

US pushes for compromise in climate talks

AFP, Singapore

The United States called yesterday for a compromise at next month's global climate talks in Copenhagen and vowed to support a fund to help developing countries cope with emissions cuts.

"We cannot let the pursuit of perfection get in the way of progress," US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told a news conference in Singapore ahead of a weekend Pacific Rim summit to be attended by President Barack Obama.

Hillary said she had "fruitful discussions" on climate issues earlier Wednesday with counterparts from the 21-member Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) forum, which includes China, Russia and Japan.

The December 7-18 Copenhagen talks are aimed at achieving a global deal to slash greenhouse gas emissions and ease the impact of climate change before the 2012 expiry of the Kyoto Protocol, which excludes the United States.

Obama has brought the United States back into the climate discussions after his predecessor George W. Bush refused to sign the Kyoto pact.

"If we all exert maximum effort and embrace the right blend of pragmatism and principle, I believe we can secure a strong outcome at Copenhagen," Hillary told the news conference.

Beyond Copenhagen, "we

are committed to reaching the goal of a global, legally binding climate agreement, and will continue working vigorously with the international community towards that end."

Earlier, in prepared remarks to a closed-door gathering of Apec foreign ministers, Clinton said the group's members account for 60 percent of global emissions and their efforts to cut them can have a "transformative impact".

She called for a trade-off between raising global living standards and strong action on climate change, and acknowledged the United States' "historical responsibility" for climate change, according to the official text.

Hillary reiterated US support for a fund aimed at helping developing countries reduce emissions, but gave no details.

"We are prepared to support a Global Climate Fund that will support adaptation and mitigation efforts and a matching entity to help developing countries match needs with available resources," she said.

European Union leaders agreed last month that developing nations will need 100 billion euros (150 billion dollars) by 2020 to tackle climate change but failed to nail down the group's share.

Finance ministers from the G20, which includes the United States and EU, were also unable to make headway on how to finance the climate fund when they met in Scotland last week.

Travel agency

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that there are one or two travel agencies which work for militant outfits.

"Haji visas were managed so that soon after carrying out the mission the men could leave the country as pilgrims," said the DB official, adding that, "Though they failed to make the attack before haji, their mission is still on."

He said, "We are waiting to take action against the travel agency. But first, we are trying to net the Pakistani nationals and their Bangladeshi cohorts who are still at large."

Another senior DB official said, "We have identified some Bangladeshi people, including Huji men, involved in the attack-attempt. The LeT men came to Dhaka to directly instruct the militants here on how to carry out the operation."

Assistant Commissioner (AC) of DB Sanwar Hossain, who led the drive to arrest Mufti Harun and his associates Shahidul Alam and Al Amin alias Saiful in connection with plotting the attack, said DB has specific information and evidence that the suspects, including the foreigners, frequently visit Jama'atul Ulum Madrasa at Lalkhan Bazar in Chittagong.

Mufti Harun is a son of Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) faction chief Mufti Izaharul Islam

Chowdhury who established the madrasa on a hilltop.

Harun and his associates are now on a fresh three-day remand.

Talking to The Daily Star, AC Sanwar Hossain said, "We suspect that the LeT leaders did not come to Bangladesh directly from Pakistan. They came via Dubai and London to dodge the intelligence personnel."

AC Sanwar also said they have evidence against Harun having close link with another Pakistani LeT leader Saiyed and that he visited at least four Middle East countries.

DB also found evidence of money transaction in the account of Faizur Rahman, younger brother of detained Harun.

Mufti Harun and his two associates were arrested on November 4 following the arrests of David Coleman Headley alias Gilani Daud, an Indian born US citizen, and Tahawur Hussain Rana, a Pakistan born Canadian citizen, on October 3 in Chicago and Abdur Rahman Saiyed in Pakistan last week.

The US authorities have charged them with plotting terror attacks abroad, including on a Danish newspaper that published cartoons of Prophet Mohammad (Pbuh) in 2005.

Paracetamol case

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the directors of Adflame, Dr Helena Pasha and Azfar Pasha, and its manager Mizanur Rahman, on October 20.

