

# Razzak's reform plan

**FROM PAGE 1** presidium members, who made similar recommendations for reconstituting the party.

Speculations were rife since early morning yesterday regarding an impending reform proposal from Razzak, confusing journalists about whether he would publicise the proposal at all as several contradictory announcements were made regarding the schedule of the announcement.

He finally released the reform proposal to the media following direct intervention from a few of his senior party colleagues and gave a verbal statement to the media admitting that the document of his official proposal still contains a number of errors.

Talking to reporters in his Dhanmondi residence, Razzak however said his reform proposal do not intend to minus anyone from the party. He said activists of AL are the source of the party's strength and their will ultimately will guide the party in the future.

Razzak claimed that the reform proposal he placed is his own although several reformist leaders including AL Acting General Secretary Mukul Bose had repeatedly told the news media that the reformist leaders had handed over 'their amended reform proposal to Razzak'.

Razzak also said he made the proposal public to strengthen the party. "If there is any mistake in it, please forgive me and if it is correct, then please accept it," Razzak asked of his party colleagues.

## PROPOSALS FOR WIDE-RANGING NATIONAL POLITICAL REFORM

The reform proposal Razzak announced to the nation yesterday does not only seek reforms in AL but also suggests sweeping reforms in the body politic of the country.

His proposal suggests ensuring the deserved national recognition for the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, execution of the verdict of his murder trial, ensuring state level respect for the four slain national leaders who were killed in jail in 1975, bringing of their killers to book, and preservation of the 'correct history' of the liberation struggle and the liberation war.

It also suggests abolition of communal politics and establishment of a secular democratic Bangladesh.

Some other reforms the proposal suggests as absolutely necessary are: economic reforms, administrative reforms, establishment of a free and impartial judiciary, implementation of the Election Commission proposed reforms, and enabling the Anti-corruption Commission to function independently.

Razzak also proposes amendments to the national constitution for bringing a balance of power between the president and the prime minister of the country.

## DEMOCRATIC REFORM IN THE PARTY

Razzak said his reform proposal aims to install a much higher level of democracy in AL, practice of democracy at all levels of the party, and accountability and collective leadership in the organisation instead of any individual's leadership.

The proposal criticises as wrong decisions, the now defunct five-point deal signed between AL and Islamist fundamentalist Khelafat Majlish, and the hoax of an announcement made by the currently retained general secretary of AL, Abdul Jalil, about unseating the immediate past ruling alliance by April 30, 2004.

The proposal suggests that all party funds should be deposited in a bank under the party's treasurer's supervision, who will submit treasury reports to quarterly party meetings.

## AMENDING THE PARTY CONSTITUTION

Razzak's reform proposal suggests a set of amendments to the party constitution including the following:

- 1) An individual cannot remain in the post of the party president or general secretary for more than two terms in a row. The same rule will be applied to district and upazila level top party posts to encourage new leadership.
- 2) An individual cannot simulta-

## Birdem doctors

**FROM PAGE 16** Doctors on strike at Birdem Hospital did not make any comments after the Diabetic Association of Bangladesh made its decision public yesterday. They said they would decide on the issue after their meeting scheduled for 7:30am today (Sunday).

The Diabetic Association of Bangladesh made the decision in a meeting held at Birdem Hospital last night.

The meeting decided that "Uniform Service Rule" for all doctors working in Birdem Hospital would be made effective within July after the National Council approves it. It also decided that policies on doctors' training and better service at the hospital would be modernised.

About 550 doctors are currently working in the 600-bed hospital, sources said. Doctors at the hospital said doctors working at the outdoor section of the hospital have permanent jobs there and a number of third and fourth-class employees also have permanent jobs, but the indoor doctors who joined after 1992 are working on contractual jobs.

Since 1992 Birdem authorities have been recruiting doctors on contract in the indoor section and had been renewing their jobs time to time.

# 8 rescued from human traffickers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkira

Eight people including women and children were rescued from human traffickers by Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) Friday night at Bhomra border.

