

PM hopes Nepal would be able to overcome crisis

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed her best wishes for the new government of Nepal, saying the new administration would be able to materialise the hopes and aspirations of the people and guide the nation towards greater prosperity.

Congratulating the new government, the PM said Bangladesh is ready to assist Nepal in alleviating the people's sufferings caused by this year's earthquake and recent blockade.

Hasina said this when outgoing Nepalese ambassador Hari Kumar Shrestha made a courtesy call on the PM at her Tejgaon office.

She hoped that Nepal would soon be able to overcome the crisis caused by the earthquake in April last and the reconstruction of the country would be completed properly, PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim told reporters after the meeting.

Hasina said she always pointed out the importance of Nepal and Bhutan while talking about any regional issue with India.

Renewing her offer to Nepal to use Saidpur Airport, Chittagong and Mongla ports for the transportation of goods, the PM said Saidpur Airport can be used as a regional one, particularly by Nepal, for carrying goods.

In this regard, Hasina also said Osmani International Airport in Sylhet can be used by the people of Indian state of Assam.

Stressing the need for strengthening the regional cooperation among the Saarc countries, she said more exchange of visits at the highest level is important to boost ties in the region.

The PM recalled Nepal's support to the Liberation War of Bangladesh.

The outgoing envoy conveyed greetings of the new Nepalese president and prime minister to Hasina and handed over her their two letters.

PM's International Affairs Adviser Gowher Rizvi and PMO Secretary Suraiya Begum were present on the occasion.

Life led by his heart

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had nothing to take pride in. I am talking about something that grows from love, care and patience, something that inspires you at the same time."

That very moment, an interesting idea struck him. He decided to drive all his depression away using a bicycle he had bought for Tk 600 five years earlier, as an escape route.

To help his cause, he started to decorate and take care of it with all his heart.

"Love makes all the difference, and for me it came in the form of cup-shaped brass bells," said the man in a white genji and striped lungi.

"Brass is durable, never goes rusty, and keeps shining like gold as long as someone is there to polish it," explained an excited Hamid.

A total of 57 such cups -- each weighing over 400gm -- have been used to adorn the bicycle, which has been painted in red, grey, black and blue to give a look that would contrast with the golden-looking cups.

Atop some cups, there are brass cones and other decorative items such as sail-boat model.

So far, this unique hobby has cost him Tk 17,500 but the pleasure and compliments he has received are priceless, Hamid said with glittering eyes.

He recalled one of such compliments came from an owner of a motorcycle.

"Nobody bothers to look at my Tk 2.10 lakh motorcycle. But your bicycle steals peoples' attention," Hamid quoted the man as saying.

Such feeling of having something so unique inspired him to move forward in life, leaving all his pain behind, he claimed.

Apart from his style of beating the odds, there is a major reason why he has earned respect of people around him.

He has set an example of becoming solvent through nothing but hard work.

But his journey was not smooth.

When he was just 10, his step-mother forced him to board a Dhaka-bound train in Thakurgaon. Working

as an assistant to cooks at different city restaurants for the next two years, he became a rickshaw-puller later.

He drove rented rickshaws on Dhaka streets for half a decade afterwards.

But interestingly, within three years of his marriage, he bought three rickshaws with the money he saved. He had bought 27 rickshaws by the time he was the father of four. He opened the garage soon after.

To travel between his home and garage, he bought the bicycle 20 years ago, when his business was at its peak.

He said all his hard work paid off as most of his children are now doing well. His eldest son, Abdul Alim, 31, runs a rent-a-car business, with three cars of his own.

Hamid considered his second son, Alam Hossain, 29, a rickshaw puller, a "looser and drug addict".

However, his third son, Mohammad Raju, 27, owns a mini-truck. And Hamid's only daughter is married to a Bangladeshi expatriate working in Malaysia.

Though not divorced, he has been estranged from his wife for the last three years.

Today, he owns six rickshaws.

"I refuse to receive even a nickel from them. I am happy with what I have got," said Hamid.

An important lesson Hamid claimed to have learned from life is greed has opened up the society to corruption, envy and hatred while bonds between human beings made on values have become weaker.

Hamid is happy that greed failed to motivate him.

"It's because I don't forget to love and care. That is something what is retaining the strength and beauty of my bicycle as well," said the man who had two of his upper teeth missing. Otherwise, he seems absolutely fit even in this age.

"Everything, including the condition of this country, would have been different if we could stay away from greed. The country would have been like my beautiful bicycle," he said.



After staying in the office of Bangladesh Truck and Covered Van Drivers Union for around three hours, Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Annisul Huq leaves the scene escorted by law enforcers at Tejgaon in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Eviction drive sparks

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While the violent protest continued on the streets, Annisul was holding talks with transport leaders inside the office of Bangladesh Truck and Covered Van Drivers Union.

Coming out of the office around 4:50pm, he vowed to continue the eviction drive in line with his pledge to make Dhaka a better city.

"We will not quit. We will continue the eviction drive to ease people's sufferings in the area," he told reporters.

The drive was meant to create more space inside the terminal so that truckers do not need to park vehicles on the road, he added.

