

# Yeltsin, Chernomyrdin agree to retain key reformists

MOSCOW, Dec 20: President Boris Yeltsin and his prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, ended several days of political unease Sunday by agreeing to keep key reformers in the government, a Yeltsin aide said, reports AP.

The basic structures of the former government will be preserved, presidential spokesman Vyacheslav Kostikov told the Interfax news agency.

The government of Russia will adhere to the idea of a transition to market economy and will continue the course of reforms, he added.

Separately, however, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev warned that Russia is returning to the concept of a "besieged fortress," and said the country faces a danger of revanchism in its foreign policy. Interfax and ITAR-Tass reported.

Kostikov said the decision to keep key Cabinet members associated with Chernomyrdin's predecessor, reformist Yegor Gaidar, came after several hours of negotiation.

Deputy Prime Minister Vladimir Shumeiko also took part in Sunday's talks, Interfax said.

Chernomyrdin—a conservative industrial expert appointed to the post last Monday—said Saturday that he wanted to keep leading reformers in his Cabinet, but that a market economy cannot solve all the country's problems.

Yeltsin cut short his first visit to China on Saturday to return to Moscow in a show of force designed to demonstrate to hard-liners that he would not tolerate a deviation from the course of reforms spearheaded by Gaidar.



Annual general meeting of the National Press Club began yesterday. —Star photo

## JCD leader shot at in Khulna

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KHULNA, Dec 20: A Jatiyabadi Chhatra Dal leader was shot at and another clubbed and chopped by unidentified assailants here today, reports UNB.

Both Enamul Kabir, VP of the Rupsha Bangabandhu College Student Union and Monirul Islam were admitted to Sadar Hospital in critical condition.

Witnesses said an armed group of four to five men fired on Kabir at Agradoot playground on way to the college at 4:30 pm.

He fell on the ground as a bullet struck him in the leg. Then, the attackers also hit him with sticks and rods. They also attacked Monirul, who was accompanying the VP, with lathi, hockeystick and ramdao.

## EMS with Bahrain introduced

Express Mail Service (EMS) between Bangladesh and Bahrain has been introduced with effect from December 19. The service in the country is available in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna and other big cities, said an official handout, reports UNB.

## PM: Govt to dig well

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bhai' for all. We need to create employment opportunities and for this rapid industrialisation is required," the Prime Minister said.

The Prime Minister called upon all to strive unitedly for the welfare of the nation. All knowledge, discovery and resources are meaningless if they are not utilised for the welfare of the country and the nation, she said.

She recalled that Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman laid importance on extraction of mineral resources and said it was during his period and initiative that a programme was undertaken for the exploration of new gas and oil fields in the country.

Begum Zia mentioned the setting up of Juyprhat Cement Factory and the pragmatic measures for extraction of limestone and hard rock at Madhyapara undertaken during Shaheed Zia's period.

Referring to the discovery of oil, she accused the later-day autocratic regime of using the success of the geologists in personal interest and halting a great scope. "Similar stagnancy was also observed in other mineral sectors," she alleged.

"A people's government has been established. People are the owner of all resources.... The representative government is pledge-bound to establish the right of people over the public property," the Prime Minister asserted.

She assured that the government wants to ensure proper use of the national resources and mentioned the "malignant disease of system loss" spread in a planned way by the autocratic regime.

Begum Zia called upon all to wage a social movement against the "system loss".

Referring to the reserves of coal, limestone, hard rock and other mineral resources, she said the country remained backward for lack of appropriate technology of extraction.

Lauding the success of geologists in different sectors, the Prime Minister asked them to improve technical knowledge and evolve indigenous means to fulfil hopes and aspirations of the people.

It is also the responsibility of the geologists to find the cause and remedy of desertification in northern parts of the country, she said.

## Eastern Refinery extension unit starts functioning in June

CHITTAGONG, Dec 20: The secondary conversion plant of Eastern Refinery Limited which is under construction at a cost of Taka 247 crore including Taka 153 crore as foreign currency will start functioning in next June, reports ISS.

