

## Teenage son Bilawal

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The officials confirmed that the 19-year-old Bilawal would take over the leadership of the PPP, the largest party in the nuclear-armed Islamic nation.

"Bilawal is the new chairman of the party and Asif Ali Zardari will assist him as co-chairman," one of the officials said.

The party also appointed Zardari as co-chairman, and called for a United Nations probe into the circumstances of her slaying in a gun and suicide bomb attack Thursday.

"Democracy is the best revenge," Bilawal told a chaotic news conference in the Bhutto family's ancestral home here, vowing the party's "long and historic struggle for democracy will continue with a new vigour."

Benzar's husband on Sunday demanded a UN probe into her assassination, along the lines of the world body's probe of the killing of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Hariri.

"We demand a Hariri commission-style investigation," Asif Ali Zardari said at a news conference. "We are writing to the United Nations for an international probe into her martyrdom."

"I chose not to give them permission for an autopsy," Asif Ali Zardari told a news conference presenting the couple's son Bilawal as the new leader of Bhutto's party.

"I've lived here long enough to know how and where the autopsy would have been conducted," he said, adding that any autopsy would have been "useless".

Moreover, Pakistan's ruling party said Sunday that January 8 elections may be delayed up to four months because of the assassination of Benazir Bhutto.

As political manoeuvring in the wake of Benazir's death picked up pace, another key opposition party said earlier it would reverse an earlier decision to boycott the vote if Benazir's group decided to run.

"We will definitely contest the elections if the PPP decides to contest," said Sadiq ul-Farooq, a senior member of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-N party.

Benzar's slaying last Thursday plunged the nuclear-armed country into a political crisis and triggered nationwide riots that left at least 44 people dead ahead of the parliamentary polls, seen by the United States and other Western nations as key to promoting stability in the country.

Controversy remained about whether she was killed by gunshots, a shrapnel wound or the concussive force of the blast.

She was buried without an autopsy and the debate over her cause of death undermined confidence in the government and further angered her followers, many of whom believe elements within President Pervez Musharraf's administration played a role in the killing.

Tariq Aziz, information secretary of the Pakistan Muslim League-Q, said the parliamentary elections would lose credibility if they are held on January 8, with Benazir's party in mourning and other opposition groups intent on boycotting.

He expected authorities to announce a delay within 24 hours.

"How long the postponement will be for will up to the Election Commission," he told The Associated Press. "I think we are looking at a delay of a few weeks ... up to three or four months."

Police struggled to control thousands of mourners outside

the meeting, who shouted "Musharraf is a killer!" and called for the separation of Benazir's home province of Sindh from the rest of Pakistan.

"Benazir Bhutto sacrificed her life for the sake of this country and for democracy," her husband Asif Ali Zardari told mourners after they had thrown flowers at the mausoleum where she was buried. "But her blood will not be in vain ... Bhutto will remain alive in the hearts of people."

Local media quoted unnamed sources as saying Benazir's 19-year-old son Bilawal Zardari would be appointed her successor, extending one of Asia's greatest political dynasties. Benazir Bhutto's father Pakistan's first elected prime minister founded the party in 1967 and its electoral success since then has largely depended on the Bhutto name.

Other party members said Benazir's husband, a key power-broker who was freed in December 2004 after eight years in detention on graft charges, should take the job.

"We will come up with a consensus, Benazir's will and the meeting will determine it," Zardari told reporters when asked whether he wanted the post. "The party has a lot of brave people and a lot of brave leaders."

Since Thursday, unrest has killed at least 44 people and caused tens of millions of dollars of damage.

They have wrecked nine election offices along with the voter rolls and ballot boxes inside hampered the printing of ballot slips and the training of poll workers, the election commission said. The commission has called an emergency meeting for Monday. In fresh violence, two men blew themselves up Sunday close to the residence in eastern Pakistan of Ijazul Haq, the former religious affairs minister and senior leader of the ruling party, said district police chief Zafar Abbas Bukhari. Both men died, but there were no other casualties.

Video of Benazir's assassination shows a man shooting at her three times from close range seconds before her car is caught up in an explosion from a suicide attacker.

Authorities initially said she died from bullet wounds, but Interior Ministry spokesman Javed Iqbal Cheema later said Benazir was killed when the force of the bomb smashed her head into the sunroof. Bhutto's spokeswoman Sherry Rehman said she and other witnesses saw a bullet wound in neck and said Cheema's remarks were "dangerous and nonsensical."

The government blamed the attack on Baitullah Mehsud, a Taliban commander with links to al-Qaeda, who heads a militant coalition based in its lawless tribal regions. The coalition is committed to fighting the government and its support of the US. But his spokesmen denied the charge.

