PM’s Beijing visit after Delhi reflects balanced diplomacy: Hasan

BSS- Foreign Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud today said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s visit to Beijing after New Delhi reflects the “balanced diplomacy” of Bangladesh.

“Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is going to China after coming back from India… it is a reflection that we have been maintaining a balanced diplomacy to all,” he told reporters at the foreign ministry this afternoon.

The foreign minister said Dhaka follows Bangladesh foreign policy’s doctrine – Friendship to all malice towards none – which was formulated by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid a bilateral visit to New Delhi on June 21-22 and scheduled to make her next bilateral visit to Beijing in the second week of July.

“Prime Minister (Sheikh Hasina) will go to China on July 8… the visit will be from July 8 to 11,” Hasan confirmed the dates.

The foreign minister said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was the first head of government invited by Narendra Modi after forming the new Indian government.

“It is indeed a matter of honor for us,” said Dr Hasan.

He said India is our true friend and the relationship with India is based on the spirit of the great 1971 Liberation War and bonded through cooperation, brotherhood and this special relationship is never to be broken.

While, on the other hand, Hasan said, China is Bangladesh's crucially important development partner as Beijing had made significant investment at the country's various projects.

"China is our very important development partner and our close neighbor while many Chinese companies are engaged in Bangladesh's Padma Bridge project, Bangabandhu Tunnel and several railway projects as well," he said.

Against this backdrop, Hasan said, the Prime Minister's China visit is significant as discussion would be held on a wide range of issues including several projects.

"I believe the friendly relations between the two countries (Bangladesh and China) will be strengthened through the (upcoming) visit of Honorable Prime Minister (Sheikh Hasina) to China," he said.

Responding to a query over the discussion agendas of the upcoming prime minister level bilateral meeting in Beijing, he said, "Still, we are developing those as there is more than one week time in hand before the visit".

The foreign minister said that the Rohingya issue will get priority in Beijing as China's role is crucial in commencing the repatriation of the forcibly displaced people from Bangladesh to Myanmar.

Responding to a question on both Chinese and Indian interest regarding the Teesta river project, Hasan said, "As Teesta is a transboundary river of India and Bangladesh, we think it will be good for us if India helps us (on Teesta project) as per our requirement".

While asked about the recently signed Dhaka-Delhi's Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on train movement between Bangladesh and India, the minister said it (the MoU) was signed based on the spirit of regional connectivity.

“Only a MoU was signed, any agreement is yet to be inked on this … we are thinking about regional connectivity where train service will not only run from Bangladesh to India, it will also run from Bangladesh to Nepal and Bhutan,” he said.

The minister pointed out that the railway connectivity between Dhaka and Kolkata, Dhaka and Siliguri and Khulna and Kolkata have been under operation.

“No one complained yet on the railway connectivity with India, everyone is happy,” he said, adding that it would be beneficial for both the neighbour countries if the rail connection is extended further.

The minister said India has already allowed Bangladesh to transmit hydroelectricity over its territory while Delhi showed its willingness to allow goods transportation between Bangladesh and Nepal, Bhutan using Indian soil.

In response to a question about Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s Wednesday speech in Parliament regarding the repatriation of BNP’s Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman from London, Dr. Hasan said that the foreign ministry has been engaged in discussion with the UK government in this regard.

“We do not have an extradition treaty with the UK, which is an obstacle. However, efforts to bring him (Tarique) back as a convicted criminal are going on,” he added.

Earlier, the foreign minister unveiled cover of Anajja publishers research book titled ‘Higher Education in Bangladesh’ by Dr Subal Rosario and play ‘Ami Pritilata’ by playwright Jewel Kabir.