

GS Paper 2
International Relations

India and its Neighbourhood

Indo Bangladesh Relations

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Context/ Why in news?

March 2023---Inauguration of **India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline (IBFP)**. The pipeline is running from Siliguri (India) to Parbatipur (Bangladesh) and is first cross border energy pipeline between India and Bangladesh. However, this is the second cross-border energy pipeline between India and its neighbours. In 2019, India-Nepal opened South Asia's first cross-border oil pipeline i.e., Motihari (Bohar)- Amlekhgunj (Nepal) oil pipeline.

September

~~**January**~~ **2023**---India, which holds the G20 Presidency this year, is following the convention of inviting non-member countries and international organisations to the summit and Bangladesh is the only South Asian country to have a place on India's guest list.

13th January 2023--Prime Minister of India flagged off the world's longest river cruise, **MV** Ganga Vilas in Varanasi. The cruise was scheduled to travel through 27 river systems in five Indian states and Bangladesh. This has put India and Bangladesh on the global river cruise map, opening up a new horizon and vertical for tourism and freight carriage in the Indian subcontinent.

September 2022-- Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina visited India.

3 Feb 2022: Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb laid the foundation stone for Kamalpur-Kurmaghat **border haat** between India and Bangladesh. (in Tripura)

December 15-17 2021: President Ramnath Kovind paid a State visit to attend Bangladesh's 50th Vijay Dibos.

Year 2021- 50 years of the establishment of Indo Bangladesh diplomatic ties.

26 to 27 March 2021: PM Modi, paid a State visit to Bangladesh to join the celebrations of the Golden Jubilee of the Independence of Bangladesh, the Birth Centenary of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and 50 years of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Bangladesh.(Triveni of events)

Decoding Bangladesh's Socio Political fabric

- **Duality of heritage**
- **Two streams of nationhood**
- **Coherent country** (Means people are homogeneous to Indian people)
- **Two major political parties:**
 - ✓ The Awami League led by Sheikh Hasina and
 - ✓ The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) headed by Begum Khaleda Zia

Trajectory of Indo Bangladesh relations



Prime Minister Narendra Modi's historic visit to Bangladesh for "triple celebrations" in March 2021 has ushered in a new **"Sonali Adhyay"** (golden chapter) in **multi-faceted strategic partnership** between the two South Asian neighbours.

- **1971-74:** Friendly relationship

(In 1975 Sheikh Mujibur Rehman got assassinated)

- **1974-2009:** Relationship became challenging

- **2009 onwards:** New Bonhomie (from here Awami League was in power)

- **Political transition in Bangladesh**

- ✓ Bangladesh was a part of Pakistan from 1947 to 1971.
- ✓ It consisted of the partitioned areas of Bengal and Assam from British India.
- ✓ The people of this region resented the domination of western Pakistan and the imposition of the Urdu language.
- ✓ Soon after the partition, they began protests against the unfair treatment meted out to the Bengali culture and language. They also demanded fair representation in administration and a fair share in political power. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman led the popular struggle against West Pakistani domination. He demanded autonomy for the eastern region.
- ✓ In the 1970 elections in the then Pakistan, the Awami League led by Sheikh Mujib won all the seats in East Pakistan and secured a majority in the proposed constituent assembly for the whole of Pakistan.

- ✓ But the government dominated by the West Pakistani leadership refused to convene the assembly. Sheikh Mujib was arrested.
- ✓ Under the military rule of General Yahya Khan, the Pakistani army tried to suppress the mass movement of the Bengali people.
- ✓ Thousands were killed by the Pakistan army.
- ✓ This led to a large scale migration into India, creating a huge refugee problem for India.
- ✓ The government of India supported the demand of the people of East Pakistan for their independence and helped them financially and militarily.
- ✓ This resulted in a war between India and Pakistan in December 1971 that ended in the surrender of the Pakistani forces in East Pakistan and the formation of Bangladesh as an independent country. Bangladesh drafted its constitution declaring faith in secularism, democracy and socialism.

