

Advisers agree

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parliamentary polls according to the electoral roadmap, sources said.

In his introductory speech at yesterday's meeting, Fakhruddin described the current situation and challenges and apprised the advisers of the appointment of special assistants, sources said.

At one stage newly appointed Adviser Shawkat raised the issue of holding dialogues with the political parties. "I think time has come to hold dialogues with the political parties to gain their trust," a meeting source said quoting him.

Shawkat said the previous caretaker governments also held dialogues with the parties at the beginning of their tenures.

Echoing Shawkat's view, other advisers underscored the need for holding talks with the political parties.

Talking to reporters after the meeting, the new advisers however disagreed with the demand for holding the election in between June and July and immediate withdrawal of the state of emergency.

"The government will withdraw the state of emergency when the time comes," Adviser Quader said.

The advisers said the first challenge of the caretaker government is to hold a free, fair and acceptable parliamentary election by December 2008 as per the electoral roadmap.

"It is my duty to move forward the work of legal and infrastructural reforms for holding a free and fair election," Adviser AF Hassan Arif, who was given the

charge of the law ministry, said.

STATE OF POLITICS

AND PARTIES
Amidst the growing political crisis over parliamentary polls, President Iajuddin Ahmed on January 11 resigned from the office of the chief adviser along with other advisers and declared the state of emergency suspending all sorts of outdoor political activities. On March 7, the government banned indoor politics too.

Then the issue of reforms within the parties surfaced and top leaders of Awami League (AL) and BNP became divided over the matter. The BNP was split in the absence of party Chairperson Khaleda Zia, who was detained on September 3. The AL remained united, but it faced rifts within the party regarding running it in the absence of party chief Sheikh Hasina who was detained on July 16.

A number of advisers, particularly Mainul Hossain who resigned on Tuesday, launched broadsides at political leaderships labelling them as corrupt. They also outrightly rejected the demand for holding talks with the parties.

On repeated requests of the EC, the caretaker government finally allowed indoor politics in the capital on September 10 so that the EC can hold talks with political parties on electoral reforms. The EC talks began on September 12 and some political parties, including the AL, urged the caretaker government to open dialogue with political parties over political reforms.

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ACC presses graft charges

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Memorial Trust (BMT) curator Sayed Siddiqui Rahman was also included in the charge sheet.

Besides Hasina and BMT curator Siddique, six others persons in the charge sheet are former energy secretary Dr Toufique-e-Elahi Chowdhury, former Power Development Board (PDB) chairman Noor Uddin Mahmud Kamal, Managing Director of Summit Industries and Mercantile Corporation Private Ltd Aziz Khan and Director Farid Khan, United Group Chairman Hasan Mahmud Raja and Director Abul Kalam Azad.

ACC Deputy Director Sabir Hassan lodged the case with Tejjana Police Station on September 2, complaining that Hasina and the six others, through their mutual understanding and using their influence, helped a foreign company and its local partners win a deal for setting up the 100MW barge-mount power plant in Khulna and thus deprived the lowest bidder from being awarded the deal.

The case was filed under Sections 161, 163, 164, 165, 165 (a)/109 of the Penal Code and 5 (2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act 1947. Later, the ACC brought the

Rab man injured

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was rushed to Combined Medical Hospital while drug peddler Shah Alam was admitted to Orthopaedic Hospital at Sher-e-Banglanagar in the city.

Rab-1 officials said Rab personnel and police went to raid a drug den on the Badda Link Road at about 8:30pm. Sensing the presence of the law enforcers, the armed drug dealers opened fire on them. The law enforcers also retaliated.

During the gunfight, both Maj Haider and Shah Alam received bullets in their legs. At one stage, the criminals fled leaving the injured Shah Alam.

1 killed

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filling station 'Dhaka CNG Ltd' and the windows of a nearby house.

"I could not hear anything for five minutes after the explosion," said Zakir Bin Samad, a resident of the house, adding that he found all the windowpanes of his house broken.

It is suspected that use of sub-standard gas cylinders and faulty installation caused the explosion.

Earlier, three people were killed and several others injured in Manikganj when part of a CNG-run bus went up in flames in December.

Similar explosions in a private car and a bus also left one dead and many injured in Joykali Mandir area in Dhaka and Gazipur.

A worker of the filling station seeking anonymity said they initially refused to refill the defective gas cylinder after they saw it.

"We finally agreed to refill it as Khasru assured us that nothing would happen," he said.