Fifty per cent work on this World Bank-funded extension unit of the Eastern Refinery has already been completed. The construction work on the plant started in February last year.

These were stated to the members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources when they visited the plant yesterday with the Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain.

## Kamal

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strong reluctance to identify any political party involved in communal activities in particular.

The Forum leader also refused to answer a common question of a large number of newsmen present at the press conference on whether his Forum wanted a ban on communal forces including the Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh.

The forum leaders, however, called upon the government to take effective steps in identifying people involved in nefarious activities, ensuring exemplary punishment to the criminals and upholding the rule of law to restore communal harmony in society.

Dr Kamal Hossain claimed that the failure of the law enforcing agencies to carry out their duties in many places and the support to criminals by local-level leaders of the ruling party in some places were responsible for communal unrest in different parts of the country.

## Chief of Tajik opposition assassinated

DUSHANBE, Dec 20: The head of the Islamic-democratic opposition coalition in the Tajikistan parliament, Saheb Nazarov, has been assassinated by a pro-communist group, the People's Democratic Front (PDF) which is a member of the coalition said today, reports AFP.

He was shot dead Saturday in a house in Dushanbe where he had taken refuge for the last few days, the front said.

The bodies of some 20 youths aged 18 to 20 were found Sunday in another Dushanbe neighbourhood, the PDF announced.

## Forum leaders condemn demolition of the Babri Mosque in India by fundamentalist communal forces and hoped that the public commitment by the Indian government to rebuild the Mosque would be implemented soon.

The Forum leaders however observed that when the SAARC countries were attempting to promote regional cooperation for development, it was shameful that recent communal events in the region would bring to mind negative memories of the past.

Barrister Amir-ul-Islam and Major General (ret'd) Khalilur Rahman were, among others, present on the occasion.

## Jute sector debts

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the soft-loan window of the World Bank, had already made a tentative allocation of 150 million US dollars for the programme.

During the talks last month, the government asked the World Bank to raise the loan amount to around 300 million US dollars to meet the direct and indirect costs of the programme, said the Jute Ministry source.

The request was made in light of the budgetary constraints and the high cost of retrenchment, debt restructuring and the internal financing of the jute sector, he added.

The debt restructuring issue, he observed, needed to be resolved as a "clean balance sheet" was needed to achieve the objective of privatisation, also a major component of the reform programme.

He said that compilation of the amount of regular and penalty interests on the debts of individuals jute mills was likely to be completed before the end of this month.

This would, he added, enable the government to plan the restructuring of the debts.

The World Bank source confirmed that the government did ask for a larger loan for the programme.

"With a good government decision on the debt restructuring issue, the Bank is likely to provide a hefty amount before June 30 next year so that the programme can begin on schedule," he said.

However, he added that the government had to be "extremely cautious" in dealing with the issue to strike a proper balance looking to the future of the jute industry and the financial sector.

If the government was "too generous" in exempting the interests on the loans, he noted, then other sectors with similar problems may also seek identical solutions.

Saying that the bank "definitely" wanted to provide a "very significant" amount of loan for the programme, he said that he was optimistic that it could begin on time.

The government and the World Bank are fully in tune and are moving towards solving the problem, he said "and the government is making good progress."

The government has already fixed June 1994 as the deadline to wind up the operations of the Bangladesh Jute Corporation. Ten poorly performing public sector jute mills have also been identified for closure.

A World Bank mission is scheduled to arrive next month to continue talks with the government to finalise the jute sector restructuring programme.



Milan Panic (c), Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, waves to supporters as he cast his ballot at a polling station yesterday. —AFP photo

## Observers fear election fraud in Yugoslavia

BELGRADE, Dec 20: International observers expressed concern Sunday about possible election fraud as Serbs decided whether to oust hard-line incumbent Slobodan Milosevic in favor of moderate Milan Panic, reports AP.

