

## India

FROM PAGE 1

"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 Rohingyas 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

FROM PAGE 16

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

Jenarul 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 Ranishankhali border in Thakurgaon in a similar incident.

## DNCC mayor polls Feb 28

FROM PAGE 1

-- 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

## Implement

FROM PAGE 16

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 Challisha-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.

## Observers now regret

FROM PAGE 16

know everything, and can say that the election was not free and fair," said Mohammad Abdus Salam, a 75-year-old former high court division justice.

A Canadian observer who was brought in by the foundation has also said she now wishes she had not been involved.

Bangladesh, which is an important supplier of clothing to major Western High Street brands and is the second-biggest garments exporter in the world behind China, had already faced criticism from European Union, United States, and British officials for irregularities observed during the polling.

Transparency International last week said its investigation into the December 30 election found irregularities at 47 of the 50 constituencies surveyed, including fake votes, ballot stuffing, and voters and opposition polling agents barred from entering polling centres. It found the ruling party was alone in actively campaigning at all areas surveyed, sometimes with help from local law enforcement officials and government resources.

The government has dismissed the Transparency International investigation as lacking in credibility. The AL chief's political adviser HT Imam called the group "a puppet" of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

The BNP-led alliance has rejected the election, calling it rigged, after the Awami League and its allies swept more than 95 percent of the parliamentary seats. The United States, European Union and Britain have since called for allegations of ballot-rigging and intimidation to be investigated.

Ahead of the election, the US State Department had expressed disappointment that several US-funded observers had been forced to cancel plans to monitor the polls as Bangladesh didn't issue visas "within the timeframe necessary". Bangladesh denied delaying visas and said it was following due process.

Political experts said observers were key to establishing the credibility of the poll, which was Bangladesh's first fully participatory election in a decade. The BNP had boycotted the last vote in 2014.

### VICTORY ENDORSED

The Saarc Human Rights Foundation brought in observers from Canada, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka, who spoke to the press on election day and the day after, endorsing the fairness of the voting, often in glowing terms.

On New Year's Eve, hours after being declared the winner of a contest that brought her a third straight term in power, Hasina addressed journalists and election observers at her residence.

"They voted so enthusiastically, especially women and the young generation," Hasina said. "By coming to my country, you have also given us good opportunity to show how democracy is working."

As a microphone was passed around the room, monitors from the Saarc Human Rights Foundation as well as other observers, including those from the Saudi Arabia-based Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, congratulated Hasina on the win.

The first to speak was a representative of the foundation, a Canadian woman named Tanya Foster, who called the election "very fair and democratic". "In Canada I feel that it is a similar type of process," Foster said, as Hasina smiled back.

Hasina's son, Sajeeb Wazed, who is the government's information and communication technology adviser, repeatedly tweeted out statements made by the foundation's observers calling the election fair and peaceful.

### GOVERNMENT LINKS

Though the initials and logo it uses closely resemble those of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc), the Saarc Human Rights Foundation has no affiliation with that inter-governmental body.

The foundation's Secretary General Abed Ali told Reuters the group had applied for approval from Saarc and was expecting it soon. A spokesman for the Kathmandu-based Saarc, though, told Reuters it had never heard of Ali or his group. "The organisation is not recognised by Saarc and does not have any relation with Saarc whatsoever," the spokesman said.

The Saarc Human Rights Foundation's website says it is based in Dhaka and its initials stand for South Asian Association for Research Council.

Its advisory committee includes a lawmaker from Hasina's Awami League, and one from the Jatiya Party, which has often been allied with the Awami League. A former minister in a previous BNP government is also listed on the panel, but no current opposition members.

Bangladesh law bars the Election Commission from allowing observer groups with links to political parties from monitoring polls.

The secretary of Bangladesh's Election Commission, Helal Uddin Ahmed, said it had no knowledge of links between Ali's groups and any political party.

Referring to the Awami League and Jatiya Party lawmakers on the group's board, Ali said: "They are just supporting our humanitarian activities."

"I want to make it clear that we have no affiliation with any political party," he added.