A spokesman for Benazir's party, Farhatullah Babar, said the government's accusations appeared to be "a planted story, an incorrect story, because they want to divert the attention."

Cheema said Benazir's party was free to exhume her body to conduct an autopsy, but rejected calls for an international investigation. An independent domestic judicial investigation should be completed within seven days of the appointment of its presiding judge, he said.

(AFP/AP)

## 2 ringleaders held

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terracotta Vishnu and Bust of Vishnu statues.

Rab found the four pieces during their daylong search for the missing fragments of the statues at a garbage dumping ground of Baliapur in Aminbazar on the outskirts of the capital.

Major Aminul Haque of Rab-1 told The Daily Star last evening that they would ask National Museum officials to examine whether the four fragments were of the archaeological masterpieces.

The two artefacts along with 143 others were awaiting shipment to Paris for an exhibition at the Guimet Museum. They were stolen at the airport on December 22.

Aminul said it appeared to them that out of the four pieces, two could be part of the hand of the black terracotta statuette of Vishnu where the Hindu god stands with goddesses Saraswati and Laxmi on his sides. The other two pieces could be part of the Bust of Vishnu. These two, they assume, are fragments of the abdomen of the Bust of Vishnu statuette.

On Friday, around 200 Rab personnel and 25 Dhaka City Corporation teams rounded up around 200 fragments. Later, two National Museum officials identified 27 pieces on the spot as parts of the stolen idols. No officials from the museum were on the spot yesterday.

Rab will continue their search today.

Meanwhile, our court corre-

spondent reports: a Dhaka court placed detained former lawmaker Anwara Begum on a three-day remand and sent former deputy secretary SM Mizanur Rahman and 14 others to jail in connection with the artefacts theft case.

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Ehsanul Haque passed the order after Sub-inspector (SI) Monirul Islam, the investigation officer (IO) of the case, produced them before the court with different forwarding reports.

In his forwarding report placed before the court, the IO said Anwara might be involved in the artefacts theft. So, she needs to be placed on remand to extract vital information about the incident.

The IO placed another forwarding report saying that Mizanur Rahman needs not to be interrogated. However, the same IO placed a 10-day remand petition before the court on December 27.

He, in the forwarding report, gave reasons that Rab earlier recovered 20 fragments of the stolen artefacts from different places and seven arrestees gave confessional statements.

The court yesterday sent 14 others to jail after they were produced before it on completion of their five-day remand.

Those sent to jail are Samiul Abedin, Masud Rana Saiful, Abu Bakar, Shariful Islam Manik, Mohammad Shahjahan, Mohammad Ali Shamim, Belal Hossain, Abul Hossain, Abdul Halim Babul, Zaki Mahbub, Edward Roy, Debu Barua, Mohammad Solaiman and Sankar Chandra Dey.

### Former forest chief

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assistant director of the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC), brought Anwar to the magistrate's chamber.

On October 23, ACC Assistant Director SM Sahidur Rahman filed the case with Ramna Police Station against Anwar on charge of amassing illegal wealth and providing false statement about his property to the anti-corruption watchdog.

The complainant in his first information report (FIR) stated that although the former top forest boss drew a total salary of Tk 30.49 lakh during his stint at the top position of the forest department, he accumulated wealth to the tune of Tk 2.9 crore in his name and in the names of his wife, sons and relatives between 1996 and 2007.

During scrutiny of the wealth statement he handed in to the ACC on June 14, he was also found to have concealed information about property worth about Tk 83 lakh, added the complainant.

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Golam Rabbani passed the order against Redwan Ahmed after ACC Assistant Director Shahin Ara Momtaz, the IO of the case, submitted a petition for showing Redwan arrested in the case.

On December 19, Shahin filed the case against the former state minister and Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) presidium member and his wife Momtaz Ahmed.

In the case, the complainant said Redwan illegally accumulated Tk 2.31 crore and did not show property worth Tk 1.37 crore in his wealth statement. Redwan submitted the wealth statement through jail authorities on August 14 following an ACC notice issued on August 7.

Momtaz was included in the case as she abetted her husband in accumulating and concealing the wealth.

Shahbagh police arrested Redwan soon after his release from the Prison Cell of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) Friday evening.

He was first arrested at his Baridhara home in the city on June 26 under Section 16(2) of the EPR. He was later shifted to the Prison Cell of BSMMU from Dhaka Central Jail due to health ailments.

### Dhaka asked

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group has not been effectively countered and so, the threat persists.

