

# India has to be liberal

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This is the first ever visit by any Bangladesh premier to this state after the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971.

The Bangladesh leader also held talks with Indian Vice President Hamid Ansari.

Hundreds of banners and placards were set up throughout Agartala to welcome Hasina. Thousands of people, many of whom are originally from Bangladesh but are now settled in Agartala, waited in long queues on different city streets to see her. Important speeches of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1971 were played at different places.

People of all strata gave a hearty welcome to the Bangladesh prime minister amidst unprecedented security measures put in place by the central and state governments.

In her address, Hasina said Indo-Bangla cooperation and relations had got a new dimension after her 2010 visit to New Delhi and Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh's Dhaka visit last year.

Hasina, president of the ruling Awami League, said both the countries now had a strong political will to better their bilateral relations. She urged the businessmen of the countries to come forward to give the willpower "a real shape for the mutual benefit of their people".

The premier requested the local businessmen to import more goods from Bangladesh and called upon Indian entrepreneurs to make large scale investments in Bangladesh.

Saying that poverty was the common enemy of the region, Hasina opined that it was possible to root out poverty if both the countries expanded business between them and strengthened bilateral relations.

Hasina said the fate of the people of Bangladesh and India, particularly of the northeastern part, was tied up with the same string and "poverty is the main impediment to their development".

She further said the main focus should be on improving the living conditions of people, and it could be

achieved together.

Referring to various important bilateral decisions during her India visit and the one to Dhaka by Manmohan Singh, she said these had heralded a new era of cooperation in the areas of border demarcation, water management, trade and commerce, communication and development of infrastructure and power sectors.

A better communications system might play an important role in improving ties between the two next-door neighbours, she added.

Hasina said the geographical location of Bangladesh is very important for improving regional road, rail, water and air links, especially in terms of better communication between the Indian north-eastern states, and Nepal and Bhutan.

The premier said the Bangladesh government had taken a decision to establish a rail link between Akhaura and Agartala, and construct a bridge on Feni river as carrying of cargo for the construction of power plant at Palatana in Tripura has mounted pressure on the existing infrastructure.

Besides, a decision has been taken to build a new land port at Sagrom-Ramgarh point, she said.

Hasina revealed that necessary steps were being taken for a border haat on the Bangladesh-Tripura border to help producers of both countries in selling their products at fair prices.

The prime minister said steps were being taken to remove non-tariff barriers. Officials of the two countries were working together to improve the existing facilities at the land ports and land-duty ports and other physical infrastructure on both sides.

She thanked the Indian prime minister for allowing duty-free access for 46 categories of Bangladeshi garment items to the Indian market in the first phase and later all types of items under Safta rules.

"The access has created an opportunity for Bangladeshi goods to compete with Indian products."

She said Bangladesh and Tripura shared a long common history, language and culture and their ethnicity

and values are almost the same. The bond got impetus during Bangladesh's War of Liberation.

At the time, she recalled, the people of Tripura had given shelter to millions of Bangladeshi refugees and helped them with food, clothing and shelter.

"Many of our valiant freedom fighters are lying in eternal rest in the soil of Tripura, she said, recalling their supreme contributions to Bangladesh's independence.

In his remarks, Tripura Chief Minister Manik Sarkar said everyone wanted well established relations between Bangladesh and India and it did not matter if a state was small or big.

He said that to achieve this stature, everybody would have to see the relations on the basis of equality. As a big state India has to sacrifice a bit more than Bangladesh to attain the well established relations.

Manik Sarkar said the central government would have to take realistic steps rather than verbal initiatives to strengthen relations with Bangladesh. It would benefit both the countries.

"I hope the central government will take quick and meaningful initiatives to this end shortly," he said, adding that a new horizon had

already begun to define ties between the two countries.

The Tripura chief minister also said some people in both India and Bangladesh did not want good relations to be established between the two neighbours.

