

Spotlight on Rahul after Cong's polls triumph

AFP, New Delhi

The Congress party's resounding victory in India's elections has shone a spotlight on its star campaigner Rahul Gandhi...

Rahul Gandhi, the 38-year-old son of Congress president Sonia Gandhi, was widely credited with energising the party and pulling in millions of first-time voters.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said Saturday he would ask Gandhi to serve in the cabinet, a move seen by analysts as a potential stepping stone to the top job.

Rahul Gandhi said his first priority was to work on his pledge to democratise India's political system -- long the preserve of the wealthy and well-connected.

"My job is to change the politics of the country... and unleash the energy of the youngsters," said Gandhi, whose handsome, dimpled face beamed from election posters across the country during the long election campaign.

With 51 percent of India's 1.1 billion population under 25, and two-thirds under 35, the youth vote represents a huge constituency for the centre-left secular party.

Analysts said the Congress victory and a cabinet job would pave the way for Rahul to replace Singh, 76, who recently underwent heart bypass surgery, midway through the government's five-year term.

"This is the smoothest possible transition for Rahul," said political risk analyst Subhash Agrawal.

"Singh becomes PM for a notional period of say two years, then resigns on health grounds and hands over to Rahul."

Singh has already praised Gandhi for having "all the qualities a good PM should have".

Indian newspapers on Sunday stressed Gandhi's contribution to his party's electoral

success and some chose to illustrate their front page coverage of the victory with a picture of him, rather than the prime minister.

"Somewhere in the course of the campaign, he changed from an apprentice politician to a tactician, shunning and wooing allies with the ease of a natural," gushed the Economic Times.

"Ra-Ra Rahul" cheered the Mail Today.

Since India's independence from Britain in 1947, power in Congress has passed from Gandhi's great-grandfather Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first premier, to his grandmother Indira Gandhi and later to his father Rajiv.

It now rests with his Italian-born mother Sonia, party president and seen as India's most influential politician. Many Congress supporters cannot imagine the party without a Gandhi at the helm.

Sonia has carefully managed her son's career, making sure he has been given time to carry out his stated aim of learning politics "brick by brick".

A few years ago, Rahul showed little inclination to fill the boots of his illustrious forebears. But now he has shed his halting speaking style and is sounding far more seasoned and at ease on the hustings.

In two years Rahul will be 40 -- the same age his father was when he became premier following the slaying of Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards. Rajiv too was assassinated -- by a Sri Lankan Tamil separatist suicide bomber.

In 2004 the party announced Rahul would enter politics, even though his sister Priyanka, 37, is considered much more of a natural politician.

"It's quite possible (that he will be prime minister) provided he works hard toward it, provided he goes through the grind and provided that he deserves it," Priyanka said in a TV interview earlier this month.

But critics decry the need for continuation of the dynasty, deeming it at odds with India's status as an emerging economic power.

Amini

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when Muslim devotees were in mosques for their prayers. So, the charges brought against their clients were false, baseless and fabricated.

The prosecution opposed it saying that there were specific charges against the accused as the attacks left a score of people wounded. So, they should be sent to jail rejecting their bail prayer.

After hearing both the sides, the magistrate rejected their bails and ordered to send them to jail. Following the order, police took them to the jail on a prison van under tight security.

Sramik League leader Akbar Hossain filed the case against Amini and nine others.

According to the complaint, a group of miscreants led by Amini and nine others equipped with hockey sticks, shot guns and explosive substances attacked the procession of Sramik League near Bara Katara Hussainia Ashrafur Ulum Madrasa in the city's Lalbagh area when they were returning from Paltan Maidan at about 7:00 pm on May 1.

They also hurled bombs at the processionists that left Mohammad Pappu, Imran Ahmed, Mohammad Russel and several others wounded. Some 20 to 22 pedestrians were also wounded during the incident, it said.

Meanwhile, BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday demanded unconditional release of Fazlul Haq Amini.

Netanyahu in US amid discords on ME peace, Iran

AFP, Washington

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrived in the US yesterday ahead of his maiden meeting with President Barack Obama amid divisions over Middle East peacemaking and Iran's nuclear ambitions.

