

Khaleda's oath-taking

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The BNP alone has 191 seats while the Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh has secured 17, the Jatiya Party (Nazir-Firoz) four and the Islami Oikya Jote two.

While election to the Cox's Bazar-3 constituency has been rescheduled for November 1 following death of a candidate two days before the October 1 election, re-polling to seven suspended centres at Munshiganj-4 remains withheld due to a High Court order.

The number of BNP seats is likely to increase, as there is a possibility some independent lawmakers may join the party.

Khaleda is the first woman prime minister of the republic and second woman prime minister of the Muslim world after Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan.

The BNP chief first became the prime minister on March 20, 1991. Incidentally, then, too, Justice Shahabuddin administered the oath as the acting president.

On both occasions, elections were held under neutral caretaker governments. However, this time, the caretaker government, as the one in 1996, has been mandated by the Constitution.

Khaleda, a shy and withdrawn housewife who mostly devoted her time rearing up her two sons, Tareq Rahman and Arafat Rahman, took the reign of the BNP in early 1984 and brought the party to power in 1991 in less than eight years.

It was the assassination of her husband in an abortive military coup in Chittagong on May 30, 1981 that brought her into public life and politics.

In the 1996 polls, the BNP lost to the Awami League led by Sheikh Hasina but emerged as the largest opposition party in the country parliamentary history with 116 seats.

Khaleda Zia, known as a moderate politician, in her 18 years of politics, has brought the BNP twice to power through ballot, this time ensuring over two-thirds majority of her party-led alliance in the eighth Jatiya Sangsad.

Born in 1945, she joined active politics in March 1983 and the BNP formed a seven-party alliance in September 1983 and launched a relentless and uncompromising struggle against the autocratic regime of General Ershad. She became the BNP chairperson on May 10, 1984.

In the face of mass upsurge spearheaded by the seven-party alliance, led by Khaleda, and the eight-party combine, led by Hasina, Ershad resigned on December 6, 1990 and handed over power to

neutral caretaker government, bringing an end to his nine-year autocratic rule.

In 1991, she became the country's first woman prime minister after a free and fair general election on February 27, 1991 and formed the government.

Khaleda is the only political leader in the country's history to have been elected from five seats in three consecutive general elections held in 1991, 1996 and 2001.

She has bagged the highest 227,350 votes by any individual in the Bogra-6 constituency in the October 1 election. This time she has retained her Bogra-6 constituency instead of Feni-1, which she represented in 1991 and 1996 parliaments.

The BNP restored the parliamentary system through the 12th amendment to the Constitution in 1991 and introduced the Caretaker Government through 13th amendment to the Constitution in 1996.

When in power, the government of Khaleda made considerable progress in the education sector, introducing compulsory free primary education, free education of girls up to class ten, stipend for the girl students and food for education programme. It also increased the age-limit for entry to government services from 27 years to 30 years and provided highest budgetary allocation in the education sector.

Aiming to return to power, the BNP formed a four-party opposition alliance on January 6, 1999 with the Jatiya Party, the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Islami Oikya Jote and launched several agitation programmes against the ruling AL.

The alliance then participated in the October 1 general election and won the polls with two-thirds majority.

15 more elected MPs gazetted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) gazetted 15 more elected members of parliament through an official notification yesterday.

With the latest notification of 15 parliamentary seats where re-polling took place on Monday, the EC published the official result of the October 1 general election held in 298 parliamentary seats.

The newly gazetted MPs-elect are likely to take oath today.

Re-polling in Munshiganj-4 constituency was suspended following a court order, and voting in Cox's Bazar-3 constituency rescheduled for November 1 due to death of a candidate two days before the election.

BNP activist murder 13 including 3 N'ganj Jubo League workers sued

UNB, N'ganj

A murder case was filed against 13 people, including Jubo League activists Selim, Tower Selim and Tunda Masud, in connection with the killing of a BNP activist.

The victim, Salahuddin Sumon, was mercilessly beaten up in Fatulla thana hajat by some Jubo League men, also detained there, on the night of election day.

He was admitted to a local hospital in a critical condition and then shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he died the following day.

Victim's brother Mohiuddin filed the murder case on Monday night.

According to FIR, army personnel rounded up Sumon and the Jubo League cadres from a polling centre on the election day and handed them over to Fatulla police.

