

CA tells nation

FROM PAGE 1
He hoped all parties would participate in the discussions with the Election Commission (EC) in holding the polls at the quickest," Fakhruddin said in his address to the nation over the state-owned radio and television.

The chief adviser also announced the end of the ban on indoor politics from today to facilitate political parties' dialogue with the EC preparatory to the next polls.

He said all parties would participate in the discussions with the Election Commission that will finalise its draft on reform in consultations with political parties.

"Our endeavour will continue to set up a solid foundation of democracy and good governance and create condition free from corruption and muscle power so our future journey along the path of building a progressive and democratic society is not impeded."

Fakhruddin said the objective of his government is not only to hold a fair election but also to build a sustainable democracy. "Our final goal is to make democracy sustainable forever as democracy is the best way for people's emancipation and progress."

He said a section of corrupt persons looted thousands of crores of money under their names or pseudonyms using power and influence.

"Although general people are to bear the burden of this, only a handful of people enjoyed its benefit. Therefore, the government has strengthened the Anti-Corruption Commission to take effective steps to stop corruption," he said.

The chief adviser said different persons returned Tk 820 crore earned through corruption and dishonesty to government exchequer following its coordinated efforts.

However, Fakhruddin made it clear that the National Anti-corruption Task Force would not publish any new list of suspected corrupt after this month.

He said different government agencies would carry on anti-corruption drives in accordance with rules and regulations.

"You must admit that it is not possible for the government alone to achieve final success in curbing corruption," said Fakhruddin, stressing the practice of moral values in all spheres and honest desire at personal, family, social and political levels to build a corruption-free society.

On recent student protest on the Dhaka University campus that led the government to impose curfew and shut down universities and colleges in divisional headquarters, the chief adviser lamented that it was an unfortunate incident.

He said the police filed cases against 36 suspects, including four teachers and 14 students of Dhaka University in this connection.

Fakhruddin assured that no other persons would be sued or harassed in connection with the campus incidents and final report would be given by pardoning others, including thousands of anonymous people against whom police filed FIR.

In his 24-minute speech the chief adviser listed his government's various measures to tackle national issues, including floods, price-hike, power deficit, trade and economy.

He said the present government assumed office for a limited period of time and is to take some harsh and corrective steps on short-term basis to put the nation on the right track.

"I would like to assure you that we are committed to performing the tasks vested in us properly until the holding of the election within the declared timeframe, December 2008," said the head of the caretaker government.

Turning to prices of essentials, he mentioned his government's various steps. The government action includes the process of importing 900,000 tonnes of food-grain during the current fiscal year under government initiative, which remains at the final stage.

Open Market Sale (OMS) of rice will begin today under which rice will be sold at Tk 19 a kg against the import cost of Tk 25, Fakhruddin said.

Besides, he added, private-sector import of rice and wheat has increased in last two months and opening of letter of credit (LC) to import food items has already increased following reduction in interest rate on bank loans for importing essential items.

On recent floods in the country, the chief adviser said one crore people of 39 districts and 256 upazilas were affected and property worth thousands of crores of taka was damaged. The government has taken a number of steps to tackle the floods and for relief and rehabilitation of the flood victims.

He said people of various classes and professions have come forward in aid of the flood-hit people and donated money to the Chief Adviser's Relief and Welfare Fund.

So far, nearly Tk 65 crore has come as donation of which Tk 52 crore has already been distributed in field levels as per demand and requirement of the flood-affected districts.

He said coordination committees at districts and upazila levels, comprising government, private and NGO sectors, are carrying out efforts to tackle the post-flood situation.

"The members of the Armed Forces in aid of civil administration are playing an important role in relief and rehabilitation activities in every area."

Apart from food, clothes and cash assistance, he mentioned, CI sheets

and house-building grants are being distributed to the flood-affected people so they could start life anew.

