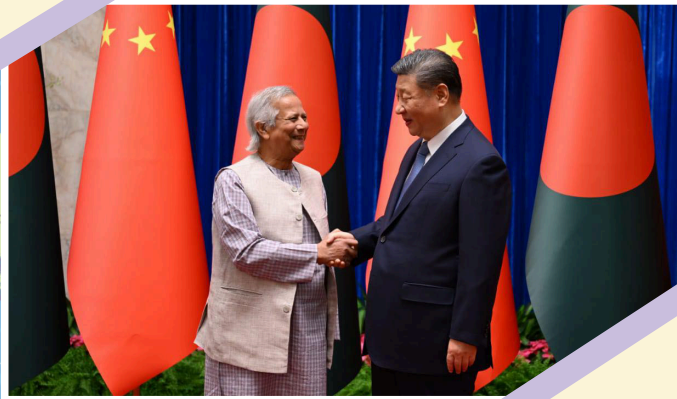
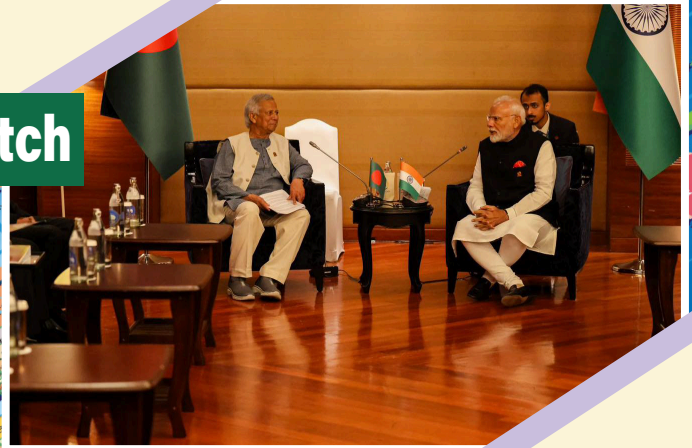


7 April | 2025

Bangladesh Foreign Policy Watch

CGS Centre for Governance Studies



A Bi-Weekly Roundup of Key Events

The UN urged all political parties to pursue mutual understanding and voiced its hope for an inclusive, democratic election that aligns with the aspirations of Bangladeshi citizens.



16 March

UN pledges support for Bangladesh's reforms

UN Secretary-General António Guterres reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to supporting Bangladesh's reform process, encouraging national dialogue, and building a sustainable and just future. During his visit, Guterres met with political leaders, young people, and civil society actors. He also visited the UN Common Premises in Gulshan, took part in a ceremonial flag-raising event, and joined an iftar gathering hosted by Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus. Political parties offered differing perspectives on the timing and urgency of reforms ahead of the elections. The BNP stressed the importance of implementing reforms swiftly, whereas the National Citizen Party (NCP) highlighted that reforms are a vital component of the electoral process.

Africa's top e-commerce Jiji expanding to Bangladesh

Jiji, Africa's premier e-commerce platform, is set to begin operations in Bangladesh, marking its first entry into the Asian market. Jiji operates a classifieds-based marketplace that connects buyers and sellers without holding inventory or managing logistics. With more than 12 million monthly active users in Africa, the platform has successfully competed with and acquired rivals like OLX and Cars45. The company intends to make significant investments in Bangladesh's e-commerce industry, which is expected to exceed \$12 billion by 2029. Jiji aims to harness the potential of Bangladesh's

rising middle class, digital growth, and increasingly tech-savvy consumer base. It is also planning to build a strong local presence and explore expansion into other markets across Asia.