DU classes Resume today

DU CORRESPONDENT

Academic activities of Dhaka University (DU) resume today after about two months of student strike enforced by the Jatiyatobadi Chhatra Dal (JCD).

The DU Syndicate at an emergency meeting with Vice-Chancellor Prof. AK Azad Chowdhury in the chair on October 6 decided to reopen the university after the JCD called off its strike. Accordingly, the administrative activities began on October 7.

According to a decision of the Syndicate, the suspended examinations of a single subject and practical examinations or viva-voce under different departments will begin on October 20. Other examinations will be held after the Puja vacation that ends on November 1.

The Syndicate also asked faculty deans and departmental chairmen to immediately announce fresh schedules for the examinations.

Dengue: 33 more hospitalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thirty-three more people with dengue fever were admitted to different hospitals in the city in 48 hours till 6:00 pm yesterday.

Health directorate sources said that of the 33 patients, 13 were admitted to Holy Family Red Crescent Hospital, eight to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, four to BIRDEM Hospital, two each to Dhaka Shishu Hospital and Midford Hospital and the rest four to private clinics.

According to experts, dengue infection may continue till the end of next month, which is the usual trend, or the end of post monsoon season.

A total of 1282 dengue patients were hospitalised since early May this year and 19 of them died of dengue haemorrhagic fever. Last year, 93 people died while 5551 were hospitalised.

Godfathers

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Chowdhury in 1996 and lost in the mayoral election to the AL leader Mohammad Hanif in Dhaka in 1994 -- is allegedly involved in extortion and occupation of terminals. According to witnesses in different bus-truck terminals of the city, Abbas' groups have captured Sayedabad, Fulbaria and Mohakhali bus terminals last week, immediately after the BNP's victory in the election.

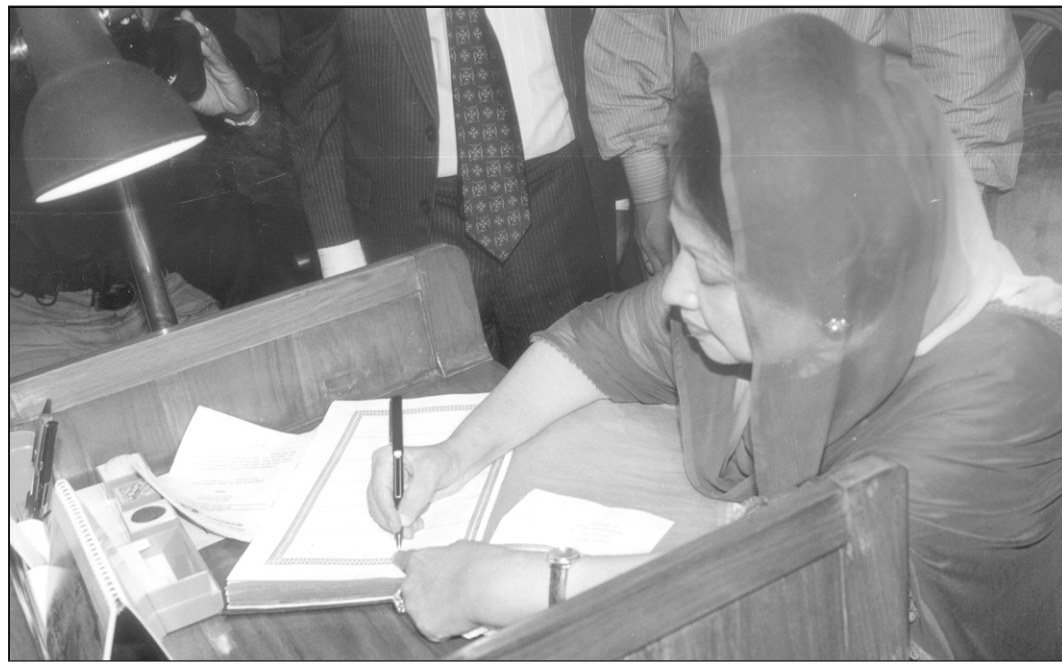
However, when approached by The Daily Star, Abbas refuted the allegations. "The BNP does not give any shelter to any terrorists or extortionists," he said, "and the question of my involvement in the capture of any bus terminal or any terrorist activities does not arise at all."

Hafiz Ibrahim is a local leader of Bhola whose firepower has exceeded that of AL leader Tofail Ahmed, who had never before lost any election in that area since the War of Independence. According to newspaper reports, Hafiz's terrorist groups have even attacked Tofail's residence in Bhola last month.

