

Suranjit fires back

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Suranjit might have initiated the move of summoning him due to the latter's sense of deprivation in the ruling coalition. He also said some elements of the ruling party, not of the cabinet, might have contributed to the move of calling them before the parliamentary body.

"We are working according to the constitution and the rules of procedure of parliament, and ensure transparency and accountability in the government. Why is Imam being so panicked and sensitive?" Suranjit said.

In defence of the claim that the committee unanimously decided to hear the three high officials' versions of the matter in question, Suranjit showed cassettes that he claimed have records of the Thursday's committee meeting's proceedings.

Referring to the Right to Information Act, he said anybody may collect the meeting's proceedings, preserved both electronically and in manual transcripts, to know whether the meeting's decision was unanimous.

State Minister for Law Quamrul Islam, who is also a member of the committee, on Saturday, however said the committee did not decide to summon HT Imam, adding that the matter of the two judges had been settled earlier, and the standing committee had no need to discuss it.

Suranjit said there were procedural misconducts in sending the two judges into retirement, and the parliamentary committee has jurisdiction to examine it. The committee found that the Supreme Court was not consulted before sending the judges into retirement, he added.

"The order of sending the two judges to retirement was cancelled since it had been done wrongly," Suranjit said. Asked whether the prime

minister was misguided into advising the president to issue the order for sending the judges into retirement, Suranjit said the parliamentary committee will comment on the matter after receiving relevant facts.

On HT Imam's claim that the two judges were sent to retirement according to the Public Servant (Retirement) Act of 1974, Suranjit said the executive branch cannot send any judge into retirement under the current relevant law.

The parliamentary body on Thursday decided to summon HT Imam, Law Secretary Kazi Habibul Awal, and Establishment Secretary Iqbal Mahmud to explain their actions regarding sending the two district judges into retirement.

On July 30, the government sent Dhaka District and Sessions Judge Mohammed Abdul Gafur, and Gazipur District Women and Children Repression (Prevention) Tribunal Judge Mohammed Shahjahan into retirement without consulting the Supreme Court. The government however reinstated the two judges on August 2.

Suranjit yesterday said HT Imam initiated the file for sending the judges into retirement, which was also signed by Law Secretary Kazi Habibul Awal, and Establishment Secretary Iqbal Mahmud.

Referring to Imam, the committee chief said, "You will enjoy the power, but won't take the responsibility for it, that cannot happen."

"I have taken an oath to perform the duties of an MP as per the constitution and rules of procedure, and to carry out my job without being influenced by personal interests. It is the duty of each parliamentary committee to examine the anomalies in the activities of respective ministries," Suranjit added.

Rajshahi mayor

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Dipakendranath alleged that the mayor threatened him twice -- on August 18 and 25 -- over the phone.

When asked Mayor Khairuzzaman Liton told The Daily Star, "I talked to him in a high-pitched voice as he defamed Bangabandhu and did not observe the National Mourning Day in a befitting manner."

The chairman disheartened many board officials and employees by comparing Bangabandhu with Ziaur Rahman, the mayor said, adding: "As I came to know about the matter, I only asked him to be careful."

"The question of forcing or threatening him to manipulate my daughter's results can not arise. The board chairman is tarnishing the image of my family only to cover up his faults," said the city mayor.

"But it is true -- as a father, I requested him once to look into the review result of my daughter personally. And now I see, it was my fault as a city mayor."

The board chairman, however, said that the mayor and his party are now cooking up stories to divert people's attention from the issue of SSC results of his daughter.

"The allegations against me are totally false and fabricated. In fact, the National Mourning Day was observed inside the Rajshahi Education Board mosque and as I am a Hindu, I was not present but I sent a message which was read out there," he added.

The chairman said, "Misbehaviour of the mayor with me is quite unacceptable."

Meanwhile, ruling Awami League leaders and activists under the banner of an alliance of professionals, cultural and social organisations held a rally near the Rajshahi Education Board office at Laxmipur in the city yesterday.

The speakers at the rally accused the board chairman of corruption.

4 more children

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Rid Pharma's two banned drugs -- Temset suspension and Ridaplex syrup -- are still available at some pharmacies in Barisal despite the July 22 government directive to withdraw the medicines from market.

Khandokar Sagor Ahmed, drug superintendent at Barisal District Drug Administration Office, told The Daily Star yesterday, "Our activities are being hampered due to shortage of manpower. But we are conducting drives regularly to seize spurious, low standard and medicines past their shelf life with our limited manpower and logistic support."

