

Asian Age, 1 January 2009

Hasina: We'll join India's war on terror

Dec. 31: Bangladesh wants good neighbourly relations with India so that problems such as poverty and terrorism can be tackled in a spirit of cooperation across the subcontinent, Bangladesh's Prime Minister-elect Sheikh Hasina Wajed told this newspaper in an exclusive over the telephone from Dhaka. "It is a victory of democracy, secularism, peace ... the people of Bangladesh today long for a better life and a prosperous nation," Sheikh Hasina said the morning after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh congratulated her. Leader of the Opposition L.K. Advani and Congress president Sonia Gandhi also spoke to her

Daily Star, 1 January 2009

Target food prices; Hasina discloses her priority list at first briefing after poll triumph; seeks Khaleda's help in running country; asks party loyal

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Daily Star, 2 January 2009

Sheikh Hasina's acid test; By Mahfuz Anam

Two recent elections have been fought on the promise of 'change' -- Barack Obama's in the US and Sheikh Hasina's in Bangladesh -- and both of them received resounding endorsement from the electorate and both now have the potential of transforming the politics of their two countries. The similarity can go further if Sheikh Hasina chooses her cabinet with the same circumspection and in-depth thinking as Obama has done, putting premium on expertise, experience and integrity. Even before Sheikh Hasina has had time to savour her historic victory, she is having to plunge herself into the difficult challenge of picking her cabinet. It is normally a very hard task to choose between party loyalists and those who can provide an efficient government. In our case it becomes harder still as there are so many debts to repay, emotional baggage to respond to and old egos to protect. But Sheikh Hasina has the mandate to ignore all that

Daily Star, 3 January 2009

Impartial anti-graft drive to continue; Hasina tells visiting UN team

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the new government to be formed by her party-led alliance will continue the ongoing anti-graft drive to build a country free of corruption. She also said they want to make the next parliament effective and for that the post of the deputy speaker as well as some chairmanship of parliamentary standing committees will be given to the opposition, and she pledged to uphold human rights more effectively too. The AL chief made the statements to a six-member UN team headed by Francesc Vendrell who went to Hasina's Sudha Sadan resident in the capital to greet her on her party's landslide victory in the recent parliamentary election. The delegation also included UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh Renata Lok Dessallien, and Chief Election Commissioner of Nepal Bhojraj Pokharel

Daily Star, 4 January 2009

Hasina to be sworn in as PM Tuesday

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina, who was unanimously elected majority party leader yesterday, will be sworn in as prime minister Tuesday. Her election by the AL parliamentary party (ALPP) came within hours into oath-taking by the AL-led grand alliance lawmakers in the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban in the afternoon. Zillur Rahman, the veteran AL leader, was picked as the deputy leader

Daily Star, 7 January 2009

Hasina sworn in as PM

President Iajuddin Ahmed swears in Sheikh Hasina as new prime minister at Bangabhaban yesterday. Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina was sworn in as the country's new prime minister yesterday evening, marking a peaceful return to democracy. Thirty-one others were inducted into her council of ministers. President

Iajuddin Ahmed administered oath to the new head of government and her colleagues at a simple ceremony in Bangabhaban Darbar Hall. The cabinet comprises 23 ministers and eight state ministers. Of them, only AMA Muhith, Matia Chowdhury, AK Khandaker, Syed Ashraf Islam, Syed Abul Hossain and Dipankar Talukder have previous experience

Daily Star, 10 January 2009

BNP front bodies to be dissolved, revamped: Khaleda

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia addresses a rally at Sonaimuri High School ground yesterday for four-party alliance candidate barrister Mahbub Uddin for the stalled parliamentary polls in Noakhali-1. Photo: STAR BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday said all committees of BNP and associate organisations would be dissolved and revamped through elections. She also appealed to her party rank and file not to lose heart. The former prime minister said BNP will join parliament to speak for the people. "People want to buy rice at Tk 10; they want fertiliser for free and job for one from each family. 'We want to see implementation of all the pledges Awami League made before the election. But they have already started denying making those [promises]."

