

## Baby dies as parents

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support during the 72-hour post-operative observation period and negligence of the authorities," he said at a press conference in front of the Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) office after the DRU refused to give him space to hold a press conference.

"On December 27, the hospital authorities suddenly informed me at 11:00am that the oxygen supply to the ICU was interrupted and I would have to shift my daughter to another hospital. The problem, however, started at 4:00am," said Shaiful.

"I made all arrangements for her shifting, but the hospital authorities kept my ill baby hostage for about half an hour until I paid all the dues worth Tk 7,740. When I took my daughter to another hospital the doctors there declared her already dead," he said.

When contacted, Coordinator of Labaid Specialised Hospital Mahbubul Hoque told The Daily Star over telephone that the child had congenital cardiac problem and was in a critical condition with lung infection.

"The baby underwent

septostomy, an invasive procedure, on December 25 and was kept in the ICU. As her condition was deteriorating gradually, we informed her parents of it and they agreed to shift the baby," he said.

He denied that the hospital authorities told the girl's father about an interrupted oxygen supply. Even an alternative system was ready and the moment the parents wanted to shift the baby, the hospital authorities initiated the emergency procedure to transfer the baby by an ambulance, he said.

The DRU authorities refused to let Shaiful hold the press conference at its auditorium although he had paid the auditorium's rent in advance on Sunday.

DRU sources said Shaiful applied for the reservation saying a press conference will be held on family matters. But later, the DRU came to know that it was against an institution. The DRU authorities cancelled the booking for providing "false" information and informed Shaiful of the cancellation on Monday night.

## Benazir's dream

**FROM PAGE 16**  
to market the book in February. The book's launch will accelerate the debate for the reconciliation between Islam and the West through democracy. The debate may give a new 'life' to Benazir, but keeping that debate alive will be the biggest challenge for the Pakistan People's Party in 2008.

And 2008 will throw tough challenges for the PPP's new chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari. Benazir Bhutto faced similar challenges in 1979 after her father Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was hanged. Then, mother Nurat Bhutto took over the party as the chairperson and Benazir Bhutto was named the co-chairperson.

In 1979, General Zia-ul-Haq postponed the general election indefinitely because he was aware that the PPP would benefit from the sympathy wave after the hanging of its founder-chairman. The PPP did not face the challenge of going to the polls in 1979.

The only big challenge was the party's political survival and they met that period with courage. Later on, it was the co-chairperson, Benazir, who led the party in practical terms and now her husband will lead the party as co-chairman in similar fashion.

In 2008, the PPP's new chairman and co-chairman face bigger challenges than in 1979. President Musharraf cannot delay the election for more than two months. Thus, the party will soon have to face elections. No doubt that PPP will benefit from the sympathy wave after the assassination of Benazir but keeping party united will definitely be a challenge after the election. Tracking down the mastermind behind Benazir's assassination is another challenge for the new leadership of party.

Making clear that he is not interested in any investigation by the incumbent regime, Asif Ali Zardari has already pointed fingers at the alleged suspects. Confident, he is more focused on the polls now. He would also be keen to arrest the assassins when his party comes into power. His son Bilawal is ready to participate in the campaign because he also wants to contribute to the 'revenge through democracy'. Most PPP workers and sympathisers are happy with Zardari's first press conference as the co-chairman. They say he showed confidence to carry on with his wife's mission.

On the other side, many in the government were not looking comfortable when Zardari declared the pro-Musharraf Muslim League as the 'Killers League'. It is feared that if the PPP sweeps the polls, it will immediately start confronting the alleged suspects who are close to Musharraf.

There are no doubts that the New Year will be tougher for Musharraf. If PPP gets majority in coming elections then Zardari will try to impeach Musharraf with the help of Nawaz Sharif and if PPP will be denied a majority then Zardari will go for a mass movement against Musharraf. Some of Musharraf's close advisers are trying to find a way out through which they can avoid a direct confrontation with the PPP, but they also face problems. Zardari has refused to receive a Muslim League (Q) delegation at his Naudero residence, which intended to see him for condolence. Bilawal is not ready to forgive the killers of his mother like Benazir forgave many killers of her father in the larger interest of the country. Bilawal cannot forget the turbulent period his mother faced without her husband in exile.

He is an eyewitness of all the sufferings his mother faced between 1999 and 2007 when Musharraf was in power. Bilawal was only a year old in 1989 when his prime minister-mother Benazir Bhutto clearly hinted that her son would be the next leader of the PPP. Bashir Riaz was her press spokesman then. He

also worked for her father Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and brother Murtaza Bhutto.

