

UNDP pledges support in political reform

UNB, Dhaka

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) yesterday assured the caretaker government of all possible support to carry out its political and economic reforms.

UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Bangladesh Renata Lok Desai said she gave the assurance when she paid a courtesy call on Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed at his office.

"We can assist Bangladesh in many ways and we're supportive of the present government," the UNDP official said.

She said people's mammoth support and expectations have given the government a unique opportunity to give democracy a strong footing and carry out reforms. "Such opportunity does not come always," she added.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed said the caretaker government is

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Rly land 'grabbed' by Abbas family freed

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh Railway authorities with the assistance of the joint forces yesterday recovered around eight acres of land allegedly grabbed by former BNP lawmaker Mirza Abbas and his family for about 35 years at Shahjahanpur in

The Rajuk would conduct a drive at Badda today.

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) conducted drives at Mirpur Section 10 to 12 and knocked down unauthorised sunshades of buildings and small illegal establishments.

According to Magistrate Anwar Pasha, the DCC is preparing a list of big illegal structures.

CHITTAGONG DRIVE

The Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) partially demolished a multi-storey commercial complex building of Chittagong south district unit of Awami League President Akhteruzzaman Chowdhury for flouting the rules, reported our Chittagong office.

Built on around 18 katha-land in Agrabad commercial area, the complex Akhteruzzaman Centre illegally encroached the adjoining

footpaths hindering public movement and future expansion of the surrounding roads, CDA sources said.

Though the complex was supposed to accommodate offices only, it housed over 450 shops on its ninth floor defying the rule, the sources added.

RAJSHAHI DRIVE

Rajshahi University correspondent reported that the Rajshahi Development Authority with the help of the army-led joint forces knocked down more than 100 unauthorised shops at old bus terminal, Debshingpara, Serail, Bhadra and Talaimari yesterday.

The forces also demolished ticket counters and offices of at least 15 Rajshahi-Dhaka route buses near railway station and

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Polls sought as soon as possible

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A non-elected government cannot stay in power for an indefinite period of time under the constitutional provisions, said former adviser to the caretaker government Dr Akbar Ali Khan yesterday.

"The national election, therefore, should be held as soon as possible to uphold the dignity of the constitution," he said.

He was speaking as the chair of a dissemination programme of a voter list survey conducted by Brotee in association with Power and Participation Research Centre, Umayan Shamannay, and The Hunger Project.

Dr Akbar, who quit the Iajuddin-led caretaker government along with three other advisers, expected that the new Election Commission (EC) will consult the political parties and learn from working on the ground and the outer world for preparing a scientific and correct voter list.

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PHOTO: STAR
Artistes perform at the Institute of Fine Arts of Dhaka University yesterday to celebrate Pahela Falgun, the first day of the Bengali month Falgun heralding spring.



Chittagong Development Authority with the help of joint forces demolishes the illegally extended part of a commercial building at Agrabad yesterday. Awami League leader Akhteruzzaman Babu owns the building.

Myanmar extends Suu Kyi's house arrest by a year

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's military rulers yesterday extended the house arrest of Tin Oo, the octogenarian deputy to democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, a senior official said.

"We extended his detention," a senior official in Naypyidaw, Myanmar's new administrative capital, told AFP by telephone.

Another official at the Home Affairs Ministry said Tin Oo's house arrest was extended by one year.

Tin Oo is the deputy leader of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party. The international community, as well as local activists, have repeatedly called for the pair to be released.

Tin Oo was arrested along with the Nobel peace prize winner in May 2003, after a pro-government mob attacked their convoy during a political tour of the country's north.

The government has released more than 100 NLD members who were arrested during the incident, but Aung San Suu Kyi and Tin Oo are both still being held under house arrest in Yangon.

He was initially held in prison in Kalay in remote northwestern Myanmar, but in February 2004 was brought back to his home in Yangon, where he has been held ever since.

The United Nations estimates there are about 1,100 political prisoners in Myanmar, which has been ruled by the military since 1962 and was formerly known as Burma.

