

Bangladesh-Myanmar Relations: Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract: The paper intends to explore the dynamics of contemporary bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Myanmar. Both the countries are close neighbors sharing land and maritime borders. They have also historical, commercial and cultural ties. From both geostrategic and economic point of view, the countries bear the necessity of strong bilateral relations. But both the countries have failed to set up meaningful relationship due to lack of Myanmar government's political will, mutual trust and confidence of the countries. From this perspective, the paper is an attempt to identify challenges and opportunities to the way of developing Bangladesh-Myanmar relations. The study is qualitative in nature based on secondary data which follows descriptive and interpretative methods. The study finds that the Rohingya refugee issue, border tension and transnational crimes are the major challenges to the way of developing bilateral relations. Along with the analysis of challenges the paper also identifies some areas of prospects to develop the bilateral relation of the countries.

Keywords: Bilateral relations, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Cooperation, Challenges.

Introduction

Myanmar is a country of Southeast Asia which gained liberation from the British on 4 January 1948 (Maung, 1979: 23). Myanmar is not only a neighbor of Bangladesh but also a great competitor in the area of trade and business. Both Bangladesh and Myanmar share about 271 kilometers common border (Sheikh, 1998:473). Bangladesh-Myanmar official relations began from 13 January 1972 following Myanmar's recognition which is the 7th country to recognize Bangladesh (Rashid, 2015:331). After the independence of Bangladesh the exchange of many high profile visits took place between the countries to develop bilateral relations. Since 1970s except the caretaker governments all the heads of government of Bangladesh visited Myanmar. In 2011, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited Myanmar which labels the priority of making robust relationship with Myanmar. Despite all these high profile visits, the relation is not going smoothly due to lack of Myanmar government's political will, mutual trust and confidence of the countries regarding Rohingya refugee issue, border tension and transnational crimes. Furthermore, the current political and economic reforms in Myanmar like inclusive economic policy, economic up-gradation and submission to Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) have added new hopes to develop the relations of the countries. But the major influx of Rohingya refugees following military operation in Myanmar regarding border post attack on 25 August 2017 has strained the bilateral relations of the countries. The Rohingya refugee crisis has emerged as security threat to Bangladesh. Though

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Bangladesh and Myanmar signed agreement with Myanmar and the UNHCR for the repatriation of the Rohingyas but due to the negligence of Myanmar government the repatriation is yet started. Against the backdrop, the paper seeks to address the challenges of Bangladesh-Myanmar relations. Along with the challenges the paper also highlights the areas of prospects to develop the bilateral relations of the countries.

It is mentionable that in recent years Bangladesh-Myanmar relations has gained attention to many academics and researchers. But, the recent studies of Imtiaz Ahmed (2010), David Scott Mathieson (2009), Kei Nemote (2005), Parnini (2013) have focused on Rohingya refugee crisis conceptualizing historical exclusion of the Rohingyas, statelessness and refugeehood, border tension and security dilemma in the host country, Bangladesh. They also explored that Bangladesh-Myanmar relations are being interrupted by the Rohingya refugee crisis and argued that the problem should be addressed through inclusive approach to include the local and international communities. They didn't take into account the issues which offer opportunities to develop bilateral relations. The paper is, therefore, seeks to address the challenges and prospects for developing Bangladesh-Myanmar bilateral relations.

Objectives of the Study

The study has been designed to present the existing bilateral relations of Bangladesh and Myanmar identifying challenges and opportunities in developing bi-lateral relations. The other objectives are-

- a) To discuss the historical evolution of Bangladesh-Myanmar relations;
- b) To address the challenges those are impeding Bangladesh-Myanmar bilateral relations;
- c) To examine the prospects of developing Bangladesh-Myanmar relations.

Methodology of the Study

The study is qualitative in nature based on descriptive and interpretative methods. The data and information have been collected from secondary sources like books, published articles, survey reports, research works, working papers, e-journals and internet sources. Besides, reports from different electronic and printing media, reports of government and non-government agencies.

Historical Background of Bangladesh-Myanmar Bilateral Relations

Just after independence, Bangladesh launched diplomatic relations with Myanmar at the highest level and appointed a senior diplomat K.M. Kaiser as its ambassador to Myanmar (Sheikh,1998:472). Since then, the top political leaders and officials of the two governments exchanged visits for many times. On 3 August 1973, Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a trade agreement aimed at promoting economic relations of the countries (The Bangladesh Observer, 1973, August 5).

