

People's prosperity not possible without peace in S Asia

PM tells Indian envoy

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said South Asia needs to be turned into a peaceful region as it is not possible to attain prosperity of the people without establishing peace.

She made the remarks when Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty called on her at the Prime Minister's Office and handed her felicitation letter from Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh.

Hasina, through the envoy, thanked her Indian counterpart for his congratulations on her assumption of the office of prime minister following a sweeping election victory.

The Indian high commissioner congratulated Hasina on her grand alliance's landslide victory in the December 29 parliamentary elections and for becoming prime minister.

Hasina and Pinak discussed various matters of



Indian High Commissioner Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office in the city yesterday.

bilateral interest and regional and international issues of common concern.

As the PM raised the matter of existing trade gap with India, the envoy apprised her that there is huge scope for expanding the market of Bangladeshi products in the eastern Indian states of Mizoram and Tripura at the next door.

Hasina mentioned the historic role of India in the War

of Liberation of 1971 and hoped that "the friendly relations between the two countries will be strengthened further in the days to come."

Later, Ambassador of Switzerland Dora Rapol paid a courtesy call on Hasina at the PMO. They discussed various issues of mutual interest and bilateral relations.

The Swiss envoy greeted the PM for forming the government through a landslide

victory in a free, fair and neutral election.

Hasina described Switzerland as one of the development partners of Bangladesh and called upon the European country to come up with more assistance to create social safety net in Bangladesh and for development of various sectors, including education and solar energy system.

The envoy apprised her that already Swiss government's assistance in primary education has been increased to 25 million US dollar from 12 million.

Dora Rapol also invited the prime minister to visit Switzerland at a time of her convenience.

Hasina emphasised increasing the volume of exports from Bangladesh to Switzerland.

Secretary of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) Kazi Aminul Islam, and Press Secretary to the Prime Minister Abul Kalam Azad were present at the meetings.



Army personnel have been deployed in different upazilas across the country ahead of tomorrow's upazila elections. The photo was taken from Konakhola area in Keraniganj on the outskirts of the city yesterday.

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY

55pc faces economic hardship while pursuing education

MAHTABI ZAMAN

The government provides almost no support to the people with disability in education sector although it is bound to provide them with all sorts of educational facilities under its constitutional obligation and as a signatory of many national and international frameworks.

Whatever efforts that the government makes for the students with disability are channelised through Integrated Education Programme or Resource Programme and Special Education Programme of the social welfare ministry.

The Resource Programme constitutes comprehensive education for 10 male students at primary and high school level in each district. There are 30 resource teachers for 64 districts.

The Special Education Programme of five divisions incorporates five schools with 30 seats for boys and 20 seats for girls. This programme is for children with visual, speech, hearing and intellectual impairment.

Of the 64 schools under Resource Programme, around 38 are now inoperative. These pupils with disabilities do not get any Braille book as the only government Braille press at Tongi has been inactive since 1994.

According to a report of the World Health Organisation, 10 percent of the total population of Bangladesh are physically and mentally challenged while according to a study of the National Forum of Organisations Working with the Disabled (NFOWD) conducted in 2005 on 12000 people of six divisions, 5.6 percent people are with disability.

Of them, 32.2 percent people are partial or full blind, 27.8 percent are physically challenged, 22.5 percent suffer from hearing and speech disability,

6.7 percent are intellectually challenged while 10.7 percent are people with multiple disability.

According to a survey of Bangladesh Pratibandhi Kalyan Samity (BPKS), the monthly income of 21 percent families having children with disability ranges from Tk 0 to Tk 1500, while the monthly income of 60 percent families ranges from Tk 1501 to Tk 3000. On the other hand, the monthly income of 13 percent families ranges from Tk 3001 to Tk 5000 and the monthly income of only 6 percent families is Tk 5001 and above.

BPKS conducted the survey in December 2005 in cooperation with other organisations working for the people with disability across the country.

The same study also found that as many as 55 percent of the children with disability face economic hardship in pursuing their education, while 19 percent of them face problems in educational institutions and with the educational system. On the other hand, 18 percent of them face communication problem, and 8 percent face social and other problems in pursuing education.

Mohammad Yusuf Mia, a blind student of Dhaka University (DU) who completed MS in political science in 2005 and is trying for a job, said he had to share the back dated Braille books with four other blind classmates at the primary schools.

"Starting from high school to university we got no textbooks from the government," he added.

"As the teachers are not sensitised about the presence of a blind student in the classes we have to depend on our classmates for assistance," said Zahidul Islam, a 2nd year LLB student of DU.

