

# Bangladesh-India Relations :Looking Ahead\*

**H. E. Mr Tariq A Karim**

First of all, please allow me to thank, the Director of your splendid Institution for inviting me and giving me this opportunity and platform to share my thoughts with you on a subject that is of more than mere passing interest to all of us here. I am really pleased to be with you here today at your reputed Institution which embodies the graduation of the Indian Armed Forces from being beyond merely valorous warriors. I have followed the growth and development of your Institution for several years and am impressed that it has continued to nurture its founding objective which is “the furtherance of interest and knowledge in the art, science and literature of National Security in general and of the Defence Services in particular.”

I, therefore, feel privileged to speak before this august gathering about the bilateral relations between Bangladesh and India - their origin, present state, the challenges, and more importantly, the outlook for the future.

If one were to pick a specific time as the starting point of history, then perhaps one could say that the history of Bangladesh - India relations commenced with the Bangladesh War of Liberation in 1971, when the people and the armed forces of our two nations stood by each other shoulder-to-shoulder and fought against the brutality and occupation of Pakistani forces on Bangladesh soil. Together, they embarked on the first leg of journey that embraced pain, blood, sweat and tears and stretched out over nine long months. That journey ended gloriously on 16th December 1971 when the Pakistani forces surrendered to our Joint Command in Dhaka, closing the chapter on twenty four years of misrule, inequality, injustice and ignominy. Without the, political, economic, military, diplomatic and humanitarian support of the government and people of India, our struggle and agony would in all probability, have been prolonged for a much longer period entailing far larger scale of bloodshed and terror. We, the people of Bangladesh recall and acknowledge with deep gratitude this unstinted support and assistance that we received from the government and people of India at that fateful time of our need. We recall with mixed emotions, of sincere gratitude, great pride and deep sorrow, the supreme sacrifice made by the numerous brave soldiers of India who fought together with our valiant freedom fighters to help Bangladesh achieve its Independence. Thus, by helping us as a true and tested friend from the moment we embarked on our fateful journey, India became a partner of Bangladesh and sealed an unwritten charter of friendship with the hallowed blood of its own sons.

But picking a specific point of time in history is always a dangerous thing, because history in a sense has no beginning and no end. It just is, and moves forward inexorably. I could assert with equal certainty, looking back at the sweep of history, that perhaps the seeds of our shared journey were sown as early as March 1940, when Husein Shaheed Suhrawardy, that great leader of Bengal who was Chief Minister of United Bengal at that time, went uninvited to the Conference of the All India Muslim League at Lahore and pleaded passionately for a different vision of Independence from colonial Britain, in which he envisaged Bengal forming a commonwealth of partnership with adjacent regional states or entities. Sadly that did not happen, and India was partitioned, as indeed was Bengal. The Bengalis’ speedy disenchantment with the new configuration was sparked by no less a person than the founder of Pakistan, Mr Jinnah, with whom must squarely rest the responsibility for kindling the spark that finally was to result in the Bengalis rejecting the use of religion as the logic for State formation and consolidation, and wresting back for themselves their own space based on nationalism, secularism, pluralist democracy and equality-based societal development, and progress of all its people. The progression of the germination and growth of that seed sown in 1940, to its final blossoming in December 1971 is also the history of a long struggle of the Bengali people of East Pakistan against authoritarianism, military dictatorship, economic deprivation and political disenfranchisement, that was also a relentless struggle for secular, pluralist democracy, economic and political autonomy, and self-determination.

The second leg of our journey commenced immediately following liberation, with the Awami League taking over the reins of government of the new Nation. We progressed fast, particularly under the leadership of our Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Perhaps we progressed too fast, in a sense, because that progression triggered off forces and events that led to the brutal assassination of Bangabandhu, almost his entire family, close associates and relatives, and abruptly disrupted our relations. But today is not the time to go into that saga in any great detail. Neither is today the time to dwell masochistically on what went awry in our relations after we became Independent, although we could perhaps touch on aspects of that when we come to the interactive session. We are here today specifically to try and peer into what the future holds for our relationship.