One day 'Bash' (Bashir Riaz) showed a picture on the cover of a French magazine to his leader, in which Benazir Bhutto was posing with her son Bilawal. A happy Benazir immediately asked for a black marker and wrote a question on the picture with her autograph. The question said, 'Dear Uncle Bash, will you be my spokesman when I will grow up? Benazir Bhutto 89'. Later on Bashir Riaz published this picture with the remarks of his leader in his book about the struggle of Bhutto family.

The same year (1989), Bilawal met then US president George H W Bush, with his mother when she was on an official visit to Washington. Benazir actually followed the footsteps of her father Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, who took his daughter to India with him in 1972 where he held talks with then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Bilawal was only two years old when Benazir's first government was dismissed by president Ghulam Ishaq Khan after 20 months.

President Ghulam Ishaq Khan was part of the establishment, which hanged Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, but Benazir accepted him for the sake of democracy and reconciliation. Unfortunately, she was betrayed. Bilawal was five years old when his mother became prime minister again in 1993. This time too, she was not allowed to complete her five-year term and lost power after three years. Bilawal spent the next nine years in exile without his father who was imprisoned in Pakistan by Musharraf regime. Half his life he has spent without his father; now, the rest of his life will be spent without his mother. He and his two little sisters are feeling to be betrayed by all those who wanted the help of their mother for bringing true democracy in Pakistan.

He is sure that true democracy will not only be the best revenge of her mother's assassination but the best way to complete her wish for becoming a bridge between Islam and the West. Only a true democracy can become a common agenda of cooperation between the two civilisations.

Only true democracy can resolve the problems of extremism and terrorism.

Bhutto had plans of an international conference of world leaders for initiating a grand dialogue between the Muslim world and the West in 2008. She even planned the engagement of those forces, who were blamed for her assassination by the current regime. Both Bilawal and Asif are determined to complete the disrupted agenda of Benazir Bhutto but they need lot of cooperation from the party ranks. They need to convert their pain and grief into a strength. Now, it will be the PPP's duty to complete her unfinished agenda.

The PPP should not forget what Benazir Bhutto said in the coming book and must contribute positively to the restoration of democracy and also for the grand cause of reconciliation between the Islamic world and the West. It is proved that puppet leaders of the third world cannot bring democracy to the Muslim countries and cannot become bridge between Islam and the West. Only popular leaders like Benazir Bhutto can do that but unfortunately she was also betrayed by the West.

Hamid Mir, executive editor, Geo TV, Islamabad.

## Private banks

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Bangladesh's rate is 6-7 percent, and in June 2007 it was 5.93 percent points.

BB sources said they have initiated steps to reduce the spread of banks in a bid to decrease business costs.

The PCBs and FCBs have already been asked to give a work plan on how they would reduce their spread.

## Bangladesh

**FROM PAGE 1**  
freedom from corruption and labour freedom.

It said Bangladesh has extreme barriers to trade freedom and tariffs are prohibitively high. It is also weak in investment freedom, property rights, and financial freedom.

"Corruption is rampant," the Heritage Foundation said, adding that chaotic regulations and restricted market sectors also impede greater foreign investment in the country as does a haphazard and politicised approach to the rule of law.

The banking sector is plagued with similar problems, the foundation observed.

It, referring to Bangladesh's weighted average tariff rate at 55.8 percent in 2005, said barriers to trade include prohibitions and restrictions on imports, restrictive labelling requirements, and ineffectively operated customs procedures.

Referring to "widespread corruption," the think tank said, "Corruption serves as a non-tariff barrier... It [corruption] is cancerous to all other economic freedoms, this is the key area that needs improvement."

Starting of a business in Bangladesh takes an average of 37 days, compared to the world average of 48 days. Entrepreneurship should be easier for maximum job creation. Obtaining a business licence is relatively simple but closing a business is difficult.

It said the overall freedom to start, operate, and close a business is relatively well protected by the national regulatory environment.

## DU teachers

**FROM PAGE 16**  
Morshed in his statement told the court that he had taken some photographs of a procession of teachers and students with a digital camera on August 22 last year and handed them to ASI Anis.

Anis, on the other hand, said he had downloaded the camera photos, which Sub-Inspector Sarajul Islam at Shahbagh Police Station later seized from him.

Anis said he signed the seizure list. The four teachers and the one student, now in jail custody, were brought to the court, and the magistrate allowed them to sit down on a bench during the hearing.

