



Mahfuz Anam

Then was it a mistake to give support to Japan?

Mahbubur Rahman

No, it was not a mistake. But I think the present government should discuss more on this issue. We should think more on this issue, should do more homework. We have gone in a rush on this issue. China is our good friend. We should take our international friends into confidence on this issue. That was definitely lacking.

Allowing India to use Chittagong and Mongla ports at this time would create security problems for us. Had India been secure itself, then I would not make any objection. Then regional connectivity was most welcome. But when insurgency is going on so close to Bangladesh's border, it is a very dangerous situation and it is a very serious concern for Bangladesh's security. The insurgency will spill over to our port, maybe the port we are using may be also completely destroyed by the insurgency.

India of course is our good friend and closest neighbour, but exchanges should be win-win. What we see now, it is all win for India and all loss for Bangladesh.



national consensus before any international negotiations, which usually we do not see in our context.

Mostafa Faruque Mohammed
Awami League lawmaker and former High Commissioner to India

People of our country were long expecting and waiting to come out of the climate laden with mistrust, distrust, and misunderstanding. We have got an opportunity to come out from that environment.

Activities of the previous government were not consistent with what they said. They said that we will not allow our territory to be used by forces inimical to India. But we have seen the cases of Padesh Barua, Rajkhow, and ten truckloads of arms.

I hope India will give \$1 billion as loan on easy condition and our railway and economic sector will be developed using the money.

We will be benefited more through increasing of communication link with India. Agreement on mutual legal assistance will not bring injustice for us. It would rather help us help each other as the criminal law of Bangladesh and India is almost the same.

Agreement on combating terrorism, organised crime and drug trafficking was made in line with greater Saarc convention. There is a protocol in Saarc convention in this regard. Such agreement between two countries is not illegal according to the Saarc protocol -- it would rather strengthen the multi-lateral context into bilateral context.

Anisul Islam Mahmud
Presidium Member, Jatiya Party

Successive governments that came power after the assassination of Sheikh Mujib did anti-Indian politics. The subsequent governments were not thought to be very friendly government towards India. And there was also a perception that we were in a proxy war, we got involved or we acted more as a



IRENE KHAN

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Irene Khan

former Secretary General, Amnesty International

I do think what the prime minister has done is of major significance and extremely courageous for her, and I think it needs to be supported by all people, particularly those who are not caught in the political trap of the politics of fear.

The Cold War has been over for decades and yet we designed our foreign policy in the context of the bi-polar Cold War situation. So, what I see here happening now is not so much a paradigm shift, but actually alignment with reality. And the reality is not only that India is a big neighbour, but that it is one of the emerging economic powers. Bangladesh needs to take advantage of it to pull the economy up.

In a changed world, many in India would disagree with a beggar-thy-neighbour policy. Because it is not an Indian advantage to beggar Bangladesh as Bangladesh is a market for India, just as we see a market in the [Indian] north-east.

I totally agree with Mr. Reaz Rahman's concept of water resources, environmental, and soft security issues being pre-dominant. But because these are soft security issues, you can't answer them with hard security strategy. The soft security approach means that if you open up the north-east, the nature of the conflict in the north-east is also changed. I am sure that is in the mind of Indian policy-makers. Those parts of India have been deprived of economic development, and openness and connectivity will work in their favour and create not only a market for us but much greater stability in the region, both for us and for India.

When it comes to creating confidence and depoliticising negotiation, then I do agree about the importance of negotiating in a more robust way than we have done. I also think we should not forget the value of international laws. Both prime ministers reiterated their commitment to democracy, pluralism, and the rule of law, but I would have like seen it as the "rule of international law" Because international law creates equality of standing during negotiation.



CM SHAFI SAMI

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CM Shafi Sami

former Adviser, Caretaker Government

The imperative of economic cooperation between nations is well recognised, and there is a very strong imperative of economic cooperation between India and Bangladesh. China and India are emerging as rising economic powers on the world horizon,

and we should strengthen economic relations with them. We should treat India's economic rise as an opportunity rather than as a threat, and we should take full advantage of it.

The prime minister's visit opened up a new horizon in cooperation.

Professor Shahiduzzaman

Department of International Relations, Dhaka University

The prime minister's India visit has shifted the paradigm of Indo-Bangla relations, which has significant impact on Bangladesh. This is a high degree of qualitative change in the bilateral relations, which gave respite and created greater flexibility in terms of dealing with the maritime boundary.