### FOREIGN OBSERVERS

But 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.

## Implement

FROM PAGE 16

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 Challisha-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.

## Observers now regret

FROM PAGE 16

know everything, and can say that the election was not free and fair," said Mohammad Abdus Salam, a 75-year-old former high court division justice.

A Canadian observer who was brought in by the foundation has also said she now wishes she had not been involved.

Bangladesh, which is an important supplier of clothing to major Western High Street brands and is the second-biggest garments exporter in the world behind China, had already faced criticism from European Union, United States, and British officials for irregularities observed during the polling.

Transparency International last week said its investigation into the December 30 election found irregularities at 47 of the 50 constituencies surveyed, including fake votes, ballot stuffing, and voters and opposition polling agents barred from entering polling centres. It found the ruling party was alone in actively campaigning at all areas surveyed, sometimes with help from local law enforcement officials and government resources.

The government has dismissed the Transparency International investigation as lacking in credibility. The AL chief's political adviser HT Imam called the group "a puppet" of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

The BNP-led alliance has rejected the election, calling it rigged, after the Awami League and its allies swept more than 95 percent of the parliamentary seats. The United States, European Union and Britain have since called for allegations of ballot-rigging and intimidation to be investigated.

Ahead of the election, the US State Department had expressed disappointment that several US-funded observers had been forced to cancel plans to monitor the polls as Bangladesh didn't issue visas "within the timeframe necessary". Bangladesh denied delaying visas and said it was following due process.

Political experts said observers were key to establishing the credibility of the poll, which was Bangladesh's first fully participatory election in a decade. The BNP had boycotted the last vote in 2014.

### VICTORY ENDORSED

The Saarc Human Rights Foundation brought in observers from Canada, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka, who spoke to the press on election day and the day after, endorsing the fairness of the voting, often in glowing terms.

On New Year's Eve, hours after being declared the winner of a contest that brought her a third straight term in power, Hasina addressed journalists and election observers at her residence.

"They voted so enthusiastically, especially women and the young generation," Hasina said. "By coming to my country, you have also given us good opportunity to show how democracy is working."

As a microphone was passed around the room, monitors from the Saarc Human Rights Foundation as well as other observers, including those from the Saudi Arabia-based Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, congratulated Hasina on the win.

The first to speak was a representative of the foundation, a Canadian woman named Tanya Foster, who called the election "very fair and democratic". "In Canada I feel that it is a similar type of process," Foster said, as Hasina smiled back.

Hasina's son, Sajeeb Wazed, who is the government's information and communication technology adviser, repeatedly tweeted out statements made by the foundation's observers calling the election fair and peaceful.

### GOVERNMENT LINKS

Though the initials and logo it uses closely resemble those of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc), the Saarc Human Rights Foundation has no affiliation with that inter-governmental body.

The foundation's Secretary General Abed Ali told Reuters the group had applied for approval from Saarc and was expecting it soon. A spokesman for the Kathmandu-based Saarc, though, told Reuters it had never heard of Ali or his group. "The organisation is not recognised by Saarc and does not have any relation with Saarc whatsoever," the spokesman said.

The Saarc Human Rights Foundation's website says it is based in Dhaka and its initials stand for South Asian Association for Research Council.

Its advisory committee includes a lawmaker from Hasina's Awami League, and one from the Jatiya Party, which has often been allied with the Awami League. A former minister in a previous BNP government is also listed on the panel, but no current opposition members.

Bangladesh law bars the Election Commission from allowing observer groups with links to political parties from monitoring polls.

The secretary of Bangladesh's Election Commission, Helal Uddin Ahmed, said it had no knowledge of links between Ali's groups and any political party.

Referring to the Awami League and Jatiya Party lawmakers on the group's board, Ali said: "They are just supporting our humanitarian activities."

"I want to make it clear that we have no affiliation with any political party," he added.

### FOREIGN OBSERVERS

But 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.

## ACC suspends

FROM PAGE 1

"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 ground floor. But he went to 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.