The four teachers are Dhaka University Teachers' Association President Prof Anwar Hossain, General Secretary Prof Anwar Hossain, Prof Harun-ar-Rashid, dean of science faculty, and Prof Neem Chandra Bhowmik, chairman of applied physics department.

The case was filed on August 22 against 4,000 to 5,000 unnamed students and teachers of Dhaka University and outsiders for violating the emergency rules, vandalising public and private property, obstructing police duty and assaulting law enforcers at the university and in the vicinity.

Police, however, pressed charges against four teachers and 15 students September 9 for instigating the violence on the campus and at Shahbagh on August 21 and 22.

Another court will today hear the other case against the same accused.

## Sweeper colony

**FROM PAGE 16**  
requested the residents to vacate their houses.

None was reported injured. Families said they went back to the building after city corporation engineers, who visited the spot, told them that the cracks caused no damage to the structure.

They also said the engineers would visit the building today to further examine the cracks.

A DCC engineer, preferring anonymity, said the incident might have happened as the building was constructed on a ground which was earlier used as rubbish dump.

## Sending Hasina

**FROM PAGE 16**  
her physical condition... she is not helping us about her treatment."

Hasina, who is under trial in an extortion case, could not appear before the court yesterday morning as her physical condition deteriorated. She fell ill during the hearing of the trial Monday.

"We provided four doctors for her treatment whom she selected. The doctors sought her cooperation for some tests but she did not cooperate with them," said Haider, adding, "As she did not cooperate with the doctors, her treatment would be provided according to the medical board's directions."

The specialist doctors who were assigned to Hasina's treatment were Pran Gopal, Shaila Khatun, Modasser Ali and M Abdullah.

The DIG-prisons said, "As the jail code does not allow treatment facilities abroad for inmates, the former prime minister would be given treatment at any hospital or clinic in the country she chooses."

Talking to The Daily Star he said, "The medical board would be constituted within a day or two. The jail authorities with the help of experts would select the medical board members."

Meanwhile, 41 intellectuals, poets, educationalists, authors, journalists and cultural personalities in a joint statement expressed their concerns about Hasina's health. In another joint statement 308 doctors also expressed their concerns and urged authorities concerned to send Hasina abroad for treatment if required.

## Boost export thru

**FROM PAGE 1**  
A total of 395 institutions, including 15 companies from abroad, are showcasing their products in the exhibition at five premier pavilions, 42 pavilions, five premier mini-pavilions, 36 mini-pavilions, 35 premier stalls and 262 stalls at the city's Shere-Bangla Nagar venue.

Entry fee has been fixed at Tk 10 for each adult and Tk 5 for children. The fair will remain open from 10:00am to 9:00pm on working days and from 10:00am to 10:00pm on holidays.

Finance and Commerce Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam, Commerce Secretary Firoz Ahmed, FBCCI Administrator Syed Manjur Elahi and EPB Vice-Chairman M Shahbullah also spoke at the function. Advisers to the caretaker government, diplomats, representatives of the international organisations, members of business community from home and abroad and distinguished personalities attended the inaugural function.

After the inaugural speech, the chief adviser formally opened the DTF 2008 at its venue. He went round some stalls.

The CA said the government has taken up programmes to face the challenges of globalisation, which include further intensifying export diversification and involving country's huge population in these activities to generate employment opportunity and reduce poverty.

To attain the goal, he said the government is focusing on simplification of import-export process, increasing the standard of goods and productivity, application of modern technology in trade and commerce, expansion of export market and flourishing capability and establishing transparency and accountability in all spheres of the business area.

He mentioned the government has formed Regulatory Reforms Commission and Better Business Forum aiming to improve the business environment and simplify the rules and regulations.

## Emergency needed

**FROM PAGE 1**  
"Newspapers as the fourth state of a nation can publish all kinds of news amid emergency because we want cooperation from journalists to establish a corruption free nation," he said.

Mainul was speaking at the inaugural function of a 15-day mass awareness raising programme styled "One year of Change under Present Caretaker Government" organised by the Department of Mass Communication (DMC) at the PIB auditorium.

"We're in the government for a short time but working to establish a permanent system," the advisers said. He also pointed out the difference between the previous and present caretaker governments, saying they have rounded up top politicians under a massive purge.

He mentioned the entire package of reforms taken up by them in the last one year like institutional reforms in the Election Commission (EC), Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), Public Service Commission (PSC), recruiting agencies for overseas employment, Chittagong Seaport shipment system, separation of the judiciary from the executive, and development in various service sectors like establishing the Citizen Charter, One Stop Service for police clearance certificate and passport related problems.

