

# Hasina promises happy homecoming for expats

From Staff Correspondent

DOHA, Nov 13: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today promised a hassle-free homecoming for all Bangladeshi expatriates urging them, in return, to invest their hard-earned foreign currencies in Bangladesh to strengthen its economy.

"I'll do everything to make your arrival at home safe," Hasina told a big gathering of Bangladeshis living in Qatar here today (Monday 2 a.m. BST / Sunday 11 p.m. Qatar time).

Some 10,000 Bangladeshis waited for over two hours to accord a grand civic reception to their Prime Minister, who was held back at Doha Sheraton Hotel for delay in programme schedule of the ongoing OIC Summit here.

It may be mentioned that some 50,000 Bangladeshis are living in this oil-rich Gulf state and account for 10 per cent of the total population of Qatar.

As the Bangladeshi expatriates voiced concern about the unabated harassment encountered by them upon arrival at different airports at home, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gave them her word that she would take all possible measures to free them from hassles at all the three international airports in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet.

Addressing the open-air assembly at Bangladesh Mashhor-Ul-Haque High School in Doha, Hasina said she had already directed the home minister to take tough measures to free all the ports of entry into Bangladesh from a vicious circle.

"Only recently, we have arrested over 50 people for harassing passengers at the airport," Hasina told the Bangladeshi community, hastily adding that many of the tourists got away with it by exploiting legal loopholes.

Sheikh Hasina urged Bangladeshis living abroad to make best use of their earnings by investing money in their home country. In this regard, she mentioned the various facilities that her government had made available for investors. She requested them not to remit money through hundi but rather use the official banking channels.

Hasina also spelled out a number of other measures that her government was considering to ensure

better living standards for expatriates once they return home.

"We're building 600 apartments under the NAM-summit preparation programme, which would be later handed over to you for your accommodation," Hasina told the gathering.

Besides, she said, housing estates would be established in phases in every district and expatriate Bangladeshis would get preference in their allocation.

Hasina assured them of taking steps for voter registration for expatriates but stopped short of saying anything positive as to whether they would be able to vote in the 2001 parliamentary polls.

The Bangladeshi school, where the civic reception was held, has a debt of seven lakh QR (Qatari Real) to the Wage Earners' Welfare Fund (WEWF). Hasina assured the Bangladeshis of waiving the debt equivalent to Tk 1.05 crore upon checking with the Labour and Employment Ministry about the health of the WEWF.

Hasina also said that she would arrange for buses to ferry students of the Bangladesh School to and from their residences in Qatar.

In her hour-long deliberation, the Prime Minister also gave detailed descriptions of development works undertaken by her 52-month old government and said more developments were in the offing.

She asked the expatriates to pray so that the killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman were punished and "Bangladesh is freed from a curse."

She blamed her predecessors in power for not giving any policy directions to the nation. "We have a vision and I believe Bangladesh will assert its place on the world map as a prosperous nation by the year 2020."

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, Bangladesh Ambassador to Qatar ATM Nazrul Islam and leaders of Bangladeshi community in Qatar also spoke on the occasion.



Rickshawpullers Union held a rally in the city's Mukhtangon yesterday protesting the ban on movement of rickshaws and rickshaw-vans on newly declared VIP roads in some of the city areas. -Star photo

## Health policy: postings

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The NHP will also regulate private practice of government doctors and operation of private clinics and diagnostic centres.

In reply to a question, the minister said, "Unfortunately the policy does not address the issue of transferring Class Four and Class Three employees of hospitals. Ershad government through a law put a barrier to transfer of such employees. So, for the time being, we are not addressing the sensitive issue."

About duplication in the ongoing Tk 15,000 crore five-year Health and Population Sector Programme (HPSP), the minister said, "The policy is obviously a guideline."

There are many issues which are mentioned in both the documents, but HPSP would mainly focus on implementation of health programmes, he said.

About modernisation of the health ministry and its two wings for quick implementation of the

policy, he said the process has been completed for computerisation.

"Pressing a button in my room, I will be able to monitor all activities at directorates and in the ministry. We hope to complete the process by January," the minister said.

Replying to another question, he acknowledged that implementation of the HPSP has been slow. He however hoped that its implementation would be hastened, especially in many key areas.

Reduction of malnutrition of children, better healthcare facilities for mothers and children at union level and ensuring safe delivery in rural areas are among other main objectives in the policy.

