

# Kim Jong-Il dies

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atomic arms arsenal.  
South Korea puts its military on emergency alert but urged its people to stay calm, and swiftly closed ranks with its close ally the United States. Analysts said there would likely be little turbulence in the North -- at least for now.

The leader "passed away from a great mental and physical strain" at 8:30 am on Saturday (2330 GMT Friday), while travelling by train on one of his field trips, the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said.

It urged people to support Jong-Un, who is in his late 20s and was last year made a four-star general and given top ruling party posts despite having had no public profile.

"All party members, military men and the public should faithfully follow the leadership of comrade Kim Jong-Un and protect and further strengthen the unified front of the party, military and the public," a weeping female announcer, clad in black, said on television.

KCNA said Kim died of a "severe myocardial infarction along with a heart attack". He suffered a stroke in August 2008 which triggered an acceleration in the succession plans.

Video footage from China Central Television showed people sobbing on the streets of Pyongyang. "How can I express all the sorrow... I can't say anymore," a soldier said.

Kim's funeral will be held on December 28 in Pyongyang but no foreign delegations will be invited, KCNA said. National mourning was declared from December 17 to 29.

"We must hold high the flag of songun (military-first) policy, strengthen military power a hundred times and firmly defend our socialist system and achievement of revolution," it said.

At the North Korean embassy in Beijing, the capital of its main ally China, the national flag was flying at half mast. China offered its "deep

condolences".

North Korea's propaganda machine has rolled into action to build up the same personality cult for Jong-Un that surrounded his father and late grandfather Kim Il-Sung, the founder and "eternal leader" of North Korea who died in 1994.

"The North's top guys have already sorted out everything and the regime seems to be stable under the new leadership," said Paik Hak-Soon of Seoul's Sejong Institute.

"I don't expect any major turbulence or power struggle within the regime in the foreseeable future."

"The Kim Jong-Un era has already started."

Analysts stressed that North Korea was entering an uncertain period, although its senior figures were likely to stick closely together for now.

"The North Korean elite has a vested interest in maintaining the system and will assess Jong-Un's ability to protect its interests," said Bruce Klingner, a Northeast Asia expert at Washington's Heritage Foundation.

South Korea summoned a meeting of the National Security Council and President Lee Myung-Bak called an emergency cabinet meeting.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff said it had increased monitoring along the border along with US forces in the country but no unusual activity had been observed.

North and South Korea have remained technically at war since their three-year conflict ended only in an armistice in 1953. The United States stations 28,500 troops in the South.

Lee had a phone conversation with US President Barack Obama about two hours after Kim's death was announced at noon (0300 GMT), officials said.

"The president reaffirmed the United States' strong commitment to the stability of the Korean peninsula and the security of our close ally,

the Republic of Korea," the White House said in a statement.

Japan, which has no diplomatic relations with North Korea, offered its condolences over the death but also called an emergency security meeting.

The news shocked South Koreans and some expressed fears of renewed conflict.

"I'm worried there will be a war. I thought it wasn't true at first," said student Song Bo-Na, 22.

KCNA, quoting a statement from the national funeral committee headed by Jong-Un, said Kim Jong-Il's body would lie in state in Kumsusan palace where his father's embalmed body is on display.

It said mourners would be allowed to visit from December 20 to 27.

Following the funeral, another event to mourn the leader would be held on December 29. Mourning shots are to be fired and three minutes of silence would be observed. All trains and ships will sound their horns.

Kim took over after his father and founding president Kim Il-Sung died in 1994, coming to power with a reputation as a playboy with a taste for the finer things in life.

But in the mid- to late-1990s he presided over a famine which killed hundreds of thousands of his people. Severe food shortages continue and the UN children's fund estimates one-third of children are stunted by malnutrition.

Kim still found the resources to continue a nuclear weapons programme which culminated in tests in October 2006 and May 2009. The country is believed to have a plutonium stockpile big enough for six to eight weapons.

For several months there have been diplomatic efforts to restart six-nation nuclear disarmament talks which the North abandoned in April 2009.

## Existing gas fields

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reviewing the IOC's digging cost from 1997 to 2011.

