

HASINA'S VISIT

Bangladesh has gained more than India

Says Indian media

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Indian print media yesterday gave a wide coverage of the activities of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina during her official visit here.

More leading newspapers ran editorials which said there appears to be a 'new sense of purpose' in the approach being taken by both New Delhi and Dhaka to strengthen bilateral relations.

The Indian dailies in their commentaries are unanimous that Bangladesh has gained more than India out of Hasina's visit primarily in economic sphere and given the provision that 35 percent of the \$1 billion line of credit announced by India may be converted into grant, which means a portion will not have to be repaid.

The grant of transit facilities to Bangladesh to conduct trade with Nepal and Bhutan is "yet another step in the right direction, sending the message loud and clear to Dhaka that its cooperation is valued in India and will be duly reciprocated," said an editorial in leading business newspaper Business Line.

All the leading Indian news channels and newspapers covered the handover ceremony of the prestigious Indira Gandhi peace award with colour photographs. Many dailies carried the stories in the front pages.

One incident reported by some Indian newspapers in the ceremony was how Congress Party President Sonia Gandhi ensured that the family members of

Hasina, who were initially sitting on the rear row at the function, be brought to the front row.

To accommodate the family members of the Bangladesh premier in the front row, some of Indian cabinet ministers had to move to the rear seats.

The joint communiqué issued by India and Bangladesh after talks between Hasina and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh also got good coverage in the newspapers.

Leading newspaper The Times of India in an editorial 'Eastern Promise' commented: "There appears to be a new sense of purpose in the approach being taken by both New Delhi and Dhaka to shore up bilateral ties."

The slew of agreements the two countries signed during Hasina's visit revealed that those are not just platitudes and rhetoric doing the rounds this time. Substance has been injected into the relationship.

The editorial said Hasina's categorical assertion that terrorists would not be allowed to use her country as a base for anti-India operations is "reassuring".

"There also appears to be some progress on the long-standing issue of India being allowed to set up a transit route via Bangladesh territory. Clearly, both sides are looking to operate within a give-and-take framework."

"For several years, India and Bangladesh have shared a strained relationship. Among other reasons, Bangladesh has resented what it per-

ceives as India's 'big brother' approach while New Delhi has felt that Dhaka is too prickly", the daily said.

An editorial in The Statesman newspaper said Bangladesh has "more to celebrate" than India from the agreements signed by the two countries during the visit. "Of profound import to Bangladesh is the agreements' decidedly economic content."

It said while "Bangladesh has much to celebrate over the tangible content of the agreements, in comparison the package for India must seem to be small beer -- the access that has been granted to the ports of Chittagong, Ashuganj and Mongla".

The Business Line editorial said Hasina's visit would turn out to be a huge success in furthering relations between the two countries which was not unexpected given the warmth she has always exuded vis-à-vis India.

"The real test, however, will be in whether Sheikh Hasina will be able to sell the results of the visit to her political allies back home and ultimately implement the agreements inked in New Delhi," it said.

Agreeing with that view, the editorial in Asian Age newspaper said: "The proof of the pudding will be in the eating. This essentially means that the visiting Prime Minister (Hasina) and her party will have to handle domestic affairs wisely, firmly and fairly if its foreign policy, particularly concerning India, is to take off in the anticipated direction."



Speakers at the BBC Bangladesh Sanglap at the Biam auditorium in the city yesterday. From left are Shahidullah Khan, Muhammad Jahangir, Mithila Farzana, Traupa Majumder and Shykh Seraj.

Democracy, healthy political culture a must to help media play due role

Speakers tell BBC Sanglap

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sustainable democracy and a healthy political culture is a must to help the media play its role without fear or favour, said speakers at the BBC Bangladesh Sanglap yesterday.

They said media have to play a pro-people role for its own survival, although there are some media houses that only serve the interest of a certain political party or the owners.

The speakers also said there should be a policy guideline for the electronic media. The dialogue on 'Mass

media of Bangladesh' was held at the Biam auditorium in the city. Publisher of the daily New Age Shahidullah Khan, Director (News) of Channel i Shykh Seraj, media analyst Muhammad Jahangir and television actress Traupa Majumder were the panellists at the dialogue. Although the Bangladesh Television (BTV) has the largest audience, it had always failed to play a pro-people role and been the spokesman of the ruling party during the regimes of the past governments. Media is meant for the

mass people, if it (the media) fails to play a pro-people role people will reject it outright, he said. Stressing the need for sustainable democracy and a healthy political culture, he said whenever democracy was interrupted, media found it hard to play its due role. Muhammad Jahangir said journalists will not be assaulted any more if the country's political culture sees a positive change. However, tortures on journalists will go unabated if the government fails to establish the rule of law, he said.

Shykh Seraj said both the print and electronic media have seen a boom in the last one decade, which had inspired the countrymen. Earlier, people used to hide their face seeing a television camera, but now they face the camera and have their say. The media has given them a platform to speak up. Traupa Majumder said more and more educated people are now choosing journalism as a profession. The quality will surely go up if the trend continues and journalism is practiced with ethics, she added.

Police bar Proshika staff from entering headquarters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police continued barring several hundred Proshika staff from entering its headquarters yesterday in contravention of a High Court (HC) order though they drove out its former chairman's hired men who allegedly took control of the office Monday midnight.

Upon a revision petition filed by former chairman of the NGO Qazi Faruque Ahmed, the HC in its order in August last year said that he could go to Proshika Bhaban alone to meet with the present chairman and chief executive officer without holding any procession and rally there.

The court also ordered both the parties to maintain the status quo.

