

Musharraf clings to power

THE INDEPENDENT, Islamabad

The motivation of the black-suited lawyer, campaigning noisily in front of barbed wire, barricades and several dozen riot police, could not have been simpler.

"We're gathered here for the defence of justice and the release of the confined judges," said Mumtaz Ahmad, as his fellow lawyers chanted slogans calling for the ousting of Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf and the release of Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry, whom he sacked and placed under house arrest. "This has been done by Musharraf. We are here for solidarity."

In the wake of Benazir Bhutto's assassination in December, and the dubious process by which Musharraf became president, few expected last week's National Assembly elections to be fair or peaceful. Remarkably, however, for the most part they were.

With Musharraf's parliamentary allies sorely beaten, there is now optimism among Pakistanis that, for the first time in several years, a genuinely civilian-led government is to take control. Yet the issue of what to do with the President, and the Chief Justice who defied him, could yet derail the agreement that the two successful parties are trying to forge.

On the surface, the issue appears reasonably straightforward. Nawaz Sharif, a former prime minister and head of the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N), which unexpectedly won the second-largest number of seats, called for Chaudhry's restoration through-



Pervez Musharraf

out the campaign. Indeed, he made it a point of principle, and many believe that it helped his party ride the anti-Musharraf wave that swept some parts of the country. But Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP), which secured the highest number of seats, is less concerned about Chaudhry's return and appears keen to keep open its political options as it attempts to build a coalition. Some within the PPP have little time for him.

Pakistan's politics is a three-dimensional game of chess, however. Alliances and agreements that appear solid can quickly evaporate, while bitter rivalries can vanish and a partnership be formed if suddenly the situation demands it.

Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari, Benazir Bhutto's widower and the PPP's leader, have said that their parties will, for the first time, work together to form a government. But to preserve harmony they have skirted the issue of Musharraf's

future, and the restoration of Chaudhry and other judges sacked by the president when they refused to ratify his imposition of a state of emergency.

"We want to form the parliament first and then let the parliament look at the issue of the judges," a senior PPP member told The Independent on Sunday. "We need to have some legal basis on which to do this." Sharif has, for the time being at least, gone along with the PPP line. Surprisingly, the question of who should be prime minister is not causing any friction: various names have been mentioned, but the only sure thing is that it will not be Sharif or Zardari, neither of whom have a seat in the National Assembly.

But the issue of Chaudhry is not going away. The lawyers' movement, which supports his restoration and has been leading protests against the government, has said it is a point on which it will not compromise. Mr Sharif and his aides know he risks losing support if he now changes his position.

Aitzaz Ahsan, a veteran leader of the lawyers' movement who has been in regular contact with Sharif throughout the election period, said: "Iftikhar Chaudhry must be restored, for how will we ever have an independent judiciary if a judge knows that acting independently could mean a life behind barbed wire?"

The US and Britain have been urging the two main parties to move swiftly towards forming a government. They say this is more important than becoming fixated on the issues of Mr Musharraf and

Mr Chaudhry. The Bush administration has let it be known that it still supports Mr Musharraf, despite the electorate's clear rejection of him. The British government mindful of being accused of meddling in Pakistan's politics urges all "moderate parties" to form a government. Such a move would, according to a Gallup poll released yesterday, be the preference for most voters. Forty per cent of PPP voters said the PML-N was their second choice, and 45 per cent vice versa.

Yet for all the diplomatic nuance, many within the lawyers' movement believe Musharraf is being given a lifeline by the West. One of the demonstrators near Chaudhry's house last week was carrying a banner that read: "US Shame On You."

Yesterday the PPP indicated that if it does not immediately push for Musharraf's ousting for which it would need a two-thirds majority it may try to reduce his powers as president. In particular, it said, it wished to change Article 58 (2b) of the Pakistani constitution, which allows the president to dismiss the prime minister and the parliament a power which has been used against both the PPP and Sharif's party in the past.

Just a week ago, few would have predicted that Musharraf would find himself in a situation in which he could be fighting for his political life.

Ahmad, the lawyer demonstrating outside Chaudhry's house, saw a simple solution. "We are against Musharraf, we are saying he should quit his office," he said. "The people, with their votes, rejected him."



