

MODI'S VISIT TO DHAKA

Pegging Sub-regionalism with Bilateralism

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THE successful conclusion of Prime Minister Modi's visit to Dhaka is important for both its content and symbolism. The 60-point Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and 22 agreements that were exchanged between the two countries provide an insight into the huge potential the two countries have in building a fruitful relationship. Modi's visit was also symbolic and he succeeded in winning the heart of the people with his use of Bangla in his speech.

His visit reflects a continuum in the foreign policy charted by the previous government. It attested to the fact that there exists a bipartisan consensus among the political class in India to take the relationship further. It silenced the sceptics on both sides of the border, especially those who perceived Prime Minister Modi only as a leader of a Hindu nationalist party and felt that it would not exhibit the same bonhomie as was seen between the Awami League government and the Congress Party that led the previous United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government. After proving his detractors wrong Prime Minister Modi assured that India will deliver on its promises to Bangladesh.

The unanimous political consensus that was displayed during the passage of the LBA and his ability to generate a consensus in the Parliament attested his ability to move beyond party lines and ideological divide.

Keeping the controversy out of the bilateral context of some agreements he said, "We are successful fellow travellers on the road to development." Few important points in the MoU deserve attention as they have the potential to transform the bilateral relations as the documents succinctly captured the objectives when it described it as Notun Projonmo-Nayi Disha.

The sub-regional content was provided prominence in the MoU and it attested that the two countries would take the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) framework to optimise the cooperation and move beyond the bilateral framework on issues of regional



Custom Station in the border for smooth facilitation of trade. The coastal shipping arrangement will open new avenues for boosting economic ties. The MoU to provide the usage of Mongla and Chittagong ports to India constitutes a significant aspect and should be seen in the larger context of sub-regional connectivity and trade. With the demarcation of the Maritime boundary, the two countries have now decided to increase their cooperation on Blue economy in the Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean.

What has been a very significant aspect of the visit is India's assurance on reaching an interim agreement on the sharing of Teesta as well as the larger issue of sharing of international rivers. India assured Bangladesh that it would take the country along while deciding on the Tipaimukh Hydro-Electric project. It would not take any unilateral action on the Himalayan component of the river interlinking project, thereby, assuaging anxiety over the issue. Both the countries reached an understanding for a project under the India Endowment for Climate Change in SAARC.

Flagging off new bus services - the Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala and the Dhaka-Shillong-Guwahati bus services along with the opening of a Deputy High Commission office in Guwahati, upgrading Bangladesh Visa office in Agartala, opening of Assistant High Commissions of India in Khulna and Sylhet, and the liberalisation of the visa regime will certainly help in greater connectivity between the people.

Without the connectivity of mind, physical connectivity becomes difficult to sustain. Prime Minister Modi's meeting with Begum Khaleda Zia, the leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), also sends the right message that India is willing to engage with all the political stakeholders in Bangladesh to transcend bilateral ties.

As Modi underlined the reality of geographical proximity combined with the excellent working relationship that the two countries share, the dream of Notun Projonmo is truly not very far.

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connectivity, power generation and grid connectivity. The BBIN countries have already agreed to sign a multimodal transport agreement in February this year and they are going to finalise the agreement this month when the four countries meet in Dhaka.

Connectivity has been a major issue in this sub-region that had in the past acted as a single economic unit in the past. While SAARC failed to take up the regional multi-modal transport connectivity to its logical conclusion due to the unwillingness of Islamabad, the four countries decided that they will move ahead with sub-regional connectivity while striving to achieve regional connectivity. These countries are also part of the larger Asian Highway and railway network.

Bangladesh and India are also part of the BCIM corridor. Furthermore, these countries are working for connectivity within the

BIMSTEC countries. BIMSTEC electricity grid and Free Trade Agreement are being planned to integrate this region to the South East Asian countries. India has extended a further line of credit of \$2 billion- a substantial part of which is going to be spent on improving road network which forms a large part of connectivity apart from rail and waterways that have been the lifeline of economy in this region. India's assurance to enhance the navigability of the waterways will help to keep the channel open throughout the year and help in trade.

Private players have been brought in to provide necessary capital investment in generating power. Two Memoranda of Understandings (MoUs) have been signed between Power Development Board of Bangladesh and two Indian companies - Adani Power Limited and Reliance Group - to set up 4,600-megawatt power plants in

Bangladesh. Jointly they are going to invest \$5.5 billion. Already the India-Bangladesh joint venture company, the Bangladesh-India Friendship Power Company, is engaged in the Rampal power project that would generate 1320 MW of power. There was a proposal to enhance grid connectivity to connect the Western side of Bangladesh to the Indian electricity grid and to increase supply of power to Bangladesh to 1000MW using the Bheramara-Berhampur grid interconnection. The annual energy dialogue would help the two countries to undertake comprehensive cooperation covering the entire gamut of energy resources.