It also aims at preparing policies for medical colleges, enactment of laws for institutions, ensuring good services at hospitals and healthcare centres and accountability at all levels.

A copy of the NHP was handed over to the Prime Minister on Wednesday last.

A 26-member committee was formed on December 12, 1996 to formulate the NHP. Five different areas were selected and sub-committees were formed to set objectives and recommend policy strategies.

Based on the recommendations of the sub-committees, six workshops were held at divisional headquarters before formulation of the draft health policy.

The Cabinet approved the draft National Health Policy on April 24. The policy outlines 15 objectives, 10 fundamental principles and 32 strategies.

Among others, State Minister for Health Prof M Amanullah, Health Secretary Syed Alamgir Faruk, Additional Secretary Dhiraj Kumar Nath and Director General of Health Services Prof A B M Ahsanullah were present at the press conference held at Hotel Sheraton.

## 25 yrs as LDC

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open up their markets and liberalise their trade regimes. The benefits of liberalisation have not been equitably shared while their industries had to bear the brunt of unequal competition from advanced industrialised countries, free access to their products in the developed markets has largely remained illusive," Kibria said.

Although there is a growing realisation for evolving a collective and effective approach to arrest the deteriorating conditions of the LDCs, the commitments made in the previous two conferences have largely remained unfulfilled, he regretted.

The problem of the LDCs cannot be treated in relative isolation from the rest of the world," Kibria said.

"The LDCs have been unable so

## Khaleda

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next general elections. "It will help the election to be held in a free, fair and impartial atmosphere."

Replying to a question of Khaleda about the objective of the Australian lawmakers' Bangladesh tour, the team leader said they came here to discuss the overall political and parliamentary situation with government and opposition leaders as well as parliamentarians.

In reply to a question from the visitors, the BNP chairpersons said after Bangladesh's independence, Awami League came to power and the then Lal government destroyed democracy and established one-party rule in the country.

"Law and order has deteriorated alarmingly, economy suffered setbacks while the democratic atmosphere has been affected in the last four years of rule by the present Awami League government," she told the delegation.

To another query from the Australians "on what terms and conditions" BNP will go to parliament again, the opposition leader said: "BNP believes in democracy and it is BNP who established parliamentary democracy in the country. So BNP always wants to join the parliament."

"But," she hastened to add, "for various reasons BNP thinks that there is no benefit of going to parliament as it is ineffective and turned into a forum of the ruling party."

Advisor to Khaleda Zia MM Rezaul Karim briefed journalists about what transpired between the two sides.

## BCIC godowns

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Ashuganj as it costs 500 Taka less per ton. Consequently, the number of dealers came down to 82 from the previous 100 last year. NGFF also suffers from storage arrangements in its 30,000-tonne capacity godown. It also incurs an annual loss of about Taka 1.85 crore to maintain the buffer godowns in the faraway regions of North and South Bengal as it gets only Taka 500 per ton as transportation cost whereas the real cost runs as high as Tk 1500.

When contacted, an official informed The Daily Star that during the lean season from June to September-October the demand for fertiliser goes down significantly. In Sylhet region, the demand goes over 10,000 tonnes during the peak season and comes down to 2,000 tonnes during the lean period. In February last, the demand was 10,500 tonnes while it was only 2800 tonnes in July. Previously, different establishments like Sugar mills, Tea Research Institute and Rice Research Institute used to buy fertilisers from the NGFF. Recently, they have drastically reduced their purchase from NGFF. Besides, due to the cordoning system of BCIC, it cannot sell fertiliser to dealers from any other district.

## Caught in BTTB

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growth rate of about 125 per cent, according to data provided by a telecom sector analyst.

GP stopped allocating cell phones with BTTB's access facility in early 1999, but BPTL, Aktel and Sheba have given a few new lines with BTTB's access facilities recently.

According to available estimates, the BPTL has some 30,000 subscribers while GrammenPhone, Aktel and Sheba have 140,000, 32,000 and 18,000 subscribers, respectively.

If the BTTB properly expands its interface then the number of the country's fixed telephone would rise to 0.8 million by the end of the next year. Presently, there is little over 0.4 million land-line based telephones in the country, industry sources said.