There are also some international forces which did not want to see the two countries moving forward closely, he said. He urged all to remain alert so that none could harm the Dhaka-Delhi friendly relations.

"The leadership of the two countries must be more careful to this end," he observed.

He said cooperation from Bangladesh was necessary for the overall development of the northeastern states of India.

Indian Union Minister for Human Resource Development Kapil Sibal, Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, FBCCI President AK Azad, Confederation of Indian Industries chief Shekhor Datta and Tripura Industries and Commerce Minister Jitendra Chaudhury also spoke on the occasion.

Earlier, Governor of Tripura Dr DY Patil and Chief Minister Manik Sarkar separately called on the prime minister at the State Guest House of Tripura.

Later, PM's Press

Secretary Abul Kalam Azad briefed newsmen on the day's events.

Hasina thanked the people of Tripura for erecting a statue of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and developing a Mukti Joddha Park.

Both the governor and the chief minister praised the visionary leadership of Hasina and hoped that relations between the two countries, especially with Tripura, would further be enhanced in the days to come.

Kapil Sibal also called on Hasina at the same venue. During the meeting, the issue of water sharing of the Teesta river and Tipaimukh Dam came up prominently.

The prime minister called for a joint initiative in water management and river training.

UNB adds: Hasina at night had talks with Indian Vice-President Hamid Ansari at Rajbhaban here. She stressed a speedy implementation of the deals signed between Bangladesh and India.

After the half-an-hour-long meeting, PM's Press Secretary Azad told reporters that Ansari welcomed Hasina's visit to Tripura and said real development could not be achieved without mutual cooperation.

# WB to inform decision

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mentation of the Padma Bridge. We are still in discussions with the government on whether this can be ensured, and I would expect a decision before end-January on whether to proceed.

"Today's meeting with the finance minister was to brief him on my visit to Washington and seek his views on the way forward," she added.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith told reporters last evening that the fund release was awaiting the World Bank president's decision following recent changes the government has made in the management of the Padma Bridge project implementation.

He too said that the government expects the bank's decision within this month.

However, he told reporters, "There is no scope to talk more on this now."

Ellen Goldstein went to Washington last month and returned to Dhaka on Tuesday. In Washington, she held meetings with the high officials of the bank about the government's recent steps regarding implementation of the Padma Bridge project.

A finance ministry official said Goldstein also held a meeting with Economic Relations Division Secretary Iqbal Mahmud upon her return to Dhaka.

In September, the bank made allegations of corruption against former communications minister Syed Abul Hossain and his family business Sahco and suspended the fund for the Padma Bridge.

The bank was supposed to provide \$1.2 billion of the \$2.9 billion earmarked for the project.

Later, the government moved Abul Hossain to another ministry from the communications ministry. It also changed the director of the Padma Bridge project.

The finance ministry official said even though the changes had already been made, the bank would only lift the suspension of fund when it was sure that the fund would be used properly and there would be no scope for corruption.

Yesterday the finance minister said the World Bank president was out on holiday. He would return to work in a couple of days and then he might decide on the fund.

The finance minister said five pre-qualified bidders were finally selected for construction of the main bridge. The bank had even approved the selection but later the fund got suspended.

Muhith said the government proposed to start the work from this stage since

there had been no allegations of corruption with the selection of pre-qualified bidders.

He said if the bank gave the nod, the government would seek final proposals from the pre-qualified bidders.

The finance minister said the work of the main bridge could not be started in this dry season, adding that the government wanted to start the work in the next dry season.

Muhith said the Canadian government was investigating whether any graft had taken place in the process of appointing a consultant firm for supervising the bridge construction. He said the World Bank hoped that the Canadian government would submit its probe report to the bank this month.

Muhith said delays in appointing a consultant firm would not be a problem as the government wanted to appoint the contractor for the main bridge first and had made a proposal to the bank to this effect.