## Scientists

FROM PAGE 16

The idea is to generate poultry that cannot get flu and would form a "buffer between wild birds and humans", Barclay said.

Global health and infectious disease specialists cite the threat of a human flu pandemic as one of their biggest concerns.

The death toll in the last flu pandemic in 2009/10 - caused by the H1N1 strain and considered to be relatively mild - was around half a million people worldwide. The historic 1918 Spanish flu killed around 50 million people.

The greatest fear now is that a deadly strain could jump from wild birds via poultry into humans, and then mutate into a pandemic airborne form that can pass easily between people.

"If we could prevent influenza virus crossing from wild birds into chickens, we would stop the next pandemic at source," said Barclay.

In research published in 2016 in the journal Nature, Barclay's team found that a gene present in chickens called ANP32 encodes a protein that all flu viruses depend on to infect a host. Laboratory tests of cells engineered to lack the gene showed they cannot be infected with flu.

Teaming up scientists at the Roslin, Barclay said the plan is to use CRISPR to edit the chicks' DNA so that only one part of the key protein is changed, leaving the rest of the bird exactly the same, genetically, as it was before.

"We have identified the smallest change that will stop the virus in its tracks," she said.

Roslin Institute scientists gained fame in 1996 as creators of "Dolly the sheep", the world's first cloned animal. They have also created gene-edited pigs to make them resistant to a virus.

## Rare Nilgai

FROM PAGE 2

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.

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

## No trace of 295

FROM PAGE 1

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 Sararul Islam denied that the containers were 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 Sararul'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 Chattogram 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

goods would worth around Tk 5,000 crore.

Asked, Customs Commissioner Nuruzzaman said, "It was not possible to put the goods up for auction on time due to a lack of manpower and other logistic supports.

"The authorities need to test the goods for ensuring their quality before the items are auctioned. They also need to prepare a complete list of the goods for ascertaining their values and country of origin. All these take time."

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.

Altaf Hossain Bachchu, general secretary of the Customs and Forwarding (C&F) Agent Association, told The Daily Star, "The unreleased consignments should be put up for auction regularly if the authorities want to ensure that they are not plundered." C&F companies are responsible for importing products as representatives of the importers.

He said the auction process was lengthy and it should be made simpler. "Otherwise, consignments will keep lining up for auctions."

As of Monday, 6,494 consignments were awaiting auction at the port, said sources there.

According to the customs auction department sources, the customs authorities sold goods worth Tk 43 crore in fiscal 2016-17 through auctions, Tk 48 crore in FY 2017-18, and Tk 38 crore in the last six months of FY 2018-19 (June-December).

On September 20, 2015, 14 unreleased containers of imported glycerine worth Tk 70 lakh went missing from the port. Two days later, the customs authorities recovered those containers from a private inland container depot in Pahartali area in city.

## Demo for FF

FROM PAGE 16

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

General Secretary of Dhaka University's Muktiyoddha 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.

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

FROM PAGE 2

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.

## Democracy

FROM PAGE 2

Germany is pleased to continue to stand by Bangladesh's side in a spirit of partnership, Merkel said.

The ambassador said he read the Awami League's election manifesto and his country would continue its support to her government to implement the manifesto.

He added that two German delegations, one is comprised of German parliament members and another led by German parliament vice-president, would visit Bangladesh soon.

Bangladesh has tremendous potentials and there are many sectors for enhancing cooperation between the two countries, the envoy said.

He also praised the success of Bangladesh in containing terrorism and hailed the quick steps of the government during the Holey Artisan terror attack.

Many German companies are interested to invest in Bangladesh and assured the PM of providing training to Bangladeshi professionals in Germany, the diplomat said.

While discussing the Rohingya issue, Fahrenholtz said he visited the Rohingya camps for three days and talked to a cross-section of people there.

PM's Principal Secretary Nojibur Rahman, Military Secretary Maj Gen Mia Md Jainul Abedin and Abul Kalam Azad, principal coordinator for sustainable development goals affairs at the Prime Minister's Office, were present on the occasion.