

BRIEFING NOTES ON THE VISIT OF  
THE HON'BLE PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA, DR. MANMOHAN SINGH

- The Prime Minister of India visited Bangladesh from 6 to 7 September 2011. This was a return visit following the historic of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India in January 2010. This has been a long anticipated visit, and both sides engaged in extensive preparatory work on the entire range of issues on the bilateral agenda for the two Prime Ministers. Preparatory work also focused on the finalization of draft instruments for signing during the visit.
- This has been a highly successful visit, reflecting the multifaceted agenda as well as the outcome of the visit. The outcome is particularly significant. This includes the signing of as many as 10 instruments - one agreement, two protocols, one addendum to protocol, and six MoUs; duty-free access for 46 textile items into the Indian market; and the announcement of 24-hour access for Bangladeshis through the Tin-bigha Corridor to Dahagram-Angorpota. The outcome can be considered in three broad categories as outlined below.:
  - i. The two Prime Ministers addressed the long pending issues such as the boundary demarcation and resolved them to mutual satisfaction.
  - ii. They took stock of the initiatives agreed to during the landmark visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India in January 2010 and sealed several of these through agreements and by setting priorities for their implementation.
  - iii. They also looked beyond and charted a vision for co-operation and development in a positive engagement for the future in the Framework Agreement on Cooperation and Development.

We have therefore, witnessed a visit that is not just successful, but exceptionally so in that its outcome is truly three-dimensional. It responds to current issues and realities, addresses long-pending issues of the past, and adopts a vision statement for the future.

- It is important to note that relations between states run in a continuum with visits and other events marking high points in this continuum. While visits are significant, one does not expect all issues to be resolved at one go. Value addition in bilateral relations, as in everything else, is incremental. The important element is the trend in the relationship measured best by the level of positive engagement. Visits cannot be judged solely by the number agreements or protocols signed, but by this value addition and the sustainability of engagement.
- Relations between Bangladesh and India are multi-faceted, multi-dimensional, with both countries having a stake in each other's development. There is a continuous dialogue between the two countries on issues that need to be resolved and areas of cooperation that need to be worked on for mutual benefit. Some like the Protocol to the LBA reached fruition during the visit and could be signed, paving the way for expeditious implementation of the LBA.

- Other issues, such as the Agreement on the interim sharing arrangement of the waters of the Teesta river, may need some more work before they can be signed. As for the Teesta waters, the two sides had already reached an understanding on the terms and modalities of this sharing arrangement. The agreement, when signed would be on the basis of these agreed terms and modalities based on the principles of fairness and equity. This was reflected in the Joint Statement.
- It would not be appropriate to judge the outcome of the visit on the basis of one agreement not being signed because of the domestic compulsions of one of the parties. It should be noted that the Joint Statement issued at the end of the visit picks up the initiatives that had been agreed to during the January 2010 visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India and directs officials of both sides to take specific actions for their implementation. Last time, the two Prime Ministers had directed the JRC to meet to discuss the issue of sharing of the waters of the Teesta. This time, we have an announcement that the two sides have moved forward to put in place the modalities and terms for a fair and equitable sharing arrangement of the waters.

#### **BRIEF OUTLINES OF THE TANGIBLE OUTCOMES:**

##### **Institutional:**

- i. Establishment of a Joint Commission headed by the two Ministers of Foreign/ External Affairs to coordinate all issues and initiatives on the bilateral front.
- ii. Signing of the Framework Cooperation Agreement on new areas of cooperation, such as power, hydro-power, water resources management, connectivity, at the bilateral, sub-regional and regional levels.
- iii. Establishment of a High Level Consultative mechanism to oversee work identified under the Framework Cooperation Agreement.

##### **Water related issues:**

- iv. Agreement to continue discussions on Manu, Dharla, Khowai, Dudhkumar, Gumti for concluding agreements for sharing of their waters.
- v. Reiteration of assurance that India will not undertake any work on the proposed Tipaimukh dam that would have an adverse impact on Bangladesh.
- vi. Reiteration of the intent to sign the interim agreement for water sharing of the Teesta river expeditiously.

##### **Land boundary issues:**

- vii. Announcement on the 24-hour unfettered access through the Tin Bigha Corridor by Bangladesh nationals. This in no way undermines the terms and conditions of the lease in perpetuity granted to Bangladesh under the LBA 1974.
- viii. Completion of the demarcation of the remaining three patches of the undemarcated areas of the boundary measuring 6.5 kms. in total.

- ix. Decision to simultaneously exchange enclaves and areas of adverse possession under the LBA. Head count of the enclaves done to identify the total population involved in the exercise (17000 on Indian side, 34000 on Bangladesh side, and total 51000) completed.
- x. Strip maps signed by plenipotentiaries, enabling the previously agreed and demarcated borders become legal boundary.

**Trade issues:**

- xi. Announcement of zero applicable duty on 46 textile items on Indian negative list.
- xii. Understanding on the development of infrastructure of the Land Ports/LCSs and agreement on opening of new Land Ports/LCS/immigration points as identified and agreed between two sides.
- xiii. Agreement on opening of new border haats following the successful opening of the border haat in Kalaichar-Baliamari.

**Connectivity:**

- xiv. Declaring Rohanpur-Singabad as an additional route for rail transit to Nepal.
- xv. Decision to put in place necessary protocols, instruments, etc. to operationalize the use of Chittagong and Mongla ports by India.