A number of officials of the filling station visited the spot but they refused to make any comment over the matter.

Quoting the wounded driver, Sub-inspector Alam of Badda Police Station said they drove the van straight to the filling station after getting the gas cylinder installed at a CNG conversion plant at Tikatuli in the city.

Asked whether they would take any action against the CNG conversion plant, the police official said he was yet to receive any directive in this regard.

An unnatural death case was filed with Badda Police Station.

Salahuddin jailed

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Corruption Act 1947 for abuse of power and corruption by taking bribes.

Reading out excerpts from the judgment, the judge said the act of Saleem, who is currently absconding, in abetting Salahuddin either by instigating or conspiring or aiding was not proved and he is not found guilty.

Salahuddin and lawyers of both the defence and prosecution were present when the judgment was delivered.

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Deputy Director Shaiful Islam filed the case against Salahuddin and Saleem with Dharmondi Police Station on May 25 for taking Tk 1 crore bribe from Mir Zahir Hossain, owner of construction firm Mir Akter Hossain Ltd.

ACC Assistant Director Ashrafur Islam investigated the case and the charge sheet was submitted on September 9.

Salahuddin took the bribe from Mir Zahir through Saleem's account in exchange for letting Zahir continue uninterruptedly the construction work of Rajshahi-Natore, Rugganj-Gulta, Kayetpara-Faridpur roads under DFID projects worth Tk 4.16 crore.

The bribe was taken in a cheque on February 14, 2005 and the cheque was encashed on February 17 from the Moghbazar branch of NCC Bank, the prosecution lawyers said.

Tamil Tigers

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Prabhakaran, in his annual policy statement, signalled they were ready for all-out war.

"Thousands of our fighters are standing ready to fight with determination for our just goal of freedom and we will overcome the hurdles before us and liberate our motherland," Prabhakaran said.

Sri Lanka's military began the New Year with a vow to crush the Tigers by June. They set a target to kill 3,000 guerrillas in the first six months and dismantle the rebels' mini-state in the north of the island.

President Mahinda Rajapakse also ruled out any negotiations with the Tigers before crushing them militarily. The authorities are confident that they enjoy the upper hand on the battlefield.

"To our knowledge no member of the armed forces has been ever brought to a court to be prosecuted for any of the killings," Irene said, adding that the situation has remained unchanged under the present regime.

Irene also said AI "is concerned at the creeping role of the armed forces in a range of functions that should rightly be carried out by the civilian administration but with no clear rules of accountability."

The AI head expressed 'deep concern' at continuing extrajudicial killings by law enforcement agencies with 'impunity' and that no report on these matters has been received.

"Irene also said AI "is concerned at the creeping role of the armed forces in a range of functions that should rightly be carried out by the civilian administration but with no clear rules of accountability."

Citing a number of cases of human rights violations committed by law enforcement agencies, Irene asked, "If the government supply had sharply fallen as the husking mills across the country stopped crushing rice. Moreover, in view of the situation, many people went on panic buying and stored huge amounts of rice at their homes."

"The price of rice shot up suddenly without any specific reason, but the price came down within 24 hours with the efforts of the army," he said.

General Moeen also called upon the businessmen not to give any chance to anyone to create panic among the people.

"At present, our duty is to ensure adequate supply of fertiliser and diesel to the farmers so that Boro cultivation is not hampered for lack of the agri-inputs," he told his audience.

The army chief also informed that the Machine Tools Factory under army management has innovated a new method to convert diesel-run water pump into gas-fired pump, which will reduce 50 per cent operating costs. The cost of transformation is Tk 1,000 only.

The Army Fund has so far received Tk 23 crore, of which, Tk 16 crore has already been disbursed among the cyclone-hit people.

Robbers kill man

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my husband," she said adding that she then rushed to the room where her parents were sleeping and found another group of robbers there.

She requested the robbers not to gag her father's mouth as he needed to breathe through his mouth due to illness, said Shabnam. "The robbers did not pay heed to my request. They dragged me to another room, tied my hands and legs and gagged me as they did to all six other members of my family," she said bursting into tears.

The robbers, all armed with large knives, then threatened the family members with death unless the keys to the almirahs were handed over to them. Shabnam said adding, "Finding no other way, I gave them the keys to all the almirahs."

The criminals then opened the almirahs and looted 35 tolas of gold ornaments, four diamond finger rings, five cellphone sets and Tk 45 thousand in cash.