Most of the teachers do not utter what they write on the blackboard, he added.

As the scope for involvement in the

mainstream is very limited for the people with disability, their families in general do not want to spend for that child.

A blind student Yusuf Mia maintained his livelihood and educational expenditure by selling mobile phone cards among the university students.

"Most of the time I was cheated as they did not pay me honestly," said Yusuf.

For higher education, students with disability spend most of their study time for charity collection, said a DU student with disability.

According to a survey conducted on 54 visually impaired students of DU in 2005 by a group of students of the Institute of Social Welfare, 73 percent students suffer from economic crisis and 65 percent face writing problem while answering a question.

"Due to lack of Braille paper we have to write on art paper or photo paper for which we have to pay Tk 7/8 for each page," said Lovely Akter, a visually impaired woman working in an NGO as junior trainer.

"We face the main hurdle after passing the SSC examination because after this we do not get any government book," she said.

These students have to depend on classmates or recorder for reading and on scribes for writing. As a result education for them becomes costlier than normal students.

BPKS Executive Director Abdus Sattar Dulal said if the teachers are properly trained, 90 percent students with disability can be enrolled in the schools.

"The government has constitutional obligation and obligation as a signatory of many national and international policies and frameworks to ensure education for the people with disability," he added.

KANCHAN-PANCHAGARH

Convert railway track to dual gauge

PM asks ministries at Ecneec meet

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the ministries concerned to examine the possibility of converting the broad gauge railway track from Kanchan in Dinajpur to Panchagarh into dual gauge.

She gave the order at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec) at NEC conference room that reviewed and approved in principle a proposal to rehabilitate the existing rail track at a cost of Tk 249 crore.

Ministers, State Ministers and senior officials concerned were present at the second Ecneec meeting of the new government with the prime minister in the chair.

"The PM gave us two weeks time to examine the feasibility and estimate additional costs for converting the railway track into dual gauge one," Planning Minister Air Vice Marshall (Retd) AK Khandaker told a press briefing after the meeting.

"It will help smooth the rail communication of the northern region with Khulna and Dhaka," he said.

Apart from the PM's order, the Ecneec approved a union level road and infrastructure development project of Tk 159 crore to be implemented in Kushnia and Jessore under the LGRD ministry.

Another project of Tk 81 crore was also approved to develop buildings and student dormitories of the Defence College where 40 percent of the students are foreign while the college has a plan to increase capacity.

The meeting also discussed a proposed project of Indira Road-Panthapath link road in the city at a cost of Tk 37 crore, but cancelled it for the time being on consideration of excessive expenditure for acquisition of land.

The project might be submitted later again with a fresh proposal that should consider reducing the width of the road so the cost on account of land acquisition comes down, said the planning minister.

Dhaka to send medicines for Palestinians

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh will soon send medicines as humanitarian aid for the war-wounded Palestinians in Gaza.

Palestinian Ambassador Shaher Mohammad stated this to reporters after meetings with Foreign Minister Dr Dipu Moni and State Minister Dr Hassan Mahmud at the foreign ministry yesterday.

The envoy highly appreciated Bangladeshi people standing beside their Palestinian brothers as well as government's big role and diplomatic approaches to the USA, the UK and China for immediate halt to the "barbaric" attacks on the people in Gaza.

Asked about the role of OIC in resolving the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, the ambassador said, "We need more unity between the Arabs and Muslim countries."



Leaders of Communist Party of Bangladesh place wreaths at a memorial at Paltan Maidan in the city yesterday paying tributes to those killed in a bomb blast at a party meeting on January 20 in 2001.

DR MOFAKKHARUL MURDER

2 to die, one gets 5 yrs' RI

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced two people to death and another to five years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) for killing a doctor of Bangladesh Medical College Hospital in the city's Dhanmondi area in January last year.

The convicts with death are Mohammad Saiful Islam and Firoz Miah while Mohammad Bulu was given five years' RI for killing Dr Mofakkarul Ahmed Sohel.

Judge Mohammad Nurul Huda of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-3 handed down the sentence in presence of the convicts at a packed courtroom.

During the judgement victim's parents -- Dr Mozaffar Ahmed and Firoza Begum -- were present in the court and expressed their satisfaction over the verdict. They urged the government for quick execution of their (convicts) punishment.

According to the prosecution, a gang of

miscreants led by Saiful killed Dr Mofakkarul Ahmed Sohel, registrar of Bangladesh Medical College Hospital, at his residence at Satmasjid Road in Dhanmondi on January 11 last year. They cut the body into several pieces and dumped those at Gaibanda and Gazipur to destroy the alams (evidences). Saiful was the victim's driver while Firoz was Saiful's cousin.

