

Full text of the speech of chief adviser

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser to the caretaker government Fakhrudin Ahmed addressed the nation yesterday marking the completion of his three months in office.

Following is the full text of the speech:

Bismillah Rahmani Rahim
My dear countrymen,
Assalamu Alaikum

"We all dream of building a beautiful Bangladesh -- a Bangladesh which would arouse pride among our present and future generations. We want such a Bangladesh which would allow them to hold their heads high at home and abroad and live in peace and happiness. We do not want a Bangladesh where they would bow down to injustice and unfairness.

My dear countrymen,

As you know, we assumed office at a critical juncture of our national life. We did not take up this responsibility out of self-interest; rather, we undertook this task out of a deep sense of love for our country and people.

Hopefully, we have proved that point in the past three months. By the infinite mercy of Almighty Allah, we are on our way to overcoming the crisis with the sincere support and benign cooperation of you all. I had said during my first address to the nation that our ultimate aim was transition to genuine democracy.

We are determined to hand over power to an elected government through holding a free, fair and credible election after implementing required programmes and institutional reforms and creating an appropriate environment as soon as possible.

My dear countrymen,

Now we want to explore: what have been our achievements during these past three months, how much of the hopes and pledges could be implemented and in which direction are we progressing? Some moments arrive in the life of a nation whose importance is infinite.

We now have such a time and opportunity before us. We want to utilise it for the sake of the country and the nation. The issue of the Election Commission comes first. As you know, full independence of the reconstituted Election Commission has been ensured and a process is underway to strengthen it.

The Commission has also initiated various reformative measures to create a proper environment as well as a desired framework for the election. The Commission has already prepared an amended draft of the Representation of the People Order, 1972 and discussions are underway at various levels to give it a final shape.

Appropriate measures are being taken so that full transparency and neutrality are maintained in the election and the process cannot be influenced in any way by any quarters.

The Commission is considering the opinions and recommendations of various quarters on this issue and I believe this process will continue in the future.

Compulsory registration of the political parties is a major plank in the electoral reforms. Necessary modifications of laws are being made for the purpose. As a corollary of the registration, the accountability of political parties in maintaining transparency in their income and expenditure and the practice of democracy within themselves should also be ensured.

Firm measures will be taken so that honest, dedicated and qualified candidates feel encouraged to participate in the elections. The Commission would also be empowered to take swift and proper action against the violators of election-related laws and regulations.

Preparations are already afoot for making the voter list with photographs along with ancillary ID cards. There is a huge public opinion in its favour. The Chief Election Commissioner has spoken about it. Measures will be taken to ensure that the identified criminals, loan defaulters, black money holders, terrorists and muslemen cannot take part in the elections.

The submission of account of income-expenditure and wealth of candidates would be made compulsory. Steps will also be taken to ban the use of photographs of national leaders, any kind of communal or provocative statements, and malicious, anti-state or divisive campaign.

Efforts will be made so that the political parties refrain from using professionals', students' and teachers' organisations as their component bodies. Active cooperation of the political parties is also needed in this regard.

My dear countrymen,

The programmes to reform election-related laws, regulations and processes will be implemented simultaneously so that no undue delays take place in the reforms and holding of actual election.

The Election Commission has already made a presentation on the timeframe for preparation of voter list and ID cards.

I would like to state here categorically that we shall not stay in office a day longer than is necessary. I have firm faith that it would be possible for us to hold the parliamentary election, as desired by the people,

before the end of the year 2008.

I should point out another thing here. Not only the upcoming election, we are determined to put in place a sustainable framework which would ensure that all elections in the future are held in a fair, neutral and proper manner -- free from all kinds of unwanted influences like money and muscle.

My dear countrymen,

We are also pledge-bound to free the nation from the scourge of corruption. Steps have already been taken to strengthen the reconstituted Anti-Corruption Commission. Side by side, a national taskforce has been constituted to tackle serious crimes, including corruption; taskforces have also been formed throughout the country for the purpose.

These taskforces are working tirelessly to assist the Commission.

Necessary changes and amendments have also been incorporated into the Emergency Rules. Our objective is clear-cut.

We seek to bring all corrupt persons, people who have misused their powers and other serious offenders to justice in accordance with the country's laws; so that society, the country and the people are freed from their dark claws.

The government will show zero tolerance in this area. We earnestly need unflinching support and cooperation of all strata of people in this anti-corruption campaign. Corruption must be hated and a social movement must be waged against it. Our posterity would only remain safe in a society which is free of corruption.

The government has also been taking measures for the improvement of the judicial system. The

Previously, people had to face a lot of hassles to submit GD entries in police stations. That scenario is now changing. Service Delivery Officers have now been appointed at many police stations.

The number of people seeking services has also increased substantially. This programme would be gradually expanded to cover other police stations. Besides, the government offices have also been instructed to solve the grievances of citizens without wasting any time.

The government is attaching priority to financial sector reforms and increase in productive activities in the industrial sector.

The budget for the next financial year is being prepared through consultations with various social classes and professions.

Special attention is being paid to the communication sector, specially railway communication. The privatisation process will also continue in appropriate sectors.