- ✓ However, in 1975 Sheikh Mujib got the constitution amended to shift from the parliamentary to presidential form of government. He also abolished all parties except his own, the Awami League. This led to conflicts and tensions.
- ✓ In a dramatic and tragic development, he was assassinated in a military uprising in August 1975.
- ✓ The new military ruler, Ziaur Rahman, formed his own Bangladesh National Party and won elections in 1979.
- ✓ He was assassinated and another military takeover followed under the leadership of Lt Gen H. M. Ershad.
- ✓ The people of Bangladesh soon rose in support of the demand for democracy. Students were in the forefront. Ershad was forced to allow political activity on a limited scale. He was later elected as President for five years. Mass public protests made Ershad step down in 1990.

- ✓ Elections were held in 1991. Since then representative democracy based on multi-party elections has been working in Bangladesh.
- ✓ 1991–1996: Khaleda Zia of BNP served as PM.
- ✓ 1996–2001: Sheikh Hasina came into power.
- ✓ 2001–2006: Khaleda Zia won a second term as prime minister.
- ✓ 2006–2008: Caretaker government under Fakhruddin Ahmed.
- ✓ 2009–present: Sheikh Hasina resumed the office as PM.
- ✓ 7th January 2024---Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina won the re-election for a fifth term in the national election.

Why is Bangladesh important for India?

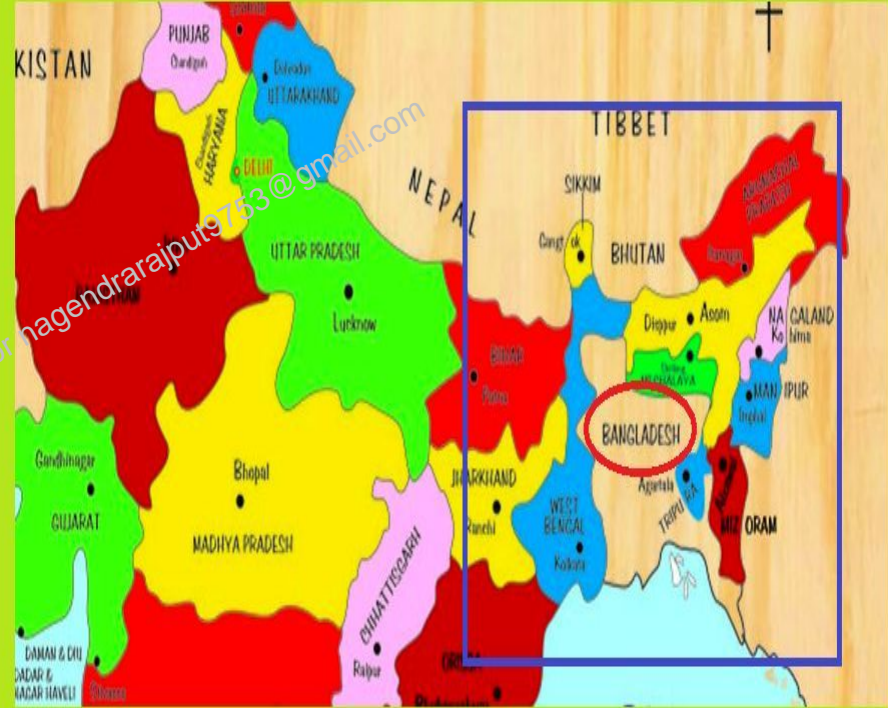
1) Location

- India and Bangladesh share a 4,096 km land boundary covering West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya and Mizoram.

2) Strategic importance

3) Important actor in India Act East policy.

Indian States sharing border with Bangladesh



4) Important role in sub regional Connectivity

5) Grid development of sub region

6) Security issues

7) Partners in various multi lateral platforms



8) Bangladesh is one of the fastest growing economy.

