

NEWS IN brief

Sonia Gandhi turns 66

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

President of India's ruling Congress party Sonia Gandhi yesterday turned 66 amidst outpouring of greetings from her party leaders and workers and holding of special prayers at a mobile temple for her healthy life outside her residence.

Scores of party workers, lawmakers and ministers thronged the official residence of Gandhi on Janpath here to celebrate her 66th birthday yesterday.

Gandhi had appealed to party workers not to take a spend money to come all the way to Delhi from far off places to greet her. Despite the appeal, party workers gathered at her residence since early morning beating drums and taking out processions.

Russia may boycott Nato summit

AFP, Moscow

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov yesterday said they may boycott Chicago summit with Nato if the two sides failed to bridge their differences over a US-backed missile defence system for Europe.

The final decision on attending the summit will be reached after March 4 presidential polls at which Prime Minister Vladimir Putin is expected to secure his return to the Kremlin.

"The staging of such a high-level summit depends first and foremost on whether it is filled with mean-

Indian Congress website hacked

AFP, New Delhi

Hackers broke into the official website of India's ruling Congress party yesterday and defaced the profile page of party president Sonia Gandhi with a pornographic message.

The attack came just days after the Indian government pledged a crackdown on "unacceptable" Internet content.

The pornographic text included a reference to a Pakistan-based email address, but did not otherwise identify the hackers. A congress leader told AFP that the party's computer department was investigating

Lokpal Bill tabled in parliament Team Anna calls bill 'weak'

PTI, New Delhi

The Parliamentary panel examining the Lokpal Bill yesterday submitted its report on the legislation to set up an anti-corruption ombudsman to Parliament.

The report on the Lokpal Bill was tabled in the Rajya Sabha by Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Chairman of the Standing Committee on Law and Justice, Public Grievances and Personnel.

In the Lok Sabha, Committee member Pinaki Misra tabled the report and the evidence tendered before the panel during the deliberations.

As the parliamentary panel tabled its report on the Lokpal bill, Team Anna members termed the draft legislation weak and urged people to join the agitation against it.

Team Anna members said the parliamentary committee has not suggested many changes and the draft bill will only increase corruption.

"We urge the people to come to Jantar Mantar on 11th of this month to tell the government that this kind of betrayal will not take place any more," Team Anna member Arvind Kejriwal said.

Speaking on similar lines, another key member of the team Prashant Bhushan said the Lokpal draft bill had no powers.

Social activist Anna Hazare, who has been fighting for an anti-graft legislation to create an ombudsman, will be sitting on a one-day token fast at Jantar Mantar in Delhi tomorrow to oppose the draft.



West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee (R) speaks with relatives of victims and fire fighters after a fire engulfed Amri hospital in the eastern Indian city of Kolkata yesterday. 89 people were killed in the disaster. PHOTO: AFP

KOLKATA HOSPITAL FIRE Rage against Mamata, media

IANS, Kolkata

The presence of Mamata Banerjee and the media only triggered further chaos and resentment at the fire-ravaged AMRI hospital yesterday, as police even resorted to batons to disperse the crowds.

Furious families of patients said the movement of ambulances had been hit after the West Bengal chief minister arrived.

Banerjee came to the narrow lane leading to the hospital-co-founded by private firms along with the West Bengal government - around 9.45am, and immediately a stream of people as also mediapersons rushed towards her.

But as the surging crowd became uncontrollable, leading to a near stampede, the lawkeepers wielding the baton, which worsened the situation.

Police personnel finally succeeded in clearing some area for the chief minister to address the relatives of victims.

"Because Mamata is here, the ambulances cannot go towards the annexe building. Please ask her to shift to another road," shouted a distraught relative of a victim.

Crestfallen and harassed at not receiving information for hours about patients, some relatives poured out their frustration.

A photojournalist was bashed up by residents and relatives of patients and a couple of cameras smashed.