Any such exercise in futures must be predicated on the inescapable fact that not only is the post-colonial political history of Bangladesh-India relations born out of blood, but that, there is much more that stretches out over millennia that should bond us together. I refer here to our shared rich legacy of history, cultural forms and values that draw and knit us together, and the reality of geography that glues us together like conjoined Siamese twins who cannot be separated by any surgical procedure. One of the strongest knots that notably binds us is that we both subscribe to democracy - we are two of the notable democracies in South Asia, one the largest in the world, the other the second largest in South Asia. India is the largest democracy in the world where democratic rule and its institutions and systems have developed deep and strong roots nurtured assiduously, consistently and unwaveringly by its peoples since India’s Independence from colonial rule. In Bangladesh, democracy had gone through many vicissitudes but the people’s trust in it and fixation with its idea and ideals is unshakable and the struggle to consolidate this process continues, even today. Additionally, we both have inclusive societies where we celebrate unity in diversity. And, very importantly, for both our States, secularism is a cornerstone of our Nationhood, regardless of the majoritarian faith.

Apart from these positive shared attributes and beliefs, we also face some common challenges. We both have a common fight against illiteracy, poverty, disease, mistrust and conflict, underdevelopment or uneven development and social conflict, and spotty governance issues that have had mixed reviews from both domestic and international juries. And now, we both face the common challenge of global warming and climate change.

However, it is most unfortunate that we have, for the greater part of the last 38 years, been unable to benefit from our commonalities. For far longer than I care to recall, we have not been able to come together and cooperate in any meaningful manner. This negative pattern in relationship dogged us both for the greater part of our post-colonial history since 1975 - except for a brief interlude between 1996-2001 when the Awami League under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina, daughter of our Nation's father, returned to power after almost two decades in the political wilderness. Our relationships have been marred, more often than not, by wide mood swings related to domestic political changes that served to nurture more mutual distrust between us than fostering mutual trust. This distracted both sides hugely, detracting from forging a common strategy to marginalise common challenges with the objective of overcoming them collectively. The agents of a natural bonding between peoples, that should have transcended all negativities, were too often marred by sharp vicissitudes in attitudes to each other between governments that translated downward across a swathe of people.

But again, I come here not to dwell on the past but to look forward. But in order to look forward, let us first also take stock of where we stand today. Today, once again, our two countries find ourselves standing together at the same cross roads we found ourselves in, in 1971.

You must all be keeping track of what's happening in Bangladesh now. Following an internationally (and domestically) acclaimed free, fair and credible elections in December 2008, once more an Awami League government has taken office in Bangladesh in January 2009. It is an elected Government that in its elected campaign promised change, return to democracy and re-securing Bangladesh's pristine secular and tolerant ideals. Going against the conventional wisdom of the day and defying machinations of some, the Awami League (AL) - led 'mohajote' won a landslide victory securing almost three fourths of the elected seats in Parliament, thus winning a huge mandate. In this coalition government of like-minded partners, the AL is firmly in the driving seat. In fact, it was in a position to form the government on its own, had it so wished.

In India too, a secular government with similar vision and similarly huge mandate was also elected to power not long ago. In the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government also, the Congress party is firmly in the driving seat, by far the senior partner. The wheel has turned full circle, and once again there is a unique alignment of political stars on the two sides. This has opened up a historical opportunity for both countries now to get their relations right, once and for all. While there was a similar alignment in 1996, it was a relatively weaker and more tenuous; reflecting the relative strength (or rather lack of it) in the overall domestic political landscape then extant. This time, the stellar consonance is strong. There is thus a window of opportunity that we both have to seize and work upon hard, quickly, to now put right all the things that went so wrong in the past.

Just as you and I individually are the products of our respective families and traditions, and our societal neighbourhood and environs, a country, any country, is also shaped by its familial and societal relationship drawn from its history, and its geographical configuration in the region and the larger world. We feel that there are three major aspects of our geographical location that make us Bangladeshis attach tremendous importance to our relationship with India, one way or the other:

- (a) First, proximity matters. The 1947 Partition threw a spanner into that. It was done in a manner which disrupted the interdependence on one another that had pre-existed among the different peoples of our sub-region. For instance, East Bengal used to be the hinterland of Kolkata. There were, and still remain cultural, social, political and emotional linkages between East Bengal (now Bangladesh) and Kolkata which are very natural. These commonalities can never be denied, and therefore, should not be overlooked.
- (b) Second, geography matters. Bangladesh's unique geography imposes certain limitations on our external dealings. We are almost entirely India-bound on three sides, except for a comparatively miniscule stretch of boundary with Myanmar. This makes India inevitably a critical factor in our foreign policy, in terms of our national security and economic interests. Additionally, we have 54 rivers - the main arterial system of our socio-economic body politic - that flow from India through Bangladesh into the Bay of Bengal. The Partition drew political boundaries across waters that in actuality do not respect such political divisions.
- (c) Third, location matters. It is to our advantage that Bangladesh is at the crossroad between South Asia and South East Asia - the two fastest growing regions of the world. But our location also has a downside. Although we have access to the Bay of Bengal, our cone-shaped coastline can make us potentially 'zone-locked', enclosed (or cut off) as we are (or feel) by India and Myanmar's exclusive economic zones. The increasing pinch of resource-constraints as we try to achieve an ambitious developmental agenda has raised the stakes for urgent delimitation of our maritime boundary that we cannot afford to keep pending for too long as domestic pressures start ratcheting up. A major aspect of our foreign policy efforts will be geared towards securing what we perceive as our right to the resources of the continental shelf adjacent to our coast on the basis of equity and fairness.

After having defined the backdrop, or the mise en scene, in which we live and breathe, let me now set out the drivers of our complex interwoven relationship. I will touch briefly on six major issues:

**International Boundary Issues.** We share over 4096 km of land border, of which a paltry 6.1 km still remain

unresolved 38 years after 1971, and 35 years after the Indira-Mujib accord. In a sense, we are still bearing the burdensome legacy of the unnatural division of 1947 and the arbitrary drawing of lines by a foreign stranger on a paper map. One of the main purpose of the Indira-Mujib accord, signed between the two governments on 16 May 1974, was completion of demarcation of land boundary, exchange of enclaves and adversely possessed territories. These issues must no longer be allowed to poison our relations, as they have a bearing on many other facets of our relationship. We must have the goodwill and determination to resolve these issues in one clean move, now.

**Security Concerns.** From insurgents to extremist militants, India's concerns are that these elements might be getting a safe haven in Bangladesh. Since 1975, successive governments in Bangladesh have consistently denied this. We also have some security concerns regarding India, in respect of criminals from Bangladesh often using India as their hideout. Perhaps the truth is somewhere in between. Instead of continuing to wallow in mutual self-recrimination that serves nobody's interests, we need to have the will to address and resolve these issues once and for all.

**Trade and Connectivity Issues.** We are aware that uneven trade between Bangladesh and India is inevitable. India is the cheapest and nearest provider of goods for Bangladesh, which are in natural demand. Bangladesh does not have the capacity to equate with India in trade. However, what we expect is that there will be equitable trade between the two countries and fair treatment of our exporters. We also hope that infrastructure would be developed in the border areas and non-tariff barriers would be removed for facilitation of trade and flows from Bangladesh to India.

On the Indian side is the long-standing issue of what we prefer to call connectivity. In this connection I may say that Bangladesh has already granted India connectivity through her waterways under the aegis of the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade. There is also a thriving bus service between Agartala-Dhaka and Dhaka-Kolkata. We have also established rail connectivity through the Maitry Express train with regular - rail service between Dhaka and Kolkata. However, we need to expand this network. Towards this end, we need to restore and re-operationalise the rail links that had been severed in 1965. But in this, we shall need cooperation and assistance of India in upgrading our rail links. The Maitry Express train service also needs to be made faster and more people-friendly than it is now to popularise it. The same applies to the bus routes in operation, or those which may be contemplated in the future. We both need to seriously consider opening of new bus routes between Dhaka-Shillong, Dhaka-Guwahati and linking all these to our major port city, Chittagong. Again, for all this, we shall look to India for supportive gestures.

Dhaka and Kolkata are intensely connected now by air. No less than seven airlines are, providing service on this route. There are daily direct flights between Dhaka and Delhi, and regular direct air link between Dhaka and Mumbai. I am happy to note that the latent potential of further expanding rail, road and riverine connectivity are currently being examined seriously by the two governments.

**Energy and Power Sharing.** This is yet another area that has not been satisfactorily or seriously explored and represents missed opportunities. Bangladesh, like India, is a power-deficit country. We need to, therefore, seriously think about power sharing and trading. Sub-regional cooperation in this regard, taking a holistic view of the situation and looking farther than the distance of our own noses is urgently needed, and must be proactively pursued by all stakeholders in tandem as well as in concert.