On the same day the court also issued a show cause notice on its own record assistant Abdul Haque Sheikh, who had received the HC order vacating the stay order in 2007, but had not informed the court.

Meanwhile, the same court is also scheduled to sit on November 15 in relation to a case against the directors and managers of Rid Pharmaceutical Ltd, also charged with adulteration of its own paracetamol syrup that caused deaths of at least 28 children earlier this year.

The court will also receive a report from Brahmanbaria police on the execution of an attachment order against the properties of three people absconding from court in connection with the case against Rid. Last month, the company's managing director, Mizanur Rahman, was remanded to jail by the court following an unsuccessful bail application. His wife Shelly Rahman however got bail.

"Children who were at the age of my child when he died, now studies at the degree level.

Had my child not taken the paracetamol syrup, he too would have been studying at the degree level by now. But the irony is that, still children die taking adulterated paracetamol syrups as pharmaceuticals like Rid produce those even today due to a lack of justice," Muhammad Ullah, whose son Tanvir died on September 16, 1990 after taking adulterated paracetamol syrup, told The Daily Star recently commenting on the case against Rid Pharmaceutical.

In 1992, the Directorate of Drug Administration filed the case against Adflame Pharmaceutical for producing paracetamol syrup with a brand name 'Flammodol' that was tested positive for the deadly chemical diethylene glycol.

The proceedings were however brought to a stop for 13 years when the High Court issued a temporary stay order which was never challenged. Although two years ago, the High Court vacated the stay, the drug court was unaware of the order until The Daily Star during its recent investigation revealed it.

Two other accused in the Adflame case, Nrigendra Nath Bala and Md Noman, have also been absconding.

Practice prevails

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The committee has included the matter in its agenda for the next meeting slated for November 22.

"In fact, bureaucrats draft the laws and the cabinet approves those after holding discussions. Many laws get challenged at court and establishment of rule of law is hampered," committee chief Suranjit Sengupta told The Daily Star.

BNP lawmaker Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, member of the committee, said once article 76 (2) (a) is enforced, the parliamentary committees can determine the necessity of enacting laws before they are placed as bills in parliament.

The parliamentary body also initiated steps to introduce an act to empower the standing committees in line with the provision in the constitution.

Suranjit, also a member of the advisory council of ruling Awami League, said the committee would work continuously to strengthen parliament through revitalisation of the committee system.

"We shall discuss it at the coming committee meeting," he said.

BNP lawmaker Salauddin said they had discussed the issue at a meeting.

"The law ministry has responded positively to the move. I believe the constitutional provision will take effect and the standing committees will be able to examine the draft bills," said Salauddin, also parliamentary affairs adviser to former premier Khaleda Zia.

No government or parliament in the last three and a half decades moved to enact law for empowering the committee system despite the fact that a parliament's

success largely depends on proper functioning of its committees.

Article 76 (3) of the constitution says, "Parliament may by law confer on committees appointed under this article powers for enforcing the attendance of witnesses and examining them on oath, affirmation or otherwise and compelling the production of documents."

Suranjit said enactment of a law to strengthen the committee systems is a mandate of the constitution.

"So, the law must be made," he added.

Parliamentary affairs experts observe that the architects of the constitution had a vision of an effective parliament with a strong committee system.