But around 70 people took position in front of the office on Tuesday and chanted slogans for Faruque under the banner of Mirpur Mohila Awami League throughout the day. Some 300 Proshika staff could not enter the office on the day.



Staffs of Proshika stage a demonstration in front of its headquarters at Mirpur in the city yesterday, as police bar them from entering the office.

The law enforcers brought Faruque's men out of Proshika building at about 8:30am nearly 32 hours after they took control of the building. Lutfor Kabir, deputy commissioner (DC) Mirpur Zone

of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said, "We are waiting for an order from the government high-ups." Pointing to the HC order, he said that the aggrieved party, not the police, could file a con-

tempt charge. Meanwhile, Proshika Chief Executive Officer Mahbubul Karim alleged that Mirpur police station on Tuesday refused to file case in connection with the Monday's incident.

'Cancel 2 provisions of labour law'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF) yesterday demanded scrapping of two provisions of the newly passed Bangladesh Labour Act (amended)-2009.

They also termed the provision Nos. 6 and 7 of the law 'anti-worker' and 'anti-industry'.

The leaders placed the

demand at a press conference organised by NGWD at Dhaka Reporters' Unity in the city.

NGWF President Amirul Haque said the two provisions would encourage garment owners to violate the law as well as rights of the workers.

According to provision No. 6, if any one violates the law, he or she will be sentenced to three months' imprisonment

instead of six months or Tk 2000 as fine or both.

Provision No. 7 said Tk 5000 will be fined for violating law while it was three months' imprisonment or Tk 1000 or both as punishment of violating law.

Amirul said, "Those provisions, in which punishment level has been reduced, will encourage the owners to curtail the workers' rights

though violating laws. It will retard the development pace of the sector."

He alleged that the government did not take any recommendations from the labour representatives before formulating the law.

NGWF leaders Shafia Parveen, Faruk Khan, Nurun Nahar, Sultana Akhter, Anwar Parvez were present at the press conference.

Two city roads renamed

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has named two more streets after two valiant freedom fighters in recognition of their outstanding contribution to the liberation war in 1971.

Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka formally unveiled the name plaques of the two roads yesterday.

The new road from the Prime Minister's Office to Agargoan adjacent to the old airport has been named 'Bir Uttam Maj Gen Azizur Rahman Sarak' and the Road No. 55 at Gulshan-2 named 'Bir Bikram Imam-uz-Zaman Sarak'.

Speaking at separate programmes, Mayor Khoka said different roads in the city have been renamed after the freedom fighters, which will help the new generation to know about the history of the liberation war.



Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka unveils the name plaque of 'Bir Uttam Maj Gen Azizur Rahman Sarak' in the city yesterday.

Deal on skills development project

METRO DESK

A consortium led by Swisscontact recently signed an agreement with the Directorate of Technical Education under the education ministry for a multi-year ADB-SDC-funded skills development project, says a press release.

The project aims to contribute to poverty alleviation by enhancing the capacity of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system to provide demand-driven, quality training programmes targeting the general population, including the poor and the marginalised.

The consortium of Swisscontact, GTZ-International Services and Maxwell Stamp Ltd. will offer technical assistance to the Directorate of Technical Education, the executing agency for the project.

The technical assistance component is part of the multi-year \$50 million loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) with contributions from the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC).

Bus strike in Rajshahi from today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Bus owners and workers enforce an indefinite strike here this morning protesting a mobile court's decision to send labourers to jail from the spot.

Bus and minibuses on all routes from Rajshahi, including Dhaka-bound coaches, would not ply during the strike, said Kamal Hossain Robi, president of Bus Labourers' Samity.

Sources said the mobile court of Magistrate Zahid

Hosain Siddique aided by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and police sentenced three workers -- Shafi, Alamgir and Saiful -- to seven days' imprisonment.

The court also fined them Tk 200 each for not carrying licences as supervisors and helpers of two Dhaka-bound coaches -- Green Line and Hanif Enterprise.

Robi said, "Such on-the-spot imprisonment of bus labourers never happened anywhere in the country in the past. Fining them was enough."

Students, trainee teachers clash in city

DU CORRESPONDENT

Students of Dhaka College and trainee teachers of Teachers' Training College (TTC) in the city were locked into a clash yesterday over teasing a female trainee that left a student injured.

Police also arrested a person in this connection.

Sources said the clash ensued when a group of teachers beat up four students of Dhaka College on charges of teasing a female trainee of TTC at a fast food shop in Science Laboratory area around

2:30pm. Hearing the incident, Dhaka College students later attacked the teachers entering TTC. They also vandalised several rooms on the college campus.

The teachers then regrouped their force and vandalised a number of vehicles on Mirpur Road that also halted smooth movement of vehicular traffic.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) of New Market Police Station Kamrul Hasan said the incident occurred after some Dhaka College students had teased a TTC trainee.

RMG workers go berserk to protest wage cuts

UNB, Gazipur

Workers of a garment factory went berserk on the factory premises at Rajendrapur in Sadar upazila here yesterday, protesting reduction in piece rate per garment and decrease in their wages.

Police said about 5,000 workers of Zahintex, an RMG unit of Givency Group, observed work stoppage, took out a procession and damaged windowpanes and machines of the factory in the morning.

Later, they took position on nearby Dhaka-Mymensingh road, disrupting traffic movement for half an hour from 9:00am.

The road blockade, however, was withdrawn with the intervention of police.

Workers said they have been agitating for the last two days protesting the authority's decision to decrease their wages from this month.

But the factory authorities denied the allegations and said wages of workers have not been decreased and the workers are receiving less salary because of less production.

The workers of the factory are given their wages based on their daily production, they added.

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