Khasru, a former law minister who had served the Awami League government, demanded that the president also chief of the caretaker government stops distribution of the latest version of the constitution as the law minister of the immediate past government 'distorted the history of the proclamation of independence in the newly written preface to the constitution'.

Abdul Matin Khasru demanded removal of the newly written introduction from the constitution, and publication and distribution of the constitution with the 'real history of the proclamation of independence'.

In a news release, Khasru stated that before handing over the office Moudud Ahmed wrote the new introduction where he 'distorted the history of the proclamation of independence'.

The release also said history will never forgive such a 'crime' by a responsible person.

Saddam, half brother

FROM PAGE 1

The appeal against ousted Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's death sentence will begin on Monday and last for a month, the chief investigative judge for the Iraqi High Tribunal told reporters.

Raed al-Juhi, who also acts as the court's spokesman, said the review of Sunday's ruling would last 30 days but that there is no firm timetable for when the appeal court would announce a final verdict.

By contrast Shias, the majority now in power, poured into the streets, dancing and yelling in joy that the Sunni Arab who oppressed them for three decades is now likely to be executed.

Mortar rounds slammed into two districts of Baghdad, one Sunni, one Shia, killing five people in all, police said.

The Shia prime minister, Nuri al-Maliki, said in a somber televised speech to the nation that Saddam "is facing the punishment he deserves." Maliki's government has been criticised for interfering in the case, which concerns the deaths of more than 148 Shia men from the town of Dujail.

The verdict, delivered in a rapid-fire, 45-minute session, was the highpoint so far in one of the great experiments in the law of war crimes since Nazi leaders were tried at Nuremberg 60 years ago. Saddam is also on trial for genocide against Kurds.

Yet the descent toward civil war since Saddam was overthrown in a US-led invasion in 2003, and questions about the impartiality of the American-backed court, have blighted a case that the United States hoped would unite Iraqis after three decades of Saddam's rule.

Underscoring the depth of sectarian divisions, in Baghdad's Shia Sadr City district youths shouted "Execute Saddam!," while in his hometown of Tikrit, in the Sunni heartland, a crowd chanted old Baathist slogans such as "Saddam we will give our blood for you."

Saddam's counsel said the verdict was timed to help President George W Bush's Republicans in Tuesday's congressional elections, and had urged a delay to prevent the sentence triggering bloodshed "for generations to come."

The US ambassador, Zalmay Khalilzad, said "closing the book on Saddam and his regime" was a chance for Iraqis to unite. The court was set up by US occupying officials who resisted calls for an international tribunal.

At first the 69-year-old ousted president, who has defiantly justified killing and torturing Shia opponents, refused to stand up before the judge. Eventually he rose shakily to his feet in the dock to hear the verdict and sentence read out.

As chief judge Raouf Abdul Rahman spoke, Saddam, hands clenched behind his back, almost succeeded in drowning him out, yelling the Muslim battle cry of "Allah hu Akbar!" (Allah is Greatest) and "Long Live Iraq!."

"The court has decided to sentence Saddam Hussein al-Majid to be hanged until he is dead for crimes against humanity," the judge said, ignoring a plea made by Saddam earlier in the trial that he should face a military firing squad, not the noose.

Saddam is being held at Camp Cropper, a US military stockade at Baghdad airport, and any execution is likely to happen behind prison walls, like those of dozens of others of criminals this year.

Judge Abdul Rahman, prompted by the defense lawyers, ordered one of the five guards around Saddam out of court for chewing gum and apparently laughing at the condemned man.

Dressed in the tieless and sober black suit he has worn in court appearances, and clutching a Koran, Saddam also struck a pious note, asking Iraqis to be "forgiving" toward American invaders and any "traitors" who repented.

Police said one woman was killed and 10 people were wounded by celebratory gunfire in Baghdad. When Saddam's two sons were killed in a US raid in July 2003, dozens of casualties were reported from celebratory gunfire, an old Arab tradition.

State television broadcast images of street celebrations, superimposed on footage of Saddam-era mass graves and killings. The main Sunni channel instead showed a soap opera.

