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INDIA AND BANGLADESH – EXPERIENCES OF COOPERATION

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ABSTRACT:

India and Bangladesh have witnessed the rise and dispirited relations between the two nations throughout the historic period and often they have been mysterious. India and Bangladesh held warm and cordial relations during the tenure of the Indian National Congress (INC) and Awami League (AL) if we look at the landscape or the viewpoint of history. The completion of 51 years of bilateral ties between India and Bangladesh in 2022, marked a beginning in the year 1971 December when India recognized the newly formed independent state of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Both India and Bangladesh have an unprecedented relationship with their unique histories. For more than 51 years, India and Bangladesh have had a more or less friendly relationship. There have been a few tense moments in the relationship's half-century history, most notably during the military regime and the BNP's rule. The golden jubilee year of the reciprocal relationship was completed in 2022. This article strives to understand areas of cooperation between India and Bangladesh.

Key Words: landlocked, conflict, cooperation, agreement, Transit, liberation and India Bangladesh Relations

INTRODUCTION:

India and Bangladesh have witnessed the rise and dispirited relations between the two nations throughout the historic period and often they have been mysterious. India and Bangladesh held warm and cordial relations during the tenure of the Indian National Congress (INC) and Awami League (AL) if we look at the landscape or the viewpoint of history (Kashem, Md. A., & Islam, Md. S., 2016, p. 250). India's contribution to the liberation war of Bangladesh was a well-recognized factor among the circles of the Awami League. The fact is that the Awami League and the Indian National Congress shared a stand of friendship which is evident in their relations and reflected in their foreign policy objectives.

The completion of 51 years of bilateral ties between India and Bangladesh in 2022, marked a beginning in the year 1971 December when India recognised the newly formed independent state of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Both India and Bangladesh have an unprecedented relationship with their unique histories. During the liberation war and the formation of Bangladesh, India had a significant role. There are many common things that tie these two nations to a single bond such as a common history, heritage and legacy, linguistic and social relations and adoring love for the art with diversifying expressions of music and literature. Most importantly in the neighborhood policy of India, strategically and geopolitically, Bangladesh has an important role and place. Geopolitically Bangladesh is important to India as the Seven sisters of the northern part of the nation have connectivity with it. The foreign policy discourse of Bangladesh is captivated by the words "Indian factor" and "blocked by India". (Ali, Md., 2023, p. 79). With this India has a first concern or the preference for the policymakers of Bangladesh. The two neighbouring nations are on a setting stage in South Asian politics in terms of security cooperation, connectivity, energy and power sectors collaboration, cultural, and social integration, and trade between the two nations. These relations have a direct effect on the millions of people in India-Bangladesh and South Asia as well.

As a result, India is a top priority for Bangladeshi policymakers. The India-Bangladesh partnership affects millions of people in both countries, as well as in South Asia and beyond. The two nations are presently setting an example in South Asian politics in terms of security cooperation, connectivity, collaboration in the energy and power sectors, social and cultural integration, and bilateral trade. During the COVID-19 period, cooperation between the two nations was crucial. India made a humanitarian gesture at the time by assisting

