

India

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"The world has become a global village. For economic development, you need connectivity. It is very, very important," she added.

Her comments came days after the Awami League formed government for a third straight term.

The PM said China, India, Bangladesh and Myanmar already signed an agreement to establish connectivity, known as Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM-EC).

"After signing that agreement, I think there is no reason to worry about the corridor for India," Hasina said.

"Rather, I feel that trade will increase," she said, adding that all these countries would benefit from it. "So connectivity for economic development is necessary."

Hasina thinks India can discuss it. And if there is any issue to worry about, it can be solved through bilateral and multilateral discussions.

She also expressed hope that the Teesta water-sharing issue would be solved.

"It depends on India, their state government and the central government," she said.

Appreciating Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his efforts, she said Modi has taken some very pragmatic steps and he supports the deal.

"But the problem lies with Didi Moni. You know that. So, I also discussed [it] with her. She agreed, but somehow, it's not materialised. But I hope that in future, it will be solved," Hasina said, in reference to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Asked about her expectation from the neighbouring countries on Rohingya issue, she said Rohingyas are a major issue for the country because more than 1 million of the refugee population is living in Bangladesh now.

"It is a big burden for us. And we want that this issue be solved immediately and these Rohingya people should get back to their own country.

"And India, as a big neighbour, I feel that they have a big role to play," she said.

Hasina said India, which has good relations with the Myanmar government, can take some pragmatic initiatives, put pressure on Myanmar or discuss the matter with Naypyidaw so that the Rohingya can return to their country.

"We need India's cooperation on this issue," Hasina.

Asked if the Saarc summit may happen this year, she said it depended on how the Pakistan PM comes forward and resolves this issue and ensures a congenial atmosphere for the summit to resume.

About the criticism on the December 30 election, the prime minister said criticism is very common thing in a democratic system.

"In our country, we have press freedom. Everybody can say and discuss. International community can criticise, but they should understand the reality," she said.

"Those who criticise us and the election, they should go to the election history of this country... they should show what wrong has been done. Then we can be cautious about it in the future," she said.

This time election atmosphere was peaceful, she said.

"We have ensured peace, harmony. We have ensured food security, education and healthcare. Now people are enjoying the benefits of our government."

"We ensured people's human rights. We always value the human rights for the people."

Human rights do not mean security or safety only, it also includes people's food security, their health security, their education, their housing and wellbeing.

"A person wants a better life. If we can do it, it means we are ensuring human rights."

Some NGOs and people are criticising, she said, adding, "As a politician, I know the criticism will be there. If you work more, you will face more criticism. That I know."

Bangladeshi shot

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Col Gazi Nahiduzzaman, commanding officer of BGB Battalion-42 in Dinajpur.

Janarul died on the spot while the others escaped unhurt, he said, adding that BSF immediately took the body away.

A 45-minute commanding officer-level meeting was held around 12:00 noon after the incident along the zero line.

In the meeting, the BGB strongly protested the killing and asked its Indian counterpart to return the body, said Lt Col Nahiduzzaman.

The BGB also urged BSF members to detain the nationals if they commit any crime on Indian land and hand them over to the BGB so that they can take actions against them in line with the country's law, he said.

The BSF, however, claimed that they were compelled to open fire on the intruders as they attacked them first. The BSF will return the body after completing formalities, said the BGB official.

On early Friday, another Bangladeshi was shot dead by the BSF on Ranishankholi border in Thakurgaon in a similar incident.

DNCC mayor polls Feb 28

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-- will also be held on February 28, Helal said.

According to the polls schedule, the last date for filing nomination papers for both in the DNCC by-polls and election to the new wards is January 30.

The returning officers will scrutinise the nomination papers on February 2, and the last date for withdrawing candidacy is February 9.

Helal said the commission announced the fresh schedule as the High Court lifted its stay orders on holding the polls.

On January 16, the court cleared the way for the DNCC by-election and election in the new wards.

The DNCC mayoral post fell vacant following the death of Annisul Huq on November 30, 2017. He was elected mayor on April 28, 2015.

On January 9 last year, the EC had declared the schedule of the DNCC by-polls and election in the new wards, setting February 26 for the voting day.

