

JS debate over question cut

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The JS yesterday witnessed an unscheduled debate and uproar over shifting of 28 out of 71 questions from the day's order.

Deputy leader of the opposition Advocate Abdul Hamid pointed out in the House that it was an unprecedented incident that so many questions were shifted in a single day.

He alleged it was designed to avoid the 'unpleasant' questions of opposition lawmakers. He sought the Chair's intervention to ensure the government's accountability.

Speaker Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar, who was presiding over the session, at one stage of the debate termed Suranjit Sengupta's speech "extraneous and exaggerated" and talked in terms of expunging them from the proceedings.

He, however, cooled down as the treasury bench members certified there was nothing un-parliamentary in Suranjit's deliberation, and also informed the House that the question would be transacted on February 27.

The House that resumed its session 40 minutes behind schedule transacted a total of 71 questions during the question-hour. It also witnessed tabling of four ques-

tions by proxy.

LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said the questions transferred from yesterday's proceedings would be transacted on some other day, and that triggered a debate.

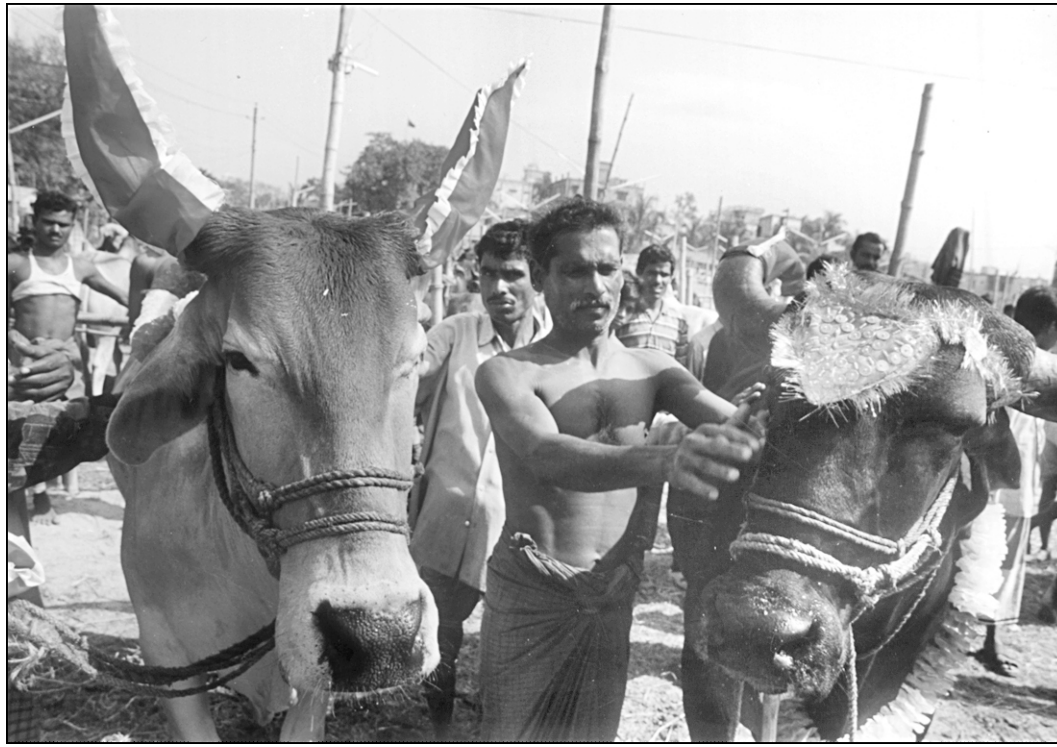
Suranjit Sengupta sought explanation from the treasury bench why so many questions were shifted in a single day. "It is a serious lapse. The parliament secretariat must be judicious in dealing with the questions," an exited Suranjit said, adding that he would not make the Chair a party.

At this stage, an angry speaker said Suranjit's speech was "extraneous and exaggerated" and it should be expunged from the proceedings.

The Chair's 'ruling' prompted the opposition lawmakers to shout in the House.

However, the Prime Minister's Parliamentary Affairs Advisor Salauddin Quader Chowdhury and Law Minister Moudud Ahmed supported the opposition lawmaker on this point, saying Suranjit was within his rights as a parliamentarian.