PHOTO: AFP

Shelley Crosby (C), 56, cheers for Democratic presidential hopeful US Sen Barack Obama (D-IL) at the John S Knight Centre on Saturday in Akron, Ohio. Obama is campaigning ahead of the March 4 Ohio primary.

NEWS ANALYSIS

White House campaign packs surprises

AFP, Washington

US presidential campaigns have certain rules: it's best to be rich, famous, show verbal savvy in attacking your opponent, and to have served as a state governor rather than in Congress before aspiring for the Oval Office.

But this year's campaign, even with nine months to go before the actual vote, has already proven the most unorthodox in history, and analysts predict more surprises are in store.

From the outset, the leading cast of characters is a motley crew: a former first lady is battling a junior black senator for the Democratic nod, while a conservative outcast who nearly ran out of money last year is edging in fast on the Republican nomination.

"They have rewritten the rules... It has been a very unconventional year," said analyst Darrell West, a professor at Brown University.

"I'm sure there will be more surprises, because this has been the most surprising American election in recent memory."

Longtime political insider Stephen Hess, who has worked for three presidents, said expectations have been so shaken up that it makes the future of the White House race to replace George W. Bush impossible to gauge.

"John McCain was counted out last summer, and to start again at this point is unprecedented," Hess said of the 71-year-old Arizona senator who failed in his 2000 bid for president.

"On the other side Obama -- that's a question that's remarkable. That's not even a phenomenon, it's not a wave, it's a movement," said Hess of the 46-year-old Illinois senator seeking to become America's first African-American president.

"That happens so seldom in politics that there's hardly anyone around who can predict that, on the basis of what happened before."

Just six months ago, polls suggested that the White House battle

was likely to play out between Clinton on the Democratic side and former New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani on the Republican side.

But today it is long-shot darkhorse McCain who is in line for the Republican nod, having inexplicably overcome a scourge of criticism over his support for Bush's Iraq policy and his failed bid to legalize illegal immigrants.

The theory that money, combined with charisma, good looks and solid advisors could buy you

the presidency has been disproved with the withdrawal of multi-millionaire Republican Mitt Romney, also an early favourite.

And the notion that women would turn out in droves to support a female for president has vanished into thin air as many Democratic women are flocking instead toward Obama.

Record turnout by young voters has dispelled the myth of an apathetic young electorate, while the impact of the Republicans' conservative religious base has dwindled

with the rise of the more centrist, independent-minded McCain.

However, Carroll Doherty of the Pew Research Centre cautioned it would be imprudent to speculate how an anticipated battle between Obama and McCain would evolve.

"If anything is a lesson," Doherty said, "it's you don't make judgment until the people have voted and the delegates have been counted, because to write off anyone at this point ... would be a mistake. We just don't know what's going to happen."