9) Water sharing

10) Socio cultural connects

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New Trends in India-Bangladesh Ties

Areas of cooperation

1) Border Management

(i) Land Boundary Agreement (LBA)

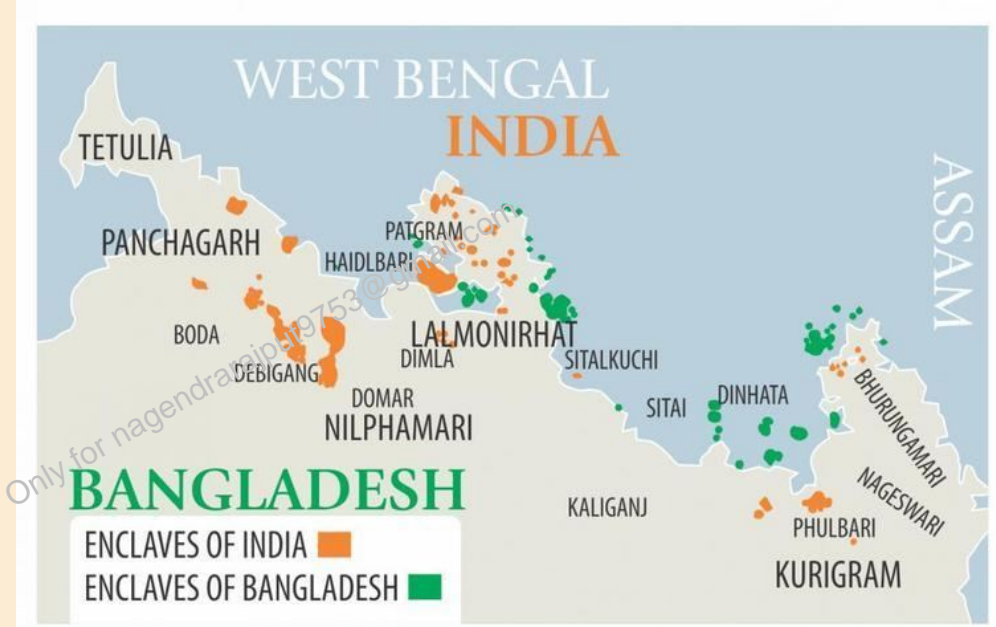
- India and Bangladesh share 4096.7 km. of border, which is the longest land boundary that India shares with any of its neighbours.
- **Why is it in News ?**
- ✓ **1st August 2022---8th anniversary of India-Bangladesh land boundary agreement celebrated.**
- ✓ **Nov 2021---Union Home Minister has said that the Northeast States will be linked by road and railway to Bangladesh in a year or two under the historic Land Boundary Agreement (LBA).**

- **Background**

- ✓ Indira-Mujib pact of 1972
- ✓ 1974
- ✓ The 119th Amendment Bill 2013
- ✓ 2015

- Envisages a transfer of 111 Indian enclaves to Bangladesh in return for 51 enclaves to India.

- **Implications**



(ii) Security cooperation

(iii) Conversion of International Boundary along Kuhsiyara river into a fixed boundary

(iv) Facilitation of the border fencing



(2) Cooperation in Connectivity

(i) Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA)

- **Why in News** (March 2021)

World Bank report named **“Connecting to Thrive: Challenges and Opportunities of Transport Integration in Eastern South Asia”** stated that seamless transport connectivity between India and Bangladesh has the potential to increase national income by as much as 17% in Bangladesh and 8% in India.

