



Summary of Discussion on
Bangladesh-India Relations
Progress made and the Challenges ahead

Dhaka, Bangladesh
September 17, 2016

Organized by:


IPAG

The Institute for Policy, Advocacy, and Governance (IPAG)

The Daily Star
The Daily Star

Summary of the Two Sessions
The IPAG-Daily Star Dialogue

**India-Bangladesh Relations:
Progress made and the Challenges ahead**

Table of Contents

1.	Agenda, Speakers and Panelists	03
2.	Brief Profile of Panelists and Moderators	04
3.	Executive Summary of the Indo-Bangla Dialogue	14
4.	Ten Key Recommendations from the Dialogue	15
5.	Summary of Session I <i>(Economic Aspects: Trade, Investment, Connectivity & Energy)</i>	16
6.	Summary of Session II <i>(Strategic Affairs: Border & Security, Water & Environment, Regional & Multilateral Issues)</i>	20

The IPAG - Daily Star Dialogue

'India- Bangladesh Relations: Progress made and the Challenges ahead'



Speeches by the Distinguished Speakers:

- **Abul Maal A Muhith** MP, Minister of Finance, GOB
- **Dr. Mashiur Rahman**, Economic Affairs Advisor to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh
- **Dr. Adarsh Swaika**, Deputy High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh
- **Prof. Rehman Sobhan**
- **Mahfuz Anam**, Editor and Publisher, The Daily Star

Overview of India-Bangladesh Relations: **Prof. Syed Munir Khasru**, Chairman, IPAG

Session I: Economic Aspects: Trade, Investment, Connectivity & Energy

Panelists:

1. **Rajeet Mitter**, Former Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh
2. **Prof. Mustafizur** Rahman, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)
3. **Pankaj Tandon**, Member, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) & Vice President, KEC Intl. Ltd.
4. **Dr. Arif Dowla**, Managing Director, ACI Limited
5. **Prof. M Tamim**, Petroleum and Mineral Resources Engineering, BUET
6. **Nitya Nanda**, Fellow, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)

Session II : Strategic Affairs: Border & Security, Water & Environment, Regional & Multilateral Issues

Panelists:

1. **Brig. Gen. Shahedul Anam, ndc, psc (Retd.)**, Editor, Op-Ed and Strategic Affairs, The Daily Star
2. **Suhasini Haidar**, Diplomatic & Strategic Affairs Editor, The Hindu
3. **Dr. Ainun Nishat**, Professor Emeritus, Centre for Climate Change and Environmental Research, BRAC University
4. **Ashok Malik**, Distinguished Fellow & Head of Neighborhood Regional Studies Initiative, Observer Research Foundation (ORF)
5. **Prof. Imtiaz Ahmed**, International Relations, University of Dhaka
6. **Smruti S Pattanaik**, Research Fellow, The Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses (IDSA)

BRIEF PROFILE OF THE PANELISTS

The Daily Star–IPAG Dialogue Series on ‘India-Bangladesh Relations’

Date: September 17 (Saturday), 2016

Time: 9:30 AM – 5:00 PM

Jointly Organized by: The Institute for Policy, Advocacy, and Governance (IPAG) & The Daily Star

Session I - Economic Aspects: Trade, Investment, Connectivity and Energy

Name	Position/ Designation	Role in Dialogue	Relevance/Significance for the Roundtable
<p>Mahfuz Anam</p> 	<p>Editor and Publisher, The Daily Star</p>	<p>Moderator</p>	<p>One of the most distinguished media professionals in the country, Mr. Mahfuz Anam has comprehensive expertise in media planning and media development from a long career as journalist, editor and publisher in Bangladesh and as a media expert for UNESCO. Besides, Mr. Anam regularly speaks in regional and international forums on international relations, regional cooperation, governance, human rights, press freedom and related issues. He is a regular moderator of various conferences including the 4th Bangladesh Investment Summit, Asia in Hong Kong. In 2007 he was elected as the Chairman of the Asia News Network.</p>

