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POLITICAL AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Prime Minister urges SAARC nations to promote trade



Hon. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has called for combined efforts to eliminate poverty and terrorism, the two most dangerous malaises in South Asia. In her speech at the inaugural session of the 17th Saarc summit at the Hithadhoo Convention Centre in Addu, the Maldives on November 10, 2011 the Hon. Prime Minister said that the South Asian nations have to cooperate and exert combined efforts to eliminate poverty from the region . The theme for this year's summit is *Building Bridges - both in terms of physical connectivity and figurative political dialogue*.

Calling for bold decision backed by political will to implement various development projects the Bangladesh Prime Minister noted that the time is ripe for bold decisions--to pledge and redeem the political commitment. Referring to the gloomy picture of the intra-Saarc trade, the Hon. Prime Minister said “although trade in goods under Safta has crossed the billion dollar mark, it is way below its potential.” She noted that some progress has been made in reducing the sensitive lists of traded goods recently, but many of the exportable goods still remain outside the ambit of the Safta agreement.

Stressing the need for better connectivity in the region, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said that physical connectivity is crucial not only for intra-Saarc but also for wider regional trade and investment. The Hon. Prime Minister urged the member states to take practical initiatives so that the Railways Agreement is concluded at the earliest and regional transport connectivity can facilitate greater movement of people, goods and services.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina made a strong plea to ease the travel restrictions with a view to ensuring free movement of goods and services within the region. Alongside bilateral negotiation, the Bangladesh leader proposed the institutional cooperation of co-riparian countries

of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra river basins, which would facilitate integrated development and management of water resources of the respective basins, nourish agriculture and consequently benefit more than a billion people in the region. She sought cooperation to firmly tackle the smuggling of narcotics, fake currencies, and the trafficking of women and children.

On the international economic scenario, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said that in recent years, the South Asian economies have been affected by global financial crisis. Although the Saarc countries have withstood some of the financial challenges, their economies still remain vulnerable to factors originating beyond the

region. “Rising prices of food and fuel combined with a reduction in food production due to erratic climate behaviour have jeopardised sustainable livelihoods for many of our people”- she added “the adverse effects of climate change and global warming have visibly made our lives harder, restraining our progress in poverty alleviation, and attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.”

Afghanistan President Abdul Hamid Karzai, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Nepal Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai, Pakistan Prime Minister Yusuf Raja Gilani and Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa also attended the inaugural session.

German President visits Bangladesh



German President Christian Wulff paid a three day visit to Dhaka from November 28-30, 2011 and met with the Honourable President and Prime Minister of Bangladesh, addressed representatives of Civil Society

and delivered a speech at the University of Dhaka. During his meeting with Hon. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina the German President said that his country would explore new areas of cooperation with Bangladesh in various sectors including trade, power and energy.

President Wulff who led an 84-member delegation including a strong business team acclaimed Bangladesh as a 'stabilizing force' in South Asia and praised the development activities that have been taken up by the present government. Hon. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said that Bangladesh always gives high importance to its relations with Germany, Bangladesh's second largest export destination and one of the key development partners.

The Hon. Prime Minister conveyed to the German delegation the present government's firm commitment to strengthening democratic values, practices and institutions as well as wiping out terrorism. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina sought German support in the energy sector and global

climate change negotiations and solicited German collaboration with Bangladeshi universities and research institutions, especially in medicine, biotechnology, generic engineering, applied disciplines and ICT areas.

The German President addressed a group of teachers and students at the University of Dhaka and met with

Civil Society representatives at the Goethe Institute. At a luncheon meeting with the FBCCI, leader of the German business delegation Dr Karl Ernst Brauner said that the German business delegation is extremely keen to deepen commercial ties with Bangladesh.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

UNCTAD report lauds Bangladesh's economic progress

According to a United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (Unctad) report on Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for 2011, Bangladesh has done better than many other countries in this category in terms of overall development.

