



# Newsletter

Press Wing, Prime Minister's Office

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## Interview with BBC

### We don't support torture in custody : Sheikh Hasina

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has told the BBC that her government does not support torture in custody. "To tell you the truth, our government is never led by any intention to torture people in custody and it [government] also doesn't do it [either]," she said.

Senior broadcast journalist at BBC World Service Manoshi Barua interviewed the PM in London on 6 August when issues of Bangladesh economy, politics and social issues came up.

Her comments on the custody issue came as Manoshi asked what steps the present government took to stop such torture, which the journalist described as a legacy of subsequent governments.

"Incidentally, some [one or two incidents] may happen . . . if you see our position in the last 10 years, we could take appropriate measures to control crime," Hasina said.



Manoshi's question was Bangladesh had a long history of custodial torture and it did not take place during any specific government and what steps the incumbent government took to come out of it.

Sheikh Hasina said there are some international rules to interrogate presumed and suspected criminals and her government is providing law enforcement agency personnel with training in this regard, sending them in countries like the US and the UK.

"Information is gleaned from criminals using methods practised by other countries and nothing is done beyond it."

The PM said now incidents of custodial deaths appear rarely while torture in custody also largely disappeared. She, however, reminded the BBC journalist that the past regimes virtually developed a culture of impunity and she herself was a victim of that situation after losing her parents, brothers and other near and dear ones in 1975.

"The killers were provided indemnity instead of exposing them to trial . . . that meant you [actually] entertained the culprits," the PM said, adding that it could be very difficult to check crimes in a



country where a social system is built by recognising the crimes. She had to wait 35 years to get justice.

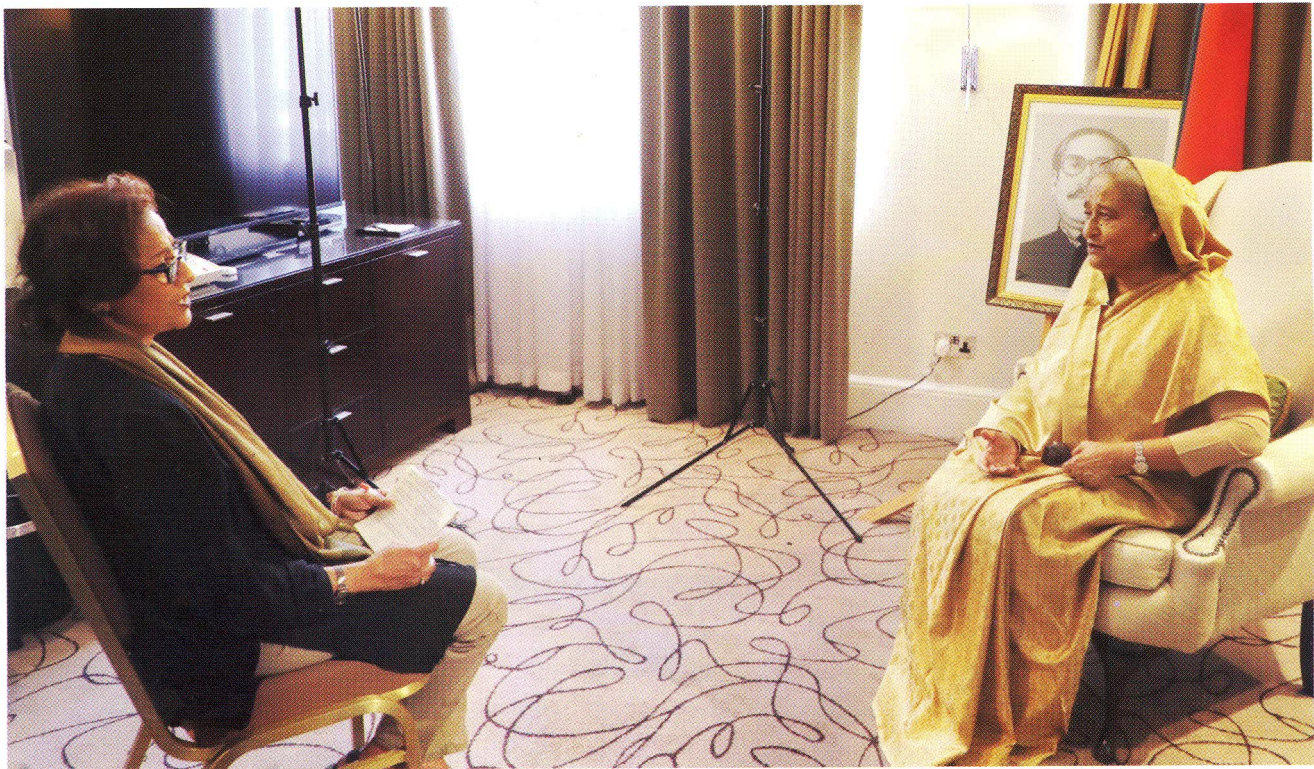
Again asked what initiatives her government took to stop such culture, Sheikh Hasina said all “appropriate measures in this regard” had been taken. She said Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was assassinated within three and a half years of independence and this culture continued for many years when military dictators ruled the country directly and often in the guise of politicians.