Laden's wives can leave Pakistan

GUARDIAN ONLINE

Two wives of Osama bin Laden, held in Pakistan after the raid in May that killed their husband, are set to return to their homeland of Saudi Arabia, Pakistani officials have said.

A third wife will not travel back to her native land, Yemen, after authorities refused to accept her but may instead be offered a new home in Qatar, the Gulf emirate, a source in the Pakistani interior ministry told the Guardian.

All three women were detained by Pakistani military personnel after the American special forces raid on a house in the northern Pakistani city of Abbottabad during which Bin Laden was killed. Around a dozen children were also taken into Pakistani custody.

According to the officials and Saudi press reports, the two Saudi-born wives, Khairiah Sabar and Siham Sabar, recently had their Saudi citizenship restored, a move which would allow their return, possibly as early as next week.

However, there been no official confirmation from Riyadh, and the Saudi ambassador in Pakistan has told local reporters he has no knowledge of any forthcoming transfer.

Western officials in the region urged caution.

"Let's wait and see. It's likely they will go back [to Saudi Arabia] at some stage but it may well not be imminent," said one.

Officials in Riyadh told the Guardian earlier this year that, at least theoretically, there was no objection to the women's return to Saudi Arabia.

Garos dance away

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and Dhubaura of Mymensingh and Madhupur of Tangail district attended the celebration with their cultural teams.

Some 10 cultural teams with 300 artistes, donned in traditional multi-coloured clothing and beating traditional musical instruments, celebrated the concluding day.

The indigenous artistes used indigenous musical instruments like kakawa, nangglist, rangkilding and rangbong to accompany choruses and dance sequences. The dance sequences portrayed different agricultural activities such as preparing land and sowing seeds.

The festival is organised to satisfy Meenma, the mother of crops and monsoon, said Sanjib Drong, convener of the celebration committee, at the conclusion of the festival.

The celebration is not only for enjoyment, it also has spiritual and social importance, he added.

The Garo people are deprived of their basic rights in many cases, he said, adding that they want respect from the community at large and the state for their cul-

tural difference.

Talking to this correspondent, eminent drama artist Mamunur Rashid, also present at the festival, said that indigenous people are termed as 'small ethnic groups', which is regrettable.

The indigenous people have their own culture and way of life and we should allow them to flourish their culture and tradition and live their life accordingly, he opined.

The celebration was very colourful and beautiful, said William Hanna, adding that

indigenous people all over the world celebrate such programmes in their own style and such celebrations have been continuing for centuries enriching the culture of regions and countries.

The festival was rounded up with a 'mandi chorus' - Hareraray, Hareraray - which means to offer thanks to the creator for a good harvest.

Joyram Drong and Chhittaranjan Drong, as priests, conducted the religious rituals marking the celebration.

Climate given some hope

FROM PAGE 1

The EU proposal, which it calls a road map to a new climate deal, has been backed by more than 120 countries.

But even if the Kyoto protocol gets a second lease of life, it would deliver very little in terms of cutting greenhouse gas and checking rising temperature as the EU represents only 11 percent of the global greenhouse gas emission. And the EU was anyway committed to reducing carbon emission by 20 percent by 2020.

The surprise US declaration came when Todd Stern, US special envoy for climate change, told a press conference: "The EU has called for a roadmap. We support that."

The EU wants action from other countries as the Kyoto Protocol accounts for just 15 percent of world emissions as it was never ratified by the US and does not cover major economies such as China and India.

Kyoto protocol, the only

legally binding agreement on emission, was signed in 1997 and is to expire in 2012. This is why a second commitment period is so important if the world has to bind itself within the target of keeping the global temperature rise to 2 degree Celsius by the end of this century.

But when the Kyoto was signed, the countries which committed to cutting emission accounted for 70 percent of the greenhouse gas. Since then China and India, which were not obliged to cut emission, have emerged as the biggest and the third biggest polluters. The US never signed the commitment.