Rehabilitation activities have been strengthened in many areas of the country shortly after the receding of floodwater as well as a massive programme has been taken giving highest priority to distribution of seeds, fertiliser and agricultural loans to the farmers.

"Our courageous and hardworking farmer community has already started cultivation with fresh zeal to make up for the losses. Cultivation process in many districts is at the stage of completion," Fakhruddin said.

Regarding fresh floods, he said the government is firmly determined to face the new situation by all possible means.

On power situation, he said generation of electricity had not increased in the past although the demand went high. The present government has taken short, mid and long-term planning to meet the growing demand for electricity.

The average power production was 2,800 MW in last January whereas now 3,600 MW electricity is being produced daily, he said.

An additional 200 MW electricity would be generated in December this year following the government's steps and it hopes that more 370 MW power will be generated by next June, the head of the caretaker government mentioned.

Lauding the Bangladesh Armed Forces as professional, Fakhruddin said they have made commendable contributions at different times during the need of the nation, including in improving law and order situation, relief and disaster management, various development activities and in the UN peacekeeping missions abroad.

Presently, he noted, the armed forces are providing significant assistance to the present government in curbing serious crimes, terrorism and corruption as well as in relief and rehabilitation operation for flood victims.

The chief adviser had a word on hawk business, the means of earning of the hawkers, which was hampered during eviction drives. He said the affected hawkers have been rehabilitated in various places of the capital by giving opportunity to run their small business. Presently, the hawkers of Dhaka city are getting scope for running their trade in new places besides the previously fixed areas.

As business picks up during Ramadan and there be a buying binge before the holy Eid festival, he said the government would take necessary steps so that people can go shopping in a happy mood during the upcoming month of fasting and religious festival.

The government will try to ensure supply of uninterrupted electricity to shopping malls and shopping stores as well as strengthen the security system.

About jute mills, the CA said the government has taken a work plan to reduce the losses the state-owned jute mills have incurred since independence due to inefficiencies.

"Attention has been given so that government-owned 18 jute mills can be operated properly. For the first time, the government disbursed funds for purchasing raw jute in July during jute season," he said.

Fakhruddin also stated that the process of paying arrears of workers of the four closed jute mills has been started soon after closure of those mills and the workers won't have to wait for long, as in the past, to receive their benefits.

He said his government has taken decision in principle to operate the closed jute mills by private sector on the basis of short-term lease. Under such arrangements two mills in Chittagong already are in operation.

Barisal robber

FROM PAGE 16
Habu's confessional statement, taking him along with them around 2:30am to recover hidden firearms.

Habu's cohorts ambushed the team near a betel leaf farm on their way to Barthi. The firefight lasted 30 minutes. Habu was caught in the crossfire as he tried to flee from police custody. He died on the spot.

The injured policemen are Chandan, 26, and Tuhin, 29. Habu's accomplices managed to flee following the shootout leaving behind one shutter gun, four bullets and six bottles of phensidyl.

Magistrate ATM Mahbubul Karim Sunday morning visited the spot and ordered the body to be sent to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

People of Gournadi-Agoljhar-Kalkini region brought out a procession and distributed sweetmeats on getting the news of Habu's death.

Abdul Hye Sarkar, officer-in-charge of Gournadi Police Station said Habu was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment in a case and was wanted in 17 criminal cases filed with different police stations.

Habu had a case filed against him in connection with murder, a case for rape, four for robbery, nine in connection with narcotics and two under Explosive Substances Act and several for extortion.

Habu lost all the fingers of his left hand in 1996 in a blast while making bombs.

ANH Akhter

FROM PAGE 16
director of the ACC and also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate of Dhaka, showing 31 people as prosecution witnesses.

The IO prayed for issuance of arrest warrant against Nazneen. She has been absconding since the case was filed against the couple.

In the charge sheet, the IO mentioned that the charges brought against the two were primarily proved and they should be brought under trial.