The robbers even sifted through clothes, beds and garbage cans to make sure no valuable item was left behind.

After taking around two and a half hours to accomplish their mission, the raiders left the locked building with the main entrance blocked from outside.

By the time neighbours from two nearby houses came to know of the incident and untied all the residents of Shabnam's house, her father had already breathed his last.

A case was filed with Uttara Police Station. The police are yet to arrest anyone or recover any of the stolen goods.

HR record poor

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The AI, one of the largest global human rights organisations, also called for the immediate release of four detained Dhaka University teachers, calling them "prisoners of conscience."

Irene reiterated her demands for the government to lift restrictions on press, freedom of expression and right to assembly, adding that the government has assured her of considering the withdrawal.

Reviewing the current administration's rights situation, she said, "AI has seen some familiar patterns of human rights abuses continuing under this regime that this government must address with more vigour than it has done so far."

She also held the government responsible for new examples of human rights violations and for not addressing the matter.

Irene also said AI has observed that a "new pattern of manipulating due process has emerged in the context of dealing with cases of corruption and political abuse."

Referring to the Special Powers Act, 1974, she said the same law is being used to detain politicians and businessmen charged with corruption as well as journalists and bomb-blast plotters.

Under emergency powers rules, it is being invoked as grounds "for arbitrary deprivation of liberty or denial of fundamental principles of fair trial," she said.

Calling for its suspension by the caretaker government, Irene said a new parliament can consider its repeal.

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"To our knowledge no member of the armed forces has been ever brought to a court to be prosecuted for any of the killings," Irene said, adding that the situation has remained unchanged under the present regime.

Citing a number of cases of human rights violations committed by law enforcement agencies, Irene asked, "If the government supply had sharply fallen as the husking mills across the country stopped crushing rice. Moreover, in view of the situation, many people went on panic buying and stored huge amounts of rice at their homes."

7 RHD engineers

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Company officials asked them to come to Coffee World to receive the money. They also informed the task forces of the matter.

A magistrate was present during the arrest, Dharmondi Police Station Officer-in-Charge Monowar Hossain said, adding that the task forces later handed over the RHD officials to Dharmondi police.

The OC said no case was filed in connection with the arrest as of 7:00pm yesterday and that enquiry into the allegation was going on.

Relatives of the detained RHD officials, several hundred RHD staff and a number of contractors thronged the police station early yesterday.

The relatives termed the arrest "made-up" and said the officials went to the coffee shop to discuss a case about a dispute over the Ashulia Toll Plaza.

CPD on state of economy

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reserve and flow of remittance.

It also hailed the institutional reforms including establishment of a regulatory reform commission, separation of the judiciary and the proposed coal policy and consumer protection acts.

While foreign currency reserves, remittance inflow, revenue collection and stock market performance give some hope, alarming developments in the area of prices, export, and investment are undermining the prospect of achieving the GDP target for the FY2008, the CPD analysis said.

It noted that due to the depressed domestic investment, foreign direct investment (FDI) declined by 4 per cent to \$236 million in the July-October period of FY 2007-08 against \$274 million in the previous fiscal.

"Uncertainty about future, political development, weak infrastructure, particularly disquieting energy situation, inflation trends, hesitant mood of domestic investors, indecision about a number of big proposals are possible reasons for this," the CPD report added.

Referring to shutdown of four state-run jute mills in the first half of this fiscal, CPD said it was a wrong decision especially when the importance of jute and jute goods took an upturn, reported UNB.

Four out of 22 state-run jute mills have been closed down and 84 out of 142 jute procurement centres wound up, throwing some 14,000 workers out of job.

"The decision was inhumane. We don't know whether there was a study before closing these mills or not. The government shut down the mills before paying the arrears to the workers. It wasn't a justified

decision," observed the CPD executive director.

He stressed the need for measures to reopen the mills in the interests of the country's economy as the apparel sector's income is showing some stagnant figures in recent days.

Responding to a question, Mustafizur Rahman said the inflation goes up to 50-80 per cent if the rice prices are taken into account.

To get out of the trap of high inflation rate of rice, he said, there is no alternative to increasing the domestic production at lower cost.

CPD cautioned the government against signing any new loan agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

It suggested that the government use block allocation in financing the rehabilitation programmes for those affected by floods and cyclone.

Mentioning the food grains in stock and in the pipeline of import, Mustafizur said the amount is satisfactory and sufficient to tackle the present food demand.