“This culture continued for year after year and it was a difficult task to bring back the country to a healthy trend . . . we performed that difficult task.”

The PM said there is a class or section of society which is spearheading propaganda on the rights situation while democratic system runs the country. “They always desperately try to find out our faults . . . as their status become elevated when an unconstitutional or abnormal government or martial law rules the country.”

The PM said she knew that the question was raised in Geneva where Bangladesh law minister and other representatives were present. “The law minister and others gave reply properly in this regard.”

On a question whether the people are getting the benefits of economic growth, Sheikh Hasina said the people are certainly getting the benefits. “Think a little that the country’s poverty rate was over 41 percent in 2005-2006 and the rate has been brought down to 21.04 percent . . . we could attain this success within 10 years.”



The PM said the country’s per capita income surged to about \$2,000 from \$400/500 and the country achieved 8.1 percent GDP in the last fiscal year. “When higher growth is achieved, the inflation increases naturally. But we didn’t allow raising inflation and we maintained it at 5.5 or 6 percent,” she said.



About migration of the people, the Prime Minister said there is a tendency of the people since the ancient period that they will have to build their fate by moving to other places.

“You cannot link the issue with poverty and it’s a tendency of the people,” she said, mentioning that her government is giving loans without security to the youths who want to work.

When the interviewer questioned about the “vulnerable situation” in banking sector and loan default culture, the PM said the matter is not to that extent as publicised. She said the culture of not repaying bank loans was initiated during the rule of military dictators. “Whenever we came to power, we tried to realise the loans,” she said, adding that if action is not taken always, it will not yield any results.

Sheikh Hasina said special incentives were given in this year’s budget. “Those intending to take loan have been asked to repay within the timeframe; otherwise they won’t be given credit,” she said.

About the press freedom, Sheikh Hasina said there was one television channel (Bangladesh Television), one radio centre and a few newspapers in the country until 1996. But after coming to power in 1996, she said the Awami League government made open all things in the private sector.

“There are 44 television channels in the country,” she said, adding that her intention was to generate employment.