In 1978 during the reign of Myanmar's military ruler Ne Win, Bangladesh for the first time experienced the refugee crisis due to Nagamin operation¹ which led about 200,000 Rohingyas to enter Bangladesh (Ahmed, 2008: 99). So, at the time the political relations of the two countries came under strain. On 9 July 1978, after many round table of discussion, both the countries signed an agreement on repatriation of Rohingya refugees (The Bangladesh Observer, 1978, July 10). Myanmar's Deputy Foreign Minister U Tin Ohn and Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Mr. Tabarak Hussain signed the agreement on behalf of their respective governments. The two representatives also agreed on some important issues like appointment of representatives on demarcation of land boundary, formulation of border ground rules and cooperation in preventing illegal crossing of peoples between Bangladesh and Myanmar (The Bangladesh Observer, 1978, July 10).

In the year 1991-1992, the second massive Rohingya refugee influx to Bangladesh strained the bi-lateral relationship. At that time nearly 250,000 Rohingya refugees had fled to Bangladesh to escape persecution (Ragland, 1994:310). In November 1991, Bangladesh Foreign Minister Mustafizur Rahman visited Myanmar and met his counterpart U Ohn Gyan to talk about the crisis and forced for the repatriation of the refugees. Eventually, the UNHCR negotiated with the Myanmar and Bangladesh Government for a peaceful settlement to the Rohingya crisis and finally signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on 28 April 1992 to resolve the crisis (Yesmin, 2016:78). By December 1999 about 200,000 Rohingyas were returned to their motherland (Ahmed, 2008:104). This exposed Bangladesh government's matured and fruitful handling of a large crisis with neighbor.

During Khaleda Zia period (2002-2006) the bilateral relation was strengthened through the exchange of visits between the chairman of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) of the Union of Myanmar and then Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. During the visit of Begum Khaleda Zia which took place on 19 May 2003, three agreements- Coastal Shipping, Trade Account System and Joint Business Council Agreements were settled to improve bilateral trade (Rashid, 2015:332).

After assuming power by Sheikh Hasina on 6 January 2009, Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dipu Moni held official talks with Myanmar Foreign Minister U Hyan Winz on 14-17 May 2009 and debated a lot of issues, including the repatriation of Rohingya refugees, relaxation of visa requirement, demarcation of the maritime boundary, acceleration of the banking services, increasing border trade, road link between the two countries up to china, direct air link, exporting surplus power to Bangladesh, border fencing etc. (Rashid, 2015: 334). On 5-7 December 2011, the official visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to Myanmar began a new era in bi-lateral relations. The Prime Minister met with the President

¹ The Nagamin operation was a military operation conducted by the armed forces and immigration officials of then Burma to register citizens in northern Arakan (the present Rakhine state of Myanmar) and oust alleged immigrants from the area before national census.

of Myanmar on 6 December 2011 and both the leaders agreed to enhance cooperation in the fields of trade and commerce, defense, investment, energy, agriculture and border supervision (Foreign office briefing notes, 2011).

Key Challenges of Bangladesh-Myanmar Relations

The Rohingya Issue

The long decade Rohingya² conflict is impeding the bilateral relations of Bangladesh and Myanmar. The term “Rohingya” has been derived from the word “Rohang” which is the former name of the Arakan Province. But the Burmese historians and academics deny the historical origin of Rohingyas and term these people as Bengali immigrants. They are not considered Myanmarese citizens as per the 1982 Citizenship Act³. (Parnini, 2012) pointed out that the origin of the Rohingyas went back to the early 7th century when Arab Muslim merchants started settlement in the area. But after independence in 1948, the Government of Burma has refused the Rohingya’s historical claims and denied their recognition as ethnic group by 1982 Burma citizenship Law.⁴ After the independence of Bangladesh, Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh from Myanmar in 1978 following the ‘Nagamin’ (Dragon King) operation of the Myanmar army. During the 1970’s Naga-min operation pushed about 200,000 Rohingyas into Bangladesh (Ahmed, 2008: 99). Later in 1991-1992 about 250,000 Rohingyas entered Bangladesh to escape persecution (Yesmin, 2016:78-80). The Government of Bangladesh (GOB) with the support from United Nations stood by their side despite its own socio-economic problems. Again, in June 2012 another Rohingya exodus occurred which displaced about 100,000 Rohingyas following ethnic violence against Muslims in Rakhine state (Rahman, 2018:32). On 25 August 2017, following the attack on Border Guard Police of Myanmar by Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), the Myanmar army has carried out a bloody crackdown in Rakhine which caused a major influx of Rohingyas to Bangladesh. It is estimated that about 700,000 Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh following the brutal military campaign of Myanmar since 25 August 2017 and at present about 10 lakh Rohingyas are living in Bangladesh including 300,000 other Rohingyas who entered Bangladesh in the previous years (The Daily Star, 2018, February 17).