Bangladesh in developing its vaccine. For more than 51 years, India and Bangladesh have had a more or less friendly relationship. There have been a few tense moments in the relationship's half-century history, most notably during the military regime and the BNP's rule. The golden jubilee year of the reciprocal relationship was completed in 2022. (Ali, Md., 2023, P. 80) The mutual relations began in 1971 when India recognized the newly formed independent People's Republic of Bangladesh. The geographical location of Bangladesh is imperative for India and other regional powers. It is a reiterating fact that India's longest border runs across the five states of West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram along with Bangladesh. This became noteworthy from the political, socioeconomic, strategic and cultural outlook. These relations are having immense influence on the people of both Bangladesh and India and most importantly in South Asia. Bangladesh in the context of geopolitical and geostrategic outlook has gained a significant place. If we look at the geopolitical framework of India-Bangladesh, Bangladesh is often described as "India-Locked" as 90 percent of its borders internationally are shared with India and its maritime boundaries are with the Bay of Bengal where India has a powerful presence. Similarly, the Indian north-eastern region is "Bangladesh-Locked" (Majumdar, A. J. 2014, p. 329). as the transit rights through Bangladesh curtails significantly the distance between the nation's other areas and the north-eastern region has a geostrategic gravity. This provides an alternate route with special importance to the presence of China in Doklam and also reduces the transit on the Siliguri Corridor. It also paves the way for the opening of the region for trade and commercial activities which can bring in closer ties between India and Bangladesh Physically and psychologically to have a better relationship.(Murshid, K.A.S., 2011, p. 50). The separation of Bangladesh (East Pakistan) from British India was merely for the purpose of governance and political convenience while it geographically has its roots in the Indian subcontinent with 54 common rivers flowing from India into Bangladesh which has become a continuous problem of water crisis between the two nations. It has become hard for the states to come to a consensus on the issues of water sharing for irrigation, energy purposes, construction of dams and barrages, linking or digging canals etc. at the basic sharing but the issue has also become unagreeable on an individual basis on each other's explanation of legitimate requirements. It has become a sensitive conflict among the nations in domestic politics as well.

History of India-Bangladesh relationship of cooperation:

After the birth of Bangladesh as an independent state, we have already seen that India was the first nation to recognize the freedom of Bangladesh as a nation. India was also the first country to sign a “Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Peace” for 25 years which is based on mutual respect for each other’s independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity while maintaining frugality from meddling with each other’s domestic affairs. (Pant, Harsh, 2007,p. 232)

Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Peace:

On March 16th 1972 a Treaty of peace and friendship between the government of India and the government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh was signed between Mrs Indira Gandhi the then Prime Minister of India and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman the then Prime Minister of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh. The treaty was based on the inspiration of the common ideals of peace, secularism, democracy, socialism and nationalism. It states that based on the cemented ties of friendship through sacrifices which led to the victorious emergence of free, sovereign and independent Bangladesh it is determined to maintain friendly relations that would transform the border into a stretch of eternal peace and friendship. The treaty adhered to the ideologies of non-alignment, peaceful co-existence, mutual cooperation, and non-interference in domestic affairs and upheld the respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty (Ministry of External Affairs). The treaty is determined to protect peace, stability and security and promote the growth of the nations in all possible ways of mutual cooperation. The treaty apart from working on national interests also focuses on lasting peace in Asia and the World at a larger interest. The treaty is signed to resolve and contribute to strengthening world peace and security with the wisdom to eliminate any indication of colonialism, racialism and imperialism. (Ministry of External Affairs) The treaty is convinced that the problems and crises can be solved in the present-day world only through cooperation and not by any conflicts. The treaty also determines to follow the aims and principles of the United Nations Charter. This treaty was the first of its kind between India and Bangladesh.

Trade Agreement, 1 Nov. 1972:

In 1972 India and Bangladesh signed a bilateral trade agreement to boost commercial ties. The agreement is periodically renewed and updated to facilitate trade between the two nations. The agreement is conscious of the needs of the people in expanding the trade agreement with reciprocal cooperation. The agreement intends to strengthen the economic relations between the two countries based on equality and benefit. It also aims at the benefits reaching the common people of both nations in the fields of trade and development. It considers that the objective can be achieved only by secured and organized trade between the two nations. Article I of the treaty states that the two governments should recognize the reciprocal needs in the purview of the developing economies and undertake to explore the possibilities for expansion and promotion of trade for the advantage of both nations. This treaty is to meet the requirements of the people living within a sixteen km border area between West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram on one hand and Bangladesh on the other to provide trade facilities on a day-to-day basis. Article V of the treaty agrees to make arrangements that are beneficial for the usage of the waterways, railways and roadways to facilitate trade between the two countries. (Ministry of External Affairs)

Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (1971):

In 1972 India and Bangladesh signed the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (PIWTT) which was renewable for every two years. This agreement allows for the transit of goods and passengers between India and Bangladesh through inland waterways. It has facilitated bilateral trade connectivity between the two nations. The renewal of the treaty hasn't been done regularly since 2001. Singh, S. 2009, p. 149).