About the proposed import of 5 lakh metric tons of rice from India, he said the government, if required, should contact the Indian high-ups to ensure the rice is bought at that country's domestic market price.

About a possible way out of inflation in a short time, he said, "We don't have any magic wand to control the inflation right away."

He, however, discouraged using contractionary monetary policy to curb the higher inflation rate.

CPD is also against any readjustment of fuel prices now. "The readjustment might be needed in the near future," said its executive director.

BB projects

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flows to all productive sectors. They are needed especially to recoup the losses caused by natural calamities and improve the domestic supply situation.

"The policies would also facilitate the import of essential commodities to ease supply shortages in the domestic market," he said.

"At present, the excess liquidity does not indicate any significant demand side pressure on the economy. However, with expected increase in economic activities in the coming months, the demand for credit may go up and if such a situation arises the policy stance would be to contain the demand side pressures without hurting the investment demand in the economy," says the statement.

There are several factors that would be critical to effective monetary management during the second half of FY 08. Those include escalating subsidies on energy products, business confidence to accelerate private sector investments and reasonable socio-political stability, observed the policy statement.

BB deputy governors Nazrul Huda and Ziaul Hasan Siddiqui and Executive Director Habibullah Bahar were present at the briefing.

President

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and abroad, he said.

He thanked the government and all concerned for successfully implementing the relief and rehabilitation activities following the onslaught of the cyclone Sidr.

The president called upon the countrymen to contribute from their respective positions to make "our independence meaningful and towards making the country happy and prosperous."

In another message, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed has urged all irrespective of party and opinion to work together to establish a progressive and modern democratic state to fulfil the expectations of the people and the dreams of the Liberation War.

He said the present government took office at a critical juncture in the country's history. Conflict and clash among main political parties as well as hartal, siege and violence over holding election on January 22 last year led the country towards an anarchic and uncertain situation.

The CA said misrule over a long period and unbridled corruption by a section of people had blocked the way to well-being in public life and flourishing of democracy.

In such backdrop, he said, the present government began its journey with a promise of change and amid great expectations by the masses.

Fakhruddin said discipline has returned in public life across the country due to tireless and steadfast efforts in last one year.

The government has taken various steps for holding a free and fair election, which is its main objective, he added.

The CA mentioned that the caretaker government had taken a number of important steps, including separation of the judiciary from the executive control.

He said, "We'll be able to reach the desired stage for establishing an accountable and justice-based sustainable system of state and discrimination-free and deprivation-less society with the support and assistance of both civil and military administration and countrymen."

On December 3, the SC stayed the HC order on Jan 2 after ACC challenged the order. The SC later fixed yesterday for delivering verdict when ACC filed the leave to appeal.

Hasina submitted her wealth statement after the SC stayed the HC order. The ACC initiated an investigation into the statement. Later, it instructed its investigator to postpone the probe as an SC stay order in this regard was in effect.

DU Violence

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and students on August 22 last year. He gave those to Assistant Sub-inspector Anisur Rahman working at the Archives Department of Detective Branch (DB) of police.

The four teachers and the student, who are in jail custody now, were brought to the court. The magistrate allowed them to sit on a bench during the hearing.

The accused teachers are Dhaka University Teachers' Association President Prof Sadru Amin, its General Secretary Prof Anwar Hossain, Science Faculty Dean Prof Harun-ar-Rashid, and Applied Physics Department Chairman Prof Neem Chandra Bhowmik.

The case was filed against 4,000 to 5,000 unnamed students and teachers of Dhaka University and outsiders on August 22 for violating the EPR, vandalising public and private property, obstructing police from performing their duty and assaulting law enforcers on the university campus and its adjoining areas.

However, police pressed charges against four teachers and 15 students on September 9 for instigating violence on the campus and in Shahbagh area on August 21 and 22.

Dhaka Club

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Club might be interrogated in connection with the Nico scam case.

Family sources said the task force members earlier picked up Selim on Tuesday afternoon from his office but they were not aware where he was kept.

The law enforcers took Selim to his office yesterday afternoon. There they conducted a search and seized various documents including passports, the family sources said.

3 special assistants

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demand for lifting emergency and holding elections by June, he said, "The government is working to address the issues politicians have raised. I think we'll have to advance step by step in implementing our work plans."

On the issue of detained Dhaka University teachers and students' release, he said he would talk with the persons concerned. "There is no lack of goodwill."

