

## Dhaka talks tough on terror; will Reopen all transit routes with India



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Bangladesh has reiterated it would not allow its soil to be used for any terrorist activity against India and has promised to reopen all transit routes for maximum connectivity between the two neighbours. This was stated by Bangladesh High Commissioner in India, Mr Tariq Ahmed Karim, during his talk 'India-Bangladesh Relations: Beyond Barriers' organized by the Centre for Development and Peace Studies, a Guwahati-based think tank, here last night.

Mr Karim, in an unusually candid address, admitted there has been avoidable 'barriers' that has been keeping relations between the two populous neighbours tense for large part of the past forty years since Bangladesh attained its independence. "Now, things have changed and the Prime Ministers of the two nations, Dr Manmohan Singh and Sheikh Hasina, have already given us the work order to boost ties and consolidate on the prevailing congenial atmosphere," High Commissioner Karim, who has been handpicked by Sheikh Hasina as her country's top envoy in India, said.

Mr Karim told the packed gathering comprising top government functionaries, academics, social activists, and journalists, that his country has now decided to reopen all transit routes with India and take things back to that prevailing before 1965. The High Commissioner, during the interactive session later, indicated that Dhaka would allow the use of its Chittagong Port to services the land-locked northeastern Indian states.

"The world has seen our resolve to fight terrorism and India has acknowledged it at the highest level. We shall not allow any terrorist act against India to be carried out from our territory," the High Commissioner said during his hour-long address. He, however, urged India to take a leap forward in easing the trade imbalance that is largely against Bangladesh's favour.

The High Commissioner called for management of the rivers that criss-cross the two nations. "Rivers do not have boundaries. What is needed is river management, not water sharing," Mr Karim Said.

In his introductory address, CDPS Director Mr Wasbir Hussain, said in the past forty years since India helped Bangladesh attain independence from Pakistan, New Delhi and Dhaka have maintained a blow-hot-blow-cold relationship. "To be frank, there has been a great deal of trust deficit between the two nations. But there is no reason why there should be a status quo. I am happy to note that things are indeed changing, and changing fast, after the Awami League headed by Sheikh Hasina, returned to power in December 2008," Mr Hussain said.

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