



CA vows to transfer power through polls at earliest

EC to be reconstituted, flawless electoral roll to be prepared

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday pledged to transfer power to an elected government at the earliest through holding a free, fair and credible general election after reconstituting the Election Commission (EC) and preparing a flawless electoral roll.

"Our beloved motherland has been faced with a difficult challenge. Today, the greatest challenge for us is to uphold and strengthen democratic rule by ensuring political and social stability, holding free and fair elections and ensuring people's voting right," he said in his maiden address to the nation over radio and television.

Fakhruddin, who assumed office on January 12 to head a reconstituted caretaker government, said the main task of his



Chief Adviser to the Caretaker Government Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed addresses the nation yesterday evening through Bangladesh Television (BTV) and Bangladesh Betar.

SPEECH HIGHLIGHTS

- Introduction of voter's ID cards and transparent ballot boxes to be examined.
- Influence of black money and muscle on the next election will be curbed.
- Prospective candidates will have to submit wealth, income statements and veracity of their versions will be ensured.
- ACC will be activated to fight graft.
- Power supply will be increased through curbing of corruption.
- Price hike of essentials will be curbed.
- Parties should nominate honest, efficient candidates.

JUDICIARY SEPARATION SC asks govt to submit amended CrPC by Feb 1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday ordered the government to submit an amended Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) by February 1 to advance separation of the judiciary from the executive.

It also asked the government to correct some 'erroneous' provisions in the four rules for judicial services by the same date.

The seven-member full bench of the Appellate Division with Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassar Husain in the chair yesterday passed the order.

The nine government officials, accused of distorting the 12-point SC directive given earlier for the separation, stood with their hands folded and sought the apex court's

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Ecneec recast, purchase body formed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government yesterday formed advisers' committees on purchase, economic affairs, law and order, administration and national award while the National Economic Council (NEC) and Executive Committee on National Economic Council (Ecneec) have also been reconstituted.

As per an official notification, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed will be the head of NEC, Ecneec and advisers' committee on administration. All the advisers are members of the NEC and Ecneec.

Advisers to the ministries of foreign, education and health are members of the advisers' committee on administration, the notification reads.

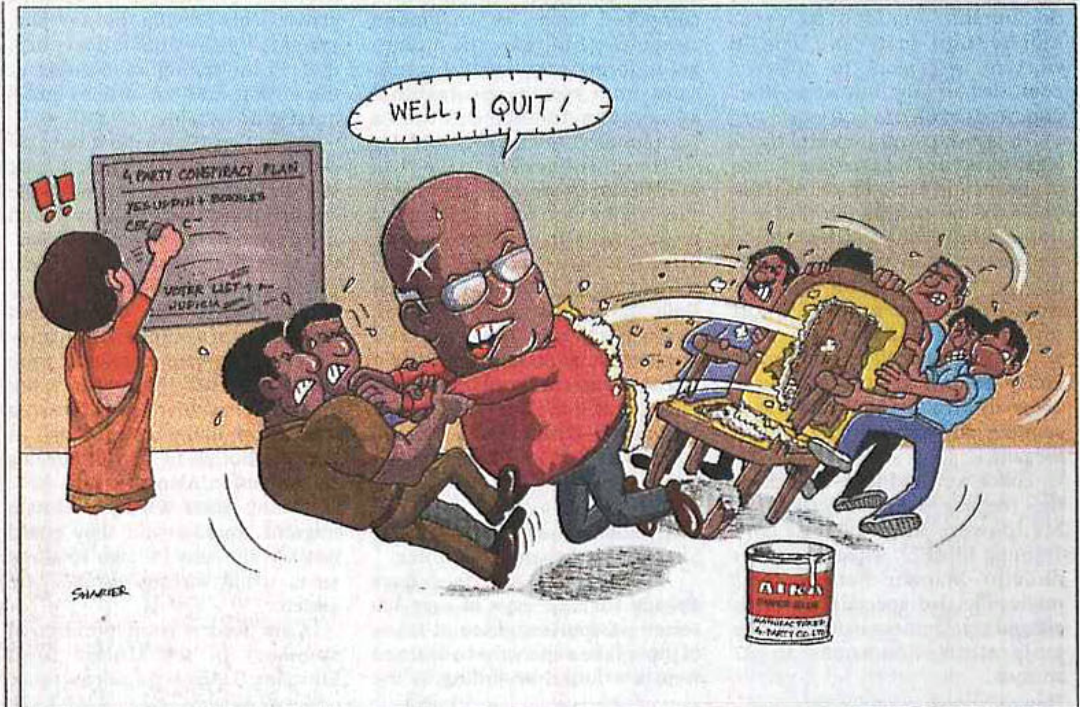
It also says that the finance

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

BCS results

The results of the 27th Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examination were announced by the Public Service Commission (PSC) yesterday, a press release said.

