

Joint Press Conference

Statement by

HE Sheikh Hasina

Hon'ble Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Prime Minister's Office, Saturday, 23 Jaistha 1422, 06 June 2015

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

His Excellency the Prime Minister and Members of the Media,

It is indeed a great pleasure to have Prime Minister Narendra Modi amongst us today. This is truly a historic moment. We are transforming our relationship to a greater height.

2. This afternoon, we exchanged the letters of ratification of the 1974 Land Boundary Agreement. With this, a 68-year old humanitarian issue comes to a peaceful end. We are extremely happy that the land boundary issue has finally been resolved. I appreciate Prime Minister Modi's leadership in achieving it. We also thank the people of India and all the political parties in India for their unequivocal support to the agreement. In this context, I recall with gratitude the historic role of Father of Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Former Indian Premier Srimati Indira Gandhi. We also recognize the contribution of the Hon'ble President of India Shri Pranab Mukherjee.

3. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in a speech delivered in Kolkata on 6 February 1972, said, "As for us, we will be wanting to cooperate with all concerned for creating an area of peace in South Asia, where we could live side by side as good neighbors and pursue constructive policies for the benefit of our people..." This visionary statement encapsulates how we look at South Asia. I believe that we could collectively achieve greater peace, stability, progress and prosperity for the people in the region which was the dream of Bangabandhu.

4. India is certainly our most important neighbour and one of our key development partners. India made invaluable contribution during our War of Liberation for which we are deeply grateful. India has attained commendable economic development and is fast emerging as a powerhouse in the areas of education, science, technology and innovation. Bangladesh's economy has also been growing over 6% for the last 6 years. We have also achieved almost all of the MDGs and made significant advancement in poverty eradication, women empowerment and education.

5. Few minutes back, we had a very fruitful bilateral talk. Our conversations were warm, candid and forward looking. We understand each other's concerns and priorities. We discussed all aspects of our ever-growing relationship.

6. Prime Minister Modi and I agree that greater connectivity is vital for the development of the two countries and for the region. The signing of the Coastal Shipping Agreement, the renewal of the Trade Agreement and the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade, as well as the flagging off new bus services are examples of our commitment to seamless connectivity across the region to reduce inequities and maximizing welfare gains. The new trade facilitation measures incorporated in these agreements would create new opportunities for more trade, investment and business. We have very good cooperation in power and energy sectors.

7. Prime Minister Modi was receptive to the issue of growing trade deficit and assured of his government's cooperation. To bring balance in trade between the two countries, we agreed to establish Special Economic Zones in Mongla and Bheramara for India. We hope, this would increase Indian investment in Bangladesh substantially.

8. Today, we have signed a number of bilateral documents, covering diverse areas of cooperation. These include economic cooperation, trade and investment, security, infrastructure development, education, science and technology, IT and culture. Cooperation in such a vast area shows the depth, breadth and maturity of our partnership for development.

9. We also discussed the issues of sharing of water of common rivers including Teesta.
10. We both reiterated our strong commitment to make our borders peaceful and prosperous. We also pledged 'zero tolerance' against terrorism and extremism.
11. People-to-people contact is the strength of our links. This is the strongest of our links. Together, we decided to open Bangladesh Mission in Gwuahati, Indian Missions in Khulna and Sylhet. This again reflects our growing mutual confidence and shared commitment to expand our relationship.
12. Our vision for comprehensive and enduring relationship would be outlined in the Joint Declaration. We have to translate the Declaration into concrete deliverables. I assure you, Mr. Prime Minister, that we are committed to extending full support and cooperation in this journey.
13. Mr. Prime Minister, Your visit has instilled new dynamism and confidence in our relationship.

I wish you a pleasant and productive stay in Dhaka.

Khoda Hafez.
Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever.
Long Live Bangladesh-India Friendship.