After a long debate, the speaker informed the House that he had reason to shift the question and it would again be transacted on February 27.



It's Eid time and sacrificial animals are pouring into the capital.

PHOTO: STAR

Govt, NGOs should join hands to stop spread of AIDS

KAUSHIK SANKAR DAS, from Kathmandu

A high-level conference on HIV/AIDS in South Asia ended here yesterday with pledges to 'speak out and break the silence and stop the stigma and discrimination' to prevent the disease from accelerating further.

The commitments were declared in a statement at the concluding ceremony of the two-day long conference in the Nepalese capital co-sponsored by UNICEF and UNAIDS.

They also called upon the leadership to use every opportunity to openly discuss the issues surrounding the spread of the disease.

And to make it possible, the Kathmandu declaration committed to include government and NGO partners, especially from sectors like education, religious affairs, defence, social welfare, women development, information and also the young people of the region who have become extremely vulnerable to the menace in recent times.

UNICEF says globally almost half of all new infections are occurring among young people. The declaration urged the leaders to include in their programmes issues of gender inequalities and human

rights violations, especially the abuse and exploitation of women and young girls and boys which spread the epidemic.

The donor partners present at the conference committed to allocate and mobilise adequate resources from government, private sector and international agencies to ensure that the epidemic is prevented.

One of the delegates however commented, "We know what has to be done, but we don't know how to do it." As it has been pledged in the declaration, money is not a problem, but getting it to the people who need it more may turn out to be a difficult task for the UN agencies.

It was acknowledged that the governments of South Asian countries and other organisations have been taking a number of actions against HIV/AIDS. But it was also agreed that successes exist on a small and localised scale.

It requires a collective responsibility of the governments and leaders of all levels including religious sector and media to halt the epidemic from spreading. Creating an environment which would provide services to the most vulnerable groups should be given top priority 'for achieving large scale reductions in the number of people infected and affected.'

The head of Bangladesh Health Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain said while chairing a group discussion that to eradicate poverty, one of the root causes of the disease, education and health issues should be given top priority.

He added, "To prevent HIV/AIDS, we have to keep our moral, social and family values intact. They should not be eroded." He also observed that the media can play a vital role.

Carol Bellamy, executive director of UNICEF, admitted that the numbers of infected people in South Asia are much lower than the numbers in sub-Saharan Africa, the world's largest HIV/AIDS infected region. But the number of new infections is also growing in South Asia at an alarming rate.

Bellamy said it would not be wise to wait for the numbers to get bigger, because by that time it could be too late.

And probably that's the reason the delegates called upon the SAARC countries to include reports on progress in fighting HIV/AIDS at relevant ministerial level meetings.

Clash with police CU JCD leader arrested

CU CORRESPONDENT

A JCD leader was arrested yesterday in connection with Monday's clash on the Chittagong University campus.

Nasir Khan, president of Shahjalal Hall unit of JCD, was arrested from Fotehpur area near the campus at 2pm.

Earlier, Hathazari thana police had filed a case against some leaders and activists of Chittagong University (CU) unit of JCD, including its president Md. Salim for their alleged involvement in the clash with police.

Meanwhile, CU unit of JCD in a press conference in the city yesterday placed five-point demand.

The demands include immediate resignation of CU Vice-chancellor professor A.J.M. Nuruddin Chowdhury and pro VC prof Dr. M. Shamsuddin, punitive measures against police men involved in the attack on JCD men and expulsion of the shibir cadres who beat JCD men Shahed.

Transport strike in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Transport strike in Khulna-Satkira and Khulna-Paigachha roads began yesterday.

Khulna Division Bus and Minibus Owners Association and Transport Workers Association jointly called the strike following a clash between transport workers and local people at Dumuria bus stand at around 10 in the morning.

At least five people, including three transport workers were injured in the clash.

Sonali Bank

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daughter of Aziz Mishir, a senior journalist, tried to encash a cheque for Tk 10,000. Later, it was found that the cash was not delivered.

Similar incidents have occurred at this very branch after the bank stopped giving tokens for cheques, account holders alleged.

