

Landmark visit of Sheikh Hasina



The landmark visit of Sheikh Hasina is all set to bring smiles to the people of both countries. There were lots of expectations from her visit. India has contributed to a great extent to the creation of Bangladesh and now it was time for Bangladesh to repay this gratitude on the part of bigger neighbour. In this pretext the visit of Hasina assumed greater significance. She was the first head of the state who was visiting the country in the beginning of this new decade. And the expectation of the people of Tripura, Assam and Meghalaya, states that share a long porous border with Bangladesh was even higher from this visit. At the end of the day she did keep her word as a true friend of India.

Time has come to look into the details of what the entire North Eastern region and the tiny state of Tripura stands to gain from this visit. Firstly, the announcement made regarding the connectivity of Agartala to Akhaura in Bangladesh means a lot for the people of Tripura. Tripura will no longer remain secluded in one remain corner of the country. Not only will the state get connected with the Bangladeshi rail network, but in the days to come one could well imagine of traveling all the way to Kolkata by rail via Bangladesh. This may take time but the Union Railways minister Ms Mamata Banerjee will make sure that this 14 KM rail stretch is completed ahead of schedule. And the ramification in the long run is that Tripura will get connected with the Trans Asian rail network too in the not so distant future.

The second nod of approval being provided by Sheikh Hasina is regarding the use of Chittagong port by India. Time and again, Tripura chief minister Mr Manik Sarkar has raised this demand. The location of Chittagong port is of crucial importance for a landlocked state like Tripura. The decision to start border trade through the Sabroom – Ramgarh border that is located very close to the Chittagong port is also significant. The MoU on power also heralds a good sign for the economy of Tripura. The viability of the Palatana power plant in South Tripura has increased manifold with this MoU whereby India has decided to supply over 250 Megawatts of power to Bangladesh that is “power

starved”. Power Grid will soon ink a pact with Bangladesh streamlining the export of power to Bangladesh via Tripura. Besides Ashuganj port will also be allowed for use for transporting the turbines for the Palatana plant. Finally, one should look into the joint agreement both countries have signed with regards to jointly fighting the menace of terrorism. Gone are the days when the likes of Anup Chetia could muster the courage of holding talks with the likes of Pervez Musharraf in a posh Dhaka hotel. The recent arrest and pushback of top ULFA leaders have shown the willingness of Dhaka in terms of curbing the rampant activities of the top militant leaders of various North Eastern



outfits inside Bangladeshi territory. It will be a consistent demand of the people of Tripura that Sheikh Hasina also reins in the likes of Ranjit Debbarma, ATTF supreme who continue to operate freely inside Bangladesh. The fact that the central leadership has realized the importance of taking Bangladesh on board in terms of bringing in peace in the North East speaks volumes of the growing understanding of the real issues plaguing this erstwhile trouble torn region. But what is significant is the assurance given by Sheikh Hasina that forces inimical to India will not be allowed to operate from Bangladeshi territory. Besides she has also hinted the extradition treaty between the two countries will also be signed streamlining the handing over of the militant leaders and other top criminals .