On May 31, ACC Assistant Director Mahbubul Alam lodged the case against Akhter and his wife with Uttara Police Station for concealing information of wealth worth over Tk 2.23 crore in the statement submitted to the ACC earlier.

Akhter was arrested on February 4 on the ACC premises when he went there to submit his wealth statement. His name was on the first government list of 50 corruption suspects.

Koko

FROM PAGE 16
Dr Manzoor said Koko was given and inhaled since he has been suffering from bronchitis.

He said they are yet to get the pathological test reports. The board will meet after getting the reports. "So at this stage, it is not possible to say what diseases inflicted him," he added.

Khaleda denies

FROM PAGE 16
Aazam and Sanaulah Miah, the other lawyer for Khaleda, met the detained BNP chief at the sub-jail yesterday.

Aazam entered the sub-jail at 3:30pm and came out at 5:00pm while Sanaulah stepped in at 5:00pm and emerged after about an hour.

Khaleda said Hannan Shah and Khandaker Delwar Hossain are the coordinator and the secretary general of BNP and urged her party colleagues to work as per the guidance of the two leaders.

"Hannan Shah and Khandaker Delwar Hossain-led party is the mainstream BNP," Khaleda said as quoted by her lawyer.

Aazam said Khaleda's physical condition is good.

2 JMB men

FROM PAGE 16
Comilla -- were teachers at Sengram Dakhil Madrasa in Sylhet's Jaintapur upazila. They have already been given 10-year jail terms in another blast-related case on July 10. Both of them are now in jail.

The court reached the judgment after examining the statements of 24 prosecution witnesses.

A total of 10 cases were filed following a series of blasts that rocked the city on August 17 two years back.

Fisheries sector

FROM PAGE 16
sustainable fish resource management is urgently required to improve the conditions of the fishermen, he said regretting that implementation of the suggestions never saw the light of day.

The present government, as part of its ongoing reform initiatives, is seriously considering implementing the suggestions made in the strategy paper and bringing changes in the leasing process, Dutta added.

He also said to completely reform the fisheries sector, suggestions made on strategy studies titled Aquaculture Extension Strategy, Inland Capture Fisheries Strategy, Marine Sector Strategy and Shrimp Strategy will be implemented gradually.

The fisheries and livestock ministry recently requested land ministry to relax monetary requirements so that a larger number of fishermen can successfully take part in the leasing process of the water bodies.

For the same reason, the ministry also requested the National Board of Revenue to exempt all tax and VAT (Value Added Tax) accrued on the value of a lease.

Furthermore, following the Inland Capture Fisheries Strategy, the government is likely to lease out the water bodies to community-based fishery management organisations or co-operatives comprising fishermen only.

For better sustainability, the government also has plans to spend the funds collected from the lease on protection and maintenance of the water bodies.

During 2006-07 fiscal year, around 24.41 lakh tonnes of fish were produced in the country while around 23.19 lakh tonnes of fish were produced during the previous 2005-06 fiscal.

The land ministry each year leases out around 30 lakh hectares of water bodies to the highest bidders through open tenders, enriching the exchequer with around Tk 15 crore.

Indoor politics relaxed

FROM PAGE 1
hold meetings of its forums to discuss only its organisational reforms and the Election Commission's (EC) proposal for electoral reforms, sources in the ministry said.

A political party may hold the meetings at its central office, hotels, restaurants, auditoriums, and residences of its members, but it will have to inform the Dhaka Metropolitan Police in advance about the meetings.

Following the notification, offices of the political parties, which had been locked since the imposition of the ban on indoor politics on March 8, may be reopened.

The political parties however may hold the meetings only in the capital as the ban on indoor politics remains in the rest of the country, the sources added.

According to the notification, which was issued amending a provision of the Emergency Power Rules, a maximum of 50 leaders may meet at a time.

"If the number of attendees at a meeting is to exceed 50, the party will have to take prior permission from the home ministry," a source in the ministry told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity.

The official said a political party may also hold its council to bring reforms to itself with prior permission from the home ministry.

