

Interaction with Mr. Hasanul Haq Inu, Minister for Information, Bangladesh

August, 2016



Welcome

I'd like to personally welcome all delegates. It's an exciting time for all of us as we continue to grow and adapt, remaining always adaptable, motivated and responsive to new ideas. We're meeting during a time of large nation-wide and global change. The field of law, policy and strategy research is an exciting area in which we work. We will continue to meet and bring intellectual people to come together in forums like this, to ensure IIFH remains at the top to strengthen the humanity.



We feel honored to host Mr. Hasanul Haq Inu, Hon'ble Minister for Information and President of the Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal, Bangladesh, on Aug 2016 for an interaction on India-Bangladesh relations and the way forward. The interaction covered a broad spectrum of issues: bilateral economic and security cooperation, Bangladesh's' internal dynamics, the menace of radicalization, and South Asian regional cooperation, among many other related issues.

General NC Vij, welcomed the visiting dignitary, stressing upon the welcome upward spiral in bilateral ties between India and Bangladesh witnessed an in the recent years, specifically mentioning the landmark resolution of land and maritime boundary disputes between the two countries. He stressed further that commonality of interests and purposes were driving both the nations to a more mature and meaningful relationship in the future. While he flagged India's nagging concerns vis-à-vis growing radicalization in Bangladesh and its spillover effects on India, he also exuded confidence that outstanding issues between India and Bangladesh would get resolved soon, given the sublime trajectory in bilateral relationship.

Hon'ble Minister from Bangladesh, Mr. Hasanul Haq Inu, on his part, reciprocated the sentiments of goodwill and cooperation as expressed by General NC Vij. In a reference to India's remarkable contribution towards Bangladesh's liberation from the tyranny of West Pakistan, Hon'ble Minister acknowledged that Bangladesh owes a blood-debt to India. He pointed out that Bangladesh's emergence as a free and independent nation-state marks a significant paradigm, with culture, ethnicity and language playing more dominating roles than just the religion in shaping the national



identity of Bangladesh. This, the Hon'ble Minister said, was a clear denouncement of the two-nation theory which led to the creation of Pakistan. He reaffirmed that Bangladesh remains a secular and pluralistic society, with its ideals influenced by thinkers and leaders like Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore and Romain Rolland. While he termed the existing bilateral treaties between India and Bangladesh as small windows of cooperation, he argued that the 'big gate of cooperation' remains yet to be opened - a clear pointer to the Teesta water sharing issue that remains unresolved.

The Hon'ble Minister further opined that 'the big gate of cooperation' between the two countries could be opened by none other than two current Prime Ministers, Mr. Narendra Modi and Ms. Sheikh Hasina, leaders who share common understanding and a vision for joint development. He also cited Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi when he struck a chord with the Bangladeshi people declaring at the Dhaka University that, "While people thought we were just 'close' to each other (*paas-paas*), now the world would have to acknowledge that we are not just *paas-paas* but also *saath-saath* (bonded together)".

Among other highlights of Minister. Hasnul's talk, he dwelt a great deal upon South Asia's regional economic cooperation. Pinning the blame for lack of economic cooperation in the region on historical legacies, the Minister regretted that South Asian countries have opened their doors to the West but not to each other. "Nation-states are not secured by military hardware alone", as the Hon'ble Minister stated, adding that there was the need to promote human security across the South Asia. Responding to criticism that Bangladesh was increasingly turning into a hub of Islamist



radical forces, the Hon'ble Minister stated that youths in Bangladesh were as much affected by the happenings in the Middle East anywhere else. Further, he indicated that part of the blame for growth of radicalization in Bangladesh could be laid at the culpability of a few political parties.



The talk by Hon'ble Minister Hasanul Haq was followed by an interactive session. The Minister responded to a broad swath of questions from the audience. Notable questions related to Bangladesh's perspective on China's sponsorship of the 'Maritime Silk Route', the on-going trials of war criminals, rumours of disconnect between a part of Bangladesh's Armed Forces and the trials of war criminals and external influences on the process of radicalisation in Bangladesh. Answers given by the Minister were in conformity with balanced and progressive policies of the Government of Bangladesh that was determined by national interests. As regards external radicalising influences and trial of war criminals, the Minister stated that control of the former and retribution on the latter were necessary to foster a healthy society in Bangladesh. He hoped that motivated opponents of such efforts would see the light and cooperate.

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