Evacuation

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grants from Bangladesh and Pakistan" would be deported. Within weeks, India started pushing Bangla-speaking Muslims into Bangladesh. Dhaka responded by pushing them back.

The BDR is already on high alert to face any "unpleasant incident", security sources said. The evacuation followed a flag meeting between the border forces of the two countries, which ended in failure on Monday.

India's West Bengal home department has asked the Union home ministry to deal with the impasse on the border.

Meantime, the 213 Bangla-speaking people who were pushed back by the BDR five days ago are stranded in no-man's land in the Nazir Gomani area. They do not know what to expect next.

The Nazir Gomani area is also tense as the local population expects the stranded people to be pushed in again.

BDR sources at Panchagarh said the BSF has assembled truck-loads of people along the border overnight for possible push-ins.

Our Kushtia correspondent reports that the BSF also assembled people along the Meherpur border.

Kamal Guha, West Bengal agriculture minister, has blamed Indian Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani for the border crisis. Describing the situation as "serious", he said he would raise the issue at the cabinet and core-committee meeting.

IMF loans

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Pacific region.

He refused to comment on the possible outcome of the loan negotiations.

According to banking sources, the recent reserve position is not at a level that permits the government to take a decision on free-float of exchange rate.

The finance minister yesterday said remittance, which has so far provided the cushion to the dwindling reserve, showed a downward trend in the last few days.

"And if war breaks out in Iraq there would be a negative impact on remittance, as many Bangladeshi expatriates may come back," Saifur said.

According to the latest figures available with the central bank, the reserve stands at \$1.61 billion.

It was at \$1.55 billion when the government made an Asian Clearing Union (ACU) payment early last month. Another ACU bill is due next month.

If US-led forces strike Iraq and remittance continues on a downward trend, the foreign exchange reserve would be difficult to manage, said the sources.

At yesterday's meeting, the government agreed to downsize the Tk 19,200 crore ADP for the current fiscal.

"We have to cut down the ADP (Annual Development Programme) as it could spell a setback in the face of a slowdown in the flow of external assistance," Saifur said.

But the government has to find out how much could be cut without hurting social development goals, he said.

BAC sues Agarwal, seven others

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAC) yesterday filed seven cases against businessman Omprakash Agarwal and seven others, including two bankers, on charge of misappropriating Tk 18.34 crore.

BAC officer Abdul Huq filed the cases with the Motijheel Police Station, according to sources.

The other accused are Sajedul Huq, managing director of the United Commercial Bank Limited (UCBL); Anwar Ahmed, former managing director of the National Credit and Commerce Bank Limited (NCCBL); Pankaj Saha, chairman of H B Apparels Ltd., Narayan Chandra Bhounik, managing director of HB Apparels, Kazi

Mohammad Shafiqur Rahman, executive vice-president of the NCCBL, and G M Fakhruddin and Syeda Khaleda Begum, branch manager and former vice-president respectively of the NCCBL.

According to the cases, the accused misappropriated the money through over invoicing and transferring foreign currency against back-to-back letters of credit. They were also accused of misappropriating the government's cash incentives against garment export through fake documents.

Omprakash Agarwal was the fictitious owner of H B Apparels at 56, S M Maleh Road, River View complex, Tanbazar, Narayanganj. His official name was Omprakash Chowdhury.

HC summoned

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the two countries on accepting people back when they are detained while crossing the border, a spokesman of Indian External Affairs Ministry said here Monday night.

He said the 213 people, now stranded in no-man's land across Cooch Behar (West Bengal) border, were Bangladeshi citizens and carried proof of their residence like electricity bills.

These people are from Lalmonirhat district of Bangladesh and were intercepted on January 31 while trying to cross into Cooch Behar district of West Bengal, the spokesman added.

Meera Shankar told Haider that the fact that 213 people were stranded at the border was "a humanitarian issue" and that they were not getting any humanitarian assistance.

"They are stranded on the zero line and they have to be accepted back by Bangladesh," said the Indian spokesman. He also said India is ready to extend humanitarian assistance to the stranded people.

Haider was told that Bangladesh has to take back its nationals based on the agreed terms between the two countries. Under the terms, it was to be done immediately on the basis of statements given by the apprehended people or within three days where verification was necessary.