According to the Emergency Power Rules, those who will violate the restrictions will be punished with prison terms of two years to five years and fines.

Indoor politics was allowed even after the declaration of the state of emergency on January 11, but the government on March 8 imposed a total ban on politics including indoor politics on March 8 saying the political parties had been abusing the limited political freedom.

CA's address hailed

FROM PAGE 1
said the steps would leave a positive impact on the Election Commission's talks on reforms and implementation of the roadmap to polls.

Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad said Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed in his speech has touched on almost everything the nation was expecting.

"As he has spoken elaborately on different matters, it is now clear that the government is sincere in its efforts to hand over power to an elected government through holding a free and fair election on schedule," Ershad, also a former president, told The Daily Star last night.

"As the ban on indoor politics has been withdrawn, we will regularly sit at the party office," said the JP chairman.

Welcoming the decision of the chief adviser, BNP Standing Committee Member Lt Gen (ret) Mahbubul Rahman said, "I congratulate him for the steps."

Through loosening the restrictions on politics, the government has reaffirmed its commitment to hold a free and fair election, and the measure would definitely help create an environment conducive to carrying out intra-party reforms, observed the BNP leader.

Mahbubur, a former army chief, told The Daily Star that they would soon hold party meetings to introduce reforms.

JP acting chairman Anisul Islam Mahmud said the chief adviser's decision would help the EC have fruitful talks with the political parties. "Lifting of the ban would create a friendly environment and help prepare a flawless voter list," he noted.

Rain-fed rivers

FROM PAGE 1
all major rivers of the Brahmaputra-Jamuna basin have witnessed sharp rise while a rising trend was observed in all the rivers of the Ganges-Padma and Meghna basins.

Meanwhile, India Meteorological Department forecasts that isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall is likely in next 24 hours over Indian states of Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, and sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim.

Due to excessive rainfall at these places in India, the Dharala, Teesta, Brahmaputra, Jamuna, Buriganga, Balu, Turag, Sitalakkhya and Kaliganga of the Brahmaputra-Jamuna basin, the Meghna, Surma, Kushiya, Monu, Khowai, Gomti of the Meghna basin and the Padma, Korotak, Punarabha, Atrai and Kobada in the Padma basin have witnessed significant rise in floodwater.

Besides, almost all the rivers of the southeastern hill basin including the Muhuri, Halda, Matamuhuri and Feni marked rise, while the Sangu marked a fall by 10cm at Bardarban.

BSS said, over 1.5 lakh people of 160 char villages of Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Rangpur, Jamalpur, Bogra, Sirajganj and Pabna were marooned again due to the worsening flood situation.

As a 460-metre patch of the flood bypass of the Teesta barrage was washed away, the seedbeds for Aman paddy fields were damaged and road communication broke down, our Nilphamari correspondent said.

Our Sirajganj correspondent said, at least 50 thousand people have taken refuge again at flood shelters. The affected people are in desperate need of food and pure drinking water.

Our Kishoreganj correspondent said excessive rainfall and floodwater damaged 3,061.80 hectares of vegetable and AS paddy fields along with Aman seedbeds in nine

The present EC, led by ATM Shamsul Huda, was reconstituted on February 4, and soon after it started preparing a draft proposal for massive electoral reforms, which was disclosed to the people on April 5 with an announcement that the commission would finalise the proposal following consultations with the political parties.

The poll chief at a meeting with the law adviser on April 4 first asked the government to lift the ban on indoor politics to pave the way for talks with the political parties. Since then, the commission had been calling for a partial if not a complete lifting of the ban for creating an environment conducive to holding fruitful discussions.

The political parties also had been saying that they would not sit with the EC to discuss the proposal for electoral reforms until the ban on indoor politics is lifted. Due to the ban, the EC could not sit with the parties although it held a discussion with civil society personalities and journalists on the proposed electoral reforms.

