

# Vajpayee may reshuffle cabinet soon

REUTERS, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, under pressure to revive his ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), is expected to reshuffle his cabinet soon, a government source said yesterday.

He said no timing had been set for the reshuffle, but described it as being "overdue."

Vajpayee has long been expected to reshuffle his top team after serious setbacks for the Hindu nationalist BJP in state elections earlier this year. He had to postpone it because of a military standoff with Pakistan over disputed Kashmir.

"A cabinet reshuffle is possible soon but the timing has not yet been decided. It is overdue," the source said, declining to give further details.

Domestic media has focused on speculation that Vajpayee might drop or move Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha, who faced heavy criticism from BJP members over an unpopular budget he unveiled in February for the financial year starting in April 2002.

The 77-year-old Vajpayee last carried out a major reshuffle in September in a move which was meant to burnish his government's image and speed up economic reforms.

Several new faces were brought in and Disinvestment Minister Arun Shourie, who has been pushing India's privatisation programme, was elevated to cabinet rank.

The BJP, which swept to national prominence on a wave of Hindu nationalism following the razing of a Muslim mosque in Ayodhya in 1992, had to drop many of its hardline views in order to form a coalition government in 1999.

But it has since lost control of several key states, including India's biggest state Uttar Pradesh -- the BJP's heartland and home to Ayodhya -- in elections earlier this year, prompting a bout of soul-searching over the party's future.

Sinha in particular came under

attack for failing to sell the benefits of economic reforms to the electorate.

The BJP also came under fire for its handling of Hindu-Muslim riots in February and March in western Gujarat state, one of the few states which it still controls.

Political analysts say Vajpayee is keen to undertake an image change before the next general election due by 2004.

The BJP's parliamentary allies are also expected to push Vajpayee to try to obtain ministerial berths in any reshuffle.

## Duma approves anti-extremism bill

AFP, Moscow, June 20

Russia's lower house of parliament on Thursday pushed forward Kremlin-sponsored legislation on extremism which human rights groups warn could also lead to crackdowns on the country's political opposition as well as extremists.

The State Duma approved a bill in a 272-126 vote in the second of three required readings.

Among other things, the legislation defines extremism as any action that resists the actions of authorities on both federal and local level.

It identifies "extremist activity" as any steps taken by public or religious groups, as well as the media, which undermine the Russian constitution and national security.

It also allows the police to disband parties and political movements that have been identified as extremist in nature.

Human rights groups have criticized the bill as too vague, fearing that it will give law enforcement agencies the authority to crack down on opposition political parties and figures as well as genuine extremists.

## 'State must ensure equal rights of people'

BSS, Dhaka

Former Chief Justice Mostafa Kamal yesterday said it is the responsibility of state to fulfil any legitimate demand and ensure equal rights of the people.

"Our constitution has guaranteed equal rights for all and state has the responsibility to fulfil any legitimate demand of the people," he said.

Justice Kamal was speaking at a discussion on "Participation of Disabled in the Election Process of Bangladesh," organised by Action of Disability and Development (ADD) at Bangladesh Institute of Administration and Management auditorium here.

Presided over by Programme Manager of ADD Mosharrar Hossain, the discussion was participated by Executive Director of Democracy Watch Taleya Rahman, Country Representative of Asia Foundation Karim L Kashper, and Second Secretary of EU Josephine Kalinauckas.

Referring to the demand of the disabled, Mostafa Kamal said it is now matter of time to fulfil the demand of the disabled.

He called upon them (disabled) to work with utmost sincerity, and said they have achieved tremendous progress in different fields of development during the last couple of years without any help of the government.

## Govt firm to protect rights of children

BSS, Dhaka

Minister for Science and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan yesterday said the government was pledge-bound to create conducive atmosphere for the flourish of latest talents of children and to protect their rights.

He said late President Ziaur Rahman took different initiatives including introduction of Natun Kuri programme in Bangladesh Television (BTV) to flourish the hidden talent of the children.

"Previous Awami League government closed the Natun Kuri programme in BTV for only one reason because it was introduced by Ziaur Rahman," the minister said while addressing the inaugural function of 'Jatiya Zia Shishu Shilpi Protijogita (child artists competition) Shapla Kuri-2002' at Shishu Academy.