Sri Lankan envoy discusses trade at DCCI

Sri Lankan High Commissioner Dharmapala Weerakkody held discussions with the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) to explore ways to strengthen trade and investment ties between the two nations. DCCI President Taskeen Ahmed pointed to the potential for learning from Sri Lanka's expertise in deep-sea fishing, tourism, and shipping, while urging investment in Bangladesh's agriculture, healthcare, tourism, IT, and FMCG sectors. Bilateral trade between the countries increased from \$93.11 million in FY2019-20 to \$134.06 million in FY2023-24. Both sides emphasised the urgency of establishing a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) to enhance economic cooperation. Weerakkody highlighted synthetic fabrics, healthcare, hospitality, IT, and pharmaceuticals as key sectors for potential joint ventures and noted that PTA negotiations are expected to commence soon

17 March

Rampal Power: Indian staff earn high salaries, bonuses

Indian nationals working at the Rampal Power Plant in Bangladesh receive notably high salaries, with some earning up to Tk 47 lakh (\$43,000) per month and the average exceeding Tk 10 lakh (\$9,000). The power plant, a joint venture between Bangladesh and India, has 32 of its top 40 roles filled by Indian employees deputed from NTPC Limited. Despite financial setbacks and underperformance, the plant continues to issue substantial bonuses and allowances, with Tk 13.76 crore (\$1.25 million) paid in just one month. Environmental concerns persist due to its location near the Sundarbans and lack of compliance with effluent treatment guidelines. In contrast, the Payra Power Plant employs fewer foreign professionals and pays lower executive salaries.

BSF attempts border fencing at Dahagram

The Indian Border Security Force (BSF) recently attempted to construct a barbed wire fence and install iron poles along the zero line of the Dahagram border.

This prompted a protest from the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), which cited the construction as a breach of international law. Following the protest, the BSF suspended its fencing activities. This incident is not isolated; similar attempts were previously reported on March 2 and January 10, leading to rising tensions in the area. Local residents expressed concern over the repeated fencing efforts, saying it made them feel unsafe accessing their land near the border. The BGB has since increased patrols and surveillance in the region, while local law enforcement continues to monitor the situation closely.

Global efforts needed for Rohingya repatriation: Touhid

Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain called upon the international community to develop a concrete roadmap for the immediate repatriation of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar's Rakhine state. His comments came during a meeting with Australia's newly appointed High Commissioner Susan Ryle, who reaffirmed her country's continued support in resolving the crisis. The discussion also addressed bilateral matters including trade, investment, migration, visa facilitation, and collaboration in technical education. Hossain stressed the value of strengthening cooperation between Bangladesh's technical training institutions and Australian educational establishments to boost global workforce mobility. He congratulated Ryle on her appointment and assured her of full support during her time in Bangladesh.

US expresses deep concern over Bangladesh

The United States has expressed serious concern about the persecution of religious minorities in Bangladesh, including Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians. This issue is currently a central focus for the US government. Initial talks have begun between officials of the US administration under President Trump and Bangladesh's interim administration to address these matters. US Intelligence Chief Tulsi Gabbard pointed to the broader threat of extremist ideologies globally, particularly those advocating for an "Islamic Caliphate." She reiterated the Trump administration's commitment to combatting such ideologies and addressing the associated threats of terrorism. The administration remains firmly resolved to dismantle extremist networks and confront terrorism wherever it emerges.

18 March

Yunus: Minority attacks politically driven

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus stated that recent attacks on religious minorities in Bangladesh were politically rather than religiously motivated. He assured that the government has taken necessary actions against the perpetrators. During a meeting with US Senator Gary Peters in Dhaka, Yunus discussed political reforms, minority rights, and the timeline for upcoming elections, which could take place in December if reform proposals are finalised. The “July Charter” was introduced as a guiding document for the country’s political future. Both Yunus and Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain responded to circulating misinformation about Bangladesh. Senator Peters conveyed concerns raised by Bangladeshi-Americans, while Gabbard’s earlier comments on minority persecution were described as misleading.

Qatar backs Bangladesh's reform initiatives



Qatar has expressed its full support for Bangladesh’s interim government and its ongoing reform initiatives. On 18 March 2025, Qatari Ambassador Seraya Ali Al-Qahtani met with Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at the State Guest House Jamuna. Yunus emphasised the importance of enhancing trade and investment links between the two nations and extended an invitation to Qatari investors to explore opportunities in Bangladesh’s economic zones. He also announced an investment summit scheduled in Dhaka in early April aimed at attracting foreign investments. The ambassador praised Bangladesh’s efforts and expressed hope for stronger Qatari participation. Yunus further mentioned his planned visit to Qatar next month to attend an international conference.