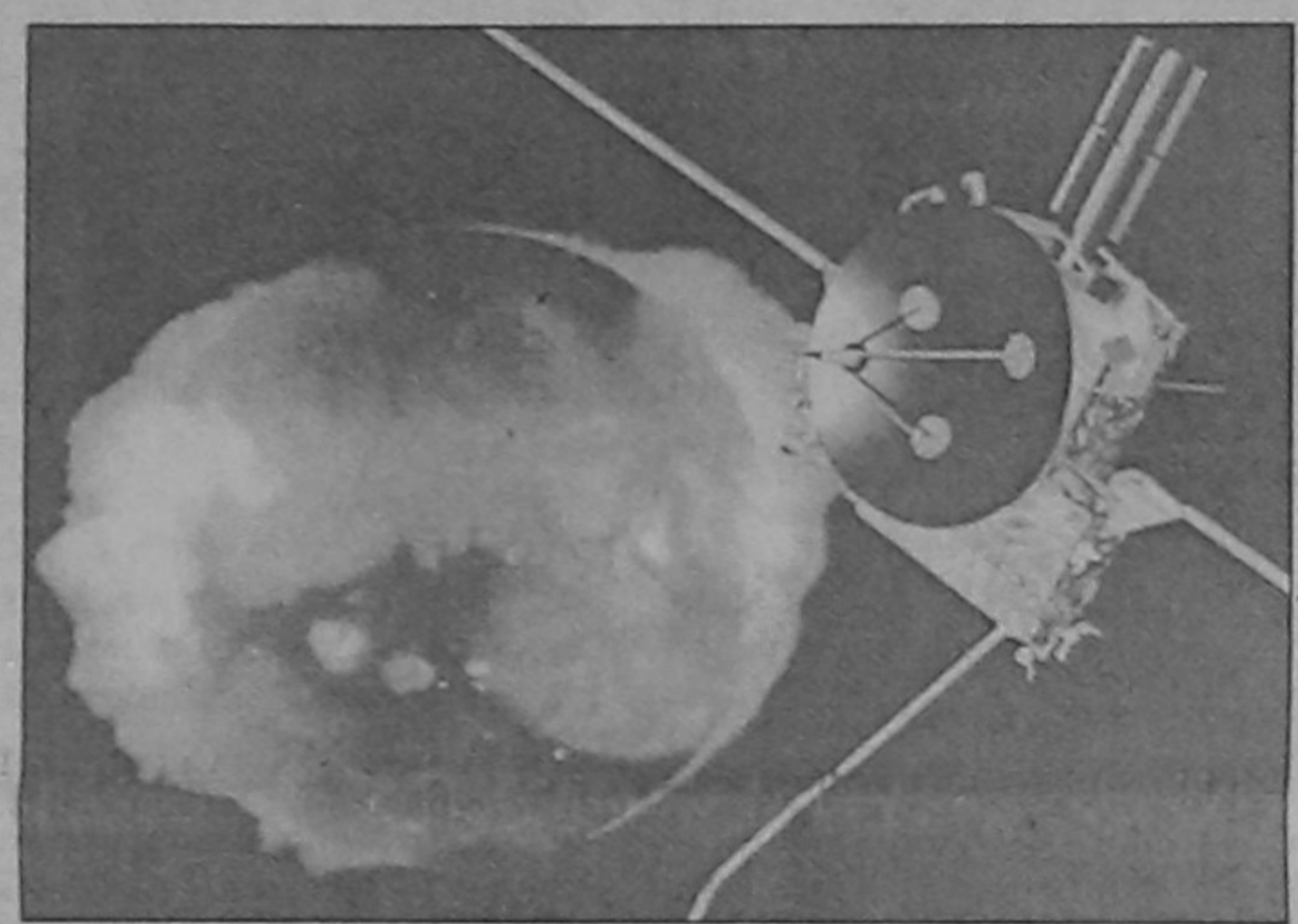


PHOTO: AFP

This undated computer generated image distributed by Nasa shows the spacecraft Ulysses near the Sun. Ulysses, a US-European space scout that has been orbiting the Sun for 17 years, almost four times its expected lifetime, is on the brink of dying, the European Space Agency (ESA) has said.

Unique solar probe freezing to death

AP, Washington

The Ulysses solar probe, after 17 years of studying the sun and solar system, is about to die by freezing to death, Nasa and the European Space Agency said Friday.

The satellite had long outlasted the five-year mission it began in 1990, but it continued to transmit useful data on solar winds.

More recently, its plutonium power source had slowly weakened and its fuel was freezing as the probe made a wide circle of the sun, travelling as far as Jupiter.

In January, engineers tried a longshot manoeuvre to heat up the fuel. Instead, their effort back-

fired and hastened Ulysses' death by several months.

The \$250 million probe was a joint European-Nasa project. After being released from orbit by astronauts on the space shuttle Discovery in October 1990, Ulysses made nearly three full wide circles of the sun from above and below its poles, logging about 6 billion miles overall.

When the satellite recently started to fail, the probe had just finished examining the sun's north pole for a third time.

"This mission has rewritten textbooks," said Arik Posner, Nasa's Ulysses programme scientist.

Japan launches Internet satellite

AFP, Tokyo

Japan successfully launched Saturday an experimental satellite aimed at providing high-speed Internet access across Asia, even when terrestrial infrastructure goes down, the space agency said.