The need for strengthening the local government institutions for accelerating development at the local level is also undeniable. Unfortunately, this sector has been neglected in the past.

The government and the Election Commission are, therefore, contemplating the holding of Upazila elections in order to make the local governments in the country effective.

My dear countrymen, I speak about our unfulfilled responsibilities for the war-wounded freedom fighters and their families at the Independence Award ceremony.

We also have responsibilities for other deprived and repressed sections of society. We have to be more active to redress their sufferings.

I especially want to mention all kinds of disabled people, acid-burnt mothers and sisters and the tortured women. Many women in our society are still victims of dowries or illegal fatwas. We want to bring an end to this intolerable situation. Affirmative initiatives at both state and social levels are needed to make this happen.

My dear countrymen,

I want to specially mention the positive contributions and cooperation of our patriotic armed forces in our overall efforts to infuse dynamism in the socio-economic arena of the country. The glorious role played by the armed forces of Bangladesh at various conflict zones of the world under UN Peacekeeping Operations has been acclaimed by all.

They have also been making laudable contributions at various times and in different areas inside the country. Currently, they are playing a commendable role in maintaining peace and discipline within the country, in recovering illegally occupied lands and in the anti-corruption drive.

As it is now possible to meet the demand for gas in various sectors, generation of electricity could be increased by 400 megawatt per day by restarting six power stations, including those at Tongi and Raozan. The government is taking short-, medium- and long-term measures to overcome the electricity crisis.

Responding to the government's initiative, the shop owners are helping save electricity by closing down their shops by 7 in the evening. The industrial entrepreneurs have similarly agreed to follow area-wise weekly holidays.

I thank the business community as well as the people at large for bearing with these temporary hardships. There is no alternative before us but to remain patient as the problems which have piled up in the power sector over the years due to corruption and mismanagement would take a long time to heal.

My dear countrymen, In that context, I shall raise the issue of consumers' rights and citizens' awareness. If the consumers remain united and the citizens strive to establish their rights, then that would aid the business community as well as the administrative machinery to tread the right path.

Not only citizens' and consumers' rights, I want to make them conscious about their responsibilities as well.

A survey has shown that the use of electricity and gas can easily be brought down by one-third in each of our households. I therefore make a clarion call to the consumers to exercise maximum restraint in the use of power, gas and water at individual and family levels.

My dear countrymen, We are striving to make the administration welfare-oriented in order to establish good governance in the country. The process of recasting the administration is continuing. I have already visited five divisional towns outside Dhaka for providing directions to government officials at the field level.

Side by side, I have also exchanged views with the civil society and the professionals for enhancing coordination between the public and private sectors. I have emphasised increasing communication and coordination in government activities at the grassroots level.

The people are extending spontaneous cooperation in the government drives to dismantle unauthorised structures, recover illegally occupied government lands and combat those who are placing obstructions to natural flows like rivers and canals. Significant progresses have been made in these tasks. But we do not intend to harm the poor, the working class or small businessmen as an aftermath of these initiatives. The authorities concerned have been directed to provide all-out assistance to those already affected.

Measures have been taken to maintain unhindered supply and movement of commodities and to maintain normalcy in the markets. All-out steps have been taken by the government to ensure continuous supply of fertiliser, diesel and elec-

the global podium. Prof Yunus and the Grameen Bank have brought Nobel Peace Prize for the country by playing a leading role in upholding the rights of the poor through micro-credit and by establishing peace in the process.

In the sporting arena, our young cricket team have created a sensation by reaching the super-8 in the world cup. We are witnessing advances in other areas of national life as well.

The country is now almost self-sufficient in food-grain production because of the success of our hard-working farmers in producing golden harvests within a small landmass.

Our millions of garments workers have established the industry as the most competitive one in this region through their incessant toils day and night. The successes of our immunisation and birth-control programmes through tireless efforts by the conscious mothers and health workers have been lauded all over the world.

Our average life expectancy has risen in recent years and we have attained parity in enrolment of boys and girls in schools.

Our most efficient and disciplined soldiers now lead the world in establishing global peace.

My dear countrymen, As the head of the government, I

I have not hesitated and shall not hesitate in taking far-reaching and stringent steps to eliminate injustices and unfairness. We do not want to be seen as a weak nation anymore. Our muscles are full of energy now. Our minds are firm. Our goals are unwavering.

My dear countrymen, I want to specially mention the positive contributions and cooperation of our patriotic armed forces in our overall efforts to infuse dynamism in the socio-economic arena of the country. The glorious role played by the armed forces of Bangladesh at various conflict zones of the world under UN Peacekeeping Operations has been acclaimed by all.

They have also been making laudable contributions at various times and in different areas inside the country. Currently, they are playing a commendable role in maintaining peace and discipline within the country, in recovering illegally occupied lands and in the anti-corruption drive.

I have firm faith that this trend of patriotism and devotion to work shown by our armed forces shall continue in the future.

My dear countrymen, The world leaders have expressed their full support for various initiatives and steps taken by the present government for firmly putting the country on the path of genuine democracy. Our efforts to run the administration in line with the UN Conventions and universal values have earned the praise of all.