Tulsi’s remarks won’t affect Bangladesh-US ties

Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed stated that US Intelligence Chief Tulsi Gabbard’s recent remarks about religious minorities in Bangladesh would not affect bilateral relations between the two nations. The Bangladeshi government dismissed her concerns as misleading. Ahmed affirmed Bangladesh’s preparedness for its graduation from the Least Developed Countries (LDC) category in 2026. He also addressed current challenges in the edible oil supply, attributing the issues to problematic business practices. The government has approved new procurement plans for LNG cargos, rice bran oil, lentils, and non-Basmati boiled rice from India. Additionally, a contract for a Phase-3 water treatment project has been awarded to a Chinese company and a Dhaka-based joint venture.

05 March

Bangladesh condemns Israel, demands ceasefire

Bangladesh called on Israel to immediately cease military operations, exercise restraint, and uphold international humanitarian law. The government appealed to the United Nations and global leaders to take decisive action to end hostilities, safeguard civilians, and ensure the uninterrupted delivery of humanitarian aid. Bangladesh reiterated its firm support for the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent state based on pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The government also highlighted the urgent need to resume diplomatic initiatives aimed at achieving comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. Bangladesh reaffirmed its willingness to collaborate with the international community to ensure peace, dignity, and justice for the Palestinian people.

Bangladesh condemns Israel, demands ceasefire

Eighteen victims were brought back to Bangladesh on a Thai Airways flight with the help of the Bangladesh foreign ministry, the Criminal Investigation Department, the Bangladesh embassy in Thailand, and Brac’s migration programme. Human traffickers had lured the victims with false promises of high-paying jobs in Thailand. After arriving, they were taken to Myanmar and coerced into cyber-crime operations under threat of violence.

One victim, Md Alif, recounted being duped by a job offer, held at gunpoint, and imprisoned for six months. Those who resisted were subjected to torture, including electric shocks. One individual managed to escape and initiated the rescue process. Authorities are currently working to arrest the traffickers, with one already in custody. The case underscores the urgent need to raise public awareness to prevent others from falling victim to similar scams.

Bangladesh's apparel exports to EU surge

Bangladesh's apparel exports to the European Union saw a 60.9% surge in January 2025, reaching €1.91 billion compared to €1.19 billion in January 2024. Knitwear exports rose by 64.2% to €1.15 billion, while woven garments increased by 56.3% to €765.97 million. Key factors behind this growth include competitive pricing, favourable trade arrangements such as the Everything But Arms initiative, and enhancements in production capacity. Overall, EU apparel imports rose 31.9% year-on-year in January 2025, amounting to €8.29 billion. Bangladesh continues to hold its position as the EU's second-largest apparel exporter, following China. Other regional exporters—Cambodia, Vietnam, India, and Pakistan—also recorded notable increases in their shipments to the EU market.

20 March

Australia to issue Dhaka visas

Australia has announced that visa applications from Bangladeshi citizens will now be processed directly by its High Commission in Dhaka, replacing the previous practice of handling them through New Delhi. Australian Home Minister Tony Burke relayed this decision to Bangladesh's Home Adviser, Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, during a phone conversation. According to the Chief Adviser's Press Wing, the change takes effect immediately. The request to process visas locally was first raised by Bangladesh's Chief Adviser, Professor Muhammad Yunus, during the Australian minister's visit to Dhaka in October of the previous year.

Indian nationals shoot two Bangladeshis

Two Bangladeshi nationals, Yamin Miah and his uncle Akhter Hossain, sustained gunshot wounds

after reportedly being shot by Indian Khasia individuals near the Bichhnakandi border in Sylhet on Wednesday night. Local sources said the Bangladeshis had illegally crossed into Indian territory to smuggle sugar. A disagreement over sugar pricing led to the shooting. The two victims were injured in their legs and are currently receiving treatment while staying in hiding. The Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) has confirmed the incident and launched an investigation to determine further details.

22 March

PDB disputes Adani's payment claim

The Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) has challenged a claim by Adani Power Jharkhand Limited, which alleges that Bangladesh owes \$771 million in outstanding payments. PDB argues that the actual payable amount is closer to \$630 million and accuses Adani of overcharging by \$141 million through the use of unauthorised coal price indexes. The coal price discount initially offered by Adani was withdrawn in mid-2024. While a dollar shortage has contributed to payment delays, PDB recently paid \$400 million. In the meantime, Adani has imposed \$50 million in late payment fees since April 2023, applying a 2% monthly penalty. A government-appointed committee has recommended renegotiating coal pricing terms due to the higher electricity tariffs Adani's plant charges compared to other providers.

