

## MANMOHAN MEETS VAJPAYEE, ADVANI Situation in Bangladesh, other neighbouring states discussed

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New  
Delhi

The situation in Bangladesh and other neighbouring countries of India came up for discussion when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh met top BJP leaders in a bid to work out a political consensus on major foreign policy issues.

External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee briefed top BJP leaders, including former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Leader of the Opposition L K Advani, on Tuesday on the situation in immediate neighbourhood and on ties with Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka, a statement issued by the Prime Minister's office said.

The luncheon meeting con-

vened by the PM came days ahead of Mukherjee's trip to Pakistan to officially invite Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf for the Saarc summit to be held here in April.

Foreign Secretary Shivshanker Menon, National Security Adviser M K Narayanan, PM's special envoy to Pakistan S K Lambah, senior BJP leader and former Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh and former National Security Adviser Brajesh Mishra attended the meeting.

The purpose of the meeting was to keep the main opposition party in the loop on major initiatives of the government, especially on foreign policy, sources said.

The development came a little over a week after the PM drove down to Vajpayee's residence on December 25 to greet the latter on his 82nd birthday, which was

viewed by analysts as a bridge-building exercise.

The BJP had, of late, stepped up attacks on the government on a number of foreign policy issues, including dealing with terrorism, Pakistan and the Indo-US nuclear deal.

The BJP leaders were reportedly briefed on the status of negotiations on the Indo-US nuclear commerce deal after US Congress passed a historic legislation last month in the run up to the bilateral agreement to be discussed to implement the deal.

The BJP had, during the winter session of Parliament, accused the UPA government of converting into a 'client state' of the US by accepting the terms of the deal. The main opposition had also played 'unilateral' moves by the government on foreign policy front.

## 20 injured in Chandpur BNP intra-party clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

About 20 people were injured in an intra-party clash of BNP at Sholaghor in Chandpur on Tuesday during an election procession.

Farid Ahmed Manik, a rebel candidate of BNP for Chandpur-IV constituency, brought out a procession against the BNP nominated candidate SA Sultan Tito, immediate past BNP lawmaker.

As the demonstrators pass by the house of Tito, some activists pelted stones at the house and the supporters of Tito immediately chased and locked in clash leaving about 20 people injured.

Police in collaboration with the army personnel dispersed the mob and brought the situation under control.

Police has been deployed in and around Tito's house at Sholaghor, a suburb of Chandpur.

## Hasina signs condolence book on Ford

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina has signed the condolence book opened at the United States Embassy here in memory of former US president Gerald R Ford.

Hasina signed the book on behalf of the people of the country, her party and her family.

The AL president, in her writing, expressed deep sorrow at the demise of the former US president and prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul.

Gerald R Ford, the 38th president of the United States, died on Tuesday at the age of 93.

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Patricia A Butenis, Awami League leaders Kazi Zafarullah, Syed Abul Hossain and former ambassador Mohammad Ziauddin were present on the occasion.

## President hosts Eid receptions

BSS, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed hosted receptions for distinguished citizens and foreign dignitaries on the occasion of holy Eid-ul-Azha at Bangabhaban this morning.

The president and his wife Prof Anwara Begum welcomed the guests and exchanged Eid pleasantries and new year's greetings at the receptions for the distinguished guests joined by Speaker Barrister Jamir Uddin Sircar, Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassir Hossain, advisers of the interim caretaker government, Supreme Court Judges and politicians.

Others, who attended the reception are senior serving and retired civil and military officials including the chiefs of the Army, Navy and Air Force, Vice-Chancellors of different public and private universities, educationists, national award recipients, editors and senior journalists of national newspapers and new agencies, writers, poets and literateurs.

Another reception was hosted earlier in honour of the foreign dignitaries when ambassadors and High Commissioners of different countries and chiefs of various international agencies based in Dhaka exchanged Eid and new year's greetings with the President and Prof Anwara Begum.

The president/chief adviser offered his Eid prayers earlier this morning at the National Eidgah Maidan here in a congregation also joined by the speaker, the chief justice, advisers, Mayor of Dhaka Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Supreme Court judges and a large number cross section of people.

Khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque Maulana Obaidul Huq led the prayers and subsequent munajat seeking peace, progress and prosperity of the Muslim Ummah.

## Akhtaruzzaman new DG of BR



Md Akhtaruzzaman has taken office as the director general of Bangladesh Railway (BR) on December 28, 2006, says a press release.

He joined BR in 1973 as assistant signal and telecommunications engineer.

During his long career Akhtaruzzaman held different important positions of signal and telecommunications department. Before this appointment he was the additional director general.

**DHAKA  
TODAY**

**Blue for peace**

Family members of slain former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria and civil society members will stage a demonstration as part of their 'Blue for Peace' programme demanding proper investigation into the killings. Venue: In front of Shishu Meia, Shyamoli. Time: 4:00pm.



Grand alliance candidates, left, of Chittagong led by Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury withdraw nomination papers at Chittagong divisional commissioner office while candidates, right, of Rajshahi withdraw nomination papers at the election office in Rajshahi yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

## Sincere efforts can solve all outstanding issues Iajuddin tells Myanmar envoy

UNB, Dhaka

President/Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday hoped that with sincere efforts of both Bangladesh and Myanmar all outstanding issues including repatriation and maritime demarcation could be resolved amicably.

The remark came when outgoing Ambassador of Myanmar in Dhaka U Thane Myint called on Iajuddin at Bangabhaban.

Prof Iajuddin said Bangladesh attaches special values on its relation with neighbour Myanmar and hoped that mutual cooperation in different areas of common interest would further strengthen the existing relations between the two countries, according to a Bangabhaban spokesman.

He mentioned that the volume of bilateral trade between the two countries was heavily tilted in favour of Myanmar and hoped that the

business community in both the countries would be able to achieve the modest target set by the two sides.

In this regard, Iajuddin underscored the need for increased import of pharmaceuticals and other products from Bangladesh.

He requested the government of Myanmar to quickly complete the ongoing construction work of Bangladesh-Myanmar highway.

He told the Ambassador that the interim caretaker government has taken all necessary steps to hold the ensuing general elections in a free, fair and neutral manner.

The Myanmar Ambassador informed that Myanmar is eagerly waiting to work with the next government in Bangladesh, which would be installed in power through the upcoming election.

He hoped that both the governments would make efforts for

speedy completion of the ongoing construction works of the Myanmar-Bangladesh highway.

## Injured Pirojpur journoman admitted to DMCH

Pirojpur Correspondent of the daily Inqilab and Baishakhi TV Jahirul Haque Titu, who was critically injured following an attack by BNP-Jamaat cadres, has been admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital on Tuesday, says a press release issued by Pirojpur Press Club.

Titu, along with some other journalists in Pirojpur, was injured on December 28 as the BNP-Jamaat cadres swooped on the journalists in a bid to foil their scheduled human chain.

In this connection, a case was filed against 19 people but none has been arrested till date.



PHOTO: STAR

Admirers pay their last respect to folk singer Shefali Ghosh at her Nandan Kanon residence in Chittagong yesterday.

## Politics now volatile, uncertainty looms

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divided into two camps. "We are requesting the political parties to make their last efforts to hold a free and fair election in the country for maintaining peace."

Termining the grand alliance's decision as "logical," eminent scholar Prof Anisuzzaman said "There is no justification for participating in a 'farical' election."

The caretaker government did not take enough initiatives to create a congenial atmosphere for a free and fair election in the country, he said adding that the partisan officials are still in the Election Commission (EC) and the voter list is yet to be corrected properly. The situation would not have deteriorated so much if President Iajuddin Ahmed had accepted the demands of the grand alliance, he further observed.

On the question of 90 days provision in the constitution, Anisuzzaman put emphasis on all political parties' reaching a consensus in this regard. Referring to the situation after the fall of Ershad regime in 1990, he said that the constitution could be maintained through the judgement of the Supreme Court.

In her reaction, National Prof Sufia Ahmed termed the situation 'very critical' and 'uncertain'. "I am confused as everything is happening unexpectedly, nothing is going normal".

Brig Gen (retd) Shakhawat Hossain said, "The crisis won't be solved if the election is held with the participation of one alliance."

