



Defence in focus

Bangladesh, India to boost cooperation thru' PM's crucial four-day visit from today; no prospect of Teesta deal

REZAUL KARIM and PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

Seeking to inject fresh dynamism into Bangladesh-India ties, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina arrives in Delhi today on a four-day state visit.

While two defence deals are high on the agenda for Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi to seal during the visit, the prospect for a much-awaited Teesta water-sharing agreement gets even slimmer.

"Certainly, defence cooperation would be one of the outcomes of the visit," Indian Foreign Secretary Subrahmanyam Jaishankar told a visiting Bangladesh media delegation at the external affairs ministry in Delhi yesterday evening.

Asked about any pleasant surprises, the foreign secretary said he doesn't want to mislead anybody if the question

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Streets of DHAKA
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NIKO SIGNED bribery deals

New evidence shows how it plundered Bangladesh's natural resources by hiring consultancy firm for dirty jobs; an int'l tribunal hears a Niko case Apr 24-29 in Paris



TENGRATILA DISASTER

Niko managed to win the deal for cheap by showing the new gas field in Tengratila of Chhatak as a used one in 2003. Two huge blowouts in January and May of 2005 took place due to "faulty and negligent operation of Niko." The gas field burnt for years and eventually turned the 260 billion cubic feet (bcf) gas reserve into a vast wasteland. Bapex estimated the loss to be \$1.05b.

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and WASIM BIN HABIB

Canadian explorer Niko Resources has left behind a hard-to-miss corruption trail, showing how it won an unsolicited energy deal and dodged responsibility for the subsequent blowouts, by bribing influential people linked with the last BNP-led government.

The company, having been floated only in 1987, was so desperate that it did not even hesitate to appoint a consultancy

firm, owned by a Bangladeshi-born American, for \$4 million to handle the dirty work in Bangladesh, according to evidence obtained by The Daily Star.

Niko went on to sign another contract with the same consultancy firm, Stratum Developments Ltd, partly for disbursing the speed money among government officials. As part of the deal, Stratum would "ensure and expedite" the process of a joint venture agreement (JVA) with local explorer Bapex to develop two gas fields.

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NIKO RESOURCES LTD

PARTNERS IN BRIBERY
 NIKO RESOURCES SIGNED TWO CONTRACTS WITH A CONSULTANCY FIRM TO WIN UNSOLICITED DEAL THROUGH BRIBERY.

QASIM SHARIF

Upon a \$4m bribery deal, managing director of the consultancy firm got in touch with influentials in the then ruling BNP and government, and lured them into the Niko scam. The Bangladeshi-American was later made president of Niko Bangladesh.

AKM MOSHARRAF HOSSAIN

Selim admitted that he gave AKM Mosharraf Hossain, the state minister for energy of BNP, Tk 60 lakh. Niko pleaded guilty before a Canadian court in bribing him with a luxury SUV and trips to New York and Calgary. Mosharraf eventually resigned when the bribery news made headlines.

SELIM BHUIYAN

Picked possibly for his strategic links, businessman Selim laced together all key players in Niko's web of corruption. He was a family friend of AKM Mosharraf Hossain, then state minister for energy and mineral resources, and also knew Giasuddin Al Mamoon. He kept Tk 60 lakh for himself in lobbying fee.

GIASUDDIN AL MAMOON

Mamoon was supposed to get Tk 6 crore and another \$2,40,000 after the deal. His stake was high as he was the all important friend and business partner of Tarique Rahman. With Selim, Mamoon went to Mosharraf's house and gave him a go-ahead for Niko. He admitted to RCMP to have received cash. Selim said the sum was Tk 1.8cr.

TIMELINE

- 1997:** Niko enters Bangladesh, takes part in second round gas block bidding, but fails
- 1998:** Niko submits unsolicited proposal to develop Chhatak and Feni gas fields
- July 27, 1999:** Niko signs a \$4 million "consultancy agreement" with Stratum

- August 1999:** A framework of understanding signed between Niko and Bapex for identifying abandoned gas fields
- October 1, 1999:** Niko and Stratum sign a "management services contact"

SCAN THIS QR CODE TO WATCH VIDEO

THIS IS A PART OF INTERVIEW GIASUDDIN AL MAMOON, A CLOSE FRIEND OF TARIQUE RAHMAN, SENIOR VICE CHAIRMAN OF BNP, GIVEN TO ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE (RCMP) ON NOVEMBER 7 AND 8, 2008.

Star LIVE

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A fitting send-off

Tigers win Mashrafe's final T20I against SL to square the two-match series 1-1



SAKEB SUBHAN from Colombo

There were two forces at work in the tour-ending second T20I between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka at the R Premadasa International Stadium in Colombo yesterday. There was the

home team, who were determined and desperate to put a decisive marker of superiority by winning the T20I series 2-0 after 1-1 draws in the Tests and ODIs. But it was the Tigers who prevailed, and were not swayed an inch by the current of a Lasith Malinga hattrick and a

Chamara Kapugedera rally with the bat, as they honoured their departing captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza by winning his last match in the format by 45 runs, thereby coming away from the tour of Sri Lanka with an equal share of each of

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A TRIBUTE TO A LEADER OF MEN
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Teammates greet Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza after the end of the second and final T20I against Sri Lanka at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo yesterday.

Join hands to eliminate terrorism

Hasina urges Muslim countries



"Islam never allowed a Muslim to kill another Muslim or innocent people of any other religion... The killers of innocent people can never belong to Islam."

DR MOHAMMED BIN NASSER BIN MOHAMMED AL-KHUZAIM
 Vice president of two holy mosques in Makkah and Madinah told Islamic Foundation rally in Dhaka yesterday

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon Muslim countries to join hands to launch a concerted campaign to eliminate terrorism.

"Everybody who believes in peace should be united against terrorism," she told a mammoth rally of Islamic religious leaders and scholars in the city's Suhrawardy Udyan.

The programme was organised marking the 42nd founding anniversary of Islamic Foundation.

The PM said Bangladesh will be on Saudi Arabia's side as it took the initiative to fight terrorism and violent extremism in the name of Islam. She reiterated her solidarity with Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz's initiative.

Hasina said weapon producers' traders were the eventual beneficiaries of militancy at the cost of Muslims' blood.

"It's very unfortunate that Muslims are being killed by Muslims. So I hope that the initiative of the Saudi King would help make all Muslim countries aware of the fact," she added.

Vice President of two holy mosques in Makkah and Madinah Mohammed bin Nasser bin Mohammed Al-Khuzaim and Imam and Preacher of the Prophet's (SM) mosque Abdulmehsin bin Mohammad bin Abdul Rahman Al-Qasim attended the rally as special guests.

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ISLAMIC FOUNDATION RALLY

- First time in public venue
- Local guests over 2 lakh
- Foreign guests 6
- 3,000 vehicles for participants

PHOTO: AFP