Daily Star, 11 January 2009

No more politics of vengeance; Hasina asks partymen to stay above personal interests

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged her party men to forget personal interests and devote themselves to the service of the common people who overwhelmingly voted Awami League to power. 'This is not the time for reckoning what we have got and what we haven't. The main consideration is what we could give to the people,' she told a discussion marking Bangabandhu's Homecoming Day at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference centre. Hasina said people have given the Awami League a big responsibility through the December 29 elections. 'We must fulfil their hopes and aspirations,' she said

Daily Star, 15 January 2009

AL grassroots in disarray

The Awami League chief's directives to grassroots leaders of the party to pick a single candidate for the post of chairman in the upcoming election to upazila parishads appears to have fallen flat with rival contestants from the party still in the polls race in many upazilas. Supporters of many candidates, who were not picked by grassroots level party committees, are clashing with supporters of party-backed candidates in many areas, let alone extending support to them. In the first week of this month, AL President Sheikh Hasina sent directives to the president and general secretary of the party's district units to put up only one contestant for chairman post to ensure the party's victory in the local government polls slated for January 22, sources in the party said. The party chief even asked them to take stern action against those who will ignore party decision

Daily Star, 16 January 2009

Japan offers \$440m for power, bridge

Japan has offered a package credit of \$440 million (40 billion yen) for the development of power plants, power distribution project and bridge improvement in Bangladesh. Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso made the offer as he called Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday afternoon and congratulated her on the assumption of prime minister's office. Taro Aso described the election victory of Awami League under her leadership as a significant event. Welcoming the Japanese credit offer,

Hasina sought more cooperation from Tokyo in power, agriculture and communications sectors

Hindu, 16 January 2009

Check infiltration of Bangladeshis, Centre told

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Thursday directed the Union government to take immediate steps for issue of Multi-Purpose National Identity Cards (MPNIC) to Indian citizens in Assam and other north-eastern States. The court also asked it to prepare a National Identity Register (NIR) to check the infiltration of Bangladeshis. A Bench of Chief Justice K.G. Balakrishnan and Justices P. Sathasivam and J.M. Panchal said the cards should be the basis for citizens to avail themselves of benefits such as ration card, school admission and inclusion of name in electoral rolls

Daily Star, 17 January 2009

AL looks for fresh blood in quest of change

Both Awami League (AL) and BNP, the two major political parties in the country, are planning radical changes in their leaderships. While AL's move is sparked by its desire to maintain the momentum it achieved through its recent landslide electoral victory and its professed commitment to the 'charter for change', BNP's springs from its frantic search for remedy following its recent election debacle. Awami League's (AL) new central committee, which is likely to be elected in April this year by a long delayed national council of the party, might look much younger. Party sources said most of the incumbent members of the presidium, the highest policy making forum of the party, and some other central leaders might be dropped from the new central committee, as party President Sheikh Hasina wants to bring forward young leaders in a bid to prepare the party for the long run

Daily Star, 20 January 2009

Lies in the Truth Commission

The Truth and Accountability Commission (Tac) has allegedly allowed many graft suspects to be spared prosecution by surrendering wealth way less than what they were found to have 'amassed illegally'. Despite wide discrepancies between findings of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) probe into assets of those accused of graft and the confessional statements made for clemency, the truth commission did not ask for ACC's views, said sources involved in the anti-graft drive. Of those listed by ACC as corruption suspects, 270 sought exemption from prosecution in return for voluntary disclosure and surrender of their ill-gotten wealth

Daily Star, 20 January 2009

Govt moves to stamp out terrorism

The government will launch a fresh investigation of terrorist activities including major grenade and bomb attacks perpetrated during the BNP-Jamaat-led four-party alliance government's regime, in an effort to identify the masterminds and their national and international links. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday instructed the home ministry to take immediate steps in that direction, so the government may try the masterminds and stamp out terrorism from the country, sources in the government said. Presiding over a cabinet meeting in Bangladesh Secretariat yesterday, Hasina, also the Awami League (AL) president, directed the minister and state minister for home affairs to submit a complete report mentioning names of the masterminds and their links

Hindu, 25 January 2009

Militant held on Bangladesh border

Shillong: A suspected cadre of Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam (MULTA) was apprehended on Saturday by the Border Security Force (BSF) along the India-Bangladesh border. A MULTA cadre Sharul Islam of Gopalganj in Bangladesh was arrested at Sadartilla on the cross-junction of Meghalaya-Assam border with Bangladesh, the BSF sources said

Daily Star, 25 January 2009

The PM is being embarrassed by her own party

Even if her enemies had tried they couldn't have done a better job of embarrassing Sheikh Hasina and her barely two-week-old government. First the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), student wing of Awami League (AL), and now the party's grassroots leaders, including a cabinet minister and an MP, have done precisely the things that she has promised, and is trying to, totally move away from. Their actions have brought blemish upon her and her party's brilliant electoral victory and raised unnecessary doubts in the public mind as to how serious is the AL chief's commitment to bring 'change' in politics and in governance. The mayhem caused by the Chhatra League and its continuance for 11 days in spite of repeated warnings by no less a person than Sheikh Hasina herself, was a clear sign that when it came to money, tender manipulation, hall 'capture' to indulge in extortion during seat allocation, and other related crimes, party ideology or national interest did not have much impact on those responsible for denigrating the sanctity of university campuses and indulging in violence and destruction of public and private property