Between 1971 and 1975 India was the largest single contributor of aid to Bangladesh and the cooperation and cordial relations flourished during this period as they have witnessed new heights. This was the period of Mrs Gandhi's congress regime in New Delhi and Mr Sheik Mujibur Rahman's regime in Dhaka. Bangabandhu Sheik Mujibur Rahman's assassination in August 1975 and the taking over of power by Ziaur Rahman changed the relationship between India and Bangladesh. This power shift has resulted in the sourness of relations. The 'Anti-India' slogan became a key advantage for the domestic politics of Bangladesh. It became evident from the polishing of one's nationalist credentials by opposing India and the political parties made utmost use of it.

The military rule of General Ziaur Rahman and General H M Ershad, India was portrayed as the hegemonic “Big Brother” which was used to rebuild the identity of Islamic Bangladesh. (Majumdar, Anindya., 2014). The military rule till 1990 and the changing internal advances within Bangladesh, made it tough for the Indo-Bangladesh relations to renew the earlier warmth. It could be because Bangladesh’s endeavour to have strategic autonomy and to move away from the shadow of India restrained and limited the commitment during this period. The bilateral ties have seen different stages and only with the salutation of democracy the relationship has improved and stabilised. In 1990 after the elections that multiple parties contested the BNP-led government took office and opted for economic liberalization. Same time India also came out with its liberalization policies which helped in the restoration and increase of trade and economic relations. The end of the Cold War and the rise of globalisation have made the Indian governments make their foreign policies more realistic, sensible and down to earth. Though it helped in the deepening of the economic relationship the inability to make use of the Indian markets effectively by Bangladesh has created a huge trade deficit in favour of India. The Awami League was a target for the opposition, BNP for being in an associated relationship with India and considered to hurt the interests of Bangladesh. During the tenure of the BNP rule/regime from 1991 to 1996, Bangladesh-India did not see much change. Only when the AL returned to power in 1996-2001 it witnessed the signing of the Ganges water-sharing treaty which is valid for 30 years. (Pant, Harsh. 2007, p. 232)

The Ganga/Ganges Water Treaty (1996):

In the year 1972 Joint Rivers Commission of India and Bangladesh came into existence and since then it has been maintaining the liaison to ensure the most effective joint effort in maximizing the benefits of common river systems. The JRC is headed by the Water Resource Ministers of both nations. The Prime Ministers of India and Bangladesh signed the treaty on 12th December 1996 on the sharing of the Ganga waters which will remain in force for a term of thirty years which can be renewable on mutual interest. The implementation of the treaty is monitored by the Joint Committee which was set up wide Article IV of the treaty. (Ministry of Jalshakthi, January 3, 2023).

With the determination to strengthen and improve friendly relations with the intent to be a good neighborhood, the treaty was signed. The treaty is intended to share the waters of international rivers flowing through the territories of the two nations and to make the optimum utilisation of the water resources in the fields of flood management, irrigation, river basin development and generation of hydro-power for the mutual benefit of the peoples both the nations. The treaty recognises the need for the sharing of Ganga waters at the Farakka Barrage with a spirit to accommodate mutually and to give a solution to the long-term problem of augmenting the flows of the Ganga water. The treaty aims to give a solution without affecting the rights and entitlements of either nation. (Treaty Between the Government of the People).

