

## President, PM greet Bush

## 'Ties with US to grow further'

President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina congratulated George W. Bush yesterday on his assumption of office as the 43rd President of the United States of America, reports UNB.

In a message to his new American counterpart, Shahabuddin said Bangladesh values its friendship with the USA and appreciated its support for the development of Bangladesh.

He hoped that the existing mutual cooperation and partnership between the two countries would continue to flourish in the days ahead.

The President wished good health and happiness of the new US President and a very successful term in his office.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a separate message to Bush expressed her eagerness to work with him in close concert to promote and achieve the common objectives of peace, stability and prosperity throughout the world.

She hoped that under the privileged background, rich experience and impeccable credentials of Bush, America would continue to enjoy unprecedented prosperity and provide leadership to the world, responding to the great challenges and opportunities in the new century.

Hasina wished the new US President success in his endeavours.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina speaking with the Chairman of the Cambodian Senate Chea Sim (R) during a meeting at the Senate House yesterday in Phnom Penh. -AFP photo

## Myanmar continues to mass troops

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forces of the two countries. The BDR has decided to nominate its Deputy Director General but the Myanmar side is yet to communicate its decision in this regard.

Reports from across the border said two Light Infantry Regiments of Myanmar Army have been deployed in forward positions, within some 500 yards of Bangladesh border. Besides, 15,000 regular troops have also been deployed within three km of Bangladesh border. The Myanmar authorities have done this in gross violation of international border rules which forbid movement of troops within eight km of a neighbour's border except in case of a military exercise. In that case also, prior information has to be provided to the

neighbouring country.

The two Light Infantry Regiments and other troop formations of Myanmar are equipped with recoilless rifles, mortars, heavy machine guns and even artillery guns.

The two Regiments have moved out from the western command headquarters at Sittoung. Military Commander of Myanmar's western region Lt General Wan Tuwa officially visited the forward deployment positions of Myanmar troops twice in the last five days. Normally some 30,000 regular troops are at the direct disposal of Myanmar's western command. Besides, the number of Naska forces in the area concerned is over 2500, reliable sources said. The Myanmar troops are

learned to have been deployed in Totardip area of Myanmar, bordering Bangladesh's Ulabania.

Sources noted that the JSC can settle the Bangladesh claim that Myanmar is constructing embankments along the Naf river in violation of the maritime boundary demarcation agreement signed between the two countries in 1966. Later in 1980, a land boundary demarcation agreement was signed by the two neighbours and it incorporated the 1966 agreement.

Foreign Secretary Shafi Sami, when contacted, said the border tension with "our close neighbour will be defused shortly."

Asked about possible outbreak of a conflict, he said, "Let us not speculate now. We will cross the bridge when it comes."

## Hartal passes off peacefully

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from early morning and continued processions and rallies up to 2pm. Police cashed a Chhatra Union procession near the Matsha Bhaban at about 8am, but none was injured.

Witnesses said presence of leftist leaders and activists on streets during yesterday's hartal was more than that of BNP-led opposition alliance which enforced a good number of hartals earlier.

Movement of rickshaws was almost normal in the city. Some auto-rickshaws, auto-tempos, minibuses and BRTC buses piled some specific routes.

Private offices, business houses and shopping complexes remained closed during the

hartal hours. Attendance in government offices was thin. Banks operated with their collapsible gates closed.

All educational institutions in the city also remained closed.

During the hartal, the Left Alliance held a rally at Paltan crossing. It was addressed by, among others, Saiful Haq, Mahbub Alam, Anwarul Haq, Iqbal Majumder, Nur Ahmed Bakul, Abdur Razzak, Karim Shikder, Faizul Haq Lala, Sharifuzzaman, Sharif, Abdul Halim Akand and Mosharraf Hossain.

They strongly criticised the ruling AL for bringing out procession against the hartal and demanded immediate resignation of the Home Minister for his "complete" failure to provide security to people.

Criticising the government's inaction, they said law enforcing agencies did not take any step to recover "alamats" (evidences) of the bomb explosion till 10pm on Saturday. This proves the government's connection with the killers. They demanded proper investigation into the incident and trial of the killers.