He said last week they sealed a drug store in front of Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital and fined two other pharmacies for selling banned "Temset" suspension and Ridaplex syrup.

The drug administration department has only one superintendent for six districts in Barisal division, he said.

Sources said there are 4,730 pharmacies or drug stores and ten pharmaceutical companies in six districts of Barisal division.

Over 10,000 illegal drug stores are run in the region using fake licence or without any authorisation, sources said.

As per rule, every district headquarters must have an office of drug administration with at least one drug super and one drug inspector official.

However, Barguna, Bhola and Jhalakathi have no drug administration office while the Pirojpur and Patuakhali offices don't have any drug superintendent.

Govt ready

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the law and order situation.

On constant allegation of extra-judicial killing, Tuku said such killings have neither the approval of the constitution nor of the government. But he hastened to add there is a question of self-defence.

State Minister for Law Qamrul Islam told the reporters that "previous governments used police as their weapons, but the present government won't use them as political weapons."

He said AL leaders and workers have been instructed to allow police to work as friends of the people.

Earlier, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner AKM Shahidul Huq chaired the inaugural function of the Chawkbazar Police Station, the 38th under the DMP.

Local lawmaker Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin also spoke at the function.

Hasina asks

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"You must show respect to people's trust in us. You must work for the betterment of the people to fulfil their expectations," she told her party men.

Pointing finger to BNP and its anti-liberation allies, she resorted to corruption and misuse in the country whenever they were in power after the assassination of Bangabandhu. "They do not want welfare of the country and its people as they get involved in politics to serve their own interests," said Hasina, instructing the ruling party men to work sincerely for building a 'golden' Bangladesh Bangabandhu had dreamt of.

"You will have to think what you can contribute to the country rather than what you can get," Hasina said, adding that her father sacrificed his life for the welfare of the country.

Paying tributes to Bangabandhu who was killed with other family members on August 15, 1975 and the four national leaders who were killed on November 3 inside

the jail, she reiterated that they would have to execute the long-pending verdict in Bangabandhu murder case and hold the trials of the killers of four national leaders and the war criminals.

After killing Bangabandhu, the anti-liberation war forces destroyed democracy and resorted to widespread corruption in the country, Hasina said, adding that Ziaur Rahman and her wife Khaleda Zia helped and rewarded the killers of the father of the nation and four national leaders. It indicates that they had involvement in the killings, she added.

Saying that the conspirators are still busy with their new plot, the AL chief directed her party men to remain alert and vigilant against any conspiracy in the country.

Chaired by city AL acting president MA Aziz, the discussion was addressed, among others, by Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Rahmat Ullah, Quamrul Islam, Fazle Noor Taposh, and Bangla Academy Director General Shamsuzzaman Khan.

5 more infected

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Anti-viral drug is being provided to the patients with complications and sufficient quantity of drugs is in stock in all the public medical colleges and hospitals and also in some private hospitals, they added.

"Currently the government has a stock of 29 lakh Osetamivir capsule to treat around three lakh patients," said Director of Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) Prof Mahmudur Rahman.

"But the fact is, this anti-viral drug is needed for a few patients. In most cases the patients recover without this drug. What is needed the most is to keep the patient isolated to contain the spread of the virus," he said.

While talking to The Daily Star Health Minister Prof AFM Ruhul Haque said the government is thinking of strengthening awareness campaign.

"We will sit with the education ministry today and with the media tomorrow to discuss how the awareness campaign can be augmented," he said.

People don't need to get panicked, as the government has enough stock of the anti-viral drug and some local companies are already manufacturing and exporting this drug, he added.

Different companies in Bangladesh have started producing Osetamivir. Beximco is manufacturing the drug with the brand name Ose flu while Eskyef as SK Flu and Popular Pharmaceuticals Limited as Oseflu.

Globally Roche is producing the drug with the brand name Tamiflu. But the ingredients for producing Osetamivir are the same for all companies, said experts.

The government said a total of 12 hospitals are under surveillance while 15 are kept ready for providing treatment to swine flu patients immediately.

The experts, however, said the government should specify the 12 hospitals which are under surveillance and the districts that are affected with swine flu.

The geographical distribution of swine flu should be revealed for making people more aware about the disease and the cautionary measures.

