

## **Bangladesh-India Relations: Challenges and Opportunities**

Muhammad Kamruzzaman \*

**Abstract:** Bangladesh -India relationship has been prized with strong historical and cultural background. But both sides seem to be cautious about keeping this relationship. Bangladesh shares 4094 kilometers of land border with India on three sides, the fourth side being open to the Bay of Bengal. Despite lot of success over the years, various issues are still unsettled which need to be resolved in order to continue this relationship. These include sharing the water of 54 international rivers that flow from India to Bangladesh, controlling terrorism and promoting economic development as well as building neighboring relationship. This paper attempts to investigate emerging issues. i.e. border dispute, drug and human trafficking, smugglings, trade and investment, water disputes, environmental degradation which are apparent bases of divergence in the pursuit of bilateral relations between Bangladesh and India.

**Key Words:** Bilateral Relations, Conflict of Interest, Trade Deals, Border Conflict, First Neighborhood, Geo-Politics, Domestic Politics.

### **Introduction**

Bangladesh and India both shares historical relations. India has been the standing partner which helped the people of Bangladesh in the Liberation war in 1971. Moreover Bangladesh and India are two significant countries in South Asia. Both of the countries were ruled for a long time by the British colonial power. In 1947 Indian sub-continent first got Independence from British colonial rule and was divided into two independent states; one is India and another is Pakistan, But in 1971 one of the major parts of Pakistan known as East Pakistan got independence from Pakistan through Liberation war. This paper attempts to investigate some issues, challenges and recent developments of Bangladesh - India relations. The circumstances and limited choices of both the countries during liberation war in 1971 brought these two countries closer. During those turbulent days people of Bangladesh needed help and cooperation from India, India on the other hand, had extended all out cooperation to the freedom loving people of Bangladesh. After nine months war and surrender of 90 thousand Pakistani occupation soldiers, the War ended. It was estimated that Bangladesh had lost 30 lakh valuable lives and chastity of 3 lakh Bangladeshi women. At the same time India also had lost 12 thousand trained patriotic soldiers who joined in the last phase of Liberation war. The study has been conducted on the basis of literature review and information gathered from newspapers and other primary sources.

### **Bangladesh-India Bilateral Relations: Why Some Issues Remain Unsettled?**

#### **1) Insurgency**

Insurgency has been playing the role in straining of India with Bangladesh. Northeast India has been facing insurgency since 1956 due to ethnic separatism among its

---

\* Lecturer, Department of Government and Politics, Jahangirnagar University, Savar, Dhaka- 1342

inhabitants is operating with the support of Bangladesh. National liberation Front of Tripura<sup>1</sup> (NLFT), United Liberation front of Assam<sup>2</sup> (ULFA) and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland<sup>3</sup> (NDFM) are major insurgent group in Northeast India. There are some various that ULFA has several lucrative income generating projects in Bangladesh to sustain its insurgency activities in India (Ghosh: 2013)

## **11) Border Disputes**

India's land border with Bangladesh as per the ministry of Defence is 4351 k.m running through five states, viz., West Bengal (2217 kms) Assam (262 kms), Meghalaya (443 kms), Tripura (856kms) and Mizoram (318kms), including nearby 781 kms of riverine border. The border traverses through 25 districts. The border is mostly used for smuggling goods from India to Bangladesh like livestock, drug trafficking, women trafficking and food items. Sometimes a group of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh cross the border to India in search of improving their livelihood. Because of a large number of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh into India, a controversial shoot on-sight policy has been implemented in border by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF). Several times Bangladesh and India border security force meet at flag meetings for resolving push in and push back issues. While operating in the border there are occurrences of violence between the illegal migrants and Indian soldiers. The border has also witnessed occasional skirmishes between the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) and the Border Guards of Bangladesh (BGB), during the period of 2001-2006. (Dutta: 2009)