BANGLADESH - BHUTAN - INDIA - NEPAL CORRIDOR



- **About BBIN**

- ✓ Signed on 15th June 2015 in Thimphu, Bhutan.
- ✓ Facilitate the unrestricted cross-border movement of cargo, passenger, and personal vehicles between BBIN countries.
- ✓ Advantages:

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(ii) Protocol on land water transit and trade (PIWTT)

- **Why in News (May 2020)**

- ✓ Second Addendum to the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade was signed.
 - First signed in 1972.
 - Last renewed in 2015 for five years with a provision for its automatic renewal for a further period of five years.
- 50:50 cargo sharing by Indian and Bangladeshi vessels is permitted.
- **Includes new Indo Bangladesh Protocol (IBP) routes(increased from 8 to 10)**
- ✓ Inclusion of Sonamura-Daudkandi stretch of Gumti river.
- ✓ Operationalization of Rajshahi-Dhulian-Rajshahi Route and its extension up to Aricha, Bangladesh

- **Declaration of new Ports of Call**

- ✓ A port of call is an intermediate port.
- ✓ There were six Ports of Call each in India and Bangladesh under the Protocol.
- ✓ Now Five new ports of call on both sides.

- **Two extended Ports of Call**

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Advantages of Protocol on land water transit and trade (PIWTT)

- Improve the connectivity of Tripura and adjoining States with Indian and Bangladesh's economic centres (Inclusion of Sonamura-Daudkandi stretch of Gumti river)
- Augment infrastructure in Bangladesh (The operationalization of Rajshahi-Dhulian-Rajshahi Route and its extension up to Aricha, Bangladesh)
- Inclusion of new Port of Call like Jogighopa in India and Bahadurabad in Bangladesh will provide connectivity to Meghalaya, Assam and Bhutan.

(iii)BCIM (Bangladesh China India Myanmar corridor)

- **Why in News?**

India's decision to skip the **Belt and Road Forum (BRF)** have led to the exclusion of the **Bangladesh- China- India- Myanmar (BCIM) Economic corridor** from the list of projects covered by the China-led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) umbrella.

✓ Reason---



China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC)

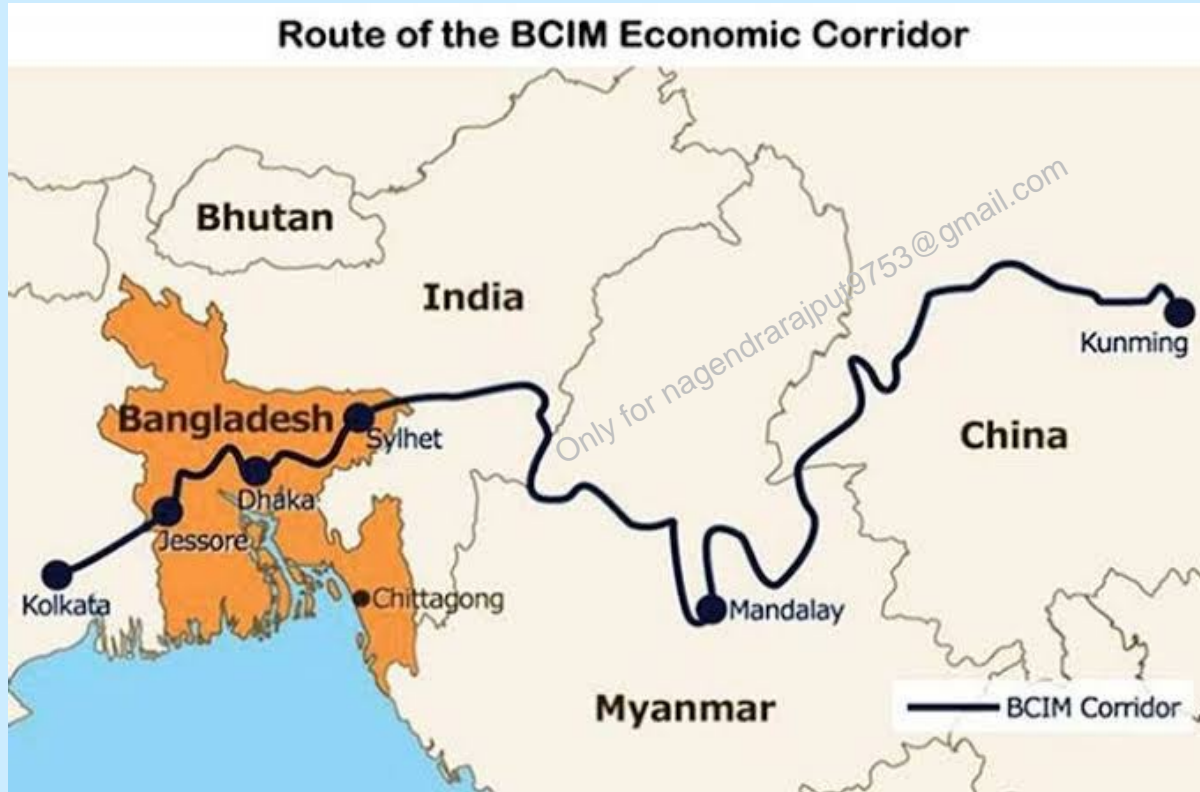


Nepal-China Trans-Himalayan Multi-dimensional Connectivity Network



China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The BCIM economic corridor aims to connect Kolkata with Kunming, capital of the Yunnan province.



Importance of BCIM

❖ For India

❖ For Bangladesh

Concerns/Challenges

Need of hour

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How does the development Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar (BCIM) project offer India an opportunity to create its own win-win relationship with China? Examine.

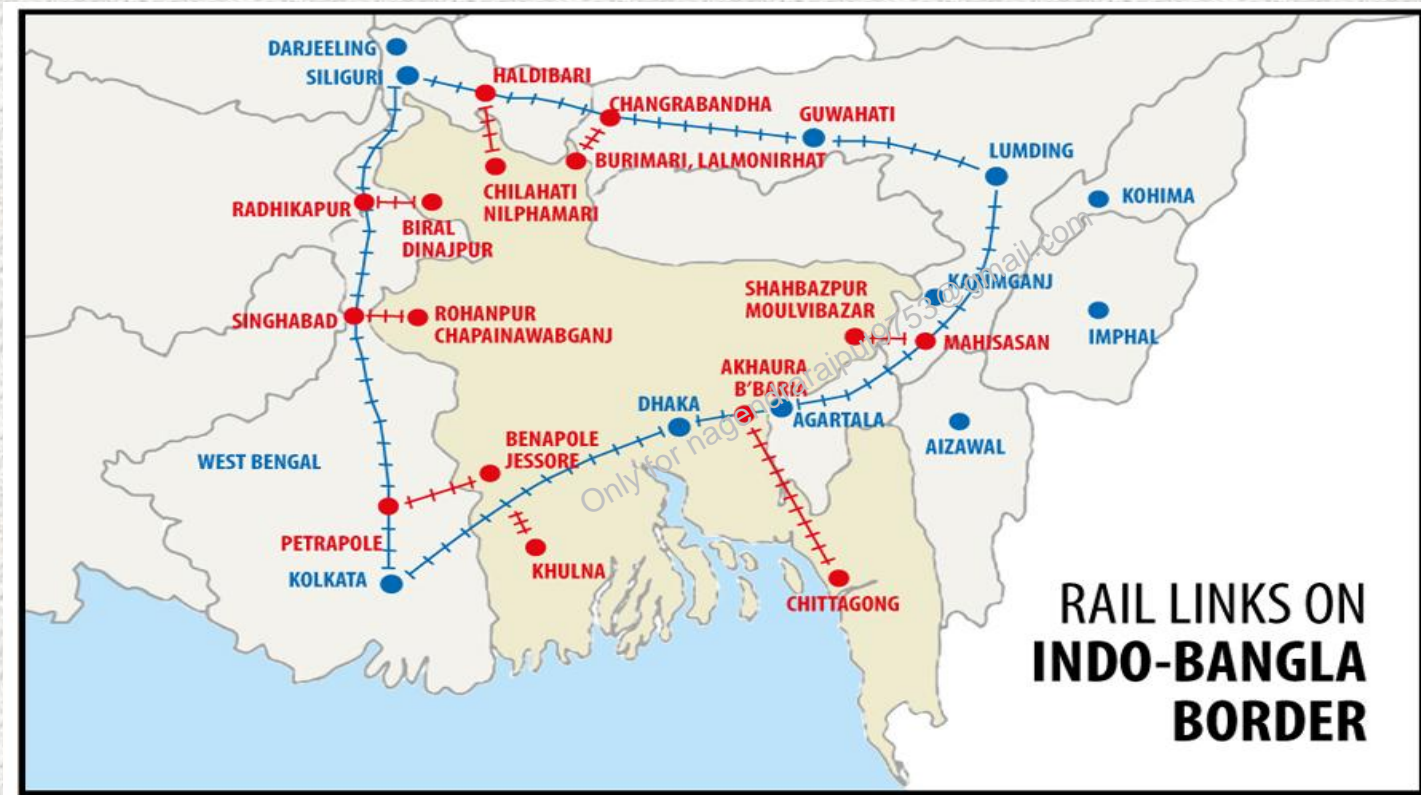
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(iv)Haldibari-Chilahati rail route and Agartala-Akhaura rail line

Why in News

Aug 2021: Bangladesh and India started regular operation of freight trains through the restored Haldibari-Chilahati rail route after over 50 years.

The much-awaited Agartala-Akhaura rail line, which is 15.6 kilometres long, connecting the Northeast region of India with Bangladesh, is likely to be completed by September-end of 2022.



Significance



(V)Maitri SetU

- Inaugurated on 9th March 2021.
- 1.9 km land bridge connecting the North-East (NE) Indian state of Tripura and Bangladesh.
- On the transboundary Feni river shared between Bangladesh and India
- Called the Friendship Bridge.

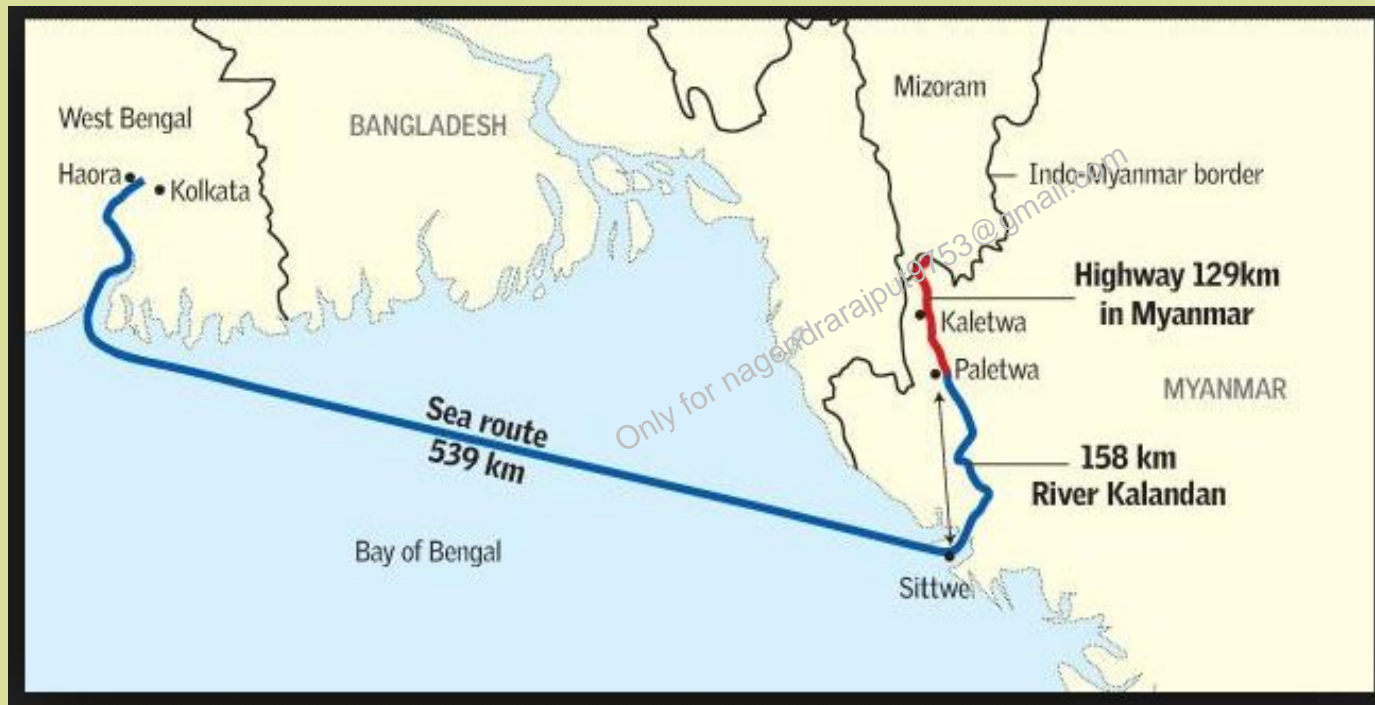
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Significance of Maitri Setu