**Power:**

- xvi. Understanding reached on harnessing the resources of the region for development of hydro-power to meet the demands of Bangladesh.
- xvii. Signing of MoU on renewable energy to explore potential for non-conventional sources of energy.

**An overview of the various Agreements/MoUs signed  
during the visit of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India to Bangladesh**

**1. Framework Agreement on Development and Cooperation**

- This agreement is a vision document outlining not only current areas of cooperation between Bangladesh and India, but also the potential of co-operation in the years to come.
- It states that the two countries can undertake projects on hydro-power, water resources management, infrastructure development, power, education, either bilaterally, sub-regionally and regionally.
- It provides scope for expanding the cooperative arrangement beyond bilateralism so that co-operation can involve others in a sub-regional as well as regional framework.

**2. Protocol to the Land Boundary Agreement**

- Completes the demarcation of the undemarcated 6.5 kms of the boundary. With the completion of the demarcation, this is the first time since the boundary was drawn by Radcliffe that Bangladesh will have a completely defined boundary on all sides.
- Defines the modalities of the exchange of enclaves and areas in adverse possession - both to take place simultaneously and expeditiously.
- Prior to the drawing up of the Protocol for the first time since 1974, the two countries completed a headcount of the enclaves to ascertain the population involved (17,000 on Indian side and 34,000 on Bangladesh side, total 51,000). The two sides also completed a joint survey of the adverse possessions to find out and reconcile the extent of APLs to facilitate their speedy exchange/adjustment.
- Signing of the strip maps by plenipotentiaries has been completed for the demarcated areas of the boundary. This has transformed the working boundary into a legally recognized international boundary.
- The signing of the Protocol has meant that a long pending irritant will be removed from the agenda of the two countries. It also means that for the first time since its independence, our country will have a recognized international boundary.
- The announcement concerning 24-hour access for Bangladesh nationals through the Tin-bigha Corridor resolves a long pending demand of the people of Angorpotra-Dahogrm and the fulfilling of one of the articles of the LBA.

**3. MoU on Cooperation on Renewable Energy**

- This MoU envisages cooperation between the two countries in the field of renewable energy such as, solar, wind, tidal, etc.
- Both Bangladesh and India are facing incremental demands for power to fuel their development needs. With this MoU, Bangladesh will be able to tap into and learn from the experience already gained by India.

#### **4. Addendum on MoU between Bangladesh and Indian railways for Rohanpur-Singabad:**

- This addendum amends the existing MoU between Bangladesh and Indian railways allowing additional route for transit by rail from Bangladesh to Nepal in addition to Birol-Radhikapur.
- It may be noted that Birol-Radhikapur cannot be used presently because of gauge conversion on Indian side from meter gauge to broad gauge. Bangladesh has also undertaken gauge conversion on its side of its border, but the project will take up to 2013 to complete.
- This additional route is effective transit to Nepal for Bangladesh through India.

#### **5. MoU on cooperation in the Fisheries sector:**

- This MoU envisages cooperation in the field of fisheries with exchange of experts, best practices, experiences, etc. It also allows for capacity-building through exchange of technology and training of experts.
- Fisheries development is a critical area for the government in its quest for food security. The government needs to inject new technology and ideas for the development of the sector and this MoU will facilitate this.

#### **6. MoU on conservation of the Sunderbans**

- This MoU acknowledges that the Sunderbans is a shared resource and that it is endangered, needing to be nurtured.
- It allows for exchange of experts, best practices, knowledge, etc. among the experts and the officials serving in this area.
- It also allows for joint projects, surveys and exchange of information, in an effort to preserve this vulnerable and threatened world heritage site.
- For Bangladesh, preserving and conserving the Sunderbans is a major challenge and an objective of the government. This MoU will help the government achieve this goal.

#### **7. Protocol for the conservation of the Royal Bengal Tiger:**

- This protocol also envisages cooperation in a critical area of concern for Bangladesh, that of protection and conservation of the Royal Bengal Tigers.
- This protocol will allow the two countries to undertake surveys, exchange information, train personnel, and undertake joint projects for the protection of the tigers.

#### **8. MoU on cooperation between BTB and DD:**

- This MoU addresses a critical concern in Bangladesh, that Bangladesh TV channels are not shown in India.

- Through this MoU, Doordarshan and Bangladesh Television have agreed to air each other's programmes free of charge to encourage viewership of each others' programmes.
- It also allows for training of personnel from BTV in Indian institutes.
- It is expected that this MoU will pave the way and encourage the private tv operators to explore ways and means to expand viewership in each others's countries.

#### **9. MoU between DU and JNU:**

- This MoU will allow faculty and student exchange between the two premier institutes of Bangladesh and India.
- It is expected that the MoU will help the DU develop its programme further for the benefit of both the students and the faculty.

#### **10. MoU between BIFT and NIFT:**

- This MoU allows the Fashion Training Institutes of the two countries to collaborate in the field of training and exchange visits.
- RMG is a critical sector fueling the growth of the country's economy. The collaboration with NIFT which was established much earlier and has gathered sufficient experience in this sector will benefit Bangladeshi entrepreneurs interested to work in this sector.
- This becomes more relevant with the announcement of the Indian government providing zero applicable duty entry to 46 RMG items from Bangladesh into Indian market.