

Kazakh leader appoints PM as chief of staff

REUTERS, Almaty

Kazakhstan's powerful president, Nursultan Nazarbayev, appointed his long-serving prime minister as chief of staff yesterday in a move to balance the rival groups vying for influence in the oil-producing former Soviet state.

Karim Masimov, 47, was selected by Nazarbayev to run his presidential office after serving nearly six years as premier of Central Asia's largest economy, a period of sustained economic growth and billions of dollars in foreign investment.

The Nazarbayev loyalist replaces Aslan Musin, who was appointed head of the budgetary accounts committee.

Nazarbayev held closed-door talks with members of parliament about replacing Masimov. Two sources close to the government told Reuters that Serik Akhmetov, first deputy prime minister, was likely to be promoted to the premiership later on Monday.

Kazakhstan holds 3 per cent of the world's recoverable oil reserves and has attracted more than \$150 billion in foreign investment in two decades of independence from the Soviet Union.

Nazarbayev, 72, dominates political life and tolerates little dissent in a country of 17 million people stretching from the Caspian Sea to China. A member of the last Soviet Politburo, he has ruled Kazakhstan since before independence in 1991.

Without an obvious successor, the veteran leader periodically reassigns important jobs in the state apparatus to guard against any one group obtaining too much power. Analysts said both Masimov and Musin had grown in influence in the last year.

"Imbalances have appeared within the ruling elite," said Andrei Chebotaryov, an independent political analyst in Almaty.

He said Masimov had established himself as a political force in his own right after distancing himself from Timur Kulibayev, the president's billionaire son-in-law, who was removed from the top job at the sovereign wealth fund in December.

Rivers officially

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said, adding, "We have requested the land ministry to take legal action against those responsible for the exclusion of the foreshores."

The foreshore is the part of the shore between the lowest water level in the dry season and the highest level of water during the monsoon.

Shipping Secretary Abdul Mannan Howlader said, "We have repeatedly informed the land ministry of the anomaly in river demarcation, as it is the one to take legal action in this regard."

The national taskforce has no authority to compel a ministry to act, he said.

Sources said a section of unscrupulous officials had facilitated exclusion of foreshores during the demarcation in exchange for money.

One example of the gross destruction of the Balu is marking off a land-filling on a shoal in the middle of the river near Ichhapur Bridge as "private land". The land has a boundary with pillars set up in an extremely irregular alignment.

River grabbing has also been going on at different locations, including one near Kamarpura Bridge along the Ashulia-Tongi embankment link road of the Turag.

The relevant authorities, however, have been silent about the earth-filling on such low-lying land, although the wetland conservation law prohibits such filling-up even on private land.

The district administrations of Dhaka and Gazipur along with the BIWTA have drawn the boundary line of the Turag, Balu and Buriganga during the dry season, excluding foreshore land in violation of a High Court order.

In 2009, the HC directed the deputy commissioners (DCs) concerned to demarcate the rivers as per Cadastral Survey (CS) and Revised Survey (RS), retaining the eroded areas and shoals and in order to protect them with pillars, walkways and plantations.

Now, with most of the foreshores left out, the government has to earth-fill into the rivers for walkways and trees, narrowing down the rivers further, said a

BIWTA official.

They have neither followed the CS or RS records accordingly nor the definition of river, as outlined in the river port laws, said a BIWTA deputy director, who has worked extensively on the issue, wishing anonymity.

"They have only attempted to establish the lean water flow in the dry season as a river conveniently accommodating the anomalous leases and grabbing of foreshore lands," he said.

Following reports on faulty demarcation, the government in May last year formed a committee headed by state minister for land Mostafizur Rahman. Subsequently the committee visited the Turag and Balu rivers.

It decided that the district administration along with BIWTA and directorate of land records had to resurvey and reset the pillars to demarcate the foreshores during monsoon high tide (August-September).

Rafiqul Islam, Dhaka river port officer, however, said they had relocated the pillars from Ashulia to Tongi in the right places.

When it was pointed out that pillars were still well into the river at many places, including in the Balu near Ichhapur Bridge, he said, "It may seem so to you, but it is actually not."

Md Nurul Islam, deputy commissioner of Gazipur, said they had realigned the pillars along an 18-kilometre stretch but could not reclaim foreshore in all the cases.

"We tried to include foreshore with the river as much as possible. We hardly found land free as much as it should be," he said, "I cannot readily say how foreshores were leased out to private individuals."

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), said excluding the foreshores in the process of saving rivers was a deviation of the HC order, as it would further shrink the rivers.

As per Land Management Manual, the district administration had no authority to lease out river foreshores, which is khas land, she said.

