



PRESS RELEASE

2nd India-Bangladesh Strategic Dialogue | 22-23 June 2023

“India and Bangladesh close partners, need to accelerate economic and digital connectivity to optimize bilateral ties”, say experts

As India and Bangladesh head into general elections, there is a lot to celebrate in this bilateral relationship. But as the second India-Bangladesh Strategic Dialogue concluded, last mile implementation of numerous projects remains a work in progress that needs to be speeded up for this relationship to fully realize its potential.

The dialogue, jointly convened by the Ananta Centre and the Centre for Policy Dialogue, Dhaka saw domain experts, policymakers, and journalists coming together to discuss some of the overarching issues governing the India-Bangladesh relationship at present. The dialogue was led by co-chairs Dr Naushad Forbes, and Dr Fahmida Khatun.

Welcoming the delegations of both countries, H.E. Md. Mustafizur Rahman, High Commissioner of Bangladesh to India highlighted the importance of “collective prosperity and mutual benefits.” Further emphasizing the importance of connectivity, he added, “Agartala-Akhaura Rail link, which is nearing completion will be the first rail route between Northeast India and Bangladesh. We have decided to allow Chattogram and Mongla ports to be used for the movement of goods by India. This will surely help the socio-economic growth of India’s northeast region.”

Harsh V. Shringla, Chief Coordinator of India’s G-20 Presidency and former High Commissioner to Bangladesh reiterated the importance of working on the bilateral relationship. Addressing the dialogue, he said despite words like “Sonali Adhyay” used to describe the relationship, there is always something new to aspire for and this should be the continuous goal in both countries.

Addressing trade barriers between the two countries, Dr. Naushad Forbes, Chairman, of Ananta Aspen Centre, said, “In spite of the lofty ambitions on connectivity, a typical truck crossing the border waits for 138 hours to collect 55 signatures. It all demonstrates the good intentions of connectivity projects which are followed by delays in executions. We have restrictions, that stem from us being close neighbors but ultimately constrain our relationship. Great opportunities exist in opening fully to investment by each other, to financial collaboration, to an open border for the movement of goods.” India-Bangladesh are friends, who have seen much progress in our relationship, and friends who can do much more. The basic transportation infrastructure needs to come first, followed by a motor vehicle agreement (digitalizing paperwork) that ensures the free movement of goods through the border.

The next edition of this dialogue will be held in Dhaka in 2024.

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