On November 8, after a meeting with transport owners and leaders at the terminal, Annisul asked the truck owners to clear the illegal structures from the terminal by November 27.

Over the last few days, a significant portion of the terminal has been cleared of illegal establishments. Even the owners had been helping the city authorities, locals said.

The terminal was built about six decades ago, they said, adding that the Bangladesh Railway owns most of the terminal land.

The terminal is meant for parking vehicles, but over time, some people set up various illegal structures, including shops, markets, garages and workshops.

Earlier this month, Annisul said, "The railway did not lease its land to anyone. Those structures at the terminal are illegal."

As much of the terminal space has been occupied by grabbers, many vehicles are parked on the nearby road, obstructing traffic.

Rustam Ali Khan, general secretary of Bangladesh Truck Covered Van Owners Association, said most of the places are occupied by shops and restaurants, which has reduced parking space.

Now, 200 to 250 trucks can be parked there. After demolition of the illegal structures, there will be room for 700 to 800 vehicles, he said.

At one point of yesterday's drive, a bulldozer of the city corporation smashed a covered van parked inside the terminal, workers alleged, saying that this prompted them to take to the streets.

Later, they started hurling bricks at the bulldozers.

In response, police opened fire and also baton-charged the crowd in efforts to bring the situation under control,

said Abu Bakar, an employee of a workshop at the terminal.

The injured -- Badruddoza, 51, Jasimuddin, 40, and Masum, 25 -- were taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

They sustained pellet injuries in different parts of their bodies, sources said.

Jasimuddin told this correspondent that he was just watching the eviction drive when a bullet hit him.

Contacted, Biplob Sarker, deputy commissioner (Tejgaon division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said cops fired three blank shots to disperse the demonstrators.

According to him, it is unlikely that anyone was injured in police firing; rather the brick chips hurled by the protesters might cause injuries to some.

Khaleda seeks bail today in Niko case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will surrender before a Dhaka court today and seek bail in the 2007 Niko corruption case.

The Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case in December that year, bringing charges against Khaleda and several others of abusing power to award a gas exploration and extraction deal to Canadian company Niko when she was prime minister between 2001 and 2006.

The BNP chief will appear before the Special Judge Court-9 of Dhaka at 11:30am, Khaleda's panel lawyer Sanauullah Miah confirmed yesterday.

The anti-graft body pressed charges against Khaleda and 10 others in May 2008. Two months later the High Court stayed the proceedings of the case.

On June 18 this year, the HC cleared the way for the trial proceedings to resume and ordered Khaleda to surrender before the trial court within two months after a copy of the HC verdict reached it.

BNP leaders Moudud Ahmed, AKM Mosharraf Hossain, former acting energy secretary Khandaker Shahidul Islam and Kashem Sharif, vice-president (South Asia) of Niko Resources Bangladesh Ltd, are also accused in the case.



Gowher Rizvi, a special adviser to the prime minister, speaking at a discussion on "18th Anniversary of the CHT Accord: Right and Realities of Local People" at The Daily Star Centre yesterday. National Human Rights Commission Chairman Mizanur Rahman, far right, Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghaty Samity President Santu Larma, second from right, and Raja Devasish Roy, left, look on.

PHOTO: STAR

Be patient, have faith

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(PCJSS) and also chairman of the CHT regional council, said Ziaur Rahman had brought around half a million people into the region from outside the CHT for islamisation and militarisation of the region. He said those processes were still going on.

Although the government finalised the amendment of CHT land commission bill, it could not place it in parliament due to opposition from a vested quarter, Santu Larma said, adding that that vested quarter is making tourism facilities encroaching upon indigenous people's land.

Professor Mizanur Rahman, chairman of the National Human Rights Commission, said it was shameful for a government not to implement an accord after signing it.

Speaking as a special guest, he said that after detailed discussion with indigenous people, the NHRC came to know that the ownership of land was the most crucial issue there and it was seriously threatening the social harmony between the indigenous and Bengali-speaking people.

Prof Rahman requested the adviser to convey this message to the government.

Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, said arrogance of the majority was increasing in the society and it would bring suffering to everyone.

"It is regrettable that violence against women was happening all over the country. But violence against women in the CHT was happening to actually grab indigenous people's land," she said.

No development will help people if the

government cannot ensure the safety and security of its citizens, she said.

Barrister Debasish Roy, king of the Chakma circle, said the government "does not have a policy for indigenous people and the CHT region."

Mangal Kumar Chakma presented the keynote paper titled "18 years of CHT Peace Accord: Rights of Local People and Realities".

Among others, Professor Dr Sadeka Halim also spoke in the seminar which was moderated by Sanjeeb Drong, secretary general of Bangladesh Forum for Indigenous People.

Keep online

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Publication Act, the statement said.

The readers at home and abroad get news of the country fast from these online editions, it said.

"So, we think the online editions of the newspapers should be kept out of the online media registration process," the statement read.

The Editor's Council issued the statement as the Ministry of Information published a draft of the online policy in its website on August 6.

The draft policy spoke of operating online media through the national broadcasting commission, but the Press Information Department has begun the activities of registering online media, and the last date of applying for registration has been set to December 15.

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