

## **India-Bangladesh Relations**

India's links with Bangladesh are civilisational, cultural, social and economic. There is much that unites the two countries – a shared history and common heritage, linguistic and cultural ties, passion for music, literature and the arts. With Bangladesh, India shares not only a common history of struggle for freedom and liberation but also enduring feelings of both fraternal as well as familial ties. This commonality is reflected in multi-dimensional relations with Bangladesh at several levels of interaction. High-level exchanges, visits and meetings take place regularly alongside the wide ranging people-to-people interaction. India's Missions in Bangladesh issue about half a million visas every year and thousands of Bangladeshi students study in India on self-financing basis and are recipients of over one hundred annual GOI scholarships.

### **Recent High Level Contacts**

Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh accompanied by EAM, Chief Ministers of 4 States (Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram) neighbouring Bangladesh, and an official & media delegation visited Dhaka on September 6-7, 2011 at the invitation of PM Sheikh Hasina. Ten Agreements/ Protocols/ MOUs including a Framework Agreement on Cooperation for Development and Protocol to the Agreement concerning demarcation of the Land Boundary between India and Bangladesh were signed. PM announced the commencement of unfettered 24-hour access across the Tin Bigha corridor to Dahagram and Angorpota enclaves as well as duty-free import of 46 textile items (subsequently expanded to all items, except 25) from Bangladesh. Earlier Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina accompanied by a 123-member delegation had paid a State visit to India from January 10-13, 2010. The Prime Ministers of the two countries agreed to put in place a comprehensive framework of cooperation for development of the two countries based on their mutually shared vision for the future. A Joint Communiqué issued during the visit outlined various initiatives.

Other High-level visits from India to Bangladesh include Union Minister for Power Shri Sushil Kumar Shinde (September 15-16, 2011), Finance Minister Shri Pranab Mukherjee (May 5-6, 2012), Minister of Law & Justice and Minority Affairs Shri Salman Khurshid (May 24-27, 2012), Rural Development and Drinking Water & Sanitation Minister Jairam Ramesh (August 4-6, 2012), Health & Family Welfare Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad (November 10-12, 2012), Minister of Law and Justice Dr. Ashwani Kumar (December 14-16, 2012) and Shri Sushil Kumar Shinde, Home Minister (January 28-29, 2013). Extradition Treaty and Revised Travel Arrangements between India and Bangladesh were signed during the visit of Home Minister to Bangladesh in January 2013. Visits from Bangladesh to India include Home Minister Advocate Shahara Khatun (February 24-25, 2012), Information & Culture Minister Mr. Abul Kalam Azad (September 10-13, 2012), Local Government & Rural Development Minister Mr. Syed Ashraf Islam (September 18-22, 2012), Agriculture Minister Begum Matia Chowdhury (November 8-10, 2012) and Home Minister Dr. Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir (December 5-8, 2012).

The first meeting of the India-Bangladesh Joint Consultative Commission was held on May 7, 2012 in New Delhi. EAM and Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr. Dipu Moni and their respective delegations discussed all bilateral matters and assess progress of implementation of the 2011 Joint Statement and 2010 Joint Communiqué. Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Mohamed Mijarul Quayes visited New Delhi on July 24, 2012 for Foreign Office Consultations and held discussions on the entire gamut of bilateral issues. Home Secretary R K Singh visited Dhaka from October 15-17, 2012 leading a 10-member delegation to attend the 13<sup>th</sup> Round of Home Secretary Level Talks. 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the India-Bangladesh Task Force on Human Trafficking was held in Cox's Bazar on December 8-9, 2012.

### Sharing of River Waters

India and Bangladesh share 54 common rivers. The Ganga Waters Treaty was signed on December 12, 1996 for water sharing of river Ganga during lean season (January 1-May 31). The 37th Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) meeting was held in New Delhi from March 17-20, 2010. In the last technical level meeting held in Kolkata in February 2012, both sides exchanged data at Dalia in Bangladesh and Gazaldoba in India. The first meeting of the Sub-Group under India-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission for Joint Study on India's Tipaimukh Hydroelectric Project was held in New Delhi on August 27-28, 2012. The Terms of Reference for conducting the Joint Study was finalized at this meeting and the Indian side handed over the Detailed Project Report conducted by India on the Tipaimukh project to the Bangladesh side.