The historical land Boundary demarcation agreement between Bangladesh and India and related matters was signed in May 1974. This historical agreement is a sign of depth friendship, goodwill and mutual trust and above all, the vision of peace and harmony of two great leaders, the Father of the Nation of Bangladesh Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibar Rahman and Smt Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India. Article 9 of the Indo - Bangladesh Friendship Treaty provides for mutual consultation between the two signatories in order to remove a threat if either of them is attacked. This agreement is a milestone in the history of Indo - Bangladesh relations. This comprehensive agreement was intended to resolve all lingering and vexing problems. Killing of Bangladeshi people by Border Security Force (BSF) of India has become a high nerve-racking issue in recent times. Public sentiments has been evoked largely in Bangladesh on this issue. Human

---

<sup>1</sup> The National Liberation Front of Tripura (abbreviated NLFT) is a Tripuri nationalist organization based in Tripura, India. It has an estimated 550 to 850 members. The NLFT seeks to secede from India and establish an independent Tripuri state, and is an active participant in the Insurgency in Northeast India. The NLFT manifesto says that they want to expand what they describe as the Kingdom of God and Jesus Christ in Tripura.<sup>1</sup> The NLFT is currently designated as a terrorist organization in India.

<sup>2</sup> The United Liberation Front of Assam is a separatist outfit operating in Assam, North East India.<sup>[1][2]</sup> It seeks to establish a sovereign Assam with an armed struggle in the Assam conflict. The government of India banned the organization in 1990 citing it as a terrorist organization, while the United States Department of State lists it under "other groups of concern."

<sup>3</sup> The National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) is an armed christian separatist outfit which seeks to obtain a sovereign Bodoland for the Bodo people in Assam, India. It is designated as a terrorist organisation by the Government of India.

Rights Organization like as Odhikar published that from 1, January 2001 to 30, December 2015, 1809 Bangladeshis were killed by BSF. In September 2011, the demarcation of land boundary agreement was signed between Bangladesh and Indian Government during the state visit of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. The Agreement has settled the long standing land boundary issues related to demarcation of 6.1 kms; territories in adverse possession; and exchange of enclaves.

### **III) Maritime Border**

While Bangladesh, having hollow coast liner, delimits its sea border southward from the edge of its land boundary, India stretches its claim southeast wards, covering thousands of miles in the Bay of Bengal. Due to competing claims of the two countries, delimitation of the sea boundary determining Bangladesh's exclusive economic Zones have remained unresolved. Moreover, in terms of determining the continental shelf, the presence of the Andaman's and Nicobar islands puts India, in a favorable position. (Harun : 2010)

### **IV) Drug Trafficking**

Now a days, Bangladesh is used as a transit point by drug dealers as well as drug mafia, that dispatches yabba, heroin, opium, coken, fensidil from Myanmar, Afghanistan and other neighboring countries of the golden triangle to different destinations. As a result, Bangladesh's Department of Narcotics Control has come under the scanner several times and invited criticism. Bangladesh has become the prime transit route for trafficking heroin to Europe from South Asia, according to a report from International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) 2007 in the annual Report. INCB notes that the most common methods and routes for smuggling heroin into Bangladesh are by courier from Pakistan, commercial vehicles and trains from India and via sea routes through the Bay of Bengal or overland by truck or public transport from Barma.

### **V) Trade and Investment**

The trade relationship has a detrimental effect on bilateral relationships. 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 million. The geographical proximity of Bangladesh and India has made it one of its biggest trading partners. There are pressing concerns in Bangladesh regarding the large bilateral trade deficit with India and the large volumes of informal imports from India across the land border which avoid Bangladesh's import duties . The bilateral trade deficit with India has been increasing rapidly on an average of about 9.5% annually. The trade deficit with India is frequently highlighted by Bangladesh as a major contentious issue. Trade deficit for Bangladesh is more than \$4 billion. For long, Bangladesh has been urging India to reduce this gap by lifting the tariff barriers as they were major impediments to the growth of Bangladesh's exports to India. By responding to Bangladesh's concern, in November 2011, India granted duty free access to all products, except 10 tobacco and liquor items from Bangladesh which amounts to 30% of Bangladesh's export. As much as 98 percent of Bangladeshi products enjoy zero duty benefits in the Indian market. Bangladesh's exports to India are expected to cross \$1

billion in 2012. **(The Daily Star: August, 2012)** Political discontent in Bangladesh tends to focus on the issue that India has a lot of non trade barriers for Bangladeshi exports. Although exports from Bangladesh are growing at a healthy pace, there is no sign of reducing this trade gap. (Farooq: 2006)