Milosevic, a former Communist and Serbian nationalist, is widely blamed as the instigator of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Many Yugoslavs and Western diplomats fear his re-election as Serbian president could lead to expanded warfare in the Balkans.

Many polling stations were crowded Sunday morning despite frigid weather and for in Belgrade.

But international observers reported some "worrying examples" of possible fraud, and an independent TV station fielded dozens of calls from voters who claimed they were being intimidated or prevented from voting.

The foreign monitors said it was too early to tell if the reports were serious enough to declare the elections undemocratic.

More than 90 observers from 20 countries, international bodies and non-governmental organizations have fanned out across the country to monitor voting.

As federal premier, Panic pledged he would call new elections if Sunday's voting was determined to be irregular.

"If these elections do not go through correctly, we'll have new elections in 90 days," said Panic, who turned 63 on Election Day.

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## Israel unmoved

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Lebanon dominated the front pages of Israel's newspapers Sunday.

Lebanon refused to permit entry to the men, who Israel claims are members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, two Muslim groups pledged to sabotaging the Middle East peace talks.

Some Israeli newspaper commentators sharply criticized Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, saying he misjudged the consequences, such as world condemnation, Lebanon's refusal to accept the deportees and apparent rapprochement of rival Palestinian factions.

"You can be for deportations or against them, but it's certain that the entire process was messed up and has landed on us like a boomerang," wrote Yoel Marcus in the Haretz daily.

"It is hard to understand how people who are so committed to peace could make so many mistakes in so short a time," Marcus wrote, referring to Rabin's left-of-center coalition.

But in their weekly session Sunday, the Cabinet ministers reaffirmed their support for the expulsions. Last week's deportation orders were issued after six Israeli troops were slain by Muslim fundamentalists over a two-week period.

"We had to cut off Hamas' ability to harm the citizens of the state of Israel and the Palestinians who support the peace process," Industry Minister Micha Harish said after the session.

The fact remains that Hamas has been weakened and that the factions supporting the negotiations have been strengthened, Harish said. Rabin ally, told Israel radio, Outside the session, dozens of Peace Now activists stood silently with placards denouncing the deportations and calling for direct negotiations with the PLO.

## India must disclose nuclear 'game plan,' says Sundarji

NEW DELHI, Dec 20: A former top army general said Sunday India must publicly disclose an explicit nuclear weapons policy to counter any threats from Pakistan or pressures from Washington for nuclear non-proliferation, reports AP.

Gen Krishnaswami Sundarji said he expects New Delhi to come under increased pressure from the United States to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty after President-elect Bill Clinton takes office in January.

The fact that India is a threshold nuclear weapon power is no secret," Gen Sundarji said in a signed front page article in the mass-circulated Indian Express newspaper.

"The really big secret is that India has no coherent nuclear weapon policy option," he said. Sundarji commanded the 1.2 million Indian army from 1986-89.

He warned that a "tragic nuclear exchange" between India and Pakistan could take place due to a miscalculation of each others nuclear status.

India exploded a nuclear bomb in 1974.

Pakistan's foreign secretary, Shahryar Khan, admitted to Washington in February that his government has the technology to assemble a nuclear bomb.

## Govt has lost its democratic spirit: JP

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Party (JP) has reiterated its demand of mid-term election as what it said the present government had even lost its "so-called democratic spirit" and was repressing the opposition parties.

"This government can no longer claim itself a democratic one considering the present activities," Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, acting chairman of the party told a press conference at his Gulshan residence.

He said that during the past few days the JP rallies and processions came under attack of either the ruling party supporters or the police and it scemed the government decision had taken to resist the JP by any means.

New JP Secretary General Khaleedur Rahman Tito, Vice-President Moudud Ahmed MP, Monirul Haq Chowdhury MP, Col. (Ret'd) M A Malek, Sarder Amjad Hossain, Tajul Islam Chowdhury MP and Mahbulul Haq Dolon were present at the press conference.