Results are on page 19.



Aziz finally resigns

Poll set for today officially cancelled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Justice MA Aziz resigned from the post of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) yesterday citing a major political alliance's lack of confidence in him and to avert further political unrest in the country.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission (EC) Secretariat issued a notification yesterday officially cancelling holding of the ninth parliamentary election slated for today.

Aziz's departure ends his highly controversial 21-month stint in the office, during which he was forced to go on a leave of absence on November 22 after repeated demands for his resignation from Awami League (AL)-led alliance for failing to prepare a correct and updated voter list.

His resignation follows the newly appointed caretaker government's announcement that reconstituting the problem-ridden EC is its top priority so that it can proceed with other electoral reforms, namely updating the voter list, and institutionalising the system of voter ID cards and transparent

ballot boxes.

Law Adviser Mainul Hossain told The Daily Star on Saturday that the caretaker government decided to appoint a new CEC within a couple of days. It has been learnt that the new CEC will be selected from the bureaucracy.

Saiful Alam, an election commissioner appointed on November 27 to replace another controversial commissioner, told UNB yesterday that he will also resign if he is asked by the government. Other controversial election commissioners are also expected to resign.

Aziz personally delivered his letter of resignation to President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday afternoon, which the president accepted.

"Any further political unrest would also be highly detrimental to the economic interest of Bangladesh. In order to prevent such an undesirable situation from arising, I have resigned from the post of CEC," MA Aziz stated in a statement released to the media on his behalf by his personal assistant.

"Over the last few weeks the political scenario has changed rapidly. A new caretaker govern-

ment has been sworn in which is working towards creating an environment for holding elections acceptable to all the political parties," Aziz said in the statement.

"If I continue in the post of CEC this may give certain political parties the opportunity to create once again new obstacles in the democratic process of holding national elections," said Aziz, adding, "This would be seriously prejudicial to the interest of the country."

Stating that the post of CEC is constitutional, Aziz said he attempted to perform his duties with 'sincerity and dedication', adding, "I have done my best to ensure the holding of free, fair and impartial elections in accordance with the constitution."

He however added, "Despite my best efforts, a major political alliance of the country could not repose confidence upon me. This led me to go on leave until February 22, 2007."

He also hoped, "A newly constituted Election Commission would be able to hold a free and fair election in due course."

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

AL welcomes CA's speech BNP's reaction today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) last night welcomed the speech of the chief adviser (CA) to the caretaker government (CG) and hoped that the CG headed by Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed will soon announce a date for holding the next parliamentary election.

Meanwhile, BNP refrained from giving any reaction last night but party leaders watched the CA's speech on television. It will give its formal reaction today, according to party sources.

"Election is mandatory to keep continuity of democracy and the constitutional system of the country. We hope that the caretaker

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

US, UK, German envoys talk politics with BNP leaders

UNB, Dhaka

US Ambassador Patricia A Butenis, British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury and German Ambassador and current EU chair Frank Meyle exchanged views on the current politics with BNP senior leaders over dinner last night.

BNP leaders Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and former foreign minister M Morshed Khan were, among others, present at the dinner hosted by former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar at his Gulshan home.

Talking to UNB over telephone,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Civil society lauds speech

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In reaction to the speech of Chief Adviser to the Caretaker (CA) Government Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed, former adviser to a CG, M Hafizuddin Khan, said his speech actually reflected the long-standing demands of the civil society.

The CA's pledges for eliminating influence of black money and muscle on the next election, curbing of corruption, arresting criminals, and for reconstitution of the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

AUG 21 GRENADE ATTACK Dhaka not aware of Ulfa link

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh foreign ministry yesterday expressed ignorance about the reported Ulfa involvement in the August 21 grenade attack on Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina's rally in Dhaka in 2004, saying that the Indian government didn't communicate anything about such claim.