The domestically developed H-2A rocket carrying the Kizuna satellite was launched at 17:55 pm (0855 GMT) with no glitches from the Space Centre on Tanegashima island off the southern tip of Kyushu Island,

southern Japan.

The communications satellite, expected to be in use for five years, separated from the rocket approximately 35 minutes after the launch, said an official of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) during a live broadcast.

The 342 million dollar-Kizuna will allow super-high speed data communications of up to 1.2 Gbps, which would make it the fastest in the world, the agency said.

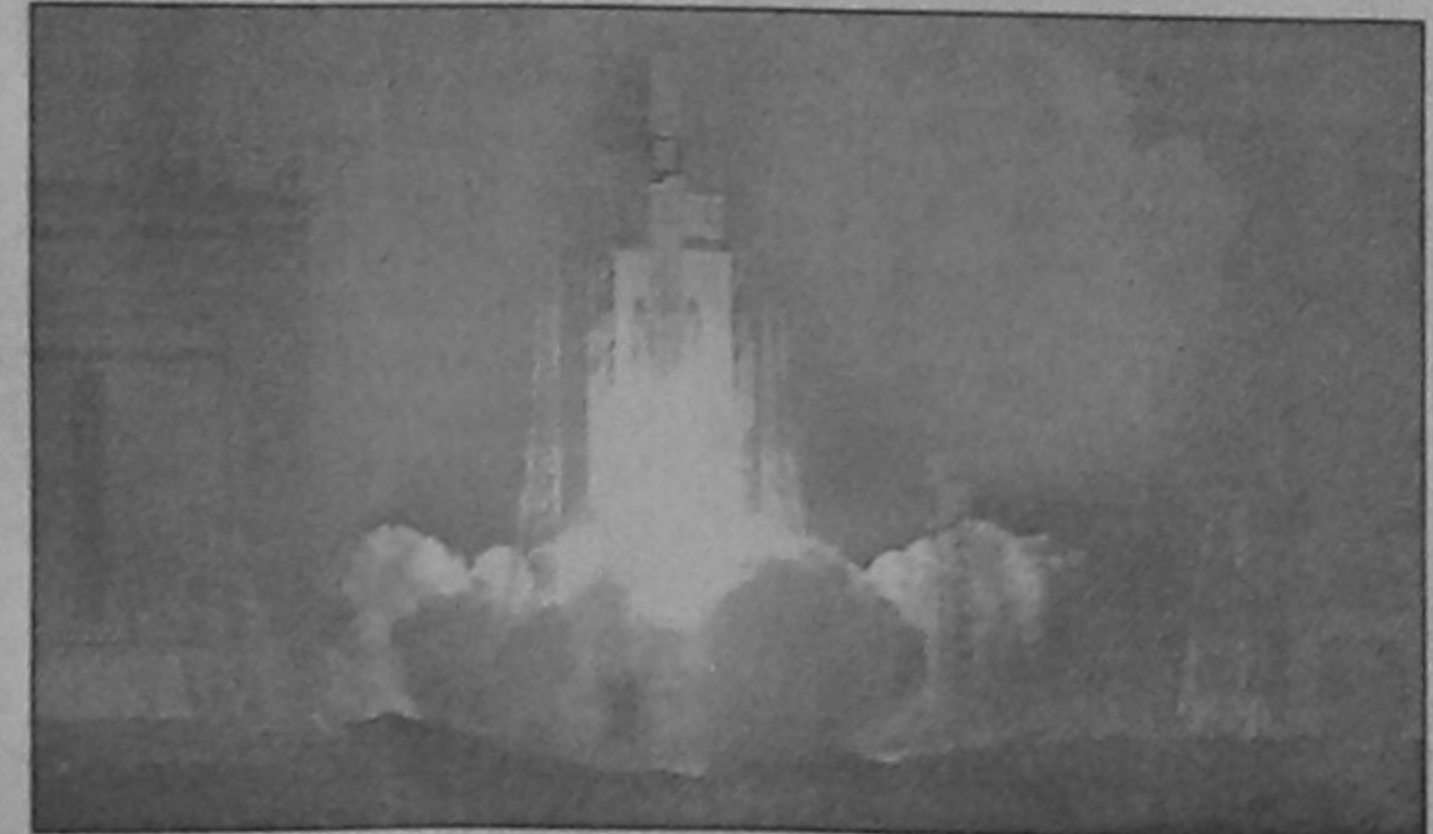


PHOTO: AFP

Japan's H-2A rocket carrying a high-speed Internet communications satellite is launched at Tanegashima Space Centre in Kagoshima Prefecture on Saturday.