Once again there was a halted improvement in relations between India and Bangladesh during 2001-2006 when the BJP took up the migration issue in its 1998 election manifesto and linked the cross-border movement, ISI and Al-Qaeda in its foreign policy towards Bangladesh. (Singh, S. 2009, p. 154) AL was elected to power at the same time after a long gap and was also guarded of the India Bangladesh relations. On 16th April 16 BSF jawans were killed in Pridywah, Meghalaya The (Times of India, Apr 18, 2005). at a time when India was erecting the fence at the Border became a concern for the government of India and it took it to the government in Dhaka which led to a negative impact on the relations. They reached the lowest decline during the 2001-2006 tenure of the BNP-led Khaleda Zia government.

The state visit to Delhi by Sheikh Hasina in 2010 made an effort and laid the foundation for the inclusive and core structure of cooperation. The following year in 2011 witnessed the historic visit of Manmohan Singh to Dhaka which resulted in the signing of an array of agreements. Of these protocols, two agreements are major issues that came to the table for cooperation including the Bangladesh-India water-sharing issue on the Teesta River and the Indian transit facilities through Bangladesh to its northeastern states which are land-locked (Kashem, Md. A., & Islam, Md. S. 2016, p. 252). India-Bangladesh relations gained a new momentous situation during the tenure of Dr Manmohan Sing and Ms Sheik Hasina. Mamata Banerjee played a spoiled sport at the last moment as she refused to accompany Dr Manmohan Singh's visit to Dhaka and sign the Teesta water-sharing treaty. This was with the objection that the agreement would harm the interests of West Bengal in turn creating a deadlock situation to the cooperation. (The Hindu., 2011, September 27).

Land Boundary Agreement:

Since the partition of British India in 1947 attempts have been made to arrive at an all-inclusive land boundary settlement between India and Bangladesh (the erstwhile East Pakistan). The Nehru-Noon Agreement of 1958 and the demarcation of the Land Boundary agreement between India and Bangladesh referred to as LBA 1974 (Ministry of External affairs) are expected to find solutions for the complex issues involved in the demarcation of the border. Despite these agreements, three outstanding issues related to an un-demarcated border of approximately 6.1 km remained unresolved – including the exchange of enclaves and adverse possessions. The Protocol to the 1974 LBA referred to as the 2011 Protocol was signed on 6th September 2011 when the Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh visited Bangladesh. This agreement is the gateway to the settlement of the longstanding land boundary conflicts between the two nations. This agreement was expected to have a stable and peaceful boundary and create an environment that can improve bilateral cooperation and be conducive to strengthening cooperation. The smuggling along the border, illegal activities and crimes related to the trans-border basis are expected to be dealt with through this agreement with better management and coordination of the border. (Ministry of External affairs) In the formulation of the agreement, the two nations – India and Bangladesh have taken the on-ground situation and the interests of the people residing in the areas into consideration. The protocol of 2011 does not confront the population displacement and guarantees the areas of economic activity relevant to the homestead have been preserved. The State Governments involved with the border of Bangladesh – Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and West Bengal gave their full support in the preparation of the 2011 Protocol. (India & Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement) An Indo-Bangladesh delegation in May 2007 had an extensive visit to some of the enclaves and adverse possessions to consult the people in the involved areas. The people in the areas expressed their desire to not leave their land and remain in the country where they had lived all their lives. The State Government's views and concerns were taken into consideration in favour of realigning the boundary to maintain status-quo in the territories where adverse situations existed was also taken into consideration. Both India and Bangladesh have decided to avoid uprooting and displacement of the population on a large scale against their intentions and decided to preserve the status quo with the adverse possessions to be determined and solved through joint surveys. In the 1974 LBA, the exchange of territories in deference to the requisites of the people to retain their land was mentioned. Whereas the 2011 protocol is the opposite of the 1974 LBA as it seeks to maintain the status quo of the adverse possessions.