Ilias Ali had earned a name in terrorist activities during his Dhaka University days in the 1980s. He was permanently expelled from Dhaka University with 11 others in 1987 on charge of carrying out terrorist activities. During the BNP regime in the early 1990s, he was arrested on charge of killing two JCD activists in the Surya Sen Hall.

In addition, convicted in a murder case in the 1970s and accused in a number of murder cases in the 1990s including a double-murder case a few days back, Hemayetullah Awrangha has been elected an independent from the Shariatpur-1 constituency in the Monday's repolling. Known in the country for decades as a terrorist, Awrangha is known as the chief of the capital's underworld gang "Five Star" group.

Awangha had been enjoying Awami League's blessings till the election when he decided to run against the AL nominee in the seat upon being denied a party ticket. The AL is now pointing a finger at him as a "branded criminal".



BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia signing register book after taking oath as MP at the Sangsad Bhaban yesterday.

AL to publish 'white paper'

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Hasina evaded a direct reply to a follow-up query as to whether the country should run without an opposition. "It appears that they (four-party alliance) don't want any opposition," was all she said.

"We'll publish a white paper. Through a fact-finding committee, we'll expose before the public the crude rigging that has marred the October 1 parliamentary elections.

"But, we will go ahead with our road-barricade programme and non-cooperation movement till the people's right to voting is restored," Hasina announced.

It was for the second time that the AL chief held news conference since her party's debacle in the general election. A day after the election, Hasina rejected the results bringing allegation of 'crude rigging' in the elections. On October 3, she had issued an ultimatum for the authorities to scrap the results or face a 'non-cooperation movement' starting on October 11. She had also declared that the party members who won in the election would not take oath as lawmakers.

"Yes, I did commit that I would accept the election results. But I did not commit to accept rigged results," she said referring to the international community's request to the AL to accept the poll results.

The former prime minister said she knew of no move by Western diplomats to bring her and the BNP chairperson to table to end the stand-off.

Flanked by party General Secretary Zillur Rahman and International Affairs Secretary Abul Hasan Chowdhury, the AL president came up with a barrage of allegations of vote riggings in the October 1 polls.

She also expressed her deep anguish and frustration at the post-poll violence let loose by the activists of the four-party alliance across the country and the indifference shown by the caretaker government to curb such incidents.

She also rejected Monday's repolling in some of the centres under 15 constituencies. "We took

part in the repolling as we believe in democracy. But, you have seen how the voting was completed by 1:00 p.m. in all those centres yesterday (Monday)."

Asked whether the AL will go to court to prove its complaints about 'rigging' in the polls, Hasina said, "We'll file a case but what's the use if that goes to deep fridge."

She claimed that 50 per cent of the voters loyal to the AL could not cast their votes in October 1 elections. In a calculated manner, some 100 to 150 seats were targeted beforehand to make the AL's defeat a certainty, she alleged.

The AL chief also alleged that the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami used some 70,000 blank cards, meant for poll observers, to manipulate the elections. The AL polling agents were driven out in many centres, as they protested the opponents' foul play.

Hasina observed that army personnel were deliberately misguided as they were provided with a false list of 'vulnerable' centres. She said her party had apprised the president, who is in charge of defence ministry, of these matters more than one occasion.

Saber Hossain Chowdhury assisted Hasina as she raised the issue of anomalies in the voters' list. Taking a CD (compact disk) from Saber's hand, she said, "We could not find any uniformity between the voters' list released in CD by the Election Commission and that in the hands of polling officials."

Moreover, she alleged, there were similarities in the voters' lists that the presiding officers and the BNP's polling agents had; but those were different from the voters' lists provided to the AL agents.

She also repeated allegations of fraudulent practices before, during and after the voting. These include 'partisan' shake-up in administration, assigning Islami Bank staff as polling officials, supply of extra ballot papers to polling centres, delay and slow progress in the voting process in many centres and sending of unauthorised faxes showing results to the Election

Commission. Hasina came down heavily on post-poll violence and atrocities, particularly on the AL leaders and workers and also on the religious minorities across the country. "The magnitude of such atrocities have already surpassed the level of tortures on our people on March 25 (1971)."

She alleged that 900 people, mostly of Awami League men, were killed and several thousands others injured in the country during the nearly 90-day rule of the caretaker government.