The law adviser also said they are working to establish a people's government through holding a free, fair and acceptable election after accomplishing various institutional reforms.

Presiding over the function, Information Secretary Jamil Osman said the DMC is a responsible service institution and works at the grassroots level to disseminate necessary information through popular media like bioscope, films, songs, discussion, meeting and street drama.

He said the government has created an avenue for democracy, development and tranquillity in the country in the last one year through anti-corruption drives and reform measures.

The adviser urged the civil society, media representatives and the administration to work unitedly to check terrorism, corruption and crime.

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## Hasina's lawyers

**FROM PAGE 1**  
minister Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, another accused in the case, was present.

Hasina's younger sister Sheikh Rehana, the other accused, was shown as absconding.

The former premier's chief counsel Shahef Ahmed told the press that after examining all the relevant documents and evidence, they are now convinced that charges cannot be framed against any of the accused in the case.

Citing some 'baseless allegations' that contained 'inconsistencies', Shahef said they will submit a discharge petition before the court on Sunday and argue out.

Opposing the charge brought against Hasina over awarding a power plant deal on turn-key basis instead of non-turn-key, the counsel mentioned that units number-5 and 6 Ghorashal power plant took nine and seven years to be completed. The job was awarded on non-turn-key basis.

But Siddhirganj power plant deal awarded (when Hasina was premier) to Techno Prom Export, a state-owned Russian power generation company, on turn-key basis had a 28-month deadline for completion, and it saved \$ 61.67 million of public money, he said.

For these reasons, the charge of extracting toll by prolonging the work period is baseless, he argued.

Moreover, the Russian company was supposed to inform the ministry was concerned every month about progress of the work with photographs and video footages, the counsel mentioned.

The defence lawyers also said that Azam Chowdhury was merely a sales agent of the Russian company and he had no role in striking the deal with the company. The deal took place between Power Development Board and the state-owned Russian company, and he had nothing to do at any point in the process.

"Medical report shows that Hasina is suffering from high blood pressure, eye and kidney diseases and as a result

The CA said the country will have to participate in the trade fairs of different countries on a large scale for expanding market of export goods and exploring new markets.

"If necessary, single-country trade fair for Bangladesh products will have to be arranged in various prospective places, which will bring good results," he observed.

Simultaneously, efforts will have to be carried out for duty-free access to the markets of the developed countries.

In this regard, he said it is imperative to take appropriate steps by the ministries and the departments concerned and the private sector for human resource development.

"It is imperative to improve knowledge, strategy and efficiency to realise facilities in different international forums," he told his business audience.

Different business associations and research organisations have scope to make contribution in this regard, he said.

Besides, the CA said, country's interest will have to be upheld in regional and bilateral commercial discussions in the light of the multi-lateral commercial system of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Citing an impressive contribution of readymade garments to the nation's export income, he said all will have to be more active about increasing backward linkage of this sector, reducing lead time, development of infrastructure and compliance.

He suggested enhancing the capability and productivity to face the situation after the lifting of European Union's embargo on import of Chinese garments from January 2008 as well as to utilise the opportunity in Japan and other potential countries.

He hoped that the Dhaka International Trade Fair 2008 would make a positive contribution to local and international trade area, particularly increasing export trade.

## Emergency needed

"These changes may cause problems to some vested quarters, but the people will gradually get the benefit for a longer term," he observed.

Termining the present caretaker regime a reformist and crisis management government, Mainul said they on priority basis have taken up some reform initiatives to strengthen the foundation of democratic system and establish good governance.

He listed institutional and economic reforms, service sector development, food safety and supply situation and freedom of information and mass media.

Curbing corruption from all strata of society is one of the mandates of the government aiming at establishing an equitable society and fair administration for honest and competent people, he added.

He said the government has created an avenue for democracy, development and tranquillity in the country in the last one year through anti-corruption drives and reform measures.

The adviser urged the civil society, media representatives and the administration to work unitedly to check terrorism, corruption and crime.

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## Prices of oil

**FROM PAGE 1**  
oil was selling at Tk 100 a litre yesterday. It has lately been in short supply on the retail markets there.

On the wholesale markets, per litre soya bean oil sold at Tk 93 while it cost Tk 85-86 a week ago. Price of palm oil rose to Tk 80 from Tk 73 and that of a better quality (super palm) to Tk 84 from Tk 77. The latter is being widely sold as soya bean oil by retailers.

Importers claimed their prices reflect the hikes on the international market. But wholesalers and retailers dismiss the argument saying that no consignment of soya bean or palm oil has entered the country since the recent global price spiral.

