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Hasina's Visit to New Delhi: An Assessment

For India, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent visit to New Delhi may be a successful one, but it has generated mixed reactions in Dhaka. An inconclusive deal over the sharing of the Teesta waters, and India-Bangladesh defence agreements and memoranda of understanding have given reasons to many in Bangladesh to target Hasina's government.

Amit Ranjan¹

The visit of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, to India from 7 to 10 April 2017 was marked by the signing of 35 bilateral agreements and memoranda of understandings (MoUs). Twenty two were signed between the two governments and 13 were business-related engaging the private and public sectors from the two countries.² As expected, stalemate remains over the most dominant issue of the visit – sharing the waters of the transboundary Teesta River.

India-Bangladesh Defence Deals and Other Security-related Issues

During Hasina's visit India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a Line of Credit (LoC) worth US\$500 million to Bangladesh for procurement of defence goods.³ "The two Prime

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² http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/28362/India_Bangladesh_Joint_Statement_during_the_State_Visit_of_Prime_Minister_of_Bangladesh_to_India_April_8_2017. Accessed on 10 April 2017.

³ <https://twitter.com/MEAIndia> Accessed on 8 April 2017.

Ministers emphasised the need to further strengthen and consolidate defence cooperation through greater military-to-military training and exchanges. They also complimented the armed forces for their professional conduct during joint search and rescue operations in the Bay of Bengal leading to the rescue of a large number of fishermen from both sides and the recent initiatives to enhance cooperation in the field of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Recovery (HADR) activities.”⁴ One of the MoUs signed was between Defence Services Staff College, Wellington (Nilgiris), Tamil Nadu, India, and Defence Services Command and Staff College, Mirpur, Dhaka, Bangladesh, to enhance cooperation in the field of strategic and operational studies. Another MoU was between National Defence College, Dhaka, Bangladesh and National Defence College, New Delhi, India, to enhance cooperation in the field of national security, development and strategic studies.⁵ Earlier, India wanted to sign a comprehensive defence agreement with Bangladesh, but settled down for these two lesser agreements and seven MoUs.

Even this deal has not found enough support in Bangladesh. Soon after it was reported in various news channels and national dailies in Bangladesh that, during Hasina’s visit to New Delhi, India and Bangladesh would sign a number of agreements on defence issues, several questions were raised against such a possibility. Secretary General of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, as quoted in *The Financial Express*, said, “Signing any defence deal or memorandum of understanding with India will be a dangerous venture for Bangladesh...We think Bangladesh’s defence system will turn into India’s extended one if Bangladesh procures military hardware from that country.”⁶ In the same vein, another BNP Secretary General, Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, asked why the government was willing to sign a defence deal with India since it claimed that Bangladesh-India ties were now at their peak. “BNP doesn’t think there’s any necessity of signing such deal or MoU. People won’t accept any agreement that goes against the country’s independence and sovereignty.”⁷ Not only the political leaders but also many members of civil society had expressed their opposition to a defence deal with India. A roundtable discussion was conducted

⁴ http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/28362/India__Bangladesh_Joint_Statement_during_the_State_Visit_of_Prime_Minister_of_Bangladesh_to_India_April_8_2017. Accessed on 10 April 2017

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ ‘Any Defence Deal with India ‘to be a dangerous Venture-BNP’ (2017, 17 March), *The Financial Express* <http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/2017/03/17/64599/Defence-deal-with-India-‘dangerous’:BNP>. Accessed on 19 March 2017.

⁷ ‘Resolve outstanding issues with India first, BNP asks PM’ (2017, 7 April) *Prothom Alo*. Retrieved from <http://en.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/news/144597/Resolve-outstanding-issues-with-India-first-BNP>. Accessed on 10 April 2017.

by Bangladesh's daily *Prothom Alo* before Hasina's visit to India. In that discussion, most of the participants were critical about an India-Bangladesh defence deal.⁸ (Retired) Major General ANM Muniruzzaman, President of the government-run research institute, Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies, said, "It is not clear why there is a need for military cooperation or why India is so insistent about this proposal. The Indian media is speaking about joint manufacture. That means certain restrictions will be placed on our procurement. As it is, small states always have certain limitations. We must take this into consideration and keep national interests in mind when we take any steps."⁹

Reacting to the outcome of Hasina's visit to India, Khaleda Zia, Chairperson of the BNP and former Prime Minister of Bangladesh, said, "If voted to power, the BNP would review all the "anti-state" deals and MoUs signed with India to protect the country's interests...People regard the tour as an ultimate failure and also as one to give [away] all and take nothing. The prime minister returned home empty-handed as she was only given some assurances." She also added, "People once again noticed that India's defence, political and geo-political dominance over Bangladesh would grow due to signing of treaties and MoUs in different areas, including security assistance and cyber-crime, arms purchase, line of credit, assistance in nuclear project, import of diesel and power and increasing connectivity."¹⁰ Before Khaleda, a senior BNP leader, Gyaneshar Chandra Roy, said, "We think the agreements were signed to ensure security of India, not that of Bangladesh. India has inked the deal to freely use Bangladesh's territory to save its own land when it'll engage in war with any big power."¹¹ Ruhul Kabir Rizvi said, "The country's people have no consent to the defence MoUs, and they won't allow those to be implemented. We'll set up our security system in our own style."¹² He added, "India has signed the MoUs with a particular political party of Bangladesh to keep it in power forever. This agreement is with a party which has no popularity."¹³ The position of Bangladeshi military on the deal is not clear. But, as a normal practice, it is expected that Hasina must have had taken

⁸ Details of the roundtable can be viewed at <http://en.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/news/143647/Defence-deal-with-India-hardly-relevant-Analysts>

⁹ Kabir, Ayesh (2017, 4 April) 'Deal or No Deal' *Pratham Alo*. Retrieved from <http://en.prothom-alo.com/opinion/news/144381/Deal-or-no-deal>. Accessed on 10 April 2017.

¹⁰ 'PM returned Empty -handed' (2017, 13 April), *The Daily Star* Retrieved from <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/pm-returned-empty-handed-1390516> Accessed on 13 April 2017.

¹¹ <http://en.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/news/144793/Why-so-many-deals-BNP-asks-govt-to-justify>

¹² People Rejected Defence MoUs with India: BNP' (2017, 9 April) *Bangladesh Observer* Retrieved from <http://www.observerbd.com/details.php?id=67999>. Accessed on 10 April 2017.

¹³ <http://www.observerbd.com/details.php?id=67999>

her important military commanders into confidence before agreeing to any format of defence agreements and MoUs with India.

It can be argued that Bangladesh's need for defence weapons, given its geopolitical situation is very limited. But Bangladesh had never accepted such limitations and had signed defence deals with countries its political leaderships had preferred. In 1975, the defence relationship between Bangladesh and China began because the Soviet Union refused to supply spare parts to Bangladesh. Between 1975 and 1978, China supplied 78 per cent of Bangladesh's arms import.¹⁴ And since then, China has been the main supplier of defence equipment and hardware to Bangladesh. Begum Khaleda Zia had signed defence cooperation agreement with China in December 2002.¹⁵ As a result of that, Beijing has also become the major supplier of large number of modern weapons to Bangladesh. The two Ming-class submarines which Dhaka had procured from China in 2016 cost around US\$203 million. This is a huge amount of money for any Least Developed Country like Bangladesh to spend on weapon procurement, especially when it has no 'declared' rival near its border. Further deepening their defence relationship, during the visit of the Chinese President Xi Jinping to Dhaka on 14 October 2016, Bangladesh and China entered into 'Strategic Partnership of Cooperation'. Hence the criticism in Bangladesh about any defence agreement with India does not objectively address the issue. Rather, it is centred on which Bangladeshi party signs a deal with which foreign power. Most of those, who are publicly criticising the India-Bangladesh defence agreements, have had no hesitation to accept a similar deal with China.

During their meeting on 8 April 2017, the two Prime Ministers called on the international community to end selective or partial approaches to combating terrorism and, in this regard, jointly called for the early finalization and adoption of a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism by the United Nations General Assembly. They "recognized the need for urgent measures to counter and prevent the spread of terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization in the region and beyond and expressed their determination to take concrete measures to further step up cooperation and coordination among law enforcement, intelligence

¹⁴ Ghosh, Suchitra (1995) *China –Bangladesh-India Tangle Today: Towards a Solution?* Kolkata: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Limited, p. 16.