The AL president noted that there have been unspeakable atrocities on the members of the minority community. "Mothers and daughters were raped alongside at Panchabati, Garfagoan."

At one stage, AL MP-elect from a Mymensingh constituency Altaf Hossain Golandaz stood up to corroborate the AL chief's allegation. "One hundred and six houses belonging to our party men were damaged, both hands of Jubo League vice-president at Garfagoan were cut off, and eleven women, including a mother and her daughter were raped," he said.

As the news conference was in progress, two injured party workers, Rafiqul Islam and Abdul Mannan, were brought to the conference venue from hospital beds to show newsmen some examples of atrocities unleashed upon the AL men across the country.

Seeing the two, Hasina walked down the elevated dais and rushed to them. Emotion-choked, she described some incidents of violence against her party leaders and activists.

AL central leaders Syeda Zohra Rajuddin, Abdu Samad Azad, Zillur Rahman, Sajeda Chowdhury, Abdur Razzak, SAMS Kibria, Suranjit Sengupta, Tofail Ahmed, Abdul Jalil, Abdul Mannan and Abdul Mannan Khan, among others, were present at the press conference.

Musharraf breaks ice

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The Indian leader reminded Musharraf that it was Pakistan-based militant outfit Jaish-e-Mohammed, which had taken responsibility for the car bomb attack in Srinagar, capital of Jammu and Kashmir, on October 1, and said Islamabad had done nothing to take action against the outfit.

In reply, Musharraf is understood to have said, "We are inquiring into it."

At a news conference in Islamabad Monday, Musharraf said the Srinagar car-bomb explosion that had left civilians killed was condemnable.

The Indian prime minister offered to Musharraf humanitarian assistance, including food and medicines, for refugees from Afghanistan, who had taken shelter in Pakistan and suggested officials of the two countries meet to work out modalities for this. Musharraf readily agreed to this.

The decision to send humanitarian help to Afghan refugees in Pakistan was taken at an unsched-

uled meeting of Indian cabinet committee on security in New Delhi Monday evening.

Official sources in New Delhi view Musharraf's call to Vajpayee as an attempt at lowering the temperature shot up by some remarks made by the Pakistani military ruler in recent days. The call, they said, may have come under pressure from the United States.

Certain remarks made by Musharraf about India in his address to the nation some time back to explain the decision to cooperate with the US in the fight against terrorism as well as his description of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir as "freedom struggle" at a press conference Monday have understandably drawn sharp reaction from India.

After the Srinagar car-bomb blast which had left 38 people, mostly civilians, dead, Vajpayee wrote a letter to US President Bush urging him to appreciate India's stand that terrorism cannot be fought in isolation, and India

made it clear that its patience for sponsors of such incidents was not unlimited.

The US, according to diplomatic sources in New Delhi, would not like Indo-Pak hostility to increase at a time when the international coalition against terrorism hub in Afghanistan was in full bloom.

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin also spoke to Vajpayee Monday night and exchanged views on the unfolding situation following the US-led military operations against Afghanistan. They also discussed formation of a broad-based government in Afghanistan in the post-Taliban era, the sources said.

External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh told reporters in New Delhi Monday that India was in touch with the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance.

India, Russia and Iran have been supportive of the Northern Alliance as a broad-based alternative to the Taliban militia.

4 UN-related office staff killed

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airstrikes around Kabul and in northern Afghanistan, where a rebel alliance has been fighting Taliban troops.

The United States has emphasised that it is not targeting civilians in the attacks. The mine-clearing agency's office where the workers were killed Monday night was close to a Taliban radio transmission tower, a possible target of the raid.

"At 9:00 pm last night (1630 GMT Monday) in Kabul an office of the NGO Afghan Technical Consultants (ATC) was hit in the bombardment of Kabul. The building was destroyed," UN spokeswoman Stephanie Bunker said in neighbouring Pakistan.

"ATC was an NGO working under the umbrella of the United Nations Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan."

"All four died on the spot. Pieces of their bodies are still to be recovered from the wreckage," she said, adding UN coordinator for Afghanistan, Mike Sackett, sent his condolences to the families of those killed.

"People need to distinguish

between combatants and those innocent civilians who do not bear arms," Bunker told a news conference in Islamabad.

The Taliban claimed yesterday that dozens of people have been killed in the US-led raids, and accused the United States of deliberately hitting civilian targets. There was no independent confirmation of the Taliban figures.