## Fulfilling four days

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first innings about India's three-pronged pace attack of Zaheer, Jagavall Srinath and Ajit Agarkar, perhaps forgetting what genuine pace really is) took nothing but mediocre and then getting on top of their megastar batsmen speaks volumes about the character of this Bangladesh team.

In the end we achieved more than what we set out to get. The batsmen were expected to perform creditably and they delivered magnificently with Aminul Islam, Habibul Bashar leading the way.

The skipper Naimur Rahman never before in his career had got six wickets in a competitive game. He managed to do that against the team whose batsmen are widely regarded as the best players of spin.

Mohammed Rafique also created problems for quality batsmen on the opposing side. Rafique bowling his left-arm spinners is a unique experience for the people who have seen him over the years. Just a few seasons ago, Rafique was a rippy pacerman struggling to make an impact in domestic cricket. He has gone through some transformation!

Everything that happened in the Test was for the better of Bangladesh cricket including the loss. Lets not deter from the fact that for the next two or three years, we will be getting educated. With every game from now onwards, we will learn something new. It's a process every Test team has gone through. So there's absolutely nothing to feel disheartened about.

We should also pay no attention to the bullish remarks like, "Given the quality of their (Bangladesh's) bowling, we never even thought of a target that could challenge us," or "The result was never in any doubt," from Indian captain Sourav Ganguly. Besides, the whole world saw how frustrated his team was while Bangladesh played their first innings and how limited his bowling options were.

Everything said and done, it was a fulfilling four days of cricket where Bangladesh came out moral victors. In the end normalcy was restored. Perhaps it is too early for us to start upsetting the balance.

## Hasina asks OIC

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Termining poverty as single most concern for least developed Muslim countries, Hasina called for massive investment in primary, mass and non-formal education; health and nutrition.

In this context she referred to an OIC-supported establishment, the Islamic Institute of Technology (IIT) at Gazipur which is suffering from financial crises.

"The IIT, unfortunately, has been suffering from financial difficulties. Over the years unpaid arrears of subscription have increased to over 14 million US dollars," she said.

She called upon the member states to make their contributions as early as possible.

On the mooted Islamic Common Market (ICM), the prime minister said, "I hope that in the days ahead within this scheme (ICM), we will also be able to further strengthen our efforts in respect of the following: free flow of development funds, manpower and technology from resource surplus to resource scarce member countries and preferential market access facilities to least developed member countries in respect of their exports to other member countries."

Host country Qatar took initiative to revive the idea of setting up an Islamic Common Market and an experts meeting was convened to examine different aspects of the idea.

Hasina also reiterated her call for a concerted action in enhance

## Bid to help PBCP

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day on June 13. Accordingly, the super asked the GRO of the district court and the OC of Dumuria thana to do the needful. But the GRO and the OC did not do comply rather they suppressed the matter with ulterior motive, said a top KMP official.

Meanwhile, Shimul obtained release orders on bail from the court concerned in all but three criminal cases taking full advantage of the invisible hands of co-operation of the corrupt officials of district police.

But it was the DC of KMP Mazharul Huq who stood in the way of Shimul's getting any further bail order. He engaged a certain KMP Inspector to unearth the mystery behind Shimul's incessant bail orders from the higher court.

Having made a thorough investigation into the matter, it was revealed that the GRO of the district police concealed all necessary documents relating to Shimul's conviction and case docket under the cushion of his chair.

The KMP inspector of city SB recovered the documents and case dockets from the possession of the official of the district police court and later handed them over to the Additional District and Sessions Judge Hasan Imam.

The documents were sent officially to Khulna District Jail authorities on November 8 from the Judges' court under memo no 893. These documents are related to punishment of Shimul in the murder case. But dockets of arms case and documents of conviction for this offence are still missing from the GRO court, said the city SB of KMP. The jailer of Khulna Jail said that he had received the conviction order on November 8.

## PM: Bashar

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ences, if any, through mutual cooperation.

"We can frustrate the evil designs of our enemies by strengthening our unity and integrity," the Prime Minister told the Syrian leader.

Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr SA Samad and Foreign Secretary CM Shafi Sami were present during the meeting at the summit venue at Doha Sheraton Hotel.

Earlier, Prime Minister Hasina called on Sheikhha Mozah Nasser Al Misnad, wife of the Emir of Qatar, at Wajba Palace and discussed matters of mutual interests. Sheikhha Mozah is well known for her work and contribution for children.