<p>Rajeet Mitter</p> 	<p>Former Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh</p>	<p>Panelist</p>	<p>Mr. Rajeet Mittar is a career diplomat who has served as the Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh from 2009 to 2011. During his tenure, Mr. Mittar, oversaw various India-Bangladesh agreements including the access to Dahagram and Angorpota enclaves, 46 RMG items in the duty free list, and exchange of enclaves, joint border management and sale of 250 MW of electricity by 2014. Previously he served as the Indian Ambassador to Philippines. He is also a leader BCIM Economic Corridor Joint Study Group. Given his direct engagement with Bangladesh as one of the top Indian diplomats during his service career and later his continued association as one of the well-respected scholar and thinker on Indo-Bangla relations, he is well qualified to make positive contribution in the conference.</p>
<p>Professor Mustafizur Rahman</p> 	<p>Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)</p>	<p>Panelist</p>	<p>Professor Mustafizur Rahman is one of the most distinguished economics researchers in Bangladesh, whose areas of work include fiscal-monetary policies and macroeconomic management, trade policies and reforms in developing countries, regional trading arrangements & free trade agreements, trade-poverty nexus, multilateral trading system & interests of the Least Developed Countries. He has served as a member of the Panel of Economists for the Sixth Five Year Plan and the Ten Year Perspective Plan of Bangladesh and he is currently a member of the Panel of Economists for the Seventh Five Year Plan of Bangladesh. Professor Rahman has been involved in research works undertaken by a wide range of international agencies and institutions including UNCTAD, UNESCAP, World Bank, ADB, Commonwealth Secretariat, European Commission and the ILO. Prof. Rahman has authored several books, publications and monographs in the areas of trade and economics. His most recent publication include “Towards Regional Integration in South Asia: Promoting Trade Facilitation and Connectivity” and “Trade Facilitation Towards Export Promotion in India: Addressing the Emerging Gaps”.</p>

<p>Pankaj Tandon</p> 	<p>Member, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) & Vice President, KEC International Limited.</p>	<p>Panelist</p>	<p>Mr. Pankaj Tandon, Vice President (T&D) is currently spearheading the SAARC & Myanmar Business for KEC International Limited. He has been a seasoned professional with significant experience in commercial, Business Development and Project Management and operations in Tyre, Telecom and T&D Industry with overseas stint in Italy, South East Asia and SAARC. He is leading operations and multiple projects in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, and Srilanka and now in Myanmar.</p> <p>He holds a Management degree from MDI and is member of Institute of Cost and Management Accountants. He also earned Advanced Diploma in Management Accounting from Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, UK. He avidly represents SAARC interests on various forums especially on inter regional trade and connectivity.</p> <p>Mr. Pankaj having lived in Dhaka a decade ago, continues to expand business with Bangladesh and has strived to develop skill sets and interdependent competencies in Bangladesh in T&D sector.</p>
<p>Dr. Arif Dowla</p> 	<p>Managing Director, ACI Limited</p>	<p>Panelist</p>	<p>Dr. Arif Dowla has been serving as the Managing Director of one of the largest Bangladeshi conglomerates, ACI since 2005. With a multinational culture, ACI has diversified its operation into four major Strategic Units and has partnered with different leading international entities to initiate Joint-Venture companies. ACI has strong business relations with some of the leading Indian conglomerates which include: Godrej, Tetley (Tata Group), and Dabur. Hence, Dr. Dowla has significant experience in trade, investment, and business collaboration with Indian business houses and industrial conglomerates.</p> <p>As the Group Managing Director of ACI, Dr. Dowla manages business units and subsidiaries of the ACI industrial conglomerate which include: ACI Healthcare, ACI Pure Flour Limited, ACI Foods Limited, Premiaflex Plastics Limited, ACI Motors Limited, ACI Agrolink Limited and ACI Logistics Limited. He was the Chairman of Mutual Trust Bank from 2012-2014. He also is the Honorary Consul of Belgium. Because of notable contribution, Dr.</p>