Our ratification of the UN Convention against Corruption as well as the decision to set up a National Human Rights Commission has been praised worldwide. These matters were awaiting government approval for many years. These were part of our endeavour to raise the level of our national morality to an unchangeable new height.

The recently concluded Saarc Summit has declared 2008 as the 'Year of Good Governance' for all member-states. We want Bangladesh to emerge as a luminous star of good governance in the sky of South Asia. I have firm conviction that it is attainable.

My dear countrymen, Today, boosted by self-confidence, we are witnessing the determination of our nation to raise its head high on

Allah Hafez."

TIBET-PROTHOM ALO-VIQARUNNISA NOON DEBATE

Debate helps generate leadership

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A debate sharpens the intellect of students, nurtures their intellect and helps generate leadership among them, said the speakers at the inaugural ceremony of a debate competition at Viqarunnisa Noon School and College auditorium yesterday.

The Tibet-PROTHOM ALO-VIQARUNNISA Noon Debating Club 3rd Children, 13th Interschool, 3rd Inter-College and 11th Interclub Debate Competition will continue in the city till April 22.

Students from class five to seven in children's group while from class eight to ten at school level can take part in the debate competition that started with the slogan 'Nitir Boley Khuji Ainer Ruprekha' (Outline of

law is sought within the frame of ethics).

Speaking as chief guest Chairman of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board Prof Monirul Islam said debate is an art that kindles self-realisation.

Joint Editor of the PROTHOM ALO Abdul Kaim said when a culture to speak logically would be developed, the society will advance further.

Principal of Viqarunnisa Noon

School and College Tahmina Khanom said debate amplifies the power of thinking and increase self-confidence.

Senior Vice-president of Kohinoor Chemical Company (Bangladesh) Ltd Altaf Hossain and Senior Manager of Brac Bank Jahid Ibne Hi also spoke on the occasion.



PHOTO: STAR
Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) in association with Manusher Jonno launched a study titled 'Bangladesh Governance Report 2007' based on the national governance survey 2006. From left are Executive Director of Manusher Jonno Shaheen Anam, Country Director of Asian Development Bank (ADB) Hua Du, former adviser to the caretaker government Akbar Ali Khan, Prof Rehman Sobhan, Chairman of PPRC Hossain Zillur Rahman and Quzi Mesbahuddin Ahmed.

'Lack of accountability breeds corruption'

Cross-country bicycle tour against corruption launched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Corruption breeds when accountability of public representatives is compromised for personal consideration, said Chairman of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Prof Muzaffer Ahmad at a function yesterday.

He said corruption virtually engulfed almost every sector of the country including education sector.

"As a teacher I feel ashamed when I learn about corruption in educational institutions. Corruption takes place in educational institutions when education becomes a commodity," Prof Ahmad added.

The only way to get rid of corruption is to boycott the corrupt people socially, he added.

Eminent journalist Abul Maksud said corruption outweighed all previous achievements of the nation.

To free the society from corruption, he suggested people to practice honesty in their personal life.

The bicycle riders, Abul Hossain and Muhammad Maniruzzaman Akand, began their journey from the National Press Club in the city. Later they visited Central Shaheed Minar on their way to Mawa.

Chairman of Solidarity Movement Engr M Abu Taher presided over the programme while its Secretary General Belal Ahmed, Chairman of Prime Bank Capt Imam Anwar Hossain, and former director general of Bangladesh Rifles Maj Gen (retd) ALM Fazlur Rahman also spoke on the occasion.

Set up big power plants to meet crying demand for energy

Experts recommend at seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A multidisciplinary seminar yesterday recommended mixed energy system for the country with special emphasis on setting up big power plants to meet the crying demand of energy.

It also stressed on big investments at private-public partnership in power sector, and import of hydroelectricity from Nepal and Bhutan ensuring transparency and accountability in the total process.

The seminar titled 'Bangladesh energy sector: The way forward' was organised by German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) in cooperation with the Ministry of Energy, Power and Mineral Resources at a hotel in the city.

Speaking as chief guest, Energy Adviser Tapan Choudhury said beside gas, other sources of energy, especially coal, must be given due importance in the energy planning so that economic development of the country is not constrained due to power shortage.

The proven reserve of gas will meet the demand forecast until 2011, while probable reserves to meet the demand until 2015, he said, adding that it will therefore be inappropriate to rely heavily on natural gas.

Tapan Choudhury said it is necessary to exploit the country's coal reserve so that only coal-based thermal power plants could be set up from 2010 onwards.

Speaking as panelist at the concluding session, Asian

Development Bank Representative Rahman Mursheed said, "We need big power plants because the renewable energy cannot meet the demand."

World Bank Representative Md Iqbal said unless there is huge investment, there will not be lucrative energy.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Representative Shireen Kamal Saeed said the authorities concerned must consider the impact of energy generation on environment.

Bangladesh Energy Sector Chairman Prof Qazi Khilquzzaman Ahmad said energy policies should be defined so that people can be benefited from it.