



Ex-Indian PM VP Singh passes away

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Former Indian Prime Minister VP Singh, who formed the country's first non-Congress coalition government at the Centre in 1989 toppling Rajiv Gandhi died here yesterday. He was 77.

The end for Singh, who has been battling blood cancer for over 17 years and renal failure, came in Apollo Hospital where he was admitted some six months ago. He is survived by his wife Sita Singh and two sons, Ajeya and Abhay.

Singh was the finance minister and later defence minister during Rajiv Gandhi's tenure and parted ways with Congress over the controversy over kickbacks allegedly paid for purchase of Bofors guns from Sweden.

After the 1989 elections, Janata Dal led by VP Singh came to power with outside support from BJP on one side and that of Left parties on the other but his National Front government did not last more than 11 months.

Tiger chief vows to evict government forces

AFP, Colombo

The leader of Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels, Velupillai Prabhakaran, vowed in a radio broadcast Thursday to fight on and evict government forces closing in on his de facto political capital.

Prabhakaran delivered his annual "Heroes' Week" speech over his Voice of Tigers radio station despite two air attacks on rebel communications towers a few minutes before he went on the air.

"Whatever challenges confront us, whatever contingencies we encounter, whatever forces stand on our path, we will still continue with our struggle for the freedom of the Tamil people," he said.

"We will continue with our struggle until alien Sinhala occupation of our land is evicted," he said, referring to the island's ethnic Sinhalese majority which dominates the government and security forces.

Rebel chief Velupillai Prabhakaran cancelled his 54th birthday celebrations on Wednesday, but was going ahead with a scheduled annual statement despite intense fighting around Kilinochchi, the de facto capital.

The pro-rebel website Puthinam.com said Prabhakaran delivered his speech Thursday, ending "Heroes' Week" -- a series of ceremonies commemorating the 22,000 Tamil fighters who have perished in his campaign for a separate state.

With his northern fiefdom shrinking rapidly in the face of a massive onslaught, Prabhakaran was expected to use the address to rally his forces for a do-or-die battle for survival.

Sri Lanka's political leaders and Colombo-based diplomats were expected to follow the speech carefully when it is broadcast on the rebels' radio station, which was bombed by the military during last year's speech.

The last 18 months have been disastrous for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who want to carve out an ethnic homeland in the north and east of the Sinhalese-majority island.

Heavy fighting raged on the outskirts of Kilinochchi on Thursday despite monsoon rains, military officials said, adding that troops were poised to breach new defences built by the rebels.

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Thai opposition People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) leader Chamlong Srimuang (C) addresses Thai anti-government supporters from a truck adorned with posters against ousted prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra at Bangkok's international airport on the third day of its occupation on Thursday.

Pakistan confident on peace talks progress with India

AFP, New Delhi

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said Wednesday that it was possible to make concrete progress in peace talks with arch-rival India.

Speaking after talks with his Indian counterpart Pranab Mukherjee, Qureshi asserted Islamabad wanted "friendly relations" with New Delhi and that the two sides had a "window of opportunity" to

energise a slow-moving peace process.

"I want friendly relations with India. The region has suffered, people have suffered. We must give the people of South Asia some hope," he said in a joint news conference.

"We have this window of opportunity. We must not let it pass. We have challenges... but I am confident we can convert challenges into opportunities."

He said issues such as demarcating a maritime boundary and bringing down troop levels on the Siachen glacier, situated in the far north of disputed Kashmir and the world's highest battlefield, were "solvable."

India and Pakistan began a peace process in 2004, but ties were severely disrupted by the July bombing of India's embassy in Kabul blamed by New Delhi on Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency.

Who are the Deccan terrorists?

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in a string of home-grown Indian Islamic militant splinter groups.

Until recently, the majority of terrorist attacks in India have been blamed on groups based in or supported by Pakistan.

But attacks over the last year have been claimed by groups with names stressing their local origins. The appearance of the Deccan Mujahadeen, which appears to take its name from the Deccan plateau that covers much of south India and was previously unknown, has added to the growing belief that India is confronting a home-grown Islamic militancy.