² The term “Rohingya” refers to a distinct ethnic group who lives in Rakhine state of Myanmar and speaks Rohingya or Ruaingga, a dialect that is different from others in Myanmar. The majority of Rohingyas are Muslims and the rest are Hindus.

³ This act defines that according to the treaty of Yandabo, signed on 24 February 1826 which brought to an end the First Anglo Burmese war (1824-1826), anyone who was not a part of Burmese Kingdom, he/she and his/her descendants would not be provided the citizenship of Myanmar (Desai, 1939, P.1).

⁴ Section (2) of the 1982 Burma citizenship law has defined a national as a person belonging to the Burmese race such as Kachine, Karen, Kayah, Chin, Mon, Rakhine and Shan of the state and persons belonging to such racial groups who have settled in territories now included the state as their permanent home from a period anterior to 1824 AD. The Rohingyas do not belong to any ethnic race as described by Section (2) of the 1982 Burma citizenship law.

Repatriation Process of Rohingya

In 1992 the repatriation process started with an average of 15,000 people per month with support and monitoring of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and government of Bangladesh (Ahmed, 2008:104). From the year 1992 to 2005, it is assumed that approximately 2,36,599 Rohingyas were repatriated to their motherland (Ahmed, 2010:101). After that many ministerial talks took place but the repatriation process didn't start.

Recently, the two countries have also agreed to stop the Rohingya influx to Bangladesh and to form a joint working group for starting repatriation process (The Reuters, 2017, October 24). On 16 February 2018, Bangladesh handed over a list of 8,032 Rohingyas of 1,673 families to Myanmar with a view to starting repatriation process (The Daily Star, 2018, February 17). Actually, the huge number of Rohingya refugees is a matter of serious security concern for the host country, Bangladesh. The refugees are being involved in serious crimes including terrorism, drug and human trafficking, smuggling, robbery and other organized crimes which threaten security and stability of the country. The following table shows the security threats emanated from Rohingyas in Bangladesh.

Table 1- Security Threats Emanating from Rohingyas in Bangladesh

Security Issues	Particulars
Demographic issue	The continuous arrival and the high birth rate of Rohingyas in the camps are causing demographic change particularly in Teknaf. They produce more children to get more rations from the UNHCR and other International organizations in the camps which are adding extra pressure on the existing population problem of Bangladesh.
Economic concern	Rohingyas are occupying local job market. They have been employed in local hotels, motels, ports and small business are all of Rohingya origin. Moreover, some Rohingya refugees are creating trouble abroad threatening the countries overseas labour market. By using Bangladeshi passport these illegal Myanmar nationals are going to Middle east countries that are causing huge embarrassments to the Bangladeshi community living in abroad following their arrests of unruly and unethical behavior and practices all of which are abruptly blamed on the Bangladeshi nationals.
Organized crimes	Many Rohingyas are involved in illegal trade, drug and Human trafficking. There is a trafficking network between undocumented Rohingyas and some Myanmar people to conduct the crimes.

Environmental threats	Deforestation is the main environmental threats in the Cox's Bazaar region. Bangladesh has lost considerable area of reserve forest about 2000 hectares of forest for providing land to the refugees for construction of their shelter (<i>The Daily Star</i> , 2019, April 19). Moreover, refugees and undocumented Myanmar nationals are regularly cutting off valuable trees and destroying forests to meet up fuel demand in the Bandarban and Cox's Bazaar areas causing serious harm to Bangladesh's environment and bio-diversity.
Societal problems	Rohingyas are engaged in various crimes like killing, stealing, robbery, using drug that are decaying social values, law and order situation of the country.

