

# Full text of CA's address to the nation

BSS, Dhaka

Following is the English rendering of the address delivered by Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed to the nation yesterday:

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim  
My dear countrymen,  
Assalamu Alaikum,

At the outset I recall with deep respect our legendary national leaders, fearless freedom fighters of the great Liberation War, whose supreme sacrifices and unparalleled contributions led to the establishment of an independent and sovereign Bangladesh in the world map today.

Right on this day just one year ago, I took oath as the Chief Adviser of the non-partisan caretaker government in a critical juncture of the nation. Expressing my total allegiance to the sacred constitution of the country, I took up the responsibility to run the government in the interest of people's happiness, prosperity and maintaining flourishing of democracy.

We have crossed one year moving through a turbulent and difficult road. I hope the way you extended your cooperation and moral support to the epoch-making programmes of the government during this one year, similarly, you will continue to provide with such all-out support for the rest of the period.

As you know, I have recast my council of advisers last week. Five advisers have resigned. Five new advisers were appointed in their places. Side by side a few special assistants have also been appointed. I believe this change will enhance the vigor and efficiency in the overall running of the government.

Surely you remember that under what a chaotic and violent situation the state of emergency was promulgated and we had to take up this tough responsibility. So, in my first speech to the nation, I said, the main challenge of the caretaker government will be to organize a free and fair election in order to maintain political and social order, upholding and consolidating the democratic administrative system, and keeping the wheels of progress and prosperity of the country moving. I said that our future has to be made more bright, more work-oriented. It is you to judge what we have achieved so far.

Dear countrymen,

First, I want to discuss the most worrying and problem-ridden issue like present price hike of commodities. The overall prices of rice, oil, wheat and some essential commodities have increased to such a level that this has created an intolerable situation for the citizens of the country, particularly for the people with limited income. Two consecutive large-scale floods in one year coupled with catastrophic cyclone 'Sidr' have severely hit the food production and distribution system side by side causing various other damages. As a result of this, the food deficit is likely to reach 15 lakh tons. You have seen our all-out efforts to face this unusual situation. But, unfortunately, along with other commodities the price of rice in the international market reached a new height. The price of wheat doubled in one year. The price of a barrel oil touched 100 dollar.

In order to face the situation, we have decided to import 10 lakh tons of rice officially on an emergency basis. Out of this, an agree-

ment for the import of three and a half lakh tons of rice has already been signed. A high level delegation is now in Delhi to finalise the arrangement for the import of five lakh tons of rice. Tender has been floated for the import of two lakh tons of rice from Thailand. The issue of importing rice from Vietnam is also being discussed.

With a view to keeping the price of rice stable, the government started selling rice in every town of the country under OMS (Open Market Sale) from January 9 last. Besides, BDR had started selling rice at its fair price shops in Dhaka in well advance. In the poverty-stricken districts, rice is being distributed for those living under the poverty level through six lakh VGF (Vulnerable Group Feeding) cards from this month. In the Sidr-hit areas, rice is being distributed among the 26 lakh VGF card holders free of cost for four months since December.

Earlier, during the period between September 2007 and December 2007, a total of 58 lakh people were brought under VGF programme for the consecutive four months. Besides, necessary allocations have been made for the Food for Work Programme and Test Relief. These programmes, particularly the introduction of OMS led to the fall in the price of rice. Newspapers published reports on this issue. The government has strengthened the market monitoring. I hope, rice price will become stable soon in the local market.

But the experts think, there is no alternative to giving priority to the agriculture for keeping the prices of commodities at a tolerable level. All-out measures are being taken to ensure highest production in the coming boro season. Not even one in the last three years more than 25

lakh tons of urea fertiliser were used. The present government has taken steps to distribute 28 lakh tons of fertiliser, including the import of a huge quantity of fertiliser. The government spends Tk 31 to import one kg of urea fertiliser and one kg fertiliser is being sold at a rate of Tk 5.30 only.

The government has given a huge amount of subsidy to the farmers on fertiliser despite pressure on the budget. With a view to reaching fertiliser at a fair price and on time, the farmers will now be able to buy fertiliser from 14000 centres this year, which is three times higher than the previous year.

Seedbeds have been made for high yield variety of seeds. During last year, high yield variety of seeds was prepared on 3.75 lakh hectares of land. This year the target for seedbed is 12.50 lakh hectares. Now electricity connections will be increased for irrigation purposes. We are firmly determined to provide adequate power supply during irrigation season. It is presumed that the farmers would be more encouraged for Boro cultivation in view of price hike of rice. We hope there will be substantial rise of Boro production in the coming season.

Considering the importance of research in the agriculture sector, the government for the first time has allocated Tk 350 crore in the budget. We hope the research will make valuable contribution for long-term agriculture development.