The NLD won a landslide victory in 1990 elections but has never been allowed to govern.

US House resolution slams Iraq troop plan

Suicide bomber kills 18 near Baghdad college

REUTERS, Washington

US House of Representatives Democrats unveiled a resolution on Monday opposing a troop buildup in Iraq, setting up a confrontation this week over President George W. Bush's war strategy.

In fresh violence a suicide truck bomb blew up near a Baghdad college yesterday, killing 18 people and wounding 40, police said.

Seizing the initiative from a deadlocked Senate, the House is expected to vote on Friday on Bush's decision to send another

21,500 troops to fight the unpopular war after each of its 435 members is given the chance to speak for five minutes.

It does not force the president to do anything, but supporters say they hope a strong statement against his policy will make Bush reconsider. The simple, two-sentence resolution also pledges support for US troops.

"Congress and the American people will continue to support and protect the members of the United States Armed Forces who are serving or who have served bravely

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and honourably in Iraq," the resolution says, adding:

"Congress disapproves of the decision of President George W. Bush announced on January 10, 2007, to deploy more than 20,000 additional United States combat troops to Iraq."

Bush indicated he was not planning to watch the House debate, telling an interviewer on C-Span television: "I've got a full day tomorrow" and "I already know what the debate is."

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MEETING WITH HASINA

US envoy calls for reforms in parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US Ambassador in Dhaka Patricia A Butenis yesterday stressed the need for reforms in political parties to go with the changed political scenario and public demand.

Following an hour-long meeting with Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina in Sudha Sadan yesterday Butenis told reporters, "We had a frank discussion about political parties and my sense is, just reading the newspapers, that the people don't want a return of politics as usual because they want a change."

The US envoy said she encouraged AL and other parties including BNP to examine the wrong practices inside the parties and to find out what the people want. "The party

itself can take initiatives to make reforms based on what the people want," said the US ambassador.

Butenis, who will fly to Washington at the end of this month for two weeks on vacation, called on Sheikh Hasina to share AL's thinking about the current political situation and holding of the next election.

Butenis said the present caretaker government (CG) has been working to create an environment for holding a credible election. "The caretaker government should move towards poll as early as possible, resuming the stalled electoral process," she said.

She also urged the Election Commission to engage the political

following Conte's appointment of a close ally from his Cabinet as prime minister. The move angered many

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Emergency declared in Guinea

AP, Conakry

The president declared a state of emergency, announcing in a broadcast on state radio and television that he has ordered the army to "take all necessary measures" to restore order after three days of violent protests.

The death toll from rioting and clashes with security forces reached at least 27 on Monday as the West African country's major trade unions called for President Lansana Conte to step down after his apparent violation of a power-sharing agreement.

Conte said in the broadcast late Monday that he had ordered the army to "protect the people of Guinea from the risk of a civil war."

The violence started Saturday following Conte's appointment of a close ally from his Cabinet as prime minister. The move angered many

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PHOTO: STAR
Rapid Action Battalion recovers two grenades from an under construction building at Demra in the capital yesterday but fails to capture the criminals.

ANTI-CRIME DRIVE

2 grenades, 10 firearms recovered

STAR REPORT

The army-led joint forces, during its ongoing nationwide drive, arrested at least 1,623 people on various charges and recovered two hand grenades, 10 firearms and six homemade bombs within 24 hours

completing 6:00pm yesterday. Meanwhile, Shamin-Al-Mansoor Siddiqui alias Azad Siddiqui, younger brother of Krishak Sramik Janata League (KSJL) President Abdul Kader Siddiqui, was placed on a four-day police remand yesterday. Army-led joint forces arrested Azad, accused in 26 criminal cases including three murder cases, at Iccchapuri of Kalitali upazila in Tangail on Monday.

Tangail police produced Azad

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Source: Islamic Foundation

Prayer Timing

February 14

Fajr 5:25 6:00

Zohr 12:45 1:15

Asr 4:30 4:45

Maghrib 5:57 6:01

Esha 7:15 7:45

Azan

Jamaat

Jamaat