Rohingyas face systemic racial discrimination

On the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus called for global efforts to address racial injustice, highlighting the Rohingya crisis as a key concern. He noted that more than one million Rohingyas have lived in Bangladesh under conditions of statelessness and systemic discrimination since 2017. Yunus reaffirmed that repatriation to Myanmar remains the only viable solution. Bangladesh reiterated its commitment to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), which it ratified 60 years ago. As a state party, Bangladesh upholds non-discrimination as a fundamental principle of governance and called upon the international community to facilitate the safe return of the Rohingya population.

US thread maker opens Ctg factory

American & Efird (A&E), a leading global manufacturer of industrial threads, has inaugurated its 24th production facility in Chattogram, Bangladesh, expanding on its existing presence in Gazipur. Located strategically near the Chattogram seaport and financial district, the new plant is equipped with modern technology and designed to support environmentally sustainable operations. The facility aims to boost sustainable thread manufacturing, increase production American & Efird (A&E), a leading global manufacturer of industrial threads, has inaugurated its 24th production facility in Chattogram, Bangladesh, expanding on its existing presence in Gazipur. Located strategically near the Chattogram seaport and financial district, the new plant is equipped with modern technology and designed to support environmentally sustainable operations. The facility aims to boost sustainable thread manufacturing, increase production

Rohingya boat sinks entering Bangladesh

A boat carrying Rohingya refugees capsized early in the morning while attempting to enter Bangladesh from Myanmar. At least 25 refugees, including one child, were rescued alive, but several individuals remain missing. A Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) member involved in the rescue operation is also unaccounted for. According to survivors, the boat was carrying more than 50 people when it capsized due to rough sea conditions. Local authorities and law enforcement agencies have continued search and rescue efforts to locate the missing passengers.

23 March

Envoy calls Yunus China visit milestone

Chinese Ambassador Yao Wen remarked that Professor Muhammad Yunus's forthcoming visit to China, in his capacity as Chief Adviser of Bangladesh's interim government, would mark a major step forward in bilateral relations. The visit coincides with the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two nations.

India reduces onion export duty

India has announced that it will lift the 20% export duty on onions starting April 1, as per a notification from its Department of Revenue. Previously,

a combination of export duties, minimum export prices, and outright export bans had been implemented to stabilise domestic supply. These restrictions were in effect for nearly five months during the 2023–2024 period. Despite such measures, India managed to export 17.17 lakh tonnes of onions in FY 2023–2024 and 11.65 lakh tonnes in FY 2024–2025 (as of March 18, 2025). Notably, monthly onion exports have surged from 0.72 lakh tonnes in September 2024 to 1.85 lakh tonnes in January 2025.

24 March

Jaishankar: India knew Hasina backlash

India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar revealed that India was aware of the growing anti-Hasina sentiment in Bangladesh prior to the government's ousting in August 2024, although he noted India's limited capacity to intervene. He acknowledged that the United Nations had warned Bangladesh's army against the excessive use of force during the protests, citing implications for their peacekeeping role. India has since initiated diplomatic engagements with the interim government. A meeting between the Indian Prime Minister and Bangladesh's Chief Adviser is expected to take place at the April 2025 BIMSTEC Summit. Jaishankar addressed rising concerns about China's influence in the region, Myanmar's instability, and indicated that SAARC could see a revival through BIMSTEC cooperation.

Bangladesh, Australia to curb migration



Bangladesh and Australia have signed a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) aimed at enhancing collaboration on combating illegal migration and human trafficking. The agreement, signed by Bangladesh's Inspector General of Police Baharul Alam and Australia's Border Force Commander Mark Whitechurch, seeks to ensure safe, orderly,

and legal migration. It reflects a joint commitment to upholding security and human dignity in migration management. The SOP will also enable faster processing of Australian visa applications in Dhaka. Both governments stressed the importance of continued collaboration to prevent illegal migration and provide safer, legal alternatives for Bangladeshi citizens. This initiative marks a notable advancement in bilateral efforts on migration governance.