Abdul Rahman ejected former US attorney general Ramsey Clark at the start of the hearing after the veteran campaigner sent him a note describing the trial as a "mockery of justice."

The Iraqi High Tribunal also sentenced Awad Hamed al-Bander, former chief judge in Saddam's Revolutionary Court, to death. Former Iraqi vice president Taha Yassin Ramadan was sentenced to life in prison. A fourth local Baath party official was acquitted at the prosecutor's request.

Three defense lawyers have been killed in the course of the trial, and the previous chief judge resigned over government interference.

Malcolm Smart of the human rights watchdog Amnesty International said: "We don't consider it was a fair process."

Human Rights Watch director for international justice Richard Dicker said the trial should have been conducted by an international court and called the verdict a "lost opportunity to give a sense of the rule of law".

Sadr City, the main Shia suburb of eastern Baghdad, erupted in joy at the verdict, as around 1,000 people marched, waved flags, denounced Saddam and hailed their hero, radical preacher Moqtada al-Sadr.

Iraq's beleaguered military was on a war footing for the verdict and a curfew was in force in three flashpoint provinces -- the war-torn capital, the sectarian battlefields of Diyala and Saddam's home region of Salaheddin.

Meanwhile, north of Baghdad in the Sunni town of Dawr near Saddam's home town of Tikrit, scores of protesters gathered to support the deposed president, according to a spokesman for the local security coordination centre.

"They chanted 'With our blood, with our souls we redeem you Saddam'," said police spokesman Hamed el-Duri.

In Tikrit, Sheikh Al-Nadawi, the head of the Baigat group of tribes to which Saddam belongs, said: "Saddam lived a hero and will die as a hero. The court was set up by his rivals... It is a historical farce."

The defendants were convicted of ordering the village of Dujail to suffer savage collective punishment after agents of current Prime Minister Maliki's Dawa party tried to kill Saddam there in 1982.

(Reuters, AP, AFP)

CA orders

FROM PAGE 1

yesterday said police will engage all its strength and perform duties fairly and impartially to hold the national elections.

The president and chief adviser to the caretaker government has already directed him regarding the matter, he said, adding, "I have also directed all my colleagues to play firm and bold roles and take whatever steps the law permits."

Khuda Bokhs was talking to newsmen at a views exchange meeting at the police headquarters.

The programme was organised to take suggestions from the journalists on a five-member media cell to be formed at the police headquarters to make information available for the newsmen.

The caretaker government chief also ordered the police force to carry out their duties neutrally, professionally and boldly, the IGP said.

He, however, refused to elaborate on the meeting with the chief adviser and said Bangabhaban will inform the press of the matter.

He hoped that people will play active role from their respective positions as they played in the past to maintain law and order and hold a fair, peaceful and neutral election.

Avoiding direct answer to whether godfathers will be arrested, he said, "Godfather is not a legal term, we should rather call criminal. We will arrest the criminals which is a continuous process."

Asked what steps he has taken as the IGP to prove that he is a neutral person when questions have raised concerning his 'loyalty' to a particular political party, the IGP showed apparent anger saying, "Is it a question at all?"

The IGP also avoided answering whether actions will be taken against policemen loyal to the former government.

When asked what steps have been taken to transfer the superintendents of police and officers-in-charge who were posted in 'better' positions and have allegation of partisan role, Khuda Bokhs said he knew nothing about it.

Asked whether 'crossfire' will continue during the rule of the interim government, the IGP did not reply and hurriedly ended the programme.

Cold causes

FROM PAGE 16

oversee electricity distribution.

"We all depend on each other, but we can't help each other without a common authority," he said, according to the Italian news agency ANSA.

"It's totally contradictory to have several European connections and not have a single European authority," he said.

The reliability of Europe's electricity system has been undermined in recent years as consumption has grown without corresponding investment.

Frequently during periods of extreme cold or heat, the power networks in European countries come under pressure, with transmission companies forced to take special measures.

The last major outage in Europe occurred in September 2003, when virtually all of Italy and part of the Swiss city of Geneva were left without power for up to 20 hours.