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BD-India Witness Progress All Sectors Of Cooperation

BSS



Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali on Friday said that Bangladesh had been enjoying the best of its relations with India over the past seven years under the pragmatic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

“Bangladesh and India have witnessed tremendous progress in almost all sectors of cooperation namely, security, connectivity, power, trade and commerce, development cooperation, health, cultural exchange and people-to-people contact,” he said.

The minister was addressing the opening ceremony of “Bangladesh-India Friendship Dialogue: Seventh Round” jointly organized by Friends of Bangladesh, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and India Foundation, New Delhi at a local hotel yesterday evening as the chief guest.

Mahmood Ali said apart from bilateral, both the countries have now embarked on sub-regional cooperation in certain sectors while the relationship at the multilateral level is also growing.

“The engagement is intense at all levels, from the highest political leadership to officials down to common people,” he said adding that this has made way for new areas of collaboration such as blue economy and management of oceanic resources, satellite launching, special economic zones and peaceful use of nuclear energy.

The minister said that all these would bring unprecedented benefit to both the countries and their people.

Giving an overview of Indo-Bangla relations, he said Dhaka-New Delhi relations have its genesis in the country’s struggle for independence in 1971 that culminated into the successful visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Dhaka in June last year.

He said the fruitful discussion he had with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has since

been infusing new dynamism in Indo-Bangla relations.

In this connection, he said the maritime boundary and land boundary issues were settled amicably which is an extra-ordinary demonstration of friendship, mutual trust and goodwill between the two countries. "It yet again proved that anything is possible if the political goodwill is there."

On terrorism and violent extremism, Mahmood Ali said the Bangladesh government had adopted a "zero tolerance" policy against the menace and it was pursuing a value driven foreign policy that promotes peace, secularism, freedom, human rights, good governance and social justice, non-violence, inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogues as well as ethnic and religious tolerance to combat extremism.

"Our own endeavors at the national level and firm commitment in the international arena against terrorism are appreciated by the international community," he said adding that Bangladesh is jointly working with India in countering cross-border terrorism.

Regarding connectivity, he said Bangladesh and India are cooperating in many ways to enhance connectivity as both the countries have taken a holistic view on the transit issue so as to provide seamless connectivity to India and the whole region.

Under the BBIN (Bangladesh, India, Bhutan and Nepal) Motor Vehicles Agreement, he said Bangladesh and India are going to have passenger, cargo and private vehicles moving across the sub-region.

The foreign minister said Bangladesh is working closely with India to ensure the country's energy security and is exploring joint venture investment in hydro-power projects and the possibility of power import/exchange through interconnection with India's north-east.

Under the aegis of sub-regional cooperation, at least one hydro-power project in Bhutan has been identified for development trilaterally, he said adding that Indian private sector companies are exploring opportunities in power and energy sectors in Bangladesh.

Describing trade as an important aspect of Bangladesh-India relations, he said since Bangladesh's trade being heavily tilted towards India, both the country are looking at removal of trade barriers, harmonization of standards and coordinated development of trade infrastructure at border.

The minister while terming water as a very sensitive and important issue in Bangladesh-India relations expressed the hope that in the spirit of good neighbourliness, those would be resolved soon.

"We are seeking India's participation in our proposed Ganges Barrage project on the river Padma. We have also agreed to sharing the best practices for a basin-wide management of common rivers which is expected to pave the way for full-fledged basin-wide management," he added.

National Secretary General of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Ram Madhav, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahriar Alam, Foreign Secretary Md. Shahidul Haque and India High Commissioner to Bangladesh Harsh Vardhan Shringla, among others, addressed the function.

Ministers, policy makers, academics, civil society members, security analysts and businessmen were present at the dialogue.

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