Primary and Mass Communication Adviser Rasheda K Chowdhury said she is well aware of the challenges of holding elections timely in line with the government-announced roadmap. "The process is already on. Two lakh people have already been enrolled in voter list."

Keeping in view the global and national realities, the caretaker government will try to address the price hike and inflation issues to reduce general people's sufferings, she said.

On withdrawal of the state of emergency to restore fundamental rights of the people, she said, "It will not be correct to say that all fundamental rights remain suspended now. There are some improvements in some areas. For example, extrajudicial killings have come to an end."

She went on, "Collective decision is needed for withdrawal of emergency, when and how it will be withdrawn. Diverse issues are involved in it."

Saying that the process is on for holding elections by the end of 2008 as pledged, Maj Gen (ret'd) Ghulam Quader said, "Economic challenges remain key issues to address. Prices of essentials have gone up, inflation too. We need to address these."

He does not see any rationale in the demand for holding elections by June, he said.

"This is very illogical. Everyone had earlier accepted the roadmap for holding the elections by the end of 2008. What new development is there that the elections need to be held by June?"

On the demand for lifting emergency, he said, "Emergency will not be there even for an hour when it is not needed anymore."

Health Adviser AMM Shawkat Ali also said the caretaker government's

Editor, publisher

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daily had run the news items on different dates on the basis of facts and with no intention to defame Pintu. Moreover, the charges brought against the defendants are false, fabricated and concocted. So, they should be discharged from the charges, the lawyers added.

Pintu told the court that the news items published on different dates in the daily were done to defame him in the society. The lawmaker also said the daily had run a news item regarding his eligibility to be a lawmaker.

Quoting the meaning of defamation from different books and dictionaries, the magistrate of the court said the reports published in the daily were based on facts and he did not find any element of defamatory nature to be able to frame charges against the defendants.

In response to the court's query whether a reporter is allowed to quote conversations taken place during a session of the Jatiya Sangsad, Mahfuz Anam told the court that reporters are permitted to enter the parliament building and have the right to quote any conversation -- regardless if it is decent or indecent -- that took place during a session of the Jatiya Sangsad.

After the hearing, the court discharged the two of the defamatory charges.

Advocates Sayeed Ahmed Gazi, Mahbubul Haque, Ashraf-ul-Alam, Chaitanya Chandra Halder, Anwarul Kabir Babul, Emdadul Haque Lal, Shahidullah Miah, Belal Hossain Jasim, Prasanta Kumar Karmaker and Abu Bakar Farhad represented the defendants.

Pintu in his complaint on June 25, 2006 mentioned that the daily published a news item on June 12 titled "Agitation in the Leather Technology College at Hazaribagh, local lawmaker Pintu took police to the college and beat the students".

On June 14, the daily published another news item titled "Pintu published a project of Tk 1 crore for a road construction razing over 200 graves of Azimpur Graveyard, but Dhaka City Corporation knows nothing".

The next day, the daily ran the news titled "Mayor's stay order on construction of a road through Azimpur Graveyard," the complainant added.

These news stories were false and intended to undermine him politically and socially, Pintu claimed.

Koko tells ACC

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Bashundhara in the names of his two daughters, and seven and half kathas of land bought in the names of his daughters in Bogra.

He also owns a flat measuring 1880 square feet at DHS in Banani he bought at Tk 28 lakh taking loan from Dhaka bank. He also owns one third of the house the government gave to the family of Ziaur Rahman in Gulshan.

He also has shares of several crores with different companies. He also has Tk 5.93 lakh in AB bank, 24,000 in Dhaka bank, 59,000 in IFIC bank, and 35,000 in carwest bank. Koko also bought a car worth Tk 40 lakh on installment.

Wife of Koko Sharmila Rahman owns 150 tolas of gold which she has received as gift during her marriage and on different occasions.

Besides, he also owns furnishings worth Tk 4.20 lakh, air-cooler worth Tk 2.80 lakh, and fan worth Tk 9,000.

The ACC on December 18 served notice on Koko asking him to submit wealth statement. Koko was arrested on September 2 along with his mother Khaleda Zia in connection with the Gatoed graft case.

biggest challenge is holding a free and fair election and handover of power.

Law Adviser AF Hassan Arif said his first and foremost task is to ensure holding of a free, fair and impartial election.

"It's my duty to provide legal infrastructure and assistance for holding free and fair polls