Boundaries between nations without any disputes are major prerequisites for effective cooperation across the border. Such boundaries help in reducing friction and also help the neighbours make firm beneficial exchanges and build confidence in constructing the relationship on friendly lines. The 2011 Protocol was expected to ensure the settlement of India-Bangladesh boundary issues with no existing differences in the interpretation regardless of the government in power. This Protocol was to help the issues of security concern, security cooperation and the uprooting and denying of the antagonistic elements to India. This Protocol would have represented a historic step culminating in the resolution of the long pending boundary issues between India and Bangladesh. The agreement had wide approval from the people residing and involved in those areas. Its execution would have allowed India and Bangladesh to focus on unlocking the bilateral relationship and cooperation through improved security, trade and commerce, transit and development at its complete potential.

The LBA protocol signed in 2011 was opposed by the Indian Parliament. The Manmohan Singh government failed to move the Indo-Bangladesh ties forward. It can be said that the level of strengthening the Indo-Bangladesh relations depends to a large extent on which government is in power in Delhi and Dhaka. According to Anindya Jyothi Majumdar, there exists a sequence of uneasiness and mistrust between India and Bangladesh though the warmth in the relationship has fluctuated frequently with the changes in the governments on both sides. (Majumdar, A. J. 2014, p. 327) Non-implementation of the LBA Protocol has become a major challenge in the relationship between India and Bangladesh. When the agreement was signed on 16 May 1974, the Bangladesh parliament passed the LBA treaty in a short span of months, whereas in India the parliament did not pass it. LBA Protocol involved the cession of territory which required a Constitutional Amendment which became a major challenge. Three major issues remained unresolved in the agreement connected to a) land boundary of approximately 6.1 km that included Daikhata-56 (West Bengal), Muhuri River–Belonia (Tripura) and Lathitila–Dumabari (Assam) is not demarcated; b) exchange of enclaves and c) adverse possession are the main challenges behind LBA ratification according to the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (Kashem, Md. A., & Islam, Md. S., 2016). Again and again, this conflict of land boundary was in discussions between the nations. During the Indian state visit of Sheikh Hasina, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh in 2010 January, both nations conveyed their interest in resolving the long-standing conflict of land boundary and agreed to effectively address all the conflicts related to it in the good spirits of the 1974 LBA. During Dr Manmohan Singh's visit to Dhaka in September 2011 both the nations signed protocol though they didn't witness its acceptance.

The acceptance for the LBA finally came up after 41 years of Mrs Indira Gandhi and Mr Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Pact in 1974. During the regime of Prime Minister Modi, the LBA Bill was passed in Parliament unanimously in Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha in the presence of all 331 members becoming the 100th Constitutional Amendment. Though initially there were some noises and disharmony regarding the passing of the LBA Bill it was passed with a majority in the parliament. With the acceptance of the LBA Bill three important, complex and sensitive issues were resolved between India and Bangladesh relations. They are

- the exchange of 162 enclaves between the two nations,
- the exchange of adverse possessions of each other's territories and
- the demarcation of 6.5 km of boundary.

Another longstanding issue of maritime boundaries between the two nations was also resolved during the same time through UN intervention and arbitration. (The Daily Star, Jun 4, 2015) Very well-defined borders make good neighbours and friends whereas the disputed boundaries create conflicts. With the signing of the LBA, the conflicts have come to an end. With the passing of the LBA Bill in the parliament a new momentum in the relationship of India and Bangladesh has been set. Sheikh Hasina the Prime Minister of Bangladesh considered the LBA acceptance by the Indian parliament as a 'new milestone' in the long-pending conflict of India-Bangladesh relations. Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Syed Muazzem Ali made a statement after the LBA ratification by India as a historic landmark for the ties of Indo-Bangladesh relations (The Hindu., 2015, May 7). This nearly 70-year-old long-standing conflict between the neighbouring nations has come to an end with LBA ratification and both India and Bangladesh can benefit. In an article in Indian Express, dated 11th December 2014 Alyssa Ayres writes that India will be able to improve its trade and security relations with Bangladesh with the cooperation and coordination on the border conflicts. With the implementation of the LBA positive developments can be made in the effective management of the border, counter-terrorism, cooperation and preventing smuggling and other crimes that are linked with the border. This resolution is an opportunity to increase connectivity and economic cooperation among the two nations. According to Mohan India and Bangladesh have an expansive opportunity to turn their long land boundaries and their maritime spaces into zones of expanding economic cooperation. (Mohan, C. R., 2015, 8 May). This can become an incentive to promote cooperation including in the areas of energy.

