



PHOTO: PID, PMO

Indian National Congress President Sonia Gandhi calls on President Zillur Rahman at Bangabhaban and holds meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on the sidelines of a conference on autism at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in the city yesterday.

Cooperation in spirit of mutual respect, says Sonia

UNB, Dhaka

Indian ruling Congress party President Sonia Gandhi yesterday said Bangladesh and India can cooperate with each other in the spirit of mutual respect and equality for greater common good of people of the two countries.

"That is what Indira Gandhi would have wanted and this is what I hope we will constantly endeavour to do," she said while receiving "Bangladesh Freedom Honour" on behalf of her mother-in-law at a function at Bangabhaban.

Sonia Gandhi said Bangladesh is ahead of India in areas critical to the quality of life.

She mentioned Bangladesh's achievement in universal immunisation of infants, significant reduction in infant and child mortality, higher level of female secondary education and a longer life expectancy.

Receiving the award, she said, "If Indira Gandhi could have been with us now, I know she would have been overwhelmed by the high honour you have bestowed on her."

The quality Indira Gandhi prized above all else was fearlessness. This was a quality which her father Jawaharlal Nehru and the father of India Mahatma Gandhi inculcated in Indira Gandhi's mind and which she cherished throughout her life, said Sonia.

"Courage and Indira Gandhi were synonymous. Never was this courage more manifest, never was it more tested, than in the months from March to December 1971 when Bangladesh was being born," she said.

"A free Bangladesh was your victory, but also her (Indira's) finest hour," she said.

Hasina, Sonia for regional move to root out militancy, terrorism

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Indian National Congress President Sonia Gandhi yesterday expressed unanimous opinion about concerted efforts among the South Asian nations to root out militancy and terrorism from the region.

The two South Asian leaders came up with the identical views when they had a meeting at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in the afternoon on the sidelines of the two-day regional conference on autism.

Briefing newsmen after the meeting, PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad said Hasina and Sonia discussed wide range of bilateral issues of development including poverty alleviation from the region.

On counter terrorism, the two leaders said militancy and terrorism is such a problem that can not be eradicated by a single country or a nation. They emphasised that combined efforts are needed to root out the problem.

They described the existing friendly relations between Bangladesh and India as "very excellent" and hoped that the bilateral relations will be stronger

ened in the future.

Ambassador at Large M Ziauddin, Principal Secretary to the PM MA Karim, PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad and Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Rajeev Mitter were present at the meeting.

SONIA MEETS ZILLUR

Meanwhile, Sonia paid a courtesy call on President Zillur Rahman at Bangabhaban in the afternoon.

She told the president that she was deeply grateful to the way people of Bangladesh have honoured posthumously her mother-in-law. She hoped that the existing excellent relations between Bangladesh and India would be deeper in the days to come.

Echoing her sentiment, Zillur said the relations between the two countries would be further improved by her visit.

He recalled the turbulent days of Bangladesh's War of Liberation of 1971 when Indira extended her cooperation by providing shelter to Bangalee refugees.

"We're very pleased to confer the 'Bangla-

des Freedom Honour' upon Indira Gandhi," he added.

BEACON OF HOPE

Earlier, Zillur said Indira remains as a beacon of hope and strength to Bangladesh to build the country as a true Sonar Bangla.

He said she had inspired millions of Bangladeshis and Indians to fight against all oppression and injustices.

"Even after 40 years, she remains as a beacon of hope and strength to all of us who aspire to make Bangladesh a true Sonar Bangla," the president said as he conferred posthumous Bangladesh Swadhinata Sammanona (freedom honour) on the slain Indian prime minister at an impressive event at Bangabhaban.

He handed over the award to Sonia, daughter-in-law of late Indira Gandhi.

Zillur deeply appreciated Sonia for her gracious gesture in accepting the "Bangladesh Swadhinata Sammanona" on Indira Gandhi's behalf.

SHEIKH HASINA

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday described Indira as a true and great friend of Bangladesh, its people and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

"At the call of Bangabandhu, she withdrew Indian soldiers within three months of the independence of Bangladesh.

"That was a unique and rare gesture of Mrs Indira Gandhi," said Hasina at a special ceremony at Bangabhaban.

Recalling the eventful days of Bangladesh's War of Liberation in 1971, she said Indira Gandhi travelled the world seeking support for the independence of Bangladesh.

She also sought support to save the life of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who was facing capital punishment in a Pakistani jail at that time, she said.

She paid deep homage to Indian soldiers of Bangladesh-India Friendship Forces who were martyred in the War of Liberation.

The premier expressed her personal gratitude to the Indian government and Indira Gandhi for providing shelter to her younger sister Sheikh Rehana and her family after Bangabandhu was assassinated in 1975 along with most of his family.

"That was really an invaluable support of Mrs Gandhi like a guardian that was extended to us during our time of distress. We are delighted to honour her (Indira Gandhi) with our highest award," she said.

Citing a friend's role

Following is the translated text of the citation in honour of late Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi:

The people of Bangladesh hold in mind with deep appreciation the incomparable contribution of the great Indian leader Shrimati Indira Gandhi and the Indian people. Since the beginning of the Liberation War that broke out following the call of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Smt Indira Gandhi firmly stood for Bangladesh and its people fighting for independence even in the face of opposition and threats from several international quarters.

When in 1971 the Pakistani military junta employed its maximum strength to suppress the spirit and rights of freedom of the Bangladeshi people and when the existence of the nation was threatened, India sheltered more than one crore refugees, gave the Bangladesh government an opportunity to work freely, supported freedom fighters, initiated all possible

efforts to free Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from a Pakistani prison, undertook diplomatic measures to draw international support in favour of the Liberation War, and, finally, quickened the freedom of Bangladesh at the risk of engaging itself in a war.

The history of the Liberation War remains incomplete without citing the unswerving support and cooperation and the outstanding role and other contributions of the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. It is for her solid and brave stance for the Liberation War from the very beginning to the end that our victory was quickened. It is for that reason the homecoming of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was possible so promptly.

As a symbol of the highest veneration and appreciation of the people and the government of Bangladesh, Smt. Indira Gandhi has been conferred with "Bangladesh Freedom Honour" (posthumously) today, Shrawan 10, 1418 Bangla Calendar/ July 25, 2011, AD.



2 electrocuted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two people were electrocuted in separate incidents at Sutrapur and Gulshan in the city yesterday.

The victims were identified as Monirul Islam, 26, machine operator of Biku Press at Farashganj under Sutrapur police station and Mohammad Zainal, 35, a security guard of a house at Road No #99, Gulshan-2.

Sutrapur PS Sub-Inspector (SI) Jamshedul Alam said at around 9:00am yesterday Monirul Islam came in contact with a hanging live wire while he was cleaning motor of the press. He was taken to National Medical College Hospital and shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the on-duty doctors declared him dead.

Meanwhile, Zainal was found lying unconscious in the generator room on the ground floor of a six-storey building. He was rushed to DMCH where doctors declared him dead around 2.20pm.

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July 2011

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