A see-off

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husband off a day later and return home on the same day.

But the airline kept them waiting.

This was the second time her husband Golam Mostafa, 52, had come to the airport along with her, a mother of two.

Mostafa was supposed to leave the country for Saudi Arabia on September 16. As Biman failed to honour his flight schedule, they spent the night at the airport and then the following two nights at a small hotel nearby before returning home on September 19.

They came back on September 22 to avoid the nationwide hartal, enforced by clutch of Islamist parties in protest at an anti-Islam film the following day. Since then they have been staying at the airport and eating at adjacent hotels.

The two seemed to get fidgety while passing their time, sitting on trolleys and often falling asleep on them.

Mostafa was given a flight schedule yesterday at 12:00noon, which was again deferred to 8:00pm. Talking to The Daily Star last night, he said his schedule was again cancelled.

Taizul Islam, 35, said he was supposed to leave for Saudi Arabia on September 20 but the flight was rescheduled for yesterday.

"I have to reach the country by the next three days to save my job," he said.

He had spent thousands of taka to come from Munshiganj to the airport, go back home on September 20 and then return to Dhaka yesterday.

"Still, I am not sure whether I will be able to fly today [yesterday]," Taizul said.

Mohammad Jashim, a 27-year-old from Comilla, who works at a fast-food shop in Saudi Arabia, echoed Taizul.

He said he had spent an additional Tk 5,000 after Biman officials told him on September 20 that he had to come back four days later.

People do not usually carry extra local currency when they come to the airport to leave the country, said a frustrated Jashim.

"Not everyone has relatives in the capital. How can one stay here without any money?"

The airline's decision to carry hajj pilgrims beyond its capacity led to the flight schedule disorder and the suspension of its domestic operations, sources in the airline said.

The departure of a leasehold airplane 10 days before its schedule added to the crisis, said Khan Mosharraf Hossain, general manager of Biman, yesterday at a statement.

The airline ferried about 14,000 pilgrims to Jeddah till yesterday and will carry a total of 56,500 pilgrims, the statement says.

Violence

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Contacted, Arifur Islam, assistant proctor of the university, said Shimul had been admitted to Japan Bangladesh Friendship Hospital and was out of danger.

In the other accident, Morjina was crushed under the wheels of a Gazipur-bound bus of Provati-Banasree Paribahan while she was crossing the road in front of the Moghbazar Telephone Exchange around 3:15pm.

"A speeding bus coming from Mouchak intersection knocked her down first and within moments another bus ran her over," said witness Tofail Miah, a tea stall owner in the area.

When the bus tried to speed away, locals caught and set it on fire, said Altab Hossain, sub-inspector of Ramna Police Station.

The mob torched another bus of the same company as it was coming from the same direction at the same time, he added.

The drivers and helpers of both the buses managed to escape.

1/3 of world population

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internet, which the ITU says puts them on target to achieve the 40 per cent target by 2015.

With 3.3 per cent households having internet access, Bangladesh stands at 97th position in a chart ranking 127 countries evaluated in 2011.

The findings are part of a comprehensive report released by the ITU's Broadband Commission for Digital Development yesterday.

The "State of Broadband 2012" report evaluates the deployment of broadband services around the world and tracks progress towards achieving targets set by the commission regarding increasing the

affordability and use of broadband.

More than 170 countries have been evaluated in the report.

The report ranked countries based on their rates of internet use. Iceland, at 95 per cent, boasts the world's highest internet usage rate, while Timor Leste has the lowest rate at 0.9 per cent.

The United States ranks at 23 in the world in percentage of individuals online in 2011.

It said that by 2020, connected devices would outnumber connected individuals by a ratio of six devices to every person online. The report found that while household access was increasing at an acceptable rate, individual

internet use was continuing to lag behind.

The ITU said mobile broadband could provide a platform for achieving an increase in individual use. By the end of 2011, the report said, new mobile broadband subscriptions were outstripping fixed connections by two to one.

The report also notes that a "strong linguistic shift is now taking place online". If current rates of growth continue, the number of users accessing the internet in languages other than English (primarily Chinese) will outstrip English language users by 2015.

Social network participation was also ranked, with the Philippines com-

ing in the top spot, with more than 70 per cent of active internet users using social networking sites. Indonesia came in a close second, with Malaysia, Brazil and Russia rounding out the top five. The global average rate was around 55 per cent, the report said.

The ITU is the primary United Nations agency dealing with information and communications technology. In addition to gathering statistics and making policy recommendations, it also plays a key role in coordinating the shared global use of the radio spectrum and satellite orbits. It also develops international telecommunications standards.