They pointed out that there are always reserves of edible oil that can meet the domestic need for at least a month. So, usually it takes more than a month for the global price hikes to affect the local markets.

In the last few days, the price of per tonne crude soya bean oil on the international market has risen to \$1,160 from \$1,100 on December 22. During the same period, the crude palm oil price has shot up to \$1,060, marking a \$65 rise, importers said.

But AKM Fakhrul Alam, country manager of Malaysian Palm Oil, said, "The global price hikes have nothing to do with the soaring up of price on the local market as the edible oil now being sold was exported long before December 22."

Oil prices should not rise further in the next couple of weeks as a shipment of 32 thousand tonnes of crude soya bean is scheduled to arrive at Chittagong port in a day or two. Another 25 thousand tonnes of crude palm oil would reach by the second week of this month. Both the consignments have been bought at previous international rates, he added.

Sensing that the retail price might see a sharp rise, unscrupulous traders have been hoarding soya bean oil, said wholesalers at Moulvibazar in Old Dhaka, the largest wholesale market for edible oil.

A section of traders are using brokers to collect oil from local market with the motive of selling those at much higher prices.

"Importers and distributors are selling oil at high rates instead of supplying us with it as per our demand. And it all forces us to increase prices," said Kamal Hossain, a wholesaler at the capital's Karwan Bazar.

He also said the government should intervene in the market situation to make sure prices of the products bought at previous international rates do not increase.

## India allows

**FROM PAGE 1**  
exporters in the morning.

The meeting also decided that the consignments of rice under the LCs opened after December 27 would be exported to Bangladesh at the rate of \$ 500 a ton, said Nirmal Shikari, Indian rice exporter.

On December 27, the Indian government decided to raise the export price of rice from \$ 425 to \$ 500 per ton.

Following the government decision, the Indian customs authorities on December 30 stopped allowing consignments of rice below \$ 500 per ton through Petrapole land port in India, causing tailbacks of trucks loaded with rice consignments to Bangladesh.

Earlier on Monday, rice prices in Bangladesh saw a sharp rise as consignments of rice from India reached the Benapole land port under an increased rate of \$ 505 a ton.

The price of coarse rice hit an all-time high on Monday with Tk 30 a kg in the capital and elsewhere in the country.

UNB adds: Asked if the government would buy rice from India at the enhanced price, Food Adviser Tapan Chowdhury yesterday told reporters, "We are considering rice import from other countries like Thailand, Myanmar and Pakistan. We are also examining the quantum to meet the domestic demand."

India on December 27 jacked up the minimum export price of rice at \$ 500 per ton, third time in less than a year, from \$ 315 a ton in February last year.

In November, India withdrew the ban on rice export to Bangladesh in view of the difficulties caused by the devastating cyclone. But later, it imposed a number of conditions and finally raised the minimum price to \$ 500 on December 27.

Tapan Chowdhury said the government has taken a move to change the rice import policy to facilitate import from other countries.

He said India had promised to export 5 lakh tons to Bangladesh. "We hope they will sell to us at the previous price," he added.

He said traders favour import from India because of low transport cost, but they will now look for alternative sources.

## 15-day

**FROM PAGE 1**  
the campaign through a discussion in Dhaka while its audiovisual units will carry out the publicity drive at district and upazila levels.

Department of Films and Publication (DFP) will screen documentaries through TV channels while the state-run Bangladesh Television (BTV) will telecast talk shows to be participated by the advisers to the caretaker government and experts in the fields concerned.

Bangladesh Betar will also broadcast talk shows to review the progress and successes of the government in different fields in the past year.

## Pak govt makes

**FROM PAGE 16**  
Cheema's comments made at a news conference a day after Bhutto was assassinated at Liaquat Bagh in Rawalpindi on December 27, came after TV channels aired privately shot photos and video footage which showed a gunman shooting at Benazir.

The Pakistan People's Party leader is seen in the footage falling through the sun-roof before the suicide bomber detonated his explosives. The briefing by caretaker Prime Minister Mohammed Soomro was also attended by the foreign, interior and information ministers and senior officials.

"Editor after editor lambasted the government for its non-serious attitude towards the tragedy, specially the statement that Bhutto had died by hitting the lever and not (due to) a bullet or shrapnel," The News reported.

During the briefing, an editor asked why spokesman Cheema had said that a lever on the sun-roof had caused a fatal injury when the manufacturers of the car and Benazir's husband Asif Ali Zardari had stated that there