Workers Party leader Saiful Haq urged the Home Minister to arrest ruling party "godfathers" of terrorists first.

CPB leader Mahbub Alam alleged that "conspirators" at home and abroad were involved in the bomb attack to make the country dependent on others.

## Hartal today

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Prior to bringing out the main torch procession, BNP held a brief rally in front of its central office at Nayapaltan. The rally was addressed by city BNP President Sadeque Hossain Khoka, MP and general Abdus Salam.

Jatiya Party brought out a torch procession from its Kalabagan office. Jamaat and IOJ took out separate processions from Paltan area.

Hartal Exemption: Hospital, ambulance, medicine shop, restaurant, newspaper offices and vehicles of emergency services and law enforcing agencies.

## JS : Teachers

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get jobs and get promoted to senior positions then there is no reason why school teachers should not be listed in the MPO and get government benefits.

Sharif Khasruzzaman said the issue was discussed at a meeting of Awami League parliamentary party where the Prime Minister assured that she would consider the matter. "If the decision is not revised, it will have adverse impact on our politics."

Despite pleas by the ruling party members, the Education Minister stuck to his point and favoured the decision, arguing that those teachers who are engaged in teaching should have a standard of academic qualification.

Sadique, however, assured that the government might consider the matter only if the teachers' associations want to do it and sign another agreement with the government.

"Let the teachers' associations sit and come up with their proposal. But at this stage, the government cannot do anything unilaterally," he said.

## Experts look for link

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CPB rally at Paltan Maidan on Saturday.

According to information available from different sources, the bomb was neither thrown into the crowd nor was it planted beforehand. It is highly that someone carried the explosive.

Intelligence agencies are trying to ascertain the type of explosive and also the reason and purpose of the explosion. Speculations range from involvement of international politics to local terrorist to fundamentalist elements. Feud between CPB and underground political parties in the country's southwest is also suspected.

Asked why the culprits selected CPB rally for the explosion when there had been so many rallies throughout the year, a senior official of Special Branch of Police said that the people responsible for the explosion, were aware that a large number of people from outside Dhaka were going to attend the rally, which would make it easier for them to go with a bag containing explosives.

CPB rally became the target with an aim to intensify enmity in the political arena between BNP and Awami League.

Another official of a government agency concerned said while investigating they were putting emphasis on some specific points -- whether anyone inside the government or ruling party or opposition has any involvement,

whether there is any internal feud inside the CPB and whether any third party is involved in the incident.

According to him ahead of the election government is likely to go for anti-Jamaat-Shibir movement soon. In that case a split of the four-party alliance is obvious if BNP fails to take a stand for Jamaat. The government will take the advantage of the situation and create the premises that it might have planted the bomb.

The official further said that by putting the blame on the government, the four-party alliance might try to convince the left front to join them. The alliance has been proposing the left front to join in for a long time in vain.

The intelligence agency official further noted that beside these factors, the agency would also investigate intra-CPB conflict, underground politics and politics involved with the transport sector of the country.

Regarding the torn-out black bag which was recovered from the spot, Sunil, one of the injured, told journalists that the bag belonged to Himangshu Mondol. Himangshu, Amar and he himself came from Khulna to Dhaka to participate in the rally together. Himangshu was carrying the black bag while he was carrying a bag made of jeans. Sunil added that he believed that there was nothing inside the bag other than cloth and food.

## PM meets Cambodian king

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ernment faced unitedly.

Hasina mooted the idea during her audience with King of Cambodia Preah Bat Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk and Queen Samdech Preah Reach Akka Mohesey Norodom Moniqueat Sihanouk at the Royal Palace.

The Prime Minister, who arrived here earlier in the day to attend a conference of the Association of Asian Parliaments for Peace, focused on the sociopolitical situation at home.

Hasina said her government had restored peace in Chittagong Hill Tracts after two decades of bloodshed. "We have resolved the longstanding problem without any third-party mediation."

She said Bangladesh achieved self-sufficiency in food after replenishing 40 lakh tons of deficit.

A large number of programmes have been taken up in the social

sector, she said while mentioning socioeconomic progress in the country.

