

INDIAN PRESIDENTIAL RACE

Pranab emerges as front runner

THE HINDU ONLINE

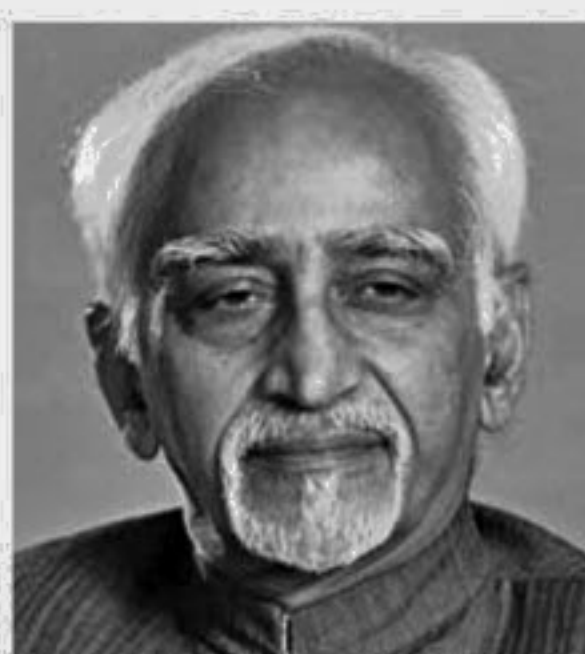
Union Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee is the front runner for President, as the formal and informal consultations among the constituents of the ruling United Progressive Alliance (UPA) on the election, scheduled for July, gained momentum.

This became evident when the Congress was forced to acknowledge for the first time in public that Mukherjee was indeed in the race after one of the party's spokespersons, Renuka Chaudhary, went on record earlier in the day that the senior leader was too "valued" to the party and the government to be spared for the post of President.

It is immediately not clear what prompted Chaudhary to jump the gun, especially since the Congress has not



Pranab Mukherjee



Hamid Ansari

contested reports in the media that Mukherjee is one of the preferences of the party. Vice-President Hamid Ansari has been projected as the other choice.

Earlier in the week, the BJP ruffled the feathers of some allies of the NDA, with Leader of the Opposition Sushma Swaraj having ruled out support to either Mukherjee or Ansari, saying that the party may have no problem with the candidature of either Ansari or

The BJP has gone quiet after the faux pas, but the Congress has stepped up consultations. Trinamool Congress leader and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamta Banerjee, who is here to attend the Chief Ministers' meeting on the National Counter-Terrorism Centre on May 5, met Congress president Sonia Gandhi, amid indications that the party may have no problem with the candidature of either Ansari or

Mukherjee.

On her meeting with Gandhi, Banerjee merely said she would prefer consensus, and it was for the Congress to take a decision on the nominee.

Banerjee, who also had an hour-long meeting with Samajwadi Party chief Mulayam Singh, said the two parties would take a joint decision. Significantly, Yadav said earlier that the next President should be "political."

The Left parties will have preliminary discussions on Friday, amid indications that they will have no issue with either of the Congress's choices.

Swaraj's comments on Ansari have clearly given an edge to the UPA in general, and the Congress in particular. The NDA is scheduled to meet at a date yet to be finalised to take a view on the subject.

Maoists release kidnapped Indian official

AFP, Raipur

Maoist rebels in central India released a government official yesterday after holding him hostage for nearly two weeks in the latest of a series of kidnappings by the guerrillas, police said.

The guerrillas kidnapped Menon last week, shooting his bodyguards dead as he was on a tour.

The 32-year-old is the most senior civil servant in the area in his role as Sukma's district collector.

Last week the rebels released a regional lawmaker, Jhina Hikaka, from captivity after holding him hostage for more than a month in the neighbouring state of Orissa.

Menon's kidnapping is the most recent in a series of high-profile abductions, including a case earlier this year when foreigners were targeted for the first time by the guerrillas.