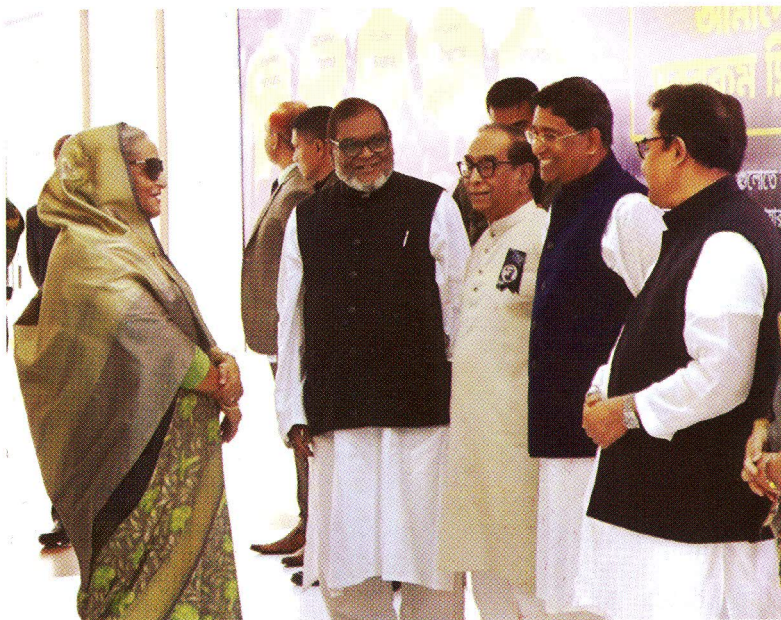
She said there is full freedom of mass media. “If it doesn’t exist how is propaganda mixing with falsehood being carried out against me and my government?” she asked.

The PM asked whether anybody enjoyed such freedom during the rules of military dictators. “Even it was absent during the regime of Khaleda Zia,” she said.

Sheikh Hasina said many people are saying that there is no freedom of the media. “But how do they speak if freedom of speech doesn’t exist?”

The PM said her government is making strides to maintain a peaceful atmosphere in the country. “If anybody gives any provocative speech, will others remain idle? ... No, they cannot do it,” she said. “Security will have to be given to the people first and we’ll have to do whatever necessary for their security.”

### **PM returns home after 20 days**



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina returned home on 8 August morning from London, wrapping up her official visit to the United Kingdom.

A VVIP flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines carrying the PM touched down at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 10:45am. Leaders of Awami League and its associate bodies greeted the PM at the Gonobhaban after she reached there from the airport.

Meanwhile, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader said the PM asked the authorities concerned to intensify the cleanliness programme to prevent the outbreak of mosquito-borne dengue fever.



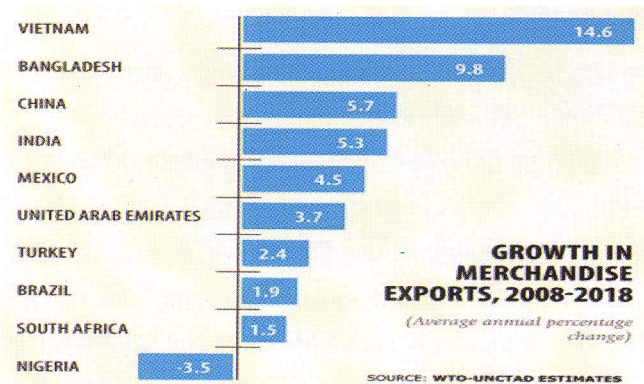
Sheikh Hasina left Heathrow International Airport in London at 6:55pm (London time) on 7 August. Bangladesh High Commissioner to the UK Saida Muna Tasneem saw her off at the airport.

The PM had gone to London on July 19. During her stay in the UK, she joined a conference of Bangladesh envoys in European countries on July 20. Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland QC and Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon separately called on Hasina in London. On July 22, the PM underwent a successful surgery on her left eye at a London hospital.

### Bangladesh second in export growth

Bangladesh has achieved the second highest export growth globally over the past decade (2008-2018) and the highest among South Asian nations thanks to the spiralling apparel shipment, according to World Statistics Review 2019.

Vietnam, which is also one of the top garment exporters worldwide, topped the list with a 14.6 percent export growth while Bangladesh gained 9.8 percent, according to the flagship annual report of the World Trade Organisation.



Exports of two giant economies, China and India, grew by 5.7 percent and 5.3 percent respectively. Bangladesh exceeded the export growth of many leading economies like China, India, Brazil and Turkey and some developing nations because of the high volume of garment export.

“Bangladesh’s exports of apparel and clothing more than trebled between 2008 and 2018,” the WTO said. Vietnam’s exports of electrical machinery increased almost 30-fold between 2008 and 2018, according to the report.