A similarly shadowy group calling itself the Indian Mujahadeen claimed responsibility for serial blasts in Delhi in September, which killed 20 people, and bombings in the western city of Ahmedabad in July when 45 died.

Another group, the Islamic Security Force-Indian Mujahadeen, said it was behind explosions last month in India's northeast state of Assam that killed 80.

It is unclear whether the various groups are connected, but retired senior security official B. Raman has said their chosen names were a "bid to Indianise" the Islamic militant movement.

Security services also suspect the groups may be fronts for outfits that have been banned by the Indian government over the past few years such as the Students' Islamic Movement of India.

Others say they could be an undercover coalition of the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed militant organisations.

The Indian Mujahadeen, which also calls itself "the militia of Islam," first came to public attention last November following serial blasts in Uttar Pradesh.

The same group sent another email to the media after blasts in

May in the city of Jaipur in which it said it would wage an "open war" against India for supporting the United States, and warned of more attacks against tourist sites.

Just minutes before the blasts in Ahmedabad, the Indian Mujahadeen sent emails to several TV news stations warn-

ing that people would "feel the terror of death".

It said the Ahmedabad blasts were revenge for riots which swept Gujarat in 2002 in which at least 2,000 people, mainly Muslims, were hacked, shot and burnt to death.

It has warned India's largest-circulation daily, The Times of

India, and other media groups to halt their "propaganda war" against Muslims.

And it has told Mukesh Ambani, India's richest businessman, to "think twice" about his construction of a glass-and-steel 27-storey home on land in Bombay where a Muslim orphanage once stood.

Rio world congress

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"We want to treat these bad people the way they treat us. Many children here can still recall the horrible experience. We want to put an end to it and make sure that we never have to deal with it again," he said.

The use of children under the age of 18 for sexual gratification is not new, said Unicef Executive Director Ann Mveneman.

"Legal structures alone will not solve the problem, we need the laws to be implemented, the social service organisations to understand their role, and we must deal with traumatised children as victims and not as perpetrators. There has to be a transformation in attitude and gender dynamics, which in many places are so discriminatory," she added.

Brazil seems totally committed to tackling this problem. Brazilian Minister Paulo Vannuchi told the press that his government thinks it alone cannot fight this issue and urges the civil society to come forward with new energy.

Salma Khatun Mala, a 16-year-old Bangladeshi participant, who has been living in the ACD shelter home since the age of seven-and-a-half, described the roots of such heinous crimes.

Mala, a child traffic victim with a very traumatised past about which she simply refuses to talk, said, "The forms of child sexual exploitation include prostitution, (hotel based, home based, floating, street based) sex tourism, pornography, early marriage and false love affairs."

"The influencing factors behind child marriage are interrelated complex issues like poverty, not being able to manage dowry, and also power play by family members, who forces such marriage on children," she added.

Sarwar echoed Mala's point of view and added, "The socio-cultural practices of early marriage pose as the number one threat in this regard. These young children are married off to older men, sometimes to men across the border, who do not give the young bride the right to divorce for which they are forced to follow them wherever they take them. During the harvest season these young brides are made to work on the fields in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, and not to forget the sexual exploitation issue here."

However, in Bangladesh NGOs like Aparajevo Bangladesh and ACD are doing a commendable job. Take for instance Mala's story, she is a member of Young Journalist Forum (YJF) and attends a local school.

Mala, an excellent student of class VII, writes about the plight of street children and traumatised victims for ACD's magazine Shoishob, and newspaper Shishur Kotha. These stories are at times picked by Massine Media Centre and published in Shomokal.

Lucky Akter Mim, a sixteen-year old child expert of Aparajevo Bangladesh PCAR, (Protection of Children at Risk) was forced to leave her family at the age of nine.

She too does not want to brood over her past. Instead, she is focused to change lives of others like she has changed hers. As a child expert she trains children in 10 street schools to raise awareness about child rights, HIV/AIDS, early marriage, trafficking and personal health hygiene.