¹⁵ Pattanaik, Smruti S. 'Sheikh Hasina's Visit to India: an opportunity to broaden the relationship' *IDS Comment*. Retrieved from http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/sheikh-hasina-visit-to-india_sspattanaik_070417. Accessed on 8 April 2017.

and security organizations of both countries. They reiterated their commitment to ensure that their respective territories would not be allowed to be used for any activities inimical to the other.”¹⁶ Further, “they underscored the need for effective operationalization of the bilateral Extradition Treaty and, in this regard, welcomed the addendum signed during the visit of Home Minister of Bangladesh to India in July 2016. They also lauded the exemplary cooperation on checking the smuggling and circulation of fake currency notes and narcotics. They lauded the signing of Standard Operating Procedures for operationalisation of the MoU on Cooperation between the Coast Guards.”¹⁷

On India-Bangladesh border issue the two Prime Ministers “shared the view that effective implementation of the Coordinated Border Management Plan (CBMP) would enable better border management to jointly manage the identified vulnerable areas, irregular movement, incidents of violence and tragic loss of lives and ensure a border free of criminal activities. Both Prime Ministers reiterated that the number of deaths at the border must be brought down to zero and directed the concerned authorities to work towards that end. Both leaders welcomed the Standard Operating Procedures signed between the Indian Border Security Force and the Border Guard Bangladesh to allow use of Indian border roads for construction and maintenance of Border Posts of Border Guard Bangladesh as well as use of medical facilities in remote border stretches. They also appreciated the fact that meetings of the District Commissioners/District Magistrates of bordering districts on both sides have been held in cluster format since 2014.”¹⁸

Economic Assistance, Trade and Cooperation with Bangladesh

India announced a new concessional LoC of US\$4.5 billion to Bangladesh. This seems to have been done mainly in priority sectors in order to bring India’s resource allocation to Bangladesh to over US\$8 billion in the next six years.¹⁹ There are various projects in Bangladesh worth US\$3 billion being implemented with Indian soft loan. In 2011, during India’s the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s visit to Dhaka, India provided US\$1 billion of LoC to Bangladesh.

¹⁶ http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/28362/India__Bangladesh_Joint_Statement_during_the_State_Visit_of_Prime_Minister_of_Bangladesh_to_India_April_8_2017. Accessed on 10 April 2017.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/28362/India__Bangladesh_Joint_Statement_during_the_State_Visit_of_Prime_Minister_of_Bangladesh_to_India_April_8_2017

¹⁹ <https://twitter.com/MEAIndia>.

This was increased to US\$2 billion in 2015 during the Modi's visit to Dhaka.²⁰ "Bangladesh has been slow in using the previous US\$ 3 billion of Indian credit due to procedural flaws mainly on Dhaka's part. Until last month, India disbursed a little over 50 per cent of the US\$1.06 billion loan it sanctioned in August 2010. And the disbursement of the second credit of US\$2 billion approved in March 2016 is yet to begin."²¹

At present, the two-way trade between India and Bangladesh is about US\$ 6.5 billion, of which India's exports to Bangladesh stand at around US\$5 billion.²² Hasina's meeting with business leaders led to the signing of 13 MoUs between Indian and Bangladeshi companies to generate an investment of US\$10 billion in power, energy, logistics, education and medical sectors of Bangladesh. Some of these signatory companies are state-owned.²³ To support trade and contact between the border people, an MoU was signed to establish Border *Haats* (market).²⁴ The first set of Border *Haats* was set up in 2010 on the India-Bangladesh border in the Indian States of Tripura and Meghalaya. At present, two border *Haats* are in Meghalaya at Kalaichar and Balat and the other two are in Tripura at Srinagar and Kamalasagar.²⁵

The day Hasina landed in India on 7 April 2017, the two countries began commercial supply of High Speed Diesel (HSD) with an inaugural consignment of 2,200 metric tonnes of the fuel given by India to Bangladesh. India plans to build a pipeline to carry HSD to Bangladesh. Until the project is completed, HSD will be transported from Assam's Numaligarh Refinery to Bangladesh via rail.²⁶

To support the power sector in Bangladesh, India would partner Bangladesh in its goal of power for all by 2021 – 60 Mega Watt added to 600 MW supply from India and further commitment of 500 MW.²⁷ The two Prime Ministers welcomed the consensus on the proposed additional interconnection between Bornagar (Assam, India), Parbatipur (Bangladesh) and Katihar

²⁰ Indian Line of Credit: Fresh \$ 5 b likely amid slow use of previous \$ 3b *The Daily Star* 8 April 2017. <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/indian-line-credit-fresh-5b-likely-amid-slow-use-previous-3b-1388062>

²¹ 'Indian Line of Credit: Fresh \$ 5 b likely amid slow use of previous \$ 3b' (2017, 8 April) *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/indian-line-credit-fresh-5b-likely-amid-slow-use-previous-3b-1388062>. Accessed on 10 April 2017.

