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PARTIES' REACTION TO CA'S ADDRESS

Long-term schemes like ID card a job of elected govt: 4-party

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Urging the interim government to hold the election at the 'earliest possible time', BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday said it is the elected government's responsibility to do the long-term things like preparation of voter ID cards.

"The chief adviser said about resolving a lot of problems but it is not possible without long term plans and actions. And so, we think it is the duty of an elected government to do such things to serve the interest of the people," he told a press briefing at Hawa Bhaban in the capital.

Giving the four-party's formal reaction to the chief adviser's (CA) speech to the nation on Sunday night, he thanked the CA for promising to hold an election as soon as possible.

The BNP secretary general, however, said people expected a specific timeframe for holding the election as the only task of the caretaker government is to assist the Election Commission.

He urged the caretaker government to hold the election at the earliest possible time that he said might be three months.

The caretaker government should remain aware so that the

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STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL)-led 14-party alliance yesterday expressed the hope that the caretaker government (CG) headed by Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed will take measures to hold a free, fair and credible general election as early as possible by reconstituting the Election Commission (EC).

Giving the alliance's formal reaction to the chief adviser's (CA) first address to the nation Sunday night, the AL general secretary said the people hope that the new CG will hand over power to an elected government following a fair and

credible election. This will add a new dimension to democracy in the country, he added.

"Our expectation is that the caretaker government will not only reconstitute the Election Commission but also appoint honest and political influence-free officials at all levels, who will be involved in the electoral process. This is needed to do away with the election engineering of the previous coalition government," he said.

Jalil said it is a must to arrest corrupt people, criminals and black godfathers, illegal arms and black

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Committee formed to revitalise ACC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The council of advisers to the caretaker government (CG) yesterday formed a seven-member committee to look into legal, administrative and institutional issues of the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) to find its shortcomings that need to be mended to combat corruption.

The seven-member committee headed by Law Adviser Barrister Mainul Hossain will pinpoint the shortcomings to make the ACC fully functional, Press Secretary to the Chief Adviser (CA) Syed Fahim Munaim said at a news briefing at the CA's office last night.

Other members of the committee are the communication adviser, cabinet secretary, home and finance secretaries, ACC secretary, and the attorney general.

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PHOTO: STAR

Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha bulldozes a shopping centre illegally built by the caretakers of Joykali Mandir near the temple in old Dhaka yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Garbage and waste from nearby garment factories choke Jinjira canal in Keraniganj on the outskirts of the capital.

Sangu gas production depleting too early

SHARIER KHAN

The country's first off-shore gas field Sangu, also the costliest of all fields, is faced with a premature rapid depletion with its daily production already almost halved, competent sources said.

The gas field's British operator Cairn is however frantically trying to increase its production by drilling the 10th well at the site and repairing two of the existing nine wells. The new well is expected to be completed by March 30.

Drilling of this extra well located four kilometres off the existing Sangu field platform will add \$20 million to the recoverable cost of Sangu for Cairn. Sangu platform is located 35 km off the coast in the Bay of Bengal.

Cairn already claims to have invested a staggering \$ 555.95 million in the field till 2005. Now, \$20 million plus other expenses will add to this.

The field has one completely dry well. With four troubled wells and four operational ones, it now

produces 91 million cubic feet gas per day (mmcf). A few years back, this field was producing 160 mmcf.

By repairing two troubled wells, Cairn hopes to raise production up to 125 mmcf by the end of this month. But Petrobangla believes that it might go up to 110 mmcf at best.

Cairn believes that drilling of the 10th well might increase the field's production back to 160 mmcf as this would tap a new

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Rights body concerned at deaths in army custody

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rights watchdog Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) yesterday expressed grave concern at deaths of four people in army custody in 24 hours and demanded independent probe into and steps to stop recurrence of such deaths.

Odhikar, another rights watchdog, also demanded independent inquiry into the killing of 19 people in the custody of army, police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in last 10 days, and making public the

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Diplomats hope election will be held soon

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Encouraged by the caretaker government's agenda, foreign diplomats in Dhaka yesterday hoped that the next general elections would take place as soon as possible.

The envoys of US, UK, Germany and France made careful and optimistic comments about the next elections in Bangladesh to reporters after attending a

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ORIENTAL BANK SCAM 3 officials held

Further embezzlement of Tk 40cr unearthed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three officials of the Oriental Bank were held in the city yesterday on charge of misappropriating at least Tk 40 crore using fake accounts.

A recent investigation has found them and another of their colleagues at the bank's Karwan Bazar branch to have been involved in

the fraudulent scheme.