**Water Sharing.** This is an emotive issue, as indeed Indians already are intensely aware from their own internal water-sharing disputes within India. We have 54 common rivers. We are aware that being a water-deficit country, India needs to harness its water resources to meet ever growing domestic requirements. We do not downplay India's needs. However, while catering to its own requirements, India also needs to ensure a fair flow and share of water for Bangladesh and also assure Bangladeshis that nothing that is done in India will adversely impact or harm Bangladesh. Ironically, although criss-crossed by so many rivers that high floods make Bangladesh appear from the air as numerous islands dotting a vast expanse of water, we are in actuality a water-dependent country. Our entire life style evolved from and revolves around rivers. We may recall here the landmark Ganges Water Treaty of 1996 between Bangladesh and India (signed during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's first term). This treaty is an epitome, of goodwill and cooperation that made a win-win situation possible for both the countries when finally resolved in 1996. We hope that it will be possible to arrive at similar win-win arrangements in respect of the other 53 rivers that we share, sooner rather than later. A perception on the part of Bangladeshis that India is unwilling to address these issues could have deleterious consequences for the dynamics of our domestic politics. It is as much in India's interest as ours that this must not be allowed to happen. The stakes are much too high this time.

**People to People Contacts.** The walls that people erect in their minds are harder than bricks and reinforced concrete, and the prisons in our minds that we create are as impregnable as they are difficult to break out of. Long years of deliberately keeping people across the broad spectrum of society apart from each other have only served to reinforce these self-created prisons, that have remained hostage to what I have described as a tenacious and unrelenting security syndrome. We need to determinedly break ourselves free from this psychological self-incarceration. Without promoting socialising of contacts across the length and breadth of our respective societies, we cannot ever hope to make real progress in rediscovering each other. Only then will our liberation and independence acquire real meaning and substance. Improving connectivity, therefore, not only in the infrastructure for flow of goods and services, but also totally free and unencumbered people-to-people contacts should now be a high priority goal.

People from Bangladesh come to India for numerous purposes such as medical treatment, education, cultural exchanges, visiting relatives, tourism and so on. We hope that India will encourage its people to visit Bangladesh. This contributes to promoting better understanding, and demystification and demythification of each to the other.

We both need to exponentially increase this interactive flow of people between our two countries. In the long run, people to people contacts will form the enduring bedrock that will help, nay indeed drive, the removal of barriers between us.

## **Future Portends - Looking Ahead**

As you are aware, our Foreign Minister Dr Dipu Moni undertook an official visit to India in early September. During the visit, she called on the Prime Minister of India Dr Manmohan Singh, External Affairs Minister Shri SM Krishna, Union Minister of Finance Shri Pranab Mukherjee and Union Minister for Water Resources and Parliamentary Affairs Shri Pawan Kumar Bansal. She held bilateral talks with the External Affairs Minister on a range of issues pertaining to India-Bangladesh relations. The visit demonstrated the commitment of Bangladesh to strengthen bilateral relations. Each side showed a keenness to respond positively to the concerns of the other. The Joint Press Statement that emanated at the conclusion of that visit is by far the boldest and most forward looking document that has emerged from such a meeting, since 1975 (The same is at the Appendix). Both the Governments agreed on many issues including, inter alia, connectivity, water and power sharing, security and trade. The document in a sense is the road map that we intend to pursue, as well as, the skeletal architecture for our future relationship that we both have to labour intensively on, to flesh it out meaningfully and fully.

During Dr Dipu Moni's call on the Prime Minister of India, the Prime Minister mentioned that India attached the highest priority to its relations with Bangladesh. He reiterated his invitation to H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to visit India at an early date, as it would write a new chapter in India-Bangladesh relations. We are expecting that our Prime Minister would visit India very soon. Both sides are now engaged in seriously doing the home-work required to ensure that the visit, when it takes place, will be a historic landmark and the harbinger of change, ushering in a new era of meaningful cooperation, friendship, goodwill and amity.

We want to place India at the forefront of our diplomatic relations. We see India as a country that would exert increasing influence regionally and globally. We see India's economic rise as one of the pivotal development of this century. We recognise India's strength as a pluralist democracy which is something that brings Bangladesh close to India. We in Bangladesh too wish to benefit from India's gains. At the same time, it is in India's own interest to co-opt Bangladesh in its own prosperity. May I recall here something that the late Rajiv Gandhi told us in early 1985, soon after he assumed the mantle of leadership of India: "It was, in India's own interest that Bangladesh should develop and become economically prosperous and stable, and that India should help Bangladesh in this endeavour." This prosperity should transform into symbiotic prosperity and development, benefitting people of both countries, the immediate sub-region and indeed, by extension the larger region.