Sheikhha Hasina observed that the two countries could work together for improvement of condition of children, particularly those disabled.

The PM explained her government policy for providing free education to all children up to class five and female education up to class eight. She also mentioned various incentives including stipend for poor school.

Sheikhha Mozah accepted an invitation from the Prime Minister to visit Bangladesh to see for herself various reforms and welfare programme for improving the economic status of the common people especially those live in the rural areas.

The PM said her government is giving emphasis on agro-based industries to enhance the economic condition of farmers. She also mentioned about Bangladesh workers employed in Qatar and their contribution to its economy with a request to look after them.

## Hosts fall apart at crux

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145 by Aminul Islam only the other day, watched in disbelief as wickets fell like nine pins. In a horrible exhibition of batting Bangladesh lost five wickets for 53 runs in the post-lunch session.

The defeat was written on the faces of Naimur's men when Bangladesh's remaining wickets fell during the tea session. It took only three-and-a-half hours and exactly 46.3 overs for the Indians to dismember the brittle Bangladesh batting.

India, needing just 64 runs in the final hours, wrapped up the victory in style with Rahul Dravid notching a fine 41 not out. Opener Das was defeated on 22 at the other end when they reached the target in 15 overs. The lone casualty along the way was left-handed opener Sadagopan Ramesh, who for a second time in the match dragged the ball on to his stumps after scoring only one.

In trying to cut Hasibul, Sadagopan became the tall right-arm seamer's first victim. He was unfortunate not to claim a second scalp after Al-Shahriar dropped Das in the slips.

Undoubtedly the day belonged to Bangladesh for all the wrong reasons. The comedy started once opener Shahriar Hossain decided to leave the field after Srinath struck him on the shoulder with a bouncer. It was a painful blow, but the situation demanded that the batsman remain at the wicket. By the time he returned the ship was already sinking.

His 'impulsive' partner Mehrab, who scored four in the first innings, departed in the same fashion courtesy of a reckless square cut off Zaheer after making 20.

First innings hero Bashar started from where he had left off on Friday greeting Srinath with a boundary, but paid the penalty of playing too many shots. His exchange of looks and words with India pacer Ajit Agarkar eventually brought about his doom - mistiming a pull against the aggressive bowler to Zaheer Khan at deep square leg.

Bashar top-scored with 30 that included five fours. Wicketkeeper Khaled Masood with an unbeaten 21 was the other batsman to reach double figures.

Agarkar, who bowled with venom, also accounted for lone century-maker Aminul Islam. Aminul was adjudged leg before

## EU envoy calls

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Besides the decision of granting duty-free access for the 48 poorest countries in world, "In another decision only days ago, the EU adopted the list of products to be liberalised in the third stage of integration under the WTO Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC), meaning essentially the elimination of any quotas imposed on the imports of the products concerned into the EU," he said.

The list of products to be liberalised by 1 January 2002 represents 21.8% of the value of imports in 1999, or E 12.9 billion, the Ambassador further mentioned.

However, some 34 trade-related technical assistance proposals presented by the Government of Bangladesh in January of this year has not been accepted by EU on the ground of failing to constitute an expression of a coherent strategy put to practice.

Minister of Labour and Employment Abdul Mannan M.P. said, "In today's competitive world-market enhancing quality of RMG production is a must."

Without sound employer-worker relationship which is impossible, "Conformity to labour laws, consciousness ensuring health service as well as guaranteeing 930 takas minimum wages are the primordial goals to be achieved," the Minister asserted.

BGMEA President Anisur Rahman Sinha said, BGMEA is committed to ensure safety of the workers. Working with 22,000 workers in garments and textile industry, highest in the sub-continent, BGMEA has opened four hospitals in the country for health service.

BGMEA is also providing training to workers in sudden breaking-out of fire. With UNFPA, it is currently running a project on reproductive health of the garments workers, Mr. Sinha informed.

Trade Union leaders present in the seminar recommended for identifying the problems in the RMG sector, providing transport to women workers in case of work at night, securing the 930 takas minimum wage, freedom of constructive Trade Union activities etc.

## No scope of SAARC

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colopened an extraordinary official-level SAARC meeting here Monday, said the fledgling regional movement would overcome the "problems that bedevil relations among some of us."

"They are intractable, but not insoluble," Kadirgamar said.

"There is a vast reservoir of goodwill among all the parties of our region which in time will propel the member states concerned to get together, to bury their differences, and move SAARC along."