"It is important to manage the threat through capture and arrests and also by building necessary structures within government and the civil society to counter the group's belief system," he said.

He also said it is important for the economy to grow if militancy is to be effectively mitigated with a particular focus on poverty as militants readily exploit poor communities for recruits.

Gunaratna said the al-Qaeda embraces the concept of leading or cooperating local struggles as demonstrated by their activity in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Somalia, Egypt and Libya, among others.

He added that disbelieving the al-Qaeda threat is dangerous as demonstrated by the case of Pakistan.

### India up prices

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Bangladeshi traders as the per-kilogram cost of rice will stand at Tk 35 which will further increase after adding transport and other costs," said Nasir Uddin, a rice importer in Jessore.

An Indian High Commission spokesman, however, could not confirm the increase in the price of rice exported to Bangladesh.

He told The Daily Star that they are still discussing the issue of five lakh tonnes of rice to be especially exported to Bangladesh as relief for the cyclone-hit people.

"India has been trying very hard to keep the price low for the five lakh tonnes of rice earmarked for export to Bangladesh," the spokesman said last night.

Nasir said, "A few Indian rice exporters told us that it is possible to export rice to Bangladesh with profits at prices between \$355 and \$360 per tonne. But the government policy is not allowing them to export rice at that rate."

Another rice importer, Tipu Sultan, said traders prefer importing rice from India as the transport cost for per kilogram rice is less by Tk 7 compared to other countries.

"We have suspended importing rice from India after the latest price increase as it is not possible to profit at this price," he said, adding that if imported, the minimum price of per kilogram rice will stand at Tk 37 in domestic markets.

Wholesale traders in Dhaka, meanwhile, blamed low production of rice for the crisis in the market, which has led to the price hike.

"Overall production of rice in the country this year was less than that of previous years and this prompted us to turn towards the international market for importing rice," said a rice trader. "But it is difficult to get rice in the international market due to high prices," he added.

According to the data of Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) on yesterday's market price, the price of coarse rice was Tk 28-30 per kilogram, which is 16 percent higher than the price a month ago and 57 percent higher than the price in the same period last year.

The prices of other varieties of rice have also increased by 9-13 percent compared to the price a month ago.

## New Year's Eve

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the city.

Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) has already issued notice to all licensed bars in the capital to close by 5:00pm today.

As the state of emergency is prevailing, law enforcers said they would take action as per the Emergency Power Rules if anyone breaks the rules by unruly activities and drug abuse.

Sources said the authorities concerned are extra cautious this year due to the assassination of former Pakistani prime minister Benazir Bhutto.

Rab's dog and bomb squads will be deployed at different vulnerable points. Rab will also set up check posts on different roads of the capital to search vehicles. Rab intelligence teams will also be deployed.

Rab's strike force will be kept on reserve to respond to any untoward incidents.

"Our personnel have already started searching vehicles and people setting up check posts at different places in the city," Rab Legal and Media Wing Director SMAK Azad told The Daily Star last night.

Police officials said around 3,500 policemen will be deployed in the capital on New Year's Eve. Apart from 2,800 uniformed policemen, plainclothes men will also be deployed.

In addition to this, eight platoons of police, each with 111 policemen, and around 200 personnel from the Detective Branch of police will be deployed while its strike force would be kept as reserves.

Meanwhile, Department of Narcotics Control has requested all to refrain from abusing drugs and unruly behaviour on the night of 31st December.

It sought cooperation of all to avert any untoward situation that is usually triggered by unscrupulous and unruly people who sell, buy and abuse dangerous and adulterated drugs. This deteriorates the law and order situation and also poses a threat to people's lives, it

said.

RESTRICTIONS

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) authorities made a number of city roads off limits to traffic for 10 hours from 8:00pm on New Year's Eve.

Gulshan, Banani, Baridhara and Dhaka University areas will come under the restrictions.

Motorists have been asked to use Kakoli, Phoenix and Natun Bazar intersections to enter Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara from 8:00pm today to 6:00am on New Year's Day.

The DMP also requested people living near Gulshan Club intersection, Wireless Gate Bridge, Shooting Club Bridge, Gudaraghat Bridge, Jatisangha Bridge and Shahjapur Bridge and Gulshan Avenue of Gulshan-1 and Gulshan-2 to reach their homes before 8:00pm today.

It said no vehicles will be allowed to enter the Dhaka University campus through Palashi, Bakshibazar, Chankharpu, Nimitol and Government Employees Hospital, but Shahbagh intersection, Nilkhet and Old High Court entrances would remain open.

The instructions will not be applicable for vehicles of the residents of Dhaka University area and they will be allowed to enter after security checks.

