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NRB NEWS 2013

Netaji Research Bureau had a very active and productive year during 2012.

On January 5, 2012, Professor Diana Sorensen, Dean of the Arts and Humanities, Harvard University delivered a special lecture on “Humanities in Higher Education”. Professor Malabika Sarkar engaged Professor Sorensen in a conversation. Professor Sugata Bose was in the chair.

On January 17, 2012, the Sisir Kumar Bose Lecture 2012 was given by Thant Myint U, on “Where China Meets India: Burma and the New Crossroads of Asia”. Sugata Bose chaired the lecture, which was followed by a lively discussion. Sumantra Bose presented a historic photograph of Sarat Bose and Aung San to the speaker.

On January 23, 2012 the traditional Netaji Birthday Assembly was held at Netaji Bhawan in the morning at 10.30 a.m. Pramita Mallick and Bhoomi performed the opening music. Sugata Bose gave the welcome address and spoke on “Music in Netaji’s Life”. The January issue of The Oracle 2012 was formally released. The Governor of West Bengal, Mr. M.K. Narayanan, presided over the Birthday Assembly. Mr. Jairam Ramesh, Union Cabinet Minister, addressed the gathering and highlighted Netaji’s contributions in the field of economic development and the environment.
Bhoomi presented a special Netaji Birthday Concert. The Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee, paid her homage to Netaji at the conclusion of the concert.
On February 11, 2012, “You and I”, Soumyajit Das and Sourendra Mullick, presented a special concert in honour of Dr. Sisir Kumar Bose whose 92nd birth anniversary was on February 2, 2012.

On August 5, 2012, on the occasion of the birth centenary of Saadat Hasan Manto, Ayesha Jalal, Mary Richardson Professor of History, Tufts University, delivered a special lecture on “The Pity of Partition: Manto across the India-Pakistan Divide”.

On August 12, 2012, in joint observance of the Quit India movement and Independence Day there was a beautiful programme of patriotic songs by Sounak Chattopadhyay, Sasha Ghosal and Sugata Bose in the Sarat Bose Hall. The audience greatly enjoyed the programme, which concluded with the singing of all five verses of “Jana Gana Mana”.
On September 15, 2012, President Pranab Mukherjee visited Netaji Research Bureau to pay his homage to Netaji on his first trip to Kolkata as President. NRB Chairperson Krishna Bose welcomed him and showed him round the museum. After seeing the museum the President made a short speech in the Sarat Bose Hall. The speech is published in this issue of *The Oracle*. In the Visitor’s Book of NRB, the President remarked: “It was a great privilege to visit this place of historic importance which symbolizes sacrifice and dedication to the cause of our great nation.”
On October 20, 2012, Dr Sisir Kumar Bose was posthumously awarded the “Friends of Bangladesh Liberation Honour”. Professor Krishna Bose received the award in Dhaka from the hands of the Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

On December 21, 2012, the Sarat Chandra Bose Memorial Lecture 2012 was delivered by Professor Gowher Rizvi, Advisor to Sheikh Hasina, Hon’ble Prime Minister, Bangladesh, on “Transforming Bangladesh-India Relations: A Paradigm Shift in Sub-regional Cooperation”. Professor Sugata Bose was in the chair.

Netaji Museum continued to be a major attraction for visitors from different parts of India and abroad. Many young students from disadvantaged backgrounds were allowed free entry. More visitors came in 2012 than in 2011. Distinguished visitors included Mr. Shahid Malik, High Commissioner of Pakistan in India and his wife Ms. Ghazala Malik on January 15, 2012; Mr. Goutam Soni and Ms. Usha Soni, New Delhi, on January 15, 2012;
Mr. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, former Chief Minister of Assam, and Dr. Jayasree Goswami Mahanta on February 23, 2012; Mr. Takeshi Osuga of the Japanese Embassy in New Delhi on March 2, 2012; Mr. Yutaka Shigemitsu, nephew of wartime Japanese Foreign Minister and post-War Deputy Prime Minister, Mamoru Shigemitsu; Peter Grilli, President of the Japan Society of Boston, on December 20, 2012; Professor Gowher Rizvi, Advisor to Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister, Bangladesh, and Mr.Hasamul Haq Inu, Minister, Information, Government of Bangladesh, on December 21, 2012.

With the financial assistance of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, a sophisticated security surveillance system has been installed at Netaji Bhawan. A 63 KVA Liquid Cool Generator set and an addressable Fire Alarm system have also been put into operation at Netaji Bhawan. A Conservation Laboratory has been set up at Netaji Museum and a large number of documents conserved during the year. Netaji Bhawan is a hundred years old heritage building. Roof waterproofing of this heritage building has been completed and other work of conservation and renovation will be completed soon. Netaji Museum is being upgraded with state-of-the-art technology. A virtual tour of the museum is now available on Netaji Research Bureau’s website (www.netaji.org).
15 Jan. Fri.’43
Air-raid alert - 10-11 p.m.

18 Jan. Mon.’43
Order of home-internment cancelled by the Government

19 Jan. Tues.’43
Went to college after an enforced absence of more than four months.
Air-raid alert in the evening (9-10 p.m.)
Wrote to father

23 Jan. Sat.’43
Rangakakababu’s birthday. What an auspicious day for our people!
A sacred day for all of us. Forty-six years - lived as life should be lived.

26 Jan. Tues.’43
‘Independence’ Day.

28 Jan. Thurs.’43
Attended a practical class in pharmacology for the first time since my release. Liked it.

29 Jan. Fri.’43
Another visit by a police officer. Served with a fresh order of restraint - to be in force for a period of one year.
Received father’s letter of the 25th inst.

31 Jan. Sun.’43
Wrote to father.

1 Feb. Mon.’43
Went to college.
2 Feb. Tues.’43
My birthday. I am twenty-three today. The twenty third year has been for me a year of trials and suffering. Street accidents, police assault, imprisonment without trial, serious illness - all crowded into a period of about eight months. Add to the physical suffering mental unrest and anxiety. But in spite of everything, the year has been a year of valuable experiences - in various directions. (Have to write about them separately.) Moreover, I have a feeling (do not know whether it is true) that I have come through all this a better man. The sense of frustration that got hold of me during 1941-42 is not there. The future may not be an easy one but is certainly pregnant with great possibilities. I am full of hope as I step into my twenty-fourth year.

Father is in prison.
Mother is suffering but continues to show, as usual, her silent courage and fortitude.

15 Feb. Mon.’43
Wrote to father

21 Feb. Sun.’43
Dadamoni’s death.
Sudden end at 12.20 p.m. as a result of coronary thrombosis.

22 Feb. Mon.’43
Received father’s letter of the

5 March, Fri.’43
Dadamoni’s Sradh

23 March, Tues.’43
Received father’s telegram from Coonoor

26 March, Fri.’43
Received father’s telegram asking us to postpone departure for Coonoor (10.30 p.m.)

27 March, Sat.’43
Wrote to father
31 March, Wed.’43
Received father’s telegram (at 4 p.m.) intimating that interview arrangements had been made and that we could leave for Coonoor. Decided to leave on the 1st and made necessary arrangements.