US company Chevron will dig nine wells in Moulvibazar and Bibiyana in Sylhet next year at an estimated cost of \$19 million per well, the proposal added.

Considering these facts, the proposal said Gazprom's quotation is at par and in some cases lower than other companies.

Gazprom will use high quality digging equipment for the gas wells and also provide engineering services of reputed international firms.

No tender was called for the job.

The deal for the job will be signed between the two governments in line with the bilateral agreement made between the two sides during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to Moscow in November last year.

In 2009, Polish company Cracow was selected for digging five out of the 10 wells for \$24.36 million per well on an average.

However, just days before signing of the agreement, Cracow in February this year expressed its inability to do the job.

## 7 babies die

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sufferers in the cold spell.

A Met official said yesterday evening the cold spell would continue for two more days.

The lowest temperature yesterday was 9.2 degree Celsius in Rajshahi.

In the capital, the temperature fell to 12 degree Celsius.

Our correspondents in Madaripur and Munshiganj reported that ferry service on Daulatdia-Paturia route resumed at 10:00 am yesterday.

A report from Jamalpur says: At least seven children have been attacked with pneumonia in Sarishabari upazila due to biting cold. The number of patients, mostly children, affected by cold has increased at the upazila health complex.

In Chuadanga, a moderate cold wave accompanied with dense fog has affected normally.

A mild cold spell with thick fog is affecting life in different northern districts -- Rajshahi, Natore, Pabna, Bogra, Dinajpur, Thakurgaon and Panchagarh -- and southwestern region of the country.

The seven new borns -- all under 25 days -- died at Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

RMCH Director Dr Toufiqul Islam said all the babies were suffering from low weight, bronchitis, asthma and eczema. Intense cold worsened their condition. Their lives might have been saved if the incubators at the hospital were functional.

An RMCH source said of the 14 incubators for the paediatrics wards, only three were in order.

## Rejoinder

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prosecution has placed 52 war crimes charges to the International Crimes Tribunal.

"The support forthcoming so far has been from people like Moulvi Farid Ahmad, a Bengali lawyer in Dhacca, Fazlul Quadeer Chaudhary and Professor Ghulam Azam, of the Jamat Islami, all of whom were soundly beaten in the General Elections last December."

In his protest, Ghulam Azam said, "Anthony Mascarenhas' writings are debatable and to draw conclusion from his book is unethical. This is only one side of the story! He introduced many characters in his writing who, either no longer lived or were untraceable, making it impossible to verify. As such, it is utterly unacceptable and absolutely unethical to publish extracts from this book. We feel that bringing reference to his book now in this manner is purely purpose oriented."

OUR REPLY  
Our story was based on an article titled "Genocide" by Anthony Mascarenhas, former assistant editor of Karachi-based Morning News, published in The Sunday Times on June 13, 1971.

We stand by our report.

# AL smells a rat

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said the aim of the talks with the coalition partners and other like-minded parties is to improve understanding with them and also to extend the present alliance to challenge the opposition and anti-liberation forces.

The AL-led 14-party alliance sits today at 7:00pm at Gono Bhaban to discuss the current political situation of the country and work out a tactic to deal with possible future unrest by the opposition.

On Sunday, a series of crude homemade bombs went off in central Dhaka as hundreds of activists of BNP and Jamaat clashed with police, smashed more than a dozen vehicles and set some of those on fire.

A 24-year-old youth was killed in a bomb explosion at the capital's Motijheel while a man died when some unruly people torched two vehicles in Sylhet, police said.

Violence also erupted outside the capital with the opposition activists torching at least 10 vehicles across the country.

The government and the opposition blamed each other for the violence.

Against this backdrop, the AL high command has decided to take on the opposition men on the street. "Awami League will be on the

streets from now on to resist BNP-Jamaat's conspiracy against the government," AL Presidium Member Matia Chowdhury, also the agriculture minister, told The Daily Star.

**ALPRESS BRIEFING**  
Awami League at a press briefing yesterday alleged that BNP and Jamaat on Sunday resorted to secret killings and other criminal activities to foil the trial of war criminals and also to save BNP chief's two sons Tarique Rahman and Arafat Rahman Koko from different corruption charges.