The experts also said April-September is the peak time of seasonal flu. So flu-like symptoms does not mean swine flu.

However, they warned the situation might worsen by winter as the A/ H1N1 virus spreads more in dry season.

4 BCL men

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New Market Police Station said, "We already arrested two of them on charge of extortion."

At the police station the correspondent found the OC surrounded by some BCL leaders inside his office room.

"We did not arrest them yet but detained," said OC adding, "We are yet to be sure of the complaint."

But one of the BCL leaders, who were having a closed-door meeting with the OC, said it was nothing but a misunderstanding. In fact one of the BCL leaders had slapped a trader, he added.

The BCL activists who put barricade said they would continue their protest until their leaders are freed.

Earlier on Friday, Rab-4 personnel arrested BCL leaders Abdul Momin and Shahidul Islam Shahid from Gabtali area.

Rab and police sources said there are at least four general diaries filed with the New Market Police Station against Momin, who belongs to Tareq-Manik faction of BCL Dhaka College unit.

Khaleda hails

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award is the pride for the whole nation. Because the name of Bangladesh was pronounced by the international community."

"We have dreams and also have the ability to materialise it as well, but we want the opportunity to express the ability," Prof Yunus added saying he hoped to bring more pride for the country.

US President Barack Obama conferred the award on Prof Yunus at the White House on August 12.

Foreign missions

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The government has 47 missions abroad, which were set up in 1982, but many of them do not deal with the overseas workers, Muhith said, adding that more trained staff will be recruited in the missions where required.

Expatriates welfare and commerce ministries are preparing a proposal on the required manpower to send it to the cabinet soon, he said.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Labour and Expatriates' Welfare Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain and Commerce Minister Faruk Khan were present at the meeting.

The overseas jobseekers often become victims of harassments, the finance minister said, adding: "We have discussed how we can better serve them (the jobseekers) abroad."

The government is also preparing a draft guideline of the much talked about Expatriates' Bank, Muhith said.

There has been a demand for long of more trained and pro-worker personnel in the foreign missions, especially in Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Malaysia, the major destinations of the Bangladeshi workers.

There has also been a common allegation of the expatriate workers that they do not get help from the missions, while the authorities claim there has been shortage of officials.

Around 65 lakh Bangladeshis went abroad with jobs since 1976. Only in last seven months this year, 3.5 lakh workers went abroad for the jobs. The expatriate workers sent home \$9.4 billion in last fiscal year.

2 UK ministers

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They will visit a char (island) to meet some of the people most directly affected by severe storms and extreme weather, and see how they are adapting their homes and livelihoods to live with climate change.

The ministers will also formally launch the 'International Climate Champions' project, a new British Council initiative in Bangladesh aimed at giving young Bangladeshis a voice on what should be done to meet the challenges of global warming.

Douglas said, "It is essential that a fair and sustainable deal on climate change is struck in Copenhagen. We need all countries to sign up to an agreement that encourages global prosperity without putting our planet in further danger."

"Bangladesh is at the forefront of the battle against climate change and there is excellent work already taking place to mitigate the effects we are already seeing there," he said.

Miliband said, "People in Britain with families in India and Bangladesh know at first hand the devastating consequences that natural disasters such as floods and droughts are already having on the region, but they also know that unchecked climate change will make this far worse."

"It's why Britain wants to get every country behind a climate-change deal at the international summit in Copenhagen this December. And it's also why Douglas and I are going to Bangladesh and India - to see how we can make that deal happen," he added.

Bomb hoax

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canteen, media centre and library with metal detectors and sniffer dogs, witnesses said.

Rownak Hossain Rono, general secretary of the club management committee, however, said they had not received any threat.

He said, Rab officials came in the morning and told them that they would search the club as there were bombs inside.

DGFI and Rab experts are trying to trace the caller through tracking the call, said a Rab official.

Japan election

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results, suggesting that he would resign as party president. Other LDP leaders also said they would step down, though official results were not to be released until early Monday morning.

The left-of-center Democratic Party of Japan was set to win 300 or more of the 480 seats in the lower house of parliament, ousting the Liberal Democrats, who have governed Japan for all but 11 months since 1955, according to exit polls by all major Japanese TV networks.

The loss by the Liberal Democrats traditionally a pro-business, conservative party would open the way for the Democratic Party, headed by Yukio Hatoyama, to replace Aso and establish a new Cabinet, possibly within the next few weeks.