Before effectively meeting the challenge of the last year's post-flood situation came the devastating cyclone 'Sidr'. In terms of magnitude the cyclone was more fatal than that of 1991 but due to timely action taken by the government,

there has been less loss of lives. Precautionary measures were taken at the meeting of the national disaster management committee chaired by me before the cyclone struck to meet the post-cyclone situation quickly. I want to thank the well-to-do section of our people, organisations, foreign governments and the agencies for the way they had extended support to the government in meeting the challenge. The post Sidr rehabilitation works was slow in the initial days as the roads and ferries were destroyed. But within a short time, relief could be sent through helicopters and river routes. It will not be exaggerating to say that there had been no corruption in relief activities during flood and post-cyclone period. Many had predicted outbreak of water-borne diseases after Sidr. But with the combined efforts of the people, military and civil administration and the NGOs we have been able to resist.

Dear countrymen,

After taking over responsibility the present government has been trying to create a level-playing field for holding an acceptable, free, proper and neutral election. I want to categorically say that we are firmly determined to hold parliamentary elections by December 2008 as per the roadmap given by the Election Commission and if possible before that time frame. There is no scope for hesitation in this regard.

Dear countrymen,

You know that we have reconstituted the Election Commission with the people who are completely neutral and enjoy peoples' confidence. The reconstituted Commission has prepared draft of the amended election law and rules, which will be finalised soon. In the meantime they held dialogues with civil society, media, and professional bodies and is now on the verge of completing discussions with the political parties. We have lifted ban on indoor politics in the capital Dhaka for creating a congenial atmosphere. As per our commitment, after the conclusion of dialogues between the Election Commission and the political parties, reforms of the electoral laws and rules will be finalised.

As per the plan of the Election Commission the work for preparation of voter ID card with photographs is going on in full swing. The Election Commission has informed last week registration of

two crore voter's with photo have been completed. In this programme, supported by the armed forces, the national ID cards are being given, which is unique in this region. The government is not interfering with the activities of the Commission in any way and has been providing all kinds of cooperation. Besides, the government is also showing its sincerity for the institutional flourishing of the Commission and on giving administrative freedom. In this regard a draft law is now at the final stage.

Dear countrymen,

You know, that after 36 years of existence of the independent state, we have separated judiciary from the executive from November 1 last year as per the directive of the constitution. The day will remain as a milestone in the history of Bangladesh in establishing rule of law. Although our political parties in their election manifestoes had spoken about separation of judiciary time and again but they never implemented it after going to power.

Dear countrymen,

With a view to establishing good governance in the country, the government has reconstituted different constitutional bodies including the Election Commission, the Anti-Corruption Commission, Public Service Commission and the University Grants Commission. Efficient people acceptable to all have been appointed at the top places of these organisations. The process for institutional growth of these organisations is ongoing. At the same time efforts are on for decentralisation of power at different stages.

We have taken multifarious initiatives to establish good governance in the government institutions. Steps have been taken to bring about qualitative change in different service sectors, including the police through citizens' charter, service standard, model police stations, one-stop service and support centre. The process of passport delivery has also been made quicker and time befitting. More reforms will be brought in different fields including the increase in use of information technology.

We have taken initiatives for making the government rules and regulations time-befitting. Regulatory Reform Commission has been formed comprising emi-

nent persons in different fields of administration, economics and commerce. This commission will review the existing rules and regulations and suggest their amendments and update. Its main objective will be to simplify and quicken the work within a time frame. This will increase dynamism in government work side by side with simplifying the private sector economic

and commercial activities. Of late, we have formed 'better business forum' so that businessmen can contribute more to the national economy. Five working groups have been formed under the forum, which will jointly be led by one representative each from the government and the private sector. This forum will work towards

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Participants of a workshop of GroupM agencies on business vision pose for photograph. The workshop was held in Shillong recently.

## GroupM workshop on business vision held

All GroupM agencies in Bangladesh -- Asiatic MindShare, Maxus and the newly launched Mediaedgeia -- held the first ever combined workshop on setting their business vision for 2008 in Shillong, India, recently, says a press release.

Twenty selected managers cutting across companies and business functions attended the four-day workshop that began on December 25. India was chosen as the venue to feel the pulse of a changing economy.

Asaduzzaman Noor, deputy managing director, Asiatic MCL, facilitated the holding of the workshop. The team was led by General Manager Partha Ghosh.

GroupM offers innovative media services to all its clients, both local and multinational companies, and its services are at par with other developed markets in the Asia Pacific region, the press release added.

## Rehabilitation of city fire victims demanded

Communist Party of Bangladesh yesterday expressed sympathy for the victims of a devastating fire that broke out at Nimtoli slum in the city on Thursday, says a press release.

In a statement, party Chairman Manjurul Ahsan Khan and General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim demanded immediate rehabilitation of the victims.

They also called for an investigation into the cause of the fire as there were three fire incidents in the same area in recent months.

Meanwhile, General Secretary Saiful Haq and other central leaders of Left Democratic Alliance have also urged the government to rehabilitate 10,000 victims of the slum at Rayerbazar.

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