

Hasina's interview

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her government had to examine all pros and cons of the national interest.

In the past, those who were in power, did not think of the people and country's interest, rather concentrated on how to get commission through under-hand dealing... But we are doing tough bargaining for long-term interest of the country."

In this context, she mentioned that the accord on KAFCO was signed during the Ershad era at the cost of national interest.

Hasina, who is now personally looking after the power sector, said, "Electricity is such a subject which needs time for improvement. One should not expect any solution overnight. People will have to be patient."

"However, we were able to tackle the situation by almost meeting the peak-hour demand and it improved a lot before the breakdown in the national grid on June 20."

Referring to the Saturday's setback, Hasina wondered about the frequent breakdown in the national grid at a time when power situation had started returning to normal.

"It must be looked into why such breakdowns happen frequently."

The Prime Minister feels that since she is now looking after the power sector, her adversaries might have a hand behind it to embarrass her and also put the government in an awkward situation in their bid to create an issue for movement.

An inquiry committee is now working to find out the cause of the June 20 power failure, she said and added that those who are involved must be brought to book.

Asked when the government would be able to meet the requirement of power, she said: "We had almost managed to meet the demand by proper power management before the grid line failure."

"I thought I should do something. So I need to visit the two countries to ease the tension," Hasina said.

Out of this realisation, the Prime Minister said, she had telephonic talks with both Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif. Both the prime ministers invited her as she expressed her willingness to visit their countries.

Asked if she has any message for Opposition Leader Begum Khaleda Zia on the eve of her government's third year, Hasina said: "Certainly, I like to tell the Leader of the Opposition and all others irrespective of party affiliation to work together for the betterment of the country."

She said her government was constituted with representation of BNP, Jatiya Party and others to make concerted efforts to drive the country towards progress.

Hasina also mentioned the appointment of a neutral personality like Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed as President with the expectation that all would come closer and contribute to the economic uplift of the country.

In this regard, she said every government has its own policy and "we are carefully taking steps" so that national interest is protected.

Replying to a question on the long-awaited autonomy to state-owned Radio and Television, Hasina said: "We're going one step further. We are giving it to the private sector."

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final stage to operate radio in the private sector, she said, adding that the government will take decisions on allowing more private radio and TV stations after scrutinising their offers.

Asked if he private radio and TV will go into operation this year, the Prime Minister said if it is not possible this year, it will be operational next year.

About the separation of judiciary bill which was expected to be introduced in Parliament much earlier, Hasina said a High Court verdict on the question of Constitutional amendment debars the government to place the bill in the House.

She, however, asserted that "the Judiciary is totally independent and enjoying full freedom. There is no interference in the Judiciary from this government."

On her recent peace initiatives, in the wake of nuclear tests, that took her to India on June 16 and her plan to visit Pakistan on June 24, the Prime Minister declined to make any comment.

She, however, said her talks with Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee was "very fruitful."

"It will not be proper to say anything before visiting Pakistan," she said to a query whether she is taking another move to bring the prime ministers of India and Pakistan across the table after the third national Business Summit, held in January in Dhaka.

Pressed further, Hasina categorically said: "I will not mediate" between India and Pakistan over the nuclear issue.

"We feel that this is a problem of India and Pakistan and they'll settle it bilaterally."

Explaining Bangladesh's position, she said: "We want peace and stability in the region. Arms race will not benefit anyone."

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Country to receive \$7.36m from UNDP soon

Bangladesh will receive 7.36 million US dollars from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) soon within the ambit of the country cooperation framework, official sources said, reports BSS.

Secretary of Economic Relations Division (ERD) of the Finance Ministry Dr Mashur Rahman and resident representative of UNDP in Dhaka David E. Lockwood signed three agreements yesterday morning on behalf of their respective sides in the ECNEC conference hall at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the city.

Other ERD and UNDP officials were present during the signing.

The projects include strengthening the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, socio-economic empowerment of women and children living in brothel communities in Narayanganj, Jessore, Chittagong and Mongla and safe blood transfusion.

The first project in the package will help enhance the capacity of the C and AG's office as an independent body in performing audits to an internationally accepted standard. This will also promote the accountability and transparency of the financial management of the government.

The safe blood transfusion project will include blood banks in 75 hospitals all over the country and will furnish the hospitals with testing facilities for the HIV and other transfusion transmissible diseases.

The socio-economic empowerment project will ensure reproductive and sexual health services, access to legal aid, alternative livelihood opportunities, prevention of HIV and other STDs and impart formal and non-formal education in the brothel communities in Narayanganj, Jessore, Chittagong and Mongla.

The 23-member executive committee was elected for the year 1998-99. The election was held on Sunday.

The group jointly led by Prof Abdul Bayes and Prof Alauddin Ahmed has nominated JU senator Motahar Hossain from the senator category and editor of Shiksha Barta AN Rasheda from the distinguished citizen category for the syndicate election.

The group has also nominated APS to the Prime Minister Mohammad Ibrahim Hossain for the Finance Committee.

The other group led by Prof Khondakar Mustahidur Rahman has nominated Dr Nasiruddin from the senator category and Mafizuddin Ahmed of Economics Department from the distinguished citizen category.

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Pressed further, Hasina categorically said: "I will not mediate" between India and Pakistan over the nuclear issue.



Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) accorded a reception yesterday at the National Press Club to foreign journalists who are in city to cover the inaugural ceremony of the Bangabandhu Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge (BJMB). —Star photo

JU teachers nominate candidates for Syndicate, FC elections

By Staff Correspondent

Two separate groups of teachers in Jahangirnagar University (JU) have nominated their candidates for contesting the elections to syndicate and Finance Committee (FC) of the university on June 27.

A total of six candidates from the two groups have been vying for two posts of syndicate and one post of FC, official sources said.

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Pressed further, Hasina categorically said: "I will not mediate" between India and Pakistan over the nuclear issue.

"We feel that this is a problem of India and Pakistan and they'll settle it bilaterally."

Explaining Bangladesh's position, she said: "We want peace and stability in the region. Arms race will not benefit anyone."

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Vajpayee thanks PM

By Staff Correspondent

Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee thanked Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her message regarding the cyclonic storm that has affected many parts of western India, reports UNB.

In a message yesterday, the Indian Prime Minister said "Your sympathies, as well as those of the government and people of Bangladesh will, I am sure, provide comfort to the large number of families whose lives have been affected by the storm."

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Reception to foreign newsmen

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) yesterday accorded a reception to the foreign journalists who are now in the city to attend the formal inauguration of the Bangabandhu Bridge, today, reports BSS.

A total of 30 journalists from India, Pakistan, Japan, South Korea, Nepal and Bhutan are already in the city to cover the historic inauguration of the multi-million dollar bridge which is the 11th biggest in the world and number one in South Asia.

BFUJ president Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury presided over the function. A number of foreign journalists including Mark Tully, a former BBC correspondent in New Delhi, Kamal Bhattacharya, chief reporter of the Calcutta-based 'Sangbad Pratidin' and Senator (Retd) Sayed Faseh Iqbal, editor-in-chief of the Baluchistan Times and president of the Council of Pakistan Newspapers Editor spoke at the reception.

Foreign Secretary M Mustafizur Rahman also spoke on the occasion. Press Secretary to the Prime Minister Jawadul Karim, Additional Foreign Secretary Mohiuddin Ahmed, Vice-President of Bangladesh Bar Council Barrister Amirul Islam, senior journalists including BFUJ and DUJ leaders and senior officials of the government attended the reception which was held at the National Press Club.

The GCO activists set fire to a copy of the budget speech delivered by the treasurer of the university during the gherao programme.

A rally was held during the programme which was addressed by Dipankor Shaha Dipu, Monjur-E-Khuda Tarik, Saifur Rahman Tapon, and Rahman Mizan.

Later, the GCO leaders met the Vice Chancellor at his office housed in the administrative building of the university. The leaders, however, walked out of the meeting as the Treasurer appeared in the scene.

Meanwhile, an alliance of four student organisations gheraoed the office of Vice Chancellor demanding withdrawal of the decision to increase tuition fee. The organisations included Bangladesh Chhatra Federation, Biplabi Chhatra Maitri, Jatiya Chhatra Dal and Chhatra Oikya Forum.

The leaders of the student bodies also condemned the statement of the treasurer that each student of the DU should pay Tk 10,000 instead of Tk 2600 as educational expenses.

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Maj Dalim was reinstated after Aug 15 incident

Investigation Officer in Bangladesh murder case yesterday said dismissed Major Dalim, an absconding accused in the case, was reinstated in the army after the tragic incident of August 15, 1975, reports UNB.

"Major Dalim was not in any service during the incident, he was reinstated later," ASP Abdul Kahar Akand told the District and Sessions Judge's Court.

Replying to queries from a defence lawyer during the cross-examination, the IO said he did not find any record showing that Major Dalim had made appeal against his dismissal from the army before the incident.

"I reviewed the papers about Dalim's reinstatement in the army, but did not include papers in seizure list," the ASP of Criminal Investigation Department said.

Quoting witnesses, Akand told the court that the army officers involved in August 15 killing used to visit Bangabandhu after the incident.

The IO also said that the alleged involvement of 1st, 2nd and 4th East Bengal Regiments in the incident was not proved.

Among the Commanding Officers of the three units, Aminul Haq of 4th Bengal was questioned. But he was not made a witness in the case, Akand said replying to a query.

He said two other commanding officers were not questioned during the investigation. Of them, Major Matur Rahman of 1st East Bengal Regiment is now

Chief of the Air Staff Vice-Marshal Jamal Uddin Ahmed returned yesterday morning after a fortnight-long visit to the United States of America, an ISPR press release said, reports BSS.

During his stay in the USA, the air chief attended the Pacific Air Chiefs' Conference held at Honolulu, Hawaii.

He also visited some air bases and training institutions of the US Air Force and witnessed exercises and static displays.

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Postal Dept issues 4 commemorative stamps on BJMB

Bangladesh Postal Department will issue a set of four commemorative stamps of Tk 4.00, 6.00, 8.00 and Tk 10.00 denominations to mark the inauguration of the Bangabandhu Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge (BJMB) today, reports UNB.

An inaugural envelope of Tk 6.00 will be published and a special canceller will be used on the occasion.

The commemorative stamps and inaugural envelope will be sold from all head post offices and Bhupur sub-post office, including four GPOs.

The stamps will subsequently be sold from the all post offices, including extra-departmental post offices.

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