			<p>Dowla was included in the Forum of Young Global Leader Honorees 2009 by the World Economic Forum.</p> <p>Dr. Dowla obtained Ph.D in Mathematics from the University of California, San Diego, USA.</p>
<p>Dr. M. Tamim</p> 	<p>Professor of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Engineering, BUET</p>	<p>Panelist</p>	<p>Dr. M. Tamim is a Professor of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Engineering, BUET. He obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Alberata, Canada in Petroleum Engineering. He has research interest in reservoir engineering, petroleum economics and energy planning; development and application of various numerical computer models, reservoir management problems. He also has experience in greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation, energy efficiency improvement and energy related environmental remedies. Dr. Tamim has published a number of papers in national and international journals. Including the notable publication on energy demand “Comparison of some Asian offshore production sharing contracts with respect to Bangladesh”. He worked at different capacities relating energy policy formulation, planning and regulation with all governments since 1995. He was in charge of the Power and Energy Ministry in 2008 during the caretaker government period. Dr. Tamim is member and the founding Chairperson of Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE), Bangladesh Section and a life Fellow of the Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB).</p>

<p>Nitya Nanda</p> 	<p>Fellow, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)</p>	<p>Panelist</p>	<p>Mr. Nitya Nanda is a Fellow at The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). He has about fifteen years of experience in research and consultancy in the areas of trade, investment, competition policy, energy and environment issues. Furthermore, he heads the Centre for Global Agreements, Legislation and Trade at TERI. Previously, he worked as a Policy Analyst on trade, investment and competition issues for CUTS International. Mr. Nanda has several publications on the aforementioned issues in national and international journals and authored the book “Expanding Frontiers of Global Trade Rules: The Political Economy Dynamics of the International Trading System”. Some of his most recent publications include “India-Bangladesh Energy Relation”, “The role of cooperation in regional economic integration” and “Agricultural Trade in South Asia: How important are the Trade Barriers?”</p>
---	---	------------------------	--

Session II - Strategic Affairs: Border & Security, Water & Environment, Regional & Multilateral Issues

Name	Position/ Designation	Role in Dialogue	Relevance/Significance for the Roundtable
<p>Professor Syed Munir Khasru</p> 	<p>Chairman, The Institute for Policy, Advocacy, and Governance & Professor, Institute of Business Administration (IBA), University of Dhaka</p>	<p>Moderator</p>	<p>Prof. Syed Munir Khasru heads the international think tank, the Institute for Policy, Advocacy, & Governance (IPAG) and has delivered lectures, made presentations, and moderated sessions in international conferences & seminars on economy & trade, international relations & strategic affairs, governance & management. An MBA from the Wharton School of Business, University of Pennsylvania, he also is a faculty at the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), University of Dhaka. On Indo-Bangla relations, among the upcoming events, Prof. Khasru has been invited in the North-East Connectivity Summit to be held in Tripura, India from September 22-24, 2016 to participate as a Keynote Speaker in the “Policy Makers Forum” to be attended by the Chief Ministers and Members of the Parliaments from the North Eastern States of India. He will speak on the Plenary Session on ‘Connecting North Eastern State of India with Bangladesh and South East Asia: Opportunities, Potentials and Challenges.’ Prof. Khasru writes for leading international media outlets of Asia which include the Straits Times (Singapore), South China Morning Post (Hong Kong). In India it is the Times of India, Hindu, and Hindustan Times.</p>

<p>Brig. Gen. Shahedul Anam Khan</p> 	<p>Brig. Gen. Shahedul Anam Khan ndc, psc (Retd.).</p> <p>Editor, Op-Ed and Strategic Affairs, The Daily Star</p>	<p>Panelist</p>	<p>Brig. Anam is a seasoned security expert and distinguished writer who is currently the editor of Op-ed and Strategic Affairs of The Daily Star. He has previously served as Directing Staff at the Defense Services Command & Staff College, Mirpur and was the Director of Military Intelligence and Director of Military Operations at the Army Headquarters. He has several hundred articles to his credit, published in both national and international journals magazines. He has participated in various conferences and seminars, including the series “India-Bangladesh: Building the Bay of Bengal Community”. He is the joint author of, “Understanding Terrorism in South Asia: Beyond Statist Discourse”, published in 2006, “Terrorism in the 21st Century: Perspectives from Bangladesh” and “Countering Terrorism in Bangladesh”, both published in 2008.</p>
<p>Ms. Suhasini Haidar</p> 	<p>Diplomatic and Strategic Affairs Editor, The Hindu</p>	<p>Panelist</p>	<p>Ms. Haidar is the strategic & diplomatic affairs editor who writes on foreign affairs and international relations at The Hindu. She is a well-known journalist and former CNN-IBN anchor. She has contributed to numerous blogs and articles on regional and strategic issues covering Asia Pacific, particularly South Asia, where she has written pieces on the potential and challenges of SAARC, BRICS architecture and dynamics of China’s growth among many others. She has worked in television for more than 20 years and presented the signature show 'World View with Suhasini Haidar' on CNN-IBN.</p>