As such, even with the EU signing the second commitment of the protocol, that would cover only 11 percent of the global greenhouse gas after Japan, Canada, Russia and Australia have walked out. And environmentalists see it a great defeat in the fight to check global warming that has been causing havoc across the world,

more so in the poorer countries.

Chris Huhne, Britain's minister for energy and climate change, declared the United States was giving ground in the face of a united call from two-thirds of the world's nations.

"I think the US is reflecting the pressure that's been brought to bear and is continuing to be brought to bear on many of the other members here who have yet to agree," he said.

But other big emitters such as Brazil and South Africa have said they are willing to discuss the proposed programme.

The EU road map says negotiations should begin soon on a new global emission cut agreement under which all the major emitters would make commitments by 2015 to cut emissions, starting from 2020.

The US is reluctant to agree to specific dates yet but wants negotiations to start promptly.

PM to open Batexpo

FROM PAGE 1

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is set to inaugurate the event at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the morning.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith, Textiles and Jute Minister Abdul Latif Siddique, LGRD Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam, Commerce Minister GM Quader, Industries Minister Dilip Barua, Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Faruk Khan and Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan will address the inaugural session as special guests.

A total of 146 stalls of garment accessories (local and foreign), garment fabrics, garment technology and stock lot have been set up at the fair venue.

Opposition BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will attend the closing session of the three-day show on Monday as the chief guest.

Former Industries and Commerce Minister MK

Anwar, BNP acting Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, former minister and Khaleda's adviser M Osman Faruk and former commerce minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury will also be present at the concluding session.

The organisers expect that this year's Batexpo would be different and it would be able to attract more foreign buyers than in 2010 with an increased volume in spot orders, which was \$65 million last year.

It will be a reunion for both foreign buyers and local manufacturers, and the fair would help expand global market for Bangladesh's readymade garments, they say.

MGH, SAASCO Group, GLZ, IFC Bank, Exim Bank, Southeast Bank, Airtel, NCC Bank, Shahjalal Islami Bank and Well Park Residence are among the sponsors of the event.

A policy of convenience

FROM PAGE 1

professed stance by opening new windows for government officials to get appointed as administrators

on the expiry of elected mayors' tenure to run city corporations. Ignoring widespread criticism, necessary changes in the Local Government (City Corporation) Act 2009 were brought in to this end.

The changes made through the passage of a bill by parliament on November 29 shut the door for elected mayors to hand over power to their elected successors after the elections. This means a mayor will have no choice but to go on the expiry of his tenure without having the opportunity of giving a thought to who will or might succeed him.

Not only that, the same day parliament passed another bill bringing some major amendments to the Upazila Parishad Act 1998, opening the window for government officials to get appointed as administrators to run the upazila parishads too in the case of the posts of chairman and two vice chairmen falling vacant. Once appointed, the administrators will be able to con-

tinue functioning until the parishads are formed through fresh elections.

Before the changes, there were provisions that allowed only elected representatives, including chairmen, vice-chairmen and members of the parishads, to run the parishads.

City corporations and upazila parishads are two crucial institutions of the local government system, an integrated part of the central government that exercises the executive powers of the state. Being part of the central government, local government bodies are legally empowered to exercise executive power too. So, when an administrator is appointed to run a local government body, he is allowed to assume state powers as well.

After the changes brought into the city corporation law, DCC mayor Sadek Hossain Khoka and all councilors of the corporation were automatically removed. And in exercise of the authority it gained in the new legal provisions, the government appointed two administrators last Sunday to run the bifurcated DCC until they are constituted afresh

through polls.

By doing so the government seems to have also ignored one of the fundamental principles of state policy and provisions of local government stated in the constitution.

According to that fundamental principle announced in article 11, the Republic shall be a democracy in which effective participation by the people through their elected representatives in administration at all levels shall be ensured.

And the article 59 speaks of the composition of local government bodies while article 60 speaks of their functions. The two articles also limit the parliament's plenary legislative powers to enact law on local government bodies. It means parliament cannot make any law whatever it wants.