Hatoyama on Sunday thanked voters for supporting his centre-left Democratic Party of Japan (DPP), which won a general election in a landslide according to exit polls.

"I am thankful for the support shown by the public," Japan's next prime minister said after a series of exit polls indicated his party won at least 300 seats in the 480-seat lower house, defeating the conservative ruling party.

The vote was seen as a barometer of frustrations over Japan's worst economic slump since World War II and a loss of confidence in the ruling Liberal Democrats' ability to tackle tough problems such as the rising national debt and rapidly aging population. The Democrats have embraced a more populist platform, promising handouts for families with children and farmers and a higher minimum wage.

The Democrats have also said they will seek a more independent relationship with Washington, while forging closer ties with Japan's Asian neighbors, including China. But Hatoyama, who holds a doctorate in engineering from Stanford University, insists he will not seek dramatic change in Japan's foreign policy, saying the U.S.-Japan alliance would "continue to be the cornerstone of Japanese diplomatic policy."

National broadcaster NHK, using projections based on exit polls of roughly 400,000 voters, said the Democratic Party was set to win 300 seats and the Liberal Democrats only about 100. TV Asahi, another major network, said the Democratic Party would win 315 seats.

The LDP's secretary-general, Hiroyuki Hosoda, said he and two other top officials plan to submit their resignations to Aso, who serves as president of the party.

As voting closed Sunday night, officials said turnout was high, despite an approaching typhoon, indicating the intense level of public interest in the hotly contested campaigns.

"We've worked so hard to achieve a leadership change and that has now become almost certain thanks to the support of many voters," said Yoshihiko Noda, a senior member of the DPP. "We feel a strong sense of responsibility to achieve each of our campaign promises."

Ruling party leaders said they were devastated by the results.

"I feel deeply the impact of this vote," former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, a leading Liberal Democratic Party member, told television network TBS. "Our party must work to return to power."

Even before the vote was over, the Democrats pounded the ruling party for driving the country into a ditch.

Japan's unemployment has spiked to record 5.7 percent while deflation has intensified and families have cut spending because they are insecure about the future.

Making the situation more dire is Japan's aging demographic which means more people are on pensions and

there is a shrinking pool of taxpayers to support them and other government programs.

"The ruling party has betrayed the people over the past four years, driving the economy to the edge of a cliff, building up more than 6 trillion yen (\$64.1 billion) in public debt, wasting money, ruining our social security net and widening the gap between the rich and poor," the Democratic Party said in a statement as voting began Sunday.

"We will change Japan," it said.

Hatoyama's party held 112 seats before parliament was dissolved in July.

The Democratic Party would only need to win a simple majority of 241 seats in the lower house to assure that it can name the next prime minister. The 300-plus level would allow it and its two smaller allies the two-thirds majority they need in the lower house to pass bills.

Many voters said that although the Democrats are largely untested in power and doubts remain about whether they will be able to deliver on their promises, the country needs a change.

"We don't know if the Democrats can really make a difference, but we want to give them a chance," Junko Shinoda, 59, a government employee, said after voting at a crowded polling center in downtown Tokyo.

Having the Democrats in power would smooth policy debates in parliament, which has been deadlocked since the Democrats and their allies took over the less powerful upper house in 2007.

With only two weeks of official campaigning that focused mainly on broadstroke appeals rather than specific policies, many analysts said the elections were not so much about issues as voters' general desire for something new after more than a half century under the Liberal Democrats.

The Democrats are proposing toll-free highways, free high schools, income support for farmers, monthly allowances for job seekers in training, a higher minimum wage and tax cuts. The estimated bill comes to 16.8 trillion yen (\$179 billion) if fully implemented starting in fiscal year 2013.

Also whose own support ratings have sagged to a dismal 20 percent repeatedly stressed his party led Japan's rise from the ashes of World War II into one of the world's biggest economic powers and are best equipped to get it out of its current morass.

But the current state of the economy has been a major liability for his party.

"It's revolutionary," said Tomoaki Iwai, a political science professor at Tokyo's Nihon University. "It's the first real change of government" Japan has had in six decades.

The lawyers told the court BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia did not appear before it yesterday on security grounds while Tarique earlier went to London for treatment with due permission from Supreme Court.

The lawyers appealed to the court to fix the new date before Khaleda leaves Dhaka on September 9 or 10 for Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah.