The report states that in spite of the current global economic gloom, the Bangladesh economy has fared reasonably well. It says that in order for Bangladesh to achieve the status of a developing country, it needs to increase per capita gross national income (GNI) and human

assets index, which is basically an indicator to measure nutrition, health, adult literacy and secondary school enrollment rate.

The country has definitely demonstrated resilience during the global recession and has achieved a satisfactory level of real GDP per capita compared to many other LDCs. Bangladesh's performance in the economic vulnerability index and the reduction in external debt-GDP ratio augur well. These will have to be further improved to move to the next stage of development.

It is a positive step that Bangladesh is one of the top recipients of remittance and the biggest exporting country among the LDCs.

BUSINESS, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Frozen fish export to the EU:

Bangladesh exempted from mandatory test

Bangladesh has got rid of a mandatory EU screening for exporting frozen fish after the country made progress in its residue monitoring system. Earlier the European Union used to test 20 percent of frozen fish consignments from Bangladesh to keep its exporters under a continuous pressure to improve compliance. The EU relaxed its rule after an audit team of the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) of the European Commission visited Bangladesh in March-April 2011. The decision was posted in

the official journal of the European Union on November 16, 2011.

The lifting of the restriction, which was slapped two years ago, will cut delays in export and reduce costs. Senior officials of the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock view demand for Bangladesh's frozen fish will rise with this move.

With registration of 190,000 shrimp farms, implementation of traceability has become easier. The number of laboratories and testing machines has increased. At the same time, the government of Bangladesh has also framed laws on fish feed and hatcheries. The sector that employs more than 10 lakh people fetched \$625 million in exports in fiscal 2010-11. Bangladesh Frozen Foods Exporters Association terms the EU waiver a great achievement and sets a target of \$1.5 billion from export of shrimp and fisheries by 2015.

Car Plant to be set up in Savar

Hindustan Motors Limited, a flagship venture of the CK Birla Group, India, in collaboration with Intraco Group will set up a car manufacturing plant at Savar. The plant will be set with an estimated cost of US\$ 10 million and both the companies have a plan to assemble 10,000 cars within the next three years. Initially, they will

assemble 200 cars. This was informed at the launching ceremony of Ambassador brand, India's most widely known car, in Bangladesh. Hon. Industries Minister Dilip Barua formally inaugurated the car's marketing at an event in Dhaka which was also attended by representatives of the Company, Indian High Commission in Dhaka and the FBCCI.

Addressing the function, the Hon. Industries Minister said that there are huge potentials for joint ventures in upgrading car plant in

Bangladesh due to the availability of state-of-the-art technology and skilled human resources.

He laid emphasis on quality production and competitive prices to capture the market.

Global marketing summit in Dhaka

Bangladesh hosts a global marketing summit in 2012 to discuss how marketing philosophies, ethos and insight can be used to find innovative solutions to some of the global challenges. The first-ever three-day *World Marketing Summit* will begin on March 1, 2012 at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka. The summit, a global initiative of the world's most influential marketer professor Philip Kotler, will be held in association with the Bangladesh Ministry of Foreign Affairs with an aim to create a better world through marketing. Bangladesh was selected as the host because it represents the Third World and has performed well in economic and social development in recent decades. At the Press Conference in the Ministry

on November 23, 2011 the Hon. Foreign Minister Dr. Dipu Moni, MP said that the summit is expected to emerge as a global platform for minds and souls in the marketing world to exchange views on developing just and responsible marketing practices.

During the summit, the experts will examine a number of issues such as human resources development, health, food security, environment and climate change. The uniqueness of the summit lies in the proposed 'incubators'. A total of seven incubators will be set up for the experimental projects that will come out of the summit discussions. Each incubator will be spearheaded by an academic institution of the country selected for field execution and will be supervised by another academic institution. Bangladesh will work as the coordinating country for all the incubators.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

World Bank to provide Bangladesh \$172m for solar panel

Bangladesh struck a \$172 million financing deal with the World Bank, which will enable the country to install 630,000 solar home systems in rural areas by 2012. The agreement, signed on 14 November 2011 is part of an ongoing World

Bank supported project styled *Rural Electrification and Renewable Energy Development Project* which has already helped Bangladesh install more than 600,000 solar home systems, surpassing its initial target of 50,000 systems.