Bangladesh-India Cooperation in Trade, Investment and Economic Relations:

There are various facets of the bilateral relationship between India and Bangladesh. Both countries have exhibited positive and growth-oriented performances in terms of economic growth, bilateral trade and connectivity at the regional and global platforms. Both nations have maintained their economic ties. India is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. Bangladesh is also growing economically in South Asia as the second-largest economy as per the report of the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR). (The Daily Star., 08 January 2019). By 2041 Bangladesh aims to be a developed country. Trade between India and Bangladesh is not at a parallel line with the development patterns that are visible in their economic growth. There is no significant trade agreement between the two countries except for the general trade agreement under the regional forums. (Mahfuz Kabir & Nahian Reza Sabriet., 2020). India and Bangladesh have not been successful in enhancing their bilateral trade by the establishment of value chains. Since the adoption of the Aid for Trade initiative in 2005 there has been domination from the value chains in the course of global trade and investment. The promises in the advancement of trade have been held in the case of textile and apparel value chains, rice value chains etc. The geographical closeness between the two nations provides abundant opportunities for unlocking potential trade. India and Bangladesh share fifth fifth-longest border in the world with 54 shared rivers. Both nations can utilize the existing areas of cooperation and aim for new areas of cooperation and mutual benefit in trading opportunities. Both the neighbouring countries share a long land border and riverine land ports with transit routes. They also share common socioeconomic, political, cultural and linguistic ties. With all these similarities the economic relationship gains a prominent place in the bilateral relationship. Economic relations, trade and investment are prime highlights in India-Bangladesh relations. In January 1972 during the Bangladeshi Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad's visit to New Delhi, an elaborate discussion was held on economic cooperation. In the same year on March 28th, they signed a trade agreement according to which both parties to the agreement expressed their interests in strengthening "economic relations based on equality and mutual respect." State-to-state trade was considered the best practice between India and Bangladesh. In the same year on 5th July, another trade agreement was signed which came into existence on 28th September 1973 for a term of three years. On October 4th 1980 India and Bangladesh signed a trade agreement for three years with a possibility of extending it for another three years. In 2007 to promote bilateral trade, reduce the trade imbalance, resolve business-related issues, increase Bangladesh's exports to India and

encourage investment from India, the India-Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries (IBCCI) was formed. India announced duty-free access to exports from underdeveloped countries in the SAARC region including Bangladesh during the 14th SAARC Summit in New Delhi. A new dimension in bilateral relations was created with the introduction of Border Haats. Ali, Md., 2023, p. 87) In 2015 on June 6th, India and Bangladesh signed a trade agreement for five years which gets extended for the next successive term of five years unless either government gave written notice to terminate. At least six months' notice period should be served. In present-day relations, foreign policy objectives are the '3C Mantra' i.e. commerce, culture and connectivity and the economic dimension becomes the major area of cooperation in India's foreign policy towards Bangladesh. Kashem, Md. A., & Islam, Md. S., 2016, p. 255) For Bangladeshi patients, India is the favourite medical destination. An average of 1,000 Bangladeshis visit India daily for medical treatment and the number is increasing according to the Indian Ministry of Tourism. A resilient development of the political economy is involved in this medical tourism. For the 2016-2017 financial year, Bangladesh was the largest trading partner for India in South Asia, according to the Indian Department of Commerce. Bangladesh accounts for 35% of Indian exports of a total of 83% in South Asia. (Ali, Md. 2023, p. 87). India and Bangladesh signed an agreement for the promotion and protection of investment for ten years in 2009 February. The agreement shall be automatically extended unless there is any opposition from any one of them. Agro-processing, ceramics, automobiles, gems and jewellery, chemicals, light engineering, ITC, hospitals, medical equipment, pharmaceuticals and textiles were identified by Bangladesh as desirable investment zones. The economic relationship between India and Bangladesh is three-dimensional with economic, trade and investment as the main attributors.