The victims were being trafficked to India. They are Hani Pada Das, 45, his wife Jyotsna Rani Das, 38, from Khushiakhali village in Chakoria upazila, their daughter Sumi Das, 10, Panbala Das, wife of Simanta Das from Barkub Bazar of Kutubdia upazila in Cox's Bazar, their daughters Kakoli Rani Das, 20, and Rushmi Rani Das, 16, Jaba Rani Das, 35, wife of Tejendra Nath Das from Fulchhari village of Banskhali upazila in Chittagong and their daughter Reshi, 4.

BDR personnel rescued the victims at around 9:00pm and later handed them over to police. The traffickers however managed to flee the scene, said sources quoting BDR.

Jaba Rani Das and Panbala Das told this correspondent that the traffickers had promised them with jobs in India.

## Legal framework

**FROM PAGE 16** said adding that by successfully punishing a few of the corrupt individuals, examples will be set that no one is above the law.

The government is firmly moving towards the goal of holding a free and fair election by 2008, he added.

Dhaka University Professor Mahbubullah said, "We must sustain the drive against corruption and institutionalise it. The drive should not create any panic, rather should continue taking people's confidence in it."

He suggested that donations to the political parties should be stopped by introducing a system through which the government will fund the parties. Through this system, funds might be collected from others through persuasion, not coercion. The parties should have vouchers and annual audits to ensure transparency in them, Prof Mahbub noted.

Economist Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman said the present anti-corruption drive has broken the culture of impunity. He said that illegal money recovered could be used for social activities for creating awareness among people about corruption.

LI Gen (ret'd) SM Ibrahim said a mechanism should be created so that the anti-corruption drive becomes natural where no external forces can push the government or other constitutional bodies for it.

Sharing Pakistan's experience, renowned Pakistani columnist Ikrum Sehgal said catching the big fishes and creating examples for the lower level leaders is very important.

Stressing the need for specific agenda of the caretaker government, he asked the armed forces not to be involved in the political process.

South East University Vice Chancellor Professor Shamsheer Ali and Probe magazine Chief Editor Irtiza Nasim Ali also spoke at the seminar moderated by its Editor Ayesha Kabir.

## BNP constitution

**FROM PAGE 1** see Shah Alam, who has been paralysed for the last five years. No senior or mid-level leader was present at this time.

Asked about the reform proposals announced by party Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Khaleda said, "The party councillors will decide which reforms to be implemented. If necessary, the council will be held for three days so that every councillor gets a chance to speak."

"Nothing will take place beyond the party constitution...I have some proposals too, which I will place in the council," she said.

"Everybody in the party wants to see a strong BNP, not a divided one," Khaleda said, adding that the councillors established the BNP, so nothing will be done keeping them away.

When asked if she will take any disciplinary action against any party leader for violating the party constitution, the BNP chairperson said time will tell.

Asked what she will do if she is made the chief adviser to the party, Khaleda said she will accept the decision if it is taken by the party councillors.

The pro-reform leaders of BNP are meanwhile continuing their preparations to hold party council as soon as possible. They are planning to seek government permission soon to hold a council to implement their reform proposals placed by Mannan Bhuiyan on June 25.

Many grassroots level leaders yesterday met Mannan Bhuiyan to express their solidarity with his reform proposals.

"About 200 former lawmakers of the party are in favour of the reform, so the preparation to hold the council is going on," said BNP Joint Secretary General Ashraf Hossain.

"We will seek permission from the government for holding the council [if the ban on indoor politics is not lifted soon]," he said, claiming that more than one-third party councillors are ready to support the council.

ZA Khan, one of Khaleda's advisers, said, "We are preparing to hold a credible and effective council to implement the reform proposals to ensure intra-party democracy but it will take some time to complete the process."

# Finance adviser

**FROM PAGE 1** The government has slightly changed the tariff structure on textile machinery, computer, powder milk, newsprint, mobile set and income tax slab in the budget for FY 2007-08, Badiur Rahman, chairman of National Board of Revenue (NBR), said at the press conference.

The import duties on textile capital machinery has been reduced from proposed 10 per cent to 5 per cent for FY 2007-08, the NBR chairman said.