Presided over by the acting chairperson of the academy Principal Hamida Ali, the function was also addressed by secretary of the academy M Humayun Kabir and its director Shamsul Alam Liton.

## Biggest tug boat Kandari-1 to be inaugurated today

BSS, Ctg

The country's biggest tug boat M T Kandari-1 built at a cost of Tk 14.98 crore will be inaugurated today.

Shipping Minister Lt Col (Retd) Akbar Hossain will inaugurate the tug boat, owned by Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) at a formal ceremony.

CPA sources said the Kandari-1 was first built by the Narayangangri Dock Yard in 1984 at a cost of Tk 5 crore but it sank twice in the river Karnafuli due to mechanical fault immediately after its commissioning.

Talking to journalists yesterday morning at the dock of the Kandari-1, Engineer Abdur Rashid, Managing Director of the KSMW Ltd, a private-owned local ship builder said that successful trail of the newly-built tug boat by a group of experts completed recently.

Rashid said the 2500 horse power Kandari-1 now can pull a vessel weighing 60,000 metric tons during favourable wind and current, and vessel weighing 30,000 metric tons during unfavourable wind and current.

The tug boat was constructed by the local ship builder under supervision of local experts with the help of GP Marine, Singapore and recommended by internationally reputed firm Lloyd's, he added.

Rashid said KSMW Ltd since its establishment in 1994 with primary investment of Tk 5 crore had successfully repaired 160 different categories of ships and was able to build nine new ships, including Sea Truck, Fishing Boat, Oil Tanker and Cargo Ships. A total of 500 people now working in his firm.

## Forex seized

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toms hall. Officials then searched his baggage and recovered 2.06 lakh rial.

Nurul Islam, who hails from Chakhalil in Noakhali, was shown arrested for foreign currency smuggling and handed over to airport police.

Earlier, foreign currencies equivalent to about Tk 64 lakh were seized at the airport on June 14 in two operations led by the same official.



A human chain was formed in front of the Chittagong Press Club yesterday, demanding punishment to the killers of Sabequn Nahar Sony, a BUET student.

PHOTO: STAR

## President asked

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"I heard your speeches, a resolution was taken based on your deliberations and I share your sentiment," Prime Minister Khaleda Zia told the party deputies while rounding off the meeting.

President's son Mahi met his father immediately after the BNPP meeting at their Baridhara family residence.

Earlier, President Chowdhury left his presidential residence, Bangabhaban, in the afternoon for his family house at Baridhara and was staying there till 9:10pm. He later returned to Bangabhaban.

He (the president) will respect the decision (of the party) because he is the founding secretary general of the BNP," Mahi told reporters. "He was a close associate of late president Ziaur Rahman."

On Wednesday, the first day of the BNPPP meeting, parliamentarians belonging to the ruling BNP demanded impeachment of the president.

They came down heavily on the president for not turning up at the grave of late president Ziaur Rahman at his 21st death anniversary programme.

He also did not mention the late president's contribution in the country's War of Independence in his message on the same occasion.

The lawmakers observed that a party-nominated president should not ignore the contribution of the party's founder.

## Stevedores call off planned strike

BSS, Ctg

Bangladesh Master Stevedores Association (BMSA) yesterday called off their proposed indefinite strike in Chittagong port, scheduled from last night following a fruitful meeting between Port Users Forum and Chittagong Port Authority, BMSA and port sources said.

## US-British raids kill four Iraqis in Baghdad

AFP, Baghdad

Four Iraqis were killed and 10 wounded when US and British warplanes bombed southern Iraq yesterday, a military spokesman in Baghdad said.

The United States and Britain "added another ugly crime to their black record when their aircraft attacked our civilian and services installations in Missan province, 366 km south of Baghdad, killing four citizens and wounding 10 others," said the spokesman, quoted by the official INA news agency.

The US Central Command earlier said US and British warplanes struck an Iraqi military command and control centre that was helping to direct anti-aircraft artillery fire at coalition planes patrolling a no-fly zone in south Iraq.

## Budget on poor's back

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impact on the poor," he observed. Prof. Rehman Sobhan said tax administration is malfunctioning and there is no accountability in expenditure. "What is done with the money is totally non-transparent."