SAARC secretary general, Nihal Rodrigo, said their official-level meeting was no substitute for a summit and cautioned that they should force closer regional ties in the face of challenges posed by globalisation.

The meeting being inaugurated is meant to promote a collective encounter of the functional kind, it is not meant to delve deep into a review of its past performance nor to make philosophical projections into the future," he said.

Rodrigo said there was a lack of co-operation among member states and attributed it to a "want of closer encounters of a practical kind."

India has also been reluctant to attend a summit with Pakistan's military ruler, General Pervez Musharraf, who seized power in October 1999.

Sri Lanka's foreign minister urged the officials to make a strong recommendation on time frames for a South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA). SAARC had earlier set a 2001 deadline for a framework treaty on free trade.

However, Asian diplomats attending the three-day meeting here said it was a formidable challenge to meet that deadline given the internal problems.

Sri Lanka, which currently holds SAARC's rotating chairmanship, remained optimistic for the future of the organisation that was formed in 1985, but has little to show by way of results. "Whatever the political climate may be at a given point of time, a sense of South Asia is clearly evident among our peoples, and is bound to grow," Kadirgamar said.

## Estrada impeached

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him.

House Speaker Manuel Villar swiftly moved to impeach the president after leading a traditional prayer as several hundred pro- and anti-Estrada demonstrators protested outside the Congress building.

Without missing a beat, he segued into reading an order for the House secretary-general "to immediately transmit to the Senate the impeachment complaint constituting the articles of impeachment" before striking the gavel to cut off any further debate. The move caught by surprise the pro-Estrada legislators, who had vowed to unseat Villar as payback for his having bolted the ruling Lamp party 10 days ago.

Villar stressed that the impeachment motion had already received a minimum number of 73 votes or a one-third majority in the 218-member lower house as required by the constitution.

The House's task became "peremptory and ministerial" as its justice committee had already endorsed the impeachment motion on November 6 after exhaustive debate, he said.

**Bangladesh Gas Fields Company Limited**  
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### House Required (Re-Notice)

An independent house for minimum 5500 square feet at Dhanmodi, DOHS, Mohakhali, Gulshan, Banani or Uttara areas in the Dhaka city is wanted for use as the liaison office-cum-rest house for this company. Apart for arrangement for keeping 3-4 cars full time, there should have the facility for keeping 1 truck occasionally. Moreover, there should be an open space of minimum 30 feet X 30 feet area for installing 130 feet long self-supported tower in order to ensure the telecommunication system of the company within the boundary wall of the house. If there is no 30 feet X 30 feet open space within the boundary wall of the house, then the house should be of RCC frame structure from the infrastructural point of view so that it is possible to install a 3 leg self-supported mast on the roof of the house. There should be room measuring 12 feet X 15 feet suitable for use to install telecom equipment within 25 feet-30 feet from that tower or mast. Besides, BGFL will install a 21 kilowatt capacity Diesel Generator in that house with its own expenses for which there should be room with the area of 10 feet X 12 feet on the ground floor or an open space for 10 feet X 12 feet. Both tower or mast for the installation of telecommunication system will have to be favourable for the result of the location of the house path/site survey. Landlords will have to give such assurance that the appropriate authority/Civil Aviation has no objection in installing tower/mast of the height as mentioned in the area concerned.

Interested landlords are requested to deposit the application/proposal with signature in the box kept at the present liaison office at 97, Purana Paltan (Bijoy Nagar), Dhaka in a sealed envelope on 28<sup>th</sup> November, 2000 by 2:00 PM in the afternoon mentioning the name, address, documents regarding ownership, structural design of the house and design/plan as approved by the RAJUK with the rate of monthly rent on square feet basis (covered area, place for keeping vehicles, open space and rate of monthly rent separately/gross). Mentionable that, the rate of the monthly rent should have to be same for 5 years. Application/proposal will be opened the same day at 2:15 PM in presence of the interested landlords, if anyone remains present.

Selected landlords will have to make a 5 (five) years term contract as per terms and conditions of the existing contract for rent of house. The house will have to be handed over to the company from 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2001 and the contract for rent of the house will be effective from the date of such hand over.

Bangladesh Gas Fields Company Limited Authority reserves the right to accept any application/proposals or reject all application/proposals without assigning any reason.

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