

India-Bangladesh Diplomatic Relations : Naredra Modi's Regime

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India is the largest democracy in the world and Bangladesh is one of the most populous country in the South Asia. Both countries shares historical, geographical, social and economic ties. Major part of Bangladesh is surrounded by Indian state, which sometimes makes the country feel 'locked by India'. India and Bangladesh share a common border of almost 4096 km, bordering five Indian states of West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. The emergence of Bangladesh as an independent sovereign state in South Asia is a historic event. Relying on India's massive military assistance, Bangladesh's freedom fighters have been able to realise their aspirations for Independence.

On sixteenth December,1971, Bangladesh became an independent sovereign state. Thereafter march of 1972 the first prime minister of Bangladesh Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahaman and the prime minister of India Indira Gandhi signed the Peace and Friendship Agreement. In the ensuing period, the country was economically devastated by the abnormal plunder of Bangladeshi's capitalist class. This situation led to the rise of anti-india forces and the establishment of military rule in 1975.

Then in 1996, when the Awami League came to power and the relation of both countries reestablished. In this year both countries signed the Water Sharing Agreement. The 'Gujral Doctrine' announced by the Foreign Minister of the government of India at this time, made it more progressive relations about the two countries. However the government led by Hasina collapsed in 2001 and established a coalition government led by Jatiya Party. Again after winning the general elections of 2008, the government was formed under the leadership of Hasina's Awami League. In 2009 Dr.Manmohan Singh became the Prime Minister of the UPA 2.0 government in India. And the same year the two heads of the government of two countries met in Egypt, which was fruitful. In January 2010 the Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina visited to India. During this visit a number of issues were signed between the leaders- both countries will extradite prisoners, jointly fight against terrorism and the both countries will take actions against drug smuggling.

When chairperson Sonia Gandhi visited to Bangladesh in early 2011, it was decided to resolve the issues of bilateral relations. For examples- finalizing the water sharing agreement of the falling rivers between the two countries, to solve the problems of the people living the borders of the two countries including Chitmahal. Also the ensure that Pakistan does not carry out terrorism using the land of Bangladesh. However, despite the promise there was no solution during the tenure of this government.

In 2014 general elections were held in both India and Bangladesh. Although the Sheikh Hasina led the government was reestablished but UPA government of India collapsed and NDA formed the government also called Modi government (Leadership of Narendra Modi). Since the establishment of government has focused on building strong ties with neighbouring countries. Bangladesh is of the most favourable country to India. The government decision in 1996 of Gujral Doctrine or better known as the vision of Vajpayee government aims to enhance diplomatic relations with neighbouring countries. In 1992 Narasimha Rao's government Look East Policy's extension part is Act East Policy initiated by Modi Government in 2014, that aims to build a strong relation. Although the Look East Policy focused on the economic growth with integration of East Asian countries, Act East Policy focused on building economic ties as well as strategic cultural relations. Home Ministry of Indian government also says- 'connectivity is an important element of Act East Policy'.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid a successful two days visit to Bangladesh on June 6-7, 2015. It was not only a high-profile bilateral visit but was equally rich in deliverable outcome. It was part of Prime Minister Modi's 'Neighbourhood First Policy'. Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee once famously said "you can change your friends but not neighbours". For India to play a vital role in the emerging multipolar world politics.

June 7, 2015 in Dhaka, Prime Minister of India and Prime Minister of Bangladesh signed a Joint Declaration – "Notun Prajanmo-Nayi Disha". Smt. Mamata Banerjee, Chief Minister of West Bengal also joined Prime Minister Modi and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Dhaka on June 6, 2015 for the historic ceremony where they witnessed the exchange of the India-Bangladesh land boundary agreement 1974 and its 2011 protocol. Modi recalled with deep respect the visionary leadership of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Prime Minister Hasina appreciated to Modi for his pragmatic and dynamic approach in leading the world's largest democracy and growing economies in the world. Both were expressed satisfaction over the historic 100th Constitutional Amendment Act to give effect to the 1974 Land Boundary Agreement and its 2011 protocol. They recognized that was a milestone in India-Bangladesh relations.