Briefing journalists at party chief's political office in Dhanmondi, AL acting general secretary Mahbul Alam Hanif accused Khaleda Zia of lying about Sunday's mayhem.

"The nation doesn't expect such falsehood from the former prime minister who is now the Leader of the Opposition in parliament," he added.

The ruling party also alleged that Khaleda's object was to gain politically from the "unstable situation".

"It won't be good either for Khaleda Zia or for the politicians," AL leader Tofail Ahmed told the press briefing.

Tofail urged the people of the country to unite against all the evil forces, and compared Sunday's incident with

the simultaneous bomb blasts in 500 places in the country in 2004 when BNP was in power.

**AL-CPB MEETING**  
"We want to build a greater political unity with all the pro-liberation political parties to resist the anti-liberation forces' attempt to create anarchy in the country to hinder the war crimes trial," Hanif told The Daily Star after the meeting with CPB leaders.

Apart from the AL chief Sheikh Hasina, the meeting was attended by AL leaders Abdul Jalil, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, Abdul Latif Siddique, Kazi Zafarullah, Mahbul Alam Hanif and Dipu Moni, among others.

CPB General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim said they agreed with the AL to launch simultaneous programmes to drum up public support in favour of war crimes trial.

"Every pro-liberation war political party with their individual capability will take to the streets for a month demanding the trial of the war criminals."

"We've also suggested devising strategies to isolate Jamaat by neutralising all other forces that are backing the anti-liberation party [Jamaat]," Selim said.

# Havel's funeral scheduled for Friday noon

AFP, Prague

The state funeral of former Czech president Vaclav Havel, who died Sunday at the age of 75, will take place at noon (1100 GMT) on December 23 in a Prague cathedral, officials said yesterday.

Havel's secretary Sabina Tancevova told Czech public TV that US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was likely to attend the funeral Friday, while Czech media named German Chancellor Angela Merkel as a probable guest.

"The ceremonial farewell to President Havel will take place on Friday, December 23 at noon at St Vitus Cathedral" in Prague Castle, the seat of Czech presidents, said Radim Ochrav, spokesman for Havel's successor Vaclav Klaus.

Havel, who suffered circulatory failure caused by long-term health woes, was president of Czechoslovakia from 1989 to 1992 and of its successor, the Czech Republic, from 1993 to 2003.

Before becoming president, the dissident playwright steered his nation through the peaceful 1989 Velvet Revolution that toppled communist rule in Czechoslovakia, which then split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993.

The centre-right Czech cabinet was due to meet later yesterday to plan a period of national mourning.

The Czech Mediafax news agency said before the meeting that mourning would last for three days, from Wednesday to Friday.

The government of neighbouring Slovakia meanwhile decided to declare a day of national mourning on Friday.

Thousands signed condolence books for Havel and bowed to his coffin in Prague yesterday, a day after a wave of candle light tributes were held across the country as news of his death spread.

## Ministers

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The minister and the state minister went to the Press Club to address a discussion, the BCL leader said.

There was a big gathering in front of the Press Club of the leaders and activists of BNP and pro-BNP student body -- Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal -- at the time.

"The ministers felt insecure as the gathering of opposition members was bigger than those of the pro-Awami League ones," said the BCL leader.

Around 10 leaders and 30 activists of the BCL then attended the discussion at the request of the minister and the state minister.

"Using the members of a student body for ministers' security is unfortunate," a joint general secretary of BCL, who also went to "secure" the ministers, said.

## 5 killed

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of Mymensingh; and Habibur Rahman, 23, and Babul Hossain, 38, of Manikarchar in Jamalpur district, police said.

Two other victims could not be identified till filing of this report at 9:00pm.

The injured are Nazrul Islam, 30, and Nurul Islam, 35, of Halaughat upazila and Alam Halia, 30, a resident of Trishal upazila in the district.

Zakiur Rahman, officer-in-charge (OC) of Bhaluka police station, said the accident occurred when a tin sheet carrying truck skidded off the road and fell into a paddy field killing the five on the spot at around 4:45pm.

The truck's driver lost control over steering as a tire of the vehicle punctured.

All the victims were travelling on the roof of the truck, he said.

