

Canada to assist in edn, environment sectors

BSS, Ottawa

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Hasan Mahmud passed a busy day in Ottawa yesterday holding meetings with Canadian State Minister for Foreign Affairs Deepak Obhrai, State Minister for Canadian International Cooperation Jim Abbott and Chairperson of Canada-Bangladesh Parliamentary Friendship Association and former minister of CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) Maria Minna.

During the meetings, he discussed issues of bilateral and regional interests with them. They reiterated their commitment to Bangladesh for continued support and informed that they stand ready to further assist in modernising the education system, environmental protection and finding source of renewable energy.

They also assured increased assistance to Bangladesh as the government of Canada took a recent initiative to focus its efforts on 20 countries including Bangladesh by concentrating resources and improving cooperation. They also showed interest in forming a Bangladesh-Canada Parliamentary Friendship Association in Dhaka shortly.

The foreign minister briefed them on government initiative to form a Joint Task Force on terrorism in consultation with other South Asian nations.

He also exchanged views on impact of climate change on Bangladesh and new avenues of cooperation between the two countries including introducing uniformity in education system and funding sources of renewable energy.

Bangladesh High Commissioner to Canada and Canadian High Commissioner to Bangladesh were present during the meetings.



Winners of Charon Sangbadik Munajat Uddin Smriti Purashkar Akhil Poddar and Shankar Lal Das pose for photograph with the guests at the award giving ceremony at Dhaka Reporters' Unity in the city yesterday. Sitting from left are Motiur Rahman Chowdhury, Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, Anwarul Haque, Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul and Nasima Munajat.

Take steps to protect children from harmful websites

Speakers call at confce

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Measures should be taken to enrich the Internet with adequate and appropriate contents for children so that they do not stray into harmful websites, said the speakers at a conference yesterday.

The conference titled 'Protecting children in cyberspace' was organised jointly by the daily Shamokal and South Asia Mobile Forum in observance of the World Telecommunication and Information Society Day in the city.

The speakers including some leading IT experts, industry insiders, human rights activists and media personalities expressed concern at the lack of awareness and measures in protecting children from harmful contents in the cyberspace.

Although the concept of Digital Bangladesh focuses on mass use of Internet among all ages, it needs to be ensured that the children are using it in a safe and constructive manner, they added.

Though Internet has dark side we need not to be afraid of this problem, rather we should create awareness about its use in a productive way," said

Fazlur Rahman, former chairman to Mobile Operators Association of Bangladesh.

The speakers said with fewer opportunities for physical and social activities, children go online to learn, play, and communicate with their friends.

But due to lack of adequate educational contents and awareness among family members and friends, many children are prone to visit adult websites that may damage their juvenile minds, they added.

"Children have curious minds with a hunger for learning new things. This curiosity may lead them to visit adult contents in the Internet, which may in turn make them vulnerable to sexual crimes in future," said Khushi Kabir, a renowned human rights activist.

"We need to present educational contents in a more entertaining way so that the children do not stray into harmful websites," said Bangladesh Computer Samity (BCS) Chairman Mostafa Jabbar who moderated the event.

"We also need laws and appropriate policies to make the cyberspace safe not only for children but also for everyone else. We are to ensure effective

implementation of existing laws and policies to create an Internet environment in which children can safely play, learn, and grow," he added.

The discussants also stressed the need for strengthening information and communication technologies (ICT) policies to protect children along with everyone else from harmful contents in the Internet.

They said open dialogue with children at schools regarding the issue should prove to be beneficial, adding that parents and guardians may resort to technological measures to prevent their children from accessing unwanted websites.

Shamokal Editor Golam Sarwar, Bangladesh Association of Software & Information Services (BASIS) Chairman Habibullah N Karim, Citycell CEO Michael Seymour, former chairman of ISPAF Abdus Salam, Grameenphone Additional General Manager Mamun Hashmi, Bangla Lion Chief Adviser Parvez Ahmed, Tru Broadband Chief Executive Galib Ahmed, and Amader Gram Chief Executive Reza Selim also spoke at the conference.

