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## Recent Changes in Bangladesh and Impact of India, BCIM, Maritime Bdry and Transit

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### Recent Changes in Bangladesh and Impact on India

#### Conclusion

Durable peace and lasting good neighbourliness are essential in South Asia.

#### BCIM

- The Home Minister told the press conference that a headcount of the 162 enclaves — 51 in Bangladesh and 111 in Indian territories — had been completed. The total population of the enclaves is 51,000
- The Coordinated Border Management Plan (CBMP) was signed in the presence of Home Minister P. Chidambaram and his Bangladesh counterpart Shahara Khatoon on Saturday, with the hope that this would further enhance the quality of border management.
- Ms. Khatoon said the coordinated efforts of the BGB and the BSF would check smuggling and trafficking of humans, drugs, and arms.

#### Maritime Bdry

- India and Bangladesh started their bilateral talks way back in 1974, which was inconclusive. India was looking for equidistant border where Bangladesh was for equity-based boundary. The same difference in arguments rendered Bangladesh-Myanmar talks inconclusive as well. But, India and Myanmar (opposite States) agreed upon equidistant boundary.
- There are four issues involved in the maritime boundary. First, is the determination of the Hariabhanga border river boundary, especially the ownership of South Talpatty Island, which has to be settled. Second, is the determination of boundary of territorial waters up to 12 miles. Third, there is a need for determination of the boundary of the exclusive economic zone of another 188 miles from the end of territorial waters (12 + 188 miles = 200 miles economic zone.) Lastly, there remains the issue of boundary demarcation of the continental shelf up to another 150 miles from the end of the exclusive economic zone (200 + 150 miles = 350 miles of continental shelf) .

- On the Hariabhanga River boundary issue, it is suggested that a fixed boundary on the river with geographical coordinates may be agreed upon, as was the case between Bangladesh and Myanmar on the Naaf River. The disputed South Talpatti Island that is supposed to have emerged after the 1970 cyclone is actually a low-tide elevation. It is located about 4 kilometres south of the Hariabhanga river (21.37 N latitude and 89.12 E longitude) . The direction of the mid-flow (deepest channel) of the river Hariabhanga will determine the ownership of the Island.
- What is required at this stage is that the process of negotiation should recommence at a political level and for the government leaders look at the problem from a broader view of bilateral relations without confining themselves to the legal and technical details. The bottom line is that India's political leaders must decide as to whether Bangladesh would get a fair and equitable share of the economic zone and continental shelf of the Bay of Bengal. India's claim in the Bay of Bengal constitutes about three per cent of its total economic zone and continental shelf while for Bangladesh its entire economic zone is at stake.

## Transit

- While India gives top priority to transit facilities through Bangladesh to northeastern India and denial of sanctuary for Indian insurgents in Bangladesh, Bangladesh's top priority rests on water sharing, and water management of common rivers (54 rivers flow to Bangladesh from India) , implementation of land border agreement of 1974 and duty and hassle free access of Bangladesh's products to India's market. With regard to bilateral trade, both countries agreed "to address removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers" and establishing border hats on selected areas including on the Meghalayan border. Bangladesh wanted to open the border hat on Bangladesh-Meghalaya border on 14 April ( 1<sup>st</sup> day of Bengali Year) but could not be opened. Recently Bangladesh Commerce Minister expressed his disappointment at the delay in establishing border hat and removing tariff and non-tariff barriers
- Many Bangladesh people believe that India with its vast resources and more than a trillion dollar- economy, would be forthcoming in following the 'Gujral doctrine' which means strict reciprocity is not intended for smaller neighbours and whatever accommodation India is able to give, it provides without reciprocity. Regrettably, many in Bangladesh take India's promises with caution because in the past, either the promises were not delivered or were put into cold storage due to the federal-state bureaucratic maze in India.
- One of the reasons for India's assistance to the birth of Bangladesh, according to many observers, was not only to weaken Pakistan but also to dismantle the network used to assist separatists in India's northeast.
- Another motivation for India to turn a new page with Bangladesh is that given the depth of Chinese influence in Myanmar, India fears that Bangladesh could also come under China's sway if it does not sincerely address Bangladesh's needs.

