



Institute of Regional Studies

Webinar on Pakistan's Reengagement with Bangladesh: Expectations and Challenges

Future is more glorious than the past

Islamabad's peace initiative was a welcoming development that needs to be sustained. Both Dhaka and Islamabad must overcome historical legacy and move forward with a mission of peace in the region. These were the views expressed by the key speakers of a webinar on 'Pakistan's engagement with Bangladesh: Challenges and Expectations' organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) here on Thursday.



Prof. Dr. Syed Riffat Hussain, Professor from the National University Sciences and Technology (NUST) called for a truth and reconciliation commission to probe 1971 tragedy besides offering apology to end bitter legacy between the two countries. Prime Minister Imran Khan's 15 minutes call to his Bangladeshi counterpart is indeed an opportunity for both countries to give a refreshing start of bilateral relations. There is lot of potential in the trade sector that can surely help reduce Dhaka's dependency on the New Delhi, he stressed. Both states being a part of UN, SAARC, OIC and other international organization can work together for the betterment of their people, he added.

Mr. Mukhlesur Rahman Chowdhury, former Minister and author from Bangladesh appreciated the initiative taken by the both states. He especially thanked Prime Khan Imran Khan as his forward-looking approach is based on mutual trust and respect of each other sovereignty. This is high time, for both Islamabad and Dhaka to review their traditional stances as there are number of commonalities between them such as culture and religion to bring them closer, he stressed. Bangladesh resisted Indian opposition and joined One Belt and One Road initiative in which Pakistan is already a part. This is a major development that need to be further exploit, he added.



Prof. Shahab Enam Khan from Bangladesh dispelled the impression that Liberation War was Hindu dominated as always portrayed. New Delhi intervened just 13 days before the victory. It was not a win-win situation for both India and Bangladesh as the former stepped in for her own interests, he said. Prof. Khan called for a national apology rather than political. He urged Pakistanis to visit Dhaka to learn social, political, religious and economic Bangladesh as the Dhaka is entirely different from what people of Pakistan learn through the media, he added. Prof. Khan said that Bangladesh did not show interest in the Kashmir as New Delhi always stressed it a bilateral issue between Pakistan and India. Dhaka did not want to be a party into the conflict as it values its relations with all neighboring states of the region, he added.

Dr. Moonis Ahmar, a meritorious Professor of International Relations at the University of Karachi, was of the view that there is a little awareness in Pakistan about historical legacy with the Bangladesh. Even today, legacy is still alive in Bangladesh, he said. Apart, there are number of issues that needed to be dealt seriously to go ahead with the Bangladesh. For instance, several trade agreements were signed during Gen. Mushraf tenure but none of them could be functioned because of lack of will from both sides. Vibrant trade relations is the key to normalize of relations between the two states, he stressed.





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All the participants and key speakers appreciated Institute of Regional Studies and its team for organizing such a timely webinar to discuss Islamabad-Dhaka relations and hoped that this exercise would further generate a debate on this important issue at the national level in both states.