Bangladesh is now the 42nd largest exporter and 30th largest importer of the world, the data said.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh maintained the title of second largest garment exporter worldwide grabbing 6.4 percent of the trade while China maintained its dominance occupying 31.3 percent despite a slight decline in the growth in 2018.

August 11, 2019

### Will honour people’s trust: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has vowed to reciprocate the trust and confidence the people placed in her party by electing it for a third consecutive term.

“...We’ll take the country ahead towards further development and prosperity,” she said, after exchanging Eid greetings with a cross section of people at her official residence Gonobhaban on 12 August 2019.

Sheikh Hasina said Bangladesh is making progress, and it will keep on doing so defying all odds. The Awami League president said her government is working to ensure that Bangladesh is always treated with respect.

The people’s living standard is improving, their income is increasing, and the poverty rate is declining, she said.





Recalling the tragic incidents of August 15, 1975, when she lost her parents and most of the family members, Sheikh Hasina said, “Keeping pain and grief in the heart and sacrificing everything, I’ve dedicated my life for the wellbeing of the people of Bangladesh and improving their fate.”

She said the souls of her parents will rest in peace if the people live well because “my father dedicated his life for the people of this country.”

On Eid day, Gonobhaban opened for visitors at 9:30am when people from all walks of life started coming after prayers and waited in a long queue to meet the prime minister.

Awami League leaders, cabinet members, freedom fighters, MPs, leaders of political parties, representatives of professional and trade bodies, and a cross section of people, including beggars and the destitute greeted the Prime Minister. The prime minister also exchanged greetings with Supreme Court judges, senior civil and military officials and envoys of different countries.

### Ensure hassle-free journey home: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina held a series of meeting with different ministers, advisers and party leaders at the Gonobhaban on 10 August on her return from London.

During a meeting with Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, the Prime Minister directed him to ensure hassle-free journey of home-bound people. She also discussed various aspects of law and order ahead of Eid-ul-Azha with Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan.

Besides, Health Minister Zahid Maleque briefed the prime minister about the latest situation of dengue in the country. Sheikh Hasina gave various instructions to the health minister about overall treatment of dengue fever.

Meanwhile, the prime minister held meetings with Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzak, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, Information Minister Hasan Mahmud, her Adviser HT Imam, State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Fazilatunnesa Indira, State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid and Deputy Minister for Education Barrister Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury Nowfel.

Besides, she held meetings with Awami League Presidium Member Advocate Sahara Khatun, Joint Secretary Jahangir Kabir Nanak and Cultural Affairs Secretary Ashim Kumar Ukil.

### Nation pays rich tribute to Bangabandhu

The nation has paid rich tributes to the Father of the Nation on the occasion of his 44th death anniversary and the National Mourning Day. People observed the day recalling the brutal assassination of Bangabandhu and renewing the pledge to safeguard the country’s independence and sovereignty.

The government, the Awami League, different political and socio-cultural organisations, educational institutions and professional bodies observed the day by organising various programmes.

The national flag was hoisted half-mast atop the offices of all government, semi-government and autonomous bodies and educational institutions.





In the morning, President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid tributes to Bangabandhu by placing wreaths at his portrait in front of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at the capital's Dhanmondi-32. After placing the wreaths, the two leaders stood there in solemn silence for some time in respect of the great leader.

A contingent of Bangladesh Armed Forces gave state salute at that time as the bugle played the last post. A munajat was offered seeking eternal peace of the departed souls of those who were killed in the August 15 carnage.

After paying tributes to Bangabandhu, the PM visited the historic Dhanmondi residence of Bangabandhu, which has been turned into Bangabandhu Memorial Museum.

Following the visits by the president, the PM and other dignitaries, people from all walks of life, wearing black badges, thronged the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum to pay their respects to the Father of the Nation.

Sheikh Hasina later went to the Banani graveyard and spread flower petals on the graves of the victims of the August 15 carnage. She joined a munajat there.