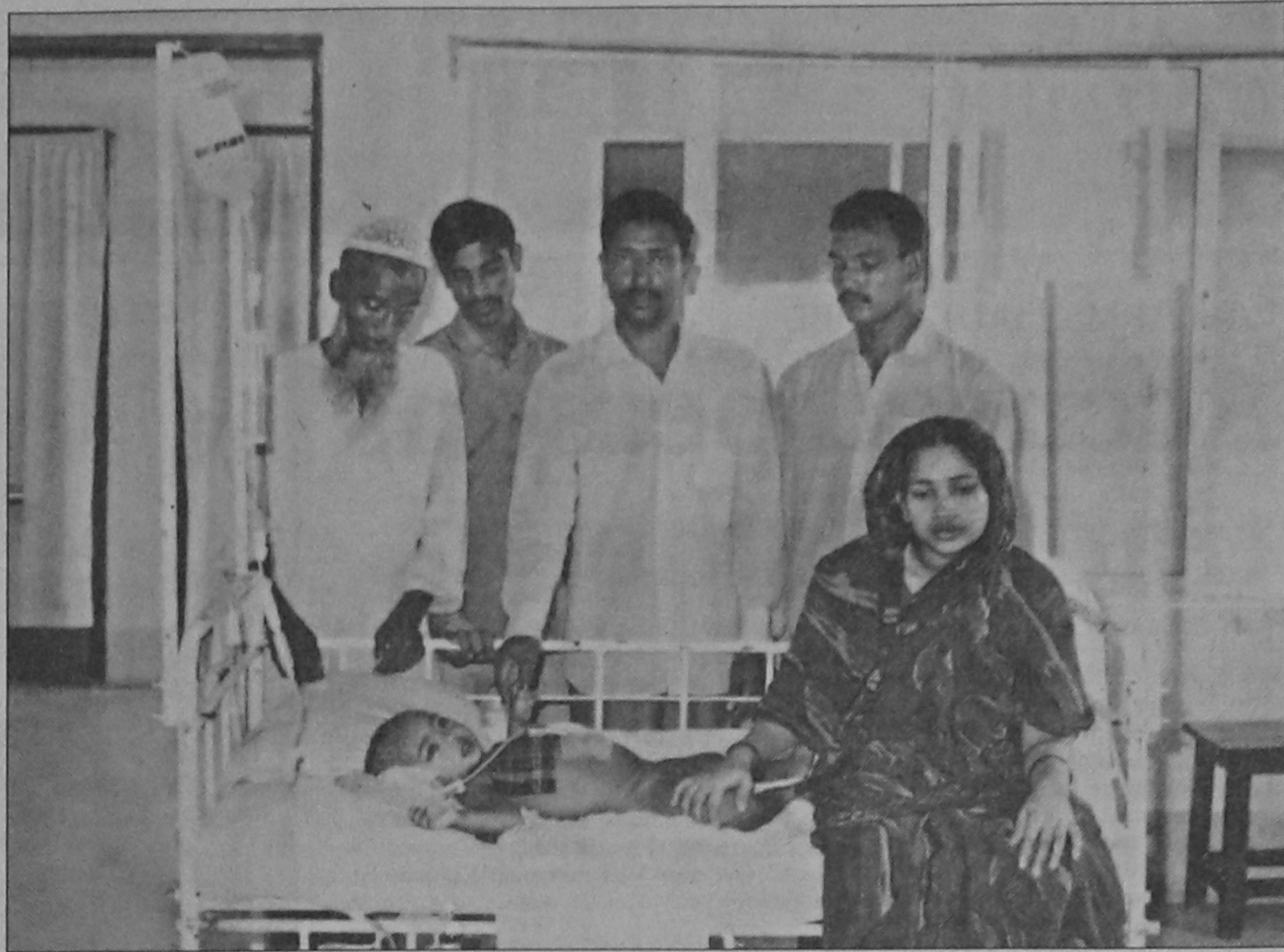
They said provisions on committee system are rarely found in the constitutions of other countries and article 76 in the Bangladesh constitution is a unique one.

"It will not be an exaggeration to say that article 76 of the constitution gives the committee constitutional status. It is rare for any parliamentary committee to get constitutional status," said Khondaker Abdul Haque, an expert on parliamentary affairs.

Abdul Haque, in his book "Parliamentary practice and procedure" published by Bangladesh Institute of Parliamentary Studies in 2001, said it is hard to say whether any other parliament like Bangladesh Jatiya Sangsad has a committee system with a huge number of parliamentary committees.

The committee system of Bangladesh parliament began with only 11 parliamentary committees on ministries. The number had been increased by more than three times after introduction of the provision of a separate parliamentary committee on each ministry.

Indian parliament has 17



Wishing no one kills the children anymore; we are reprinting this grim photograph of Tanvir and his family members in a bigger size on our readers' request.

PHOTO: COURTESY

PM asks

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country's existing economic situation, financial policies and achievements, economic growth as well as future plans to boost up the national economy.

Hasina expressed satisfaction over the country's economic achievements, saying, "The nation is now on the right track and will be able to attain more financial growth during the tenure of the present government."