Table-1 Bangladesh-India Trade in different financial years (in million US Dollar)

Financial Year	Import	Export	Balance
2001-2002	1018.90	50.19	(-) 968.71
2002-2003	1357.79	83.81	(-) 1274.18
2003-2004	1602.55	89.32	(-)1513.23
2004-2005	2025.78	144.19	(-) 1881.59
2005-2006	1868.00	241.96	(-)1626.04
2006-2007	269.00	289.41	(-)1979.59
2007-2008	3393.00	358.08	(-)3034.82
2008-2009	2843.00	245.14	(-)2597.86
2009-2010	3213.70	304.63	(-)2909.07
2010-2011	4574.90	512.5	(-)4062.40
2011-2012	4758.89	490.42	(-)4268.47
2012-2013	4776.9	563.96	(-)4212.94
2013-2014	6035.5	456.633	(-)5578.867

Source: [http://www.dhakachamber.com/Bilateral/India-Bangladesh%20Bilateral%20Trade%20 Statistics.Pdf](http://www.dhakachamber.com/Bilateral/India-Bangladesh%20Bilateral%20Trade%20Statistics.Pdf) and Ministry of Commerce, Government of Bangladesh.

The causes of this large gap could be attributed to some trade and non-trade barriers. The non-trade barriers, as pointed by Bangladesh commerce ministry include:

- a) Laboratory tests in Bangladesh, especially for food products, cosmetics and leather and textile products.
- b) Packaging requirements
- c) Inadequate infrastructure facilities such as warehousing, transshipment yard, passing yard
- d) Connecting Roads at land customs stations also hinders exports from Bangladeshi; The land border trade is subject to very administrative constraints in Bangladesh. The most important customs clearance post is at Beanpole, which borders petrapole on the Indian side and which is on the main roads linking Kolkata with Jessore and Dhaka. On the other hand as per the report of the Bangladesh Commence Ministry, trade barriers include: (a) imposition of state tax, (b) anti-dumping which is one of the WTO's measures introduced by India. During 1990's because of countervailing duties 90% of industrial tariffs has come down to 12.5%. It is far lower and far more uniform than they were ever in the past 50 years from the perspective of SAARC<sup>4</sup> For

<sup>4</sup> The **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)** is the regional intergovernmental organization and geopolitical union of nations in South Asia. Its member states include Afghanistan,



Bangladesh, these changes mean that Indian domestic markets, for most manufactured goods are highly competitive with complete release from Indian tariffs under bilateral or multilateral free trade arrangements. Porous land border between Bangladesh and India adds to the trade deficit, dating back to the initial years of Bangladesh's birth. (Farooq : 2006) The substantial, informal and unrecorded trade, carried across the Indo-Bangladesh border is more quasi legal in nature and is often described as 'informal' rather than illegal. (Rajpal: 2003)

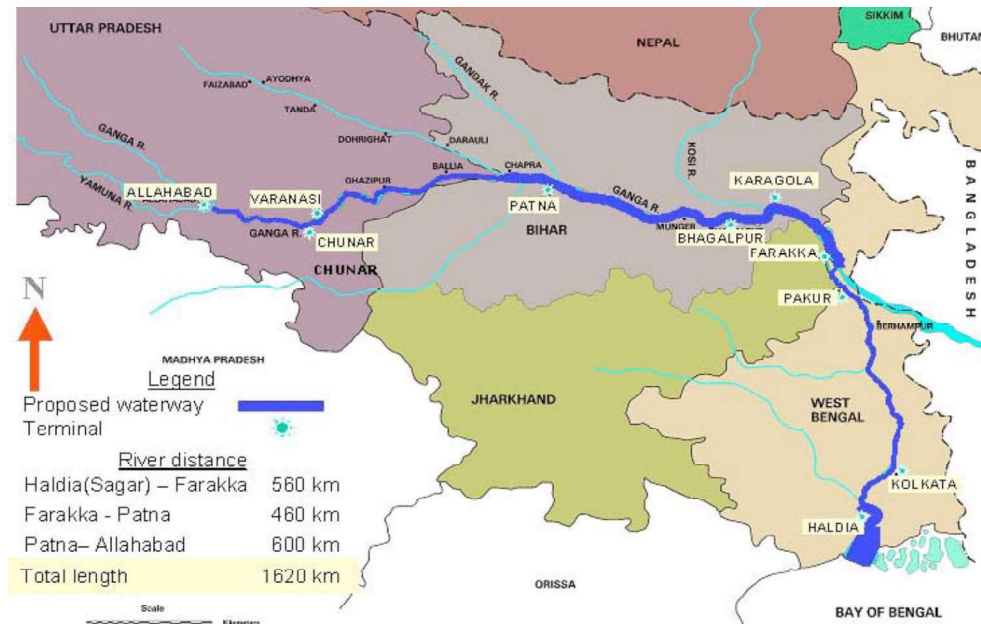
According to recently signed agreement India has agreed to remove several items many of which relate to the garment sector from the negative list of imports from Bangladesh. The Indian textile industry demanded more "protection". But New Delhi had to take a wider view of its interests. India's exports to Bangladesh in the 'fiscal year 2013-2014 stood at \$ 6035.5 million while its imports from Bangladesh amounted to \$ 456.633 million. The Indian customs Department published a circular on November 9,2011 to the effect that India has given duty free access to 15 Bangladeshi products, Within three months, India has given the facility to Bangladesh for 61 products. This was a long time demand from the Bangladesh side. However the overall balance of bilateral trade is heavily tilted towards India's favors. India is Bangladesh's second most important import source after china and ranks fifth as Bangladesh's export destination.

### **V1) Water Disputes**

Sharing of Ganges water is one of the sources of conflict between India and Bangladesh. This conflict between two countries arose when India decided to construct Farakka barrage to divert water from Ganges to Hoogly River in India. Ganga is a trans-boundary river of India and Bangladesh. The 2,525 km (1,569 m) river rises in the western Himalayas in the Indian state of Uttarkhand and flows south and east through the Gangetic plain of North India into Bangladesh where it empties into the Bay of Bengal. It is the second largest river in the Indian sub-continent by discharge. The aim of construction of the Farakka Barrage was to increase the lean period flow of the Bhagirathi-Hoogly branch of Ganga to increase the water depth at Kolkata port which was threatened by siltation. (Harun: 2010) As irrigation withdrawals increased in Bangladesh conflicts arose over the question of sharing water flow at Farrakka. The inadequacy of water during the slant season to meet the assessed demands in the two countries is the root of cause of the conflict. (Farooq : 2006) Bangladesh government feels that the reduction in flow caused damage to agriculture, industry and ecology in Bangladesh. The Government of India feels that such misgivings are misplaced. Because of the inability of the concerned governments to come to any lasting agreement over the last few decades on sharing the river water, this problem has grown. Now it is also viewed as a case of upstream-downstream dispute. (Artheur:1990)

---

Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, the Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. SAARC comprises 3% of the world's area, 21% of the world's population and 3.8% (US\$ 2.9 trillion) of the global economy, as of 2015. SAARC was founded in Dhaka on 8th December, 1985. Its secretariat is based in Kathmandu, Nepal. The organization promotes development of economic and regional integration. It launched the South Asian Free Trade Area in 2006. SAARC maintains permanent diplomatic relations at the United Nations as an observer and has developed links with multilateral entities, including the European Union.



Source: <http://www.defence.pk/forums/bangladesh-defense/59471-india-going-ahead-tipai-dam-2.html> 8

In the relationship between Bangladesh and India the dispute over Ganga water was an important component for over two decades. In 1977, the two countries reached a five year agreement on water sharing which was signed in November, 5 1977. However, the basic issues remained unsolved and hence the agreement was not renewed and lapsed in 1982. Later, a proposal was mooted by India to enhance the flow of Ganga at Farakka by construction of a barrage across the Bramhaputra Jogighopa in India and transfer of water to Farakka through a canal. A proposal from Bangladesh was to construct a series of reservoirs on the tributaries of Ganga in Nepal. But this would have brought Nepal in the picture. None of these proposals could be implemented. According to the views of Bangladesh about this dispute, there was a “unilateral diversion” of waters of the Ganga by India at Farakka to the detriment of Bangladesh as reduction in flows had severe adverse affects on Bangladesh. It was also projected that large and more powerful country is disregarding the interests of small and weaker neighbors. This view is more common in Bangladesh. Sentiments grew to such as extent that India was projected as being responsible for all water related disasters whether drought or floods. The Farakka project was supposed to be the cause behind all water related problems.

The perceptions on the Indian side were entirely different. Ganga River is closely intertwined with religious and social life of the people. There are also legitimate needs of the Kolkata port on the question of siltation and growth of future traffic. It was felt that Bangladesh had greatly over stated its water needs and its claim was disproportionate to its fair share by any logic. Regarding diversion of water for the Kolkata port through the Farakka Barrage and the adverse effects due to reduced flows in Bangladesh were not addressed seriously. It was considered to be to blame India for flood problems. A further complication was the feeling of the concerned State Government in India that their

interests had not been properly addressed by the Central Government during bilateral talks with Bangladesh. After 1990, there was a virtual stalemate between the two governments on this issue.

Finally an agreement was reached and a treaty on the Sharing of Ganga Water between India and Bangladesh was signed on 12 December 1996. The Ganga water treaty is cited as one of the important examples of peaceful negotiations between upstream and downstreams neighbor in South Asia. According to this agreement India should release water at the Farakka barrage in the dry season between of January to May every year. The 1996 treaty describes three different possibilities of water availability at Farrakka according to which shares of water of the two states would vary .Accordingly if water availability at Farrakka is more than 75000 cusecs (expected in January, February and last 10 days of May), India receives her full requirement of 40,000 cusecs, and Bangladesh the rest . If the flow is between 70,000-75,000 cusecs (expected during first 10 day of March Second 10 days of May), Bangladesh receives 35,000 cusecs and India the rest. In the periods of 10 March-10<sup>th</sup> May, if the available water at Farakka is less than 70,000 causes but more than 50,000 causes the two states share that water on a 50:50 basis. The 50:50 sharing is subject to a provision that Bangladesh and India each receives guaranteed 35,000 cusecs of water in alternative ten-day periods during 10 March to 10 May.

The applicability of the treaty has been delimited by the providing that in case of availability of below 50,000 cusecs (cubic feet per second) of water the sharing formula of the treaty would have no relevance, In such cases, as article II (iii) of the treaty provides, Bangladesh and India will enter into immediate consultation to make adjustment on an emergency basis, in accordance with the principle of equity, fair play and no harm to either party,' Although sharing under the 1996 treaty depends on stable flows at Farakka, the 1996 treaty contains no effective provision to ensure such flows. It only contains an assurance of India for forfeiting the water flows at Farakka. That assurance falls far short of amounting to an obligation of controlling or regulating uses of the Ganges water in the upper basin. The fragility of that assurance can be discerned from the provision in Article II (iii) in which both the states recognized the possibility of water availability of below 50,000 cusecs. Sharing of Teesta water is another cause for irritation in Bangladesh India relations. In 2011, Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India visited Bangladesh to resolve Teesta water dispute. It has not been resolved due to objections which were raised by West Bengal Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee. She has expressed her unhappiness about regular sharing of Tessta water. Present BJP Government has taken initiatives to resolve the Teesta water dispute and has expressed highly concerns on this issue. (Gibson : 2006)

## **VII) Climate Refugee**

According to German Watch, The Global Climate Index - 2009 report expresses that among 170 countries of the world Bangladesh is most vulnerable to climate change. The nation is particularly at risk because it is a vast delta plain with 230 rivers, many of which swell during the monsoon rains. The land in Bangladesh is either below or barely above sea level. This geology, combined with river water from the melting Himalayan glaciers

in the North and encroaching Bay of Bengal in the South, makes the region prone to severe flooding. The situation is made worse by the prevalence of intense storms, a marker of climate stresses. It is suspected that if sea levels rise in the next 40-50 years, then half of the population in Bangladesh will move across borders to neighboring countries. i.e. India and Myanmar. The situation is complicated by the fact that the population of the country is the highest in the world. According to US Davis, approximately 75 million (half) of Bangladesh's population would emigrate due to sea level rise. It will have impact not only on Bangladesh but also on South Asia and South-East Asia for many generations. As Bangladesh has very limited high land to which people can move migration to India becomes the next option. With India facing its own population pressures in low lying coastal areas. This new environmental facts throw challenges for both the governments. The two neighbors need to conduct a joint study on the impact of forced mobility from sea level rise, the number of people who will be displaced and possible solutions. For example, India could identify the areas where climate refugees can be accommodated. India - Bangladesh would have to study the possibility of shifting climate refugees (caused by climate change) from India to other parts of the world. (The Daily Star : August, 2010)

#### **VIII) Environmental Degradation**

Another climate change induced concern is environmental degradation especially of Sundarban mangrove forest one of the largest such forests in the world. The size is about of the 9,600 sq.km of Sundarbans, 40 percent of which lie in India and the rest in Bangladesh. The Sundarbans are critical for the protection of low-lying areas because they provide ground stability in the face of high tides, holding the tress and also absorbing salt. As India and Bangladesh are already sharing data on flood forecasting new stations can be set up to expedite the transfer of data on environmental degradation. As climate change will intensify the process of river erosion, this has become an urgent issue for India and Bangladesh. Reports in the Bangladeshi media predict that around 2400 hectares of cultivable land and 400 hectares of settlement on the banks of Jamuna, Ganga and Padma rivers will disappear due to erosion in 2017. Sometimes new land emerges along the rivers which leads to controversy over their ownership. In terms of the prospect involved in bilateral relations, India merits greater significance for Bangladesh than any other country. It is enough to mention that the issues at stake in Bangladesh-India relations are of crucial importance more for Bangladesh, but for both the countries for the sake of peace and prosperity. As indicated, earlier interstate relations embrace virtually all aspects of relations. These, while impinge on the prospects for the political and economic emancipation of Bangladesh, not much academic efforts have been employed to gauge the nature, magnitude and intensity of challenges faced by Bangladesh in managing its relations with India. Even, less has been done to explore the policy options for the country in overcoming these challenges. Meanwhile, with the formation of the Government headed by the Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 6 January, 2009, a new era of fresh prospects and opportunities of refurbishing the Bangladesh - India relations have been opened before the two countries. Recently, Bangladesh Prime Minister visited New Delhi on August 15, 2015 and met Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India on 24 September, 2015. (Patkar: 2006)

### **Recent Development in Bangladesh - India Relations**

At present, as per sources of Ministry of External Affairs, Bangladesh relations, high level contacts are developing the relations between these two countries. This is reflected in multi-dimensional relations with Bangladesh at several levels of interaction. High level exchange visits and meetings take place regularly alongside the wide ranging people to people interaction. Indian High commission in Bangladesh issues 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.

### **Diplomacy on Top: Head to Head Negotiations**

Former Indian prime Minister Dr. Monmohan Singh accompanied by Chief Ministers of four states (Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram) and an official as well as media delegation visited Dhaka on September 6-7, 2011 at the invitation of PM Sheikh Hasina. Ten agreements including a Framework Agreement of Cooperation for Development and Protocol to the Agreement concerning demarcation of the land Boundary between India and Bangladesh were signed. PM of India announced the commencement of 24-hour access to 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. 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 flier. The bilateral relations between the two countries are on a high trajectory with regular high-level visits and exchanges. Smt. Sushma Swaraj and General (Retd.) V.K. Singh paid their first stand-alone visits abroad to Bangladesh after assuming charge as Honorable Minister and Minister of State of External Affairs in June and August 2014, respectively.

Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi paid a State visit to Bangladesh on June 6-7, 2015. During the visit, 22 bilateral documents were concluded, including the exchange of instrument of ratification for India-Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement (LBA). Sheikh Hasina Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh visited New Delhi on 19 August 2015 to attend funeral of late Smt. Suvra Mukherjee, spouse of Hon'ble President Shri Pranab Mukherjee. Both Prime Minister's met in New York on 24 September 2015 on the sidelines of UNGA. Hon'ble President Pranab Mukherjee visited Bangladesh in March, which was his first trip abroad since assuming the office. Hon'ble President of Bangladesh Mr. Md. Abdul Hamid visited India in December 2014, which was the first visit by Bangladesh's ceremonial Head of the State after a gap of 42 years. Actually it is a milestone of the history of Bangladesh.

### **Recent Economic Assistance to Bangladesh**

On the economic assistance side, India has extended credit of US\$ 1 billion to Bangladesh for a range of projects including railway infrastructure supply of Bangladesh 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 the visit of Sheikh Hasina, Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh to India in January 2010, India announced a US\$ 1 billion line of credit (LOC) for Bangladesh. Most of these projects have been completed and the remaining are under various stages of completion. Hon'ble prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi announced a new LOC of US\$ 2 billion during his visit to Bangladesh in June 2015. The new line of credit ( LOC) will cover projects in areas of Roads.

### **Security Issues**

India's main concern had always been its perception that Bangladesh had, consciously or otherwise been providing safe heaven for or even abetting, elements of various militant groups from the North-east Indian states who were actively pursuing anti India activities using Bangladesh as a launching pad. However the Mohajote (Grand Alliance) government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina considered these elements as inimical to Bangladesh's own security concerns and detrimental to its overall societal development. The Government of Bangladesh issued India in clear categorical and unambiguous terms that Bangladesh would not allow its territory to carry out activities inimical to India's security concerns and enunciated policy of zero tolerance towards any terrorist activity conducted on launched from Bangladesh. The commitment made in the very early days of government, has been more palpably demonstrated. It has been deeply appreciated by India. Security concerns alone cast cloud over the growing relations between these two countries. Within the overall security rubric, the Home ministers of the two countries signed a Treaty in Dhaka in January 2013. (The Daily Star: February,2013) Earlier during visits of the Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India in January 2010 the two countries had signed the agreement of Moral Legal Assistance on Criminal matters, transfer of sentenced persons and an Agreement on Combating International Terrorism, Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking. (Bindra: 1982)

### **Cultural Exchanges**

The *Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre (IGCC)* in Dhaka regularly organizes programme covering the entire scope of cultural activities since 2010. Scholarships are being granted by ICCR every year to students from Bangladesh for pursuing general courses in Arts, Science Engineering and also specialized courses for culture ,drama, arts and sports etc. Youth delegation of one hundred members is visiting India annually since 2012. The High Commission of India has been publishing a print and electronic edition of Bengali literary monthly magazine,"Bharat Bichitra" for the last 42 years. The magazine is considered as one of the best of its kind in Bangladesh and has a wide leadership among all sections of society. (The Bangladesh Observer: September, 2012)

### **Connectivity**

The movement of goods by road is conducted through more than 20 Land Customs Stations (LCSs) along the border and more than 20 are notified for operationalisation. The Protocol on Inland Water Trade and Transit (PIWTT) has been operational since 1972. It permits movement of goods over barges/vessels through the river systems of

Bangladesh on eight specific routes. Connectivity through the Coastal Waterways enabled by the signing of the Coastal Shipping Agreement is also of priority to both India and Bangladesh. There are bus services between Dhaka-Kolkata, Dhaka-Agartala, Dhaka-Shillong-Guwahati and Kolkata-Agartala via Dhaka. Commencement of Khulna-Kolkata bus service is also at an advanced stage of preparation. Three Broad Gauge inter country rail links between the two countries are in operation out of the 6 rail links that exist while work on the Shahbazpur-Kulaura rail link is in progress. There is regular Passenger train service 'Moitree Express' between Kolkata and Dhaka, which now operates 4 days a week. National airlines of both countries and few private airlines operate between Dhaka, Chittagong and New Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai.