Myanmar army poised to attack Says Kachin rebels

AFP, Bangkok

Myanmar's army is poised for a major assault on Kachin minority rebels, the guerilla group said yesterday, despite calls for an end to the violence which has cast a shadow over the new regime's reforms.

Around 2,000 government forces have moved into place around the northern town of Laiza -- a key rebel stronghold, an official for the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The apparent troop build-up follows calls by UN chief Ban Ki-moon on Monday for an end to fighting, which has forced thousands to flee into neighbouring China.

"They are preparing to attack the KIA base in Laiza... they have reinforced a lot of troops and sent a lot of artillery but have not attacked yet," the official said, claiming rebel forces number around 3,000.

Civil war has gripped parts of Myanmar since independence in 1948.

But Myanmar's government has agreed ceasefires with several ethnic rebel groups as part of reforms since coming to power last year, a move also aimed at the international community which links eased sanctions with the peace process.

In January President Thein Sein's government told the military to halt all offensives in ethnic minority conflict zones.

But violence in the Kachin area, reignited after a 17-year ceasefire was shattered last year, has continued to rage prompting fears it could obstruct national peace.

India ferry death toll hits 113

AFP, Guwahati

The toll from one of India's worst ferry disasters rose to 113 yesterday as rescuers fished out the bodies of more passengers who drowned when the boat sank in a river in Assam state.

Chandan Brahma, transport minister of the north-eastern Indian state, said a search was still on for bodies of other victims of the double-decker ferry which capsized in the Brahmaputra river during a storm on Monday.

Rescuers and soldiers have salvaged the mangled wreck of the 25-metre ferry, which was reportedly crammed with up to 350 people despite its operating capacity of 225.

The Brahmaputra, which is eight kilometres wide at the scene of the accident, flows through northeastern India into Bangladesh and out into the Bay of Bengal.

NEWS IN brief

Netanyahu set for easy poll win

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu looks set to sail to an easy victory in early general elections likely to take place in September, a series of polls showed yesterday.

The Israeli leader is riding high in the polls, with surveys putting him far ahead of his rivals for prime minister and showing his Likud party will increase their parliamentary standing to become the biggest party in the 120-seat Knesset.

The latest polls come after days of speculation about the prospect of early elections, which had been scheduled for October 2013. The head of Netanyahu's coalition said Wednesday that consen-

Yemen kills 8 Qaeda militants

AFP, Sanaa

Yemeni soldiers killed eight al-Qaeda militants as they tried to attack an army post in the southern province of Abyan yesterday, the defence ministry said.

"Eight Al-Qaeda militants were killed and others wounded" when army forces "foiled their attack" against a military post near Bajdar on the outskirts of the provincial capital Zinjibar, the ministry's website 26sep.net said.

The army has been battling al-Qaeda militants, who have renamed themselves as the "Partisans of Sharia"

Palestinian unity meet fails

AFP, Cairo

A Cairo meeting between Hamas chief Khaled Meshal and an official of the rival Fatah movement made no headway on the formation of a Palestinian national unity government, an official said yesterday.

Two hours of talks Wednesday night in the Egyptian capital produced "nothing new," the Palestinian official told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Meshal and his deputy Mussa Abu Marzuk discussed with senior Fatah official Azzam al-Ahmed "the possibility of advancing the reconciliation process, in particular a government of national unity, but

Power import faces

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completed before the expiry of tenure of the Awami League government.

Explaining the problems of power import, a top PDB official said the PGCI selected private land to install the station. The private owners are asking for land price much higher than the government-fixed land acquisition price.

The PGCI is ready to pay that high price, but the West Bengal Government would not let it pay that price.

The West Bengal government argues with the PGCI that if it allows the purchase at such a high rate, it will have implications over land purchase for other projects.

"We gather that the Indian central government's power secretary and minister are persuading the West Bengal government to resolve the matter at the earliest possible time. We are hopeful it will be resolved soon," the official said.

Based on the joint declaration of the two countries signed during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's January 2010 visit to India, the two nations struck the power deal and started building infrastructure to transmit 500 MW power.