Bangabandhu, his spouse Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib, sons Sheikh Kamal, Sheikh Jamal, and Sheikh Russell and most of his family members were killed in cold blood on August 15, 1975. His daughters Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana had been abroad at that time.

### **PM visits Tungipara**

The prime minister arrived in Tungipara by a helicopter in the morning. She paid tributes to the Father of the Nation at his grave there. After placing a wreath, she stood in solemn silence for some time. Speaker Shirin Chaudhury, cabinet members, senior AL leaders, chiefs of the three services, and senior civil and military officials were present.



Sheikh Hasina offered prayers seeking eternal peace of the departed souls of the Father of the Nation and the other victims of the August 15 massacre. Later, the PM, along with senior party leaders, placed another wreath at the grave on behalf of the party.

The AL took elaborate programmes to observe the day. In the morning, party leaders placed wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu in front of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in the capital.

The district and upazila administrations observed the day through holding prayers and discussions.

Bangladesh missions abroad arranged discussions and hoisted the national flag half-mast atop their offices. Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television, private TV channels and radio stations aired special programmes marking the National Mourning Day. The national dailies and local newspapers brought out special supplements yesterday. Besides, specially designed posters were displayed at educational institutions and other public places.





### PM joints Milad

The Prime Minister joined a milad and doa mahfil in front of the capital's Bangabandhu Memorial Museum after Asr prayers in the afternoon. Bangladesh Mohila Awami League arranged the programme. PM's daughter Saima Wazed Hossain and other family members and relatives also attended the milad.

### Govt to work for development of medical science: PM

Putting emphasis on advancing the country's medical science further, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 17 August said her government will do whatever is necessary to develop the field.

"We want to do everything necessary for the development of medical science, education and higher education," she said.

The PM was addressing the medical team, comprising Bangladeshi and Hungarian doctors and other staff members, who recently carried out a critical surgery on conjoined twins Rabeya and Rokeya at the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka. The team called on the premier at the Gono Bhaban on Friday night.

The PM congratulated the physicians, nurses and other staff members for carrying out the operation successfully. She hoped that the twins would return to their mother's lap soon.

The three-and-a-half-year-old twins from Pabna's Chatmohor upazila had been suffering from a rare embryological disorder.



The conjoined babies were separated after a successful 33-hour operation at the CMH on August 2. Doctors said such a surgery was very rare in the world.

### Stay alert, keep homes, surroundings clean:PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has urged people to be aware of the mosquito-borne disease and keep their houses and surroundings clean to prevent the breeding of Aedes mosquitoes.

"The dengue prevalence is still there ... it used to be believed that these elite Aedes mosquitoes are seen in posh areas ... now they've spread elsewhere ... to many districts. So, we'll have to remain more alert about it," she said this while exchanging Eid greetings with officials at the Prime Minister's Office on 18 August.



Dengue is not only seen in Bangladesh, but also in many neighbouring countries in South Asia and even South East Asia. In other countries like the Philippines, it has turned into an epidemic, forcing them to declare emergency, the PM said.

About the country's economic progress, the PM said the GDP growth reached 8.10 percent and the government has fixed a target in the budget for the current fiscal year to achieve an 8.2 percent growth. The government has a target to reach the double digit.



The PM stressed the need for the revival of some pro-people programmes like “Ghore Phera” Project, “Shanti Nibash” Project, and “Oboshor” Project introduced by her previous governments.

While talking about her government's steps for curbing corruption, the PM said those who take and give bribes both are equally guilty. She asked her office to strengthen its monitoring so that the work on development projects can start right after floodwaters recede.

#### *Aug 21 grenade attack remembrance*

#### **Couldn't have been possible without govt patronage**

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has alleged that the then BNP-Jamaat government was involved in the August 21 grenade attack said it is not possible to carry out such an attack without the patronage of a government.

She was speaking at a discussion in the capital. Awami League organised the event marking the 15th anniversary of the 21<sup>st</sup> grenade attack.