She worked for a child development bank for six months and now as a child expert draws a salary of Tk 3,000, which she saves for her future.

Both Mala and Mim gave out an aura of positive energy. They have changed their lives and are now helping others to find light at the end of the tunnel.

The highly vocal and energetic adolescent team from Bangladesh at this Congress has put on a new momentum to fight this cause.

Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF)
PKSF Bhaban, E-4/B, Agargaon Administrative Area
Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207
Website: http://www.pksf-bd.org

Vacancy Announcement

Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF), an apex microcredit funding organization working for poverty eradication throughout Bangladesh, invites applications for the following positions in its two projects: i) Programmed Initiatives for Monga Eradication (PRIME) and ii) Learning and Innovation Fund to Test New Ideas (LIFT). PRIME is working for eradicating monga in 5 northern districts, while LIFT is providing financial support to various poor-friendly as well as innovative projects of different organizations located in different districts of the country. These projects are funded by DFID under its Promoting Financial Services for Poverty Reduction (PROSPER) programme in Bangladesh and will end in December 2013.

1. Position: Assistant Programme Coordinator (Training), PRIME
No. of vacancy : 1(one), Job station: Rangpur

- Key Responsibilities:**
- Prepare plans, modules and budgets for conducting training for the PRIME beneficiaries on on-farm/non-farm income generating activities as well as for different training of the officials of partner organizations of PRIME.
 - Implement the training plans for the beneficiaries as well as the partner organizations.
 - Ensure monitoring and evaluation of different training.
 - Develop various training materials e.g., manuals, leaflets, posters, flip charts etc.

- Requirements:**
- Masters Degree in any discipline from a recognized university with minimum two first divisions/ classes in the academic life. Candidates having third division/class in the academic period are not eligible to apply.
 - Have at least five years experience in conduction, coordination and management of training for the beneficiaries and programme personnel.

Remuneration: Taka 25,000/- (consolidated)
Age: Below 35 Years.

2. Position: Assistant Programme Coordinator (Health), PRIME
No. of vacancy : 1(one), Job station: Rangpur

- Key Responsibilities:**
- Prepare plans for ensuring primary health care services for the PRIME beneficiaries. Implement these plans through different partner organizations as well as assess the impact of the health services to PRIME beneficiaries.
 - Lead and monitor the activities of health assistants of the partner organizations.
 - Facilitate training for the health assistants of the partner organizations.
 - Develop and maintain regular contacts with different government/ non-government health-service providers and ensure coordination with them for ensuring primary health care services for the PRIME beneficiaries.

- Requirements:**
- MBBS degree from any recognized medical college. Candidates having Masters in Public Health (MPH) will be given preference.
 - Have demonstrable experience in primary health care services.
 - Experience in public health in any NGO would be considered as an additional qualification.

Remuneration: Negotiable
Age: Below 35 Years.