<p>Dr. Ainun Nishat</p> 	<p>Professor Emeritus, Centre for Climate Change and Environmental Research, BRAC University</p>	<p>Panelist</p>	<p>Professor Ainun Nishat, PhD is a pioneering expert on water resource and climate change from Bangladesh. Formerly, he was the Vice Chancellor of BRAC University, Professor of BUET and the Country Director of IUCN. He is engaged in diversified research projects in the field of climate change & environment with the Centre for Climate Change and Environmental Research, BRAC University. He is one of the pioneers of water resource management in Bangladesh and has traveled around the world to attend different seminars and conferences. As an expert in water resource management, he was a member of the Indo-Bangladesh Joint River Commission and played a vital role in the Ganges Water Treaty Negotiations that were finalized in 1996. He had been closely involved in the preparation of a number of strategies and action plans like the Bangladesh National Conservation Strategy and National Environment Management Action Plan etc.</p>
<p>Ashok Malik</p> 	<p>Distinguished Fellow & Head of Neighborhood Regional Studies Initiative, Observer Research Foundation (ORF)</p>	<p>Panelist</p>	<p>Mr. Ashok Malik is a Distinguished Fellow, and Head of ORF's Neighbourhood Regional Studies Initiative. His work focuses on Indian domestic politics and foreign/trade policy, and their increasing interplay, as well as on the broader process of globalisation and how it is influencing policy choices in not just the economy but in social sector spheres such as health, education and urbanisation. A journalist for 20 years, Mr. Malik is a columnist for several leading Indian and international publications including Times of India, Hindustan Times, Yale Global Online etc. He has been involved in numerous research works, more recently pertaining to the India foreign policy towards its neighbours including “How to deal with foreign policy headaches</p>

			<p>from neighbourhood” and “Modi’s reach abroad”. He has been awarded the civilian honour of the Padma Shri in 2016.</p>
<p>Professor Imtiaz Ahmed</p> 	<p>Professor, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka and Executive Director, Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS)</p>	<p>Panelist</p>	<p>Professor Imtiaz is the Executive Director of Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS), based in Sri Lanka. He has served as the Chairperson of the Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka (2000-2003) and is a Visiting Professor at the Sagesse University, Beirut. His areas of interest are Political Theory; Theories of International Relations; South Asian Politics; Religion and Culture; Tolerance and Terrorism; Foreign Policy Analysis; Strategic Studies; Politics of Development; Refugee and Migration; Women and Environment. One of the most recognized experts of international relations in Bangladesh, Prof. Imtiaz has authored, co-authored, or edited 16 books and 6 monographs, some of which include, “Women & Militancy: South Asian Complexities”, “Water Futures in South Asia” and “Bangladesh and SAARC: Issues, Perspectives and Outlook”. He has also published more than 98 research papers and scholarly articles in leading journals and chapters in edited volumes.</p>

