Recognition

and the IMF have accepted Kosovo as a member and if you look at Bangladesh's own history where like Kosovo they were a minority, where the East Pakistanis thought that they were controlled by other people who were not giving them their right due, I think the parallels with Kosovo are also very striking. And if we put them all together, how would it benefit Bangladesh? It would put Bangladesh on the side of the right."

Ali Nasirullah, a Bangladeshi who lived in Kosovo during the war, thinks it is morally wrong that Bangladesh has not yet recognised Kosovo. "Like us they have suffered for belonging to a particular race, we should stand by their side," he says.

Professor Imtiaz Ahmed of Dhaka University also agrees on the moral issue. He thinks that the question of acknowledging a country's sovereignty depends on many issues, which include "trade and other bilateral relations." He also takes into consideration the Russian factor and says that Bangladesh must think of the possible ramifications that it can carry in terms of its relationship with Russia.

Ali thinks creating a healthy relationship with Kosovo will open the door of new opportunities to Bangladeshi businesses. "Unless it wants to look insensitive and foolish as a nation in the eyes of the international community, Bangladesh should recognise Kosovo," he says.

Ali thinks that a nuclear power plant takes a decade to complete if it goes smoothly, and there is no instance in the history of world politics where a country has pulled out of an international agreement because the other country has recognised the sovereignty of another country. "And the bigger question is," Ali says, "Who is going to fund this (nuclear) project? The Russians won't, they don't give 10 billion dollars of assistance to anybody. And should we keep Kosovo in the backseat until the Russians build the reactor? And, by the way, where are our feelings for the Ummah?"

Ambassador Moriarty, however, does not make any comment on the Russian connection. He says, "It's for Bangladesh and Russia to look at their own relations. Does anybody have a timeline for construction of a nuclear reactor here as the project is really far advanced? Is there something really going on that I am not aware of? Because all I am aware of is that preliminary discussions are going on, and the project is hugely expensive. So this is an issue that I don't have all the details of and obviously this is something that you have to decide. I also couldn't imagine a country is saying we are going to break off relations if you recognise Kosovo, because if the Russians are going to do that they would have had to break off relations with a whole bunch of other countries. I will let Russia speak for itself."



Children in Kosovo celebrating the country's independence day.

When contacted, Russian embassy sources refused to make any comment on the issue. But the country's stance is clear; "Russia should use every opportunity at its disposal to block Kosovo's admission to the UN as an independent state," Konstantin Kosachyov, head of the international affairs committee at the lower house of Russia's parliament, is quoted as saying in Ria Novosti, the Russian state owned news agency.

Ambassador Moriarty says giving recognition to Kosovo without any further dillydallying is the right thing to do. "All I am saying is that, from my perspective, from the perspective of 61 other countries, from the perspective of the IMF and the World Bank, this is the right thing for Bangladesh to do. In the case of Kosovo it is clearly a Muslim-majority portion of the country oppressed by the larger portion. The sight of great atrocities by the great majority power...there is no reason why Bangladesh can't recognise Kosovo," he says.

Professor Imtiaz says that it is a matter of time that Bangladesh will recognise Kosovo. He believes that the Foreign Secretary's comment last week means the country is buying time. We hope that Bangladesh will recognise the tiny Balkan nation, whose history, like Bangladesh's own, is soaked with the blood of those who loved the country so dearly. The sooner the government recognises Kosovo, the better.