The hawkish premier, who wants a "fresh" approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, will unveil in the White House meeting on Monday his long-awaited policy for regional peace focused on countering Iran, aides said.

Contents are still secret but one Netanyahu aide told AFP that differences between Israel and the United States are "more on the outside."

Disagreements have surfaced on several key issues since Netanyahu's right-leaning government was sworn in at the end of March but the two leaders are likely to use the summit to reaffirm the strong ties between the close allies, aide, Zalman Shoval said.

They were planned to give a brief press conference after their meeting, which will precede an intimate lunch together with their wives.

One major cause of friction has been Netanyahu's refusal to date to publicly endorse the creation of a

Palestinian state, a bedrock principle of US-backed peace efforts in the region.

According to Israeli minister Yisrael Katz of Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party, the prime minister will stick to his guns on this issue during his visit to Washington, the first since taking office in March.

"Even if there are disagreements between the two governments, it will not fundamentally change their very close and broad ties," said Shoval, a former ambassador to the United States.

Obama himself admitted in March that Netanyahu's election and hawkish coalition did not make peacemaking any "easier" and his administration has fired off several sharp public messages towards Israel.

Netanyahu has assigned top priority to halting Iran's nuclear bid.

Obama, however, has pledged to act vigorously to end the decades-old Middle East conflict and sees its resolution as a key component in a comprehensive regional policy for resolving the crisis with the Islamic republic.

Netanyahu is expected to irk his hosts and the Palestinians by telling Obama that Israel will keep building

in existing settlements in the occupied West Bank, a key obstacle in the stuttering peace process.

The tone of the Obama administration has raised fears in Israel that Washington may sacrifice the interests of its staunch ally in its attempt to end the Iranian estrangement.

Despite the friction, Netanyahu hopes to convince Obama of the viability of his new plan, which will effectively replace the latest Israeli-Palestinian peace talks launched in Annapolis, near Washington in 2007.

"If we bring forward a new plan, the Americans will not reject it if they feel it can help their policy," a senior Israeli official said.

The 59-year-old premier this month called for a "fresh" approach to the Middle East peace process based on a three-pronged approach including talks, security cooperation and development of the Palestinian economy.

He advocates bolstering the West Bank economy before negotiating a full peace deal, arguing the Palestinians are not ready for independence and that any Israeli concessions will only strengthen radical groups such as Hamas.

Kuwait votes for first female lawmakers

AP, Kuwait City

Four Kuwaitis have become the first women elected to their nation's parliament, a resounding victory in a conservative Persian Gulf country where the legislature has been men-only for almost half a century.

Women gained the right to vote and run for office in 2005 but failed in two previous elections to win seats in the 50-member parliament. Official results from Saturday's vote were read out by judges on state-owned TV on Sunday.

Kuwait, one of the few democracies in the Gulf, has led the region in giving its people political rights. Some critics, however, say the country's political stability and economy have suffered due to the powerful parliament's frequent clashes with Cabinets that are still selected and led by the ruling family.

Saturday's election was the outcome of one such confrontation, which prompted Kuwait's ruler, or emir, to dissolve parliament and call the vote, the second time that has happened in a year.

One of the women elected, Massouma al-Mubarak, was also the country's first female Cabinet minister. The other female winners were women's rights activist Rola Dashti, education professor Salwa al-Jassar and philosophy professor Aseel al-Awadh.

Swine flu spreads in Japan

WHO meets today to discuss fears about the global outbreak

AFP, Kobe

Japan said Sunday that 32 more people had tested positive for swine flu, bringing the total number of cases to 44 amid fears the virus has a foothold in the west of the country.

The latest group of flu sufferers included 29 high school students in Osaka prefecture and the city of Kobe in neighbouring Hyogo prefecture, where eight students were already ill from the virus, a health ministry official told AFP.

A college student in his 20s, a teacher in his 40s, and a woman in her 50s also tested positive for A(H1N1) influenza, he said.

"Now the number of cases of domestic infection has risen to 40," the official said.

Four other Japanese -- a school teacher and three students who flew to Tokyo from Canada via Detroit -- contracted the virus overseas earlier this month and have since recovered, bringing the country's total cases to 44.

"We quickly need to collect information on the current infection," said Chief Cabinet Secretary Takeo Kawamura, the top government spokesman.