So, one may raise the question how did the parliament bring latest changes in the city and upazila laws empowering unelected people to get appointed as administrators to run these two local government bodies? Were the constitutional provisions ignored then? Can articles 59 and 60 of the constitution be left to lie

down?

In the Kudrat-E-Elahi Panir versus Bangladesh case, which was generated following the cancellation of upazila the parishad system by the then BNP-led government in 1991, the Appellate Division discussed the importance and significance of articles 59 and 60.

"The thrust of the verdict [Kudrat-E-Elahi Panir versus Bangladesh] was to ensure that all local government bodies must be composed of and run by elected representatives of the people", noted jurist Shahdeen Malik told The Daily Star.

Asked for his comment on the appointment of administrators to a divided DCC, Malik said the government had ignored the spirit of the verdict and also articles 11, 59 and 60 of the constitution.

The AL-led government might have intentionally forgotten the verdict in Kudrat-E-Elahi Panir versus Bangladesh case in its own interests as honoring the spirit of this verdict would not have allowed it to appoint administrators to bifurcated DCC.

However in the case of a cancellation of the caretaker

government system, the government moved very fast to implement the Appellate Division's verdict delivered in May this year declaring the provisions for CG illegal and void. It made parliament to amend the constitution abolishing hurriedly the CG system, so it can remain in office during the next parliamentary polls.

The government vehemently defended and relied on the verdict to reject demands for retaining the CG system although there was a controversy over the clarity of the verdict that also spoke for holding two more parliamentary polls under the CG system.

The government's dubious approach to the verdicts has been a glaring example of how a government honours a verdict if it supports the political position of the government.

Moreover, the presence of some unelected people in the present cabinet as technocrat ministers and the prime minister's very powerful advisers holding even portfolios has made another mockery of the government stance against unelected people assuming state power.

Zardari vows to return soon

Says recovering well

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari is "fine" and will return home soon, a news anchor quoted him as saying yesterday, nearly a week after his rush to a Dubai hospital led to speculation the unpopular leader might resign and even of a possible coup.

"I'm fine and will return soon," Zardari reportedly told Hamid Mir, a popular news anchor, who repeated the comments on state television.

The issue of the president's health has gripped Islamabad, exacerbating a series of cascading crises, that he may resign.

Recruitment of a Communications Specialist

Cowater International Inc. is the implementing agency for a project of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), "Strengthening Comptrollership and Oversight of Public Expenditure" (SCOPE). This is a capacity development project, working with the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (OCAG) of Bangladesh. We are seeking applicants for a full-time consultant as the **Communications Specialist**. The primary responsibilities of the Communications Specialist will be to assist the SCOPE project, working closely with OCAG and an international Parliamentary Relations Expert to:

- Further develop and refine external communications strategies and action plans, including a Public Relations Handbook, PAC Handbook and Media Handbook;
- Further develop and refine internal communications strategies;
- Lead orientation workshops and seminars for OCAG;
- Strengthen the OCAG Communications Cell;
- Provide advice with respect to the further development the OCAG website; and
- Provide ongoing assistance to OCAG with respect to their communications activities, including press releases;
- Develop relationships with the OCAG, the Public Accounts Committee and other committees of parliament regarding media and communications matters

Desired qualifications include the following:

- Relevant University education at the graduate level;
- At least 10 years of directly relevant experience;
- Experience in developing or improving handbooks, guides, and other tools;
- Very good understanding of the public sector in Bangladesh
- Demonstrated skills and experience in facilitating workshops and other training events;
- Fluency in English; and
- Excellent communication and writing skills.

The position is full-time for one year and may be extended. Applications are being sought from individual consultants only, not from firms and other organizations. Please send your CV and remuneration expectations by **1 January 2012** to:

Peter J. Armstrong
Field Project Manager
SCOPE Project
2nd 12-Storey Government Building
(9th floor), Segunbagicha, Dhaka-1000

Applications can also be sent by fax or by email:

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