²² <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/indian-parties-have-common-stance-bangladesh-1388992>

²³ <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/indian-parties-have-common-stance-bangladesh-1388992>

²⁴ http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral_documents.htm?dtl/28360/List_of_AgreementsMoUs_exchanged_during_the_State_Visit_of_Prime_Minister_of_Bangladesh_to_India_April_0710_2017. Accessed on 10 April 2017.

²⁵ <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=155324>

²⁶ 'Diesel Import from India starts tomorrow' (2017, 7 April) *Daily Star* Retrieved from <http://www.thedailystar.net/country/diesel-import-india-starts-tomorrow-1387774>. Accessed on 10 April 2017.

²⁷ <https://twitter.com/MEAIndia>.

(Bihar, India) for power evacuation facilities from which Bangladesh can draw 1,000 MW from Assam-Bihar transmission through Bangladesh with suitable tapping points at Parbatipur (Bangladesh).²⁸ The two countries also signed the Inter- Governmental Agreement for cooperation in the field of civil nuclear energy and other agreements related to nuclear cooperation.²⁹ An MoU was also signed between Energy Efficiency Services Ltd of India and Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority of Bangladesh.³⁰ Investment by private players in the power sector of Bangladesh was welcomed by the two Prime Ministers. An MoU was signed between Petrobangla and Petronet to set up of a Joint Venture Re-gasification LNG Terminal at Kutubdia Island.³¹

Connectivity

Connectivity is important to increase trade and people-to-people contacts between the two countries. During the visit of Hasina, India and Bangladesh started a train called Maitree Express-2. It will run between Benapole in Bangladesh and Petrapole in India. As of now, it will run once in a week. The number of train trips is likely to be increased later. This is an extension of the first passenger train service between Dhaka and Kolkata – Maitree Express – which was started on 14 April 2008. In March 2017, the frequency of Maitree Express’ trips was increased from one to four days in a week. The distance between Khulna and Kolkatta is about 200 kilometres, and is covered in around four hours. For Maitree Express-2, infrastructure has already been developed on both sides of the border for the international train service. Offices have been built for immigration, customs and railway police.³²

During their meeting, the Indian and Bangladeshi Prime Ministers jointly inaugurated the newly-restored railway link between Radhikapur (India) and Birol (Bangladesh) which will facilitate cargo movement between the two countries. They also witnessed the trial run of passenger train between Khulna and Kolkata and welcomed the fact that the full-fledged

²⁸ http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/28360/List_of_AgreementsMoUs_exchanged_during_tge_State_Visit_of_Prime_Minister_of_Bangladesh_to_India_April_0710_2017. Accessed on 10 April 2017.

²⁹ Ibid,

³⁰ Ibid,

³¹ Ibid,

³² ‘From Khulna to Kolkata by Train’ (2017, 7 April), *The Daily Star* Retrieved from <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/khulna-kolkata-train-1388086>. Accessed on 10 April 2017.

service in this sector would be operational by July 2017.³³ International Railway Terminus is to be established at Chitpur, Kolkata by August 2017. They appreciated the progress made with respect to the new railway link between Akhaura and Agartala, including land acquisition, so as to complete the link by the end of 2018.³⁴ An MoU was signed between Container Corporation of India and Container Company of Bangladesh Limited, which is expected to lead to greater cooperation in freight operations. The two sides agreed to examine the request of Bangladesh to establish a new rail link between Panchagarh (Bangladesh) to Siliguri (India).³⁵ A new Kolkata-Khulna-Dhaka bus service was launched. This would facilitate people-to-people contacts.³⁶ Another MoU was signed for the development of Fairway from Sirajganj to Daikhowa and Ashuganj to Zakiganj, on the Indo-Bangladesh Protocol Route, between the Ministry of Shipping of the Republic of India and the Ministry of Shipping of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.³⁷

