

Schemes target overall development

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Online Desk: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said the Awami League government was steering Bangladesh forward by taking multi-sectoral development projects, as she inaugurated the country's maiden underwater transport tunnel in the port city Saturday.

"We're taking comprehensive development schemes considering all aspects for overall development of Bangladesh," she told a mass rally, hitting out at her opponents in pre-election movement.

Turning to the BNP move, she categorically said that BNP would gain nothing by threatening to oust her government through movements.

"Today, BNP wants to oust the government. They are giving out various types of threats to launch movement. Let me make it clear that Awami League has attained for Bangladesh the developing-nation status through coming to power with people's vote. No threat will work," she said, as the BNP and like-minded opposition parties staged demonstrations in the capital, Dhaka, on the day.

The prime minister was addressing a grand rally organised at KEPZ field in Anwara to mark the inauguration of the country's first-ever underwater tunnel, named after Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, says a UNB report.

Chattogram North and South District Units of Awami League organised the rally.

Sheikh Hasina reminded that Chattogram witnessed terrorism during the regime of BNP.

"But Awami League, after assuming power, pulled it back onto the road of development. Chattogram is our commercial capital and we're developing Chattogram with this end in view," she said to applause from the crowd.

Hasina said AL always worked for the country's development and the tunnel reduced the distance with Cox's Bazar and would also connect the Asian Highway and expedite the country's development further.

Slamming BNP she said that the party "only kills people, loot money and resorts to corruption".

"Khaleda Zia stole orphans' money and for that reason she has been convicted. Her son Tarique Rahman is absconding in a foreign country," she said.

Hasina, also the chief of the ruling Awami League, said that In 2007 Tarique Rahman signed a bond to the then caretaker government to quit politics and left the country.

"He laundered crores of taka. He was involved in 10- truck arms smuggling and for that he has been convicted.

"He has also been convicted of the August 21 grenade attack aimed at killing me," she said.

The prime minister said that Khaleda Zia rigged votes in February 15 election and for that reason people of Bangladesh deposed her from power through movement.

"They (BNP) should remember that. They are vote riggers, they are the looters of people's money, they are killers, BNP- Jamaat means killers, murderers and terrorists and they believe in militancy," she told the rally.

Sheikh Hasina said that Awami League believes in peace and development.

“As Awami League is in power today, Bangladesh is advancing. No one will be able to suppress Bangladesh. That is the reality,” she said.

From the rally ground the PM also formally inaugurated the country’s first- ever much-anticipated underwater expressway “Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Tunnel” through the Karnaphuli river.

First of its kind in South Asia, the tunnel constructed beneath the Karnaphuli connects the city’s Patenga with Anwara upazila.

Chinese President Xi Jinping sent a goodwill message on this occasion. The message was read out by Chinese Ambassador in Bangladesh Yao Wen, and later he handed it over to the premier.

PM Hasina also released a special commemorative postage stamp and first- day cover along with special canceller, marking the inauguration of the road tunnel. She also unveiled commemorative note of Taka-50 denomination to mark the occasion.

At the outset, a video documentary on the tunnel was screened. The 9.39-km-long tunnel, including approach road, built at a cost of Tk 10,689 crore, will open to traffic from 6am on Monday.

The tunnel’s two tubes are spaced approximately 12 meters apart. Both tubes feature two lanes for traffic, and a 5.35-kilometre connecting road is situated at each end of the tunnel, with an additional 727-metre-long over-bridge at the Anwara end.

In terms of connecting two regions of the country, the tunnel is the second “dream scheme” in road-transport sector after the Padma Bridge. The tunnel has been built following the “one city-two town” model like Shanghai in China.

The prime minister said that when AL carries out development of the country, the BNP-Jamaat duo destroys it.

“They (BNP) have the history of burning people alive,” she said.

She also said that BNP founder Ziaur Rahman was involved in the brutal killing of her father, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and rest of her family members.

“They only know how to kill, nothing else,” she told the rally.

In this connection, she said that they had killed over 21,000 leaders and activists of AL along with its front and associate bodies.

She also highlighted different social initiatives taken by her governments such old age allowance, widow allowance, deserted women and divorcee allowance, housing for homeless, physically challenged allowance, free of cost book distribution, stipend for student and others development schemes.

She said as the democratic trend has continued in the country, alongside with development activities, poverty rate and extreme poverty rates have been reduced.

She urged the overseas job seekers not to go to foreign countries by giving money to middlemen.

In this regard, she referred to name of Probashi Kalyan Bank to get loan without any collateral.

Hasina urged the people to cast their votes in favour of Awami League for maintaining the development spree of the country.