<p>Ms. Smruti S Pattanaik</p> 	<p>Research Fellow, Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi</p>	<p>Panelist</p>	<p>Ms. Smruti is a seasoned expert on security with particular focus towards South Asia. She has lectured on India’s foreign policy and South Asia at the Colombo University, Sir John Korelawala Defence University, Asia Centre in the University of Melbourne, University of Karachi, University of Peshawar and University of Dhaka. She was selected to attend the Symposium on East Asian Security (SEAS) Program conducted by US State Department and USPACOM in 2011. She was the Course Director of India-Bangladesh studies program jointly conducted by Jamia Millia Islamia and Dhaka University. Some of her most recent publications include “India-Bangladesh Relations: Historical Imperatives and Future Direction”, “India’s Neighbourhood Policy: Perceptions from Bangladesh” and “Majoritarian state and the Marginalised minorities: Case Study of Hindus in Bangladesh”.</p>
---	---	------------------------	---

Executive Summary

The Institute for Policy, Advocacy, and Governance (IPAG), in collaboration with the Daily Star, the leading English daily in Bangladesh, organized a One Day Dialogue on India- Bangladesh Relations on September 17, 2016 in Dhaka. Six experts from both Bangladesh and India participated in the Dialogue resulting in useful & thought provoking discussion on wide range of important issues which among others included trade, physical & people to people connectivity, border security, water & power sharing & scope for regional integration. The event was participated by government officials, development agencies, diplomats, academicians, experts & media representatives.

In course of the deliberations, discussion, and debate, 10 key recommendations were made on further strengthening India–Bangladesh relations as well as fostering South Asian connectivity and collaboration, which have been shared in this document. Some of the important and significant discussions, suggestions, contentions and consensuses that came forth during the entirety of the dialogue from the policymakers, experts, and analysts have also been included in this paper.

In course of the Dialogue, the eminent panelists brought forward relevant issues surrounding recent ease of trade barriers between India-Bangladesh, the need for improving existing trade infrastructure & physical connectivity, contention and consensus in joint power & water sharing and undertaking collaborative South Asian initiatives. The details of the panel discussions are included in the Summary Session.

Ten Key Recommendations from the Two Sessions

1. To facilitate more trade between Bangladesh and India, there needs to be standardization of protocols between the land customs of both India and Bangladesh and there needs to be comprehensive sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS) agreement with India along with mutual recognition agreement and strengthening of BSTI. The region as a whole will need to have single windows seen in ASEAN to expedite trade.
2. Bangladeshi infrastructure is not yet ready for its own transports, so lanes have to be made and improvised before India can use them as transit routes. There is need for more transparency with regards to fixing transit fees for Indian vehicles using Bangladeshi routes.
3. An independent committee to inspect the environmental implications of the Rampal power plant should be formed before undertaking any decision regarding its implementation.
4. Steps should be taken to patrol vulnerable areas and joint patrolling should be increased along India-Bangladesh border.
5. Basin wise river management is necessary when it comes to water sharing and all river sharing interventions must take social and environmental concerns into account. The Joint River Commission (JRC) should have separate technical and political mechanisms in place. There is need for an institutional architecture in Bangladesh and India so that water is used judiciously and priced well
6. The generation of hydropower from North East could be planned and distributed to where there is demand in central India and Bangladesh.
7. Water navigation is the cheapest mode of transport for nonperishables and India and Bangladesh should consider it instead of solely focusing on road connectivity.
8. The media of South Asia needs to have more joint journalism initiatives.
9. The philosophy of abundance was not looked into when forming SAARC. South Asia has human beings in abundance and there should be investment in this abundance for SAARC to be fully functional.
10. The disparity in size and resources between Bangladesh and India should not be seen as constraints and there needs to be improvements in our mutual perceptions regarding each other.

Session I: Economic Aspects: Trade, Investment, Connectivity & Energy

Moderator: Mr. Mahfuz Anam, Editor and Publisher of the Daily Star

Panelists:

- Rajeet Mitter, Former Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh
- Prof. Mustafizur Rahman, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)
- Pankaj Tandon, Member, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) & Vice President, KEC International Limited.
- Dr. Arif Dowla, Managing Director, ACI Limited
- Prof. M Tamim, Petroleum and Mineral Resources Engineering, BUET
- Nitya Nanda, Fellow, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)

Trade, Investment & Connectivity

In the first session, the discussion centered on improving trade facilities and connectivity infrastructure between the two countries. Mr. Rajeet Mitter initiated the session by mentioning that the dialogue was a timely initiative given the strong friendship Bangladesh and India are enjoying. Facilitation of more effective trade was discussed extensively by both Mr. Mitter and Prof. Mutafizur. Both of them mentioned how ease of transportation of goods from one side of the border to the other due to better trade facilitation and management in border areas have the potential to lower cost of business.