The Cambodian King said he was happy to note that Bangladesh is a promoter of peace. "Cambodia also believes in peace," he said, "there is peaceful existence of all communities in the country."

He said that there is no ethnic problem in Cambodia: "People of all communities and faith are living together here in harmony and peace."

Welcoming Sheikh Hasina to his country, Norodom Sihanouk said there exist a traditional bond of friendship between the two countries for decades and that it would strengthen further in future.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Principal Secretary to the PM Dr S A Samad and Foreign Secretary CM Shafi Sami were present in

the meeting.

The Cambodian monarch also hosted a lunch in honour of Bangladesh Prime Minister.

On her arrival at the Pochentong Airport at about 11 am (local time), the Bangladesh Prime Minister was accorded a red carpet welcome.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen received Hasina at the airport.

She was given a guard of honour by a contingent of the Royal Guards at the tarmac of the airport. She inspected the guard and took salute as national anthems of the two countries were played.

Later she was taken to the presentation line where high officials of the Cambodian government were waiting.

A good number of young ladies and boys were also waiting with flowers and national flags of Bangladesh and Cambodia to greet Hasina, who is also the current president of AAPP.

EPI vaccination  
Body to probe death of child in Khulna

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Jan 21: A four-member enquiry committee has been formed with the Deputy Civil Surgeon Dr Daud Ali Mir as its head to submit a report by Wednesday on the death of a child after being vaccinated under the EPI vaccination programme here last Wednesday.

Other members of the committee are Dr Alamgir, Dr Atiar Rahman and EPI supervisor Hafizur Rahman. The two-month old child Liton, son of day labourer Hossain Ali Shaikh and Hosne Ara died few hours after taking DPT vaccine.

The incident occurred at village Elaipur under Rupsha upazila.

The Whip of Jatiya Sangsad Mostafa Rashida Shuja, a representative of WHO and Health Officer of Rupsha Health Complex visited the house of Hossain.

Thirty children were given DPT vaccine on that day at the EPI camp at village Elaipur. Five of them fell sick after few hours. Of them, Liton died and four others identified as Ekhlash, I. Bony, 10 months, Saiful, 11 months, and Tanjila, 4 months, were admitted to KMCH.

## 11-party

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economist Prof Anisur Rahman and poet Abu Bakr Siddiq also spoke at the rally.

Earlier on the day, leaders of different political parties and students' and workers' organisations visited the CPB central office at Purana Paltan and paid tributes to the party activists killed.

The leaders include those of Ghatat Dalai Nirmul Committee, Sammilita Nari Samaj, Pahari Chhatra Parishad, and Bangladesh Chhatra League.

CPB workers took the body of Abul Hashem, one of the four victims, to Demra in a truck yesterday afternoon. Hashem was a worker of Latif Bawani Jute Mills at Demra.

Two other coffins wrapped with red flags of CPB were seen in front of the party central office till evening. Party sources said those would be sent to Khulna at night (last night). The body of another victim was at Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue as autopsy was in progress, they said.

CPB workers from the city and outside gathered at the party central office and paid tributes to those killed. The road in front of the office was closed for traffic yesterday.

## Nasim blames Jamaat

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the House that the bomb exploded at Paltan Maidan was neither planted nor thrown. Intruders carried the bomb to the rally and it went off, he said adding that several other bombs were exploded within a short span of time at the office of the Jamaat-backed Hawkers' Kalyan Samity. Two others died in the explosions, he said.

He said many of those injured in Saturday's explosion at the rally were unknown to the CPB leaders. "So, it is apparently clear that some intruders backed by a certain quarter is responsible for the blast."

"Since we fought the War of Independence together in 1971, CPB is our political friend and the fundamentalists unleashed such heinous attack to weaken the progressive force," he said adding they (the fundamentalists) are trying to tarnish the image of Awami League which is leading the country towards progress.

Referring to the incident of bomb explosion at an Udichi

function, in Jessore, attempt on the life of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Kotlipara in Gopalganj and killing of eight including six Chhatra League leaders in Chittagong, Nasim said the Paltan incident is a follow up of the blue print by the Oppositions to create political instability in the country.

The Home Minister assured the House that the criminals as well as their godfathers would be brought to book immediately. He said the Hawkers' union leaders met the Leader of the Opposition a few days back and it is possible for them to kill the people by exploding powerful bombs.

The Home Minister urged the opposition parties to shun the path of bloodshed.

Two high-powered committees one headed by a Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Home and the other by an Additional Inspector General of police have been formed to probe the incident, Nasim informed the parliament.

## Textbook scam

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before selling the books. The NCTB has agreed to allow payment of royalty in six installments in violation of rules, the sources pointed out.

Three concerns of Beximco group Pustaka, Shuktara and Free Press -- were awarded the job of printing and distribution of over eight crore textbooks for primary and secondary levels.

The NCTB in a letter gave serial number of the textbooks but cautioned pustaka not to take it as 'sale order,' one source said.

As per the NCTB tender document, the printers should make arrangement for inspection of ready stock of books before distribution and after a satisfactory inspection by NCTB officials, the printers will go for distribution to avert any crisis due to inadequate number of books.

The Beximco concern distributed only a little over 6.5 lakh books yesterday. That is why it did not ask for sell order from the NCTB. Printing and publication industry sources said.

Book sellers thronged the wholesale market at Banglabazar in the city yesterday but most of them had to return disappointed.

Retail book sellers at the city's New Market advised guardians and students to come after January 25 as they were yet to collect books.

When contacted, NCTB Chairman Dr Tapan Kanti Chowdhury said he was too pre-occupied to talk to the press.

The NCTB yesterday informed the Ministry of Education that royalty on books was not deposited although sale of those started.

## Envoys: Fair election

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the end of this month.

The team will exchange views with a broad section of the society to determine the monitoring needs for the polls and the type of assistance that could be provided by the EU countries. On its return the assessment team will submit its report to the Asian Working Group.

The envoy said at this point in time the number of poll monitors coming to the country representing the EU could not be predicted, but the number was highly likely to cross the 90-strong team it sent to Sri Lanka during the island nation's general elections.

If asked for, the EU is willing to help the country meet material needs for the elections, like making ballot boxes, Schramm said.

Besides representation on the main monitoring team, the 15 EU countries may send separate contingents of observers, including a few legislators, he added.

The German ambassador, however, made it clear that his country was only interested in violence-free and fair elections in Bangladesh.

"We are not interested in the outcome of the elections," said Schramm. "We only want peaceful democratic continuity."

## 13 nabbed without clear charge

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another case on the Bangabandhu Avenue blast. Unidentified persons were responsible for the blast, his FIR said. Another case under Section 54 of CrPC was filed in connection with the Paltan incident.

Meanwhile, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has been assigned to investigate the case. The CID team, led by ASP Abdul Kader Akand, went to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and interrogated some witnesses, undergoing treatment there.

While talking to The Daily Star, Kahar said that it was too early to make any comment, adding that they had just started investigation.

Sources in the CID said that the two blasts were similar. Shaheen of Kishorganj, now residing at 363/3 Bibir Bagicha of Pachabari in Demra; Didar of Habiganj, currently living near the Sayedabad bus stand; Mamun of Comilla; Deen Mohammad of Madaripur; Alamgir of Faridpur, based in South Kazi Demra at present; Anwar Hossain, Habibur Rahman, Abul Hossain and Mokter Hossain of Shammibagh in Sutrapur have been arrested in connection with the Paltan rally incident.

They were produced before the CMMs Court last evening with a prayer for a five-day remand. The court, however, granted the police two days for

interrogation.

The four hawkers arrested for their alleged involvement in the Bangabandhu Avenue explosion are Nazrul, Aslam, Milon and Razzak.

Nazrul was put on a one-day police remand by the CMMs court. The rest were admitted to the DMCH under police custody.

Police said that the arrested hawkers were in the Bangabazar-Paltan area during and before the incident.

Meanwhile, a twelve-member team of army's engineering core yesterday collected splinters from the explosion spot at the Paltan Maidan. They stayed there from 10-10am to 12-40pm and also collected marbles, and parts of

## Nazmul Huda

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chy. He said they staged a peaceful sit-in protesting appointment of two judges in the Supreme Court. Rather, pro-government lawyers attacked their sit-in, he alleged.

The meeting observed one minute's silence in memory of the four persons killed in Saturday's bomb explosion at a rally of the Communist party of Bangladesh at Paltan Maidan in the city.

Yesterday's scheduled "silent procession" of lawyers to protest the PSA case was deferred till 1 pm on January 24.

Huda also condemned the attack on the rally and said the government must bear the responsibility since it failed to ensure security to the political party to hold meeting at a designated venue.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen spoke about the political situation in his country and said the country had overcome political problem in last two years and brought stability.

He referred to triangular policies for development and ways and means for solving internal and external problems. Now there is a coalition of two parties in the country and the two parties are enjoying having good relations under the leadership of the Cambodian King.

Hun Sen said Cambodia became full member of UN and also the ASEAN. "Now there is peace and reconciliation under the ASEAN."

The Cambodian Prime Minister said that major donors like World Bank, Asian Development Bank and others were now coming to this country whose next goal is to become the member of WTO.

Woman tortured  
BDR subedar closed to battalion HQs in Rajshahi

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Jan 21: BDR company commander Subedar Abdul Kader was closed from the border outpost to the battalion headquarters in the face of agitation by local people over the incident of beating a woman and her son by the BDR personnel.

Houseswife Anamati, 25, was beaten mercilessly by the company commander of Udayanagar Char Bondar Outpost (BOP) in Bagha upazila on Thursday.

Subedar Abdul Kader tortured Enayet Haque, 8, son of Anamati with a baton, local people said. The BDR man also assaulted Anamati when she protested it, they added.

## Bus accident kills four in Rangamati

RANGAMATI, Jan 21: Four members of a picnic party were killed and 40 others injured when their bus fell into a roadside ditch at Jamtoli in Rajshahi upazila on Saturday night, reports UNB.

The victims were identified as Tanveer Ahmed, 4, Raju, 15, Shohag, 20, and Alauddin, 15.

Police said that the bus was returning to Rajshahi carrying 55 passengers, mostly government officials and their family members from a picnic at Cox's Bazar on Friday.

Local engineer of Public Health Department and Manager of Krishi Bank were among others injured. They were admitted to local hospital and Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

## Dhaka, Phnom Penh

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ter sought cooperation of the Cambodian government so that Dhaka could become the dialogue partner of ASEAN. She admired Cambodian good governance and expressed satisfaction about the overall affairs in the Southeast Asian country once torn by civil war.

Briefing newsmen, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr SA Samad and Press Secretary Jawadul Karim said the meeting was held for over one and a half hours and matters of bilateral relations were widely discussed.

During the meeting Bangladesh Prime Minister expressed willingness to make joint efforts for combating floods, of which both countries become victims time and again. In this regard the Cambodian PM welcomed her gesture and said his government also successfully tackled floods this time.

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The Cambodian Prime Minister said that major donors like World Bank, Asian Development Bank and others were now coming to this country whose next goal is to become the member of WTO.

He said like Bangladesh, the main target of his socioeconomic strategy is poverty alleviation. "We have plans to reduce the expenditure on armed forces, which will help increase expenditure in education and health sectors."

He told the meeting that they were trying to transform all that is non-productive into productive.

Hun Sen said his government is also trying to strengthen local government and election to the local bodies would be held in 2002. His government is also bringing reforms in judicial sector, he added.

He said that his government also achieved success in the economic sector by bringing down the inflation rate and increasing the growth rate remarkably. "We're following sound macroeconomic policies."

During the meeting, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said her government attached the highest priority to improving status of common people by providing them with basic facilities for a decent living.

She said she recognised the importance of institutionalisation of democracy. "It is only an environment of political stability and peace which can ensure sustainable economic growth."

Regarding the foundation of bilateral relations, the PM said: "The ethos of friendship towards all and malice to none initiated by Father of the Nation and enshrined in the Constitution is the cornerstone of our foreign policy."

She said Bangladesh and Cambodia shared the history of common culture and religious tradition. She thanked the Cambodian PM for excellent hospitality and extended invitation to him to visit Bangladesh. The Cambodian PM accepted the invitation and agreed to visit Bangladesh at a mutually convenient time.