However, exiting the area will have no restrictions.

Fire engines, ambulances and other vehicles of the emergency services will remain out of the purview of the restrictions.

### Chief adviser

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been smoothly conducting the relief operations with the help of the people and the armed forces.

He thanked the expatriate Bangladeshis who came forward with generous help for the cyclone victims, saying their compassion and love for their motherland would encourage others to help build a happy and prosperous Bangladesh.

## Khaleda, Moudud

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of the Prime Ministers Office might also be questioned.

The sources added that the ACC issued notices to different ministries and departments including Bapex, Titas, Petrobangla, Sylhet Gas Field, Bangladesh Gas Field Ltd, and the energy ministry, asking them to provide the investigators with necessary documents.

The ACC will complete the process of gathering documents and visiting different places within a short period of time, they said.

Former energy adviser Mahmudur Rahman's statement will also be taken as he opposed awarding the deal to Niko. The ACC is considering Maumudur as an important witness in the case, the sources said adding that persons involved at different levels of the process of awarding the job to Niko, from preparing the proposal to the awarding of the job, will also be questioned.

Meanwhile, no progress has been made in the investigation of the case filed against former premier Sheikh Hasina and six others for allegedly inflicting an enormous amount of loss on the

state through awarding gas deals to Canadian gas exploration company Niko by abusing their power.

"No progress has been made yet in the investigation of the case against Hasina," said Iqbal.

The co-accused of Sheikh Hasina in the case -- detained former state minister for energy Rafiqul Islam, former principal secretary to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) Dr SA Samad, former energy secretaries Dr Towfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury and AKM Hossain, former Petro Bangla chairman Mosharraf Hossain, and Vice-president (South Asia) of Niko Research Bangladesh Ltd Kashed Sharif.

The joint forces arrested Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina from her Dhanmondi residence in the capital on July 16 while hearing of the charge framing against the AL leader was being held under special arrangement.

The ACC yesterday also approved filing of the first information report against AL's Nur-E-Alam Chowdhury Liton in connection with amassing wealth that is not corroborated by his known sources of income.

## HR commission

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turned the Bureau non-functional.

"If the same thing happens in the case of the Human Rights Commission, it will be nothing but a waste of public money. We want the commission to be independent and effective," Itekhazur Rahman said adding that there must be a provision ensuring that the HR commission publishes its annual report with details of all its activities for better transparency.

He said the civil society organisations could help the government prepare a draft HR Commission Ordinance in consultation with the stakeholders and mass people.

BLAST Executive Director Taslimur Rahman said the commission might face problems it is heavily dominated by bureaucrats.

Reading out the statement, ASK Coordinator Sayeed Ahmed said the HR Commission Ordinance 2007 must adopt a wider definition of human rights to include political, social, economic, cultural and all other rights that are necessary for the development of the citizens.

According to the draft HR Commission Ordinance, a six-member selection committee would propose two names for each of the three-member commission.

These six-member selection committee would consist of a justice from Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, a cabinet secretary, the attorney general, the comptroller and auditor general, the chairman of Public Service Commission and the law secretary.

"This selection committee is too dependent on the executive

branch of the state. We demand participation of the civil society in the committee who worked to uphold human rights for a long time," the statement said.

Inclusion of at least one female member in the commission must be ensured by the law, it said, adding: "We want reflection of opinions of all people irrespective of ethnicity, religion and sex."

Sayed Ahmed said as there are possibilities that the state would be all the more blamed for violating human rights, effort to solve the problems only through arbitration or compromise is a constricted idea. "A detailed description of the commission's power to investigate and its procedures therefore is necessary," he said.

According to the HR Commission Ordinance, the commission would not consider the issues already under trial and as a result, the area of the commission will be very constricted, leaving the possibility that the commission might turn non-functional, Sayeed Ahmed read out from the statement.

"We think the complaints of negligence in resisting violation of human rights by government organisations should also come under the purview of the commission," the statement said.

The commission should be given the power to make recommendations whether all national laws are in line with international laws to uphold human rights, it added.

### Latifur Rahman

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annual general meeting (AGM) of the organisation yesterday, said an MCCI press release.

Rahman has investments in different sectors including pharmaceuticals, beverages and electronics.

Abdul Hafiz Choudhury, a senior partner of Rahman Rahman Huq, has been elected vice-president.