### Bilateral Trade

Bangladesh is an important trading partner for India. The two-way trade in FY 2011-2012 was US\$5.242 billion with India's exports to Bangladesh accounting for US\$4.743 billion and imports US\$0.498 billion. The trade between the two countries in the last six years is as follows:

(Figures in US\$ million)

	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12
India's exports	1864.7	2268.0	3364.0	2841.06	3202	4586.8	4743.3
India's imports	241.96	289.42	358.08	276.58	305	512.5	498.4
Total trade	2106.70	2557.40	3722.08	3117.64	3507	5099.3	5241.7

Source: Bangladesh Bank/EPB

Note: FY is July to June

### Institutional Mechanisms

Some of the important institutional mechanisms that meet periodically to discuss bilateral issues include Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) and Joint Economic

Commission (JEC) at Ministerial level, Foreign Office Consultations, Home, Commerce and Water Resources Secretary level talks, BSF-BDR DG-level border coordination conference, Joint Working Group on Security (JWG), Joint Boundary Working Group (JBWG), Joint Working Group on Trade (JWG), Joint Group of Customs Officials (JGC), Protocol Renewal Committee and Standing Committee to review implementation of Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade, and Inter- Governmental Railway Meeting. 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the BIWTA was held in Goa wherein the bilateral protocol was renewed for one year till March 31, 2012. The Standing Committee on IWTT met in Dhaka on February 12-13, 2012. Following the Commerce Secretary Level Talks held in New Delhi on March 28-29, 2012, the India-Bangladesh Trade Agreement was renewed for three years. Pursuant to the Shipping Secretary Talks held on July 2-3, 2012, the bilateral Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade was renewed for two years till March 31, 2014. India has also agreed to pay Tk 100 million every year for maintaining two river routes viz. Doikhawa-Sirajganj and Zakiganj-Sherpur.

### **India's Economic Assistance to Bangladesh**

On the economic assistance side, India has extended a line of credit of US\$ 1 billion to Bangladesh for a range of projects, including railway infrastructure, supply of BG locomotives and passenger coaches, procurement of buses, and dredging projects. The Line of Credit Agreement was signed in Dhaka on August 7, 2010 between EXIM Bank of India and Government of Bangladesh. During his visit to Bangladesh in May 2012 to attend the Concluding ceremony of the year-long Joint Celebrations of the 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore, Finance Minister Shri Pranab Mukherjee announced conversion of US\$200 million as grant from the USD 1 billion LOC for projects prioritized by Bangladesh. India has stood by Bangladesh in its hour of need with aid worth over Taka 250crore (over US \$ 37 million) to help it cope with natural disasters and floods in 2007-08 including supply of 1,000 MT of skimmed milk powder, and 40,000 MT of rice. India has completed and handed over 2,649 core shelters in the affected villages in Bagerhat district in southern Bangladesh.

### **Technical Cooperation**

On January 29 2012, NTPC and BPDB signed an agreement to set up a Joint Venture for the establishment of a 1320MW coal-based power plant in Bagerhat district, Khulna at an estimated cost of \$1.5 billion and it is expected to be commissioned by 2016. Scholarships and training programmes under ITEC, TCS of Colombo Plan, ICCR, AYUSH, Commonwealth, SAARC and IOR-ARC scholarships/ fellowship schemes are being offered to Bangladesh nationals. India offers 185 slots under ITEC and 35 slots under Technical Cooperation Scheme of Colombo Plan every year to Bangladesh. Muktijoddha Scholarship Scheme extended by the Government of India to Higher Secondary-level students (200 scholarships) and Graduate-level students (500 scholarships). From 2012 onwards, another 90 slots are being offered through ITEC under the schemes specially designed for Bangladesh Civil Servants. In order to promote people to people exchanges, four hundred ten scholarships are being granted by ICCR every year to students from Bangladesh for pursuing general courses in arts,

sciences, engineering and also specialized courses for culture, drama, music, fine arts and sports, etc. Three Bangladesh Diplomats were imparted training at Foreign Service Institute, New Delhi in 2011.

### **Cultural Exchanges**

Given the shared history and commonality of language, cultural exchanges form an important bond of friendship between the people of two countries. Special emphasis has been laid on promotion of exchanges in the fields of music, theatre, art, painting, books, etc. A bilateral Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) 2009-2012 provides the framework for such exchanges. To promote bilateral cultural exchanges, the Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre (IGCC) of Indian Council for Cultural Relations was inaugurated at Dhaka on March 11, 2010. The joint inaugural ceremonies of 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore were held in Dhaka on 6 May and New Delhi on 7 May 2011 and year-long celebrations were carried out and concluded.

**January, 2013**