3. Position: Assistant Programme Coordinator, PRIME and LIFT
No. of vacancy: 1(one)-PRIME and 1(one)-LIFT

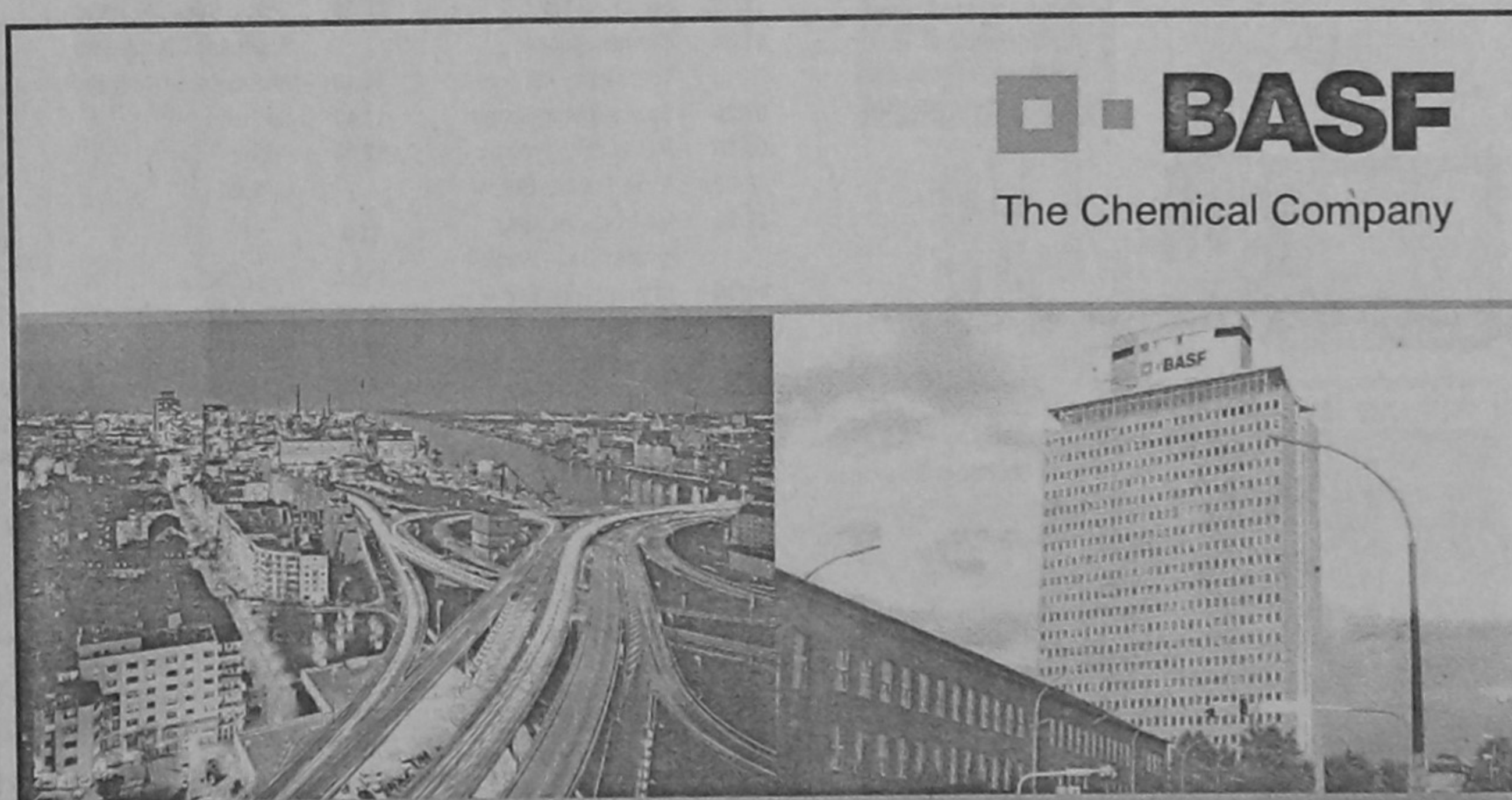
- Job station:** Position for PRIME is based in Rangpur and position for LIFT is based in Dhaka
- Key responsibilities:**
- Monitor the project activities regularly.
 - Take corrective measures for proper implementation of project activities.
 - Take initiatives to promote and develop PRIME and LIFT programmes.
 - Assess proposals of different organizations prior to funding under LIFT programme.

- Requirements:**
- Masters degree in any discipline from a recognized university with minimum three first classes in the academic life. Candidates having third division/class in the academic period are not eligible to apply.
 - Demonstrable experience in marketing/ finance/ agriculture/ livestock/ fisheries or food processing.
 - Preference will be given to the candidates having experience in training and project activities monitoring.

Remuneration: Taka 25,000/- (consolidated)
Age: Below 35 Years.

Interested candidates who fulfill the requirements are requested to send their resume with a cover letter along with all copies of certificates and two passport size photographs to the undersigned on or before 18 December 2008. Please write the name of the position applied for on the top of the envelope. Only short listed candidates would be called for participating in the selection process. Women are encouraged to apply.

Assistant General Manager (Admin)



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