The exemption limit of income tax for an individual has remained unchanged to Tk 1.50 lakh. But the minimum income tax has increased from proposed Tk1800 to Tk2000 in the final budget of the FY 2007-08.

Besides, there are changes in slabs for those in the high-income brackets. The income tax bracket of Tk 2.5 lakh increased to Tk 2.75lakh, whereas persons of the slab will have to pay 10 per cent taxes.

The income tax bracket of proposed Tk 3 lakh increased to 3.25 lakh and the proposed bracket of Tk 3.5 lakh increased to Tk 3.75 lakh. The taxpayers of these brackets will have to pay 15 per cent and 20 per cent taxes.

Rest of the high-income people earning over Tk 3.75 lakh will belong to the highest tax slab to pay 25 per cent.

The government exempted import duties on newsprint only for newspaper uses. The newspaper owners can enjoy zero tariff in importing newsprint following quotas of information ministry.

But commercial importers will have to pay duties as per government's structure in the final budget.

The proposed 10 per cent duty on computer changed to 5 per cent in the final budget.

But as the 4 per cent infrastructure development surcharge has been removed, the total duty on computer accessories will stand 1 per cent.

Import duty on milk powder (bulk) reduced to 15 per cent from earlier proposed 25 per cent.

The government has increased taxes on mobile phone set import from Tk100 to Tk 300, which was Tk 500 in the proposed budget.

The private universities have been kept out of the value added tax (VAT) net.

There is a probability to reduce tax earnings following the new tax structure, said the NBR chairman.

He, however, said the recent measures taken by the NBR such as reduction of discretionary power of the tax officials, introduction of taxpayers self-assessment system and uniform tax identification number will help to earn more revenues.

He said the NBR's recent move to bring more people under the tax net received huge response and 1800 taxpayers have been included in the tax net due to the recent drive in Dhaka city.

The NBR chairman said the board has decided to expand its drive phase by phase all over the country and 20 teams will be deployed from today in eight cities outside the capital to bring more taxpayers under the tax net. The move will continue till December 2007.

According to new duty slabs for the budget 2007-08, a total of 211 products (HS lines) will enjoy zero tariff while the number was 510 in the last budget.

A total of 1804 products (HS lines) will be kept in 10 per cent duty slab, 1703 products in 15 per cent and 2659 products in 25 per cent duty slab.

Replying to the reporters' question, secretary to the information ministry said they have discussed the matter of new wage board with the journalists and newspaper employees and it will be finalised after discussion with the owners.

## Danida staff

**FROM PAGE 16** In the meantime at Bolipara BDR zonal headquarters, the security forces along with detectives have been quizzing seven NGO officials including Kirti Nishan Chakma, senior programme officer at Danida.

Four others have also been arrested in connection with the abduction, said another source.

## 40 fishermen

**FROM PAGE 16** Badamtola, Narkelbaria and Dimer Char yesterday morning.

Lt Commander Kazi Nazrul Islam of the coastguard said, "Search for the missing fishermen is going on."

# Date for announcing

**FROM PAGE 1** in a news briefing marking the conclusion of the pilot project for gathering field level experience in preparing a voter list with photographs and national identity cards.

"We will specify the time required to complete the tasks including preparation of the voter list," the CEC added.

The pilot project, which began on June 10 in Sripur municipality area of Gazipur, ended yesterday registering 42,716 residents as voters and simultaneously issuing national identity cards to 40,559 of them.

The EC will now finalise the procedure for preparing the national voter list with photographs, evaluating the Sripur experience.

Earlier, the EC announced that the field level task for simultaneously preparing the voter list and the national ID cards will begin this month from Rajshahi City Corporation area.

The CEC said the pilot project successfully put to rest all doubts regarding the feasibility of a voter list with photographs.

Election Commissioner Sahul Hussein said nobody will be able to cast a fake vote once the voter list with photographs is prepared.

Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakawat Hossain said the name of Sripur municipality will be etched permanently in the history of introducing digital electoral rolls in Bangladesh.

The CEC on April 5 announced an 18-month timeframe for preparing the voter list with photographs and for completing other preparatory tasks for holding the stalled

ninth parliamentary election. Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed later announced that the ninth parliamentary election will be held before the end of 2008.