After signing of the agreement the World Bank officials told reporters that more than a million homes and shops in remote areas have installed low cost and reliable solar home systems with

support from the World Bank and other development partners. The World Bank has been supporting Bangladesh to implement the market-based off-grid electrification programme since 2002. Infrastructure Development Company Ltd (IDCOL), a state-run financial institution, helps implement the project. Under the programme, partner organisations, mostly non-government organisations, procure and install the systems in rural households as per the

Rolls-Royce engines for Bangladesh's power company

Global power systems company Rolls-Royce has recently announced a \$22 million contract to supply eight reciprocating engine generator sets to Baraka Patenga Power Ltd (BPPL).

The engines -- Bergen B32:40 16V -- will power a 50 megawatt power plant of BPPL that is under construction at Patenga, 14km south of the port city in Bangladesh, Rolls Royce said in a

standards set by IDCOL. Consumers enter into a microfinance agreement with their respective partner organisations following which the systems are installed.

Currently, 40,000 rural families install solar home system every month on an average. Together with support from the World Bank and other development partners, more than a million systems have been installed in rural Bangladesh.

statement on November 3, 2011. BPPL is a 51 percent subsidiary of Barakatullah Electro Dynamics Ltd, a Bangladeshi power generation company.

The Patenga power plant will play an important role in supporting the development of Bangladesh economy, supplying electricity to the national grid, the company representatives hope. In July 2011, BPPL signed a power purchase agreement with Bangladesh Power Development Board to develop the 50MW independent power plant project on a 'build-own-operate' basis for a term of 15 years.

DIGITAL BANGLADESH E-book gets huge response

E-book, the online version of school textbooks, launched for the primary and secondary

students to give them free access to ICT-based education, got a huge response as over one million visitors visited the site in just three months.

Alexa, an internationally reputed web information company which provides information about websites including top sites, in its latest monitoring report, says that eleven lakh one thousand and 946 visitors from different parts of the world visited the e-book website in three months - from August to October 2011.

The e-book service, which is accessible by digital devices like computer, e-book reader, mobile phone, PDA, CD and iPad, is being provided by the Access to Information (A2I) programme of Prime Minister's Office. On an average about 50 thousand visitors of Bangladesh go through the online versions of text books per month while the ratio of visiting the site is one reader per five minutes.

ICT fair in Dhaka



The fourth BCS ICT World 2011, an exhibition of information and communication technology, took place in Dhaka from November 23-28, 2011 with a slogan for technology in education and daily life. The exposition that pulled in 50 local

and foreign companies showcases ICT innovations at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka.

The expo organised by Bangladesh Computer Samity (BCS) was inaugurated by Hon. Finance Minister Mr. AMA Muhith. BCS President Mustafa Jabbar presided over the programme. In his inaugural speech, the Hon. Finance Minister hoped that the ICT sector will be the largest employer in Bangladesh by 2021, outperforming the readymade garment sector, the biggest export earner. He said, for building a Digital Bangladesh, the government has undertaken computerisation in the public sector, use of IT in education and advancing software development.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Carbon trading: **Bangladesh can earn \$70m annually**

Bangladesh has the prospects of earning \$70 million a year from carbon trading in the global carbon credit market. The Bangladesh Bank Governor pointed out this at a workshop on *Opportunities to expand energy efficient brick kilns in Bangladesh* in Dhaka on 27 November 2011. However, to earn the desired benefits, the brick kilns have to operate in an environment

Swedish support in urban services

Sweden will spend SEK 4.1 crore or Tk 45 crore in the next five years to take water, sanitation and hygiene services to about 20 lakh urban poor people in Bangladesh. Through its international development cooperation agency (Sida), the Swedish government will assist the urban poor in association with international NGO WaterAid.

To that effect a cooperation agreement was signed at the Swedish embassy in Dhaka on 18

friendly manner which presently have been causing pollution.