She said her government would take all-out measures to further strengthen the NBR for increasing the country's revenue income.

The PM called upon the authorities concerned to create favourable atmosphere for attracting direct foreign investment into the country.

In this connection, she said under the democratic government, a favourable investment environment has been restored at present with the prevalence of corruption-free and stable law-and-order situation.

Besides, the premier told the authorities concerned to look to the emerging East and Middle-Eastern countries beyond Europe and America for the expansion of trade and business.

About implementation of the Annual Development Programme (ADP) the PM asked them to reinforce monitoring system.

She also advised the authorities concerned to make the most of whatever resources the country has got while implementing the ADP, instead of depending on foreign aid.

The PM said her government would implement development programmes as much as it is possible, as it has come to power to work for the welfare of the people.

Emphasising the need for strengthening the rural economy, Hasina advised the authorities concerned to provide soft loan on much easier terms to the rural people.

Finance Minister AMA Muhiht and PM's advisers HT Imam and Mashur Rahman, the NBR chairman, the executive chairman of the Board of Investment, the finance secretary, the governor of Bangladesh Bank, among others, were present.

Ctg arms haul

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said. "I was included in the five-member probe committee. The committee could do nothing due to head of the committee -- former home secretary Omar Faruk," said the sources in CID quoting Enamur.

The probe committee in its report did not recommend any punitive measure against anybody.

With Enamur all the five members of the probe committee had been interrogated by CID investigators.

Earlier, during interrogation by CID on October 28, 2009 former DIG (SB) Shamsul Islam also blamed former home secretary for submitting the probe report in a haste following the directive of the probe committee head Omar Faruk.

CID Special Police Super Muslim said the investigators would now examine the statements and information extracted in the interrogation and, if necessary, the probe committee members might be brought for interrogation again.

Meanwhile, sources in CID said that the investigators were now preparing to interrogate members of arms and ammunition experts formed after the seizure of the deadly consignment.

CID has already sent letters to the authorities concerned for the names and addresses of the expert members. After that CID would send letters to them to appear for interrogation soon, said the sources.

Project freeze

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head because of a headache" said TTB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman.

The WB in a clarification to the media report said, in a letter to the government it had requested to temporarily put on hold the local procurements in the projects it finances.

It said, "The World Bank has not asked the government to suspend procurement under the WB financed projects. It remains a strong development partner to Bangladesh."

The government on November 4 amended the PPA providing scope for awarding work order up to Tk 2 crore without prior experience.

The WB on November 9 in a letter to the finance minister communicated its objection to the amendments, which was published in The Daily Star Wednesday.

TIB REACTION

The TIB said, "The World Bank measure, if enforced, will be counter-productive and will only punish the people of Bangladesh though no faults of their own."

TIB also said, it is strongly opposed to the amendments introduced by the government, and has been on record expressing the same very firmly.

At the same time the corruption watchdog sees no justification for omnibus suspension of flow of funds or project implementation, which will not help development efforts, nor will it prevent corruption, TIB said.

The TIB said, instead of using such unreasonable and unwarranted threats the World Bank should engage more closely as a partner with the government and other stakeholders to review the amendments. It should also take greater responsibility in ensuring transparency, integrity and accountability in various stages of project implementation funded by it.

Iftekhar questioned "if the bank can spend millions for consultancies that are often not only debatable, but also considered to be among factors behind misuse of funds and corruption, why as an inter-governmental funding organi-

sation the WB does not contribute to building capacities to prevent corruption in various stages and processes of project implementation?"

"Instead of developing a habit of threatening to withdraw or freeze funds, the World Bank would do better to its credibility by a shift in its approach and acknowledge the fact that in the ultimate analysis the funds it handles come from contributions of the people around the world, whom it has no right to intimidate," he added.

WORLD BANK EXPLANATION
In an explanation yesterday the World Bank said, in response to the amendments made to PPA 2006, the four specific provisions in the amendments (lottery system, no qualification or experience requirements, rejection of bids with price above or below 5 percent of estimate, and single stage two-envelope system for procurement of goods and works) are not consistent with some fundamental provisions of the WB's Procurement Guidelines (PG) regarding economy, efficiency, transparency, and fairness.