The polls were not held as the HC stayed the election schedule for six months. The court order came following filing of three writ petitions that challenged the legality of the schedule.

Helal said the EC has announced the fresh schedule of the DNCC by-polls and election to the new wards as the court earlier stayed the election schedule two days before the last date for submitting nomination papers.

He added that those who earlier collected nomination forms would have to do it again.

UPAZILA ELECTION

The EC secretary said the first phase of the upazila polls would be held on March 8 or 9. The commission will sit in a meeting on February 3 to finalise the election date, he added.

Helal said the last phase of the five-phase polls would be held after the Ramadan, which is likely to begin on May 5.

EC sources said they were planning to hold the second phase of the election on March 18, the third phase on

ACC suspends

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"Everyone is under surveillance, so officials will have to work with honesty."

Contacted, Fazlul denied the allegations.

"They [the ACC] did not bother to seek my explanation. They took a one-sided decision," he said.

"As a part of the enquiry, I asked the official to submit some necessary documents. When he came, I asked my staffer to collect it from the canteen to collect it from him [forest department official] instead," Fazlul explained.

Later, ACC Chairman Iqbal Mahmud told reporters that Fazlul was suspended for his misdeed. "He had recently been promoted [to director], and yet he was not shown mercy," he said, adding, "Anyone found to be involved in corruption will be suspended."

In another development, the ACC yesterday transferred its 36 assistant directors and 42 deputy directors to different departments.

No trace of 295

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manager of the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) last month. In the letter, it asked for information on those consignments.

Nuruzzaman said though customs officials are responsible for assessing and clearing goods, it is the port authorities' duty to load and unload, store and hand over containers to the importers.

"We have also sent a letter to the port authorities asking about the 295 consignments," he said, adding that the number of total missing consignments would be known after the probe was over.

Chittagong Port Authority Terminal Manager Saruarul Islam denied that the containers went missing.

"There is no chance of any container going missing from a restricted area such as the port... We have received a letter from the customs and have already informed it about the latest status of the containers."

Talking to this newspaper yesterday, the committee chief said they were yet to be updated on the issue.

Asked about Saruarul's claim, he said, "They [CPA] have not contacted me yet. They need to show us the containers."

After the arrival and before the release of goods, consignments are kept in the Port Restricted Area, which is supervised by the CPA. Only the authorised people have access to the place.

CPA sources said majority of the area is not under any CCTV camera coverage.

Under the Customs Act 1969, imported goods must be released from the port within 30 days of unloading from a vessel. If any importer fails to do so, the Chatogram Custom House sends a notice, allowing the importer another 15 days. The goods can be sold through auction after that, customs sources said.

But the customs authorities have failed to hold any auction for the 5,584 unreleased consignments even after the goods reached the port more than a year ago. Customs officials estimate the

Implement

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picking out projects.

The projects should be selected keeping in mind that the quality of grassroots people's life is improved. Besides, careful monitoring of projects should be conducted so that their implementation is expedited, the official quoted Hasina as saying.

In the meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne), a Tk 369cr project for construction of 5.4-km four-lane road from the capital's Jatrabari (Mayor Hanif Flyover) to Demra (Sultana Kamal Bridge) was

approved. There will be 8.44-km service lanes on both sides of the road. The project would help reduce traffic jam and number of accidents.

Another project for eliminating PPR and foot-and-mouth diseases of cattle at a cost of Tk 345cr got the go-ahead.

Referring to the project, the premier said medicine and vaccines for cattle are imported. She directed the authorities concerned to take initiatives to produce those at home.

The other projects are related to production and marketing of nutrition-rich, non-traditional cereal crop at a cost of Tk 206cr, development of seven existing textile vocational institutes and setting up of six new ones involving Tk 354cr, construction of Challishia-Kunia-Medni-Razurbazar link highway in Netrakona at a cost of Tk 257cr and replacement of six dilapidated and narrow bridges on Gobindaganj-Chhatak-Doarabazar road with new bridges involving Tk 111cr.

The AL won the December 30, 2018 parliamentary election with an absolute majority.