"We are studying how to prevent the spread of infection," Kawamura told reporters, adding that the cabinet would hold an emergency meeting on Monday to discuss the issue.

Prime Minister Taro Aso has called on the country to remain calm.

But Shigeru Omi, a former senior official at the World Health Organization who is now head of the government's special swine flu task force, warned: "We believe that the infection is beginning to spread in the region."

The WHO said Saturday it was closely monitoring the swine flu situation in Japan after officials shut down schools and cancelled public events in Kobe, where people with flu symptoms were seeking treatment at local hospitals.

"I had never dreamed that the new type flu outbreak would happen in my city," said Seiji Koga, a 62-year-old construction company worker. "Since we can't move away, we have to spend restless days for now."

Dozens of high school students in Osaka and seven people in Hyogo prefecture who had displayed suspicious symptoms were still to be tested, officials said.

"So far we can't find clear records of contacts with students in Osaka and students in Kobe, and they have not travelled abroad recently," said one local official in Osaka.

The seven people in Hyogo -- a teacher, a university student and five high school students -- had recently been in contact with one of the students in Kobe who tested positive, public broadcaster NHK reported.

Masato Tashiro, a Japanese virologist who serves on an WHO panel on the epidemic, told public broadcaster NHK: "I don't know specifics about the cases (in Japan) but judging from confirmed cases the infection is likely to be spreading to hundreds of people." "There must be a number of people who slipped through border controls (at airports) as their symptoms were quite light, passing the virus to other people before they knew it," he said.

Govt to resolve

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The minister said India is a big neighbour of Bangladesh and relations with India are very important. It is important to have understanding from the both ends in resolving the outstanding issues through discussions, he added.

Hasan said Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee and Indian Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon recently visited Dhaka. "We have understanding at our end and we hope there will be understanding at the other end too."

On growing concern over India's construction of Tipaimukh dam on international river Barak that would

cause catastrophic ecological impact on northeastern Bangladesh, he said Dhaka has already conveyed its concern to New Delhi and expects the issue would be resolved through discussions.

Asked about recent Indian media report that during his Dhaka visit Menon had conveyed to Prime Minister (PM) Sheikh Hasina that she is on hit list of militants, the state minister said it is no secret that the PM is on the hit list and 'already survived' several deadly attempts on her.

Menon had separate talks with the PM, he said expressing ignorance about what transpired during the talk.

BB appoints

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March following a decision of the bank's board of directors.

Sheikh Nadir Hossain was appointed chief consultant with a monthly salary of Tk 3 lakh for one year. Syed Rana Mustafa was appointed as a consultant with a monthly salary of Tk 4 lakh for two years. The bank provides a car, fuel cost and driver to each of them.

According to a BB circular, a consultant can be appointed for not more than one year for dealing with issues related to tax, law, cases, engineering and technology, information technology, etc. But the consultant cannot be given any thing except monthly salary or a lump sum grant at one time.

BB sources said Sheikh Nadir's curriculum vitae that the Premier Bank sent to Bangladesh Bank says he has a master's degree in political science and he is the vice-chairman of Bangladesh Samabay Bank and chairman of Bangladesh Samabay Union. It also mentions that

he implemented IT projects at different firms but does not mention the names of those organisations.

In his curriculum vitae Rana Mustafa says he is the editor of Arthakatha but he does not mention his educational qualification.

The central bank said the educational qualification and work experience of the two do not match the scope of work as consultants of a bank.

The salaries and perks provided to them also violate the Bangladesh Bank guideline.

Investigations by the central bank at different times found irregularities in the Premier Bank. A managing director of the bank was also removed following a share scam. But he has been appointed in the bank again as an independent director.

The central bank, which withdrew its observers from Premier Bank in April, thinks there may be various irregularities in the bank.

Hasina, Khaleda

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President Sonia Gandhi for the Congress-led UPJA's massive victory in the just-concluded Lok Sabha polls.

In a message Saturday night, Hasina said this victory is the reflection of huge confidence of people of India in the Congress.

"It would help materialise the people's hopes and aspirations, bring changes to their life, establish peace and democracy, and continue progress and development," she said.