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- Alternative to the Sittwe Port-Kaladan route

Sittwe Port- Kaladan route



(vi) Bangladesh showed interest in joining India Myanmar Thailand trilateral highway project.



(vii) Temporary Air Travel Bubble signed.

2)Defence Cooperation

- Exercise Sampriti
- Exercise Milan

3) Economic Relations

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4) Hydro Political Relations /Cooperation in Water Resources, Power and Energy

54 common rivers.

(i)Matri Setu

(ii)Farakka barrage

- 1951
- On river Ganga
- Aim: to flush out the silt of Bhagirathi Hoogly river to ensure smooth operationalization of Kolkata port.

Ganga Water Treaty 1996 is an agreement to share surface waters at the

(iii) Teesta Water dispute

PM Modi while on his 2 day tour of Bangladesh on March 2021 said that the deal over the Teesta and other common Rivers would be concluded soon.

TWO NATIONS, ONE RIVER

Total length: **414km**

Sikkim: **151km**

Sikkim-West Bengal boundary: **142km**

Bangladesh: **121km**



Why Teesta is important:



- for Bangladesh

According to the report of Asian Foundation in 2013, its flood plain covers about 14% of the total cropped area of Bangladesh and provides direct livelihood opportunities to approximately 73% of its population.



- For India

Teesta is the lifeline of North Bengal and almost half a dozen of districts of West Bengal are dependent on the waters of Teesta. The negotiations on how to share the water have been going on since 1972.



I I always want Bangladesh to get water. But we have a problem with the Teesta water because the water supply in the river has gone down **I**

Mamata Banerjee, after meeting Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in April 2017 at New Delhi.

1972: Joint River Commission (JRC) was established by India and Bangladesh in the Indo-Bangla Treaty of Friendship.

Water sharing in 1983 ad-hoc agreement:



1983: Agreement on ad-hoc sharing of Teesta water. According to agreement, ad-hoc sharing is valid until 1985 end.

1998: Bangladesh started "Teesta Barrage" irrigation project (3 cropping seasons per year).

2011: an interim deal that was supposed to last for 15 years – gave India 42.5% and Bangladesh 37.5% of Teesta water.

- Originates in Sikkim and flows through West Bengal as well as Bangladesh.
- India claims a share of 55 percent of the river's water.
- Bangladesh wants a higher share than it gets now.
- **Bangladesh view:**
- **India's view:**

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Analysis

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(5) Partnership on Multilateral forums

- United Nations
- South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)
- Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)
- Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

(6) On combating terrorism

(7) Cooperation during COVID 19 pandemic

(8) Cultural cooperation

9) News Areas of Engagement

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Emerging Disputes/ Challenges

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Way Forward

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Conclusion

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Thanks

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