

India assures Bangladesh all help to repatriate Rohingya refugees

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NEWDELHI: India on Friday assured Bangladesh of its continued support for the speedy and sustainable return of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar even as the two countries agreed to develop a new roadmap for bilateral cooperation. During a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday, visiting Bangladesh foreign minister AK Abdul Momen had sought India's backing for the early repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya who had sought refuge in his country after escaping a military crackdown in Myanmar.

The matter figured in Friday's meeting of the India-Bangladesh Joint Consultative Commission, and external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj assured Momen of "India's continued support for safe, speedy and sustainable return of the displaced persons to Myanmar", a joint press release said. Swaraj appreciated Bangladesh's humanitarian gesture in supporting the displaced people from Rakhine region of Myanmar, while Momen expressed his country's gratitude for humanitarian aid provided by India in four tranches since September 2017 to help the Rohingya.

The two ministers also "agreed on the need to expedite the safe and sustainable repatriation" of the Rohingya, the statement said.

Swaraj and Momen tasked officials to forge a roadmap for bilateral cooperation to "make the partnership irreversible". These efforts should be enhanced in view of the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's liberation.

Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority and India's Hiranandani Group signed a MoU to facilitate investments in an India-specific economic zone on 110 acres near Mongla port. This will be Bangladesh's first country-specific economic zone.

Three other MoUs and agreements were inked on the training of 1,800 Bangladesh civil servants, cooperation in medicinal plants and cooperation between Bangladesh's Anti-Corruption Commission and India's CBI.