Hasina said the brotherly relations among the people of the two friendly countries would be strengthened further in future. Press Secretary to prime minister Abul Kalam Azad told BSS.

"Both the countries would work together for establishing peace, democracy and for poverty alleviation in the region in the days to come," Azad said quoting the prime minister.

Sheikh Hasina also wished good health and long life of Sonia Gandhi.

Meanwhile, Leader of the Opposition and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia congratulated Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh by making a phone call last night on the Congress-led UPJA's

victory in Lok Sabha elections, reports UNB.

Singh was quoted as saying: "India wants to work hand in hand with all in improving bilateral and regional ties."

Briefing reporters at the party's Gulshan office, Khaleda Zia's foreign affairs adviser Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury said the BNP chairperson told Singh "the people of India have placed their trust and confidence on Congress and the UPJA through the elections."

The leader of the opposition also sent separate messages of felicitations to Congress President and UPJA Chairman Sonia Gandhi and Manmohan Singh.

Sheikh Hasina yesterday also sent a congratulatory message to Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee on her party's impressive victory in Lok Sabha poll in West Bengal, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

Mamata, who has good personal rapport with Hasina, said she thanked the Awami League chief for her wishes.

A senior official of the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission met Mamata to hand over the message and a bouquet and sweets on behalf of Hasina.

HC orders re-probe

FROM PAGE 1

The fresh enquiry in line with the HC's recent guidelines on sexual harassment.

The same bench on May 14 upon a writ directed the authorities concerned to form a five-member harassment complaint committee headed by a woman at every workplace and institution to investigate allegations of harassment of women.

The majority of the committee members must be women, it ruled.

It also issued a set of guidelines defining sexual misdemeanours to prevent any kind of physical, mental or sexual harassment of women, girls and children at workplaces, educational institutions and other public places including roads across the country.

The HC bench yesterday delivered the verdict upon a writ filed jointly by Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), Nijera Kori, Kamrobbi Nari, Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury, journalist Kamal Lohani and five exploited students of the university challenging legality of the JU authorities' actions on the issue of sexual harassment.

Citing some judgments of the Supreme Courts of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, the HC in its verdict held that corroboration was

not always required to prove allegations of sexual violence.

The HC bench further said the standard of 'beyond a reasonable doubt' could not be applicable in cases of this nature, relating to disciplinary enquiries regarding allegations of sexual harassment.

The court also noted that JU authorities had failed 'for reasons best known to themselves' to adopt their own guidelines on sexual harassment. Therefore in absence of any applicable law, the High Court's new guidelines should be applied to any fresh enquiry.

In May 2008, four female students of JU made complaints of serial sexual harassment against Sanowar Hossain Sunny, chair of the drama department.

The JU authorities formed three separate enquiry committees, which examined witnesses and issued reports with clear findings against the drama professor.

During this period, the students continued to face threats and harassment. On September 13, 2008, the university authorities announced that Sunny was "exonerated from all charges of sexual harassment as those had not been proved beyond a reasonable doubt".

Later the university authorities also proceeded to pass orders of temporary expulsion against four of the women complainants and two male students who had given evidence in their favour.

The temporarily expelled are Nazmul Islam Anik, Anjali Islam Shimu, Inunnahar Putul, Fahim Sharmin Dipti, Shahdatullah Rumon, all students from the 34th batch of the department and Chinmoy Gupta from 33rd batch.

Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury and others filed a public interest petition challenging the university authorities' decision and action. Later the victim-complainants and the two other students also became parties to the petition.

Responding to the writ, the HC on December 1, 2008 issued a rule upon the university authorities to show cause why their decisions exonerating Sunny from the charges and suspending the six students should not be declared illegal.

The court also stayed the university syndicate's order suspending the students who had staged demonstration to press home their demand for removal of Sunny.

Barrister Sara Hossain and advocate Ruhul Quddus Babu appeared for the petitioners.

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh Office of the Executive Engineer Civil Division-3, Kurmitola, Dhaka-1229 Invitation for Tender

কর্ণফুলী পেপার মিলস্ লিমিটেড চন্দ্রঘোনা, রাঙ্গামাটি পার্বত্য জেলা (বিসিআইসি'র একটি প্রতিষ্ঠান) বাঁশ সংগ্রহের দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি