



Ministry of External Affairs

Government of India

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Joint Statement on the Third Meeting of the India-Bangladesh Joint Consultative Commission

September 20, 2014

1. The third meeting of the India-Bangladesh Joint Consultative Commission (JCC) was held in New Delhi on September 20, 2014. The visiting Bangladesh delegation was led by Mr. Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, MP, Foreign Minister, while the Indian delegation was led by Smt. Sushma Swaraj, External Affairs Minister.
2. The Ministers reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral relations and expressed satisfaction at the significant forward movement in implementation of decisions taken by the two Governments since the second JCC meeting held in Dhaka on February 16-17, 2013. This has widened the scope of bilateral cooperation and relations have become truly multifaceted, encompassing a wide range of areas including trade and investment, security, connectivity, border management, water, power, shipping, renewable energy, development cooperation, art and culture, people to people exchanges, human resource development, amongst others.
3. Both Ministers noted that visits of the External Affairs Minister of India in June 2014 and the Minister of State for External Affairs of India in August 2014 to Bangladesh have helped propel the bilateral agenda forward. They noted the significance of the visit of the Bangladesh Foreign Minister to India as this is the first Ministerial visit from Bangladesh since the assumption of charge of the new Government in India in May 2014. It was noted with appreciation that the delegations for the JCC included key Secretaries of both Governments.
4. Acknowledging the importance of high level visits for providing dynamism and sustaining momentum in bilateral relations, the two sides looked forward to visits of the President of Bangladesh to India, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh to India and the Prime Minister of India to Bangladesh.
5. Both sides welcomed regular exchanges between the two countries at official level, which have helped create an environment conducive to maintaining the friendly and comprehensive partnership that has developed between the two countries. The Ministers noted with satisfaction that preparatory work was done for the JCC by the Foreign Secretaries of the two countries in their meeting of March 2014 in New Delhi and the Foreign/External Affairs Ministries DG/JS level talks held in August 2014. They agreed that in order to maintain the momentum of relations, it was necessary for senior officials to meet regularly. It was decided that bilateral meetings of the Power, Commerce and Shipping Secretaries would be held at an early date.
6. The two Ministers expressed satisfaction at the settlement of the maritime boundary between the two countries. This development will enhance mutual understanding and goodwill, bring closure to the

maritime boundary issue, and pave the way for cooperation in sustainable exploitation of the maritime resources of the Bay of Bengal.

7. The Ministers noted that the ratification process following the signing of the Protocol to the Land Boundary Agreement, 1974 was underway. The Protocol is expected to pave the way for resolution of pending boundary related issues.
8. The two Ministers expressed satisfaction at the constructive discussions at recent security related meetings, including the 15th Home Secretary level talks and 14th meeting of JWG on Security held in Dhaka in September 2014 and the BSF-BGB DG-level talks held in New Delhi in August 2014. The Indian Minister expressed India's appreciation for the cooperation extended by Bangladesh in security related matters, and welcomed Bangladesh's assurance that its soil will not be allowed to be used for terrorism against any country, particularly India.
9. The two Ministers stressed on the need for effective implementation of the Coordinated Border Management Plan (CBMP), including regular coordination and exchanges between nodal officers at different levels for better border management so as to prevent cross border criminal activities, illegal movement, incidents of violence and tragic loss of lives. The Bangladesh Minister appreciated the measures taken by India to bring down the number of tragic loss of lives at the border. Both sides agreed that the number should come down to zero. They also agreed on the need for early completion of fencing of remaining vulnerable patches along the border.
10. The two Ministers welcomed the new arrangement of holding meetings of DCs/DMs of clusters of bordering districts. These meetings would be held alternately in India and Bangladesh and would begin from October 2014. They also agreed to work together to hold a Conference of all DCs/DMs of bordering districts of both countries in early 2015 in India.
11. Both Ministers welcomed the understanding reached in the 15th Home Secretary level talks to delegate the authority for approval of civilian developmental works to the BGB-BSF nodal officials as per the CBMP and to refer unresolved cases to the relevant DC/DM meeting.
12. Responding to Bangladesh side's request for immediate opening of immigration facilities at Phulbari-Banglabandha, the Indian side conveyed that construction work has begun at Phulbari and that the immigration post would be operationalised soon.
13. The Ministers noted the various measures taken for enhancement of trade and investment between the two countries, and agreed that all barriers to trade should be removed. It was noted by both sides that a significant step towards enhancing market access for Bangladesh products to India was taken through the duty free quota free access given by India to Bangladesh products in 2011. The two sides agreed on the need to promote balanced bilateral trade and to address para-tariff and non-tariff barriers. Bangladesh side handed over a list of barriers to trade being faced by Bangladesh exports to India. Indian side agreed to examine the list. It was also agreed to increase Indian investments in Bangladesh. This would not only reduce the trade gap but also increase Bangladesh's exports to third countries. In this context, India welcomed the decision of Bangladesh to allocate land for a Special Economic Zone for India and extend necessary cooperation to interested Indian entrepreneurs to invest in it. The two Ministers also agreed to initiate talks for renewal of the bilateral Trade Agreement which is due to expire on March 31, 2015.
14. The two sides stressed the urgent need for up-gradation of infrastructure of the Land Customs Stations (LCSs)/Land Ports and Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) in a coordinated manner. While expressing satisfaction that the ICP at Akhaura-Agartala has been functional since November 2013, the two sides agreed on the need for optimizing utilization of the modern facilities created there. Both Ministers agreed to expedite

work on the infrastructure at the planned ICP at Petrapole as well as the connecting roads on both sides so that the ICP becomes functional by the end of 2014. The two sides agreed to monitor implementation of earlier decisions of the Joint Group on Customs (JGC) to synchronise working hours and days of the LCSs and ICPs and encourage better working level cooperation between customs officers at these trading points.

15. Both sides agreed to put in place necessary infrastructure at Thegamukh-Demagiri and Sabroom-Ramgarh for operationalization of Land Custom Stations. They agreed to examine the existing system of LCS-specific port restrictions. The two Ministers noted the need for harmonization of standards and mutual recognition of certificates as an important element of trade facilitation. They urged quick finalization of the Agreement for Cooperation between Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) and Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institute (BSTI). As agreed in the last JWG on Trade, Bangladesh side handed over to the Indian side a list of NABL accredited BSTI certificates/labs for acceptance by India. Indian side took note of this information.
16. The two Ministers noted with appreciation the positive experience gained from the functioning of the Border Haats. They welcomed the progress of work of Border Haats at Kamlasagar-Tarapur, Srinagar-Purbomodhugram, Palbasti-Paschim Botuli and Kamalpur-Kurmaghat (along the Bangladesh-Tripura border), understanding between the two sides regarding opening four new Border Haats at Bholaganj-Bholaganj, Nalikota-Saidabad, Shibbari-Bhuyapara and Rinku-Baganbari (along the Bangladesh-Meghalaya border). They also agreed to consider new proposals for setting up Border Haats along Bangladesh-India border that would contribute to the income generation and well-being of the people living in the border areas.
17. The Ministers reviewed the status of implementation of projects under the US \$ 800 Million concessional Line of Credit extended by India to Bangladesh. They noted that projects amounting to US \$ 751.95 million were being processed and are at various stages of implementation. The Bangladesh side appreciated the contribution of the Line of Credit to infrastructure development in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh side asked for favourable consideration of their request for a second Line of Credit.
18. Both Ministers noted the progress on the preparation of the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the Inland River Port at Ashuganj and recognised the need for its expeditious construction. The Indian side conveyed that Government of India has also agreed to prepare the DPR for the Rail Container Depot at Ishwardy as decided in the Inter-Governmental Railway Meeting. The issue of upgradation/ strengthening of the Ashuganj-Akhaura road was also discussed.
19. Both Ministers expressed satisfaction that the MOU on Small Development Projects (SDPs) signed in February 2013 has been operationalised. Three projects for development of civic infrastructure of Rajshahi, Khulna and Sylhet will be undertaken under this MoU during the current financial year.
20. Both Ministers emphasized the need for improving connectivity between the two countries. They welcomed the proposed trial run of Dhaka - Shillong Bus Service by 2014. They also welcomed the addition of AC coaches to Indian Railways rake of Maitree Express from September 23, 2014 and increase the frequency of services from two round trips in a week to three round trips in a week within two months. The Ministers urged the concerned authorities of both countries to devise a system of easy fulfilment of customs and immigration requirements of passengers travelling by Maitree Express.
21. The Indian Minister expressed gratitude to Bangladesh for facilitating the movement of food grains to meet the Public Distribution System (PDS) needs of the people of Tripura.
22. Both Ministers agreed that the waterways offer a cost effective and environment friendly means of transport and there is great scope for effective utilization of the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade

(PIWTT).

23. Both Ministers welcomed progress in discussions between the two countries on commencement of coastal shipping operations. They agreed that trial runs would be held in October 2014. They also agreed to expeditiously conclude a bilateral Coastal Shipping Agreement and agreed that the next round of Shipping Secretary level talks will take place in Dhaka in October 2014.
24. The two Ministers reiterated their commitment to finalization of the Interim Agreement for sharing of the waters of the Teesta and Feni rivers.
25. The Indian side reiterated its earlier commitment that it would not take any unilateral decision on the Himalayan component of the proposed River Interlinking project which may adversely affect Bangladesh. Both sides resolved to hold the 38th Meeting of the Joint Rivers Commission in Dhaka at a mutually convenient date. The two sides also agreed upon the expeditious holding of the 3rd meeting of the Sub group of JRC on Tipaimukh hydro-electric project and further exchange of data of ongoing study.
26. Both sides expressed satisfaction at the level of cooperation and achievement in the power sector. They appreciated the establishment of grid inter-connection between Bheramara-Baharampur in October 2013 and supply of 500 MW of power from India to Bangladesh through bilateral power purchase agreements. They expressed satisfaction at the steps being taken to operationalise the supply of 100 MW of power from Palatana Power Plant in Tripura to Bangladesh. Welcoming the decision of the Joint Steering Committee on Power to examine the proposal for augmenting supply of power through the Behrampur-Bheramara grid inter connection from 500 MW to 1000 MW, they directed that the necessary technical reports be expedited. They welcomed the decision of the Joint Steering Committee to accept the recommendations of the Joint Technical Team on power evacuation from the North East of India through Bangladesh with suitable power tapping points in Bangladesh. They directed that the relevant report in this regard be completed within the agreed six month period. Both Ministers expressed satisfaction at the pace of work on the Bangladesh-India Friendship Power Company's 1320 MW coal-fired power plant coming up at Rampal, District Bagerhat, Bangladesh. Bangladesh's participation in hydro power projects in the North-Eastern States of India will be actively explored.
27. Both sides stressed the importance of bringing about sub-regional cooperation in water resources management and power/hydropower and connectivity.
28. Both sides agreed to enhance telecommunication connectivity between the two countries.
29. Both countries also agreed to enhance cooperation in new areas including nuclear science and technology, space, health, jute and textiles, renewable energy, maritime, fisheries, oceanography, meteorological, and other areas related to development of the blue economy of the region. The Indian Minister congratulated Bangladesh Minister for successfully organizing the International Conference on Blue Economy in Dhaka in September 2014.
30. Both the Ministers welcomed growing exchanges between the two peoples which is helping to foster greater understanding and goodwill between the two countries. In this regard, both sides welcomed the visit of 100 member youth delegation from Bangladesh to India scheduled to take place from October 13-20, 2014.
31. Both Ministers expressed satisfaction at the progress in training and capacity building. The Bangladesh side expressed appreciation for the numerous training programmes being organized under India's ITEC programme as well as customized courses for civil servants, police personnel, fire service personnel, railway officers, teachers, Election Commission officers, customs and revenue officers. It was agreed to

further enhance cooperation between the Foreign Service Academy (FSA) of Bangladesh and the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) of India. It was noted that the Golden Jubilee of the ITEC Programme, under which many persons from Bangladesh have been trained, is being celebrated this year. It was decided that an appropriate event would be organized in Dhaka to mark the occasion.

32. Recognising the need for facilitating greater people-to-people contact, both Ministers agreed to increase diplomatic representations in each other's countries.
33. Both Ministers noted with satisfaction the coincidence of views on regional and international issues. India congratulated Bangladesh on the inauguration of the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka on 13 September 2014, and assured Bangladesh of its full support to the smooth and successful operation of the Secretariat. Both Ministers expressed optimism that the forthcoming BCIM-EC meeting to be held in Bangladesh will impart dynamism to cooperation amongst the BCIM countries. Both Ministers agreed to closely cooperate in the run up to the 18th SAARC Summit in Kathmandu in November 2014, and to ensure an outcome oriented Summit. Both sides agreed to continue to work closely in the process of finalization of the Post-2015 Development Agenda at the United Nations.
34. The two Ministers welcomed the signing of the MoU on Nalanda University.
35. The Foreign Minister of Bangladesh called on the Hon'ble President and Prime Minister of India. He also held discussions with the Ministers of Power, Water Resources, Finance & Defence as well as the Leader of Opposition, Rajya Sabha during his visit to New Delhi. The Secretaries of Government of Bangladesh accompanying the Foreign Minister also held bilateral discussions with their counterparts.
36. Both sides agreed to hold the next meeting of the Joint Consultative Commission in Bangladesh at a mutually convenient date to be decided through diplomatic channels.

New Delhi

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