Source: Developed by the Author

Tensions in Border

The frequent border conflict between Bangladesh and Myanmar is also impediment to the development of Bangladesh- Myanmar relations. Both the countries shares a common border of 271 kilometers which is divided into two parts- 64 km zero-line boundary on the Naf River and about 208 km land boundary out of which a stretch of at least 150 km is porous due to the hilly and densely forested terrain (Sheikh, 1998:471). Bangladesh-Myanmar border area became tense at different times, e.g. in January 2001, tensions erupted following Myanmar authority's attempt to build on river near Teknaf (Uddin, 2014:9). Again in 2009, when Myanmar started fencing 40 kilometers of Bangladesh-Myanmar border, Bangladesh expressed concern and Myanmar assured that it would not affect the bilateral relations of the country (Uddin, 2014:9). On June 17, 2015, the BGP men abducted one BGB man, Nayek Abdur Razzak, after shooting on BGB team entering into the Bangladesh Territory of Naf River (*The Daily Star*, 2015, June 18). The Myanmar border guard members frequently violate the 1979 Bangladesh-Myanmar border agreement while Bangladesh wants a peaceful border to continue friendly relations with Myanmar. So, to maintain friendly and cordial relations Bangladesh and Myanmar should uphold the 1979 Bangladesh-Myanmar Border Agreement and Land Boundary Treaty of 1998.

Illegal Migration, Illegal Trade, Drugs and Arms Smuggling

In spite of having skilled border forces, illegal trade, human trafficking, drugs and arms smuggling are very common in the border areas of Bangladesh and Myanmar. In Bangladesh, the people of coastal areas are mainly poor and they are convinced to migrate to Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore or Malaysia with a very cheap rate and the route is water based sea route. This is very risky and in this way every year a large number of ignorant and poor people of Bangladesh and Myanmar are being victims of human trafficking. Moreover, Many Rohingya refugees are involved in illegal trade, drugs and arms

smuggling. On 16 February 2018, at the ministerial level meeting between the Home-minister of Bangladesh and Myanmar, Bangladesh handed over a list of 49 Yaba factories of Myanmar and requested Myanmar to close down the factories (The Daily Star, 2018, February 17). Smuggling network are active at Maungdaw and Sittwe of Arakan state and Taknaf, Cox's Bazaar and Chittagong of Bangladesh where the smugglers face little resistance for arms and drug smuggling. Almost every day Bangladeshi authorities-the BGB, the police and other concerned authorities are seizing large quantity of Yaba.

Lack of Connectivity

Lack of Connectivity is one of the major challenges to the development of Bangladesh-Myanmar relations. There is no direct road and sea link between Bangladesh and Myanmar. Though historically Chittagong was connected with Myanmar's Arakan state but after 1960s it had been neglected for decades. In 2007 an agreement was signed between Bangladesh and Myanmar aimed to establishing 2 km long Balukhali- Gundum road within Bangladesh and 23 km Gundhum-Bawlibazar road within Myanmar (Ahmed, 2008:110). But the agreement is yet pending due to the lack of Myanmar's interest. Thus Bangladesh-Myanmar bilateral trade, people to people contact is minimal due to poor transport system.

Insignificant Bilateral Trade and Investment

In spite of being close neighbors, trade relations between Bangladesh and Myanmar couldn't reach in an expected level. Low volume of trade, lack of diversification, lack of working banking system and complexity on Myanmar's visas etc. are major constraints to the development of bilateral trade and investment. Besides, both the countries have no agreements based on investment, shipping, air travel, tourism and currency exchange. According to Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) data, Bangladesh's export earnings from Myanmar stood at \$21.37 million in the Fiscal Year 2017-18 whereas in the last fiscal year 2016-17 Bangladesh earned \$23.73 million from Myanmar which has declined about 9.93% (The Dhaka Tribune, 2018, July12).

