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Advisers may sit tomorrow to discuss talks with parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The council of advisers to the caretaker government is likely to meet tomorrow and discuss how to kick off talks with the political parties, said sources close to the military-backed administration.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed in an address to the nation on January 12 announced that the government would open a dialogue with the political parties in line with a decision taken by the advisory council on January 10.

Talking to The Daily Star recently, a number of advisers have hinted they would soon begin working to lay the groundwork for the talks.

From the health adviser's Tuesday's phone call to Awami League (AL) Presidium Member Motia Chowdhury, it seemed the dialogue process had begun. But later the move was described as unofficial while the advisers were

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Economy may face grave crisis unless elected govt takes over soon

Dr Akbar Ali Khan tells citizens' meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former caretaker government adviser Dr Akbar Ali Khan yesterday said an "economic emergency" also exists in the country along with the political state of emergency and the country's economy may face a grave crisis unless an elected government takes over soon.

"One cannot run the country of a population of 150 million without the mandate of the people. We need an elected government and we must move towards that direction as soon as possible," said Akbar, Regulatory Reforms Commission (RRC) chairman.

"It will be foolish to deny sitting in the air-conditioned room that there is no economic emergency,"

Akbar said while addressing a discussion organised by Bangladesh First, Bangladesh 2025, an initiative undertaken by a group of citizens for exchanging views with cross-sections of people in order to prepare a national roadmap to progress.

Eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain chaired the discussion styled "State of Economy and the Way Forward".

Akbar said he had anticipated the present economic situation one year ago when he realised that along with the declaration of the state of emergency an economic emergency also emerged and that this would have a bad impact on the country's economy.

The former finance adviser,

however, said the state of emergency came as a "breath of fresh air" at a time when the country was being driven towards destruction.

"It is very difficult for a non-elected government to address so many difficult economic issues. Therefore, I said last year that an elected government should come to office before the new budget (for 2008-09) is prepared," Akbar said.

He said a non-elected government may address various issues but it has to face certain difficulties in running the country that a political government does not have to.

Akbar said the government could have implemented the budgetary measures to control inflation and food crisis. The measures

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Bill Gates to help in health care facilities for the poor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates in a meeting with Nobel laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus has expressed his interest in investing in the improvement of health care facilities for the poor in Bangladesh.

Gates also emphasised taking a project to provide modern health care facilities to the people living under the poverty line in Bangladesh, said News World, a US-based Bangladeshi news agency.

During the meeting at the Microsoft headquarters in Seattle, USA, he said Microsoft is planning to invest in the improvement of health care facilities for the poor across the globe, not to make money through it.

Professor Yunus described his concept of social business before Gates.

The Nobel laureate also spoke to the engineers of Microsoft and

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AUG 21 GRENADE ATTACK

Pintu quizzed to know any Hawa Bhaban link

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although investigators confirmed the information about former deputy minister Abdus Salam Pintu's involvement in the August 21 grenade attacks, they are also trying to trace if more influential people had also been among the masterminds of the attacks.

"We arrested him based on confirmed information about his role in the attacks and shown him arrested in the case," said an investigator wishing anonymity. "We're now trying to find out the masterminds by interrogating him intensively," he added.

A high level Criminal Investigation Department (CID) official told The Daily Star yesterday if their probe finds any link between the attacks and the people of Hawa Bhaban or any other big wig then they will take measures to bring them to book in connection

with the case.

Investigators are quizzing Pintu at a Task Force for Interrogation (TFI) cell taking him on a three-day remand in connection with the August 21, 2004 grenade attacks on an Awami League (AL) rally on Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital, which left 24 AL leaders and activists killed and scores injured.

Although, Pintu is a lower tier central leader of BNP and a former deputy minister, he was nonetheless very influential as he had good relations with Hawa Bhaban, known as the alternative powerhouse during the immediate past elected government's regime, and with the powerful people of the much feared building including Tarique Rahman and former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar.

Law enforcers arrested Pintu 14 days after he had been picked up on January 3 from Gulshan in the

capital by an intelligence agency based on confirmed information on his role in the attacks. He was kept in an unknown place for two days after he had been picked up.

Pintu has been repeatedly denying his involvement in the August 21 attacks, although detained operations commander of now banned Harkatul Jihad Al Islami (Hujji) Mufti Abdul Hannan in his recent confessional statement said the attacks had been planned in Pintu's Dhanmondi residence.

Besides, Pintu's brother Moulana Tajuddin allegedly supplied from Pakistan the grenades used in the blasts. Tajuddin, who is now hiding abroad and was allegedly involved in Pakistan based Islamist militant organisation Lashkar-e-Tayaba, was also living there at the time.

Sources said since Pintu had

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Ashura today

UNB, Dhaka

The holy Ashura will be observed across the country today to commemorate the Karbala tragedy in which Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) along with his family and followers embraced martyrdom.

On the tenth of Muharram, the fateful day, Muslims vent remorse over the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hossain, grandson of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM), at the hands of the soldiers of Yazid, son of Muslim ruler Muabia, over 1300 years ago.

The day is a public holiday. Various religious organisations will organise programmes in observance of Ashura. Tazia procession by mourners is a main feature of the occasion.

President Iajuddin Ahmed gave a message on this occasion, terming Ashura a significant day for establishing truth and justice in the Muslim Ummah.

Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed in his message said Ashura is a very significant day in the history of mankind.

He urged all to fight against injustice and establish truth and justice in the society reflecting the teachings of holy Ashura.