Unite against India's river-linking plan

Speakers urge political parties

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Speakers at a rally yesterday called on all political parties to take a common stand against the river-linking project of India, saying that such a project would lead to serious environmental disaster in Bangladesh.

If implemented, the project will destroy the country's ecology and hasten the desertification process, which has already started following unilateral withdrawal of Ganges waters by India at Farakka, they said.

Bangladesh chapter of the International Farakka Committee organised the rally at Charabari in Tangail to mark the 33rd anniversary of Farakka Long March led by veteran politician Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani in 1976.

Environmentalist Prof Jasim Uddin Ahmad, president of IFC and former vice-chancellor of Jahangirnagar University, presided over the rally.

The speaker said India is either withdrawing or obstructing flow of almost all the rivers, including Padma, Meghna, Jamuna, Brahmaputra, Tista and Surma, by constructing dam or spurs at the upstream, creating water crisis in dry season and floods in the monsoon.

All political parties should unite to protest against withdrawal of water at Farakka, river linking project and the construction of Tinpaimukh dam, they said.

They also said India is flouting the Helsinki Convention and urged the donors such as World Bank and Asian Development Bank not to fund any project on common rivers, which will obstruct the water flow.

Scientist Dr SI Khan and Nazma Begum, senior vice-presidents of IFC, secretary Syed Irfanul Bari, Bangladesh chapter president of IFC Bulbul Khan Mahbub, Bhasani's daughter Mahmuda



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Prof Sheikh Ahsan Ullah Mojumder speaks at a press conference at the Buet seminar room yesterday. On his left are Dilruba Ferdous Shuvra, Asifur Rahman and Dr Sharmina Sultana. (Story on Page 16)

North Bangla Adivasi Forum formed

RU CORRESPONDENT

North Bangla Adivasi Forum, a forum of indigenous people of 10 northern districts, was launched at press conference at Public Library auditorium in Rajshahi yesterday.

A total of 31 indigenous community people living in ten northern districts -- Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, Dinajpur, Gaibandha, Joypurhat, Natore, Sirajganj, Naogaon, Chapainawabganj and Rajshahi -- formed the body for establishing rights and ensuring development of the indigenous people living in the plainlands.

The indigenous people alleged that they were evicted from their land by local influ-

ential people and deprived of human and social rights.

They urged the government for their constitutional recognition and ensuring rights to their mother tongue, culture and land. They also demanded separate ministry for indigenous peoples to look after their problems.

The indigenous community leaders urged their people to be united for establishing their rights and ensuring development.

General Secretary of the forum Bhagabat Tudu read out a written statement at the press conference while its President Hingu Murmu, Vice President Rissul Kisku and other indigenous leaders were present at the press conference.

Road crashes kill 5

UNB, Dhaka

At least five people were killed in separate road accidents in Dhaka, Noakhali and Gaibandha yesterday.

A report from Keraniganj adds: Two motorcyclists were killed as a speedy truck hit their bike on Dhaka-Maowa road at Baghior yesterday.

The victims were identified as Faizur Rahman, 32, and Afzal Hossain, 35.

Police quoting witnesses said the brick-laden truck suddenly appeared on the highway from nearby NBM brick field and hit the motorcycle at about 5:00 pm, killing the two on the spot.

Police seized the truck but its driver managed to escape.

Another report from Noakhali says: Two motorbike riders were crushed under the wheels of a bus on Begumganj-Laxmipur road at

Kalikapur yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Nazrul Islam Javed, 28, and Sohag Hossain, 27, hailed from Kutubpur village of Begumganj upazila.

Police said a Dhaka-bound truck from Laxmipur hit a motorcycle and ran over the two riders near a brick field at noon.

Sohag and Nazrul were going to Chandraganj from Choumuhini.

A Gaibandha report says: A man was killed and three others were injured when a truck ploughed through a rickshaw at Rasulpur on Dhaka-Rangpur highway yesterday.

Police said a Rangpur-bound truck hit a van at noon, killing one of its passengers Satish Chandra on the spot and injuring three others.

The injured were rushed to Palashbari Hospital and Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

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