Table 2- Bangladesh's Trade Figure with Myanmar

Year	Export to Myanmar (In Crore BDT)	Import to Myanmar (In Crore BDT)	Deficit (In Crore BDT)
2016 -17	188	385	197
2015 -16	204	304	100
2014 -15	132	245	113
2013 -14	92	716	624
2012- 13	90	671	581
2011 - 12	94	516	422

Source: Import payment, Bangladesh Bank and Export Statistics (2015).

Retrieved from <http://www.dhakachamber.com>

The above table shows that bilateral trade is in favor of Myanmar as Bangladesh imports more than it exports. In the Fiscal Year 2016-17, Bangladesh imported products worth Tk 385 crore, while exports to the country amounted to goods worth Tk about 188 crore (Table-2).

Energy Quest of China and India in Myanmar

Both China and India have great fascination with Myanmar's natural resources like oil and natural gas. In January 2005, the energy ministers of the three countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the construction of a tri-nation gas pipeline with 950 km. length (The Reutres, 2009, November 12). But the implementation of the proposed gas pipeline has become complicated due to Bangladesh's demands for custom-free passage to and from Nepal and Bhutan, greater transit facilities and reduction of trade imbalance between Bangladesh and India which were not acceptable to India. This divergence provided chance to sign an agreement with Myanmar to sell 5.5 trillion cubic feet (tcf) from Rakhine coastline to China through an overland pipeline for a period of 30 years (Bose, 2007: 3). After that a series of agreements on constructing oil pipeline, natural gas pipeline and crude oil pipeline respectively in 2008 and 2009 have been signed between the two countries due to Myanmar's priority to China (Bose, 2007:3). On the other side, India is interested to import gas through direct pipeline from Myanmar to India. In this regard, the Indian government negotiated with Myanmar to facilitate the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project which will connect India's north eastern states with Myanmar's sea port (Bose, 2007:3). Under this circumstances it will be challenge for Bangladesh to secure energy from Myanmar amid the growing energy competition of India and China in Myanmar.

Prospects for Developing Bi-lateral Relations

Cooperation in Regional Forums

There are vast opportunities to deepen the economic relations of Bangladesh and Myanmar through the regional forums - the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Co-operation (BIMSTEC).⁵ The Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Forum (BCIM),⁶ Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)⁷ and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).⁸ On certain strategic issues, these regional

⁵ BIMSTEC was established in 1997 which involves the countries of South and Southeast Asia. The member states are-Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Srilanka, Thailand, Nepal and Bhutan.

⁶ BCIM is a sub-regional economic cooperation of Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar. It was established in 1999 which aims to increase connectivity among the member states.

⁷ ASEAN was established in 1967 and the 10 member states are- Myanmar, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Combodia.

⁸ SAARC was founded in 1985 and member states are-Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Srilanka, Maldives and Afghanistan.

and sub-regional forums can play vital role in developing bilateral relations. For example, BIMSTEC brings together the countries of South and South-East Asia and it creates a podium for intra-regional collaboration between SAARC and ASEAN. In March 2014, during the third summit of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Co-operation (BIMSTEC), both countries stressed Bangladesh-Myanmar-Kunming road linking project connecting Mandalay in Myanmar, Dhaka and Chittagong in Bangladesh to boost bilateral trade (Yesmin, 2015:68). Besides, Bangladesh is a bridge between SAARC and ASEAN while Myanmar is located between East Asia, South-East Asia and South Asia. So, both the countries can be benefitted by each other through expanding market in the region. Bangladesh is interested to materialize the proposed Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) project of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). If it becomes visible, it will connect Bangladesh with six East Asian countries- Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Laos, Cambodia and also European countries through Turkey. It is also mentionable that Bangladesh signed TAR agreement on 10 November 2007 which came into force in June 2009 and as a part of that 130-km-railway-track is proposed to be placed from Dohazari of Bangladesh to Gundum in the Arakan state of Myanmar via Ramu in Cox'sbazar (Yesmin, 2015:68). It is assumed that The TAR and the East-West Economic Passage (EWEC) will stimulate Bangladesh's economic welfares to ASEAN and elsewhere.

Finally, the relationship of the countries can be developed through the regional forums based on proper negotiation, compromise and a sense of brotherhood and neighborhood.