Arroyo not losing sleep over ouster calls

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER/ANN, Manila

Philippine President Gloria Arroyo is not losing sleep over loud calls for her resignation as a result of the purported bribery and overprice scandal attending the scrapped National Broadband Network project.

In an interview Saturday (Feb 23) over dzRH, the President said she had been sleeping "seven hours a night," and that this was part of her "energy management."

"Because they say, if you want your left and right sides of the brain to work efficiently, it should be customary for you to have seven to eight hours of sleep at night," she added in a mixture of English and Filipino.

When asked by radio commentator Joe Taruc about the "Gloria resign" call, the President said she would rather focus on the economy than think about it.

She said the economy would not have drastically improved if she had paid attention to "political disturbances."

"That's why I am focused like a laser beam on the economy. So you can see the fruits of that focus, and that's my attitude until now," she said.

Arroyo said that despite the current political tumult, she remained on track to fulfill her duties as President.

"Yes, that's part of my discipline," she said, recalling the advice of her late father, President Diosdado Macapagal to "do what is right; do your best and let God take care of the rest."

She said her father even advised

her that the presidency was "not a position to be enjoyed."

"It's a position where you have to work hard for the good of the people, and if necessary, it's a position where you should be willing to suffer," she said, quoting the late President.

Arroyo said she had been ignoring the name-calling and remarks that, she said, had been "twisted" by the media: "Deadma lang ako doon (I just ignore them)."

But she lamented that a former member of the Cabinet former Presidential Management Staff chief and now Albay Gov Joey Salceda had been dragged into the mess.

At an economic forum on Wednesday at the Ateneo de Manila University in Makati City, Salceda was quoted as saying that "she (Ms Arroyo) may be a bitch, but she's the luckiest bitch around."

He said the numbers were proving that the economy had grown, but he later apologised for the remark, saying it was made "tongue in cheek."

Arroyo said the entire quote was actually, "If she's a bitch, she's one lucky bitch because of the improving economy."

"That's the context," she said. "On the day he was quoted, I was out in the field, so I did not understand at first why he sent me through text messages his apologies, where he said his remarks were made in the context of affection. I didn't know what he was apologising for."

The President said she had forgiven Salceda for his well-publicised quip.

NEW PAK NAT'L ASSEMBLY

Amended constitution issue to rock session

THE DAWN, Islamabad / Lahore

Controversy lies in store for the opening session of the new Pak National Assembly as the interim government's legal experts have decided to get printed a fresh edition of the Constitution, incorporating all amendments introduced by President Pervez Musharraf during the emergency rule.

The question haunting the PML-N and PPP's legislators-elect alike is: will they take oath under the amended Constitution, which has been "validated" by the Supreme Court?

Both parties have already rejected these amendments and termed them "unconstitutional and invalid." They contend that the amendments have been made by an individual instead of the parliament.

The government insists the imposition of emergency (on Nov 3), the enforcement of the Provisional Constitution Order, sacking of judges and other steps taken by the president during emergency had been validated by

the apex court and made part of the Constitution.

It also asserts that the legislators-elect taking oath under the amended Constitution would, by implication, be endorsing all these steps.

The PPP has said that it would not give a blanket cover to all steps taken by President Musharraf during emergency.

A PML-N leader said on Saturday that the matter was under consideration and some solution would be found by the time the National Assembly holds its inaugural session.

"Obviously (the new version of) the Constitution would contain Article 270AAA under which amendments made before and during the ... emergency rule were given perpetual legal cover," said a senior government official.

He said if the printing was delayed "we will have to manually affix the corrections in the constitution."