Sheikh Hasina said she was not supposed to survive the attack and even the then government did not think that she would survive. “I know many things. Those who carried out the attack took shelter in a place from where a call was made to know whether I was killed.”

“Then prime minister Khaleda Zia perhaps had kept a condolence message ready so that she could issue it soon after my death,” the PM added.

Referring to some remarks made by Khaleda Zia before the grenade attack and planting of twin bombs weighing 76 kg and 84 kg in Gopalganj's Kotalipara, she said, “Before every attack, Khaleda Zia used to say that the Awami League will not be able to go to power in 100 years. And right before the grenade attack, she said Sheikh Hasina can never be the leader of the opposition, let alone the prime minister, as she knew beforehand that I would be killed on August 21.”

Sheikh Hasina said the then PM was not made accused although she had extended direct cooperation in this regard. “She was the prime minister and the home minister at that time. She cannot shirk her responsibility.”



The PM also mentioned that Tarique Rahman had stayed at his father-in-law's home on Dhanmondi Road-5 for 10 months before leaving it on August 15 before the grenade attack. "Why did he stay there and what was his business there?"

About the heinous grenade attack, Sheikh Hasina said they had never thought that grenades, which are used in wars, could be thrown at a rally of a political party.

Noting that a grenade was found in the erstwhile Dhaka central jail after the attack, she said attackers might have been brought from the jail. No one came to receive the bodies of two unidentified men who were killed in the attack, the PM told the programme.

The then government had destroyed the evidence of the attack and an army officer lost his job as he wanted to preserve an unexploded grenade used in the attack, she said.



The PM also said the then BNP-Jamaat government staged the "Joj Mia drama" without tracing the real culprits. She also alleged that the pro-BNP-Jamaat doctors did not attend the injured AL men at Dhaka Medical College Hospital and no patient was allowed to enter Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University.

She said she had taken initiatives to rescue the injured and ensure their treatment by sending them to different hospitals. The grisly grenade

attack was carried out on an AL rally on Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital on August 21, 2004.

Twenty-four people, including then president of Mohila Awami League and late president Zillur Rahman's wife Ivy Rahman, were killed and over 500 injured in the attack.

Hasina, the then opposition leader, narrowly escaped the blast. The AL men saved her life forming a human shield around her.

### Protect migrants from middlemen: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has asked the authorities to be careful so that migrants do not end up being cheated by the middlemen.

"We've to give special attention so that no one is cheated by middlemen. We've the responsibility to look after their security and welfare because they're our citizens," she said while delivering her introductory speech at the first meeting of the National Steering Committee on Migration at her office on 25 August.

The PM also laid emphasis on the importance of creating skilled manpower before sending them abroad. Regarding the sending of female workers abroad, Hasina said female workers are going to many countries.





“But are these female workers capable of handling these kinds of work? We’ve to look into this as well.” If anyone goes abroad without receiving the training required that person would not be able to perform the work, Hasina added. The PM stressed the need for raising public awareness so that people are never cheated by the

middlemen. The middlemen often lure the innocent rural people, Hasina pointed out.

### Ensure planned development of rural areas

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has urged planned development of rural areas, keeping in mind the country’s high population density.

“We’ll ensure civic amenities in rural areas, as our aim is to develop the villages,” she said during a presentation on the Land Acquisition and Biodiversity Preservation Plan for areas adjacent to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Complex in Gopalganj’s Tungipara. The presentation was given at the Prime Minister’s Office with the PM in the chair.

Hasina said Bangladesh has very little land but a high population. “We have to ensure food security, healthcare, education and jobs. We’ve strengthened our economy considering all these factors.”

She said these should be ensured in rural areas as well so that people do not have to come to the capital just to look for jobs. “They’ll have employment opportunities in their respective areas, too.”

The PM said nature must be in mind while carrying out development work, such as protecting rivers, canals and wetlands, ensuring water drainage system and preserving waterways.

The four-year-long Land Acquisition and Biodiversity Preservation project will be implemented by the Local Government Engineering Department at a cost of Tk 395 crore.