The explanation said, WB had sent letters to all concerned in the government and is working with the government to revise existing project financing agreements between the government and the World Bank.

These revisions concern local procurements only. The revisions in the project financing agreements will only pertain to not using the above PPA amended provisions for Bank financed projects.

It also said, large infrastructure projects requiring International Competitive Bidding will not be affected. The government may continue its local procurement under the World Bank financed projects so long as the above mentioned provisions of PPA amendments are not used.

By-polls deal blow to BJP, Left parties

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India's ruling Congress, its West Bengal ally Trinamool Congress and also Mayawati-led Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) emerged big winners in a string of by-elections to 31 assembly seats and one parliamentary seat spread across seven states.

The biggest losers in the by-elections were India's main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party, Left parties and Samajwadi Party headed by Mulayam Singh Yadav.

As the counting of votes in the by-polls, which were held on November 7, and results of the polls came in by Tuesday evening, it underlined Sonia Gandhi-led Congress party's steady progress towards domination of the country's political stage.

The party won ten out of the 31 assembly seats where by-polls were held and as an icing on the cake it also bagged the Firozabad Lok Sabha seat in Uttar Pradesh where its candidate Raj Babbar, filmstar-turned-politician, defeated Dimple Yadav, the daughter-in-law of Samajwadi Party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav, by a huge margin of over 85,000 votes.

The Congress' win came in three seats in Kerala, two in Assam, one each in West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

New nat'l pay scale

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no negative impact on the kitchen market with the announcement of new pay scale. "I think prices of essentials won't go up as the present market condition is stable."

Muhiht said the district judges, the highest post in the judicial service, would get their salaries according to the third grade meaning they will receive Tk 29,000 as their monthly starting salary instead of Tk 16,800 under the previous scale.

Every member of the judicial service will be given special allowance, which is 30 percent of their basic salary. Members of the armed forces would get increased salary and wages according to their pay scale, Muhiht said.

As per the new pay scale, benefits of police and other civil forces will be increased by 30 percent, he added.

The finance minister said the government would try its best to publish a gazette notification before the Eid-ul-Azha to be held at the end of this month.

He said the government would announce a separate pay scale for the education sector next time. Under the new scale teachers, both in public and private institutions will enjoy the same pay scale.

Nurses from diploma and degree backgrounds who work under the same scale will now get different scales

PAY SCALE	
Present scale	New scale
23,000 (fixed)	40,000 (fixed)
19,300	33,500
16,800	29,000
15,000	25,750
13,750	22,250
11,000	18,500
9,000	15,000
7,400	12,000
6,800	11,000
5,100	8,000
4,100	6,400
3,700	5,900
3,500	5,500
3,300	5,200
3,100	4,900
3,000	4,700
2,850	4,500
2,600	4,400
2,500	4,250
2,400	4,100

as per the new pay scale.

Muhiht said the medical allowance of the government employees has been increased to Tk 700 from Tk 500. The government will provide education allowance of Tk 200 to Tk 300.

The pension allowance has also been increased by 40 percent. But if the pensioner is 65 years old he will receive 50 percent increase. As per the new pay scale, either of the spouses will be entitled to pension in case

one of them dies. At present only the wife gets the pension benefit if the husband dies.

The pay commission recommended Tk 45,000 as the highest salary, which was cut down to Tk 40,000. Tk 4,000 was proposed as the lowest salary, which was later increased to Tk 4,100.

The government will require an additional amount of Tk 6,222 crore a year to implement the new pay scale. Only the basic salary will come into effect from July this year while other allowances from next July.

In the current fiscal year's budget around Tk 3,500 crore was set aside for implementing the new pay scale for about 15 lakh beneficiaries.

Of that 7,61,214 government employees, 3,03,220 staffs of different autonomous institutions and 4,24,285 pensioners will come under the new pay scale.

In September last year the seventh pay commission was formed with former chairman of the Revenue Reform Commission Mustafizur Rahman as its chairman. The commission submitted its report in last April. The government formed a secretary level committee to review the report on which the cabinet took the decision yesterday with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.