The Anti-Corruption Commission too has been investigating allegations of graft in the Padma Bridge project and will submit its report within a week to the government and the World Bank, the finance minister said.

## BNP talked

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the caretaker government issue beyond the agenda," he told newsmen at Media Centre of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

Ashraf, also the LGRD minister, said, "We started war crimes trial earlier as part of our election pledges. We brought former Jamaat-e-Islami ameer Ghulam Azam to book on charges of war crimes."

"Today is an important day for us as Ghulam Azam-- the main mastermind of the killings of 30 lakh Bangladeshis during the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971-- is now behind bars," he said.

The Awami League-led grand alliance government would complete the war criminals trial during its five-year tenure, the minister said. He also expressed hope that the key war criminals would be tried within the shortest possible time.

Ashraf also thanked people for casting their votes for Awami League in the last general elections.

Replying to a query, he said a delegation of Awami League led by Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, one of party's senior presidium members and deputy leader of the House, would take part in the dialogue with the president scheduled for today.

The other AL team members are: Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed, Abdul Jalil, Suranjit Sengupta, advocate Yusuf Hussain Humayun, Begum Matia Chowdhury, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, advocate Sahara Kharun, Kazi Zafarullah, Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Obaidul Quader, Syed Ashraf Islam, Mohammad Nasim and Hasan Mahmud.

Selim and AL Deputy Office Secretary Mirinal Kanti Das were present at the press briefing.

## Petrobangla in a hurry

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The Petrobangla has not responded to their requests.

The government aims at importing LNG containers from Qatar -- 500 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) - - which is equivalent to the current gas supply deficit of the country.

The containers will be unloaded at an LNG terminal in Maheshkhali from where the gas will be transmitted to the national grid in Chittagong through an 80-kilometre pipeline. If implemented, it will give Bangladesh energy sector an alternative solution.

As part of the tender, the Petrobangla today sits with

four bidders to discuss various issues. It will take the bidders to Maheshkhali to show them the project site.

The government floated the tender for setting up the LNG terminal in 2010 and in January last year, 10 companies submitted prequalification documents. The tender could not proceed properly due to wrong selection of project consultant under the World Bank's finance. The matter was resolved in July last year by changing the consultant.

Back then, Petrobangla Chairman Hussain Monsur had told The Daily Star that he expected to award the

contract in December last year. But now, the Petrobangla is aiming at March to have the terminal installed in the next 18 months.

The four companies which were prequalified for the tender are: Golar LNG Energy Management of Singapore, joint venture of Astra Oil (Netherlands) and Excelerate (USA), Samsung of South Korea and Hiranandi Pvt Co of India with Hoegh LNG, Norway.

Bangladesh sent a team twice to Qatar to make a primary agreement on LNG supply at a concessional rate. Qatar has assured

Bangladesh of the supply, but declined to give any concession. It has also told Bangladesh that it would sign an agreement when Bangladesh's infrastructure is ready to take the LNG.

The floating terminal is likely to cost around \$300 million, which has to be arranged by the selected bidder itself.

Although the cost of imported LNG would be three to four times that of local gas, the government has taken the initiative to ensure energy security of the country. Mixing of the imported LNG with local gas would help reduce the total cost, sources said.

# MP Shaon not charged

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activist Golam Mostafa Shimul, Mazharul Islam Mithu and Nur Hossain Munna. All the accused are now on bail.

CID filed the murder charges with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court of Dhaka naming 43 people as prosecution witnesses. The charges have been filed in a murder case lodged with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station on September 2 in 2010.

Jubo League leader Ibrahim received a bullet fired from a licensed pistol

of MP Shaon in the parliament complex on August 13, 2010.

Driver Kala filed an unnatural death case the following day with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station claiming that the gun went off when Ibrahim was handling it in the law-maker's car.

Ibrahim's wife Rina Islam had made several attempts to file a case with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station but failed.

Six days later the deceased's brother Masum sued Shaon and seven others in a murder case

filed with the CMM court.