The project is being undertaken as part of the ongoing “Important Urban Infrastructure Development Project (2nd Phase)” involving Tk 3,465 crore. This will be implemented in 281 municipalities across the country between January 2018 and December 2021.

Stressing the need for undertaking development programmes through a well-thought-out plan, Hasina said development was not only building structures, rather taking up various programmes considering the needs of people and protecting the environment and biodiversity.

She asked all concerned to take up development programmes in accordance with the need. She also enquired about the condition of roads and other development work, particularly in the villages of Tungipara, saying, “I want to develop my Tungipara constituency.”

### Biman dreams big with third Dreamliner

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said the induction of the third Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner into the Biman fleet would enhance its capacity to operate flights to new destinations.

Referring to the newly-procured Dreamliners, she said the capacity of the national flag carrier in operating flights on long-haul routes has grown. The PM said this at a programme at the capital’s Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport marking the commissioning of “Gangchil” on 22 August.



Hasina said her government wants Biman to operate flights on Dhaka-New York route with the Dreamliners.

“Now we can’t operate flights to the USA, but we hope we will be able to solve the problem soon. Our Dreamliners have the capacity to fly directly to JFK Airport [in New York].”

The PM said her government was making efforts to further increase the frequencies of Biman flights on Dhaka-London route.

The national carrier was also trying to introduce flights on new routes to connect more countries with a view to improve passenger services, she added.



Describing Biman as a symbol of the country’s independence, Sheikh Hasina said people across the globe can know about Bangladesh and respect the country through Biman as its aircraft fly to various countries. She asked all involved with Biman to operate flights sincerely.

### **PM receives treatment like a general patient**

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina received treatment like a general patient from the National Institute of Ophthalmology and Hospital at Agargaon in the capital on 28 August. “The prime minister went to the National Institute of Ophthalmology and Hospital at 8 am and took treatment like a general patient by purchasing a ticket of Taka 10 from the outdoor. Earlier, he said, the premier received healthcare services from the hospital in the same way. During the time, the prime minister enquired about the activities of the hospital and thanked its physicians and nurses, the press secretary said.

### **TV channels have full freedom: PM**

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said all television channels in the country are enjoying full freedom. She made the remarks when a delegation of Association of Television Channel Owners (ATCO) met her at her office on 28 August.



The Prime Minister said Bangladesh once had only one television channel, BTV. The Awami League government opened up the media industry to the private sector after assuming office in 1996.

ATCO leaders said they are sincerely working with authorities concerned to start full transmission of all private TV channels using Bangabandhu Satellite-1.

They also placed some demands before the PM, such as making all TV channels pay-channels, and digitising the cable TV distribution process.



## Make sure evil forces don't return to power

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has urged the people to remain cautious so that the country does not go under the control of the evil forces who were involved in the August 15 massacre.

The PM was addressing a discussion at the city's Bangabandhu International Conference Centre on 30 August marking the National Mourning Day. The Dhaka south and north units of Awami League organised the event.

Sheikh Hasina said the people of Bangladesh had lost their hope of living, dignifying their lives and all other possibilities after the killing of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

She said the conspirators had tried to distort the history of the country and its struggle for freedom by killing Bangabandhu and his family members.

Responding to BNP leaders' claim that how could their party be termed "the party of killers" although it did not exist during the August 15 events, Sheikh Hasina said Ziaur Rahman was involved in the conspiracy and established the killers socially, politically and gave them opportunity in business activities.



She alleged that Zia, founder of the BNP, was a murderer who kept the killers of Bangabandhu with him and did everything. "Then there is nothing to claim that this party is not the party of killers."

The PM said Khaleda Zia had awarded the killers of Bangabandhu and the four national leaders after coming to power. "My question is what kind of party is it if not a party of killers?"

Hasina said the post-August 15 governments had tried to make the defeated forces of 1971 happy by turning Bangladesh into a failed state.

She said the goal of her government is to take the country forward. "We have achieved that by the grace of Allah. From here, nobody will be able to pull down Bangladesh."

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