

DHAKA, Aug 18: Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh should address the concerns of Dhaka during his upcoming visit to Bangladesh early next month, a seminar in the city Thursday observed. “Bangladesh has addressed India’s security concern. It is now time for India to deliver,” said Brigadier General (retd.) Shadedul Anam Khan, defence and strategic affairs editor of the Daily Star.

He was speaking at the seminar on “Upcoming Manmohan’s Visit: Veracity and Prospects,” organised by the South Asia Youth for Peace and Prosperity Society (SAYPPS) at the National Press Club on the day.

Dr Dilara Chowdhury, a retired professor of Jahangirnagar University, presented the keynote paper at the seminar. “We want this time a bagful of something as we got a bag full of nothing during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s visit to India in January 2010,” Shadedul Anam Khan said.

Anam said the bilateral agreement between Bangladesh and India will not fall through despite changes of government.

According to agreement India is providing one billion dollar to Bangladesh as part of its investment, he mentioned asking what benefit will Bangladesh get from the investment? Anam observed India should have given the money as grant.

Regarding offering of transit facility to India, he said the government should count long term environmental degradation and short term effects.

Anam also said sharing of water of Teesta River is very important.

Nurul Kabir, editor of the New Age, said Indian Prime Minister has embarrassed the Prime Minister of Bangladesh in the last one year. He said India had pledged to establish houses for cyclone Sidr victims and export rice to Bangladesh but it did not fulfil its pledges.

“We have to try to solve the existing problems between two countries through consensus,” Kabir said adding “we will be grateful to India if they solve our problems”.

The political administration of Bangladesh is responsible for the long outstanding issues, he said adding the ruling and the opposition party cannot reach any consensus while BJP and Congress in the national interest can reach consensus.

Kabir also said the government is not officially making public what agreements will be signed during the Indian prime minister’s visit.

“We want to know the draft agreement between the two countries,” he added.

Professor Dr Syed Anwar Husain, Editor of the Daily Sun, said Bangladesh had no policy. “We have neither foreign policy nor regional policy,” he said.

He said it was high time Bangladesh started thinking about foreign ministry and foreign policy. In her written paper, Dilara Chowdhury said the treaties signed by the PMs of both the countries would create win-win situation for both the countries.

Bangladesh and India has a staggering trade imbalance to the extent of three billion US dollars in formal and 2.5 billion US dollars informal trades, she said adding “This issue should be addressed seriously.”

Dr Dilara Chowdhury said “This is a golden opportunity for both, especially for India, to install trust in the hearts and mind of the people in Bangladesh.

Among others, Mostafa Kamal Mojumder, Editor of the Daily New Nation and senior journalist Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury spoke at the seminar presided over by former ambassador Ashfaque Rahman.