The immediate past acting secretary general A B M Shajahan and former secretary general Shah Moazzem Hossain were conspicuous by their absence.

The JP acting chairman said that the party presidium was to meet Sunday night to review the situation and finalise the fresh action plan.

He rejected the newspaper report, that the jailed JP Chairman HM Ershad asked the party to relieve him of his responsibilities as "baseless."

Chowdhury also said that the JP was still proceeding democratically despite government repression but how long its workers would be able to maintain it was an open question.

## BNP

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The same political party, which had not raised the issue of sharing seats in Parliament, has now been placing the issue with the motive of creating chaos, it said.

The meeting further said that the party did not raise the issue of the trial of Prof. Golam Azam or the issue of the repeal of Indemnity Ordinance in the past parliament.

The defeated party has been showing attitude of non-cooperation for political reprisal from the very beginning against the elected government, the meeting observed.

In this connection it mentioned the no-confidence motion moved against the government.

It further said that in the name of movement the same quarters were now engaged in acts of terrorism.

The meeting strongly deplored the demolition of historic Babri Mosque in India by the fundamentalist forces there and demanded punishment to those responsible for the incident. The meeting demanded reconstruction of the mosque at the same site and steps to check repetition of any such incident.

The meeting called upon the people for maintenance of communal harmony and remain alert against those who were trying to exploit the situation either to embarrass the government or for political gains. The meeting expressed satisfaction over timely action of the government for maintaining security of the people and communal harmony.

In another resolution the meeting called for fair price for paddy and reduction in price of fertilizers and insecticides.

The meeting pleaded for reopening of the mills and factories which were closed down during autocratic Ershad rule.

## Guerillas free UN peacekeepers in Cambodia

PHNOM PENH, Dec 20: Khmer Rouge guerrillas today freed 11 UN peacekeepers they had held hostage for two days, a UN spokesman said.

The men—a Uruguayan officer, eight Uruguayan soldiers, on Russian helicopter crewman and a Russian military observer — had been released unconditionally, he told a news briefing in Phnom Penh.

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## T&T employees

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The CBA President hoped that the authorities would implement fully the agreement signed yesterday. Otherwise, he warned, they would launch a greater movement again to realise the demands.

Meanwhile, three other trade unions — pro-BNP Bangladesh Telecommunication Workers-Employees Union, Awami League-backed Federal Union and pro-Jatiya Party Adarsha Federal Union — are yet to call the strike off.

## The Midnight File

**Bush, Yeltsin talk possible summit**

MOSCOW, Dec 20: Russian President Boris Yeltsin and US President George Bush today discussed a possible summit to sign a strategic arms reduction agreement, ITAR-Tass news agency said. "Among issues, concerning bilateral relations, a possible meeting of the two president was discussed to sign a treaty on further cuts in strategic offensive weapons," Tass said, quoting the Russian Foreign Ministry's Press Department, reports Reuter.

## US marines, Belgian troops land in Somalia

WASHINGTON, Dec 20: More than 300 US marines and Belgian paratroopers landed in the southern Somali Port of Kismayo early today and were preparing to take control of the airport as well, marine spokesman Colonel Fred Peck told Cable News Network. Col Peck said 224 marines and 100 Belgian troops took part in the operation, another stage in a US-led international mission to protect relief convoys in the famine-stricken east African nation, reports AFP.

## Iran's presidential election June 11

MOSCOW, Dec 20: Iran's Council of Guardians on Sunday confirmed that next year's presidential election will be held June 11, Tehran radio reported. President Hashemi Rafsanjani is expected to run for another four-year term. There was no information about other candidates, reports AP.

## Riyadh, Doha

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three leaders at the Saudi palace where the Egyptian president has been staying.

Handshakes and hugs were exchanged as the delegations congratulated each other on the agreement "which affirms the depth of the links of love and brotherhood among the brothers," the agency reported.

The agreement also "bolsters the Qatar-Saudi bilateral ties which have always been special and firm in the interest of the two countries and sister nations," it added.