1 April, Thurs.’43
Left for Coonoor with Mother and Bui by Madras Mail (3.20 p.m.)

2 April, Fri.’43
On way to Coonoor - via Madras (Madras Mail)

3 April, Sat.’43
Arrived in Madras at about 10 in the morning. Comfortable journey. Spent the day in Madras as guests of Shri Viswanath Lakshmi Ratan a friend of Shri Ramnath Goenka of the Indian Express. Had a drive round the city of Madras in the afternoon. Left by the Blue Mountain Express - 8.30 p.m.

4 April, Sun.’43
Arrived at Methupalyanm by the B.M. Express at about 9 a.m. Took the train for Coonoor. Arrived at Coonoor a little after 11.30. Drove to The Travellers’ Bungalow. First interview with father at 5 in the evening.

5 April, Mon.’43
Called on Col. Iyengar of the Pasteur Institute, Coonoor in the morning. Second interview with father at 5 p.m.

6 April, Tues.’43
Went to see father for the third time at 10.30. Took leave at about 12. Lunched with the Iyengars at their place. Left Coonoor by train arrived at 3.30. Arrived at Mettup at 5.30. Took the Blue Mountain Express. Arrived in Madras - 6.30. Left for Calcutta by the Madras-Calcutta Mail at 5.20 p.m.
8 April, Thurs.’43
On our way back to Calcutta - Madras Mail

9 April, Fri.’43
Arrived in Calcutta at about 3.30 in the afternoon.

10 April, Sat.’43
Went to college.

11 April, Sun.’43
The ‘Wanderer’ car sold.

14 April, Wed.’43
Feeling unwell

15 April, Thurs.’43
Better

16 April, Fri.’43
Wrote to father

18 April, Sun.’43
Night duty

29 June, Tues.’43
Wrote to father

17 July, Sat.’43
Mother, Didi, Gita and Dada left for Coonoor to interview father.

22 July, Thurs.’43
Wrote to father

24 July, Sat.’43
Took my first swimming lesson at the lake.

27 July, Tues.’43
Mother returned to Calcutta from Coonoor

1 Sept.Wed.’43
Ila gives birth to a son
24 Sept. Fri.’43
Ila passes away (8.20 A.M.)

28 Sept. Tues.’43
Elected General Secretary of the Medical College Students’ Union.

11 Oct. Mon.’43
Leaving for Bararee tomorrow morning.

5 Dec. Sun.’43
First daylight air-raid on Calcutta
Alert - 11.30 A.M. to 1 P.M.

29 Dec. Wed.’43
Majanani passes away - midnight
Music in Netaji’s Life

If no one answers your call, then go on alone. Go on alone, go on alone, go on alone.
If no one speaks up, O Unfortunate,
If all turn their faces away, everyone is afraid –
Then open your heart
Speak your mind clearly alone.
If all return, O Unfortunate,
If no one looks at you as you venture on the dense path –
Then crush the thorns on the path with your blood-soaked feet alone.

This song composed by Rabindranath Tagore during the Swadeshi movement in 1905, that you just heard in the Bengali original, inspired many great leaders of our freedom struggle including Mahatma Gandhi. But the last few lines seem especially appropriate for Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

If no one raises a lamp, O Unfortunate, If on dark stormy nights they shut their doors on you – Then in the fire of lightning Lighting up the ribs on your chest, shine on alone.

Your Excellency Shri M.K. Narayanan, Governor of West Bengal, Union Cabinet Minister and good friend Jairam Ramesh, distinguished guests,

On behalf of Netaji Research Bureau, I welcome you all to the traditional Netaji Birthday Assembly at Netaji Bhawan. Just as it has been a long-standing custom to have the constitutional head of our state grace this occasion since the days of Padmaja Naidu, a musical tribute to Netaji has been a key part of the tradition. We are delighted to have Shri Narayanan back with us on this joyous occasion. And, thank you very much, Jairam, for coming down from Delhi. I am delighted that in addition to my own brother Sumantra, I have my brother from Augsburg, my aunt Anita’s son, Peter Arun, present with us today.

When I used to come here as a child and my father Dr Sisir Kumar Bose welcomed all the guests, I would be entranced by the great music that accompanied the speeches by Netaji’s close associates. Sometimes Netaji’s college friend Dilip Kumar Roy captivated and enthralled the audience with his renderings of Netaji’s favorite songs in his unique, melodious voice. I am glad that Pramita Mallick and and the wonderful Bangla band Bhoomi led by Soumitro and Surajit will enliven the festivities today with their music.
Netaji’s love of music was a key element among his many human and humane qualities. “The time is out of joint,” Subhas wrote to Dilip on October 9, 1925, from Mandalay Jail. He urged Dilip to flood the country with songs and “recapture for life the spontaneous joy we have forfeited”. “He who has no music in his composition,” he wrote, “whose heart is dead to music is unlikely to achieve anything great in life.” He had been captivated by the gambhira music and dance of the Makkah district of northern Bengal. Subhas asked Dilip to visit Makkah to give a boost to the simple and spontaneous folk music of Bengal. It was only after realizing one’s swadharma, inner calling, that it was possible to claim one’s adhikar, inalienable right, to real service. “To put it in the language of Emerson,” he told Dilip, “we must be molded from within.” Forced inactivity through incarceration strengthened Subhas’s belief that for most people “action in a spirit of service” ought to be “the main plank of their sadhana (quest)”. He had reverence for Sri Aurobindo who had become a dhyanis, immersed in meditation, but he warned of the dangers of the active side of man getting atrophied through prolonged seclusion. “For a variety of reasons,” Subhas observed, “our nation has been sliding pauselessly down to the zero line in the sphere of action; so what we badly need today is a double dose of the activist serum, rajas.” Dilip sent this letter from Subhas to Rabindranath Tagore. “Subhas has written a very fine letter,” the poet said in reply. “I was gratified to know about the qualities of his head and heart through the letter. What Subhas has said about art is unexceptionable.”