The degree of flexibility given to a finance minister is limited since the defence sector, debt servicing and salary expenditures deplete the bulk of the budget, he mentioned. He termed Bangladesh an under-taxed country, saying it is not enough only to enhance the tax base but to make it a tax-compliant.

"Unfortunately, the budget is not discussed in parliament," Prof. Sobhan said.

Former finance minister M Syeduzzaman said a mid-term review is necessary to identify economic problems beforehand. If the revenue target is not possible to materialise, and the ADP not cut, borrowing from banks would definitely increase. Besides, the international environment and export prospects are not looking good for the country. These may lead to macro-economic imbalances, he added.

Former finance minister AMA Muhiit said the most non-transparent aspect of the budget is that nobody knows where the money is spent.

Economist Atiur Rahman said businessmen-turned-politicians are dominating the parliament. Around 85 per cent of the members of parliament are businessmen-turned-politicians and their pressures are reflected in the proposed budget.

"The proposed budget will not help increase investment and generate employment," he said.

BEA President Dr Moinul Islam said the size of the budget is Tk 47,168 crore, not Tk 44854 crore as mentioned because the finance minister did not include the amount needed for debt servicing.

Considering the present economic slowdown, he said, the budget is totally against the interest of the majority as the finance minister has reduced tax on new cars, air conditioners and other luxury items and imposed taxes on computers, buses and mini buses just to name a few.

General Secretary of

Jatiyatabadi Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) Hasanul Huq Inu said 'smuggling is more rewarding than trading and trading is more rewarding than manufacturing in the present situation'.

No measure has been taken in the proposed budget to control the misuse of funds and corruption. It gives no direction on how the country can face the challenges of globalisation, Inu commented.

## Dr Alamgir

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sides, the court rejected the petition. The case was filed with CMM's Court, Dhaka on April 8 against Alamgir and five others.

In the case, it has been alleged the accused had erected a 'Janat Manchha' (people's dais) in front of the Jatiya Press Club in March, 1996 and instigated government officials and employees to join the agitation against the then BNP government.

Alamgir was arrested at the Zia International Airport on March 15 on his return from Singapore under Section 54 of the CrPC.

## Classic clash on cards

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Brazilians holding a big 4-1 lead in that department.

The two teams also have a lot to prove in the game today in Shizuoka.

The Brazilians are still hurting from their 3-0 defeat to France in the final four years ago. They last won in 1994, adding to championships in 1958, '62 and '70, during the Pele era.

That 1998 final was particularly upsetting for striker Ronaldo, who was sick on the morning of the game. He played but was ineffective, and then was sidelined with knee injuries.

"After two years without playing, this is without a doubt a personal victory," he said. "Now I'm becoming a normal player again and scoring important goals."

As for England, it hates being reminded that its lone title came 36 years ago when it was the host, and that it hasn't beaten Brazil in three World Cup meetings -- 3-1 and 1-0 losses and a 0-0 tie.

Coach Sven-Goran Eriksson believes the time is right to end that streak.

"It is always a pleasure to see Brazil play football. If you give them the time and space, they are very good," he said. "Their attacking is excellent and they have got a lot of individual skill. But maybe they are not as good at defending as they are at attacking, and hopefully we can use that."

"I guess that maybe it is the best defence in the World Cup against

the best attack. It will be a big battle, but I am very optimistic."

Brazil have scored 13 goals in four games at this World Cup, while England have not given up a goal in its last three, including a victory against Argentina.

"We are so equal, a game like this is decided on details," said Juninho, who knows the English game from his time with Middlesbrough in the Premier League. "Brazilians have more technique, but we have to match them in heart and also be attentive to high balls, which they play better than we do."

In the teams' last World Cup meeting in 1970, a 1-0 victory for Brazil, the Brazilian attack featured Pele, Tostao, Jairzinho and Rivelino. This time, it's Ronaldo, Rivaldo and Ronaldinho, the so-called "Three Rs" who strike fear into any defence. Ronaldo has five goals and Rivaldo four.

In 1970, Brazil had an attacking fullback in Carlos Alberto. This time they have Roberto Carlos, who has one of the hardest swerving free kicks in the game.

England went into the 1970 World Cup as defending champion with a defence built around Bobby Moore. This time they have Rio Ferdinand who, by coincidence, started his career with Moore's club, West Ham.