The power purchase agreement (PPA) between the PDB and the National Vidyut Vikas Nigam was signed on February 28. As per the PPA, Bangladesh will get power from several plants at a discount rate reserved for the Indian central government. In India, power sales rates vary from plant to plant and the rates are higher than that in Bangladesh.

"We will get the power at a rate of Tk 4.25 per kilowatt hour which includes power transmission cost," a PDB official said.

This rate is higher than that

of power generated by the local gas-based large power plants, but much lower than that by the rental plants.

The PDB aims at bringing the other 250 MW power from the open market at a tariff of Tk 5.5 at the maximum.

"We have floated a tender and we plan to put an advertisement in Indian newspapers. If we can strike a deal and if the switching station issues are resolved soon, we can hope to have 500 MW power from India by July next year," said the official.

To facilitate the power import, Bangladesh is implementing a \$142 million project for setting up the power grid and a power conversion station in Bheramara with funds from the ADB.

Meanwhile, in the light of the joint declaration, the PDB is preparing to give a final touch to its joint venture coal-fired 1,320 MW power deal with the Indian National Thermal Power Company (NTPC).

An NTPC team is due to visit Dhaka on May 6 to discuss power purchase agreement and implementation agreement -- two vital jobs before any power project can start.

An official explained, "The company registration of the PDB-NTPC's joint venture company is underway where both of us will have 50-50 equity."

The coal-based plant to be set up in Khulna close to the Sundarbans will require \$1.5 billion investment. Getting such finance may be a challenge and, therefore, the PDB believes this project will take time to complete.

The PDB had earlier targeted completing the project by 2015. But it is now looking beyond 2016.

US releases Laden documents

BBC ONLINE

Newly released papers from Osama Bin Laden's hideout reveal a frustrated al-Qaeda leader struggling to control an unruly network, the US military says.

The documents seized during the raid on the Abbottabad compound were posted online by the research wing of the US military academy, West Point.

The papers show he was unhappy with affiliates' attacks on fellow Muslims, urging them to target the US instead.

Seventeen documents were released from a cache of more than 6,000.

The 175-page cache was posted online by the US Military Academy's Combating Terrorism Center - in the week marking a year since Bin Laden's death.



The papers date from September 2006 to April 2011 and include letters from other al-Qaeda leaders.

Some documents suggest that the group had a strained relationship with Iran.

Meanwhile, there is no explicit refer-

ence to any institutional support from Pakistan, where the al-Qaeda leader lived for nine years.

The papers make mention of "trusted Pakistani brothers", but one reference suggests Bin Laden was wary of Pakistani intelligence.

The documents also shed light on Bin Laden's concerns that Muslims were being alienated by the ideology of jihad.

In a letter from 2010, Bin Laden wrote of "starting a new phase to correct [the mistakes] we made".

"In doing so, we shall reclaim, God willing, the trust of a large segment of those who lost their trust in the jihadis," he wrote.

In a letter from April 2011, Bin Laden discusses the Arab Spring, calling it a "formidable event" in the history of Muslims and expressing hope they can influence events through media outreach and "guidance".

Zakat fund plundered

FROM PAGE 20

ACC Assistant Director Wajed Ali Molla submitted the charge sheet in a 2010 case to the Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, naming seven people including the three.

The charge sheet also mentions 45 people as prosecution witnesses.

The four other accused are Lutful Haque, former finance and accounting director of the Islamic Foundation; Miah Mohammad Yunus, secretary of Jatiya Bandhujan Parishad in Bholia; Mohammad Tofazzal Hossain, president of Islami Samajkalyan Kendra in Pirojpur, and Abdul Haque,

assistant director of Masjid Council for Community Advancement in Manikganj.

Of the accused in the case, Sayeede is in jail custody in connection with crimes against humanity during the 1971 Liberation War while Azad, also chairman of Masjid Council for Community Advancement in Manikganj, who is known as "Bachchu Razakar", is a fugitive accused of war crimes.

The five others are on the run.