Five consultants, including two who came from abroad, have been working with documents to prepare the voter list with photographs and the national identity cards simultaneously.

"They [the consultants] have completed their tasks. Now we will finalise with them a timetable for completing the rest of the preparatory tasks for holding the ninth parliamentary election," CEC Huda said.

Narrating the success of the pilot project, the CEC said many feared that people would not visit the voter registration centres for getting their photographs taken, many even feared that women would not come out of their houses to register themselves as voters. "But all apprehensions have been proven unfounded as the numbers of male and female registered voters are almost equal," the CEC declared.

The CEC also said the EC will amend the electoral rolls ordinance before the field level task for preparing the voter list begins this month. "The existing electoral rolls ordinance does not allow preparing a voter list with photographs. So, we will have to amend the existing laws," he said.

# Low wage

**FROM PAGE 16** salaries are increased, making it at par with the salaries of the same category of workers of other countries.

On an average an unskilled Bangladeshi worker in the Middle Eastern countries get 300 to 500 riyals (Tk 6000 to Tk 10,000) monthly, while the workers from Philippines, Sri Lanka and Pakistan get 700 to 800 riyals per month, said experts on manpower businesses and migration.

An expatriates' welfare ministry official said they came to know that the Filipino domestic workers are now demanding 1000 Saudi riyals per month, while the minimum wage for the Bangladeshi domestic workers in Saudi Arabia has been fixed at 400 Saudi riyals.

Syed Saiful Haque, president of WARBE, a migrant's rights organisation, said malpractices of the visa traders and some recruiting agencies and lack of strong monitoring by the government are mainly responsible for it.

In many cases salary and other facilities that are written in the job contract letters in Bangladesh are changed once the workers arrive in the destination countries, he said.

Lack of awareness among the migrant workers is also responsible

## Falu sent to jail

**FROM PAGE 1** television channels ntv and Rtv and daily newspaper Amar Desh, was arrested at his Cantonment home on February 6.

On March 2, security personnel recovered 605 corrugated iron (CI) sheets and 63 blankets meant for government relief only at a ward commissioner's office in Tejgaon in the capital. Falu was taken on seven days' remand in two phases in this case.

## KCCI PRESIDENT SENT TO JAIL

A court in Khulna yesterday sent President of Khulna Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Shaharuzzaman Murtoza to jail custody, our Khulna correspondent reports. He was arrested Friday evening after a case was filed earlier that day in connection with violating Passport Ordinance 1973. He allegedly had two passports in his possession.

Another Khulna court yesterday sent Conservator of Khulna Circle Sheikh Mizanur Rahman to jail custody on completion of his five-day remand. Mizanur was arrested on June 24 at his home in Khulna in connection with amassing huge illegal wealth and keeping contraband substances.

## Ex-Jamaat MP

**FROM PAGE 1** Project Implementation Officer (PIO) Awlad Hossain with Chouddagram Police Station on Friday night.

The UNO filed the case at about 9.35pm, accusing 12 people, including the former MP and his brother, of misappropriating Tk 40,000 in the name of Mia Bazar Islami Pathagar and four tonnes of rice worth about Tk 94,000 in the name of Gunobati Samaj Kalyan Parishad.

The PIO filed his case at about 9.45pm accusing 29 people, including Taher and his brother, on charges of misappropriating cash and rice valued Tk 175,000 in the name of various clubs and organisations.

Chouddagram police sent the cases to the Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday morning.

The joint forces arrested former Jamaat lawmaker Taher at his Adabar residence on March 7. He has so far been implicated in six extortion and corruption cases.

## Council meeting

**FROM PAGE 16** directed the home ministry to place a complete proposal before the council.

The meeting also asked the authorities concerned to examine whether the passport validity period could be extended to 10 years from five years and whether the responsibility of issuance, addition and renewal of passport could be given to any established bank, private organisation or association.

The council also gave a directive to ensure delivery of urgent passport in due time.

"Presently, nearly one lakh passports are being issued and renewed per month from 15 offices in the country and from 57 missions abroad," the meeting was informed, according to an official release.