Although veteran goalkeeper David Seaman isn't in the same class as Gordon Banks, who made a memorable save from a Pele header in 1970, he has proved that, at age 38, there are few better goalies

# 100 miners feared dead in explosion in China

AFP, Beijing

More than 100 miners were feared dead in a major gas explosion at a coal mine in northeast China's Heilongjiang province yesterday, according to state media reports.

At least 58 miners were killed in the explosion at 9:45 am (0145 GMT) which occurred as some 140 miners were working underground in the Chengzhihe Coal Mine, the official Xinhua news agency said.

A further 58 remain unaccounted for, while 24 have been rescued, the agency said. Eight of the seriously injured have been hospitalised.

Zhao Wenlin, the general manager of the mine in Jixi city, had been inspecting work underground when the explosion occurred. It was not known whether he was among the dead or injured.

Jixi's mayor Wu Wei and leaders from the Jixi Mining Industry Group are coordinating rescue efforts at the site and Heilongjiang's governor Song Fatang, was on his way to Jixi, Xinhua said.

Two other coal mine explosions in the same city killed 31 miners and injured 43 others in April.

The more serious of the two accidents occurred when 73 people were inside the Donghai Mine in Jixi city on April 8, Xinhua reported then. An employee at the mine later said 24 people had died and 39 were injured when the mine shaft collapsed.

In the other accident on April 8, seven miners were reportedly killed by a gas explosion at a privately-owned mine in Didao district.

China's State Administration of Coalmine Safety late yesterday ordered the closure of 10 coal mines under the Jixi Mining Administrative Bureau, according to Xinhua.

It said other mines in China were being urged to draw lessons from the latest explosion and said authorities were "gravely concerned over the accident".

China is expected to close thousands of small coal mines this year

in an attempt to reduce the appalling death toll among workers in the industry.

## Navy chief visits Khulna naval areas

BSS, Dhaka

New Chief of the Naval Staff Rear Admiral Shah Iqbal Mujtaba returned here yesterday morning after a two-day first-ever official visit to the Khulna Naval area.

As part of his programme, Admiral Mujtaba visited BNS Titumir, BNS Mongla and the Khulna Shipyard, an ISPR press release said.

During his visit to these establishments smartly attired BN personnel presented him guard of honour. He inspected the guard and took the salute. Besides a traditional static parade was also held as a mark of respect to the new chief of naval staff on his maiden visit there. He also planted saplings at these naval establishments.

Addressing the officers, sailors and civilian employees, Admiral Mujtaba paid rich tributes to the martyrs who made supreme sacrifice in the country's great language movement in 1952 and the War of Liberation in 1971. He also called upon the navy personnel to dedicate themselves to the service of our beloved motherland in keeping with the ideology of the martyrs.

Admiral Mujtaba stated that the members of Bangladesh Navy have been safeguarding the maritime interests and the sovereignty of our vast sea area through their relentless vigilance and constant patrol.

The chief of naval staff also laid stress on the importance of moral values and professionalism in the overall development of the Bangladesh Navy.

## Regional trade

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the new deal to Delhi for its comments.

At the other end of the debate, the foreign ministry brought a charge of 'violation of norms' against the commerce ministry as it has agreed to a Nepalese proposal for trade talks without informing the foreign ministry, sources said.

The Nepalese Embassy in Dhaka sent a proposal to the commerce ministry for trade talks and the ministry in reply sent a proposal for talks at the end of this month.

As the reply was communicated directly to the Nepalese Embassy without informing the foreign ministry, the foreign ministry wrote a letter to the commerce ministry saying it should not have done so, the sources said.

The commerce ministry is yet to reply and waiting for the Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury's return from Moscow.

Some leading businessmen think the inter-ministerial row stifles any well-concerted effort for trade negotiations with the country's neighbours.

"Because of conflicts and misunderstandings, we have faltered in our negotiations with other countries.

Even in the April trade talks with India, we have seen these problems," a leading businessman told The Daily Star.

The row between the two ministries started after the April trade talks with India in Dhaka. The Bangladesh negotiators at the talks de-linked the transit-transhipment and border trade issues from any future trade talks and sent those for consideration of the Joint Economic Commission (JEC).