The injured were rushed to Bhaluka Upazila Health Complex. Later they were shifted to Mymensingh Medical College and Hospital (MMCH), the police officer said.

The police recovered the bodies. The driver and helper of the truck managed to escape the scene.

## Retirement

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age-limit may slow down promotion and fresh recruitment.

"The prime minister has directed us to clear the obstacles to promotions and fill up two-lakh vacant posts quickly," said Mosharraf Hossain.

In her reaction, Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury said with this move contractual appointment, which affects the bureaucratic functions badly, will be decreased while unemployment will not rise.

She said the premier directed the secretaries to hold Superior Selection Board meeting frequently to ensure quick promotions.

Akbar Ali Khan, former finance adviser to a caretaker government, said, "The decision is good considering improvement in average life expectancy, but it will squeeze the scope for new appointment and promotion."

Zaid Bakht of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies said the decision may put a little pressure on the revenue budget due to salary hike at the higher echelon.

A deputy secretary of the finance ministry told The Daily Star that the government would be relieved of a huge amount of pension at least for two years which will be a financial gain.

### OTHER DECISIONS

The meeting yesterday endorsed the proposal for preserving one percent quota for the physically challenged in Bangladesh Civil Service cadre and all first and second-class public servant positions, said Cabinet Secretary Mosharraf Hossain.

It also approved the drafts of the Bangladesh Applied Nutrition and Training Institute Act 2011, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (Amendment) Act 2011, Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority Act 2011 and the Mutual Cooperation on Crime Related Issues Act 2011.

Besides, the cabinet adopted a condolence motion at the death of National Professor Kabir Chowdhury.

## GD filed

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The companies against whom the GD has been filed are: BDDL, Ashiyani Lands Development Ltd, Biswas Builders, Amin Mohammad Lands Development Ltd, The Dhanshiri (BD), Bashudha Builders, Tanshir Properties, East West Properties Ltd, Well Care Consortium, AG Properties, Metro Properties, US Bangla Group, Heerajheel Properties Development, Nasim Group, Purbachal NRB Homes, Sabuj Chhaya Residential Project, Glorious Land Development, MA Wahab and Sons, Bashukunja Lands Development, Nabodoy Housing, Shatabdi Housing, New Dhaka Alliance, Inspired Development, Atlantic Properties, Vision 21 Design & Development, Four Seasons Holdings, Kopotakha Green City, Ideal Real Estate, Probashi Palli Group, Yes Group, Innovative Holdings, Bangladesh Development Company, Actual Land Development, Uttaran Properties, New Vision Group, Udayan Properties Development, Bhulua Royal City Private Ltd, Al Warish Properties, New Dhaka Alliance, Dakkhina Real Estate, and Invite Properties.

Rajuk took the legal measure in the wake of repeated media reports that it had allowed display and sale of unapproved land projects in the "Rehab Fair, 2011", violating a High Court directive.

The GD had been filed as the companies violated the Private Housing Land Development Rules of 2004 and the Private Housing Development and Management Law, 2010, said Engineer Khalequzzaman Chowdhury, an authorised officer of Rajuk.

The officer was attending a stall at the five-day fair in the city's Bangabandhu International Conference Centre yesterday, the final day of the fair. Rajuk was given the stall to stop display and sale of unapproved land projects in the fair.

"We could not file cases against the companies due to lack of adequate information on unauthorised projects," said Sheikh Abdul Mannan, member, planning of Rajuk.

"Filing any case without proper investigation would have been unwise and could jeopardise our position," he said.

## Govt asked

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citizens, rights bodies and news media. But this time they have introduced this new form to carry on the old killing," he added.

He expressed concern that the law and order will collapse if such killings don't stop.

Editor of English daily New Age, Nurul Kabir said, "We think the killings are carried out because of political interest. These killings could not have happened without political influence and the government's involvement."

He urged the rights organisations and political parties to put pressure on the government to put an end to such killings.

"The government is claiming that the opposition parties are responsible for the killings. If so, please prove that. We want to know the truth," said SMAkram.

Member Secretary of CMDHR Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Dr Dilara Chowdhury and Prof Asif Nazrul were present, among others.