

## New nation

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of 'murky areas' that should be cleared by the government.

Naeem Mohaimen demanded quota in the public service for the ethnic and religious minorities to increase their representation in the policymaking.

He thinks some solid research should be carried out on minority representation in education and the public sector.

Naeem then observed that the youth must be alert to the "sophisticated recruitment methods being used by the Islamic fundamentalists at different private universities".

Mahfuz Rahman, director of Ice Technologies and Services Ltd, said that the ongoing measures seeking to bring about positive changes in politics must last long if they are to be effective.

Fahim Shahed, a faculty of American International University Bangladesh, lamented the state of education in Bangladesh and observed that teachers can no longer command respect from their students as they have stopped being a 'role model' because of their corruption.

Iresh Zaker, an advertising executive, said that more and more youth should join politics and this should be facilitated by the provision

of greater incentives.

Zafar Sobhan, assistant editor of The Daily Star, said the young people should be encouraged to think critically to question policies and practices.

He said this should be done to challenge the hierarchical social system in the country, whereby the young are expected to listen and not have a voice.

Shumon Jahan, an academic, said education should be one of the key areas to look at in efforts to restore trust in politics as it is essential for the youth to play a role in the future of Bangladesh.

Shahnor Wahid and Brig Gen Shahid Anam Khan of The Daily Star were present at the roundtable moderated by the daily's Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam.

Mahfuz Anam said Bangladesh has two sides—degenerative that includes the politics, economics, bureaucracy and students politics and the regenerative that includes the private sectors, entrepreneurship, journalism and the young professionals, who have enormous potential.

"It now depends on us which Bangladesh will win," he said reminding the participants that the nation's greatest asset is its history of political struggle.

Describing the urge of the people at grassroots level for liberty and democracy as brilliant, he said he hasn't seen such anywhere in the world.

"What we regret, however, is our failure to institutionalise democracy," he added.

He observed that there is a culture of theoretical discussions, but the individuals at their level do not practise those in their life.

The others who also spoke at the roundtable included Independent University of Bangladesh (IUB) Professor Omar Rahman, JCI Member NM Kabir, Rotary Club of Uttara President BM Shoaib, independent researcher Mahrul Mohiuddin, banker Mesbah U Ahmed, news anchor Mishu Rahman, social worker Shahana Siddiqui, Brac University lecturer Rubaiyat Hossain, and Aftab M Khurshid of JCI.

## Saarc Car Rally

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at the 13th Saarc Summit.

The first-ever Saarc car rally with the participation of the member countries started from Cox's Bazar on Thursday. Chief Adviser Fakhrudin Ahmed inaugurated the rally.

## Mohiuddin

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Mohiuddin is now at a detention centre on the south of Los Angeles, one official was quoted as saying.

Counsel General at Los Angeles Abu Zahar however said they are yet to receive any documents from the US immigration department.

He told ATN that they issue travel permit within a few days after receiving the relevant papers.

US immigration officials said it is possible to send Mohiuddin back if Dhaka issues travel permit and take other necessary measures.

Mohiuddin, also sentenced to life in prison for abetting the killings of four national leaders in Dhaka Central Jail on November 3, 1975, was arrested by officials of the Bureau of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement from his Los Angeles residence on Tuesday.

## Bangabandhu

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Secretary Syed Fahim Munain, told newsmen during a press briefing on the outcome of the meeting of the council of advisers later in the day.

A guard of honour was given by a smartly turned out contingent drawn from the Army, Navy and Air Force to pay respect to the Father of the Nation.

Fakhrudin also offered 'munajat' seeking divine blessings for the departed soul of Bangabandhu born in 1920 at Tungipara.

"I am paying rich tribute to the memory of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and seeking blessings for the departed soul," the chief adviser wrote in the visitors' book kept in the monument complex.

Army Chief Lt Gen Moeen U Ahmed, Naval Chief Rear Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam and Air Force Chief Air Vice Marshal Fakhrul Azam, among others, accompanied the chief adviser.

The Awami League (AL), its front organisations and different socio-cultural organisations also observed the day in a relatively simple way due to the state of emergency.

The day's programmes started with an AL delegation placing wreaths at Bangabandhu's grave at Tungipara and his portrait at Bangabandhu Bhawan in the city. Besides, fete was offered at the mazar.

A three-member delegation led by Sheikh Hasina's Political Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury visited Tungipara and laid wreath at the grave of Bangabandhu.

Different socio-cultural organisations placed wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu.

The national and party flags were hoisted atop the AL offices and its front organisations across the country.

## Cell phone operators

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want to hold a series of discussions with the mobile phone operators to determine various modalities through which Bangladesh will get a higher level of revenue from them," said the source.

Explaining the significance of this meeting, another source said that back in 1996 when the 15-year agreements with GrameenPhone, Airtel and Sheba Telecom (there was already a 20-year agreement with City Cell) were being finalised, the government told the phone companies that they should give it 15 percent of their revenue.

But under the influence of the then telecom minister Mohammad Nasim and a high official of the ministry, the AL government inserted a set of options for the mobile companies in the agreements.

The mobile phone agreements allowed modification and amendments. The law ministry remarked that the agreements may be amended to serve the national interest better.

In 2002, the alliance government formed the BTRC and asked it to amend the contracts. The then BTRC chairman Margub Morshed ignored this.

After Omar Faruk was made BTRC chairman on April 16, 2006, he amended the contracts by dropping the options altogether and in their place inserted that the phone companies would give the government 5.5 percent revenue till their 15-year (and City Cell's 20-year) contracts expire. This decision was made effective from July 1, 2005.

"This was a serious compromise of national interest which we must address now," the source pointed out.