Enhancing Trade and Business

On 5-7 December 2011, the official visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to Myanmar began a new era in bi-lateral relations. The visit took place at a time when the Myanmar government had been transforming toward democracy. The Prime Minister met with the President of Myanmar on 6 December 2011 and both the leaders agreed to enhance cooperation in the fields of trade and commerce, defense, investment, energy, agriculture and border supervision (Foreign office briefing notes, 2011). Both the countries signed an agreement to form Joint Commission at the level of Foreign Ministers and an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish Joint Business Council between the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI) and Union of Myanmar Chambers of Commerce and Industries (UMFCCI) (Foreign office briefing notes, 2011). It is expected that the trade deficit between Bangladesh and Myanmar will reduce through the opening of Letter of Credits (LC) and the direct banking channel with Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Maritime Trade

In 2012, the peaceful settlement of Bangladesh-Myanmar maritime dispute has initiated a great opportunity in developing bilateral relations. The Tribunal has awarded Bangladesh over 1,11,631 squarekilometres of sea area and 1,71,832 square kilometres to Myanmar

(Rashid, 2015:339). The International Tribunal for the Law of Sea (ITLOS) drew lines over the water and allocated Territorial Sea incorporating 12 nautical miles (22.2 Km) from the St. Martins Island, 200 nautical miles (370 kms) of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) (about 486 kms from Chittagong) and also Continental Shelf beyond 200 nautical miles to Bangladesh (Alam, 2013:1). It is a victory for both Bangladesh and Myanmar which has opened opportunities for both the countries to explore the resources in the Bay of Bengal (Alam, 2013:1). The settlement has extended the scope of joint naval exchanges and maritime connectivity in the Bay of Bengal. The government of Bangladesh has emphasized on blue economy aiming at expanding Bangladesh-Myanmar cooperation in the sphere of maritime trade.

Investment in Myanmar

Myanmar is rich in natural resources and recently has taken liberal policy to lease land for agro-based industries. So Bangladesh can encourage investment through governmental aid or private investment in many fields like Agro-tech and forestry industries, IT education and infrastructure, Hotel industry and tourism, Contract farming and marine fishing and Human resource development. But Bangladesh government should provide bank credit line for easy investment. In this regard two areas of joint investment are pending. The first is to construct a hydro-electric project and the other fertilizer plant. In terms of joint investment, Bangladesh can share land, expertise and Myanmar can provide natural gas.

Conclusion

Bangladesh and Myanmar are close neighbors having geographical proximity, traditional commercial and cultural ties. In terms of geo-strategic, political and economic point of view these two countries are vital for each other. The paper has been designed to discover the contemporary bilateral relations of Bangladesh and Myanmar. Following the objective, the paper reviews the historical relations of the countries and addresses the key challenges to the way of developing Bangladesh-Myanmar bilateral relations. It also identifies the areas of cooperation for developing bilateral relations of the countries. The study finds that Bangladesh-Myanmar relations are passing through cooperation and constraints. After the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1972, both the countries have exchanged high profile visits for many times and concluded important agreements. Despite all these high profile visits and agreements, the bilateral relation is not going smoothly due to lack of Myanmar government's political will, mutual trust and confidence of the countries. Besides, some unresolved issues like Rohingya refugee crisis and border security issue are posing challenges to smooth bilateral relations. Although the countries have completed some agreements regarding Rohingya repatriation, the repatriation is yet launched due to the lack of Myanmar Government's enthusiasm. Actually, for resolving the bilateral issues, both the countries should reciprocate in the same way through strong diplomatic ties and intensive cooperation. The Rohingya issue which is influencing the other bilateral issues should be resolved immediately considering the humanitarian and national security

perspectives. In terms of border security both the countries can launch joint border management mechanism to remove arms and drug smuggling and to detect extremist groups along Bangladesh-Myanmar border. To strengthen economic ties, connectivity as well as trade and investment are imperative for the countries. Along with land, air and sea connectivity, people to people connectivity may be increased through cultural exchange, sports and educations of trade fair. In this regard, the governments of the countries have to facilitate the banking services and ease the visa procedures of the countries. Finally, it can be summed that mutual trust and confidence is essential for the neighbors. Therefore, mistrust and misperception should be removed to strengthen the bilateral relations of Bangladesh and Myanmar.

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