The seven are Shaon's bodyguard Delwar, driver Kala, Mazharul Islam Mithu, Mizan, and their aides Jibon, Riton and Alam.

Mithu is the owner of the microbus that carried Ibrahim's body to Dhaka Medical College Hospital while Mizan drove the vehicle to the hospital.

According to the case statement, Ibrahim had become more popular than Shaon in Bhola-3 constituency and the accused felt threatened by this. They did not want

him to succeed in his political career and that is why Shaon called him over the phone and asked him to give up his dream of becoming the councillor of a ward of Dhaka City Corporation.

Masum claimed that the accused killed Ibrahim and later filed the unnatural death case to divert the investigation in another direction.

Despite repeated efforts, The Daily Star could not reach Ibrahim's wife over the phone last night for her comment about the charge sheet.

# Restore caretaker, then form EC

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president unfruitful and said the president had informed them about his constitutional limitations on the caretaker government issue.

"I am bound by the constitution. I have no jurisdiction beyond constitutional powers," acting BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir quoted the president as saying.

"He [the president], however, has assured us that he will convey our demands and proposals to the government," Alamgir said at a press conference at the party's Naya Paltan office in the capital.

The caretaker government system was scrapped on June 30 last year through the 15th amendment to the constitution.

The president's ongoing dialogue with political parties draws to an end through talks with the ruling Awami League today.

"The opposition has shown a positive gesture by participating in the talks with the president. Such a positive response from the opposition is the first of its kind since the restoration of democracy in the country in 1990," the BNP leader told The Daily Star after the briefing.

"And now it is the government that should show a positive attitude toward meeting our demands."

Referring to experts' opinions relating to a now-defunct parliamentary special committee on constitutional amendments, Khaleda told the president that all the experts had

talked in favour of the caretaker government system. They said the country was yet to reach a situation where polls could be held under a political government.

The BNP chief also told him that her party was ready to participate in talks to resolve the political standoff arising out of the abrogation of the caretaker government system.

Fakhrul said the BNP had mostly discussed caretaker government-related issues during the talks. "We did not show any interest in discussing the formation of a new Election Commission."

He said the BNP delegation drew the president's attention to repression on opposition leaders and activists, and the filing of "false cases" against them.

They called upon the president to take the initiative in creating a congenial atmosphere for politics in the country.

The party also spoke against the use of electronic voting machines in the general elections. In support of its argument, it cited examples from six countries, including the USA, Germany, Finland, the United Kingdom and Ireland, where the use of EVM had been stopped on different grounds.

It may be mentioned that the president on December 22 last year began a dialogue with political parties to discuss the constitution of a new Election Commission. The tenure of the current commission expires on February 14.

Interested candidates may apply with detailed Curriculum-Vitae along with a cover letter, 2 (two) copies of recent colored passport size photo, attested copies of all educational certificates, experience certificates, national identity card/nationality certificate, freedom fighter's certificate of parents (if applicable) and a Bank draft/Pay order/Postal order of Tk. 200/- (Two hundred) for Sl. No. 1 to 2 & Tk. 100/- (One hundred) for Sl. No. 3 to 12 in favour of Dhaka Electric Supply Company Ltd. (DESCO). Applications are to be submitted in closed envelope to reach the General Manager (Administration), Dhaka Electric Supply Company Ltd. (DESCO) at House # 03, Road # 24, Block-K, Banani Model Town, Dhaka-1213, Bangladesh latest by 31/01/2012 during office hours. Candidates having higher educational qualification against respective posts need not apply. Please mention the name of post on the top left side of the envelope. Only short-listed candidate(s) will be called for written test/interview. Candidates in service should apply through Proper Channel.

Date: January 11, 2012  
Memo No. DESCO/HQ/ADMIN-A(7)/R-7/2012/

(Md. Shafiqul Islam Chowdhury)  
General Manager (Administration)