### **Conclusion**

Bangladesh - India relations have more than an academic strategic context. Over the years, Bangladesh- India relations have been caught warp and woof, sometime in the 1970s if not further back. This relationship needs to finally come to maturity by moving its discourse into the 21st century. Bangladesh observed many ups and downs in its relations with India in the last four decades. Although, the relations between these two countries have been built through the victory of liberation war in 1971, it was cracked in the post 1975 events. The 21st century is the challenging century to build relationship between these two countries. They have a strong economy and strategic position in South Asia. In the long run, India's national interests primarily lie towards and beyond its eastern flanks to South - East Asia and the new geographical and strategic construct namely Indo-Pacific Asia. Now a days, Bangladesh has been facing some challenges with India to resolve some issues and challenges for further development and cooperation. It is argued in this paper that the relationship between Bangladesh and India is historically examined by experiences. Some steps should be taken to improve relations between Bangladesh and India for further betterment and for resolving crucial issues:

Agreement on water sharing should be given priority. Early resolution of the Teesta issue is necessary; Connectivity should be given top most priority. Both the countries should work together to operationalise it; There is need for addressing the issue of illegal migration. In this regard innovative measures should be taken to resolve the problem, being extra careful to ensure that the illegal migrants do not acquire voting rights and Indian nationality. Liberal visa system should be put in place if necessary, as well as people to people contact needs to be encouraged. Trade relationship has improved significantly between the two countries. India has provided zero duty access to Bangladeshi products, thereby addressing the tariff related issue to a great extent. The two countries should now consider an agreement on non- tariff barriers. Progress can be made by cooperation on common challenges like disaster management, food security, environmental degradation, border security and energy security etc. Indian investment should be encouraged in Bangladesh through visits of trade delegation, trade fairs and bilateral assurances on protection of the interests of potential investors. We have to understand that there are many issues that need to be addressed successfully. If the two countries want to reduce border crisis, achieve well management on border issue, overcome the challenges of natural disaster and remove environmental degradation, it is

imperative for the top most political leadership of the two countries to work together towards being able to reach these goals. To march forward in the 21st century along with other developed and developing countries of south Asia, People of both the countries need a modern, vibrant, inclusive, pro - people, pro- development policies to be carried forward by the enlightened leadership. Both of the nations have common goals and for this reason a Dickensian phase may be quoted - "we are in the best of times, we are in the worst of time, we are in the edge of hope, and we are in the edge of despairs."

## **References**

- Budania, Rajpal (2003) *The Emerging International Security, Strategic Analysis*, Vol- 27, Jan - March, 2003, Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis
- DR MANSI MEHORTA - KHANNA, (2010) *Security Challenges to India - Bangladesh Relations* Center for Land Warfare Studies 10(1) : page- 6
- DR S.S BINDRA, (1982), *Indo - Bangladesh Relations*, Deep & Deep Publications, New Delhi, P- 9- 30
- Dutta Piyali (2004) *IPCS Special Report India - Bangladesh Relations Issues, Problems and Recent Developments*, P -5
- Rashid Harun Ur( 2002), *Indo - Bangladesh Relations An Insider's view*, HAR - ANAND publications Pvt. Ltd, P - 43 -47
- Joteeta Bhattacharjee, (2012), *India - Bangladesh Relations : Finding away Forward*, ORF ISSUE BRIEF
- Gibson, Micheal T. (2006), " Hermeneutics, Political Inquiry, and Practical Reason : An India - Bangladesh : 21st Century Battle for Water Sharing : Published in *River Linking : A Millenium Folly?* Edited by Medha Patkar, National Alliance of peoples Movements, Initiative, Mumbai, India, January 2004
- Krishnasari Das (2013), *Indias Relations With Bangladesh : Issues and Concerns* World Focus, P- 105
- Rashid Harun (2010) *Bangladesh - India Relations Living With a Big Neighbour*, A H Development Publishing House, P- 42
- Sobhan Rehman (ed) (2002), *Bangladesh - India Relations Perspectives from Civil Society Dialogues*, The University Press Ltd. P - 1 -6
- Sobhan Farooq (ed), (2006), *Bangladesh Enterprise Institute*, The University Press Ltd., p- (84 - 85)
- Stein, Artheur A, (1990), *Why Nations Cooperate? Circumstance and Choice in International Relation*, Thaca, NY : Cornell University Press
- The Daily Star, August 2012
- The Daily Star, February 2013
- The Bangladesh Observer , 2011
- The Bangladesh Observer September, 2012