In a move first of its kind, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) with assistance from the police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) had the three arrested following a graft case filed a day before.

Ashfaqul Hakim, former executive officer, Sabbir Ahmed Siddiqui, SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

BB plans to go tough against loan defaulters

Seeks amendment to RPO 1972

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Bank is actively considering tougher legal steps against bank loan defaulters, seeking cooperation of the finance ministry to amend the Representation of the People Order (RPO) 1972.

The RPO that bars bank loan defaulters from contesting any

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Twin blasts kill 88 in Baghdad carnage

Two more GIs slain

AP, AFP, Baghdad

At least 88 people were killed and more than 160 wounded yesterday after two nearly simultaneous bombs struck a predominantly Shia commercial area in central Baghdad in the deadliest attack in two months, officials said.

The first blast occurred shortly after noon when a bomb left in a bag placed among the stalls of vendors peddling DVDs and secondhand clothes exploded in the Bab al-Sharqi area between Tayaran and Tahrir squares.

It was followed almost immediately by a parked car bomb just feet away. A suicide bomber killed at least 63 people in the same area last month.

Deputy Health Minister Hakim al-Zamili said at least 88 people were killed and 160 were wounded.

The explosions left body parts strewn on the bloodstained pavement as black smoke rose into the sky. Iraqi police sealed off the area

as ambulances rushed to the scene to evacuate the victims.

The bombings were a further sign of what appears to be a renewed campaign of Sunni insurgent violence against Shia targets. Last week, 142 Iraqis were killed or found dead on Tuesday alone, including 65 students at a leading Baghdad university who died in twin car bombings.

Monday's death toll made it the single most deadly attack against civilians in Iraq since Nov. 23, when a series of car bombs and mortar attacks by suspected al-Qaeda in Iraq fighters in Baghdad's Sadr City Shia slum killed at least 215 people.

Hours earlier Monday, gunmen killed a female teacher as she was on her way to work at a girls' school in the mainly Sunni area of Khadra in western Baghdad, police said, adding that the teacher's driver was wounded in the drive-by shooting.

The two US Marines were killed

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EC RECONSTITUTION

Two more commissioners ready to resign if asked

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Recently appointed 'controversial' election commissioners Modabbir Hossain Chowdhury and Saiful Alam are ready to resign from their posts if the president requests them.

Talking to reporters, both the commissioners said they are ready to resign for the 'sake of the country and for the sake of a free and fair election'.

President Iajuddin Ahmed on November 27 appointed two new election commissioners, Modabbir

Hossain Chowdhury -- who had aspirations for contesting in the election with a four-party alliance ticket from Habiganj-2 (Ajmiriganj-Baniachang) constituency, and Saiful Alam -- who does not have much of an illustrious background.

Awami League (AL)-led 14-party coalition rejected the two appointments outright.

Meanwhile, acting Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Justice Mahfuzur Rahman yesterday said, "The Election Commission (EC) is not thinking

anything about its possible reconstitution."

Asked about what they think about possible reconstitution of the EC following the new chief adviser's address to the nation, the acting CEC said, "We are not thinking anything."

"We were chitchatting," the acting CEC replied at the doorstep while leaving office as the reporters asked him what they had discussed in the EC meeting that had taken place a little earlier.

"I will certainly resign for the

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Death warrants for six JMB men to be issued in three days

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

The jail authorities will issue death warrants for the six condemned members of Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) within the next three days in connection with the Jhalakathi judges murder case.

The latest development came following receipt of a copy of the Supreme Court (SC) rejection of the condemned men's appeals against the death sentences by the jail authorities on Sunday, 54 days after

the SC had delivered the order. The jail authorities started the process of executions yesterday.

Executing the condemned now depends on a government clearance, although a number of provisions already exist to carry out the executions within 21 to 28 days following receipt of the court order by the jail authorities.

The SC on November 28 rejected the six condemned JMB men's petitions seeking permission to appeal against a High Court

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NDI for quick election

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The US-based National Democratic Institute (NDI) yesterday said a free and fair election with all-party participation should be held at the earliest possible time to strengthen the country's democratic system.

The observation came when a three-member delegation of the organisation working to expand democracy worldwide met Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina to exchange views on the next parliamentary polls.

NDI Director (Asian affairs) Peter Manakis said they would assist in the electoral process including preparation of a flawless voter list.

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Congratulations to Mr. Mohammad Shoeb

Vice Chairman of Phoenix Leasing Company Limited on being elected the Vice Chairman of The City Bank Limited

We pray for his continued success and hope he takes City Bank to new heights



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