During the present times, Indian investment in Bangladesh's gas has increased with two Indian companies signing an MoU with the Bangladesh government to invest up to US\$ 5 billion to generate 4,600 MW of electricity during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh. Bangladesh has become a leading South Asian trading partner for India and the fourth-largest market in the world for Indian exports in the years 2021-2022. Despite COVID-19 uncertainties, bilateral trade increased exceptionally at the rate of approximately 44% from \$10.78 billion in 2020-2021 to \$18.13 billion in 2021-2022. Raw cotton, non-retail pure cotton yarn, and electricity are India's key exports to Bangladesh, whereas pure vegetable oils, non-knit men's suits, and textile waste are its main imports from Bangladesh.

Energy and Power Cooperation:

In the year 1973 on January 4th India and Bangladesh signed an MoU regarding the Joint Power Coordination Board which aims at maintaining liaison between the participating nations in maximizing the benefits of the power systems and energy resources for the benefit. After signing the agreement it took almost four decades to implement and exchange electricity between India and Bangladesh. The second meeting of the Joint Working Group on Cooperation in the Power Sector was held in Delhi and Dhaka in June and May 2010 respectively regarding energy cooperation. This paved the way for the signing of a thirty-five-year power transmission agreement between the Power Grid Corporation of India (PGCIL) and the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB). (Ali, Md. 2023, p. 88) In the same year, in 2010 August, an MoU was signed between the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) and the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) for setting joint venture of two coal-fired power plants of 1320 megawatts in Chattogram and Khulna. (Ali, Md. 2023, p. 89) Another set of three agreements was signed during the visit of India's power secretary, Uma Shankar, to Bangladesh in April 2013 for the Power plant in Rampal, Khulna. India's ONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL) and Bangladesh's Petrobangla signed two production-sharing contracts for Md Akbor Ali 89 exploration and production of oil and natural gas in two shallow-water blocks in the Bay of Bengal in February 2014. Adani Power India signed a long-term pact for 25 years with the Bangladesh Power Development Board in 2017 to supply electricity from the coal-based power plant at Godda in Jharkhand. The Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi and the Prime Minister of Bangladesh Ms Sheik Hasina in September 2018 inaugurated three major joint venture projects between India and Bangladesh including the supply of electricity from India to Bangladesh. A new chapter was inaugurated in the energy sector relations between India and Bangladesh.

CONCLUSION:

This article emphasizes the recognition of collaboration and cooperation between India and Bangladesh for their development in the context of socio-economic and political foundations for their sustainable development as neighbours. As a result, in the last two decades, the governments in the neighbouring nations have proactively started working under the framework of collaboration and cooperation. With the completion of 50 years of diplomatic relations, in the year 2021, they made a move ahead of mistrust and unrest. They not only share heritage, culture, traditions, linguistic interests and history but also liberal democracy, secularism,

and an inclusive socio-cultural and nationalistic outlook. They have emerged together from the partners in the liberation war to decades of indifferences and in the course of time ultimately to cooperative neighbours. They have laid the foundations for an era of cooperation that was previously never thought of or implemented. The two nations now have to emphasise other fields of cooperation and address with utmost care the potential irritants that are remaining if any. This will strengthen the relationship between these neighbouring nations and at the same time create a strong force in South Asia.

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