Saiful went into hiding after the incident but police arrested his cousin Firoz. Later, police also arrested Saiful's brother-in-law Bulu from Gaibanda. Police recovered the dilapidated body from Gaibanda and Gazipur according to statements of the arrestees on January 16.

Saiful and Firoz gave confessional statements to magistrates during the investigation. They told the magistrate that they killed the victim for grabbing his vast wealth.

Special Public Prosecutor Sahidul Islam Sardar appeared for the accused while Advocate Abul Kalam Azad defended the accused.

Call to take stern action to save playgrounds, children's parks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Save the Environment Movement yesterday formed a human chain demanding stern action by the authorities to save playgrounds and children's parks for the recreation of both the children and elderly people.

Leaders of the movement said the children's parks and playgrounds are gradually turning into the planners' playthings in Dhaka city.

They said this at the programme in front of the National Museum in the city and demanded steps to ensure playground in every education institution.

Once there were lots of open spaces which were used as playgrounds, but those spaces are now almost destroyed due to unplanned development of the city, they added.

The leaders further said that the surviving open spaces are also under threats of encroachment posed by land grabbers, as those were not given approval as playgrounds legally.

They called for not allowing jatra and fair in the playgrounds, taking proper steps to keep them playable throughout the year and steps to arrange one or more playground in every area.

The human chain was fol-

lowed by a rally which was presided over by Prof of Jahangirnagar University Dr Md Manzurul Hasan.

Chairman of the movement SEM Abu Naser Khan, Director of Best Syed Mahub Elahi, Executive Director of Zibika Gulshan Ara Dolly, Secretary

General of Citizen's Rights Movement Tushar Rehman and President and General Secretary of Nagorbashi Sangathan Ansar Ali and Nazim Uddin and badminton players Kamrunnahar Dana and Samsunnahar Aziz Lina addressed the rally.

Involve in mainstream politics

Menon urges expats

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Workers' Party of Bangladesh President Rashed Khan Menon yesterday said more expatriates should be involved in the mainstream politics of the country where they are staying, rather than doing BNP and Awami League politics there.

He was speaking as the chief guest at the publication ceremony of a book titled 'Grassroots Politics' by Bangladeshi expatriate in the US Morshed Alam at a city hotel.

"The expatriates should get involved themselves in the politics of the country where they are living in and can come back home getting political

experience from that country," Menon added.

The lawmaker hoped that Morshed, who was also a senator candidate of Democratic Party from New York, would do better in the politics.

The book published by Scholars Publishers was written based on the grassroots politics in the US.

Menon further said that the local government system in the country was not followed properly due to military interventions.

Dhaka University Prof Syed Manzurul Islam presided over the publication ceremony that was also attended by expatriate Dr Belal Hossain Joy, Nima Rahman among others.

FFs' children demand reinstatement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Candidates, who were deprived of freedom fighters' children quota for the 3rd and 4th grade jobs in the Department of Fisheries (DoF), yesterday demanded their reinstatement.

They also demanded the government provide them with the salaries and increments which they were supposed to get if their appointments would have come into effect in due time.

Some 40 children deprived candidates said this at a press conference at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium in the city yesterday. Mukti-joddhar Santan Central Committee expressed its solidarity with them. They passed all the phases of examinations and requirements, they added.

Ashraf, a job expectant whose appointment was postponed along with others, said they are not seeking any sympathy, rather asking for their rights to be appointed in their respective posts, which was halted for two years without any reasons.

"Peon Abdus Salam filed a writ petition in the court, saying that the appointment procedure was not properly followed. Following the case, we asked the department for its clarification in the freedom fighters' quota, but we did not get any positive feedback," he added.

He further said that fisheries and livestock ministry told the department not to appoint the candidates until the case is resolved.

Mukti-joddhar Santan Central Committee President Humayun Kabir, General Secretary Ashraf Islam Nayan and Office Secretary Nazimuddin also took part in the programme.



Workers of Milk Vita Company stage a sit-in in front of its Tejgaon office in the city yesterday demanding regularisation of their jobs.

Fresh probe in Nurul Islam's death demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of different political parties yesterday demanded reinvestigation into the death of Gonoatntri Party president Nurul Islam who died in a fire accident.

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haque Inu, National Awami Party General Secretary Advocate Enamul Haque, coordinator of 11-party and Gano Azadi League President Hazi Abdul Samad, and Shamyabadi Dal politburo member Abu Ahmed Shahabuddin, among others, signed the statement.

