

# Benazir's killing to leave negative impact on subcontinent

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The assassination of Benazir Bhutto, former president of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), will leave a negative impact on the stability and security of this subcontinent including Bangladesh, said the speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

They said the militants and extremists would be encouraged to expand their network in the neighbouring countries after their 'successful mission' in killing the PPP president.

The speakers urged all concerned to uphold and strengthen democracy to tackle the threat of militancy.

The roundtable was organised by the Workers' Party of Bangladesh (WPB) at its office in the capital.

Presided over by WPB President Rashed Khan Menon, the roundtable was addressed by Awami League president member Tofael Ahmed, General Secretary of Communist Party of Bangladesh Mujahidul Islam Selim, Gono Forum president member Pankaj Bhattacharya, Ganatantri Party President Nurul

Islam, General Secretary of Samyabadi Dal Prof Akmal Hossain, Advisory Editor of Amar Desh Ataus Samad and journalist Harun Habib.

WPB General Secretary Bimal Biswas presented a keynote paper at the roundtable.

Tofael said although the situation in Bangladesh and Pakistan is quite different, we will have to take lesson from the killing of Benazir.

He said the whole nation is now united against fundamentalism and militancy which was never seen in the past.

"We shall have to utilise this

unified stand of people for the trial of war criminals, otherwise we shall have to pay like Pakistan," he added.

Rashed Khan Menon said religious extremism flourishes where military rule lasts long.

"Though the killing of Benazir is an internal matter of Pakistan, it would greatly affect peace and stability of the subcontinent," he added.

Menon urged the government to lift ban on indoor politics and withdraw emergency from the country to help restore democracy by holding a free and fair election.

## Two hajj operators blacklisted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman Bangladesh Airlines Limited has blacklisted two private hajj operators— Labbaik Travels and Al Mansur Travels due to mismanagement in the return flight of the hajj pilgrims, Biman sources said.

Jeddah airport authorities sent back 107 Bangladeshi hajjis to a local hotel on January 3 whom the two private hajj operators brought to the airport although the hajj pilgrims are supposed to return home tomorrow.

"Hajj pilgrims had to suffer a lot at the Jeddah Airport due to the mismanagement of the two hajj travel agents," said Khan Musharraf Hussein, deputy general manager (public relations) of Biman Bangladesh Airlines.

"They (two hajj operators) tried to send the 107 hajj pilgrims home

## Libyan relief for distressed people

UNB, Dhaka

Libyan government has provided various items of relief materials, including rice and flour, for the country's poor and distressed people.

The relief materials include 75,000 pieces of sarees, 68,000 pieces of blankets, 800 metric tons of rice and 500 metric tons of flour.

Libyan Charge de Affaires Mohamed AM Darhubi yesterday formally handed over the materials to Acting Secretary of Food and Disaster Management Ministry Dr Mohammad Ayub Miah.

The food secretary thanked the charge de affaires and said the relief would be distributed soon among the poor and distress people through the Relief and Rehabilitation Department.

## Rajguru Sreemat Agrabangsho Mahathero passes away

UNB, Rangamati

Rajguru Sreemat Agrabangsho Mahathero, chief priest of Rangamati Royal Buddhist Monastery, passed away at the district General Hospital on Saturday night at the age of 94. Agrabangsho Mahathero, the highest Mahasangha Nayak of Bangladesh and India, had been suffering for long from old age complications and respiratory problems. His body was kept at Rajbihar under special arrangement.

His funeral will be held three months later after the completion of religious rituals.

Agrabangsho Mahathero was given the title of Mahasangha Nayak at a ceremonial function at Parbatya Vikkhhu Sangha on March 13 in 2001.

## Abul Kashem Sarkar

Abul Kashem Sarkar, father of Kamrul Hasan, reporter of the daily Prothom Alo, passed away due to brain hemorrhage at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital on January 5 at the age of 87, says a press release.

He left behind his three sons, three daughters and a host of admirers to mourn his death.

He was buried at his family graveyard. Crime Reporters Association Acting President Madhusudan Mondal and General Secretary Arif Rahman expressed deep shock at his death and prayed for salvation of the departed soul.



Awami League acting President Zillur Rahman speaks to the media after coming out of a special court on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises in the city yesterday.

## Furniture trader stabbed to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A furniture businessman was stabbed to death and his friend injured at Jatrabari while a grocer was shot at Mirpur in the city last night.

The criminals stabbed Md Babul, 38, owner of Popular Furniture at South Jatrabari, indiscriminately at a sweetmeat shop over a previous enemy. The criminals also stabbed his friend Monir Hossain, 35, as he tried to resist them.

Babul's relatives said the criminals attacked them in the Islamia Sweetmeat near his residence at about 9:45pm.

They said the criminals numbering 10 to 12 made the attack. Babul and Monir were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared Babul dead at 10:30pm.

Meanwhile, a grocer was shot in front of a garments factory at Darussalam Road when a gang of criminals sprayed bullets as the factory owner refused to pay them Tk

5 lakh as toll at 7:30pm.