Bangladesh Bank extended a refinance scheme of Tk 200 crore in 2009 to establish Hybrid Hoffman Kiln technology in brick manufacturing to reduce carbon emissions that would halve the pollution if the kilns use the German technology in burning bricks. The UNDP in association with the government has been implementing a five-year project to introduce smokeless brick making technology in Bangladesh. At the end of the project, at least 16 HHK plants will be set up reducing carbon dioxide emission by over 1,470 tonnes.

November 2011 between Ms. Anneli Lindahl Kenny, Ambassador of Sweden to Bangladesh, and the country representative of WaterAid. The project will directly serve over 3 lakh urban poor in three major cities of Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna through water, sanitation and hygiene services with around 16 lakh floating users of mobile and public toilets. At the signing ceremony the Swedish envoy said that through the cooperation, Sweden expects to contribute towards a more inclusive provision of these services all across Bangladesh.

Australia to provide Bangladesh A\$15m climate aid

The Australian government will provide Bangladesh A\$15 million towards supporting climate change adaptation programs in Bangladesh. This announcement came when Australia's Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs Mr. Richard Marles met with Hon. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Hon. Foreign Minister Dr. Dipu Moni, MP on November 13,

2011. A\$7million of the Australian assistance will be provided to the Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund and the remainder to the Comprehensive Disaster Management Program.

Highly praising Bangladesh's resilience capacity, the Australian leader who came to Bangladesh on a 2-day official visit after attending the Saarc Summit in the Maldives , said that the aid would enhance Bangladesh's capacity to adapt the adverse impact of climate change as well as disaster management.

EMBASSY NEWS

November 21 Armed Forces Day observed

With due solemnity and enthusiasm, the historic Armed Forces Day was observed at the Embassy on November 21,2011. On this day in 1971, Army, Navy and Air force combinedly launched their attack during our glorious war of independence against the occupation forces. To commemorate the day a reception was hosted at the Bangabandhu Auditorium of the Embassy. Md Jashim Uddin, Charge D' Affaires and

Brigadier General Mohammad Abdul Moeen, ndc, psc, Defense Attache' welcomed the guests.

In his welcome remarks, CDA a.i. Mr. Md Jashim Uddin paid rich tribute to the martyrs including the members of the Armed Forces who had made supreme sacrifices for Bangladesh's independence. Mr. Uddin paid deep respect to the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for his contribution to building a modern armed force

in the newly independent country. He recalled the pioneering role of the Bangladesh armed forces under the UN Peace-keeping Missions which has brightened the image of Bangladesh abroad. Earlier, the Defense Attaché gave a brief resume on the role of the Bangladesh armed forces since its inception.

On the sideline of the reception, there was a video presentation on the glorious role of the

Bangladesh armed forces both in nation-building and in peace-keeping around the world. A good number of guests attended the event which included Ambassadors, Defense Attachés, members of the diplomatic corps, US dignitaries including high officials from the Pentagon and State Department, representatives from media, members of the Bangladesh Community and officers of the Mission.

November 30

Death Anniversary of late Minister (Press) Akhter Ahmed Khan

A condolence meeting was held on 30 November 2011 at the Bangabandhu Auditorium at the Embassy to mark the 2nd death anniversary of late Press Minister Akhter Ahmed Khan. Officers and officials of the Embassy were present at the condolence meeting. Charge d' Affairs Md. Jashim Uddin, in his remarks, described late Khan's professional contribution with fine human qualities in dispensing his

responsibilities. Press Minister Mr. Swapan Kumar Saha and Head of Chancery Mr. Muhammad Nazmul Hoque also spoke on the occasion. A special Munajat was offered at the Embassy after Asr prayer seeking divine blessings of the Almighty Allah for the eternal peace of the departed soul.

PHOTO GALLERY



Observing Armed Forces Day



Second Death Anniversary of Late Press Minister Akhter Ahmed Khan

News source:

Different daily and weekly newspapers published from Bangladesh