Qatar had insisted that the border post central to the Sept. 30 clash was in Qatar territory while Saudi Arabia said it was on the kingdom's territory. The Saudis said it was a shootout between Bedouins, but the Qataris insisted the post had been attacked by the Saudis.

As a result of the clash, Qatar suspended a British-brokered 1965 pact on the borders between the two countries, a move that was rejected by Saudi Arabia.

Egypt's Middle East News Agency reported Friday from Medina that it learned Saudi Arabia agreed to establishing a tripartite committee, comprising Egypt, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, to help implement the 1965 agreement.

## All-party body

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KM Jahangir MP, Nurul Islam Nahid, Dilip Barua, Maulana Ahmedur Rahman Azmi, SM Sabur, Nirmal Sen, Kazi Aref Ahmed, Bimal Biswas, Mainuddin Khan Badal, Sharif Nurul Ambia, Mohammad Afzal, Faiz Ahmed, Syed Hasan Imam and Prof. Abdul Mannan Chowdhury.

The meeting decided to visit the areas affected recently by communal violence sparked by the demolition of Babri Mosque in India.

It formed four teams to visit Bhola, Chittagong, Sylhet and Gopalganj.

Awami League President and Opposition Leader in Parliament Sheikh Hasina will visit Shanir Akhra in Demra thana at 11am on December 22 and Manikganj on December 24.

Members of the team which will visit Bhola on December 23 are: Abdul Mannan, Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, Tofael Ahmed MP, Suranjit Sengupta MP, Nirmal Sen, Syed Hasan Imam, Mozaffar Hossain Paltu, Faiz Ahmed and Abdul Matin Chowdhury.

The other three teams will leave on December 26 for the following districts:

Chittagong: Zillur Rahman, Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, Haider Akbar Khan Rono, Faiz Ahmed, Mohammad Afzal, Dilip Barua, Maulana Ahmedur Rahman Azmi, Mainuddin Khan Badal and Nuruddin Zahed Marju.

Sylhet: Amir Hossain Amu, Nurul Islam Nahid, Kazi Aref Ahmed, Pir Habibur Rahman, AFM Mahbulul Haq and Abdur Rouf.

Gopalganj: Abdur Razzak MP, Nirmal Sen, Shamsuddoha MP, Syed Hasan Imam, Saiful Islam, SMA Sabur, Prof. Abdul Mannan Chowdhury and Abdul Matin Chowdhury.

## UNHCR

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wants to 'make independent assessment of the nature of the voluntary repatriation.' According to the Foreign Secretary, Bangladesh and the UNHCR have close cooperation on the refugee issue. "There has been on-going dialogue on how best to coordinate our efforts in ensuring safety, honour and dignity of the refugees," he said.

Rahman blamed some militant refugee elements for creating obstacles in the process of repatriation.

"A large number of Rohingya Muslims are willing to return home, but dissidents and criminal elements among them were creating problems and misunderstanding," he said.

The Foreign Secretary said Bangladesh has its own "strong compulsions to send the refugees home because it can not shoulder the burden for long." According to him the human rights situation has improved in the Myanmar province of Arakan from where the refugees have fled since March last year to escape a military crackdown. There has been no complaints from the returnees, he claimed.

Even though the government insists that there has been no forced repatriation, international voluntary workers claim they have evidence that some refugees have been sent home against their will.

The UNHCR, which monitored first few groups of the would-be returnees, has withdrawn from interviewing the refugees because of the allegations. The UNHCR officials said they had no independent access to interview the would-be returnees.

## Number of pilgrims at Azmir may drop for curfew

AJMR, Dec 20: The number of pilgrims at the annual 'urs' of the soot saint Khawaja Moinuddin Chistie here may drop considerably owing to curfew and prohibitory orders in many parts of the country following the Ayodhya incidents, reports PTI.

Night curfew is still in force in the Dargah area itself.

However, the Dargah administration has made necessary arrangements for the urs.