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CA hopes good governance will prevail after polls

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday said his caretaker government is working so that good governance prevails after next general election with a smooth transition of power.

The CA made the remark as outgoing Canadian High Commissioner Barbara Richardson called on him at his office.

He thanked the envoy for her government's support in preparing electoral roll and contribution to the development of Bangladesh.

He noted that the high commissioner has witnessed the progress

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Violent politics risks huge growth potential

Says British minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Junior British minister for international development Shahid Malik yesterday said Bangladesh will risk its "huge potential" for development and the country's future if it returns to confrontational and violent politics.

Bangladesh has huge potential in development and growth that can be realised through greater investment in education and health, Malik said.

But this potential and the

opportunities for future generations would be jeopardised if the politicians return to the confrontational and violent politics of 2006, he said at a press conference at the end of his two-day visit to Bangladesh yesterday.

"The confrontational politics that we have seen in 2006 has to be thrown into rubbish bin of history and the country has to move forward towards the future," said Malik, adding, "The politicians and political stakeholders will have to bear that responsibility."

During his trip, Malik met Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, Army Chief Gen Moeen U Ahmed and Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam. He also visited "char" livelihood programmes and slum education centres run by Brac.

He said during his meeting with Fakhruddin and Gen Moeen he was reassured about holding of the elections by this year's end.

"Elections in 2008 are a must. Consistently we, like many others, have encouraged the creation, in

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DIALOGUE

AL to sit with govt on July 3

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) will sit for dialogue with the caretaker government on July 3.

The party took this decision yesterday at a meeting of its presidium, the highest policy making body, following invitation from the government to participate in the talks.

A top official at the at the chief adviser's office telephoned AL acting general secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam and conveyed the government's invitation.

The AL presidium meeting, held at acting president Zillur Rahman's Gulshan residence, also decided that the party will hold talks with

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Ctg airport faces risk as fire tenders out of order

RASHIDUL HASAN

Aircraft are facing serious risks while landing at or taking off from Shah Amanat International Airport (SAIA) in Chittagong since all the airport's three fire-fighting vehicles have been unserviceable for about two months.

Airport authorities have made arrangements with the fire service stations in Chittagong city for sending fire-fighting vehicles daily to attend aircraft landing and take-off. But the authorities often have to advise planes awaiting landing to fly slow or hover in the sky when fire-fighting vehicles delay in reaching the airport, about 12

kilometres from the city.

Airline officials fear that if the international aviation watchdogs come to know about this situation at the SAIA, they might downgrade it from its present status of an international airport.

According to rules, the presence of fire-fighting vehicles at an airport is a must at the time of aircraft's landing and take-off.

On June 12, the pilot of an aircraft of Biman Bangladesh Airlines landed the plane at the airport at his own risk after hovering in the sky for about 40 minutes although fire fighters had not yet arrived, Biman sources said.

SAIA authorities said fire-

fighting vehicles often delay in reaching the airport because of heavy rain or traffic congestion. Problems also occur when an aircraft arrives before scheduled time, they added.

"We ask pilots to fly slow or hover in the sky when fire-fighting vehicles arrive late or when an aircraft arrives before its scheduled time," a high official of the SAIA told The Daily Star seeking anonymity.

He, however, initially declined to provide any information, saying as a government official he cannot give journalists any such information.

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OMS of rice may resume in August

STAR REPORT

The government is considering resuming its open market sale (OMS) of rice after mid-August when the Boro procurement drive of the government would be over, Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam said yesterday.

Meanwhile, the government decided to sell low-priced rice among the low-income group in labour-intensive regions of the country, reports UNB, quoting an inter-ministerial meeting at commerce ministry yesterday.

These decisions came at a time when prices of rice, lentil and flour are on the rise across the country. Price of a 50-kilogram sack of best quality pulse increased by Tk 100, a 74-kg sack of flour by Tk 50 to Tk 100 while a maund of rice rose by Tk 10 in the capital during the past three days.

Following a meeting with Asian Development Bank officials at planning ministry, the finance adviser told reporters, "Boro procurement will be completed by mid-August. The food ministry will

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A gypsy snake charmer (Bede), left, leaves her son on a makeshift hammock on land following several accidents in her community as kids fell into water crawling out of boats. The photo was taken on the Turag under Tongi Bridge.

Hasina vows to continue anti-graft drive if voted to power

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said if her party is voted to power through a fair and credible election they would continue anti-corruption drives.

