



Ministry of External Affairs

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Prime Minister's Press Statement during Joint Press Briefing with Prime Minister of Bangladesh

June 06, 2015

Excellency, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina
Members of the media,

Thank you for your kind words of welcome. Thank you for your thoughts on the relationship and our meeting today.

I am deeply honoured and touched by your special gestures for my visit. Everything I have experienced here reflects the warmth and generosity of the people of Bangladesh. And for me, there is the wonderful feeling of visiting a close neighbour.

This morning I paid tribute to Bangabandhu, a great leader of our era. His vision and leadership, his humanism and sacrifices, gave birth to the dream of Sonar Bangla. Today, that dream prospers through the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the genius of the people of Bangladesh.

Earlier today, we launched two bus services that will connect our citizens more easily and our two nations more closely. We were privileged to have with us the Chief of Minister of West Bengal.

These two events highlight our shared values and inter-connected destinies.

My first visit to Bangladesh is a special moment for me. My personal journey has been enriched by the good wishes from countless people here.

We are not just neighbours. We are two nations bound by the threads of history, religion, culture, language and kinship – and, of course, passion for cricket.

We have the emotional bonds of shared struggles and sacrifices that bring us together as sovereign and equal nations.

Now, we are successful fellow travelers on the road to development. Our growing cooperation is a picture of my deeply held belief in the shared prosperity of neighbours.

That is why the future I dream for India is the future I wish for Bangladesh.

As we deepen our political engagement and celebrate our rich inheritance, as our economies get more

integrated and our people better connected, our nations will become more prosperous.

It will also open new economic doors for India's Northeast. And, it will enable our two countries to integrate South Asia and connect it with the dynamic East.

The vision of SAARC is a gift of Bangladesh.

We are also among the largest contributors to United Nations Peacekeeping. And, we can also make our region safer and more prosperous, and the seas more secure.

This is a relationship of great importance for us and our region.

The visit is at a historic moment. We have resolved a question that has lingered since Independence. Our two nations have a settled boundary. It will make our borders more secure and people's life there more stable.

Our Parliament's approval of Land Boundary Agreement reflects the consensus in India on relations with Bangladesh.

We accepted the settlement of the maritime boundary last year. It is evidence of the maturity of our ties and our shared commitment to international rules.

So, we stand at a moment of huge opportunity in our relationship. Prime Minister and I recognise that.

We will work together to harness the rich potential of our relationship. And, we will address our challenges in a spirit of friendship and from a position of mutual trust and confidence.

Our agreements reflect this vision and commitment.

We have renewed existing trade and transport agreements. We have added new dimensions to our economic ties.

The coastal shipping agreement will boost bilateral trade. The Indian Economic Zone will promote Indian investments in Bangladesh.

The new border haat at Kamalasagar will reinforce traditional economic links. And, the agreement on blue economy and maritime cooperation opens a new area of economic opportunities. We should now extend our frontiers of cooperation to Space.

I am conscious of the huge trade imbalance, despite duty free and quota free access to Bangladesh in India on all but 25 items. Yet, I have assured Prime Minister that we will do everything we can to bridge the deficit.

Indian investments in Bangladesh will help. I will also try to make trade smoother and easier, including at the border. The agreement on standards and testing is a step in that direction.

Power supply from India to Bangladesh will grow from 500 MW to 1100 MW within two years. The 1320 MW Rampal power project is making progress in accordance with your laws and regulation. We can do more together in power sector, here and in India.

Connectivity is the catalyst for deeper engagement. Bangladesh's decision to allow transit of power equipment

and foodgrain to the Northeast echoes the strength of your human values and our shared economic opportunities.

Connectivity by road, rail, rivers, sea, transmission lines, petroleum pipelines and digital links will increase. Today, we have unveiled some of the pathways to this future.

As I have said before, we will deepen regional connectivity and cooperation between Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal. There is a natural logic to this arrangement.

Our development partnership is scaling new heights. The quick implementation of the line of credit of 800 million U.S. dollars and full disbursement of 200 million dollars in grant is a tribute to our cooperation.

We are pleased to extend another line of credit of 2 billion U.S. dollars to support infrastructure and other development activities in Bangladesh.

As the three agreements on human trafficking, fake Indian currency and maritime safety show, our security cooperation is growing.

I am confident that we both have the political will and mutual confidence to further improve border management and coordination to prevent illegal activities, trafficking and movements.

Our rivers should nurture our relationship, not become a source of discord. Water sharing is, above all, a human issue. It affects life and livelihood on both sides of the border.

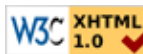
We have shown political resolve and mutual goodwill with the Land Boundary Agreement.

I am confident that with the support of state governments in India, we can reach a fair solution on Teesta and Feni Rivers. We should also work together to renew and clean our rivers.

Excellency, people in India admire your nation's progress despite many challenges. We want you to succeed in your Mission 2021 and 2041. The success of Bangladesh is important for the region and the world.

So is the success of our partnership. We are two nations defined by our youth. We owe it to them to set new directions and scale new heights in our relations. I am confident that we have done that today.

Thank you.



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