"I am not aware of it. I have read it in newspapers but the Indian side did not inform us anything of it," said acting Foreign Secretary Touhid Hossain.

He made the observations on a

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

ANTI-CRIME DRIVE

3 die in army custody

2 more die while 'fleeing' raid; over 2,000 held yesterday

STAR REPORT

Three people including a BNP leader and an activist of its youth wing Jubo Dal died in the army custody hours after they were picked up in Chittagong, Barisal and Tangail.

Meanwhile, two more people died as they tried to get away from the army at Shariatpur and Dhaka.

Of the three, Abdul Kader Milon, 42, was a former joint secretary of port city BNP and a former ward commissioner, Nayan Kazi, 30, a Jubo Dal activist and an ex-sepoy in Barisal, and Rubel Miah, 18, son of a tea stall owner of Ghatail in Tangail.

The two other dead are Mohammad Shafique, joint conve-

nor of Shariatpur municipality unit of Jubo League, and Zakir Hossain, 26, an employee of Bijoy Nagar Residential Hotel in Dhaka.

Shafique died while trying to flee from army capture, while Jakir died after he had jumped from the hotel during an army raid.

With this, the number of deaths in the army custody since the state of emergency was declared rose to five.

According to a police press release, 2,265 people were arrested across the country in 24 hours ending at 6:00am yesterday. They include 24 fugitive convicts and 1,074 facing arrest warrants.

The army alone held 132 people in the same period, said home ministry press note.

In the countrywide raids, the law enforcers also seized 20 firearms, 27 other weapons, 16 bullets and five crackers.

CHITTAGONG

The army personnel held Milon at Cafe D Sultan, a restaurant he owns, at Bayezid Bostami Mazar Gate area at around 8:00pm Saturday, reports our Chittagong office.

The next morning, they along with some policemen took him to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) at around 9:00am, but the doctor on duty declared him dead.

"The body bore marks of multiple injuries when it was brought to the hospital," Milon's brother

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) men, left, demolish an illegal tin structure at Karwan Bazar in the capital yesterday leaving the local BNP office on the pavement in the same area unharmed.

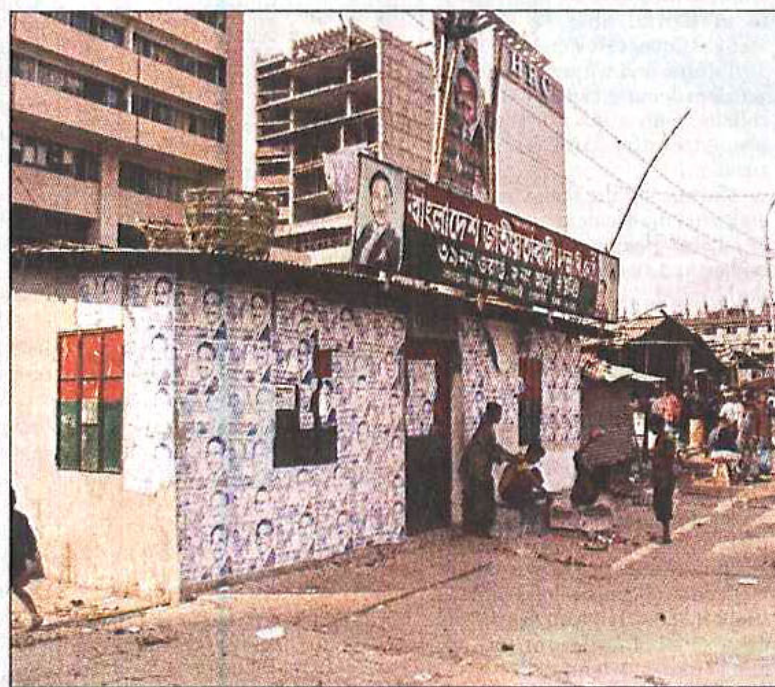


PHOTO: STAR

Nine secretaries transferred

2 contractual ones resign

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government yesterday made a major reshuffle in the civil administration changing nine secretaries including those of establishment, power and information ministries while contractual appointees, finance and law secretaries, resigned.