Prof. Mustafizur mentioned how few years ago, Indian trucks carrying goods used to load and unload at the No Man's Land but now trucks can carry the goods nonstop with no loading - unloading time lost in the process. He said that the old days of congestion in ICP has been eased in recent times and that trade has been going up between the two countries, however he cautioned there has been no breakout of Bangladeshi export to India which is dismal given the recent ease in trade barriers. According to him both the countries must have a sustainable growing steak in each other's economic development and the future task of the two countries would be to analyze why this isn't happening.

Both Mr. Mitter and Prof. Mustafizur, agreed that Bangladesh must have a good export stake at the Indian market, and that both countries must have expert level taskforce in the border ports for conducting more and better trade with each other. If Bangladesh

and India want to enhance trade through land networks, then land customs need to be improved and standardized.

Prof. Mustafizur mentioned that there needs to be standardization of protocols and electronic data exchange between the two customs and comprehensive sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS) agreement with India along with mutual recognition agreement and strengthening of BSTI. According to Prof. Mustafizur, the reason why Bangladesh is not being able to take advantage of duty-free trade with India is because 90% of trade is done through land customs which are not yet suitable for conducting international trade. Ports are used to doing international business but land customs do not have the training to conduct cross-border trade. Prof. Mustafizur observed that both Bangladesh and India and the region as a whole will need to have single windows seen in ASEAN to expedite regional trade. There should be more Bangladesh-India joint-ventures and the process of establishing Indian Special Economic Zones in Bangladesh should be furthered.

Mr. Pankaj Tandon, suggested that Bangladesh should diversify its economy to attract foreign markets and that Indian companies would also like to access the EU and US markets through Bangladesh as the country enjoys special preferences with EU and US. Both India and Bangladesh must work together in the very complex global value chain.

Dr. Dowla, MD of ACI mentioned how ACI has established three joint ventures with TATA, Dabur and Godrej and for such equal sharing joint ventures to occur, trust is needed. He urged everyone to not look at trade from a bilateral perspective but from a global and regional perspective and suggested that businesses should look into competitiveness of nations and base their trade relations on the same. He pointed out that by being myopic, the region is losing out. In his opinion, it is better to unleash the potential of the region instead of solely optimizing bilateral trade. He emphasized that although Bangladesh has duty free access to Indian market, there are some other forms of state or countervail taxes which often makes export to India less lucrative for Bangladeshi traders. On the other hand, despite opportunities to import from Bangladesh, which can be quite cheaper, India transfers goods from its west to meet the demand of its eastern region. He urged the region to look towards East Africa and Brazil to learn how they cooperate with their neighbors. He emphasized on the need to be more competitive globally.

On connectivity, Prof. Mustafizur mentioned that when transit fees with India were determined, there should have been a comprehensive transit connectivity agreement where all charges would have been fixed under one umbrella. He opined that there is need for more transparency with regards to fixing transit fees. He also noted that the

existing Bangladeshi infrastructure is not yet ready for its own transports, so lanes have to be made and improvised before India can use them as transit routes.

Mr. Tandon emphasized on the need for connectivity for enhancing business. He mentioned how business and connectivity are related to each other. He further mentioned that the disparity in size and resources between the two countries should not be seen as constraints and that there needs to be improvements in our mutual perceptions to establish better connectivity.

Energy

Prof. Tamim began his initial remarks by mentioning how the whole idea of power sharing in the region started with SAARC but SAARC failed in terms of sharing regional grid. Mr. Nitya Nanda mentioned that power sharing in South Asia through the BBIN grid is possible and it will help Bangladesh immensely as Bangladesh is agro climatic and a flat country that needs better management of electricity. Hence, if Bangladesh gets integrated with the regional grid, efficiency in its power distribution will increase. He said it was short sightedness on Bangladesh's part when Bangladesh thought it will never become an energy deficient nation believing that it had ample reserve of natural gas which is now in the process of getting depleted.

On being asked about Bangladesh getting energy from Nepal, Mr. Nanda replied that it will be difficult for Bangladesh to get energy from Nepal at the moment because of Nepal's internal inefficiency. Instead, he suggested Bangladesh to connect to Myanmar and Southeast Asia for electricity. Regarding trade, it was discussed amongst panelists that Bangladesh can't always balance out trade because it depends on which commodity one is importing and exporting, just like India can never expect to balance out trade with the Gulf or Saudi Arabia since they are oil importing countries.

According to Prof. Tamim, political unwillingness has been the major hindrance to cooperation and other barriers are technical in nature. In fact, it had taken India and Bangladesh to come to a power sharing agreement almost after 40 years. He stated that the common problem in both India and Bangladesh is primary energy problem. He opined electricity is cheaper in Bangladesh because of subsidy and subsidized local price should not be used for comparing rates with international electricity pricing. However, given the good relations both the countries are enjoying at the he was hopeful regarding power sharing between India and Bangladesh.

Mr. Pankaj mentioned that Thailand and Cambodia share power grid and that example can be followed in India and Bangladesh as well. The power from North East India can be shared by both India and Bangladesh. On using renewable energy sources like wind

and solar, Mr. Pankaj remarked that wind and solar power generation requires adequate geographical suitability and hence it is not as feasible and accessible as other conventional sources of energy. India has invested in Bhutan's power sector and in the future, 50% of Bhutan's GDP will come from that sector. According to Mr. Pankaj similar investment by India in Bangladesh's power sector can bring about similar gains for Bangladesh.

Consensus

There was consensus by all the panelists regarding formation of an independent committee to inspect the environmental implications of the Rampal power was reached. A similar consensus was reached on ensuring more public transparency with regards to fixing transit fee with India.

Contention

Prof. Tamim argued that the Rampal power plant issue had two aspects. One being the environmental implication and the other the anti-India rhetoric that is being leveraged surrounding this issue. In his opinion, opposition is showing the worst case and the government is showing the best case and actual implications will probably lie somewhere in between. This was contested by Prof. Mustafizur Rahman and Prof. Ainun Nishat. According to them, the public concern surrounding Rampal Power Plant are not just anti-India rhetoric but genuine concerns regarding the environmental implications the plant will have on the ecosystem of Sundarban.

Prof. Nishat from the audience raised concerns on the low quality Indian coal that will be used for the plant and mentioned that when the power plant proposal was developed, the issue of transportation of coal was not clarified or addressed. Mr. Tamim responded to this concern by saying that to his knowledge, coal will not be exported from India, as India is currently coal deficient and that coal for the plant will be exported from Indonesia.

Session II - Strategic Affairs: Border & Security, Water & Environment, Regional & Multilateral Issues

Moderator: Prof. Syed Munir Khasru, Chairman, IPAG

Panelists:

- Brig. Gen. Shahedul Anam, ndc, psc (Rtd.), Editor, Op-Ed and Strategic Affairs, The Daily Star
- Ms. Smruti S Pattanaik, Research Fellow, The Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses (IDSA)
- Prof. Imtiaz Ahmed, International Relations, University of Dhaka
- Ms. Suhasini Haider, Diplomatic & Strategic Affairs Editor, The Hindu
- Dr. Ainun Nishat, Professor Emeritus, Centre for Climate Change and Environmental Research, BRAC University
- Mr. Ashok Malik, Distinguished Fellow & Head of Neighborhood Regional Studies Initiative, Observer Research Foundation (ORF)

Border and Security

The panelists discussed about the nature of the Indo-Bangla border, the land boundary agreement and its ratification, and security concerns including smuggling and border killings. Brig. Gen. Shahedul Anam, ndc, psc (Rtd.) opened the discussion by commenting that the India Bangladesh border is not traditional in nature like borders in other regions, and that it is a living border. He mentioned that the movement across borders is not unidirectional. If people are moving from Bangladesh to India, then there are people who are moving from India to Bangladesh as well.