Tortured at Al-Badr camp

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Kamaruzzaman, said "Al-Badr leaders Kamaruzzaman and Ashraf used to control Mymensingh [during the Liberation War]."

The 62-year-old witness added that he had seen Ashraf, leader of Islami Chhatra Sangha, the then student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami, at the Al-Badr camp at Mymensingh District Council Rest House. Ashraf had told him that there was an Al-Badr leader named Kamaruzzaman at the camp, Kashem said.

During his 50-minute testimony, Kashem, a lawyer by profession, said the Pakistan army and Razakars, an anti-liberation force, had picked up his father as he had joined the Liberation War but released him later.

As the prosecution documents show, Kamaruzzaman, the then president of greater Mymensingh Islami Chhatra Sangha, played a key role in the formation of Al-Badr there. The force collaborated with the Pakistan forces in committing genocide and mass killings.

On June 4, the tribunal indicted Kamaruzzaman on seven charges of murder and torture of unarmed civilians and complicity in other crimes against humanity during the nine-month-long War.

The three-member tribunal headed by Justice ATM Fazle Kabir with members Justice Obaidul Hassan and Judge Md Shahinur Islam recorded the testimony before adjourning the case proceedings until today when Kashem is set to face cross-examination.

Kashem said he was a second-year student at Mymensingh Junior Training College in 1971 and took part in armed training after the crack-down on March 25, 1971.

Following instructions from Company Commander Noazish Ali Bachchu, Kashem had gone to Mymensingh town on assignment on December 3, 1971 and resided at his college hostel along with one of his juniors, Kutubuddin.

On that evening, when Kashem and Kutubuddin tuned in to Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra along with their hostel super, Rasedul Hasan, "a junior friend" of Kashem, saw them, said the witness.

"Between 8:00am and 9:00am the next day, a group of armed Al-Badr men besieged my room at the hostel. I could identify one of them as Abdul Majid," said Kashem, adding, "They picked up both Kutubuddin and me."

Kashem said although their principal had requested a Pakistani brigadier to release them, the Pakistan army officer, responsible for Mymensingh district, asked the principal to turn them in to the Al-Badr men.

"Then they blindfolded us and took us somewhere by rickshaw. When they removed the blindfold, we recognised the place as the first floor of Mymensingh District Council Rest House Al-Badr camp," said the witness, adding, "I understood that Rasedul Islam had informed the Al-Badr about us."

"Al-Badr men beat up Kutubuddin in front of me. When I asked something, they also beat me up and confined us to room no 2 on the first floor," said Kashem, adding, "Eight others were confined in that room."

"When I asked the eight about a large number of sandals beside the bathroom, they replied that Al-Badr men had killed as many people as the number of pairs of shoes I could see," said the witness. He further said on December 4, Al-Badr men brought in another man, who experienced brutal torture in front of them. That man was tied to a window and was tortured by two to three Al-Badr men. He was bayoneted and later taken away.

After that they had heard a gunshot, Kashem added. "On December 8, one of the Al-Badr men told us through a window that a list had been prepared to kill 10 of the 13 captives," said Kashem, adding, "He [the Al-Badr man] might have known me and said my

name was on the list."

Kashem said an armed group of three to four members, with faces of all but one covered, came to their room between 8:00pm and 9:00pm.

"The person whose face was open was Ashraf. He was known to me; he was a leader of Islami Chhatra Sangha," said the witness.

"Ashraf told us not to turn the lights on or change our seats. He said besides him, there was another person named Kamaruzzaman. He identified himself and Kamaruzzaman as Al-Badr leaders," said Kashem, adding, "I had not seen Kamaruzzaman earlier."

The witness added he heard that before them, Al-Badr men had also brought in Hamidul Haque, Tapa Mia, Shahed Ali, Dara and Dabir Uddin and among them Dara was killed.

Hamidul Haque, a freedom fighter and first prosecution witness in the war crimes case, testified that Kamaruzzaman had tried to persuade him while he was detained at Mymensingh District Council Rest House during the War to join him and root out the freedom fighters.

As per the seventh charge against Kamaruzzaman, on 27 Ramadan during the war, Kamaruzzaman, accompanied by 15-20 armed Al-Badr men, abducted Tapa Mia and his elder son Zahurul Islam Dara from Golapjan Road and took them to that Al-Badr camp.

The next morning, the father and son were lined up along with five others on the banks of the Brahmaputra river. Tapa Mia, when he was about to be charged with a bayonet, jumped into the river.

As the collaborators opened fire at him, he received bullets in the leg but managed to escape. But the remaining six were killed.

When Mymensingh was freed on December 10, 1971, they were released, said the witness.