Rare Nilgai

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conservation division in Rajshahi.

The animal had also been captured in Thakurgaon last year.

Manda locals chased the antelope when they found it roaming around Jotbazar area around 9:30am, according to the officials.

Surprised by the presence of a creature unseen before, hundreds of villagers cornered the animal in a pond and later caught it.

"The villagers were preparing to slaughter it for a meal," said Jahangir Kabir.

However, someone later reported the capture of a "big deer" and informed UNO Rahman.

He then sent local forest officials and policemen to the scene, who rescued the animal. It was taken to the UNO office in the afternoon and handed over to the forest department.

"Our first priority is to give treatment to the Nilgai as it bears numerous injuries," said Inspector Kabir.

The forest department rescued another female Nilgai from Thakurgaon last year which is still at the rescue centre in Dinajpur, he said.

"We will seek advice from higher officials on whether to arrange a breeding for the Nilgai or release it back to the wild," he said.

Nilgais were found in the north of Bangladesh until 1940s when they were last sighted in Tetulia and afterwards were declared extinct from this country.

Demo for FF

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the blockade around 5:00pm following assurance from Bangladesh Chhatra League President Md Rezwani Haque Chowdhury Shovon and General Secretary Golam Rabbani that the prime minister would be informed about the matter.

General Secretary of Dhaka University's Mukti Joddha Sangsad Santan Command Al Mamun said Rabbani requested them to postpone the protest saying that he would inform the PM about the demands.

"Following his request, we postponed our agitation for the time being," Mamun told reporters.

Descendants of freedom fighters have been demanding the 30 percent quota in public service recruitment ever since the government scrapped quotas in classes I and II of government jobs last year, as per the recommendations by a government committee.

Often many importers don't take delivery of goods as prices go down in Bangladesh. Also, some importers fail to come up with proper documents to have their goods released. In some cases, the importers are reluctant to pay fines for various anomalies. Because of such reasons, imported goods remain stranded at the port, said customs officials.

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The committee, led by the cabinet secretary, was formed to review the quota system after nationwide demonstrations by quota reformists intensified in April last year.

13-year-old

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injured in the incident, he said.

"Three of the four BGB men who were injured during the attack have been sent to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital," Mesbah added.

Quoting locals, Abdul Ahad, officer-in-charge of Kanaighat Police Station, said that the boy was a pedestrian and, as far as he knew, was not involved in smuggling.

"Police recovered the body of the teenager and sent it to MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital for autopsy," he said, adding that a case was yet to be filed in this regard.

At the headquarters of the foundation, a dusty two-room ground floor apartment in the industrial town of Mirpur on the outskirts of Dhaka, there are regrets.

Observers now regret

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Salam, the group's president, said the observers fielded by his organisation had only monitored a few polling stations, so were in no position to make a clear assessment of the election's fairness.

He said some presiding officers had told them they had been forced to stuff ballot boxes. "I want to speak the truth," he told Reuters. "I am not doing this for any political gain."

He said he was not directly involved in organising the poll observers.

Ali dismissed the president's comments, saying: "Can you write something just based on someone saying something?"

Tanya Foster, a policy analyst in the Saskatchewan provincial government, told Reuters she had heard from Bangladeshis in Canada that a group known as the Saarc Human Rights Foundation was looking for foreign election monitors.

"I asked about the qualifications because I thought it would be an interesting experience. I applied to Saarc and to the Election Commission and they vetted me and offered me an invitation to be an observer," said Foster, whose daughter Chloe Foster also joined the observer's panel.

They had never acted as international observers to a national election before.

Foster said she was not aware of the foundation's links to the Awami League or the lack of affiliation to Saarc.

In hindsight, she said "I don't feel great about it. I feel like I was too naive".

"I don't know that our reports are of that much value, considering we only visited nine polling centres and only in Dhaka," she added. "We didn't go to the more hostile areas. We didn't audit the election commission or conduct background checks of the presiding officers or poll agents."

Chloe Foster was not available for comment.

Ali, the foundation's secretary general, said the women had experience monitoring elections in Canada. He said it was not possible for any group to monitor all polling stations.