11,500MT Indian rice reaches Chattogram

A shipment of 11,500 metric tonnes of non-basmati parboiled rice from India has arrived at Chattogram Port, Bangladesh. This delivery is part of a contract between the two countries for the import of 450,000 metric tonnes of parboiled rice, divided into nine packages. The import proposal was approved by Bangladesh in January 2025, and a private Indian company is supplying the rice as the lowest bidder. To date, more than 285,769 metric tonnes of rice have been delivered under the contract, with the remaining quantity expected to arrive in phases. The initiative aims to address domestic demand, meet emergency food requirements, and uphold public welfare during the 2024–2025 fiscal year. The rice has passed physical inspection and unloading operations are set to begin shortly.

25 March

UN seeks \$1b Rohingya aid appeal

The United Nations, in partnership with over 100 organisations, has launched the 2025–2026 Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya humanitarian crisis, appealing for \$934.5 million in funding for 2025. The plan targets around 1.48 million individuals, including Rohingya refugees and host communities in Bangladesh. Now in its eighth year, the crisis stems from mass displacement triggered by systematic persecution in Myanmar, especially during the military crackdown of 2017. The funding is essential for maintaining basic services such as food, shelter, and protection. A significant portion of the refugee population consists of women and girls, who face heightened risks of exploitation and abuse. Approximately one-third of the refugees are aged between 10 and 24.

26 March

Modi reaffirms partnership with Bangladesh

On the occasion of Bangladesh's Independence and National Day, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Droupadi Murmu extended formal congratulations, reaffirming the deep bilateral partnership. Modi underscored the shared historical legacy and sacrifices that form the foundation of India-Bangladesh relations and reiterated India's unwavering support for regional peace, stability, and prosperity based on mutual respect. President Murmu recognised the breadth of cooperation between the two countries, highlighting progress in trade, connectivity, development, education, culture, and people-to-people engagement. Both leaders reaffirmed Bangladesh's strategic role in India's "Neighbourhood First" and "Act East" policies and committed to supporting a peaceful and democratic future for Bangladesh.

Yunus arrives in Hainan for Boao



Chief Adviser Dr. Muhammad Yunus has arrived in Hainan, China to participate in the Boao Forum for Asia 2025. Themed "Asia in the Changing World: Towards a Shared Future," the forum features 2,000 delegates from over 60 countries. Dr. Yunus is scheduled to hold bilateral meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping and other senior officials, focusing on key topics including trade, investment, renewable energy, and the Rohingya refugee crisis. Anticipated outcomes include the signing of several Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) covering human resource, economic, and cultural cooperation. Yunus will also meet investors, participate in dialogues on social business and sustainable development, and receive an honorary doctorate from Peking University.

The visit is regarded as a milestone in Bangladesh-China relations, coinciding with the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties, with both sides aiming to deepen strategic cooperation.

UNGA adopts Rohingya resolution

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has adopted a resolution focused on the situation of Rohingya Muslims and other minority communities in Myanmar. The resolution outlines plans for organising a high-level international conference to address the crisis. Co-sponsored by Malaysia and Finland, the resolution received strong backing from Bangladesh, with significant contributions from its Permanent Representative, Ambassador Md Salahuddin Noman Choudhury. It was passed with 141 votes in favour, 10 abstentions, and none opposed, following Bangladesh's request to bring the matter to a vote after rejecting proposed amendments by Russia. The resolution is viewed as a major step toward addressing the Rohingya issue. Bangladesh intends to host a related summit in New York this September.

US, Bangladesh pledge stronger cooperation



On Bangladesh's Independence, U.S. Foreign Minister Marco Rubio extended greetings and reiterated Washington's commitment to working with Bangladesh to promote regional security and economic growth in the Indo-Pacific. Rubio emphasised U.S. support for Bangladesh's democratic progress and development, particularly as the nation prepares for elections under an interim government.

