

DHAKA TUESDAY FEBRUARY 24, 2009

Iajuddin -- a flash-back on his presidency

SYED BADRUL AHSAN

IN these nearly four decades since the liberation of Bangladesh, the office of the country's president has gone through vagaries of various and sometimes an unanticipated sort. The just-concluded era, if it can truly be called that, of Iajuddin Ahmed is perhaps the point where we can begin to understand the travails the presidency has regularly gone through. When he was elected to the office of head of state during the period of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party-led four party alliance government in 2002, the general expectation was that while he would not be a remarkable president, he would at least be one who would end his term on a generally dignified note. After all, his predecessor AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury had only days earlier been run out of the presidency by his own party. And that was of course the BNP.

But a dignified exit for Iajuddin Ahmed was not to be. And the earliest sign of it emerged when, once the BNP-Jamaat government finished its tenure in office and prepared to hand over power to a caretaker government in October 2006, President Iajuddin unabashedly skipped the necessary constitutional provisions relating to

the appointment of a chief advisor and with alacrity took over the job himself. There was a clear violation of the constitution here, for the simple reason that where the President was required to explore a number of options, four in all, in his search for a chief advisor, he readily dispensed with them and went for the fifth, namely, foisting himself on the coun-

try as president-cum-chief advisor. When he took that step, it was not difficult for many to suspect that the general elections scheduled for January 22, 2007, would eventually end up as a stage-managed affair and, worse, would likely push the country to wide --- and widening --- chaos. The events of the subsequent few weeks were to give credence to such fears. As one of the advisors in his caretaker administration would later

tell anyone interested in that scandal of a caretaker government, Iajuddin would leave meetings of the council of advisors at some point, ostensibly (as it later emerged) to consult with the Bangladesh Nationalist Party on what action he needed to take! Four of the advisors, frustrated with the president-chief advisor's patent reluctance to create an atmosphere condu-

When the advisors protested, the press secretary was conveniently elevated to the rank of a minister of state and so authorised to attend the meetings.

Outside, politics was in free fall. And the country was headed towards anarchy with the decision by the Awami League to withdraw from the January 22 elections. And then came

Bangladesh's presidency has been a victim of political manipulation. Paradoxically, it has been responsible for some of the biggest blows that have been hurled at the political system. It has been an emasculated institution at certain points in national history. And at other times, it has been a terrifying symbol of the arrogance of the state.

to the holding of free and fair elections, walked out of the council in protest. It was, in simple terms, a bizarre situation that developed between the end of October 2006 and early January 2007. The president was suspected to be in constant touch with the BNP, especially with its powerful young elements at Hawa Bhaban. And then there was the matter of his press secretary sitting in on meetings of the council of advisors.

the state of emergency on January 11, 2007, with all its ramifications.

Going back into presidential history

The Iajuddin assumption of the office of chief advisor in October 2006 was clearly without precedent. It left the constitution reeling; and it forced a situation where an extreme measure, in this case the emergency, could not be avoided. But go back to the past, to




how the presidency has fared in Bangladesh since the day Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury took over from Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur as head of state. That was January 12, 1972. Chowdhury's ascension to the high office was acclaimed across the country because of the integrity he brought to bear on it. Unfortunately, Justice

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25



আনন্দের আরো বড় কারণ
ইন্সট্যান্ট ক্যাশ ব্যাক

প্রতিদিন কমপক্ষে  টাকার কথা বললেই

 টাকা পর্যন্ত বোনাস **সাথে সাথে**

দৈনিক কলের পরিমাণ	মোট ক্যাশ ব্যাক
৫ টাকা	১ টাকা
১০ টাকা	৩ টাকা
২০ টাকা	৬ টাকা
৩০ টাকা	১১ টাকা

বোনাস ব্যালেন্স জানতে অনুগ্রহ করে *778*1# এ কল করুন


WARID
TELECOM

*২৫ পয়সা কল রেটের ক্ষেত্রে কোন বোনাস প্রযোজ্য হবে না • প্রাপ্ত বোনাস ২৫ পয়সা কল রেট, আইএসডি/ইআইএসডি এবং ইন্টারন্যাশনাল এসএমএস-এ প্রযোজ্য হবে না • এই অফার সীমিত সময়ের জন্য
customer service@waridtel.com.bd | www.waridtel.com.bd | Helpline: ☎ 786 ☎ +88 016 78600786