Advisers to the caretaker government attended the meeting at the Chief Adviser's Office. The cabinet secretary, the press secretary to the chief adviser and other secretaries concerned were also present.

## 3 IPP power plant

**FROM PAGE 16** The sources said the private sponsors will install the plants at their own cost and the government will purchase electricity from them for a 20-22 years term.

Asian Development Bank (ADB) will provide technical and financial support for the Meghnaghat Phase III and Sirajganj projects while the World Bank will give support for the Bibiana project.

Both ADB and the World Bank have already announced their financial commitment to support the projects to improve the power supply situation in the country.

An official of the power cell told the news agency that they have already prepared respective pre-qualification documents for the three projects and sent those to the donor agencies for their opinions.

"After getting back the PQ documents with the donors' suggestions, we will send those to the power ministry for approval... hopefully, we will invite PQ tenders within July 2007," he said.

The previous BNP-led alliance government had invited international tenders thrice for 450MW Sirajganj project and also finalised formalities to award the 450MW Meghnaghat phase-III project to a UK-firm based on its unsolicited offer.

But the present caretaker government cancelled the two projects on allegations of irregularities and corruption, and decided to go for fresh international tenders.

As per the plan of the power ministry, all the three plants will be implemented within two years and their commercial operation will start by November 2009.

# UN shuts down

**FROM PAGE 16** mandate of the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) Iraq Nuclear Verification Office, responsible for dismantling the country's nuclear weapons programme.

UNMOVIC was set up in 1999 to verify that Iraq, under the rule of the late Saddam Hussein, no longer had weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and had complied with its obligations not to acquire new proscribed arms.

UNMOVIC inspectors pulled out of Iraq on March 18, 2003, immediately before the US-led invasion, and were not allowed to return.

The work of hunting down Iraq's suspected WMDs was then taken over by a US-led coalition body, the Iraq Survey Group, but no weapons were found, seriously undermining what had been the major US and British argument for going to war.

"It's a historic day because it opens a new chapter with regard to Iraq and WMDs," US Ambassador to the UN Zalmay Khalilzad told reporters after the vote.

Iraq's UN envoy Hamid al-Bayati said the resolution would close "an appalling chapter in Iraq's modern history."

He pointed out that Baghdad was now constitutionally committed "to the non-proliferation, non-development, non-production and non-use of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and associated equipment."

The council vote was 14 in favour with only Russia abstaining.

Russian Ambassador Vitaly Churkin said he abstained because the resolution "does not provide for certification regarding the closing of the Iraq file."

He cited lingering questions about the fate of Iraqi military items under observation, the stockpile of dual-use weapons and the programme of dual-use weapons.

He said there was still "a lack of clarity about the fate of several dozen Iraqi missiles" which UN inspectors had not been able to destroy.

Khalilzad for his part conceded that while Washington had underestimated Iraq's WMD capability during the first Gulf War in 1991, it overestimated it in the runup to the 2003 war.

In a recent joint letter to the president of the Security Council, the

United States and Britain stated that "all appropriate steps have been taken to secure, remove, disable... eliminate or destroy all of Iraq's known weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles with a range greater than 150km."

In line with an Iraqi request, the resolution directs UN chief Ban Ki-moon to transfer to Iraq's development fund all remaining unallocated funds drawn from the country's oil revenues to finance UNMOVIC work.

It also asks the UN chief "to take all necessary measures" to secure UNMOVIC archives and in particular ensure "that sensitive proliferation information or information provided in confidence by member states is kept under strict control."

Washington had for the past two years pressed for an end to all related UN inspection work there.

Demetrius Pericos, the acting UNMOVIC executive chairman, told the council that the resolution "closes a cycle of many years of verification, where the UN showed that it can implement successfully the activities demanded by the international community despite difficulties and frequently a lack of cooperation from the inspected party."

But he warned that "in the present security environment of Iraq the possibility should not be discounted that non-state actors may seek to acquire toxic agents or their chemical precursors in small quantities."

Pericos cited as an example the recent report use by insurgents in Iraq of toxic industrial chemicals such as chlorine, previously under UN monitoring, combined with explosives for dispersal.