Rivers Issues

Despite the customary greetings from Prime Minister Hasina,³⁸ the West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee did not give any quick response to resolve the Teesta river issue in the near future. The importance of rivers and contentions over them in India-Bangladesh relationship are such that it found space in Hasina's article in an Indian national daily, *The Hindu*. She wrote: "We share our Lalon³⁹, Rabindranath, Kazi Nazrul, Jibanananda; there is similarity in our language, we are nourished by the waters of the Padma, Brahmaputra, Teesta; and so on. The Sundarbans is our common pride. We don't have any strife over it. Then, why should there be any contention over the waters of common rivers?"⁴⁰ In the presence of Mamata, Modi said, "I firmly believe that it is only my government and Your Excellency,

³³ http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/28362/India__Bangladesh_Joint_Statement_during_the_State_Visit_of_Prime_Minister_of_Bangladesh_to_India_April_8_2017

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/28362/India__Bangladesh_Joint_Statement_during_the_State_Visit_of_Prime_Minister_of_Bangladesh_to_India_April_8_2017. Accessed on 10 April 2017

³⁷ http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/28360/List_of_AgreementsMoUs_exchanged_during_the_State_Visit_of_Prime_Minister_of_Bangladesh_to_India_April_0710_2017 Accessed on 10 April 2017.

³⁸ PM's Gift for Indian Leaders' (2017, 7 April), *Daily Star*. Retrieved from <http://www.thedailystar.net/fro-ntpage/pms-gifts-indian-leaders-1388110>. Accessed on 10 April 2017.

³⁹ Lalon Fakir was a mystic, songwriter, social reformer and thinker. Many of his songs are still being sung by folk singers and liked by many in both West Bengal and Bangladesh.

⁴⁰ Hasina, Sheikh 'Friendship is a flowing River: Sheikh Hasina writes for the Hindu' (2017, 7 April), *The Hindu* <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/friendship-is-a-flowing-river/article17854490.ece?homepage=true>. Accessed on 7 April 2017.

Sheikh Hasina, your government that can and will find an early solution to Teesta water sharing”.⁴¹ Just before the start of Hasina’s India visit from 7 to 10 April 2017, Mamata had reiterated that there was not enough water in the Teesta to share with Bangladesh. She said, as quoted in Indian media, “What will I do if there is no water? There is no water in the Teesta. Mukutmanipur has dried up...Mahananda has dried up. This is just April. Then May, June are up ahead. By the time the rains start...it will be July. So these three months...there are water woes.”⁴² This author has also argued elsewhere that Teesta is the overburdened river of the region.⁴³

After meeting Hasina, Mamata said, “Your problem is water, not Teesta. I am willing to look at any alternate proposal to address your issues. What we can do is that there are many other rivers in the area (India-Bangladesh), we can use water from them.”⁴⁴

Since 2011, Bangladesh has been making a lot of effort to conclude a favourable deal with India on the Teesta issue. The Union Government of India has no problem with it but the West Bengal Chief Minister is against releasing as much as 48 per cent water from the Teesta to Bangladesh. Although it was categorically stated by the two governments that the Teesta water deal would not be signed during the latest visit, till the last minute of Hasina’s stay in India, Teesta dominated the media attention.

In Bangladesh the non-conclusion of a Teesta deal is being considered as a sign of India not caring about Bangladesh’s national interest. This can be gleaned from the statements made by political leaders, opinion pieces written in Bangladesh’s national dailies and people’s reactions towards it on the social media.

Besides Teesta, the two countries have other river-related issues, too, which the two Prime Ministers mentioned during their talks. India has agreed to provide US\$200 million worth LoC

⁴¹ ‘India, Bangladesh Signed 22 pacts in key sectors, Teesta issue unresolved’ (2017 8 April), *Indian Express*. Retrieved from <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/narendra-modi-sheikh-hasina-india-bangladesh-key-pacts-credit-line-teesta-issue-road-rail-lines-4604774/>. Accessed on 8 April 2017.