Pakistan PM greets Yunus, praises ties

Pakistan's Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif extended greetings to Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus on the occasion of Bangladesh's National Day, referring to it as "National Day" rather than "Independence and National Day." In his message, Sharif acknowledged the longstanding cultural, historical,

and religious links between the two nations and commended Yunus's efforts to improve bilateral ties. The two leaders previously held discussions in New York and Cairo on matters of regional cooperation and mutual interest. Sharif emphasised the importance of promoting peace, stability, and prosperity in Bangladesh and expressed optimism for further collaboration between the two countries to ensure broader development across South Asia.

US, Bangladesh Army deepen ties

Lieutenant General Joel P. Vowell of the United States Army reaffirmed U.S. commitment to enhancing military cooperation with the Bangladesh Army during a meeting with General Waker-Uz-Zaman, Chief of Army Staff. The discussions focused on strengthening collaboration in domestic security, disaster response, and addressing broader military challenges. The upcoming "TIGER LIGHTNING" joint exercise, scheduled for summer 2025, was reviewed as a means to improve operational interoperability. Discussions also included possibilities for acquiring U.S.-manufactured military equipment. Lt Gen Vowell praised the professionalism of Bangladesh's armed forces and highlighted the crucial role of well-trained militaries in fostering regional peace and security.

28 March

Bangladesh, China to Elevate Ties to New Height

Bangladesh and China have agreed to take their bilateral relationship to a new level following a landmark meeting between President Xi Jinping and Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at the Great Hall of the People. President Xi expressed China's full support for Bangladesh's interim government and reform agenda, offering to deepen cooperation in trade, investment, and infrastructure. China pledged to continue zero-tariff access for Bangladeshi goods until 2028, begin negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement, and promote Chinese investment and industrial relocation to Bangladesh. The leaders also discussed collaboration on BRI projects, the Teesta River project, and regional connectivity. Professor Yunus requested support on loan terms, cultural cooperation, and the Rohingya crisis. President Xi praised Yunus's microcredit model and Bangladeshi fruits, while promising positive consideration of Dhaka's proposals. Officials described the visit as a "trans

formational moment” laying the groundwork for strategic ties to flourish in the decades ahead.

29 March

Chinese Airlines to Launch Chittagong Kunming Flights for Medical Travel



China Eastern Airlines plans to launch direct flights between Chittagong and Kunming to ease medical travel for Bangladeshis seeking treatment in China. Four hospitals in Kunming have dedicated facilities for Bangladeshi patients, offering care at local Chinese rates. However, high airfares remain a barrier. The new route aims to reduce both costs and travel time, improving access to affordable, high-quality healthcare. Bangladesh's civil aviation authorities are also working to cut airfares on the Dhaka-Kunming route. A delegation of Bangladeshi journalists will visit Kunming in April to assess the healthcare facilities firsthand.

April 01

Bangladesh Sends Relief, Medical and Rescue Teams to Myanmar



On March 30 and April 1, Bangladesh dispatched two batches of humanitarian aid to Myanmar, totalling over 31 tonnes of relief materials. The mission included dry food, clean water, medicines, and hygiene kits, alongside a 55-member support team comprising rescue and medical personnel. Led by Colonel Md Shamim Iftekhar, the mission aims to assist earthquake victims

and strengthen bilateral cooperation, according to the ISPR

April 04

Bangladesh Chief Adviser Meets Indian PM to Reset Bilateral Ties

In their first official meeting in a decade, Bangladesh Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a candid and constructive 40-minute dialogue in Bangkok, aimed at rejuvenating bilateral ties. Professor Yunus emphasised historical friendship and sought India's support on key issues, including a BIMSTEC Free Trade Agreement, water-sharing treaties, and reducing border killings. He also raised concerns over former PM Sheikh Hasina's destabilising statements from India, citing findings from an OHCHR report on human rights abuses during 2024 protests. Prime Minister Modi reiterated India's non-partisan approach and stressed people-to-people ties. The leaders discussed mutual priorities, including economic cooperation, minority rights, and regional stability. Both acknowledged the need to curb tensions and build trust through cooperation. Professor Yunus reaffirmed Bangladesh's commitment to an inclusive BIMSTEC, while Modi highlighted India's historic support for Bangladesh. Officials from both governments, including foreign and security advisers, attended the milestone meeting.

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