According to the EC's July 15 electoral roadmap and its August 28 announcement, the commission is scheduled to start dialogues with the political parties on September 12, which is supposed to continue till November 29.

The EC already started inviting the political parties to the much awaited dialogues, but before the government's announcement of relaxing the ban on indoor politics it was not sure whether it would be able to begin the talks on schedule, as the parties were not being able to hold their internal meetings due to the ban.

CEC ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday noon had told reporters that they would again meet the CA if the government would not lift or at least relax the ban on indoor politics by September 11.

Brig Gen (ret) ASM Hannan Shah, a pro-Khaleda leader in the BNP, said they welcome the decision if it is unconditional. He thanked Fakhruddin for forgiving the students and those who were involved in the recent unrest at Dhaka University.

"As the ban on indoor politics has been withdrawn, I am asking my party leaders and workers across the country to reopen [party] offices to hold meetings," Hannan Shah told The Daily Star adding that he has already discussed the issue with Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain.

AL Organising Secretary Mahmudur Rahman Manna said the government has taken the right decision by allowing politics to take its own course. "I welcome the decision. We will sit soon and talk about the overall situation," the AL leader told The Daily Star.

Welcoming the chief adviser's speech, Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon said they hope the announcement would be implemented fully and there would be no further condition attached to it.

Menon, a key leader of the AL-led 14-party coalition, said they would sit at party forum to discuss the proposed electoral reforms. "We will also meet as the 11-party coalition and 14-party coalition over the matter," he added.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) President Hasanul Haque Inu said the slackening of the curbs on politics would help the reform talks succeed.

He told The Daily Star that they would meet today to discuss different matters.

upazilas. According to Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) sources, the nine affected upazilas are Hossainpur, Pakundia, Kotadi, Karamganj, Tarail, Baitipur, Kuliarchar, Bhairab and Kishoreganj sadar.

Our Chandpur correspondent reports 20pa Aman fields and seedbeds on 25 thousand hectares of land inside Chandpur Irrigation Project embankment and the Meghna-Dhanagoda irrigation project have been damaged.

Our Khagrachhari correspondent said, in the worst flood in Khagrachhari in 50 years, over one lakh people of eight upazilas in Khagrachhari have been marooned and took shelter on high lands and at various flood shelters.

The inter-district road communication was disrupted till 2:00pm yesterday due to landslides at Manikchhari, Laxmichhari, Matiranga, Talbalchhari and Panchhari.

At least 16 thousand newly planted Aman plants went under water, according to Agricultural extension Department.

Our Rangamati correspondent said heavy downpour continued till yesterday and the water level remained above the danger level in Kaptai Lake, marooning at least 9 lakh people in the adjacent areas.

Our Patuakhali correspondent said, newly transplanted Aman plants on about 50,000 hectares of land have been washed away along with fish worth about Tk one crore.

Patuakhali district fisheries department sources said, over 1,200 shrimp enclosures and over 5,000 fisheries in Galachipa, Kalapara, Dashmina, Baula, Dumki, Mirzaganj and Sadar upazilas have been inundated.

Meanwhile the ban on the plying of launch in 21 routes was in force for the fourth consecutive day. The flood situation in Netrakona and Faridpur has also deteriorated.

Henin

FROM PAGE 16
Williams sisters Serena and Venus en route to the title and did not drop a set during her seven matches.

She acknowledged later that this was the greatest of her seven Grand Slam crowns because it proved to all doubters, including herself, that she is the world's best tennis player.

"This one is maybe the most important one. The quality I played in the last few matches is amazing," Henin said.

"It's just a great feeling because I had a tough draw and I had a lot of things to prove to myself - not to anyone else, just to myself - and I did it."

"I've been so consistent for two weeks and so calm, so relaxed. It's just great what I did and I'm really proud of it."

The 22-year-old Kuznetsova looked nervous at the start though and the slightly-built Henin pounced immediately, breaking her opening two serves to move into a 3-0 lead.

She then went on to close out the set in just 33 minutes.