⁴² ‘No Water in Teesta : Mamata’ *Business Standard* April 5 2017 http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/no-water-in-teesta-mamata-117040500898_1.html

⁴³ For details on the situation of Teesta, see Ranjan, Amit (2017) ‘Teesta Muddle: Can India and Bangladesh find a way out?’ *ISAS Insight* <https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/ISAS%20Reports/ISAS%20Insights%20No.%20397%20-%20The%20Teesta%20Muddle%20-%20Can%20India%20and%20Bangladesh%20find%20a%20way%20out.pdf>

⁴⁴ ‘Mamata Calls Teesta WBs Lifeline’ (2017, 9 April) *Pratham Alo*, <http://en.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/news/144797/Mamata-calls-Teesta-WB-s-lifeline-says-it-can%E2%80%99t>. Accessed on 9 April 2017.

for Buriganga River Restoration Project. The two Prime Ministers also directed the officials concerned to conclude, meanwhile, discussions on various aspects relating to the sharing of waters of the Feni, Manu, Muhuri, Khowai, Gumti, Dharla and Dudhkumar rivers.⁴⁵ “The two Prime Ministers appreciated the positive steps taken in respect of Bangladesh’s proposal for jointly developing the Ganges Barrage on the Padma in Bangladesh. They welcomed the visit of an Indian technical team to Bangladesh, establishment of a ‘Joint Technical Sub Group on Ganges Barrage Project’ and study of the riverine border in the upstream area of project.”⁴⁶ They “directed the concerned officials of the ‘Joint Technical Sub Group’ to meet soon and hoped that the matter would be further taken forward through continued engagement of both sides.”⁴⁷

Honouring Indian Soldiers killed during the 1971 Liberation War

Appreciating the role of India in the creation of Bangladesh, Hasina began, during this visit, a process of honouring the families of Indian soldiers killed in the 1971 Bangladesh liberation war. She started with seven families – four from the Army and one each from the Air Force, Navy and the Border Security Force. Each family received a citation and Indian Rupees 5 lakh (around US\$11,904.76). It is estimated that a corpus fund of around 100 crore (US\$500 million) has been set up for this purpose by Hasina’s government.⁴⁸ In all, 1,661 Indian soldiers died in Bangladesh’s liberation war. Bangladesh had already recognised the roles of Indira Gandhi and Atal Behari Vajpayee by honouring them with ‘Friends of Bangladesh’ award – received by the Congress President Sonia Gandhi and Prime Minister Narendra Modi respectively.⁴⁹

In Delhi, Hasina released a Hindi translation of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman’s ‘The Unknown Memoirs’. Also days before her arrival, the Government of India decided to name a road in Delhi after Sheikh Mujib.

⁴⁵ http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/28362/India__Bangladesh_Joint_Statement_during_the_State_Visit_of_Prime_Minister_of_Bangladesh_to_India_April_8_2017 Accessed on 10 April 2017.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Roy, Shubhajit (2017, 26 March) ‘Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina to honour Indian soldiers killed in 1971 war’ Retrieved from <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/bangladesh-pm-sheikh-hasina-to-honour-indian-soldiers-killed-in-1971-war-4585862/>. Accessed on 8 April 2017.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Conclusion

Whether Hasina's visit to New Delhi was successful or not is a matter of perception, interpretation and the perspective one takes on this. It may be successful for one country but not for the other. Analysing the Bangladeshi media reports, one finds that, according to most of them, this visit of Hasina has not been received well by many in Dhaka. At a higher level, the main reason for disenchantment is Bangladesh's entering into defence- related agreements with India while on the streets of Dhaka and in rural areas, the reason for dissatisfaction from the visit is the non-conclusion of a deal over Teesta river. Soon after it became public that Bangladesh would sign a defence cooperation agreement with India, during Hasina's visit, voices were raised against it by the political parties and individual members of the Bangladeshi civil society. Since then many questions have been raised over the rationale of having such an accord with India. A breakthrough on the Teesta issue could have been an antidote. But this did not happen. Sensing the public mood about the visit, Hasina's party, the Awami League, cancelled, on her instructions, a reception it had earlier decided to accord her upon her return from the official visit to India.⁵⁰

In more positive terms, the agreements and MoUs on connectivity, investments and power generation would certainly help Bangladesh in building infrastructure and improving its economic condition. An increase in the number of buses and trains between the two countries would help more people cross into the other side of the border for various purposes including economic purposes. That might help strengthen relations between the two neighbours.

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⁵⁰ <http://en.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/news/144781/AL-cancels-reception-for-Hasina>. Accessed on 10 April 2017.