Prime Minister of two countries recalled the Framework Agreement on Co-operation for Development (FACD) of 2011 that outlines the shared vision for an enduring and long term co-operation through economic integration and better connectivity. They are also appreciated the progress made in the third meeting of the joint consultative commission (JCC) held in New Delhi on 20 September, 2014 led by the two ministers of foreign affairs. The two Prime Ministers stressed the need for effective implementation of the Coordinated Border Management Plan (CDMP) for better border management. Prime Minister Hasina invited India's Cooperation in Jointly Developing The Ganges Barrage on the river Padma in Bangladesh. Hasina also requested to Modi for immediate conclusion of Teesta water sharing problem. Modi conveyed those deliberations are under way involving all stakeholders with regard to conclusion of the interim agreements on sharing of waters of Teesta.

At the invitation of Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi, Sheikh Hasina Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh paid an official visit to India on 5th October 2019. Prime Minister of both countries recalled shared bonds of culture, history, language secularism. Modi appreciated the zero-tolerance policy of the government of Bangladesh

against terrorism. Both sides emphasized simplifying people-people movement between the two countries. Hasina thanked to Modi for India's commitment to simplify travel requirements for Bangladesh Nationals Travelling by road or rail to India (Maitree and Bandhan express). Also appreciating the positive impact of the Border Haats on the lives and lively hoods of the people living along the remote border areas. The leaders also welcomed the renewal of an MoU between Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) and Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS). They agreed that this MoU will help to facilitate enhanced trade in goods between the two countries in a balanced manner. They welcomed that for the first time, exports from Bangladesh to India crossed the 1 billion dollar mark in 2019 witnessing a year- on- year growth of 52% in the exports. The two leaders recognized the need for increased cooperation in defence for a more integrated and secure neighbourhood . Both are welcomed the initiatives for development of closer Maritime Security Partnership and appreciated the finalization of an MoU on establishment of Costal Surveillance Rader System in Bangladesh.

Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi's two days visit (26-27 march,2021) should be viewed in larger context of India's Policy towards its neighbours based on 'Neighbourhood First'. This is first visit since 2015 has suddenly been satisfying for the Indian Leader and his deligation for a number of aspects. The situation of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in their respective countries and expressed satisfaction at the manner in which sustained engagement between the two countries has been maintained during this ongoing crisis. Bangladesh side the government of India for gifting 3.2 million doses of Oxford Astra Zeneca Covishield Vaccine made in India and appreciated the prompt delivery of the first batch of 5 million doses. Both leader acknowledged the importance of the deeper collaboration between the two countries in the backdrop of COVID-19 pandemic on public health sector, to enhance trade between the two countries, both Prime Ministers underscored the need for removal of non-tariffs barriers. The two leaders directed their respective Ministries of water resources to work towards and early conclusion of the Framework of Interim Agreement on sharing of waters of six common rivers namely Manu, Mahuri, Khowai, Gumti, Dharla and Dudhkumar. Besides new are of cooperation – recalling that Bangladesh launched its first satellite, Bangabandhu satellite(BS-1) in 2017, PM Hasina informed that Bangladesh would the second satellite soon. As part of visit, Prime Minister Modi visited the Jeshoreshwari Devi temple and Orakandi temple on 27 march, 2021. Prime Minister Lauded the prevailing tradition of religious harmony in Bangladesh.

Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi have to be faced many challenges-

- Modi handling of Bangladesh affairs appertains to the non resolution of the Teesta issue. Modi government has not been able to build a domestic consensus with West Bengal Government.
- Recent issue of Rohingya Refugee is one of the most debatable issue to India-Bangladesh relations.
- Chinese aggressive influence is a main obstacle to strong relation between India-Bangladesh.
- Border killings is one of the most sensitive issue in this relations. In a research from Odhikar (2017) between 2000-2017 Bangladeshi peoples have been killed by BSF.

David M. Malone in his book entitled *Does the Elephant Dance?* said that Bangladesh is surrounded by Indian state which sometimes makes the country feel 'India locked'. Although India is the fastest growing economy in the South Asia, but India needs to work in such a way that it can build friendly relations without being intimidating to its neighbours. Government of India specially the Modi government has insisted this way. India and Bangladesh is the member of SAARC, BIMSTEC, and also India is the Strategic Partner of ASEAN. In medical, tourism, cultural, sports, space technology, garments, IT sector both can enhance their engagement. And closer engagement in Bangladesh is very important to India for counter of China. Finally, it can be said that sensitive issues regarding India-Bangladesh relations that will be handling in soft way.

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