The newly elected committee members are M Anis Ud Dowla, chairman of Advanced Chemical Industries Ltd, Steve Banner, chief executive officer (CEO) of The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Ltd, Nasir A. Choudhury, managing director (MD) and CEO of Green Delta Insurance Co Ltd, Anjan Chowdhury, MD of Square Consumer Products Ltd, Maj Gen Amjad Khan Chowdhury (Retd), CEO of Agricultural Marketing Co Ltd, M Azizul Huq, MD of GlaxoSmithKline Bangladesh Ltd, Imtiaz Husain, chairman of Imtiaz Husain & Company, Mahbubul, chairman & MD of Singer Bangladesh Ltd, Nihad Kabir, partner of Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed & Associates, Obaidur Rahman Khan, director of Transcraft Ltd and Syed Nasim Manzoor, MD of Apex Adelchi Footwear Limited.

### Power adviser

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projects which cover large areas would get top priority in getting electricity.

Tapan mentioned that power generation units have been overhauled for smooth supply of electricity during the season.

He said Barapukuria coal mine would operate at full capacity in two phases to feed adequate coal to the adjoining 250MW power plant. "We hope both the units of the plant will be operating in the coming season."

The adviser, however, said despite all efforts, the power department will have to resort to load shedding although electricity demand would be low across the country in the current winter when the irrigation season starts.

He said during the operation of the irrigation pumps, there would be huge reactive power which might result in low-voltage in the city's power-supply system but added that Desa and Desco will take necessary measures to address the problem.

The power adviser said some measures have already been taken in line with the suggestions made by the investigation committee in a bid to forestall disaster in the national grid in the future.

### Upazila polls

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secretariat office, Iqbal said: "The present caretaker government wants to complete the upazila elections as the previous elected governments didn't take any initiative to hold such elections despite having the opportunity."

Expressing doubts about upazila election under the future elected government, he said: "If this government does not hold the upazila elections, I don't think it will take place in future."

Responding to a query, the LGAD adviser said there is no bar to holding the upazila elections and parliamentary election together.

"There is precedence of holding national and upazila elections the same day. The people of Bangladesh has the experience of casting their votes in two ballot papers at a time."

Iqbal said there are many laws for holding elections to City Corporation, district council, upazila parishad, pourashava and union parishad. The government is now thinking of formulating a new law by integrating the existing laws.

He informed that a conference of elected representatives of local bodies would be held at the National Parade Square in the city on January 5 aiming to strengthen the local government bodies.

### Tigers urged

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performance in our middle-order. We can't afford to lose wickets so quickly; we need to make better decisions when the pressure is on."

Ashrafui, 23, was glad to have the services of Test specialists Habibul Bashar, Shahriar Nafees and Enamul Haque, who flew into Auckland yesterday. Bangladesh have a single win in 49 Tests, against Zimbabwe in 2004-05, and Ashrafui called on his players to play hard against New Zealand.

Assessing the opposition, who were completely outclassed in a two-Test series in South Africa recently, Ashrafui felt they were a formidable side.

"I don't think New Zealand are vulnerable in the Tests, despite what happened to them in South Africa," he said. "They're a good side; they fight very hard and they're especially tough to play in their own conditions."

From Queenstown, Bangladesh will travel to Dunedin to begin preparations for the first Test that begins on January 4.

The second and final Test, also the last match of the tour, starts in Wellington on January 12.

## Incredible insurance

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Bengal Art, in a letter to the French Ambassador in Dhaka said, "Would you consider an insurance value of just four million euros [initially it was four million euros] sufficient for all the treasures of France?"

"For this amount of money you cannot buy a fragment of a painting by Vincent van Gogh, but your government considers this adequate 'according to international standards' for the cream of the art of Bangladesh."

It all appears to be a financial fraud especially since an item like 'Vajrasattva' alone would be worth the total value of insurance, noted Baurze, a specialist in Asian art.

Coming from the museum of Maimnati, the bronze statue of a sitting Buddha seems to be one of the major attractions for the Guimet Museum authorities. Its picture has been used on both the front and back covers of the catalogue for the now cancelled exhibition.

Sufi Mustafizur Rahman, chairman of the archaeology department at Jahangirnagar University, said, "I don't believe you can find another Vajrasattva even if you search the whole world through. It is simply an amazing work of art."

He observed, "I'm not sure if in the ninth or tenth century when the statue was sculpted here in Bangladesh the other world would know the metal moulding technology."

Pointing to a clause of the agreement that says the Guimet Museum is entitled to restore the artefacts prior to the opening of the exhibition, one of the experts seeking anonymity said, "It is indeed very fishy."

"I don't think it is necessary to restore all the artefacts before the exhibit. It may be hard to distinguish between the original ones and the restored ones without a carbon test," the expert added.

Sufi Mustafizur Rahman said Bangladesh has only two Pragna Patrimonia, a Pala era manuscript containing paintings.