

INDO-BANGLA JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

Meet to review progress today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a move to expedite implementation of the joint communiqué issued on the visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India in January, the government has called for an inter-ministerial meeting today to review the progress.

PM's Economic Affairs Adviser Mashur Rahman, who looks into the Indo-Bangladesh matters, especially agreements and commitments made by the PM and Dr Manmohan Singh, has convened the meeting at prime minister's office.

Senior officials of different ministries will attend the meeting to review the progress reports of different ministries, especially of home, communications, shipping, commerce and finance, said official sources.

"Bangladesh is very serious about implementing all the issues, but there is a lack of serious attempts on India's part to settle outstanding issues and

expedite implementation of the commitments made at the joint communiqué," said a top official, not wanting to be named.

He said bureaucratic inertia and lack of political will from certain Indian sides, delaying implementation of vital issues.

These include maritime boundary dispute in Bay of Bengal, demarcation of border and implementation of 1974 water agreement, sharing of Teesta water, supply of dredging machines and removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers from Bangladeshi products.

Sources said although Bangladesh prepared various projects to facilitate trade and commerce, connectivity and transit and trans-shipment between the two countries, India took a lengthy time to sign a \$1 billion loan deal.

However, the deal was signed in July and Bangladesh is making progress in implementation of 14 projects, undertaken mainly by ministries of communications and shipping.

"We have almost prepared a tender schedule to buy four dredgers under a project," Shipping Secretary Abdul Mannan Hawlader told The Daily Star, adding that the project to construct an internal container river port at Ashuganj Port was also finalised.

Bangladesh and India recently signed an agreement, which declares Ashuganj in Bangladesh and Silghat in India as ports of call.

Communications ministry, having most of the projects, has already floated tenders to buy locomotives from India.

"The projects to construct an overpass at Jurain rail crossing and a road between Ramgarh and Sabroom (Tripura's southern border town) are waiting for Ecneec's approval," said Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain.

Meanwhile, India agreed to hold the Joint Boundary Working Group on November 10 and 11 in New Delhi after repeated requests from Bangladesh.

Although both the PM's agreed to amicably resolve maritime boundary dispute, there has been no serious attempt in the last 10 months.

India agreed to sign an interim agreement on sharing of Teesta water and Bangladesh handed over a draft agreement, but there is no such move has been made from the Indian side to ink the deal.

On the other hand, killings of Bangladeshi citizens by the Indian Border Security Force are still on, although there have been some improvements in curbing cross-border crimes.

As per the communiqué, Bangladesh in July signed a 35-year power transmission deal with India aiming to import 250MW electricity, starting from late 2012.

But an agreement, to provide Nepal and Bhutan access to Mongla and Chittagong ports, supposed to be signed between India and Bangladesh, is also pending.

One held with 2.5kg gunpowder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested a suspected criminal with around two and a half kilograms of gunpowder at Kamrangirchar in the city on Friday night.

The arrested was identified as Md Bidyut, 22, of Zazira

upazila in Shariatpur. Officer-in-Charge Shafique Sikdar of Kamrangirchar Police Station told The Daily Star that, acting on a tip off, they arrested Bidyut in front of Rony Market at Rasulpur around 10:30pm and recovered the gunpowder from his possession.

On primary interrogation, Bidyut said his uncle gave him the gunpowder to make bombs so that he (Bidyut) could use and supply those in Zazira.

Police said Bidyut is wanted in three cases under explosive act with the Zazira Police Station in Shariatpur.



Former adviser to the caretaker government Rokia Afzal Rahman speaks at a CSR presentation meeting at a hotel in the port city of Chittagong yesterday.

Extend CSR activities to boost edn, end poverty

Speakers tell meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Businesspersons should widen the periphery of activities under corporate social responsibilities to boost education, free environment from pollution and alleviate poverty in the country.

Speakers told this to CSR presentation meeting held at a hotel in Chittagong city yesterday.

Management and Resource Development Initiative (MRDI) in association with Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) organised the meeting with the business community of Chittagong.

Rokia Afzal Rahman, former adviser to the caretaker government and president of Bangladesh Employers' Federation, attended the meeting as the chief guest.