"The possibility of non-state actors (insurgents) getting their hands on other — more toxic — agents is real," he added.

UNMOVIC, which by the end of last month had a core staff of 34 professionals from 19 nationalities, spends roughly one million dollars a month.

# US raids Baghdad

**FROM PAGE 16** police recruits, the officer said.

US forces found around 40 bodies, bound and bearing gunshot wounds, in a mass grave south of Fallujah, the military said Saturday as US-led forces reported 26 militants killed in fighting in Baghdad.

"A local Iraqi citizen's tip led coalition forces to the site of a mass grave late Friday evening outside Ferris, approximately 35 kilometers (21 miles) south of Fallujah," the military said in a statement.

"Coalition forces uncovered 35 to 40 bodies at the site. The remains were bound and had gunshot wounds."

Separately, two American soldiers were charged with the premeditated murder of three Iraqis, the US military said Saturday. And in Muqadiyah, 100km north of the capital, police said a suicide bomber exploded himself in a crowd of police recruits, killing at least 16 people and wounding 24, a police officer said on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to release the information.

The US military said it conducted two pre-dawn raids in Sadr City, Baghdad's largest Shia slum, killing 26 "terrorists" who attacked US troops with small arms fire, rocket-propelled grenades and roadside bombs. But Iraqi police and hospital officials said all the dead were civilians killed in their homes.

"The Iraqi government totally rejects US military operations... conducted without a pre-approval from the Iraqi military command," al-Maliki said in a statement released by his office. "Anyone who breaches the military command orders will face investigation."

An American military spokesman insisted all of those killed were combatants.

"Everyone who got shot was shooting at US troops at the time," said Lt Col Christopher Garver, the spokesman. "It was an intense firefight."

The Iraqi officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity out of security concerns, put the death toll at eight, with 20 wounded.

Seventeen suspected militants also were detained in the operation, which consisted of two separate raids, the US military said in a statement.

American troops entered the Shia enclave in search of militants suspected of helping Iranian terror networks fund operations in Iraq, the statement said. There were no US casualties, it said.

Witnesses said US forces rolled into their neighbourhood before dawn and opened fire without warning.

"At about 4 am, a big American convoy with tanks came and began to open fire on houses bombing them," said Basheer Ahmed, who lives in Sadr City's Habibiya district. "What did we do? We didn't even retaliate there was no resistance."

The raids cantered on the Habibiya and Orfali districts of Sadr City, police said.

Sadr City is the Iraqi capital's largest Shia neighbourhood home to some 2.5 million people. It is also the base of operations for the Mahdi Army, a militia loyal to anti-American cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. The fighters are blamed for much of the sectarian killing in Baghdad.

In the Shia holy city of Najaf, Sheikh Salah al-Obaidi, a spokesman for al-Sadr condemned Saturday's raids: "The bombing hurt only innocent civilians."

The US military statement said soldiers riding in armoured vehicles

"used proper escalation of force rules to engage four civilian vehicles."

"You start with warnings and work your way up to firing on a vehicle," Garver said. "Every structure and vehicle that the troops on the ground engaged were being used for hostile intent," he said.

US soldiers fired a barrage of bullets at one vehicle after it failed to yield at a checkpoint, Garver said. The other civilian cars were being used as a cover for insurgents, who hid behind them and fired on American forces, he said.

Some of the 26 victims were in civilian cars, some had been hiding behind the cars and others had fired on US troops from nearby buildings, Garver said.

But according to Iraqi officials, the dead included three members of one family, a father, mother and son. Several women and children, along with two policemen, were among the wounded, they said.

One of the policemen, Montadhar Kareem, said he was on night duty in the Habibiya area when the raids began.

"At about dawn, American troops came with tanks and began bombing houses in the area," he said.

"The bombing became more intense, and I was injured by shrapnel in both my legs and in my left shoulder," Kareem said from a gurney at Al Sadr General Hospital.

Hours after the raids, a funeral procession snaked through the streets of Sadr City's Orfali district. Three coffins were hoisted atop cars.

One resident who goes by the nickname of Um Ahmed, or "mother of Ahmed," stood outside her home as mourners passed by.