

Hasina, Modi talk about connectivity, commercial linkage

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Online Desk: On the eve of the G20 Leaders' Summit, a bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi was held at the Indian premier's official residence in New Delhi on Friday. "Had productive deliberations with PM Sheikh Hasina. The progress in India-Bangladesh relations in the last 9 years has been very gladdening. Our talks covered areas like connectivity, commercial linkage and more," Narendra Modi tweeted after the nearly hour-long meeting with Hasina.

The meeting was the last formal meeting between the two premiers before the next parliamentary elections. India, that is holding the G20 presidency this year, has invited Bangladesh and other non-member countries Egypt, Mauritius, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Singapore, Spain and UAE, as guest countries to participate in the meetings and the Summit. During the meeting, the two countries were expected to sign three memorandums of understanding (MoUs) — Cooperation on Agricultural Research and Education between Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council; and Extension of Cultural Exchange Programme from 2023 to 2025.

The other MoU to be signed was between Bangladesh Bank and the National Payments Corporation of India for network connectivity to facilitate transactions in rupee and taka between the two countries. Sheikh Hasina left Dhaka on Friday morning for New Delhi to attend the G20 Summit as a guest invited by this year's G20 summit president India. She will be addressing two separate sessions of the G20 on Saturday and Sunday.

On the sidelines, she is also expected to hold bilateral meetings with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman and the presidents of the UAE, Argentina and South Korea, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen told media on Thursday.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, Prime Minister's Private Sector Industry and Investment Adviser Salman F Rahman, Ambassador at Large Mohammad Ziauddin, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam, Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen and other officials concerned are accompanying her.

The meeting of the world's richest countries takes place at a time when the whole world is going through economic challenges, especially in the aftermath of the Russia-Ukraine on top of the coronavirus pandemic. For Bangladesh, the Rohingya crisis has been a real challenge for the last six years, while climate change is a perennial issue affecting millions in Bangladesh. Momen said Bangladesh wants to be the voice of the Global South at the G20 Summit, raising issues of climate change, the Rohingya crisis, and food and energy challenges.