"Al-Badr leaders Kamaruzzaman and Ashraf used to control Mymensingh [during the

Liberation War] and during my confinement at the camp, we heard that people were killed every night on the river bank adjacent to the camp," added the witness.

Meanwhile, the tribunal recorded the cross-examination of Saidur Rahman, the second prosecution witness in the war crimes case against former BNP lawmaker Abdul Alim, before adjourning the case proceedings until October 8 when the third prosecution witness is expected to testify.

BGB-BSF

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in the capital.

The five-day conference will end on September 29 with signing of a Joint Record of Discussion (JRD), said a BGB press release yesterday.

The meeting will discuss various issues including the killing of Bangladeshi innocent people along the border, trespassing into Bangladesh from India, and kidnapping of Bangladeshis.

Moreover, the meeting will focus on taking measures to stop smuggling of contraband items, including liquor, Phensidyl, cannabis and other narcotics into Bangladesh from India; preventing all kinds of infrastructural development within 150 yards along the border lines; sheltering terrorists.

A 25-member delegation of Bangladesh will be led by BGB chief Maj Gen Anwar Hussain at the conference while a 22-member Indian delegation by the BSF DG, UK Bansal.

The Bangladesh delegation will include the BGB deputy director general, concerned sector commanders, staff officers of BGB headquarters, and members of home and foreign ministries, National Security Intelligence (NSI), Survey of Bangladesh, Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) and Department of Narcotics Control (DNC).

On the other hand, senior officials of the BSF headquarters, frontier IG and representatives of Indian foreign and home ministries will be in the India side.

Padma work by May

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Economic Council (Ecne) and Cabinet Economic Affairs Committee.

The Cabinet Division on Sunday published separate gazette notifications on the move.

Earlier, he was excluded from the Cabinet Purchase Committee.

Home Minister Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir replaced him in all the three bodies.

It is widely believed that Mashur has been removed from the committees in compliance with WB conditions for its re-engagement in the Padma bridge project.

Yesterday, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica), a co-financier of the Padma bridge project, extended its loan effectuation date to June 13 next year.

A finance ministry official said the Japanese organisation had extended the deadline for a longer period so that it did not need to do so frequently.

A team from the WB is supposed to arrive in Bangladesh this week to talk about the financing of the bridge project. But the finance minister could not say when the visit would take place.

Muhith also said there was nothing new in the procurement of the \$3 billion project. "There is nothing new. The turnkey system has been included in the agreement like in the past."

Under the turnkey approach, the lenders of any project do the necessary procurement for the scheme.

government would be able to do more work than laying the foundation stone for the project.

The 6.15-kilometre bridge, which will connect the capital city with 16 western and south-western districts, is one of the major election promises of the ruling Awami League. This government only has a little over a year to go before the next parliament election.

Muhith said the government would start fund mobilisation for the project from February next year. All the issues will be finalised after consultation with the lenders -- the WB, Jica, Asian Development Bank (ADB), and Islamic Development Bank (IDB).

The Manila-based ADB, the second largest financier in the project, yesterday expressed its happiness over the WB's announcement to withdraw the loan cancellation.

"ADB is very pleased to hear that the WB has agreed, upon satisfactory implementation of agreed measures by the government, that it will engage anew in the Padma Multipurpose Bridge project."

"This is good news for the people of Bangladesh and indeed for the entire region. Padma is an iconic project, very much an operation we support for it has the potential to transform lives and unleash unprecedented opportunities for investment, trade and jobs," ADB said in a statement.

The bank said it was very happy to see that Bangladesh had taken seriously governance matters, including allegations of corruption.

"ADB congratulates the government of Bangladesh for taking bold but also

necessary actions to move the project forward. ADB now greatly looks forward to working closely with the authorities and other co-financiers to making this dream project a reality."

ADB's contribution to the project is \$615 million. Jica and IDB will give \$400 million and \$140 million respectively.

The World Bank announced its getting back to the project through a statement on Thursday, saying, "The bank has agreed that, upon satisfactory implementation of the agreed measures by the government, and with the support of the bank's governing bodies, it will engage anew in the Padma bridge project."

Girl brutally

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(GI) wire was under her neck.

Tasnin was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where the doctors declared her dead.

Victim's father SM Mizanur Rahman and mother Farhana Ahmed are lawyers at a Dhaka court.

They were at the court when the murder was committed.

Farhana said gold jewellery weighing about three and a half tolas was missing from her apartment.

Tasnin's younger brother was with her until 2:00pm. Then he went to his grandmother's apartment on the third floor of the building.

The girl was alone at his home since 3:30pm when a housemaid left the apartment after finishing her work.

Police suspected the murder suspects might be known to the victim's family.