One obvious aspect of our myriad challenges is their inter-connectedness. Rising poverty, illiteracy and the poor state of human development have made this region an ideal place for the growth of regressive and extremist forces with obscurantist and malevolent agenda. Our entire region has suffered from the menace of extremist violence and terrorism for almost two decades. Because of the inability of powerful elements in past dispensations to look upon these forces as inimical to the larger interests of peace and stability, and their propensity to succumb to the temptation of using these elements against each other to weaken or destabilise the perceived enemy, these extremist forces have gained ascendancy in our respective body polities. This has hampered our growth, by diversion of scarce and precious resources for securing ourselves, not merely against these malevolent human forces but also in our struggle to eradicate poverty, illiteracy and overall improvement of the lives of our common people. Much precious time has already been lost. We need to refocus our energies, taking full advantage of the unique point of history we find ourselves in now, when exciting new opportunities intersect age old challenges. Only through concerted cooperative efforts can we meet these challenges.

We must take it upon ourselves to isolate and vanquish the root causes of the malaise plaguing us and address them in a cooperative manner. We have to draw from each other's experiences, participate uninhibitedly in each other's prosperity and come to one another's rescue in times of crisis. It is through regional cooperation, or more specifically, sub-regional cooperation that we can usher in economic prosperity and eradicate with any degree of finality the challenges confronting us.

I have a dream! In Delhi, my primary objective and indeed mandate is to seek to exponentially improve and further build upon the friendly relations already existing between Bangladesh and India, to expand its scope and dimensions, to take it to new heights. I need your support and help to translate this dream into a reality.

We all must remember that we have to act responsibly, if we sincerely want this relationship to be a tool to improve the fate of our peoples. Our founding leaders proved their sincerity through their works and ideals. We must acknowledge that India has always been a friend in need for Bangladesh. I recall here with gratitude and appreciation the assistance and cooperation that India had extended to our flood and cyclone-affected people in 2007. Similarly, I may mention here the fellow-feeling of the people of Bangladesh for the ill-affected people of India. These demonstrate the true feelings of our two peoples for each other and they matter, immensely.

God (whether we address Him (or Her) as Allah, Bhagwan or Ishwar) and geography have placed us, inseparably together, and intertwined our destinies. It is said that people may change their neighbours, but they cannot change their neighbourhood. It is in our mutual interest and also in the interest of regional stability and prosperity that there be close cooperation and interaction between us. Bangladesh seeks to achieve this objective bilaterally and also through regional and sub-regional cooperation. Our common future is also the future of South Asia, so we must look forward with optimism and hope. As two South Asian neighbours, we need to make collective endeavours not only for our individual growth and development, but also for ensuring economic progress for the region as a whole. I can assure you on my part, we shall go the extra mile needed to achieve this goal.

Let us seize this historic opportunity and forge forward together hand in hand, for the best interests of our people, with mutual respect and affection for each other. Let not misperception and distrust detract us from our sallying forth on this exciting voyage ahead. At the same time, let us not sully the new relationship that we seek to build together, either by expectations of fawning obsequiousness on one side or perceptions of patronising attitude on the other.

I thank you all for your commendable patience in bearing with me. Thank you.

## **Appendix**

### **Joint Press Statement on the visit of Foreign Minister of Bangladesh to India**

Dr Dipu Moni, MP, Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh undertook an official visit to India from 7-10 September 2009. During the visit, she held bilateral talks with the External Affairs Minister of the Republic of India Shri SM Krishna on a range of issues pertaining to India-Bangladesh relations. Dr Dipu Moni also called on the Prime Minister of India Dr Manmohan Singh, Union Minister of Finance Shri Pranab Mukherjee and Union Minister for Water Resources and Parliamentary Affairs Shri Pawan Kumar Bansal. She was accompanied during the visit by her spouse Mr Tawfique Nawaz, Foreign Secretary Ambassador Mijarul Quayes, Director General (South Asia) in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mr Muhammad Imran and Private Secretary to the Foreign Minister, Mr Jishnu Roy Choudhury.

The visit was marked by warmth and cordiality and a commitment to strengthen bilateral relations. Each side showed a keenness to respond positively to the concerns of the other.

During Dr Dipu Moni's call on the Prime Minister of India, the Prime Minister mentioned that India attached the highest priority to its relations with Bangladesh. He reiterated his invitation to H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to visit India at an early date. He expressed his hope that her visit would write a new chapter in India-Bangladesh relations.