Ms. Smruti S Pattanaik remarked that some areas along the border are easy to cross which are impossible to manage. Steps should be taken to patrol vulnerable areas and joint patrolling should be increased. During the course of discussion, Ms. Suhasini Haider said that despite the steps taken by both governments to secure the border, the number of people being killed in the border by BSF has not come down. According to her, there is a lack of perception among Indians about the reality of Indo-Bangla border.

Water and Environment

The panelists discussed river sharing, navigation through water, institutional mechanisms for river sharing, hydropower and use of data on hydrology for utilization of water. Dr. Ainun Nishat remarked that basin wise river management is necessary and all interventions must take into account social and environmental concerns. In his opinion, the Joint River Commission (JRC) should have separate technical and political mechanisms in place. Dr. Nishat commented that despite frameworks of agreements being in place, the instructions are yet to trickle down to the operative level. He said the generation of hydropower from North East could be planned and distributed to where there is demand in Central India and Bangladesh. He mentioned that water navigation in the region is the cheapest mode of transport for nonperishables and India and Bangladesh should consider it rather than only emphasizing on road connectivity.

Mr. Ashok Malik commented that every water related project in North East India has a clear buy in from Bangladesh and that these projects cannot be facilitated without cooperation with Bangladesh. The evacuation of hydro potential in North East India is only possible through Bangladesh. He mentioned that rather than focusing on the quantity of water being allocated, the focus should be on efficient use of water and the value of water. According to Mr. Malik, lack of data on hydrology has caused wastage of water and sector wise allocation of water is necessary for use of water to be efficient.

Regional and Multilateral Issues

On the topic of regional and multilateral issues, the panelists discussed about the formation of SAARC, role of South Asia in the age of globalization, and media's role in regional cooperation.

Prof. Imtiaz Ahmed compared the formation of the European Union to the formation of SAARC. He mentioned that unlike during the formation of EU, the philosophy of abundance was not looked during the formation of SAARC. In his opinion, what South Asia has in abundance is human beings and there should be investment in this abundance. Undivided India was the 2nd largest economy in the 18th century and South Asian should not territorialize themselves in the age of globalization. The re-rise of China was possible because it is a continental country and South Asia is a continental region. A formation in South Asia is necessary where there are no conflict zones. South Asians are hung up in the Western model of state and need to get out of the mode of nationalism.

Ms. Suhasini Haider commented that a survey in 2003 conducted in India showed that Indians trusted Bangladesh the least; whereas the same survey in 2013 showed that

more Indians had a favorable opinion of Bangladesh than any other country. This is a result of change in the governments' attitude on terrorism and rhetoric at a political level. She remarked that Indo-Bangla relation can serve as a template for other countries in the region. However, in her opinion, a change in the mindset is necessary and not enough is being done to change that mindset. She also mentioned how India as a constantly growing market needs more labor and that jobs are not being stolen from Indian citizens by Bangladeshi migrants. She suggested South Asians to cooperate for human rights of South Asians labor in the Gulf rather than competing against each other and losing out in the end. She shared how the Internet has allowed for opinions to be shared across borders in the media and how joint media initiatives can help to bring about positive perceptions regarding each other.

Consensus

There was consensus among the panelists that border killing of Bangladeshis by BSF has not come down. Ms. Smruti Pattanaik commented that despite introduction of rubber bullets, people are still being killed at the border. It was also agreed, basin wise management and planning is necessary with effective management of control structure and that development of riverine navigation will solve many of the environmental problems of connectivity. Generation of hydro power could be planned and deciding on how the power will be distributed should be undertaken.

Contention

According to Ms. Smruti Pattanaik there has been significant improvement in coordination between India and Bangladesh regarding the border. Coordination in terms of border management has improved. In terms of border security, intelligence sharing between India and Bangladesh is an on-going process which is positive. However Brig. Shahedul Anam commented that there needs to be border management rather than border control and legal movement along the border should be facilitated.

Prof. Imtiaz Ahmed agreed that instead of exerting curfews and stricter control there should be public amenities around borders. In his opinion, borders should be seen as centers rather than peripheral separation.