Among the mobile phone companies, only GrameenPhone has taken primary initiative to offload shares in the local market. As the mobile market leader, the company contributed over Tk 2,100 crore to the national exchequer last year.

## Indoor politics

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the declaration of the state of emergency.

He also said the main agenda of his government is to restore a proper democratic environment in the country through holding a free and fair election.

The BBC World Service Trust and the BBC Bangla Service jointly organised the discussion moderated by Kamal Ahmed of BBC Bangla Service.

Replying to a question over the present caretaker government's activities being legitimised by an elected government, Adviser Mainul said he does not believe in the very idea.

"We have already attained legitimacy of our work through the laws under the emergency rules," he said in an apparent response to AL President Sheikh Hasina's recent speech.

Prior to leaving for the US on Thursday, Hasina said if voted to power, her government will give legitimacy to the present government's activities.

Terming Hasina's speech completely "political", Mainul said giving legitimacy to the caretaker government's work is not legal and that they are not taking her speech as usual.

Muhib, also a former finance minister, said the caretaker government, which was supposed to hold the election within the constitutionally stipulated 90 days, could be in power for many days. The AL will only legitimise the caretaker government's activities beyond those 90 days.

Hafizuddin said questions of giving legitimacy to the caretaker government will be raised after observing its activities until the end.

Nijera Kori Coordinator Khushi Kabir, who also attended the discussion, said there is a need for the caretaker government's activities being recognised by a future elected government, without which these activities will be treated illegal.

Asked by the audience whether Hasina's visit to the US is temporary or an exile, the law adviser said it will depend on whether the AL chief returns to the country or not.

The three other speakers, however, said they believe Hasina's visit is not an exile.

"But a radical change will obviously come in politics and there will be no chance for resorting to corruption in the name of politics," Mainul said, adding that the government will bring all corrupt politicians to book and will not allow them to continue politics if proved to be corrupt.

He said they will also not allow the black money holders to contest in the elections. "We will bring changes in politics only to create a chance for the honest and devoted politicians, who will work for the country and its people, and establish good governance," he said.

Both the AL and BNP leaders said it would be good for the caretaker government to hold the elections soon.

Hafizuddin hoped that the next election will be held after two years "when the popularity of the government will go down to zero level".

Muhib said, "The caretaker government assumed power in one winter and it should not go beyond another winter to hold the election."

Adviser Mainul said those who plundered hundreds of crores of taka through politics want the election to be held as early as possible so that they could engage in corruption again, grab land and accumulate black money. He said holding elections is the duty of the Election Commission, not the caretaker government.

On formation of the National Security Council, Mainul said the government has plans to do it but has not yet decided on any concrete form of it. The formation of the council is obviously not to be in power for a long time, he added.

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## Saarc Food Bank

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thousand tonnes while the other member countries will provide the rest of the stock, he said and added the Saarc Secretariat will be used as the bank's primary office.

The meeting also fixed the target, price and time limits of internal procurement of boro paddy, rice and wheat for the year 2007. The government will procure 50 thousand tonnes of wheat at Tk 18 per kg from March 20 to June 28.

It will also procure 12 lakh tonnes of rice, which includes three lakh tonnes of paddy and 10 lakh tonnes of rice between April 25 and August 31.

The council also approved in principle the draft to formulate the Financial Reporting Act-2007 with a view to bringing uniformity in the auditing and accounting system in the government offices as well as standardise it.

Under the Act, an 11-member financial council will be formed and the governor of Bangladesh Bank will head the council, he added.

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## Ctg port

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Power tec Limited, the private operator of the exclusive terminal, told this correspondent on Thursday.

"The main problem we are facing now is not getting export container timely. We have six persons who trace out export bound containers from the 14,000-15,000 containers dumped at the port."

Sometimes, it takes several hours to find out one container from a sea of empty containers at the yards. This is another cause of delay in sailing ships with export cargo.

He said the shipping agents placed a list of 555 empty containers to be loaded in the ship but only 200 might be finally loaded as the agents intentionally placed a long list.

Passing the CCT, this correspondent entered into the General Container Berth, the main terminal of the port, at around 12 noon when he saw QC Wisdom from Singapore that had anchored at a jetty number 13 at around 10:30am was waiting for unloading of 450 TEUS containers.

"There is a schedule of starting unloading of containers from the ship at 4:00pm. But we do not know when it will start finally," said Mahbub Alam, chief officer of the ship.

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## Prof Yunus

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Accepting the award, Yunus said: "This is an incredible honour and helps further the understanding and appreciation for how hard the lives of women around the world are and how we can all do something to make a difference."

Later, the Nobel laureate gave a lecture on "Globalisation, Micro-enterprise and Poverty Alleviation" at Georgetown University.

In his lecture, the founder of Grameen Bank, focused on the importance of micro-credit and the extension of small loans to underprivileged entrepreneurs in promoting economic and social development among the world's poor.

"In order to redesign the world, we have to go back to the drawing board. We can create a world that we imagine," he said. "So, let's be bold and imagine it. One of the things, I'm sure, that is in your imagination is a world totally free of poverty," said the Nobel laureate.

George Town University President John J DeGioia said Prof Yunus "shows us that with ingenuity and determination, we can respond effectively to the moral challenges of globalisation."

Prof Yunus urged the audience to reshape their views on poverty and said, "The poor should be seen as more than their economic status."

He said they are creative beings waiting for an opportunity to develop their talents. The world could eventually stamp out poverty entirely if "desititution" is viewed as a human rights violation."

"Poverty is not a creation of the poor. It is created by society at large, by the system at large, by the concepts we teach in our classrooms," Yunus said.

Prof Yunus will return home on April 1.

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