During the official talks, the two Ministers noted the multifaceted nature of relations between the two countries and the historical and traditional bonds of friendship. They also noted that recent elections have provided both countries with a historical opportunity to take India-Bangladesh relations to greater heights. It was in this spirit that both Ministers discussed the entire gamut of bilateral relations and agreed on the following:

- Both sides recognised the need to expedite negotiations with a view to finalise an agreement for sharing of the waters of Teesta river. Towards this end, they agreed to mandate their respective Foreign Offices to meet and discuss the technical and other parameters of this issue. They agreed to immediately commence Joint Hydrological Observations on the river. They also agreed to undertake bank protection works, dredging of Ichhamati river and minor irrigation/drinking water schemes on Feni river.

- The Bangladesh side thanked the Indian side for the hospitality and cooperation extended to the Bangladesh Parliamentary delegation during their visit to the proposed Tipaimukh Dam site. In this context, the Bangladesh side welcomed India's reassurance that it would not take steps that would adversely impact Bangladesh.

- Both sides recognised the importance of bilateral and regional connectivity. In this context, both sides discussed designating Ashuganj as a new port of call under Article-23 of the Inland Water Transit and Trade Agreement as well as the use of Chittagong port by India. Bangladesh side agreed to provide access to Ashuganj Port to facilitate the transportation of the Over Dimensional Consignments for the Palatana Power Project in Tripura.

- Indian side agreed to facilitate Nepal-Bangladesh and Bhutan-Bangladesh connectivity.

- Both sides agreed to enhance cooperation in the power sector. India agreed to provide at least 100 MW to Bangladesh on a priority basis. Ahead of this, it will also undertake a feasibility study on power grid inter-connectivity for transmission lines, etc. from India to Bangladesh.

- Both sides agreed on the re-opening Sabroom-Ramgarh trade point as well as opening a land route at Demagiri-Thegamukh on the Mizoram border for bilateral trade.

- India agreed in principle to provide a Line of Credit for railway projects and supply of locomotives, coaches and buses. India offered to take up construction of Akhaura-Agartala railway link under Indian assistance.

- India also agreed to assist Bangladesh in the dredging sector.

- Both sides agreed to start Border Haats at the Bangladesh-Meghalaya border for mutual benefit of the people in these areas.

- Both sides agreed to movement of containerised cargo by rail and water for bilateral trade.

- Both sides welcomed the holding of the Joint Working Group on Trade last month and discussed broad economic issues with a view to fully activate all institutional mechanisms to promote two-way trade, initiate long pending trade facilitation measures and facilitate movement of businessmen and professionals.

Bangladesh specifically raised the issue of duty free access to Bangladeshi commodities, removal of Non Tariff and Para Tariff Barriers and improvement of infrastructures on the Indian side. Indian side expressed its readiness to assist Bangladesh in strengthening the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institute. It also requested for removal of barriers to Indian investments and port restrictions for specific commodities.

- Both sides agreed to comprehensively address all outstanding land boundary issues. Both sides expressed their intent to resolve outstanding issues relating to Dahagram and Angarpota enclaves and the Tin Bigha Corridor. Both sides also recognised the need for electrification of Dahagram and Angarpota enclaves as a humanitarian gesture.

- The two Ministers reiterated their resolve to strengthen bilateral co-operation to deter the recurrence of

terrorist incidents. Both sides also reiterated their resolve not to allow the use of their territories for activities inimical to each other's security interests.

- Both sides agreed to conclude the following three agreements:

- a. Agreement for mutual legal assistance on criminal matters,
- b. Agreement for transfer of sentenced persons,
- c. Agreement on combating international terrorism, organised crime and illegal drug trafficking.

The two Ministers reiterated their conviction that opportunities for fruitful collaboration between the two countries in furthering mutual interests were enormous and resolved to remain engaged to expeditiously address all bilateral issues.

#### **Bangladesh High Commission, New Delhi, September 10, 2009**

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\*Text of the talk by **H. E. Mr Tariq A Karim**, High Commissioner of Bangladesh to India at USI on 28 October 2009, New Delhi.

\*\***H. E. Mr Tariq A Karim** has also been the Deputy High Commissioner of Bangladesh to India from 1984-88. Apart from being a seasoned diplomat, he is also a distinguished academician who has a number of publications to his credit.

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