He said, "The problem is of illegal immigration. It must stop. Everything else one has been reading about is arising out of that."

Dismissing Dhaka's charge that Indian Muslims were being pushed-in, the spokesman said the question of any Indian national being forced into Bangladesh is "baseless and absurd."

The BSF is mandated to protect the sanctity of Indian border and if there is any illegal immigration, it is duty bound to stop it, he added.

On the other hand, the Bangladesh high commissioner told reporters that "there is a big problem. The bigger issue is that there has

been some misunderstanding between the two countries and a dialogue is needed to resolve the issues".

He said the issue was not only about immigrants and a new element was injected into relations between Bangladesh and India. After talks about insurgents from India taking shelter in Bangladesh, the "al-Qaeda factor was the new element" in the situation, Haider added.

Asked to confirm reports that Bangladesh foreign minister M. Morshed Khan was likely to visit India for a political-level contact, Haider said such a contact was quite possible.

He said India should not use the word "infiltration" as it has quite different connotations but speak of "illegal immigration or economic migrants".

Last Friday, the acting Deputy High Commissioner of Bangladesh Shahdat Hossain was summoned and given the aide memoire by Director, Indian External Affairs Ministry, Kheyta Bhattacharya.

Accused in Monk murder case held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, CTG

An accused in the Buddha monk Ganojyoti Mohasthabir murder case was arrested at Rauzan in the district yesterday evening.

Sources said local people caught accused Nurul Islam from a market at Sultanpur under Rauzan thana, beat him mercilessly and then handed over to Rauzan police.

Rauzan thana police confirmed the arrest of the accused.

Buddhist monk Ganojyoti was slain at Warapunya Buddha Bihara (temple cum orphanage) at Hingal in Rauzan on April 21 last year.

Accident: Chittagong

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on the drivers of both the transports. One report says that there was not much of mist on the road at that night, and there was not much traffic either; so weather and road conditions could not have been contributory factors to the accident. Another report says that the tempo was speeding fast, and that the moment it approached the rather unwieldy culvert in front of Ibrahim Cotton Mills, the Ranger just dashed into it from the other end, and then resulted the carnage.

My hunch is that it is the tempo driver (unfortunately, he also got killed) who might have caused the accident. As the culvert rises to a curve from the road, the drivers of vehicles from both sides have obstructed vision forward. It is very likely that the drivers of both the vehicles did not sight each other's car until they were dangerously close. The tempo driver may be responsible here in this regard that his one was a hired transport, probably not one that ran regularly on Chittagong-Rangamati route. Of the two drivers he may have been the less familiar one with the condition of the road, and, therefore, to be held the more responsible one.

This very sorrowful and regrettable accident apart, the Chittagong-Rangamati Road has turned into an absolute nightmare for the automobile passengers on the road. From the port city this road goes straight to Hathazari via Sholashahar and Oxygen, where another road converges with it from Chawk Bazaar via Muradpur. On its way to Hatahazari, the road covers such important landmarks as BRTC Bus Depot, Chittagong Cantonment and Chittagong University, all places of great traffic movement. At Hathazari, the road bifurcates, one going north to Nazir Hat Bibir Hat Khagrachari and finally to Karer Hat; and the other taking a northeastern bend touches the hills at the end of Raozan and winds upward to Rangamati. The road between Chittagong and Nazirhat has become the only thoroughfare of three districts of the region, but the irony is, it is also one of the narrowest inter-district roads in Bangladesh. The road has never been widened, and has remained the

same old serpentine kind of path, thus becoming a mockery of a highway. Because of immense pressure of people and transports on the road, the movement of traffic has become very slow. A journey now to the CU campus by a CU teachers' bus takes seventy to eighty minutes, which was merely a 35-to-40 minutes' journey five years back.

It is quite essential that a parallel highway about 8 miles be built from Oxygen to Hathazari. The existing road, because of the network of military connections between Chittagong Cantonment and the cantonments in the Hill Tracts, has got immense strategic importance, and a comprehensive development of it is very much in order. The zigzag road must be straightened first, by acquiring public land, if necessary.

