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Title: The Minister of External Affairs laid a statement regarding Visit of Hon'ble Prime Minister to Dhaka, Bangladesh on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2011.

MADAM SPEAKER: Shri S.M. Krishna. If you do not mind, you can lay it on the Table of the House.

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI S.M. KRISHNA): I beg to lay on the Table a statement regarding "the visit of hon. Prime Minister to Dhaka, Bangladesh on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2011.

The Prime Minister visited Bangladesh on 6-7 September, 2011 at the invitation of Prime Minister of Bangladesh. I accompanied the Prime Minister. The presence of the Chief Ministers of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura gave added significance to the visit.

The Prime Minister held extensive discussions with the Prime Minister of Bangladesh and also called on the President of that country. The Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, the Leader of Opposition and the President of the Jatiya Party also called on the PM.

During the visit, the following Agreements and Memorandum of Understandings were signed:

- 1) Framework Agreement on Cooperation for Development;
- 2) Protocol to the Agreement Concerning the Demarcation of the Land Boundary between India and Bangladesh and Related Matters;
- 3) Addendum to the MOU between India and Bangladesh to Facilitate Overland Transit Traffic between Bangladesh and Nepal;
- 4) MOU on Renewable Energy Cooperation;
- 5) MOU on Conservation of the Sunderban;
- 6) Protocol on Conservation of the Royal Bengal Tigers of the Sunderban;
- 7) MOU on Cooperation in the field of Fisheries;
- 8) MOU on Cooperation on Mutual Broadcast of Television Programmes;
- 9) MOU between Jawaharlal Nehru University and Dhaka University;
- 10) MOU on Academic Cooperation between National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), India and Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) Institute of Fashion Technology (BIFT)

Prime Minister's visit to Bangladesh followed the landmark January 2010 visit of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. It is a matter of great satisfaction that under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's leadership, we have received significant cooperation from the Bangladesh authorities in tackling insurgency and terrorism. Prime Minister Hasina has also positively responded to our efforts to enhance economic and transport linkages between India and Bangladesh which are important for the development of our North-Eastern region.

Since the January 2010 visit of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, several agreement of importance to us, viz, Agreements on Mutual Legal Assistance on Criminal Matters, Transfer of Sentenced Persons and on Combating International Terrorism, Organised Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking, have been ratified and are now in force. The need for an Extradition Treaty was underscored by the Prime Ministers in their discussions.

It is in this context, that Prime Minister's visit to Bangladesh has achieved concrete progress in our efforts to develop and strengthen close and friendly relations with Bangladesh.

The effective management of our borders is the first essential step to creating a defined and peaceful boundary that will provide a stable and tranquil environment for cross-border cooperation with Bangladesh. The Protocol to the 1974 Land Boundary Agreement, signed on 6 September 2011 by the Foreign Ministers of India and Bangladesh in the presence of the Prime Ministers, paves the way for a settlement of the long pending land boundary issues between the two countries. This includes the demarcation of remaining un-demarcated areas, territories under adverse possession and exchange of enclaves. In building this historic agreement, the Government has received the full support and concurrence of the State

Governments concerned. In implementing the agreement, people living in the border areas will not be dislocated.

India and Bangladesh have now put in place mechanisms, including the recently concluded Coordinated Border Management Plan, which we hope will greatly reduce the scope for incidents on the border and strengthen mutual trust and goodwill among the border guarding forces and people living in the border areas. We hope that problems arising from illegal border crossings and related difficulties will be better addressed by both sides.

Our efforts to resolve the border issues with Bangladesh reflect our desire to make our borders with the neighbours borders of peace, stability and amity.

During the visit we have agreed to promote trade, investment and economic cooperation and facilitate trade by rail, road, inland waterways, shipping and air. Several initiatives are under consideration for improvement of transportation links. A major programme is currently underway to develop border infrastructure through establishment of Land Customs Stations, Integrated Check Posts, Border Haats etc.

The Framework Agreement on Cooperation for Development contains new ideas for bilateral and sub-regional cooperation which will institutionalize the rapidly growing ties between the two countries.

During the visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India in January 2010, the Government of India had announced a one billion dollar line of credit for Bangladesh. Projects worth US\$ 750 million have been since identified and are under implementation. These are largely in the area of railways and transport infrastructure.

We are keen to arrive at fair and equitable arrangements for sharing of our common rivers. We have experience of this before, as in the Ganga Water Treaty of 1996. We however recognize that water is a sensitive issue in both countries. The Government will work towards arriving at solutions that are acceptable to all concerned. There is a large trade imbalance between India and Bangladesh in favour of India which has increased over the years. The reduction of the trade imbalance has been a long standing request of Bangladesh. During his visit, the Prime Minister announced the removal of all 46 textile lines, as requested by Bangladesh, from India's negative list for LDCs under the provisions of SAFTA with immediate effect. The Prime Minister of Bangladesh conveyed appreciation for this major step on enhanced market access for that country. During the discussions, Prime Minister emphasized that greater Indian investments in Bangladesh would help to increase the export potential and earnings of that country.

The Prime Minister addressed a gathering of academics, intellectuals, political leaders and others at the Dhaka University on the theme of 'India, Bangladesh and South Asia'. The Prime Minister emphasized that in taking forward our relations with Bangladesh, we wish to work with all sections of the people and all shades of public opinion to foster multi-faceted cooperation. We will encourage people to people contacts, greater cultural interactions and more exchanges among persons, youth and scholars. The two countries will remain engaged in the joint effort to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore in an appropriate manner upto May 2012.

India and Bangladesh will continue to work closer to coordinate their positions on issues such as climate change, food security, development of peace and security. Cooperation on issues of regional and global concern within the framework of SAARC, BIMSTEC and other groupings would be taken forward.

Our relations with Bangladesh are important to us for many reasons. Bangladesh is a country that is proud of its unique and rich cultural heritage. A strong, stable and prosperous Bangladesh is in our interest. It has embarked upon the path of multi-party democracy, based on the ideals of its liberation war, moderation, and tolerance. It is a respected member of the Islamic world. It has witnessed a healthy growth rate in the last few years.

The Prime Minister's visit has enabled us to put across our vision of an equal and mutually beneficial relationship with Bangladesh to the widest cross-section of its people. It is essential for us to develop and nurture a comprehensive partnership with that country.

We are committed to building a strong India-Bangladesh partnership, including assistance in developmental efforts and enhanced bilateral cooperation to our mutual benefit.

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