The announcement of Special Economic Zones in Mongla and Bheramara would further help in addressing the huge trade gap by producing commodities keeping in mind the large Indian market. The two countries are going to further improve the Land

Studying the criminal mind

STRAIGHT LINE



MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

THIS writer does not know how University of Dhaka, once fondly described as Oxford of the East, ranks in terms of academic excellence on a global basis. Discussions with erudite stakeholders reveal a less than satisfactory state of affairs in so far as they relate to the research and academic reach as well as the administrative firmness of the public universities.

In a scenario as stated above, the opening of the Department of Criminology of the University of Dhaka in 2014, though belated, is a refreshingly welcome news. One could perhaps justifiably reason that in terms of academic propriety, the Department of Criminology could have commenced its journey alongside the Department of Sociology in late 50s at the University of Dhaka. However, owing to facts better left unsaid, this delayed pragmatism has to be admired and encouraged.

Talking about pragmatism, we are heartened to know from the Chairman of the Department of Criminology that they are accepting regular students as well as professionals including lawyers, journalists, and members of different law enforcing agencies. Further the department is working on establishing links for knowledge-sharing and learning. In such ventures one can see the formative stage of the much needed meeting of the official and academic minds, so very characteristic of higher seats of learning elsewhere.

Dwelling on the course content and its relevance to the criminal justice system, the department has very pertinently pointed to the imperative of the constitutional right of citizens to live in a peaceful society. The need for mobilisation of social forces for rendering moral development of citizens also cannot escape notice. It also recognises the importance of family and good education towards building a healthy society.

In fact, the importance of home can hardly be ignored to study crime and related societal deviations. Good homes, indeed, are our insurance against crimes. There could be no

two opinions on the "need to catch ethics early." We are told that Criminology as an academic discipline mainly focuses on the causes of crime from a theoretical point of view. So while the etiology of crime, sociology of law, and the treatment of criminals maybe the focal areas of academic concern, it would do society a service by venturing to know if social disorganisation, dislocation, wanton disregard of our values are the inevitable concomitant price that the country has to pay to attain socio-economic development. If that be the case, how do we achieve balanced growth, an oft-repeated development goal?

Theoretically speaking, we might be wondering if human criminal behaviour is genetically predetermined and in such an eventuality, how the rationale of inflicting punishment would be looked at. However, at the same time, can't we expect that, as a down to earth Social Science subject with a desirable applied bias, the Department of Criminology might venture to find out why particular geographical areas of Bangladesh are more prone to crimes and why suicides are a recurrent reality in some specific locations? The department could also look at the impacts of climate change, natural disasters or seasonal variations have on the frequency and trends of crime in our part of the world.

Delving into the enigma of understanding criminal behaviour, one might come across interesting happenings in 1971 when many hard-boiled criminals were the first to join the ranks of freedom fighters before others could break out of the shackles of hesitance and ambivalence. In greater Barisal, the valiant deeds of Kuddus Mollah, a veteran dacoit popularly known as Robin Hood of South Bengal, against well-armed Pakistani soldiers were greatly inspirational in boosting the morale of the local population. His daredevilry in Nandir Bazar and elsewhere in the district would remain as feats of exemplary courage in the annals of our civilian armed resistance during the liberation struggle. How an unethical and immoral man with a criminal mind rose to incredible heights of altruism could perhaps constitute an area of research.

The question is, are criminals, largely, a brave lot? Could a good number of them be brought back to socially and morally acceptable vocations to render them into law abiding productive citizens? How fast can the



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apparently "fun-seeking" delinquent of the neighbourhood turn into the uncontrollable don of the area? Who are the suspected patrons and how the process works to society's peril?

On a broader canvas, the political economy of crime and corruption could be an area of intense study. One could also venture to see the impact of enforcement of deviance on the implementation of pro-poor development agenda. Another significant area of concern could be to find out if increasingly litigious actions are standing in the way of harmonious development and if alternative dispute resolution could be the preferred relief.

The all-pervasiveness of crime has always engaged practitioners and academicians. Some say that no society at any time or clime is or was free from crime

and that crime is as old as humanity. Advocates of capital and corporeal punishment in their innocent exuberance might think of having a crime-free society with decapitated limbs but what is the ground reality? Is multiplicity of causation of crime a phenomena worth studying?

Last but not the least, what about those in consequential positions who have no ostensible means of subsistence, or who cannot give a satisfactory account of their wealth? Criminologists in the making could study the suspected profusion of such category of persons amidst us in academic and perhaps public interest.

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QUOTABLE Quote section featuring Raymond Williams (1921-1988) with the quote: "TO BE TRULY RADICAL IS TO MAKE HOPE POSSIBLE, RATHER THAN DESPAIR CONVINCING."

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH section with a crossword grid and a list of clues for across and down words.

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER section with a crossword grid and a list of answers for the previous day's puzzle.

beetle bailey comic strip section featuring Mort Walker's cartoon about a man practicing golf and another man vacuuming.