Normally, the law ministry and the National Assembly secretariat are authorised to print the

Constitution.

Attorney General Malik Muhammad Qayyum is on record as having said that no constitutional provision required validation by parliament, adding that changes like the Eighth and the 17th amendments were "ceremonial".

A similar situation had cropped up after the 2002 elections as the Legal Framework Order (LFO) was made a part of the Constitution. A large number of legislators-elect had refused to take oath under the amended Constitution, prompting the then speaker, Illahi Bux Soomro, to show the protesting members his copy of the Constitution and declare that LFO was not part of it.

However, Article 270AAA is a major bone of contention between the president and his legal experts, on one side, and the opposition and the lawyers' community, on the other.

The lawyers contend that the Constitution cannot be amended without a two-thirds majority in both houses of parliament.

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02 Manager (Human Resource)

Competencies: The ideal candidate should have an MBA degree in HRM with 5 years experience in HR field from which 3 years in managerial position in reputed national or multinational organization. Candidate having Master's degree with diploma in HRM may also apply. The applicants should be knowledgeable on Labor Laws, Compliance issues, Industrial environment & Conflict management, Factory HR administration, Recruitment & Selection, Performance appraisal, Job evaluation, Training & Development.

03 Manager (Compliance)

Competencies: The ideal candidate should have an MBA degree in HRM with 5 years experience in Compliance & HR field from which 3 years in managerial position in reputed national or multinational organization. Candidate having master's degree with diploma in HRM may also apply. The applicants should be knowledgeable on Labor laws, Environmental laws and Compliance issues. The incumbent should be competent to formulate and implement relevant policy accordingly as well as demonstrating discretion, confidentiality, diplomacy and integrity, honesty and openness, able to demonstrate excellent team player and team building skills and able to demonstrate a systematic and common sense approach to the role.

04 Manager (Administration)

Competencies: The ideal candidate should have an MBA degree in HRM with 5 years experience in Administrative work from which 3 years in managerial position in reputed national or multinational organization. Candidate having Master's degree with diploma in HRM may also apply. The applicants should be knowledgeable on Labor laws, Compliance issues, Industrial environment & Conflict management, Factory administration, Payroll, Logistics, Transport pool and security control.

05 Manager (Safety & Security)

Competencies: The ideal candidate should have a Master's degree with 5 years experience in Textile based organization/defense person (Major / Equivalent) will be preferred. The incumbent should have experience & knowledge of handling of industrial safety and security, have aptitude to accommodate management requirement, formulate safety & security policy and implement it up to root level under close supervision.

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07 Manager Audit (Job location: Dhaka)

Competencies: The ideal candidate should have the qualification of CA (Inter) with 8-10 years experience in Audit works from which 3 years in Managerial position in reputed national or multinational organization. The applicants should have ability to prepare Audit Report, Investigate financial disputes, Audit of inventory and Periodical audit of all bills and vouchers. Candidate having good understanding of production process of a Spinning, Textile, Dyeing & garments industry will get preference.

08 Merchandiser

Competencies: The ideal candidate should have an MBA degree in Marketing/Apparel Merchandising with 3 years experience in Knit Merchandising, from which 1 year in Merchandiser position in any reputed national or multinational organization. Candidate having master's degree in any discipline may also apply. The incumbent should have Good command of spoken and written English, having ability to Analyze yarns consumption, pricing and production, Outsourcing of Fabric/Yarns & accessories, Searching & selecting of suitable factories and negotiate orders, working independently and under high pressure, Self-motivated, self-organized and responsible.

09 Sr. Executive (Accounts)

Competencies: The ideal candidate should have the qualification of CACC/CMA or M.Com with 3-5 years experience in Accounts from which 2 years in Sr. Executive position in reputed national or multinational organization. The applicants should have ability to prepare budget, Financial Report, Maintain general accounting as well as familiar with accounting software. Candidate having good understanding of production process of a Spinning, Textile, Dyeing & garments industry will get preference.

10 Project Engineer

Competencies: The ideal candidate should have the qualification of B.Sc in Civil Engineering with experience not less than 6 years.

Job location: Kashimpur, Gazipur

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