We cannot change our geographical



PROF. SHAHIDUZZAMAN

The visit proves that Bangladesh's foreign policy has become dynamic

location, and therefore in regard to India's relations with Bangladesh, the opposition has to consider the geo-political limits. The visit proves that Bangladesh's foreign policy has become dynamic. However, we have to deal with India in a way that India will be a little bit dependent on us.

Ashfaque Ahmed

former Ambassador

I am a bit uncomfortable by the words used by Reaz Rahman. He wants to



ASHFAQUE AHMED

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preserve the status quo. He said Bangladesh gave unilateral concessions and that the threat perceptions of Bangladesh have not been taken into account. I would say this visit does not reflect his opinion at large.

There have been some positive points in the visit, but some points were ignored. One of them is killing of the Bangladeshi nationals on the Indo-Bangla border by the BSE. At least 96 people were killed in the last one year. This is something we as a sovereign nation cannot tolerate. Indians should be very careful as to how they manage the border. This is a serious human rights issue and must be looked into very carefully by both the governments.

Another point is duty-free access of 47 Bangladeshi products to the Indian market. This is actually nothing. There would be no harm on the Indian part

even if it provides market access for all sorts of products from Bangladesh.

Barrister Harun ur Rashid

former Ambassador to UN

This was a political visit. Its purpose was removing the suspicion which has bedeviled Bangladesh's relations with India since 1975. We have to realise that political and economic relationships are interdependent. For example, why can't

we trade with Israel?

Second is trade deficit. Trade gap between Bangladesh and China and Japan is much more than that between Bangladesh and India, but nobody talks about it. Why? This is because India is a neighbouring country and can give more concession.

The visit, I would say, was positive, because mutual suspicion has been removed and it opened a new horizon of relationship. One positive thing is water sharing -- this is the first time I have seen

a timeframe for meeting on Teesta agreement. Besides, the issues of inter-connectivity and one billion dollars credit for Bangladesh are positive.

I think my colleague Reaz Rahman has some misconceptions. Security threats and sovereignty have transformed in the 21st century. Look at Sri Lanka and Nepal, where security threats came from inside. Such threats have been diluted to a great extent in today's world. Look at the 1997 Asean economic collapse. Billions of dollars were taken out and Southeast Asia was in a mess.

There are now three proposals on UN reform. First is that no regional country can have a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. The formula that has been started in 2008 is the regional countries will select a country by rotation to become permanent member. And, India's permanent membership will not be approved by China. This is very clear. So, we have to consider what are the proposals of the reform. As I said the Italian proposal given in 2009 was that regional countries would set one country



BARRISTER HARUN UR RASHID

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MOSTAFA FARUQUE MOHAMMED

We will be benefited more through increasing of communication link with India

well. China will think, without going through detail, Bangladesh has in principle supported India. This was not a good idea.

Third is the sea boundary. I expected

buffer state for some other countries.

I see importance of the prime minister's India visit at that point. For the first time the prime minister has boldly faced several specific matters. There was



ANISUL ISLAM MAHMUD

The prime minister has taken a bold step that Bangladesh will not allow its territory to be used for any kind of terror activities

more meetings on it. Myanmar has come up bilaterally. Last accord has given a positive outlook on the process of sea boundary. Similarly, there was not enough talk on land boundary. On Bimstec too, I would expect time-bound specifics from the Indian side.

M Afsarul Qader

former Secretary and Ambassador

Connectivity is not only a physical issue; it means total connectivity. But if I need 20 or 50 days to get Indian visas, it cannot be called connectivity. So, think how the time of getting visas could be cut.

However, what has happened was good. There was a sort of barren relationship with India, but ice started melting.

And, we have to be a bit more cautious, because an individual gives promises, but he or she does not always remain in power. So, if the promises are documented, it is always better. We have to utter our demands strongly; otherwise they will not work. Finally, we need

very much possibility to become unpopular from the electoral point of view, so-called electoral point of view, so-called political point of view.

I would like to congratulate the prime minister on one point: that she has come up and is facing it boldly, taking a great risk, a political risk she is taking to do certain things, which in the long run I think would be very good for the country. Relation between the two countries was at a standstill. And she has tried to remove those causes.

Many are saying now that our security has been put in danger. We are selling the country and so on. What is this? I don't see how our security interests are being affected by these agreements. We have seen rise of extremism in our own country. So if we do any agreement to combat terrorism and controlling of drug trafficking, then what way we are selling our country.

The prime minister has taken a bold step saying that Bangladesh will not allow its territory to be used for any kind of



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