On an impulse Subhas wrote a letter to another popular literary figure of early twentieth-century Bengal, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay. He felt that this novelist had been the only one to have penned a truly insightful tribute to the Deshbandhu, which had touched him deeply. Chattopadhyay wrote and published his novel Pather Dabi (The Demand of the Road) about a Bengali freedom fighter in Burma during Subhas Chandra Bose’s Mandalay years. “If I had not come here,” Subhas wrote to this master of fiction, “I would never realize the depth of my love for golden Bengal. I sometimes feel as if Tagore expressed the emotions of a prisoner when he wrote: “Sonar Bangla, ami tomae bhakobashi (Golden Bengal, I love you)!” This song, along with others by Tagore, Dwijendra Lal Roy and various devotional and folk poets, figured prominently in a note book in which he had transcribed his favorite songs. He believed that the songs of Kazi Nazrul Islam, the revolutionary poet-laureate of Bengal, had been enriched by the composer’s lived experience of the colonial prison. Distance strengthened his yearning for his regional homeland. “When I see patches of white clouds floating across the sky in the morning or the afternoon,” he wrote referring to Kalidasa’s ancient epic poem, “I momentarily feel – as the exiled Yaksha of Meghdut did – like sending through them some of my innermost feelings to Mother Bengal. I could at least tell her in the Vaishnavic strain –

To face calumny for your sake,
Is to me a blessing.
Tomari lagojing kaikanke bojhe
Bahite amaar sukhe.

“From time to time,” he wrote to his sister-in-law from jail, “I miss scent and music.” “If man is regarded as a being possessing a soul, music is as much a necessity as food and drink,” Subhas claimed while demanding permission from the governor of Burma to play musical instruments in prison. There is much more that could be said about Netaji and music, including his interest in getting recommendations of good recordings of European music from Emilie Schenkl in Vienna while home interned in Kurseong during the latter half of 1936. And, of course, he gave patronage
to a talented INA orchestra, which created a repertoire of inspiring songs, such as, Kadam Kadam Barhae Ja, set to innovative tunes. Music, quite as much as the supreme commander’s speeches, was deployed to raise morale – the key asset of any revolutionary army.

But for today I will limit myself to the role that he played in choosing India’s national anthem. A hundred years ago, on December 27, 1911, at the annual session of the Indian National Congress, Rabindranath Tagore’s freshly composed song “Jana Gana Mana” was performed, offering thanks for the divine benediction showered so generously on our country and our people. It had pleased Providence to guide Bharat’s destiny and to give succor to its suffering populace. The poet’s lyrics sang a paean to the expression of this divine glory that had many attributes – the “Janaganamangalkayak”, the Giver of grace, was at the same time the “Janagana-aihya-bidhayak” – the One who crafted unity out of India’s myriad religious and regional diversity. The eternal charioteer was also the “Janaganapathparichayak” – navigating for his followers a most difficult path.

Patan-abhyudaya-bandhur pontha, jug-jug dhabita jatri
He Chirasarathi taba rathachakre mukharita path dinratri
Darun biplab majhe taba shankhadhwani baje
Sankatdukhhatrata.

The gender of this divinity is uncertain. The “janaganadukhatrayak” appears in feminine form.

Duhswapne atanke raksha korile anke
Snehamaye tumi Mata.

A song that so brilliantly fuses together an invocation to divine sovereignty with an intimation of popular sovereignty may seem with hindsight to have been a natural selection as a national anthem. Yet there is reason to ponder how Rabindranath Tagore, a patriot who was a powerful critic of nationalism, came to be accepted as the author of two national anthems of India and Bangladesh.

When Netaji inaugurated the Free India Center in Europe on November 2, the green, saffron and white tricolor of the Indian National Congress was adopted as the national flag. The image of a springing tiger reminiscent of the eighteenth-century anti-British warrior, Tipu Sultan of Mysore, replaced the charkha or the spinning wheel in the middle, even though Netaji would revert to the Gandhian symbol in Southeast Asia. After independence both the charkha and the tiger would give way to the Asokan chakra or wheel evocative of the ancient Maurya empire. “Jana Gana Mana Adhinayak Jaya He” – was chosen by Netaji as the national anthem – a choice that would be ratified by the Indian government after independence. He had played a key role in resolving the controversy surrounding the later verses of the other song “Bande Mataram” in 1937. He was open to considering Muhammad Iqbal’s song “Sare Jahan se achha Hindustan Hamara” – proclaiming the excellence of India compared to the whole world – but in the end the decision was in favor of Tagore. He asked his followers to find a common national greeting that would have a nice ring to it and be acceptable to all religious communities. “Jai Hind” (Victory to India) sounded perfect and Netaji enthusiastically embraced it as India’s national greeting. These words became India’s national slogan in 1947. The decisions regarding the national anthem and greeting were examples of Bose’s well-honed political intuition and were to be among his lasting legacies to independent India.

Dinendranath Tagore had written down the musical score of “Jana Gana Mana” in 1918. An elaborate orchestration of the song was done in Hamburg, Germany, in September 1942. On the occasion of the inauguration of the Deutsche-Indische Gesellschaft in Hamburg on September 11, 1942, a German orchestra played for the first time Tagore’s song as India’s national anthem.
In 1971 Krishna Bose found the bill for the orchestration of “Jana Gana Mana” in the archives of Hamburg’s Rathaus. It had cost 750 Reichmarks. Subhas Chandra Bose spoke of the bonds of poetry and philosophy between the two countries at the function. Perhaps Netaji sought refuge in the past world of Goethe and Schopenhauer, Ruckert and Schlegel, Max Muller and Deussen, away from the oppressive present of Nazi Germany. He did not neglect to mention how Tagore’s visits to Germany in the 1920s had strengthened cultural ties between the two countries.

Netaji made his final public appearance in Berlin at a big ceremony to observe Independence Day on January 26, 1943, before his epic submarine voyage to Asia. The independence pledge of the Indian National Congress was read out. Berlin’s Radio Orchestra played “Jana Gana Mana” as India’s national anthem with great panache. Those in India who listened clandenstinely to the broadcasts of Azad Hind Radio were enthused to hear it. The “very colorful and eminent gathering” of some six hundred guests included the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and Rashid Ali El-Gilani of Iraq. Netaji walked into the hall decorated with red tulips and white lilacs dressed in a black sherwani and addressed the assembly in German. An English recording of his speech was beamed simultaneously to India. In a wide-ranging address he made a philosophical digression:

To us, life is one long unending wave. It is God manifesting himself in the infinite variety of creation. It is ‘Leela’ – an eternal play of forces. In this cosmic interplay of forces – there is not only sunshine, but there is also darkness. There is not only joy, but there is also sorrow. There is not only a rise, but there is also a fall. If we do not lose faith in ourselves and in our divinity – we shall move on through darkness, sorrow and degradation towards renewed sunshine, joy and progress.

With unbounded faith and courage Subhas Chandra Bose was now ready to ride the wave towards the fulfillment of his and his country’s destiny.

The Azad Hind government proclaimed by Netaji in Singapore on October 21, 1943, inculcated a spirit of unity among all Indians with a subtle sense of purpose. “Jai Hind” (“Victory to India”) was chosen from the very outset as the common greeting or salutation when Indians met one another. Hindustani, an admixture of Hindi and Urdu, written in the Roman script became the national language, but given the large south Indian presence translation into Tamil was provided at all public meetings. Even the proclamation of the Azad Hind government was read in Hindustani, Tamil and English. A springing tiger, evoking Tipu Sultan of Mysore’s gallant resistance against the British featured as the emblem on the tricolor shoulder-pieces on uniforms. Gandhi’s charkha continued to adorn the centre of the tri-color flags that INA soldiers were to carry in their march towards Delhi. Three Urdu words - ‘Itmad’ (‘Faith’), ‘Ittefaq’ (‘Unity’) and ‘Kurbani’ (‘Sacrifice’) - encapsulated the motto of the Azad Hind movement.