Establishment secretary Abu Mohammad Moniruzzaman Khan was transferred to Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) as its rector and BPATC rector Md Abdus Salam Khan was appointed establishment secretary, says an official handout.

Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) secretary Badiur Rahman was

made secretary to Internal Resources Division and chairman of the National Board of Revenue (NBR).

Finance secretary Siddiqueur Rahman Chowdhury and law secretary Alauddin Sarder have resigned as directed by the government high-ups, sources said.

Economic Relations Division secretary AKM Zafarullah was made Power Division secretary, information secretary Mohammad Kamal Uddin Ahmed was appointed secretary to the Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment and member of Privatisation Commission Syed Ataur Rahman was transferred to fisheries and livestock ministry as its secretary.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

DSE turnover hits all time high at Tk 111cr

SARWAR A CHOWDHURY

Turnover on the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) yesterday hit all time high of Tk 110.89 crore amid a huge capital inflow in the market.

Earlier, the highest DSE turnover was Tk 106 crore on November 13, 1996.

DSE market capitalisation stood at Tk 34,425 crore, which was also the highest.

According to DSE officials and market operators, the latest political development, glut of liquidity and low call money rate contributed to the recent surge in turnover.

A strong buying support both from the general and institutional investors also led DSE witness the highest ever turnover, they viewed.

Experts said the market started

witnessing a huge capital inflow from January 14 following declaration of a state of emergency in the country and also formation of a fresh interim government.

On that day, the DSE turnover was Tk 92.33 crore, which increased to Tk 104.70 crore on Thursday.

DSE President Abdullah Bokhari said, "Investors especially the institutional investors got back confidence to invest in the stock exchange."

"Investment from banks and other financial institutions were around 65 percent of the total turnover on Thursday," said the DSE president adding, "Today [yesterday] the percentage could be more."

Citing an average Tk 200 crore daily turnover in Sri Lanka, Bokhari said the turnover in Bangladesh

should be more, as the size of gross domestic product in Bangladesh is greater than that of Sri Lanka.

Replying to a query, the DSE president said that the present market will not face any bubble burst like in 1996 as scrippless trading, strong monitoring and surveillance, strict rules and regulations and a state-of-the-art infrastructure are now in place.

He suggested the investors to invest on securities analysing the price earning ratio.

Stock market expert Yawer Sayeed said there is a potentiality of further increase in turnover as the current turnover is minuscule in terms of money, which is around Tk 100 crore, considering a mammoth market capitalisation of more than Tk 30,000 crore.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

AUGUST 21 GRENADE ATTACK Ulfa leader's latest claim makes it more intriguing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Investigation into the August 21 grenade attack on an Awami League (AL) rally further dips into mystery following a news that quoted a commander of Assam's insurgent group Ulfa as saying their men made the attack "with the help of Bangladeshi intelligence agencies".

The news released by a Bangladesh private news agency from Guwahati said Ulfa commander Pallav Saikia confessed that his group was behind the attack on the AL rally at Bangabandhu Avenue in 2004.

The new claim has created controversy and raised questions about its authenticity. It also contradicted a few previous disclosures made by the local investigators since the attack, which killed 23 including Awami League (AL) women affairs secretary Ivy Rahman.

Judicial confessions of Joy Mia, Shafiqul Islam Shafiq and Abul Hashem Rana in 2005 linked top criminals Subrata Bain, Khondoker Tanvir Islam Joy and Molla Masud along with others.

A Harkatul Jihad (Huji) operative also claimed last year that the

Islamist militant group was behind the attack.

Demand has been made in the wake of the new situation for a neutral and fresh investigation of the incident as investigations are often made with political bias.

"We have not yet found any clue that goes with the Ulfa claim," said Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Assistant Superintendent Munshi Atiqur Rahman, who has been involved in the investigation since the attack.

"We do not know the authenticity of the news as the Ulfa itself has denied its involvement in the attack," he said, adding that the investigators may go for fact-finding following government orders.

The Bangladesh news agency on Saturday quoted the chief of special branch of eastern Indian state Assam, Khagen Sharma, as saying that Pallav confessed to attacking the AL rally at the "explicit instructions" of Ulfa military-wing chief Paresh Barua.

A few Bangladesh intelligence officials helped the Ulfa plan the attack and even provided 11 Ulfa men with vehicles on August 21 morning, Sharma said, adding that

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

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