The victim identified as Moslem Uddin, 45, was shot in his right hand. Local people caught red-handed one of the criminals, Tushar, 18, with a pistol.

Tushar said they opened fire as the factory owner refused to pay the said money.

## Quake hits Greece

AFP, Athens

A powerful earthquake measuring 6.5 on the Richter scale hit the Peloponnese region of southern Greece yesterday and was felt throughout the country although there were no reports of casualties or damage.

The geodynamics institute of the Athens observatory said the epicentre of the tremor, which struck at 7:14 am (0514 GMT), was near the village of Leonidio in the southeast Peloponnese, around 150 kilometres (90 miles) southwest of Athens.

## TORCHING OF DGEI VEHICLE Convicted RU student surrenders

RU CORRESPONDENT

A convicted student of Rajshahi University (RU) surrendered before a court yesterday.

Abu Sayem was convicted in a case filed in connection with the torching of a vehicle of Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) during the August violence.

Rajshahi Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Ruhul Amin sent him to jail after his surrender.

Sayem is a masters student of Bhasha O Sangskriti (Language and Culture) department and general secretary of Uchichi RU unit.

Before his surrender, Sayem told newsmen that he was innocent. He, along with 10 other students, was sentenced to three-year rigorous imprisonment by the Rajshahi Speedy Trial Court on December 12.

The court also fined each of them Tk 5000; in default, to suffer three more months in jail.

## Ambassador Amin's body arrives tomorrow

UNB, Dhaka

Body of Bangladesh Ambassador to France Ruhul Amin will arrive here tomorrow by an Emirates flight.

Amin, 47, passed away in Paris due to brain hemorrhage on January 3.

His first namaz-e-janza will be held at the foreign ministry on Tuesday at 11:45am and second namaz-e-janza at Gulshan Azad Mosque after Asr prayers. He will be buried at Mirpur graveyard.

His gulkhwani will be held at his apartment 'Charukunja' at 77 Gulshan Avenue in the city after Asr prayers on January 11.

Another report adds: French government will arrange a funeral programme for Ambassador Amin today.

According to the information from the Bangladesh Embassy in Paris, the programme will include Guard of Honour by the members of the three forces, playing of national anthems of both the countries and observing one-minute silence.

Members of the diplomatic corps in Paris have also been invited to attend the programme.

A namaz-e-janza will be held at the Bangladesh mission in Paris before the funeral programme.

On his sudden demise, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner sent a condolence message through a director of the French Foreign Ministry to the widow of the Ambassador conveying their deep sympathy.

The Chief of Protocol and Head of Asia Division of the French Foreign Office separately expressed their sympathy and condolences to the Bangladesh Embassy in Paris.

On behalf of the French president and the government, Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner has also written a letter to his Bangladeshi counterpart Iftikhar Ahmed Chowdhury expressing the sincere condolences and sadness.

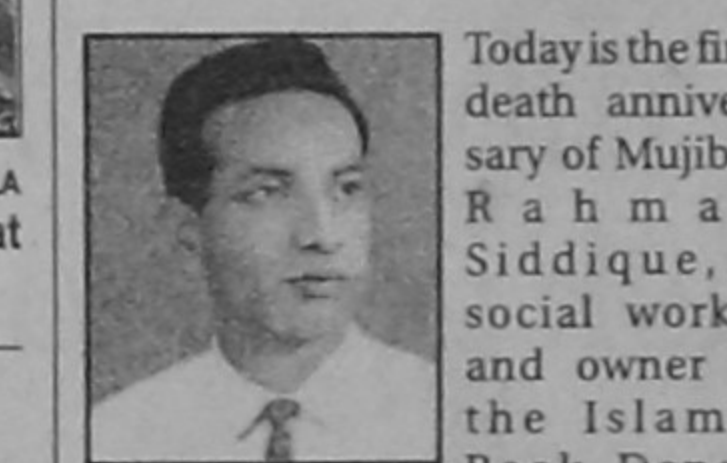
## New poll spells more bad news for Japan govt

AFP, Tokyo

Almost half of Japanese voters now support the main opposition Democratic Party, according to a new poll yesterday that appears to confirm disenchantment with Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda's government.

Some 46 percent of those questioned for the survey in the Mainichi Shimbun newspaper said that they wanted the Democratic Party to win the next general elections.

## Death anniversary



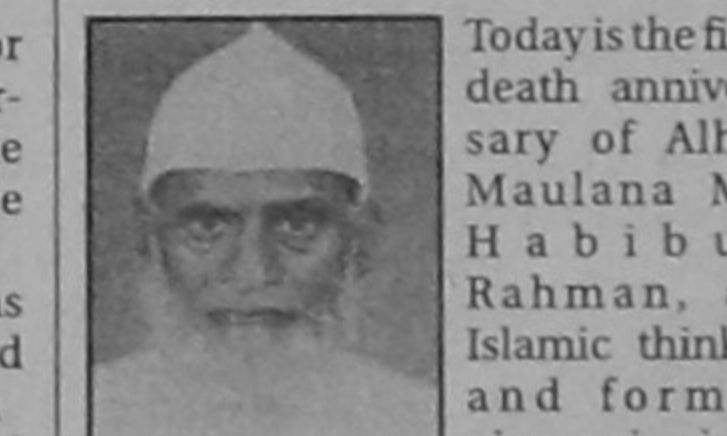
says a press release.

