

## 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 Shivshankar Menon, National Security Adviser M K Narayanan, PM's special envoy to Pakistan S K Lamba, 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 flagged "unilateral" moves by the government on foreign policy front.

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

in an unusual hurried way.

The Election Commission is not applying the law equally for all. As part of the election engineering, the commission has unjustly rejected the nomination paper of Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad.

The caretaker government has protected, instead of arresting, the criminals who attacked the houses of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) leaders, including Badruddoza Chowdhury.

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and the police are being used to arrest, harass, torture and kill the leaders and activists of the grand alliance. The false cases filed against our leaders and activists in the last five years have now been used to arrest grand alliance leaders and activists.

No list of real criminals has been made. Instead of recovering illegal arms or arresting the arms holders, the authorities are collecting licensed arms from the citizens, thereby causing insecurity for them.

The National Security Intelligence agency and the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence are being used to implement the election engineering.

The administration has not been depoliticised. Rather, 20 personal secretaries of BNP-Jamaat ministers have been appointed deputy commissioners. Skilled and efficient officials are still serving as officers on special duty (OSD).

The chief adviser is trying to deprive the people of their right to vote at the instructions of BNP-Jamaat. He is conspiring to elect the thieves and the corrupt elements belonging to BNP-Jamaat who have plundered public assets and amassed huge wealth overnight.

Our statement is very clear. We want a free, fair and peaceful election according to the constitution. For this a congenial atmosphere should be created.

It has been proved that the president as the chief adviser is not interested in creating an environment conducive to election. So, he must step down as the chief adviser. And a new chief adviser must be appointed according to the constitution.

In accordance with the package proposal, a new chief election commissioner has to be appointed and the Election Commission has to be recast.

Over 300 partisan officers appointed in the Election Commission and as district and upazila election officers have to be removed or made OSD.

Every eligible voter has the right to vote. A draft voter list has to be published. According to the electoral laws, there should be at least 15 days to scrutinise the voter list before the publication of the final voter list.

A full voter list has to be published for each constituency.

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

### 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.

Effective measures must be taken to depoliticise the administration. Identified partisan officials have to be made OSD. They have to be replaced by competent and neutral officers.

All election candidates, including Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad, whose nomination papers have been rejected illegally, have to be allowed to take part in the election.

A new election schedule must be announced after update of the voter list in order to implement the aforementioned measures so that an environment conducive to fair election can be created.

Because it is more important to have an acceptable election with the participation of people than an election held within the fixed schedule. The people will neither accept nor allow rigged polls. The grand alliance wants an election that will reflect the people's verdict.

President Iajuddin wants to hold an election without a valid voter list after illegally assuming the post of the chief adviser. We cannot legalise such an election. Therefore, we, the grand alliance, have decided not to participate in the stage-managed January 22 elections.

Article 58 (D) of the constitution calls for a free, fair and peaceful election. We will go to the polls with the people after creating an environment conducive to a free, fair and peaceful election in Bangladesh.

We will enforce blockade programme across the country on January 7 and 8 to press the demands for the publication of a correct, flawless and updated voter list and the resignation of Iajuddin Ahmed as the chief adviser. If the demands go unmet, we will lay siege to Bangabhaban for an indefinite period.

We call on the administration, police, Bangladesh Rifles and the armed forces to stand by the people and assist in the struggle to restore the people's right to vote. We will continue any sorts of movement to protect the people's right to vote.

### 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 his 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 Mela, Shyamoli. Time: 4:00pm.



PHOTO: STAR  
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.

## 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

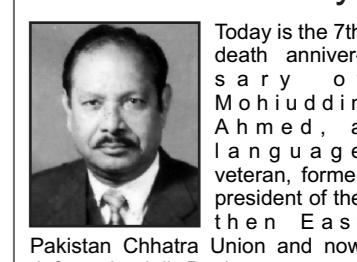


PHOTO: STAR  
Admirers pay their last respect to folk singer Shefali Ghosh at her Nandan Kanon residence in Chittagong yesterday.

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.

FROM PAGE 1

President 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.

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 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.

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