As the foreign ministry has to lead the country in the JEC, the ministry officials did not like the move, assuming that most sensitive issues with India were passed on to them without their consent.

"It means we are in an awkward situation, as we have to deal with the transit-transhipment and border trade issues at any future JEC meet. These issues are highly sensitive and raised more political clamour," a high official of the foreign ministry said.

In this context, highly placed sources said, some foreign ministry officials viewed that the transit-transhipment and border trade issues should be solved at trade talks.

## FM tags condition

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it is willing to give us for any sort of possible facilities that we may extend."

Khan pointed out Dhaka's frustration over several issues regarding which the Indian government 'failed to respond positively'.

He referred to the trade concessions asked from India but still not given and said, "We have a trade deficit of nearly 1.6 billion dollars and even if India offers concessions on all our goods, we can not cover any substantial part of that deficit. We thought that India, considering its vast size, would unilaterally respond by waiving tariff barriers on all the 25 categories of items. But that did not happen. We will not ask. This waiver would be a goodwill gesture. It would be a confidence building measure. Still, we have extended the bilateral trade treaty for another two months."

"We want relations with India on the basis of mutual reciprocity. We are neighbours and have to live permanently as neighbours."

He however said he had very useful discussions with his Indian counterpart Jaswant Singh and the prime minister's National Security Advisor Brajesh Mishra during his two day visit (June 17-18). Most of the bilateral issues were discussed and many subjects were flagged for future reference, he said.

Foreign Minister Moshed Khan yesterday said that during his recent visit to Islamabad he had discussions with his Pakistan counterpart Abdul Sattar on bilateral, regional and international issues of common interest.

"I don't think they are worried about playing England," Beckham said. "But then I don't think we are too worried about playing against them, either. That's the sort of confidence we must have."

concern.

With the Pakistan Commerce Minister also, he said, he had discussions on trade cooperation particularly on Pakistan providing duty free access to Bangladesh jute, jute goods and tea to its market.

He said that the Pakistan commerce minister told him that his government would consider the matter and let him know about it in due course.

Replying to a question whether Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf was due to pay a visit to Bangladesh in the next month, he said any SAARC country leader would be welcomed to visit Bangladesh on a priority basis.

## Israeli tanks

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In Jenin camp, as many as 250-300 people were loaded onto six buses and taken away for questioning. A local hospital was taken over and the army entered the home of the local leader of the Islamic Jihad group in the camp.

Following Wednesday night's suicide bombing in Jerusalem, Israeli troops also moved on the Gaza Strip.

Israeli helicopter gunships fired missiles at targets in Gaza City and in the south, wounding six people, while troops snatched six other people wanted for questioning.

Meanwhile, a Palestinian militant was killed in the early hours of yesterday during an aborted attack on a religious secondary school in a Jewish settlement near the West Bank town of Hebron.

## President's profile

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University of Wales in the UK. He received his Postgraduate Medical Training in London, Cardiff and Edinburgh in the UK.

A brilliant student, Chowdhury secured the second position in the Matriculation Examination and stood first in the MBBS (medicine) Examination. He completed his MRCP from the Royal College of Physicians at Edinburgh and Glasgow and TDD from Wales University.

He was elected FCPS (Bangladesh) as the honorary fellow and fellow to the Royal College of Physicians from Edinburgh in 1978 and later from Glasgow.

Badruddoza Chowdhury also authored a number of research papers in national and international journals. He was also associated with the anti-tuberculosis campaign and had been the president of the National Anti-Tuberculosis Association of Bangladesh for a

number of times.

Even after being the president, he ran free clinics in his own constituency and treated patients free at the Bangabhaban.

Well known for his patronage to art and culture, Chowdhury was involved in cultural movement. He is also an author, essayist, playwright and orator. He received the National Television Award in 1976.

He was the deputy leader of the BNP Parliamentary Party and the House after the 1979 election.

Chowdhury was also the senior deputy prime minister in Ziaur Rahman's cabinet. He was also the deputy leader of the opposition in parliament in 1996.

Professor Chowdhury was a known face in rallies and parades of the BNP in opposition.

Chowdhury is married to Hasina Warda Chowdhury and has two daughters, a son and two grandchildren.