The Belgian had a slightly tougher time of it in the second set as Kuznetsova battled hard but it was all in vain as Henin's class shone through and she clinched the title with an easy lob over Kuznetsova, who was stranded at the net.

3 companies

FROM PAGE 16
to start offering land phone services to customers from end of September or from early October. Within an hour a subscriber makes the payment, a new connection would be established at the location designated by the subscriber, he said adding, "The prices would be attractive."

RanksTel sources said the phone company is likely to introduce various package offers ranging from Tk 1,500 to Tk 3,000.

At a simple ceremony yesterday, Maj Gen Manzurul Alam, chairman of BTRC, handed over RanksTel's licence to Zakia Rouf Chowdhury, executive vice chairperson of Rangs Group.

BTRC Vice Chairman AMM Reza-e-Rabbi, commissioners Justice M Abbas Salam, SM Monir Ahmed and Alwirdy Khandakar, and RanksTel officials Amanullah Chowdhury and Anwar Hossain were also present at the ceremony.

Prices stay

FROM PAGE 1
Mohammadpur market, told this correspondent yesterday, "You will not find rice in the market priced below Tk 22, one litre bottle of soya bean oil below Tk 80, and green chili below Tk 120. How will the poor people survive?"

Yasmin was apparently in a bad mood to find that rice was selling between Tk 22 and Tk 48. "Except sugar all items are highly expensive," she said.

Retail rice traders said they have been selling coarse rice at prices between Tk 22 and Tk 30 and fine rice at prices up to Tk 48.

"The price of rice has not increased in the last 15 days. It has rather decreased by Tk 20 to Tk 50 per tonne. But that does not reflect in the retail market," said Md Hasan Sheikh, a rice trader at the Mohammadpur price market.

"If the price decreases by Tk 200 per tonne, its effects may be felt in the retail market," said another rice trader at Karwan Bazar.

Papaya is the only vegetable that was found being sold below Tk 20 at Karwan Bazar and Mohammadpur kitchen market. The price of one kilogram papaya was between Tk 10 and Tk 12.

Potato was selling at Tk 20, aubergine at Tk 36, tomato at Tk 50, okra at Tk 32, bitter gourd at Tk 30 and cucumber at Tk 32 per kilogram.

BNP secy gen

FROM PAGE 1
capital when asked about the EC's recent announcement that the commission itself will decide which faction of BNP will be invited to the upcoming electoral reforms dialogues between the EC and political parties.

Delwar once again claimed, "According to the party constitution we are the mainstream of BNP and Khaleda Zia is our leader."

"Nobody has the right to impose a leadership on our party from outside, as it is our internal matter," he said adding that recently expelled secretary general, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, is not in BNP anymore, so him bringing reforms to the party is out of the question.

Rejecting the rumour of rampant confusion among the party members and sympathisers, Delwar said there is no confusion or division among the leaders, activists and supporters of the party.

Meanwhile, Jatityabadi Mohila Dal leaders greeted Khandaker Delwar Hossain with flowers yesterday. They also placed a wreath at the grave of the founder of the party, late president Ziaur Rahman, marking the 29th founding anniversary of the women's wing of BNP.

The women leaders also went to the sub-jail where party chief, Khaleda Zia, is currently being detained, but the authorities did not allow them to meet her.

Former lawmakers Shirin Sultana, Rehana Akhter Ranu, Helen Zerir Khan, Newaz Halima Arli, Bilkis Juban Shirin, Fahima Hossain Jubair, Saimun Begum, Nur Jahan Yasmeen, Rashida Begum Hira, and Zahana Panna were among the women leaders who went to see their interned party chief.

ASHK Sadeque

FROM PAGE 1
and a daughter, and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

The veteran politician, who came to Keshabpur on Friday afternoon from Dhaka, felt pain in chest on Saturday night. He again felt pain in chest at 6:00am yesterday and died shortly afterwards.

His first nama