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# Election by end of 2008

## Fakhruddin unveils roadmap in address to nation, says steps to be taken for honest, competent candidates' poll participation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday said the ninth parliamentary elections would be held before the end of 2008 as the present caretaker government is committed to handing over power to an elected government.

"I would like to categorically state that we [the present caretaker government] will not stay in power a day longer than it is necessary. I strongly believe, it will be possible to hold the much-awaited parliamentary elections before the end of 2008," he said in his second address to the nation since being sworn in as the CA three months ago.

The ninth parliamentary elec-

tions, previously scheduled for January 22, were cancelled following the declaration of the state of emergency on January 11.

The CA said the government and the Election Commission is currently mulling holding upazila elections to make local govern-

ment more effective.

Stressing the government's commitment to fighting crime and

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<b>OTHER HIGHLIGHTS</b>	● Parliamentary election will be held before end of 2008
	● Govt, Election Commission are thinking about upazila elections
	● Full Independence of EC has already been ensured
	● Sustainable framework for free, fair and neutral election
	● Public Service Commission will be thoroughly reformed
	● Zero tolerance on corruption, abuse of power and serious crime
	● No alternative but to keep patience in facing power crisis
	● Armed forces will continue assisting govt's reform programmes
	● Reforms in financial sector will be continued
	● Efforts will be made to bar political parties from using student, professional bodies as party wing



Fakhruddin Ahmed addressing the nation yesterday.

## Election by end '08

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 corruption. Fakhruddin said, "Our aim is fixed. We want to bring the corrupt, abusers of power and serious criminals within the jurisdiction of existing laws as quickly as possible."

"We will show zero-tolerance in this regard," he said.

For the time being, there is no alternative but to be patient for resolving problems in the power sector due to years of accumulated corruption and mismanagement, he said.

In his 22-minute speech, Fakhruddin presented an overview of the government's activities in the last three months since he was sworn in on January 12, including the government's commitment to holding credible elections, ensuring full independence of the EC, reforming the public administration and finance sector, continue deregulation, and zero tolerance for corruption, abuse of power and crimes.

The election laws, rules and procedures would be reformed simultaneously to shorten the period until elections, Fakhruddin said, adding that the EC has already outlined a timeline for preparing a voter list and ID cards with photographs.

"We are deeply committed to establishing a sustainable structure to keep muscle-power, money and undesirable elements from influencing not only the next elections, but all long-term elections to ensure that they are free, fair and credible," he said.

The CA also underlined the government's commitment to handing over power to an elected government by implementing electoral reforms and creating an atmosphere conducive to holding free, fair and acceptable elections.

He said the ongoing electoral reforms would ensure intra-party democracy and the government would take strong steps to encourage honest and competent candidates to take part in elections.

The chief election commissioner on April 5 said no elections would be held before at least 18 months, as that time is required to simultaneously prepare the voter list with photographs and national ID cards. These 18 months would end in October 2008.

Fakhruddin said years of corruption and mismanagement means there is no alternative but to have patience for resolving the power crisis, even though the government has achieved some success in dealing with the problem by taking significant steps such as closing markets by 7:00pm.

The caretaker chief said the government will continue privatisation of state-owned enterprises where necessary and

it has also prioritised financial sector reform and expanding the development of industries, with a close focus on rail communication.

He said the government is mulling the recast of the Public Service Commission as well as widespread reforms to public administration, in addition to the already completed separation of the judiciary from the executive as part of judiciary reforms.

Specially noting the role of the armed forces, Fakhruddin said, they are playing a praiseworthy role in maintaining internal law and order, recovering grabbed land, and in assisting in anti-corruption drives.

He also touched on continuing international support for the government's activities, the role of Bangladesh Rifles in reining in prices of essentials, and the need for assisting the disenfranchised.