Hasina was addressing leaders and activists of the party's US chapter at her son Sajeeb Wazed Joy's Cambridge residence in Boston in the USA, reported US-based American News Agency (ANA).

Corruption remains one of the major obstacles to the country's development, said Hasina, who is staying in the US for medical treatment. The AL president was released temporarily on an executive order of the caretaker government on June 11.

Referring to the achievements made during her party's rule from 1996-2001, Hasina urged the AL leaders and activists to work unitedly to uphold the country's image across the globe.

All have to work together to strengthen the democratic institutions and ensure the holding of a free, fair and credible parliamentary election in the country, she said adding that if it happens it would be possible to turn Bangladesh into a medium developed country by 2020.

Expressing gratitude to the party leaders and activists in the US, Hasina said it was possible for her to come to the US for treatment as a free person due to their courageous role.

The AL leaders told her that a new committee of the party's New York City unit has been formed.

"The major task of such a committee is to uphold the image of Awami League across the globe and build the 'Sonar Bangla' Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman dream of," she said.

The AL chief also urged the expatriate Bangladeshis to work together for the country's welfare.

Hasina along with Joy and other

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HC asks for Niko graft case documents

Charge-framing hearing in MiG-29 case deferred

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday asked the trial court of Niko corruption case to send the case records to it by June 30 for scrutiny as the main accused, Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, petitioned for quashment of the case.

A special court, meantime, set July 2 to decide whether to exempt Hasina from appearing at court hearings in person in connection with an extortion case filed by businessman Azam J Chowdhury while another special court deferred charge-framing hearing in MiG-29 graft case against the former prime minister and six other people to June 26.

The Awami League president, now in the US for treatment after being released for eight weeks on executive order, has already been exempted from the obligation to appear at court in person in four

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140 ex-BNP MPs demand release of Khaleda

UNB, Dhaka

Some 140 former lawmakers of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) yesterday demanded unconditional release of party's Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

In a joint statement, they also demanded release of all ailing BNP men, including Tarique Rahman and Arafat Rahman Koko, to facilitate their treatment abroad.

The statement said the government would be held responsible if

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Aziz claims graft reduced at top level

Questions TIB method

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In an apparent attempt to downplay the recent findings of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) about corruption, Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam yesterday claimed that the government has succeeded in reducing corruption at top levels while cutting down the menace at lower levels remains a time-consuming work.

Questioning the TIB's method

of concluding that corruption in some sectors increased in the first half of 2007, the adviser said, "It is not right to think, based on some numbers, that corruption has increased or decreased."

The caretaker government's anti-corruption drive was aimed at cutting down corruption at top levels, not at lower levels, and the government has achieved major success in it, he said after a meeting with the visiting delegation of the

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BASHUNDHARA BRIBERY CASE Hearing deferred over Tarique plea on health ground

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special court yesterday again deferred the hearing on charge framing in the Tk 21 crore bribery case against detained BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman, former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar and six others to June 25.

Judge Shahed Noor Uddin of Special Court-3 set up on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises passed the order as the prosecution failed to produce Tarique, the eldest son of detained BNP Chairperson

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Schedule for municipal, city elections today

SHAKHAWAT LITON

After a break of over a year and a half, the Election Commission (EC) resumes a formal electoral process today by announcing schedules for polls in four city corporations and nine municipalities.

According to its plans, the next few months will be months of ballots with more local government elections including those for upazila parishads before the all-important ninth parliamentary polls in December.

Meanwhile, the home ministry has finalised a notification to be issued this afternoon, relaxing the emergency powers rules (EPR). The amended EPR will facilitate electioneering during the state of emergency by allowing processions and rallies, sources in the ministry said.

In October 2006, the EC stopped holding local elections to prepare for the ninth parliamentary polls then slated for January 22, 2007.

But in the wake of political turmoil, President Iajuddin Ahmed

on January 11 promulgated the state of emergency and cancelled the election.

Though terms of most of the local governments have long expired, the commission did not move until recently to hold any polls, citing the state of emergency and absence of a fair voter list.

According to the schedules that Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda will announce this afternoon, polls in four city corporations—Rajshahi,

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Delwar asks EC not to announce polls schedule

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday asked the Election Commission (EC) not to announce schedules for election to local government bodies.

The EC is expected to announce the election schedules today.

Pointing at Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda, Delwar said: "I am asking you not to announce the schedules for polls to the city corporations tomorrow (Friday). If you do this, the nation will label you all in the commission as conspirators."

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