A simple Hindustani version of Rabindranath Tagore’s song ‘Jana Gana Mana Adhinayak Jai He’ became the national anthem. As a Bengali, Netaji went out of his way to ask Abid Hasan to get the national anthem rendered in the national language of India. The lyricist Mumtaz Hussain composed the Hindustani song in three verses rather than five and Ram Singh Thakur wrote down a band score based on the original tune. Mumtaz Hussain did not attempt a translation, but sought to capture the spirit of Tagore’s song. “Jaya he” naturally became “Jai Ho”, long before A.R. Rahman made “Jai Ho” famous the world over. The first verse that mentioned several place names bore a strong resemblance to the Bengali lyric. A comparison of the verses evoking unity gives a clear sense of the similarities and differences between the Bengali original and the Hindustani version.
Aharaha taba ahwan pracharita, shuni taba udar bani
Hindu Bouddha Sikh Jaina Parasik Mussalman christani
Purab Pashchim ashe taba singhasan-pashe
Premhar hoy gantha.

The Azad Hind version went thus:
Sab ke dil me preeti basaye teri mithi bani
Har sube ke rahne wale har mazhab ke prani
Sab bhed aur pharak mitake sab god mein teri ake
Gunthe prem ki maka.

In 1911 the British moved the capital from Calcutta to Delhi. Little did our colonial masters know that in the same year a song had found utterance in this city that would find acknowledgement in Delhi as the national anthem once the tricolor replaced the Union Jack. But the song did not travel along the Grand Trunk Road from Calcutta to Delhi. It traversed “Patan-Abhyudoy-Bandhur Pantha” – the entire global itinerary of India’s struggle for freedom – to eventually find its home in every Indian heart.

*
Netaji Birthday Speech - "Netaji was a Colossus"

Shri M.K. Narayanan, Governor of West Bengal

I feel privileged to be once again a part of the traditional Netaji Birthday Assembly organized under the auspices of the Netaji Research Bureau at Netaji Bhawan. I am also happy to be in the midst of such an enlightened audience, and welcome the presence of the Hon’ble Minister for Rural Development, Shri Jairam Ramesh. People are well aware of his intellectual brilliance – as also his intellectual flamboyance – and all of us admire this. I hesitate to use the word ‘young politician’ whose time has come. At the same time, I am one of those privy to Jairam’s secrets and must confess that whenever I require a favour from him I use the information judiciously. I have no intention, however, to say anything that might seem to detract from his brilliance. All I will say is that the Netaji Research Bureau could not have found a better person to speak on this occasion.

There is no Indian who is not aware of Netaji’s remarkable deeds, which were aimed at securing India’s independence. This is perhaps more true of people of my generation who used to devour the daily newspapers of those days to obtain news of the exploits of our national heroes like Subhas Chandra Bose, later to become more widely known as Netaji. Over the past year, living in Kolkata, I have gained many an intimate insight into Netaji’s personality, and how and why it is that he still remains such an iconic figure to generations that came after him. This is an age when icons are toppled from their pedestal, as often as one changes one’s shirt.

I can now sense the reasons why generations have worshipped him. It was not intellectual splendor, moral grandeur, formidable intrepidity, or for that matter his military strategy. It was because he was the archetypal patriot, totally dedicated to the cause of the country’s Independence. Our struggle for freedom produced many great patriots and distinguished leaders, several of whom underwent untold hardships and sufferings in the cause of freedom and independence. Even amongst them, Netaji was a Colossus, who in a brief span of time, came to be recognized as one of the greatest men this nation has produced. I am not a historian, nor for that matter do I have any pretensions to intellectual eminence. I cannot, therefore, comment on Netaji’s exact contribution to our liberation struggle and attainment of freedom, but I do
know sufficient history - and have read up on some of his exploits, not excluding launching a couple of books about facets of Netaji’s life – to have gained a deeper understanding of what this great patriot meant to our country.

I have benefited greatly in this from what is now seen as a definitive biography of Netaji, the “revered leader”, by Professor Sugata Bose, Gardiner Professor of History at Harvard University and grandnephew of Netaji. Several of those mentioned by Professor Sugata Bose as forming part of Netaji’s inner circle – S. A. Iyer, Abid Hasan, Janaki Thevar Athinahappan were household names for our generation. Some others like Lakshmi Sehgal and Prem Kumar Sehgal were real human beings whom I had occasion to meet in person, while Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon fired the imagination of India’s youth during our onward march towards independence.

Professor Sugata Bose mentions that he borrowed liberally from the archives of the Netaji Research Bureau (founded in 1957 by his father, and that he benefited considerably from the historical study and research conducted by the NRB on the Indian independence movement and liberation struggles in Asia. Ensuring a proper record of Netaji’s activities is a most valuable task undertaken by the NRB for more than half a Century. The nation is indeed grateful for the service it has rendered in this context.

I believe that Netaji’s example and the inspiration he provided is extremely relevant for our country in this day and age. His unflinching faith in his Motherland, his belief in the Nation’s destiny, the nature of the Mission that had to be fulfilled, his commitment to establish a society free from exploitation, inequality and injustice that would inspire generations to come, all need to be not merely extolled, but need to be implemented. Only then can our Nation achieve its full potential. We face many difficult situations today. Many of our traditional values are also being undermined. At such times, it is important to remember the basic ideals which inspired this great patriot, summed up in the INA’s Motto ‘Unity, Faith, Sacrifice.’

If Professor Sugata Bose will allow me, may I quote from Chapter 9 titled ‘A Life Immortal’, of his book on Netaji – His Majesty’s Opponent. He mentions that the poet among India’s nationalist leaders, Sarojini Naidu had said on Netaji’s death that “Millions of men and women in India felt a deep personal bereavement. His proud, importunate and violent spirit was a flaming sword forever unsheathed in defence of the land he worshipped with such surpassing devotion. A greater love have not man than this, that he lay down his life for his country and his people.” What more can be said.

Thank you.
Our Rashtrpati and History

Krishna Bose

Rashtrpati Shri Pranab Kumar Mukherjee,

A very warm welcome to you to Netaji Bhawan on behalf of all our members and friends who have gathered here. Our members are here and I can see some of the friends of India, friendly countries of India, their representatives are present here. They have come to greet you. I can see Bangladesh, Japan, America, China, may be I am missing some, they have all come to greet you. Mr. Governor, we are delighted that you are with us today on this very special occasion. You are always with us whenever we have asked you. Rashtrpati ji, well, as I address you as Rashtrpati, I have a sense of thrill. You and I have seen India, pre-independence India, when we did not have a Rashtrpati. But the President of the Indian National Congress was called Rashtrpati. So Pranab Babu, you are in the house of Rashtrpati Subhas Chandra Bose. You are welcome here very much. And, of course, after the Provisional Government of Free India, Azad Hind, was formed outside India, Subhas Chandra Bose did become the Head of State and the Supreme Commander of the Indian National Army.

So if I look at it from the historic point of view, I can say that he is your first predecessor. There are distinguished historians present here, I can see, I hope I am not wrong when I say this. You can see that you are related to this in so many ways. Now if we take that into account I must say after many, many, many years we have a Rashtrpati from our part of the country, that is, Bengal, and we are very proud of it. But I must say that Bengal was never, you know, Bengal never believed in narrow regionalism. Rabindranath Tagore, *apni hoyto mone korte parben Mahajati Sadane*, Rabindranath Tagore in Mahajati Sadan recited first the poem “Banglar bayu Banglar jal Punya Houk he Bhagaban”.

Then he said, “*Tar sange ei katha jog kora houk, Bangalir bani Bharater banike satya karuk, Bangalir bahu Bharater bahuke bol dik*”. Mr. President, we do hope that through you Rabindranath Tagore’s words will come true. Bengal’s strength will make India stronger and Bengal’s message will inspire the message of India. We are all very proud of you and welcome you to this house. Thank you. Jai Hind!

May I just give you a small memento from Netaji Bhawan – a photograph of Netaji as Rashtrpati and also a CD and a book.

May I now ask the President to please say a few words to us.
Rashtrapatī’s Homage

Shri Pranab Mukherjee,
President of India.

Professor Krishna Bose, His Excellency Governor,
Friends,

I have come here to pay my homage to the
great son of India as the President of the Republic.
I do consider that this is a place of pilgrimage for all
of us. In my Independence Day speech I just referred
to a couple of lines from the Presidential Address
he gave as President of the Indian National Congress.
As Krishna-di has very correctly pointed out till
1947 the President of the Indian National Congress was referred to by all, including media persons,
as Rashtrapatī. There was a short gap between independence and the adoption of new constitution,
a two and a half years’ gap, in that period perhaps two Congress Presidents were described as
Congress ‘Sabhapati’, not as ‘Rashtrapatī’. If I remember correctly, it was Pataḥbhi Sitaramayya who
became President in 1948, and in between there was an interim President, not a full-fledged
President. Then in Nasik Congress when Puroshottam Das Tandon became Congress President in
1950, by that time on 26th January 1950, we had converted ourselves into a Republic and the
President of the Republic was in place. That’s why when I was chosen as the President of the
Republic, a number of newspapers wrote with comments that Subhas Chandra was the last
Rashtrapatī from Bengal. He was Rashtrapatī in his capacity as President of Indian National Congress
and thereafter another Bengali has become the Rashtrapatī as per the Constitution of India.

It is needless to say much before this distinguished gathering about the contribution of this
great colossus to India’s freedom movement, to our liberation. His grandson Sugata’s book His
Majesty’s Opponent, I received from him the first copy, Krishnadi I am grateful to you, you have
given me another copy because I was fascinated while reading it. So almost in two nights I completed
reading that book and, thereafter, I thought that I should share the book with someone and I gave
it to Soniaji. So my library will be enriched by the copy, which you are giving to me.
In short, in 1938 he said as the President of Indian National Congress in his presidential address
that we must abolish poverty. India must be free from the worst abuse of human rights that is
poverty. He also visualized that after getting freedom from colonial rule through its own innovative
method, India can be the model for all the countries liberated from colonial rule. All these are part
of history - his contributions. Everybody knows that the very fundamentals of our Constitution,
some of the provisions, including directive principles are substantially based on the instructions
which as Congress President Subhas Chandra gave to the Congress premiers in those days. In different provinces Congress formed the government after the 1935 Act, the general elections of 1937. In a number of provinces to the Congress premiers - that was the phrase which was used in those days - chief minister was not known - they were called as premier - he said how should they conduct the constitution within the limited powers which they had. That has become the core of our directive principles, which they incorporated later on in our constitution. I have come here to pay my homage to this great son who continues to be the source of constant inspiration to the million upon million people who are working hard to ensure the socio-economic transformation to make the India for which he dreamt, for which many of our leaders and freedom fighters dreamt, a reality. For those who are working tirelessly day in and day out he will continue to be the constant source of inspiration, Netaji will continue to be the constant source of inspiration to all of them. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.
Sarat Chandra Bose Memorial Lecture 2012
‘Transforming Bangladesh-India Relations’
- Gowher Rizvi

It is indeed a privilege to deliver the Sarat Bose Lecture for 2012. I am most grateful to the Chairperson of the Council and the Trustees of Netaji Research Bureau for inviting me and for their immense hospitality and kindness. I am particularly elated, as indeed overwhelmed, to stand here in the presence of Shrimati Krishna Bose one of the most remarkable persons of our time. Khristiona-di has rolled many lives into one. She is a distinguished teacher, academic, and the author of some of the most celebrated historical studies both in Bangla and in English; she has been elected several times as member of parliament, has been the chair of the parliamentary standing committee on foreign relation; she is a tireless and dedicated social activist associated with all good causes; and an institution buikker of which the Bureau is the finest testimony. I also have a very special and personal connection with Krishna-di. She is the niece of the celebrated Niraud Chaudhuri who was neighbor, mentor and my loco parentis at Oxford for nearly 25 years.

My bonds with Krishna-di have been further sanctified by my relationship with her three distinguished children. I have known Sugata, who is gracing the occasion here today, since his graduate days in Cambridge UK, and later I had the good fortune of being with him at Harvard for nearly 10 years. He is the pride of Bengal and India; easily one of the most remarkable historians of our time; a star that now shines with distinction amongst many luminaries in the Cambridge sky; and he is adored and admired by colleagues and students alike for his erudition, dedication and commitment to scholarship. But much more than anything Sugata is always a gentleman, urbane, refined and sophisticated; and whose humanity exemplifies the best in human kind; and along with Professor Amartya Sen he is the best face of South Asia around the world. Sugata, allow me to salute you for all that you have done, and are doing, for generations of South Asian students and scholars.

I have also been fortunate to count amongst my friends Sarmila and Sumanta. Sumanta is young but has already established himself as one of the brightest professors of politics at the London School of Economics; and like his older brother is a formidable scholar and has a list of publications that should make any one proud. Sumanta arrived at the LSE after I left Oxford and
my personal interactions with him have been fewer, but I am an avid reader of his work and remain in complete awe of his scholarship.

And Sarmila I got to know when I was at the Ford Foundation in Delhi and have kept up with her though our changing incarnations and in different countries. I have an enormous admiration for her skill as a writer and commentator on national and regional affairs. Her writings confirm that pen is more powerful than the sword. I have disagreed with thrust of her recent book, Dead Reckoning: Memories of the 1971 Bangladesh War but that has not diminished my admiration for her courage, passion and commitment. Few families can lay claim to so much distinction or record of public service over so many generations.

Let me now turn to the theme of my lecture today, “Transforming Bangladesh-India Relations”, which in many ways is intricately linked to the vision of the person we are honoring here today – Sarat Chandra Bose. In 1946-47 when the Indian subcontinent was rife with sectarian hatred and violence; and at a time when the Hindus and the Muslims were killing each other to demonstrate that they could not live together in a united homeland, the leaders of all the major parties had reconciled to the Partition of India as the only way out. Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhai Patel and Abul Kalam Azad had been forced to swallow Jinnah’s two-nation theory and were reconciled to the division of the country along sectarian lines. The voice of sanity came from Bengal. Sarat Bose, along with Husseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, Abul Hashim and Kiron Shankar Ray realized the division of India along religious lines was sheer madness that would not solve the sectarian problem but merely elevate an inter-communal rivalry into inter-state conflict. If Bengal were partitioned, West Bengal would be reduced to a third of its original size and more than half the Hindus would still remain in east Bengal. East Bengal would be shorn off from its port of Calcutta and much of its industry and thereby reduced east to becoming the agrarian hinterland of west Bengal. Sarat Bose and Suhrawardy advocated for an independent united Bengal where Hindus and Muslims could live together in shared prosperity, peace and tranquility. In the midst of madness Sarat Bose became a beacon for inter-communal harmony. He saw “no distinction between Hindu and Muslim, between one community and another, between one class and another, between one caste and another, between one creed and another”. And Suhrawardy chimed in with Bose: “Undivided Bengal would be a great country, the richest and most prosperous in India, capable of giving to its people a high standard of living, where a great people will be able to rise to the fullest height of their stature”. Bose, together with young Hashim, spelt out the concept of an united independent Bengal more fully: it would be a “free state and would decide for itself its relations to the rest of India.... there would be joint electorate .... coalition ministry would be formed with equal number of Hindus and Muslims and ... there would be equality of in the services; ... and constituent assembly of 30 (16 Muslims and 14 Hindus).”[p.580]. Jinnah who never cared much for the Bengalis seemed amenable to the proposition; but Gandhi after initially supporting the idea was dissuaded against it by
G.D. Birla who feared for the Marwari interests in a Muslim majority state. And before Bose, Suhrawardy and Hashim could mobilize popular opinion in support of independent Bengal, Mountbatten partitioned India. An independent Bengal that was denied in 1947 became a reality in 1971, albeit in a somewhat different shape. Under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Bangladesh emerged as an independent state. The lecture today is my humble tribute to the memory of a great visionary, Sarat Bose.

Bangladesh and India are not only neighbors but also natural allies. We are not just physically bound together by a shared boundary but our proximity is reinforced by a shared history, language and culture. Over centuries we have lived side by side in peace and harmony; and our philosophy, music and architecture have flowered and been shaped by the fusion of Indo-Persian civilization. Our mystics, saints and Sufis have infused spirituality into our religions and thus freed us from its bigotry and dogmatic sterility. They have taught us that the pursuit of the Truth is universal and that different paths lead to the same Truth. Our cuisine, sartorial preferences, folklore and traditions are alike; and we have common heroes and villains. Both societies are democratic, secular and plural; they are multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-religious; and while each community practices its own religion, the festivities are common and shared by all.

Our bonds were further strengthened by the experience of our liberation war when ten million Bengalis found shelter in India; and the blood of the martyrs further sanctified the ties - Indian soldiers fought and died with our freedom fighters. And after liberation, our links were revitalized by our shared mores and values; we have the same developmental hopes and aspirations; and we both committed to a peaceful region through cooperative actions.

Immediately after our liberation the promise of partnership with India bore fruit. India withdrew its army promptly at the request of Bangabandhu and it also provided the much needed economic assistance and diplomatic support to help war-torn Bangladesh to its feet. It also seemed that many of the disputes with India, that Bangladesh had inherited from Pakistan, including disputes over boundaries and Farraka, would be resolved quickly. Road, rail and water transport that had been disrupted in 1965 would restored. Such was the goodwill and cordiality between Bangabandhu and Srimati Indira Gandhi that it seemed all the outstanding issues would be resolved. But in August 1975 Bangabandhu was assassinated and Bangladesh-India relations became one of the first casualties of the ensuing military rule in Bangladesh. The reason for the deterioration of relationship between the two countries had less to do with substantive issues but got entangled in Bangladesh domestic political rivalry. Anti-Indianism provided the glue that would bind together all the politicians and political parties who were against Bangabandhu.

To bolster his tottering military regime, Major General Zia Rahman forged an alliance of the anti-Awami League forces. Zia’s coalition consisted of parties and leaders who had suffered electoral defeat in the general election of 1970 and those who were for various reasons uncomfortable with
the Awami League. It included razakars and collaborators who were opposed to Bangladesh, those who had aided and abetted the Pakistani invaders, had perpetrated genocide against the Bengalis. This motley group was glued together by its suspicions of India, opposition to secularism and a veiled desire to forge closer ties to Pakistan. This hostility and suspicion characterized all the governments between 1975 and 2006 with a brief exception of the Awami League government from 1996 to 2001. The relationship with India deteriorated because of domestic political calculations and deliberate neglect and not because of substantive issues or disputes over national interest.

The anti-Indian political expedience of the military ruling elite would not have translated into popular support and suspicion of India but for India's misplaced decision to divert Ganga waters without an agreement with Bangladesh. The anti-Indian sentiments found substance when the livelihood of the farmers dependent on Ganga was threatened by the scarcity of irrigation water. Successive governments used Farakka to fan anti-Indian sentiments and made India a potent issue in domestic politics to mobilize votes. It was not until 1996 that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was able to secure an equitable sharing of water through the Ganga water treaty and removed a genuine source of discord with India. But before she could address other issues the Awami League was voted out of power in 2001. With the return of BNP government to power the relations with India deteriorated dramatically so much so that many observers began to see Bangladesh as a source of greater threat than Pakistan.