He also feared breaking out of violence during and after the polls. The economic activities and day-to-day life would be disrupted and the country would plunge into an uncertain situation if the violent situation continues, he added.

The grand alliance's boycott of polls is only applicable for the January 22 election, Shakhawat

said observing that they did not rule out the possibility of contesting the polls in future.

In this situation, the president, also the CA, has to decide what steps to take, Shakhawat said explaining that there are three options. "He (president) could plan for a dialogue among the political parties, refer the matter to the court to extend electoral time or proclaim a state of emergency in the country."

Maj Gen (Rtd) Syed Muhammad Ibrahim termed the boycott as a "delayed decision." The grand alliance should have taken this decision much earlier as their two major demands -- correction of the faulty voter list and resignation of President Iajuddin Ahmed from the post of chief adviser (CA) -- were not realised, he added.

The voter roll could not be updated and published for public view in time because the EC and the immediate past government did not want it, he alleged adding that it was expected that the caretaker government would persuade the EC to carry out the corrections properly, but to no avail.

"I strongly believe that an accurate voters list can be prepared within 30 to 40 days time should all the resources of the government or the nation be used sincerely. I even recommend that the organisational strength and huge trained manpower of the military be made available to the EC to assist in preparing the voter list, without which election is going to be farical," he added.

Ibrahim also observed that an election participated by one party or one alliance will be like that of the election of February, 1996, in which case, it is bound to be unacceptable to the world.

On the role of President Iajuddin he said, "I strongly believe that he (president) has not followed the

provision of the constitution sincerely and with visible credibility before assuming the post of the CA."

On the question of violation of the constitution, if the election is not held within 90 days of the caretaker government's taking power, Ibrahim said that if all major political parties agree on holding a credible and acceptable election, then it will be possible to defer the election date.

In his reaction, former adviser to a caretaker government Maj Gen Moynul Hossain Chowdhury said that the people are disappointed at this decision of boycott as they were looking forward to have a general election. "We are again heading towards uncertainty which is not good for the country's image, economy and development," he said.

Prof Sadrul Amin, president of Dhaka University Teachers Association (DUTA), sees the grand alliance decision as a way of wasting more time. "We have realised earlier that the AL led alliance would not participate in the election."

The people are fed up with the long agitation and political violence by the AL, he added.

General Secretary of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) Zahid Hossain termed the election boycott as a 'misfortune' for the nation. "We expect more 'responsible' move from a party like AL."

As the whole nation is looking towards the election, it election would be held even after withdrawal of nomination by the grand alliance, he observed.

There is still time to resolve the crisis and the political parties should initiate a dialogue immediately for evolving a way out, Zahid suggested.

In his reaction, eminent writer

## Obituary

BSS, Dhaka

Yakub Ali Khan, former relief commissioner and food secretary of the erstwhile East Pakistan and joint secretary of the ministry of works of the then Government of Pakistan, died at Monroe Township, New Jersey on Monday morning at the age of 93, according to a message received here.

He was laid to rest after Zohr prayers at the Muslim Graveyard in New Jersey on Tuesday.

A brilliant student, Yakub Ali Khan, was among a handful of Bengali Muslims who secured first class both in Honours and Masters in mathematics from Calcutta University.

He joined Bengal Civil Service (BCS) and served in various capacities in the then Bengal and later in East Pakistan and Pakistan. Among his notable contributions as a civil servant was the completion of what was then known as the second capital and now Sher-e-Bangla Nagar.

YA Khan left behind three sons, two daughters and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

## Advocate AKM Siddiq

BSS, Dhaka

Advocate AKM Siddiq, an eminent lawyer, died of old-age complications here yesterday at the age of 100.

He was an administrator general and official trustee of the then East Pakistan government, family sources said.

Siddiq left behind four sons, two daughters and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

He was buried at Azimpur Graveyard following a namaz-e-janaza at DOHS mosque here.

## Death anniversary



Today is the 7th death anniversary of Mohiuddin Ahmed, a language veteran, former president of the then East Pakistan Chhatra Union and now defunct the daily Desh, says a press release.