He was the treasure of greater Faridpur district unit of Awami League in post-liberation period.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held today after Asr prayers at his residence in Faridpur.

Relatives and admirers are requested to attend the milad mahfil.

## Maulana Habibur Rahman



of Mongal Baria Alia Madrasa and father of senior reporter of the daily Khabar Abul Azad Solaiman, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at Patuabhangha Vitpara in Kishoreganj on Friday next.

## Britto Int'l Artists' Workshop begins in Bogra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A two-week Britto International Artists' Workshop 2008 began at Noongola in Bogra yesterday.

Britto Arts Trust is organising the workshop with the support of Ford Foundation and Nijera Kori.

A total of 17 artists from the United Kingdom, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, the Maldives, Taiwan, Mauritius and Jordan are participating in the workshop, organisers said at a press conference yesterday.

Shishir Bhattacharjee, president of the trust, in his written statement said Britto has been organising several programmes related to arts both in national and international level since 2002.

Britto believes artworks of Bangladesh will achieve international standards through these types of programmes.

This workshop will work as a bridge between the art and artists of different countries, he added.

Khushi Kabir of Nijera Kori said this workshop will make foreign artists familiar with local art, culture and heritage.

The workshop will round off with an exhibition by the participating artists on January 18.

## One beaten to death in Shariatpur

UNB, Shariatpur

Terrorists beat a young man to death and injured another while they were pasting posters against the gang in Bilashpur area of Jajira upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Faruque, 30.

Local sources said the members of 'Quddus Bahini' mercilessly beat up Faruque and Sipon, 25, in the morning, killing Faruque on the spot and critically injuring Sipon.

On information, police rushed to the spot and arrested two suspected Quddus Bahini members -- Sultan Khalifa and Abul Kashem -- in connection with the killing.

Earlier, the law enforcers arrested Quddus Bahini chief Quddus along with his chief aide. The gang was involved in many crimes, including extortion and terrorism in the area.

After the arrest of Quddus, local people distributed leaflets and pasted posters demanding punishment of the gang members.

Faruque and Sipon were pasting posters yesterday for the same demand.

## Malaysian cops use water cannon on candlelight protest

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysian police used a water cannon to disperse protesters who held a candlelight vigil Saturday against internal security laws being used to hold ethnic Indian activists without trial.

Some 300 people including women and children defied a police ban and attempted to gather at the capital's Independence Square, but were barred by about 100 police including dozens of riot police.

They held a brief vigil, lighting candles and singing rights anthems, before being dispersed by riot police, several carrying tear gas, and backed by a water cannon which was briefly turned on.

The crowd scattered into surrounding streets and were chased down by police officers but no arrests were made, said organisers, who said their cause had been energised by the latest arrests under the Internal Security Act (ISA).

Five members of the Hindu Rights Action Force, which organised a mass rally in November alleging discrimination against ethnic Indians in Malaysia, which is dominated by Muslim Malays, were last month detained under the legislation.

They can be held indefinitely

without trial under the law, which dates back to the British colonial era when it was used against Communist insurgents.

"Our presence tonight is to say that this is a law which is unjust," Abolish ISA Movement chairman Syed Ibrahim told reporters, adding that Malaysians of all races and religions were represented at the vigil.

Protesters urged the government to abolish the ISA, which in modern times is more commonly used against alleged Muslim militants.

"The ISA law is no longer relevant. A crime should be proved in a court of law, instead of denying people their human rights," said H. Nandakumar, a 24-year-old engineer who attended the rally.

"People are starting to realise that the government is selected by us and we don't need laws that are patronising. We can think for ourselves -- we are not children," he told AFP.

Religious and racial issues are extremely sensitive in multi-racial Malaysia, which experienced deadly race riots in 1969.

Malays make up 60 percent of the population, with ethnic Chinese at 26 percent and Indians at eight percent.



## Fall in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Mild cold wave, which is sweeping over Rajshahi, Ishwardi and Jessore regions, may continue, Met Office said, adding that night temperature may fall slightly over the country.

Highest temperature 29.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 08.5 degrees Celsius at Rajshahi.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:26pm today and rises at 6:43am tomorrow.

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

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	26.5	14.4	59	57
Chittagong	26.0	15.0	72	68
Rajshahi	26.0	08.5	71	79
Khulna	26.0	11.6	80	69
Barisal	26.5	10.4	75	79
Sylhet	27.4	14.5	76	71
Cox's Bazar	29.0	15.0	67	56