In 2009 Sheikh Hasina returned to power and improvement of relations with India loomed large at the top of her agenda. The alignment in the constellation also seemed to augur well for Bangladesh-India relations. The Awami League and its allies not only returned to power but came with a thumping two-thirds majority in parliament. And shortly afterwards in India the Congress led by Sonia Gandhi returned to power with an enhanced mandate. The Hasina-Manmohan leadership is reminiscent of the Mujib-Indira era (1972-75). The two parties, Awami League in Bangladesh and the Congress Party India were both in power as in 1972; two parties had fought together in the Bangladesh war of liberation – together they had suffered tribulations and shared triumphs; and the personal tragedies and the brutal experience of assassinations of the members of the two star-crossed families have bonded Hasina and Sonia through shared grief and intimate personal losses. The Bangladesh-India summit in January 2010 turned into a love-fest and the outcomes were historic. The two prime ministers rejected the conventional wisdom of confidence building, that is, moving one step at a time and plucking the low-hanging fruits first. The establishment on both sides steeped in inherited wisdom of diplomacy advocated addressing the problems sequentially, postponing the complicated problems to a later stage, and only making concession reciprocally. The two leaders showed great vision and took unusual political risk by investing in the future of the people and the region rather than focusing on immediate gains and parochial interests. Instead they decided to address all issues across the board bedeviling the relationship between the two
neighbors. It was a courageous decision. Hasina-Manmohan had fixed their gaze on the stars but stood solidly on terra firma.

The two leaders stood diplomacy upside down on its head. They laid down the guiding principles for the resolution of the disputes: the interests of the people would trump other considerations, to shun market place bargaining of give and take or demand reciprocity; to move away from zero sum game mentality and instead solve problems collaboratively; to avoid wasting time on negotiating trivialities but find solutions in a time-bound frame. The irritants and baggage of the past had to be swept aside so that a new era of cooperation and development could be ushered in. The leaders took unusual risk by investing in the future of the region and without any immediate compensating return. The vision was bold and the result is transformative. Almost every dimension of Bangladesh-Indian relations now bears the imprint of the new vision.

Bangladesh and India have both been victims of terrorism. Our sufferings started in 1975 with the assassination of Bangabandhu and much of his family, the murder of the four national leaders in prison, the grenade attack on the Awami League leadership, the al-Qaeda-like coordinated bomb attacks on district headquarters and the murder of innumerable political leaders, journalists, and civil society workers. Those killed included Ivy Rahman, the wife of our current President, Mr. SAMS Kibria the former finance minister and Mr. Ahsanullah Master, a sitting MP. Bangladesh became the stamping ground for foreign and domestic terrorists who inflicted numerous casualties in both Bangladesh and India. Both countries suffered and our democracy, secular and plural institutions were under threat. Not surprising the question of security loomed large in the minds of the two leaders. Sheikh Hasina, who had made fighting terrorism an electoral commitment, showed remarkable courage and confronted the terrorists. The BNP government had either deliberately allowed or turned a blind eye to the training camps and terrorists sanctuaries located in Bangladesh. The AL government took a principled but courageous decision to close the camps and forced the foreign terrorists to leave the country. India has reciprocated and taken actions to curb Bangladeshi terrorists and criminals operating from India against Bangladesh. Sheikh Hasina has taken an enormous personal and political risk. The tackling of the security issues paved the way for the resolution of other issues.

One of the most complicated issue pertained to what is termed as the land boundary disputes. This has four elements: about 6 kilometers of disputed boundary that had remained un-delineated since 1947; the access for Bangladesh through the so-called Indian ‘tin bigha’ corridor; the adversely possessed land (APL); and the Indian enclaves in Bangladesh and vice versa. These issues had defied resolution for over 60 years and caused numerous conflicts and loss of lives. The seemingly intractable problems were not only resolved but what is remarkable that despite the enormity and complexity of the issues not a single person – Bangladeshi or Indian – was forced to abandon his/her home, land or livelihood; and in the enclaves no one has been forced to move or stay against his/her will.
This is an impressive achievement by any standard and a testimony of the wisdom of the two leaders. The failure of the Indian parliament to ratify the agreement more than a year after it was signed is understandably causing disquiet in Bangladesh. While we have full confidence that will uphold its commitment and there is every reason to be confident that it be done soon, it has hurt Sheikh Hasina’s government.

A related issue of great importance is the killings on Bangladesh-India borders. In some years the numbers killed have exceeded hundreds. Illegal border crossings and trade and drug smuggling are daily occurrences and the cause of much of the incidents. ‘One person killed is too many’, Sheikh Hasina rightly argued, and demanded ‘zero killing’ by re-conceptualizing borders from ‘a place where to two countries separate into a place where to two countries meet’. The two countries have set up designated areas for border trade and the BGB-BSF commanders meet regularly to resolve issues, share intelligence and have agreed upon coordinated border management. The district magistrates and police superintendents in the border districts will hold similar meetings with their counterparts. The numbers killed in 2011 dropped to less than 40 from over 350 in 2006 (the last year of BNP government). Our objective of ‘zero killing’ has not yet been realized and the loss of lives continues to trouble us all. The government is not satisfied with the downward trend in the numbers killed and is striving to achieve our goal so that not a single life is lost in border killings. To achieve complete elimination of border killings we will need to think outside the box and conventional parameters. Most of the killings results from illegal cattle trade – nearly 1.2 million cattle heads cross the borders. One solution would be to allow cattle to be traded in the border markets or haats.

The adverse balance of trade with India has long plagued the relationship between the two neighbors. Even though most economists will argue that trading relations are complex and trade balance must be viewed in totality, we have nonetheless tried to tackle the question of trade in two ways. In a historic change of policy, India has acceded to our demand for duty free access for our exports to India. In the first twelve months our export increased by over 100 percent and is still increasing. At the same time we have sought further balance our trade by encouraging Indians to invest in Bangladesh for export to India. It is a landmark achievement for Bangladesh to secure non-reciprocal free trade with India. There is no duty or quota on our exports and we have an unfettered access to a market of 1.2 billion people. At the same time the abundance of cheap labor, joint ventures and direct investment opportunities for Indians in Bangladesh is enormous.

The benefits of improved bilateral relations are manifesting in a number of ways. Bangladesh’s aspirations to reach double-digit growth rate is being held back because of the shortage of power. Taking advantage of the goodwill and trust that has been created between the two countries, Sheikh Hasina has successfully persuaded India to sell 500 megawatts of electricity to Bangladesh even though India itself suffers from power shortage. The construction of power grid in Bangladesh has
of hydroelectric power plants being planned in the northeastern states of India. And by linking the
Bangladesh power grid to that of India, we are now in a position to purchase power from the Indian
power market. It is a true win-win situation. It will help Bangladesh to meet its power demand and
at the same time enable India to evacuate huge amounts of hydroelectric power in the northeast
through Bangladesh. These are achievements that few could have imagined just four years ago. What
we are witnessing is a quiet revolution in sub-regional cooperation that is opening up numerous
other possibilities.