He worked at the Bangladesh Mission in Kolkata during the liberation war in 1971.

On this occasion, a milad mahfil will be held and food will be distributed among the destitute.

## Full text of Hasina's speech

Following is the full text of the speech Awami League President Sheikh Hasina delivered at a press conference of the grand alliance at Sheraton Hotel in the city yesterday:

On October 29 last year, President Iajuddin Ahmed appointed himself as the chief adviser to the non-partisan caretaker government in violation of the constitution. We said from the beginning that he is neither neutral nor non-partisan. We had placed 11-point proposal before him in order to prove himself to be neutral, but he did not implement those.

The chief adviser and 10 other advisers subsequently offered a package proposal signed by them. The proposals included resignation of SM Zakaria and Mudabbir Hossain Chowdhury; appointment of two new election commissioners and entrusting one of them to act as the chief election commissioner; depoliticisation of the administration; and bringing changes to the attorney general's office, replacing all law officers and bringing changes to the top posts of intelligence agencies.

But when we accepted the package proposal, he opposed the council of advisers-agreed proposals under the directions of Hawa Bhaban.

Yet, we tried to participate in the elections for the sake of democracy. After our candidates from the grand alliance submitted nominations, we noticed that the chief adviser has started implementing election engineering under the dictates of BNP-Jamaat.

Sixty-five days, out of 90 days, have already passed, but President Iajuddin Ahmed has not taken any steps to prove his neutrality as the chief adviser to the non-partisan caretaker government.

The chief adviser has established a shadow government of BNP-Jamaat instead of a non-partisan caretaker government.

The nationally and internationally unacceptable Election Commission has failed to prepare a correct voter list.

There are only 19 days to go to the elections as per the current schedule. But a correct and flawless voter list is yet to be published.

Now it is learnt that a voter list will be published after January 7. Under the voter list rules and regulations, there is a provision that the voter list should be displayed in public for 15 days for scrutiny before publishing the full electoral roll.

If the election is held on January 22, there will be no time to earmark 15 days for scrutiny and for subsequent correction and publication of the list.

It is clearly stated in Article 121 of the Constitution that "There shall be one electoral roll for each constituency for the purposes of elections to parliament, and no special electoral roll shall be prepared so as to classify electors according to religion, race, caste or sex."

But according to newspaper reports, the Election Commission has distributed three types of voter lists -- the list of 2000 and the updated and supplementary list of 2000. And the voters' names, their fathers' names and the voter serial numbers do not match. In many cases, the lists show different information regarding name, age and profession of the voters against the same serial number and the holding number.

Many voters whose names are on the list of 2000 have been dropped. Names on pages after pages in the voter list have been crossed off, while a huge number of false voters have been included.

We fear that the presiding and polling officers will be given the list which does not contain the names of grand alliance leaders, activists and supporters and the minorities.

Additional polling centres have been set up without any advertisements. In many cases, polling centres have been set up four or five miles away, so that voters favouring grand alliance cannot cast their votes.

The judiciary and the administration still remain politicised. Charge sheet has been submitted against eminent lawyers such as Dr Kamal Hossain, Barrister Amir-Ul Islam and Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud

**WEATHER  
TODAY**

**Dry weather likely**

UNB, Dhaka

Dry weather will prevail over the country with moderate to thick fog over the river basins in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Light to moderate fog may also occur elsewhere over the country during late night until early morning, Met Office said in a forecast.

It said prevailing mild cold wave over Rajshahi division and the regions of Tangail, Mymensingh, Jessore and Chuadanga may continue and spread upto Northern Chittagong division for next 12 hours.

Country's highest temperature 25.4 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 8.0 degree Celsius at Rajshahi.

**The sun sets in the capital at 5:25pm today and rises at 6:42am tomorrow.**

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature	Humidity in percentage	in celsius
	Max	Min	Morning Evening
Dhaka	22.9	11.0	77 54
Chittagong	24.8	12.8	78 49
Rajshahi	23.0	8.0	92 46
Khulna	23.6	11.5	97 59
Barisal	24.0	9.8	89 78
Sylhet	22.2	10.8	100 73
Cox's Bazar	25.0	16.0	78 60