In the end, I want to refer to a popular American TV series, The Paper Chase, a law-flick, where the central character Professor Kingsley takes a case to the court holding the authority responsible for negligence of duty. The court accepts and passes a verdict against the state authority. Thus, Professor Kingsley proves that every road accident is caused by a neglect on the part of the traffic and road authorities. This 'higher responsibility' toward the nation is never present in our higher authority, and such accidents as the one under this column occur.

SM Sultan

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tense. But the local administration has failed to act effectively to solve this problem," said one of the admirers of Sultan.

The caretaker of the residence, Md. Zakir Hossain along with leaders of the Lal Baul Dal (founded by the artist) has informed the district administration in writing about the illegal occupation.

Meanwhile, the acting Deputy Commissioner of Narail Mohammad Korschid Alam has assigned Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) Md. Mujibur Rahman to investigate the matter.

Bhuiyan tells Sangsad

FROM PAGE 1

Angered by the government's refusal to deploy army in the local polls, Syed said the elections did not reflect people's choice.

The parliament yesterday heard a brief debate on the CEC's comments with the opposition supporting his contention and the government denying any wrongdoing.

"We don't understand why he (CEC) has made such comments despite the fact that he himself declared the polls, is conducting those as well as announcing their results," Mannan Bhuiyan told the House. He claimed that the UP polls were being held in a "very fair and festive manner".

Regarding CEC's demand for army deployment, he commented that so far there had not been any situation that called for army deployment.

BNP lawmaker KM Obaidur Rahman argued that deployment of army in the local polls might prompt a demand for deployment of UN troops in the general elections.

Meanwhile, Home Secretary Omar Faruk told a press conference earlier yesterday that he was frustrated by what the CEC had said the day before.

Claiming that the polls were being held properly, the secretary said the voters' turnout was 81 per cent and troubles were much less than the previous UP polls.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Unidentified miscreants looted Tk 9.78 lakh from the reserve office of Rajshahi district police in the early hours of yesterday.

Police said a gang of about eight people beat and tied up security guard of the office, Habibur Rahman at about 4:30am.

They entered into the office breaking open the main entrance, and looted the money from an iron safe.

District Police Inspector Bazlur Rahman filed a case with Rajpara police station accusing reserve office inspector Nasu Mia and three constables Mizan, Kabir and Fayed for the incident.

He alleged that the four looted the money as per a plan.

Police claimed that they recovered Tk four lakh from an abandoned safe found in a garden.

BGMEA leaders meet Khaleda

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said important productive sectors, including garment industry, should be kept above politics for economic development of the country.

Development of garment industry can ensure jobs and speedy progress of the country, she told the newly elected office bearers of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) at a meeting at the International Conference Center.

About the existing problems in the garment sector, the highest export earner for the country, the Prime Minister said: "We all have to face the challenge unitedly for its further development."

Congratulating the newly elected leaders, the Prime Minister assured her government's continued support to this important export sector that employs nearly 18 lakh people.

She also called upon the garment industry owners to ensure quality of apparel in keeping with requirements of the international market.

The prime minister reiterated her commitment to set up a garment village at Roopganj for a planned growth of the industry.

Quazi Moniruzzaman, President-elect to the BGMEA Board of Directors, incumbent president M Kutubuddin Ahmed, former president M Mostafa Golam Quddus, Annisul Huq and ANM Saifuddin also spoke.

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, Prime Minister's Political Secretaries Harris Chowdhury and Mosaddek Ali were present.

The BGMEA leaders appreciated the government's measures in obtaining quota-free access of readymade garments to Canada.

They hoped that similar initiative would be taken in case of Japan, a vast apparel market.

In the meeting the garment industry owners recalled with gratitude BNP's step while in the opposition, exempting garment industry from the purview of hartal.

Polls violence

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Haq, also president of Kanchpur union BNP, killed Zahirul and injured Julhas in a planned way.

He alleged that three sons of Fazlul Haq—Shamim Haq, Selim Haq and Hanif Haq—also took part in the attack.

Sources said Fazlul Haq had asked his rival candidate not to contest the polls. As he denied, he threatened him of 'dire consequences' after the polls.

"Hanif Haq and his men attacked and injured one of my nephews, Zihad Khan, on election day," Nazrul Khan alleged. Zihad was admitted to a clinic in the city.

Nazrul said his family members were passing their days in a state of insecurity.