Among the charge-sheeted accused, former BNP lawmaker Kazi Salimul Haque and Sharfuddin Ahmed were present in the court yesterday while Khaleda's nephew Mominur Rahman and former principal secretary Kamal Uddin Siddiqui have been absconding.

After the hearing, the judge set the date saying the trial proceedings against Tarique would be continued in his absence.

On August 5, Deputy Assistant Director of Anti-Corruption Commission Harunur Rashid, also the investigation officer of the case, submitted the charge sheet.

According to the case statement, then prime minister Khaleda Zia and the other accused embezzled over Tk 2.10 crore by establishing Zia Orphanage Trust that exists only on paper.

The complainant alleged that on June 9, 1991, a grant of Tk 1,255,000, equivalent to about Tk 4.45 crore at the time, was transferred from United Saudi Commercial Bank to prime minister's orphanage fund -- a fund that was created by the then premier shortly before the transfer -- as part of the embezzlement scheme.

Kennedy laid

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him and who spent 47 years tirelessly working in the US senate to improve the lives of others.

At a Catholic mass earlier in the Kennedy fiefdom of Boston, President Barack Obama, who won key support from the Kennedys in his race for the White House, eulogized him as "the lion of the Senate."

Obama, three former presidents and the nation's elite gathered at Boston's Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help to say farewell to the Kennedy family patriarch, who on Tuesday lost his fight with brain cancer. He was 77.

Obama hailed Kennedy as a "champion for those who had none, the soul of the Democratic Party, and the lion of the US Senate."

"He was a product of an age when the joy and nobility of politics prevented differences of party, of platform and philosophy from becoming barriers of cooperation and mutual respect, a time when adversaries still saw each other as patriots," the president said.

Even though rain soaked Boston Saturday, hundreds gathered outside the basilica to say goodbye.

"I want to tell him 'Thank you, we love you, and we appreciate your sacrifice,'" said Patricia Bell, 53, who took a bus from New York to Boston to pay her last respects to the late senator.

An estimated 60,000 people waited from Thursday night until Saturday morning at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum to pay their last respects before Kennedy's coffin.

After the mass, Kennedy's flag-draped coffin was flown to Washington on the last leg of his final journey, which had begun Thursday when it was placed in a hearse outside his Cape Cod home.

Thousands of people again lined the routes Saturday, mirroring scenes seen over the past three days in his home of Hyannis Port and then in Boston in an enormous outpouring of grief at Kennedy's death.

Outside the US Capitol the crowds broke into loud applause as the funeral procession halted briefly for the senator's final visit to the imposing white national assembly.

In unprecedented scenes, thousands of other ordinary passers had gathered solemnly on the lawns and roadsides nearby to pay their

respects. Outside the Senate, which shook for almost five decades with the sound of Kennedy's voice, his widow, Vicki, and other family members stepped out of their cars to greet hundreds of Congress staffers and lawmakers.

The members of the Irish-American clan were earlier moved to tears at the mass when Kennedy's son, Ted Kennedy Jr, gave a moving address about his father's tenderness to him during childhood when he had a leg amputated because of cancer.

"He taught us that even our most profound losses are survivable," Kennedy Jr said. Recounting how his father helped him climb an icy hill with his new prosthetic leg, Kennedy Jr said: "He taught me that nothing is impossible."

"He was not perfect, far from it. But my father believed in redemption and he never surrendered, never stopped trying to right wrongs -- be they his own failings, or ours," Kennedy Jr said.

Although many Americans disliked his leftist politics, the senator's passing has been a national event, signalling the end of a half-century era in which his legendary family was a highly influential force in the Democratic Party.

In uncanny echoes of JFK's funeral more than four decades ago, thousands of people lined the route from Washington's Lincoln Memorial over the Arlington Memorial Bridge, clapping as they paid their last respects.

And in a poignant moment, as the sunset over his graveside, the senator's voice could be heard in the gathering dusk from beyond the grave when his recent letter to Pope Benedict XVI was read out.

"The disease is taking its toll on me," admitted Kennedy frankly in the July letter, saying he was "preparing for the next passage of life."

The Vatican said in its reply the pope "was saddened to know of your illness and asked me to assure you of his concern and his spiritual closeness."

Benedict asked that Kennedy "may be sustained in faith and hope and granted the precious grace of joyful surrender to the will of God."

A three-shot volley rang out, followed by the haunting sounds of the bugle player, as darkness fell leaving the eternal flame flickering in the night.