"In this freestyle game, Washington is aiming firstly to hunt the sitting Islamic government in Afghanistan and then every committed Muslim in the name of terrorism," Abdul Salam Zaeef, the Taliban envoy to Pakistan, told reporters in Islamabad.

Later, Zaeef told CNN that bin Laden had survived the raids so far, and that the Taliban would not be handing him over.

"He is alive, his health is very good, and he is in Afghanistan," the envoy said. Asked if the Taliban would surrender him, Zaeef replied: "No."

Zaeef also told reporters in Islamabad that the Taliban's supreme leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, was safe in the wake of the latest airstrikes. After

the first raids late Sunday, an aide to the mullah said he had left his house only 15 minutes before missiles struck the building.

Kabul residents spent another sleepless night amid the roar of explosions and the rattle of anti-aircraft guns. Farmer Adam Khan and his family were fleeing yesterday on a truck piled high with belongings, heading out of the capital to an eastern district to escape more strikes.

They had been sleeping in their basement during the bombardment, he said. "All night the women and children were crying," the 50-year-old farmer said. "They were very worried--scared."

Targets in Monday night's raids included the airport in Kabul and a hill where the radio transmission tower is located, according to the private Afghan Islamic Press agency in Islamabad.

In Washington, the Pentagon said all its planes returned safely from Monday night's strike. There was no immediate confirmation that the aircraft carrying out yesterday morning's raids were part of the US-led coalition.

The challenge ahead

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and an encouraging growth rate that was the hallmark of the 1990s," said Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

"The two major overarching issues that need to be addressed in this regard are controlling fiscal deficit and backstopping balance of payment."

In the domain of public finance a three-pronged approach needs to be pursued. The first task is to broaden direct tax base. This needs to be followed by strengthening of non-tax revenue receipts and streamlining of non-NBR revenue earnings.

"While increasing revenue, one has to be conscious about the fiscal haemorrhage in state-owned enterprises (SOEs). The experience of the Privatisation Commission should be thoroughly reviewed for evolving a politically feasible and economically justifiable privatisation programme," said Dr Bhattacharya.

Dr Bhattacharya also believes that a Public Expenditure Review Commission should be set up to look at the fund allocation pattern and quality of projects. This will also find out areas where scopes remain to cut down revenue expenditure in real terms. Implementation of such a commission's recommendations will, however, be contingent upon progress in the area of public administration reforms.

"Containing the increasing budget deficit without dampening aggregate demand is also a major challenge for the new government," he said. "This will call for exploring resources outside the modes of banking and non-banking borrowings, which will entail improving foreign aid utilisation."

Dr Bhattacharya thinks that the balance of payment situation will demand close scrutiny in the face of export deceleration, slowdown in remittance flow, dwindling FDI and low off-take of foreign aid. The BOP has become an issue particularly given the low forex reserve, stable import growth and increasing foreign private and public debt servicing liability.

Dr Zaid Bakht looks at the immediate privatisation programme as a resource mobilisation step. The research director of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) thinks that rapid privatisation should be done pragmatically and if need be, units should be sold off without holding on steadfastly to their net worth.

Ensuring a proper investment climate through good governance, improved law and order situation and lowered transaction costs is important for attracting investments, he pointed out. For this, the new government should do its best to avoid any political conflicts.

Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) President Latifur Rahman shares the same view and feels that restoration of law and order and establishment of rule of law should be the first and foremost priority of the new government.

"Without properly restoring the law and order situation we cannot expect new investments and help the business confidence flourish," said Rahman, reminding the new ruling party of its pre-election pledge to establish a corruption-free society.

Dr Bhattacharya also feels that a constitutionally mandated Anti-corruption Council should be in place immediately and all public procurements should be made transparent as per the BNP election manifesto.

About industrial revival, he said, one of the shortcomings of the 1990s was the slackening of manufacturing growth.

"An Industry Commission may be set up to look into the major impediments to industrial growth and diversification, taking into account the ensuing global challenges," said Dr Bhattacharya.

"The commission will institutionalise dialogue between the government and business leaders as well as other stakeholders."

"The financial sector reform should also get exclusive attention of the government to strengthen the central bank's oversight functions, improve corporate management and provide institutional solution to bad debts in the form of creation of asset management companies."

"Such major issues as industrial financing to make fund available at competitive rate have to be sorted out, they all agree."

"Another immediate task of the government is to look ways for resource mobilisation to finance new industries," said Dr Zaid Bakht.

The financial sector reform is important because bad debts drain out resources. Viable non-bank financial institutions have to be set up to resolve the resource mobilisation problem, he said.

"The stock market has to get immediate attention of the government because it is the place through which small savings can be mobilised," Dr Bakht said.

Dr Bhattacharya believes that the "import substituting industries require special attention so as to promote their positive restructuring in the face of liberalisation."

"On the other hand, the export-oriented industries need a major thrust and especially the textile and apparels deserve an immediate crash programme to recover from

the current export deceleration. The BNP's election manifesto promises to reorganise the Textile Ministry with RMG focus and making available funds for the textile linkage industries should in fact be implemented immediately."

He however pointed out that "without tangible improvement of the trade supportive infrastructure, there is little scope to strengthen the country's export competitiveness."

To attract FDI, the government should target the sunset industries of the South East Asian countries, the CPD Executive Director feels. Bangladesh can bank on its heritage of having a good apparel industry to attract more capital investment in the sector. The government should also promote small and medium industries with the ultimate goal to link them with global industries.

In this connection Dr Bhattacharya maintained that making the "one-stop service" at the Board of Investment operational would be a real challenge for the new government.

The MCCI president believes the new government should also take note of the current developments in the global scenario including the terrorist attacks in the United States, which have far-reaching effect on Bangladesh economy.

"With a low, precarious foreign exchange reserve and a global slowdown after the September 11 terrorist attacks, the people, given the charge of managing the economy and businesses in the new government, should immediately sit with the trade and industry for planning measures to tackle the situation."

"In present context of global slowdown, the foreign exchange reserve position will not be totally under the control of the new government. But if it sits with the trade and industry people, I am sure they will be able to draw a better plan to tackle the situation."

Dr said the readymade garments sector should get the prime attention of the government and other than setting up backward linkage industries, the government should also act on other fronts to cut transaction costs. Issues like technological infusion, better management, efficient port, cost-effective banking service, power should be better addressed.

"One issue of vital importance is to provide public support to the most vibrant sub-sector -- small and cottage industry -- which recorded 8-9 per cent growth over the years. Export diversification is also of utmost importance for the new government," he said.

For the sake of country's business, especially for the export sector, the MCCI president feels the new government should fix a one-day weekly holiday instead of existing two days. "The weekly holiday should be fixed on Sunday and the government can give a two-hour prayer-break on Friday."

The exchange rate should be realigned and bilateral exchange rate appreciation should be addressed to stop illegal imports and hundi, said Dr . The currency basket has to be properly weighted taking into account the informal trade between Bangladesh and its neighbours.

"In the trade regime, the new government should also follow what the Awami League government did -- slow padding of trade liberalisation programme," he suggested.

In agriculture, Dr Bhattacharya believes, the challenge is to sustain the growth through non-grain crop diversification and productivity growth in grain sector through further technological diffusion and maintaining competitive farm-gate prices.

Rahman feels that the new government has a responsibility to save the country from confrontational politics. "In the face of the major opposition's planned agitation programme, which the business community has opposed, we hope the new government will take a positive and patient approach to defuse it as soon as it takes over. It should try to create an atmosphere so that the opposition can play an effective role in the parliament."

He also thinks that new government should take up measures to bolster the image of the country in the outside world and establish a credential of 'moderate Muslim democracy'. "This is not merely for projection, the new government in true sense have to practise it at the domestic level also."

Last day

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former president Abdur Rahman Biswas, reputed persons from different sections of the society and diplomats, sources said.

Cabinet Secretary Dr Akbar Ali Khan will conduct the oath-taking ceremony. After the prime minister, cabinet ministers, state ministers and deputy ministers will be sworn in.

According to sources, the list of ministers is yet to reach the Bangabhaban and is likely to be handed over to President Shahabuddin Ahmad just before the ceremony.

Officials have made arrangements for conducting oath of office to three categories of ministers but are not sure of the composition of the list, to be handed over by the incoming prime minister.

Nobel Physics prize

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verser's basic fabric that were predicted by Indian physicist S N Bose in 1924 and expounded by Albert Einstein.

"Maybe this can throw some more light on what the universe is made of," Nobel Committee Chairman and physics professor Mats Jonson told a news conference.

"If we measure more and more precisely then finally something will click,"