Another major thrust of Bangladesh’s sub-regional aspiration is born out of its location as
the pivot and hub of connectivity in the region. Bangladesh straddles south and Southeast Asia and
eastern and northeastern India. It helps to cut the distance between the port of Kolkata and the
seven northeastern states by about two-thirds. It provides easy access to the sea for landlocked
Bhutan and Nepal. Bangladesh is a part of the Asian highway and trans-Asia railway. Chittagong
also offers the nearest port to Chinese provinces adjacent to Nepal and Myanmar. Bangladesh’s
pivotal position is not only confined to road, rail and water communication. It is also central to the
power-grid connection between power rich northeastern states of India, Bhutan and Nepal and
the gas pipeline from Myanmar to India. Likewise Bangladesh’s ability to tap hydroelectric power
of Nepal and Bhutan is dependent on access through India. The connectivity interdependence creates
a completely win-win scenario.

A major impediment preventing fuller realization of the potentials of the region is the lack of
connectivity – rail, road and waterways – is holding back enormous possibilities of economic
cooperation between the countries. Historically India and Bangladesh had an integrated
communications network. Some of this eroded through neglect after the Partition of India; and
others ground to halt after the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war. The Inland Water Transport and Trade
Agreement of 1972 began the restoration of communication between the two countries but there
was little progress after Bangabandhu’s assassination in 1975. Sheikh Hasina understood the
importance of connectivity for the development and prosperity of Bangladesh and boldly signed the
framework agreement for cooperation between India and Bangladesh in 2011. This is a landmark
document that provides a comprehensive vision and mechanism for cooperation in all areas of
mutual interests. But given the state of our transport infrastructure – roads, rail and waterways –
only a limited number of routes have been opened so far. There is bound to be time lag between
our vision and its implementation. Our transport infrastructure is underdeveloped and can only
take on a modest amount of extra traffic. However to improve our infrastructure we will need to
invest massively – according one estimate about 15 billion US dollars – and to secure that investment
we will need to increase the use of our facilities by India and other neighbors. This is challenge
that will call for imaginative solutions.
made good progress and electricity will start running in May of next year. Perhaps even more significantly there is a huge opportunity for equity participation and share of power in a number

The critics of the government blind to the advantages of connectivity for Bangladesh have attacked our policy as ‘a sell out to India’. However now that our leader of opposition Begum Khaleda Zia has admitted her past mistake and accepted the necessity of connectivity with India, we can move forward more smoothly. Connectivity is neither a favor that one gives nor a leverage that one country uses against another. It is based on recognition of interdependence and a hard-nosed calculation of our enlightened self-interest. The benefits to Bangladesh are overwhelming. To put it bluntly connectivity is a treasure trove in the same way that Suez is to Egypt and the Canal is to Panama. And it will help to bring investment for building our infrastructure. The claims that India will get a free ride or that Bangladesh will not charge any fees or charges for use of our transit facilities is politically-motivated disinformation without basis. Bangladesh will determine its own fees and charges that it deems fit. It is entirely within Bangladesh’s jurisdiction and it does not have to negotiate these rates with any other country. The reality is that Bangladesh can charge whatever the market will bear. The only imponderable is what the market will bear.

The current state of transport infrastructure in Bangladesh is much too limited and inadequate for India to use the transit facilities. Bangladesh’s ability to upgrade the infrastructure is fairly limited and it can be best done cooperatively by the two governments or through public-private partnership with Indian participation.

Two radical shifts in Indian policy, with enormously positive consequences for both countries, that were announced during Dr. Manmohan Singh’s visit appear to have gone unnoticed. For the first time in our history India and Bangladesh have agreed to a basin-wide management of all the shared rivers. This was a longstanding demand of Bangladesh; and it has elevated water resources augmentation and management to a completely new level. In another far reaching change, India has for the first time agreed to trilateral cooperation – Bangladesh-India-Bhutan and Bangladesh-India-Nepal – that has already opened up new vistas for cooperation in joint power projects, water resources sharing and overland transport and power grids. We are also exploring a similar tripartite arrangement with Myanmar. This is probably one of the most significant developments in Indo-Bangladesh relations but ironically the analysts on both sides have all but ignored it. Finally, it would be ungracious not to acknowledge India’s generosity that has characterized the improved relations between the countries. Reflecting India’s position as a rising economic power superpower and its determination to assist Bangladesh’s developmental aspirations India has offered one billion dollar in soft loan to Bangladesh. It is the largest such loan that India has ever given to any country. It is also the largest non-project specific loan that Bangladesh has ever obtained. It is an untied loan for use by Bangladesh according to its own priorities. Not more than 70 percent of the procurement has to be sourced from India. The loan was not only made on terms comparable
to IDA but $200 million dollars of the loan has already been converted to grant.

One cloud hangs over our bilateral relations. The Prime Minister of Bangladesh had made
the resolution of Teesta waters dispute as her priority. After years of neglect and absence of progress
the Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) and ministerial level meetings have resumed. We have arrived
on a settlement of water sharing based on an equitable and sustainable basis that meets the legitimate
demands and needs of both countries. Indeed the agreement has already been initialed by the
officials of the two countries. However the failure to sign the Teesta agreement during Prime
Minister Manmohan Singh’s visit has been a disappointment to both sides. Although the Indian
Prime Minister has taken full responsibility for the delay in completing the Teesta agreement and
has repeatedly reiterated his commitment to sign the treaty, the disappointment in Bangladesh is
intense and threatens to obscure many spectacular gains for Bangladesh. The negative impact of
the failure to complete the Teesta agreement goes well beyond the sharing of the water. It has
reignited popular suspicions against India, it has caused a backlash against the Hasina government,
has slowed down the progress of connectivity, and is holding back promising developments in power
and water cooperation in the northeast. The cost of missed opportunities and future consequences
are too frightening to imagine. Even though we remain confident it would be foolhardy to say when
the agreement will be signed. However hope springs eternal and we remain confident that the
right thing will be done.

Despite the tyranny of history and seemingly irreolvable complications of many issues, Sheikh
Hasina opened up avenues for cooperation and development that was unimaginable four short
years ago. At home, despite earlier attacks on her policy, Sheikh Hasina has secured a bipartisan
consensus for her India policy. The opposition leader Khaleda Zia has eschewed her hostility to
India, acknowledged her mistake and implicitly endorsed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s India
policy and sub-regional connectivity. There still remains much to be done but Sheikh Hasina has
cleared the deck of unresolved issues and irritants, wiped clean the baggage of the past so that we
can move forward towards greater sub-regional cooperation, and laid out the vision and a blue
print for a peaceful and prosperous Bangladesh living in harmony with all its neighbors. The
achievement of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s government in advancing Bangladesh’s national
interests by forging cooperative relations with India is by any standard a remarkable feat. However
there remains much more to be done but the window of opportunity is becoming smaller. This is
not a time for dithering or being cautious but a moment for action and move forward with the
implementation of the vision. If we lose this moment we cannot be sure when another such
auspicious alignment of stars will happen again.
"In the name of God, in the name of bygone generations who have welded the Indian people into one nation, and in the name of the dead heroes who have bequeathed to us a tradition of heroism and self-sacrifice - we call upon the Indian people to rally round our banner and strike for India's freedom." - Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, 1943.