Rokia said businesspersons should

have responsibilities towards the society since they make profit through businesses in the society. She urged the businesses to adopt CSR, as it helps build a company's image and reputation, consequently increasing profit.

A lot of sectors in Bangladesh need more intervention of the corporate houses, Rokia said. She stressed the need for developing a culture in the country to encourage businesses to be more socially responsible. Rokia also sought policy support from the government in this regard.

Bangladesh Bank General Manager, Chittagong, Mohammad Naushad Ali Chowdhury, and National Board of Revenue (NBR) Member, Jahan Ara Siqueqi, were special guests at the seminar moderated by The Financial Express Editor Moazzem Hossain.

NBR Member Jahan Ara said the

government has relaxed some conditions for the corporate houses with a view to encouraging CSR. Businesses can get 10 percent tax rebate by spending a certain amount of money on CSR, according to a revised statutory regulatory order (SRO) issued on July 1.

BB GM Naushad Ali said the central bank is taking proactive measures to promote CSR.

Proper utilisation of CSR fund can be a key factor in eliminating poverty, said Moazzem Hossain in the closing remarks. He sought a working definition of CSR in the context of Bangladesh, pointing to the necessity to differentiate among CSR, philanthropy and charity.

Local investors, officials of Chittagong Income Tax Department and media houses participated in the seminar and MRDI Executive Director Hasibur Rahman made the address of welcome.

'72pc adult smokers influenced by peers'

UNB, Dhaka

More than 72 percent of smokers aged between 26 and 40 get the addiction being influenced, mostly by friends and peers, a study reveals.

Findings show nearly 45 percent of the smokers have got into the habit for more than 20 years with only about 10 percent smoking for less than 5 years.

A group of Chittagong Medical College students conducted the study on the smoking habit of male in four villages of Mirsharai in Chittagong.

More than half the respondents totaling 248 were reportedly smokers, a quarter non-smokers and the remaining 15.3 percent ex-smokers.

The study says 60 percent of the respondents were stimulated by friends and peers, and less than a quarter by influences from seniors and neighbours.

Half the smokers know smoking causes cancer. Smoking in public places is prohibited is known to about 80 percent of the respondents.

More than half of the ex-smokers kicked the habit after they had diseases, and 13.1 percent were encouraged by doctor's advice, 7.7 percent by family advice when 7.9 percent quit smoking for religious cause.

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Country sanctuary of criminals: BNP

UNB, Dhaka

Opposition BNP leaders yesterday blamed the government for turning the country into a sanctuary of criminals.

They were speaking at a rally organised by Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal, the labour front of BNP, at Muktangan in the city.

The rally was organised to protest the filing of cases against the BNP leaders including Sramik Dal President Nazrul Islam Khan accusing him of instigating the torching of railway carriages following the October 11 train accident in Sirajganj.

BNP Standing Committee member MK Anwar MP said there is no place for good people in the country.

He said Sheikh Hasina's government has turned the country into a sanctuary of criminals - extortionist, 'bajikor', grabbers and tender manipulators.

Anwar blamed the PM for the present sorry state of the country.

He said some 6,600 cases, which were filed against Awami League leaders and workers, including 12 against Hasina, have been withdrawn by the government. "As a result, some one lakh identified killers have returned to the society."

Describing the misrule of the 22-month-old Awami

League government, the former Minister said the situation has become such that there is no alternative to movement.

He said the ruling Awami League resorted to the course of repression on the BNP leaders and workers in a bid to reintroduce one-party Baksal.

Anwar warned that no external force can keep the ruling party in power. One day the people will remove the present government and the BNP will come to power when fresh investigation of each crime will take place, he told the rally.

Addressing the demonstration as the chief guest, BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain said the government, which exploits people after coming to power making false commitments before the election, would have serious consequences.

He said the party in power has not fulfilled any of its pre-election pledges. Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia said the government will have to take the responsibility as the PM is "pushing the country to confrontation, terrorism and killing."

Sadeq Hossain Khoka, Jafrul Hasan, Majibur Rahman Sarwar MP and Anwar Hossain also spoke at the rally with Sramik Dal Senior Vice-president Abul Kashem Chowdhury in the chair.

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