A waz mahfil organised by Islamic Foundation on the occasion of Ashura will be held at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque at 1:30pm. Bangladesh Television (BTV) and private TV channels will air special programmes highlighting the significance of the day.

Holiday Notice

The offices of The Daily Star will remain closed today on account of holy Ashura. Therefore, there will be no issue of the newspaper tomorrow.



Huge imports of rice from India have started arriving at the city warehouses, which instantly resulted in a slight drop in the prices of coarse rice. The photo was taken from a warehouse at Badamtali in Old Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: SHAFIQ ALAM

CA meets advisers, army chief, VC on DU crisis

DU CORRESPONDENT

A high level meeting chaired by Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday discussed how to find a respectable solution to the crisis at Dhaka University (DU) over the release of its detained teachers and students, sources said.

The advisers for education, home, law and foreign affairs, the army chief, vice-chancellor of the DU and top officials attended the meeting held at the CA's office.

The meeting took place at a time the agitation by teachers and students of the DU and some other educational institutions for a dignified release of all those detained in connection with the August violence last year is getting momentum.

Education Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman is likely to disclose to the media tomorrow the government decision in this regard.

Meanwhile, court verdict on the case against four DU teachers and 15 students for violating the Emergency Power Rules (EPR) is scheduled to be delivered tomorrow. Hearing of arguments in the second case against the same accused for breaching the EPR on the DU campus will be held the same day.

The crisis erupted following the August 20-22 violence on the DU campus and it spread to other public universities.

Sources said yesterday's meeting also discussed the situation at Rajshahi University, whose 10 students and an employee was

convicted in a case for torching a DGEI vehicle in August last.

The ongoing agitation for release of the detained DU teachers and students, and cancellation of all cases in connection with the August violence is apparently spreading out as students of some other institutions also began to demonstrate expressing solidarity with the agitation at the DU.

On return from the meeting at the CA's office, DU VC Prof SMA Faiz said they discussed all the five cases against the DU teachers and students including two relating to an army car-torching incident at Shahbagh, and the case against Rajshahi University (RU) students with due importance and in a positive attitude.

"The government is showing maximum magnanimity in solving the crisis at Dhaka University and Rajshahi University. We are hoping for a very positive result very soon."

Replying to a query, Prof Faiz said he is very optimistic that the crisis would be solved this week. All the issues would be resolved when the education adviser speaks to the media, he added in response to another query.

Earlier on January 13, the education adviser told the press that the detainees would be freed in the next couple of days through legal process, whatever the court verdict might be. Before that there were repeated assurances from the government as well as the DUVC about immediate release of the detained DU teachers and students.

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Army takeover, martial law not acceptable in modern world

Says Gen Moeen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed has said seizing power or imposing martial law by the army is not right and no-one in the modern world would accept that.

In a pre-recorded programme named Tritiyo Matra aired last evening on Channel 1, he also said there is no possibility of the army taking over as the situation does not call for it.

He said, "Everyone should play the roles they are entrusted with.

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MARKET MONITORING Prof Wahiduddin against engaging law enforcers

UNB, Dhaka

Eminent economist and former adviser to a caretaker government Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud has said the government should take steps to restore confidence in the businessmen instead of engaging law enforcement agencies in the market monitoring.

"We have suggested the government to make a buffer stock of rice to manage the crisis and it's very possible," Prof Mahmud said while talking to the journalists after a meeting of the Consultative Committee on Economic Policy, Management and Reforms yesterday.

He said politics and economics should not be seen separately. "So, any decision should be made considering its political and economic impacts... How to address the impacts on the poor section when the adjustment is made in the prices."

Bangladesh Bank Governor Salehuddin Ahmed, FBCCI Administrator Syed Manzur Elahi, former adviser to the caretaker government Sultana Kamal and NBR Chairman Abdul Majid also attended the meeting held in the NEC conference room at the planning ministry.

In the meeting, they suggested the

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Tearful Khaleda sees mother's body Could not meet sons also freed on parole

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was released on parole yesterday to have last glimpse of her mother who died Friday night.

Her sons Tarique Rahman and Arafat Rahman Koko were also granted a brief freedom to pay respects to their grandmother Taiyeba Majumder.

Khaleda got two hours to spend beside the body while Tarique and Koko each about an hour at their cantonment residence.

The former premier and her sons, however, could not meet each other as the jail authorities had their release staggered. They were sent back to prison separately.

Tarique, also senior joint secretary general of BNP, and his younger brother were not allowed to attend the namaz-e-janaza held at Gulshan's Azad Masque last night.

Sombre faces of the relatives greeted the mother and sons at their Shaheed Moinul Road residence that had the three for the first time since their arrest. Khaleda and Koko were arrested on September 3 while Tarique on March 7 last year on corruption charges.

Meanwhile, a number of BNP leaders including Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain and acting office secretary Rizvi Ahmed wanted to pay respect to late Taiyeba and meet the chairperson, but the authorities did not allow them.

Family sources said Khaleda, Tarique and Koko—all broke into tears seeing Taiyeba, who would be buried today at Faridpur graveyard in Dinajpur town. The body would be kept at the CMH before being flown back to Dinajpur this morning.

Koko, who looked sick, frequently enquired about his mother and brother. He spent about an hour with his grieving family members and relatives.

Later, the jail authorities sent him back to the prison cell at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University at around 5:45pm.

Tarique arrived minutes after the van carrying Koko had left the cantonment. In a white punjabi, he was in the house for over an hour. Before being driven back to the Dhaka Central Jail at around

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Dhaka University students, under the banner of "Students against Repression", bring out a silent procession demanding the release of four teachers and a fellow student.

PHOTO: STAR

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