Names of Yunus, Tofazzal and Abdul Haque were not in the first information report (FIR), but came up in the charge sheet as their involve-

ment in the corruption was found during the case investigation.

Wajed Ali Molla, also investigation officer of the case, appealed to the court to issue arrest warrants against all the accused and an order to attach their moveable properties.

Islamic Foundation Finance and Accounting Director Aiyub Ali Chowdhury filed the case with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station on May 24, 2010.

In the FIR, he said there were zakat committees in every district for distribution of the Zakat Fund. The accused being members of

the committees had used their influence over the Zakat Board and got the fund released for their own organisations operating in four districts, whereas the fund was intended for the destitute people of 64 districts, the FIR adds.

The case was filed following an enquiry by a three-member investigation committee formed by the Islamic Foundation into allegations of misappropriation.

The enquiry found that fake signatures and thumb impressions had been used and identities of destitute people had been fabricated to misappropriate the fund, according to the FIR.

**UN Volunteers**  
Inspiration in action

**United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme Vacancy Announcement**

United Nations Volunteers programme in Bangladesh announces vacancies for the following positions for the "Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility" under the National UNV modality.

(i) Planning Specialist - 01 (ii) Monitoring Specialist - 01

For detailed job description, information about the positions and instructions to apply, please visit <http://www.undp.org.bd/jobs>.

Please send hard copy of applications to UNV programme, C/O UNDP, IDB Bhaban 14th floor, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Agargaon, Dhaka.

Last day of Applications: 4.30 pm on 15-May, 2012 (Tuesday)  
Qualified female candidates are strongly encouraged to apply. Only Short-listed candidates will be contacted.

**Request for Quotation (RFQ)**

**Procurement of Printing Services**

UNDP Bangladesh seeks quotations from interested and qualified vendors for printing services as mentioned in the RFQ document. All interested firms may collect the Bidding documents (RFQ) from [md.asfezzaman@undp.org](mailto:md.asfezzaman@undp.org) by a formal request to UNDP that will register bidders into participants list, so any correspondence, questions regarding the bidding documents and respective answers can be sent to all bidders.

Submission of Quotation: The envelope should state "Procurement of Printing services" and should be addressed to the UNDP Procurement Unit, IDB Bhaban (12th Floor), Begum Rokeya Sharani, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207. The quotation should be submitted in the bid box placed in the 12th Floor of IDB Bhaban.

The deadline for submission of quotation is **May 16, 2012, 04.30PM.**

**Omera** বিজ্ঞ  
যন্ত্রপাটিকে রাখে সচল

**"VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT"**

Omera Petroleum Limited (OPL), a safety, health & environment compliant organization & a sister concern of MJL Bangladesh Limited, is setting up state-of-the-art LPG Storage, Bottling and Distribution Terminal in different locations of the Country. The Company is now looking for ambitious, pro-active and self-motivated individuals for immediate appointment to the following position:

**Position: Site Engineer**

No. of positions: 03 (For Dhaka, Chittagong and Bogra)

**Key Responsibility:**

a) Overall responsibility during construction at site.  
b) To liaison with Local Authority, Contractor and Consultant during construction time at site.

**Qualifications:**

a) Diploma in Civil Engineering.  
b) 5-10 years experience in the field of Construction like Building, Shed construction, Machine foundation, Tank foundation, Jetty construction etc.  
c) Good analytical, interpersonal and computer literacy is essential.

The challenge and expectation are demanding while rewards are attractive. If you possess the required educational qualification, skills and experience, we invite you to send a resume with cover letter to the address given below by 15th May, 2012:

Human Resources Department,  
MJL Bangladesh Limited, Mobil House,  
CWS(C) 9, Gulshan 1, Dhaka 1212

You can also e-mail at [career@mobilbd.com](mailto:career@mobilbd.com)

Only short listed candidate will be contacted for interview. Selection will be made purely on merit basis.

আপনার গাড়ীতে ব্যবহার করুন বিশ্ব মান সম্পন্ন **Omera** **UBE1**