

Bangladesh

Bangladesh came into existence as a result of refusal of the Pakistani military junta to transfer power to the Awami League led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. This led to the 1971 Bangladesh genocide and the massacre of pro-independence Bengali civilians, including intellectuals. In the Bangladesh Liberation War, 1971, the Mukti Bahini aided by India waged a guerrilla war and creation of Bangladesh.



The new state of Bangladesh became constitutionally secular state in 1972. In 1977, secularism was removed from constitution by Martial law. Islam was declared the state religion by Bangladesh Parliament in 1988. In 2010, the Bangladesh Supreme Court reaffirmed secular principles in the constitution.

India Bangladesh Relations

India shares its longest border of 4,096.7 kilometres with Bangladesh. Both nations share bonds of history, language, culture, and multitude of other commonalities. India was the first nation to recognize Bangladesh and establish diplomatic relations immediately after its independence in December 1971. The excellent bilateral ties reflect an all-encompassing partnership based on sovereignty, equality, trust and understanding that goes far beyond a strategic partnership. However, Dhaka's approach towards India has varied over time and under different regimes. Under Awami League government, relations have been positive. But more nationalist

governments and military regimes have attempted to balance against India. Sometimes efforts have been made to destabilize India along Bangladesh border and deepen military and economic ties with China and Pakistan.

Both nations are members of SAARC, BIMSTEC, IORA and the commonwealth.

Significance of Bangladesh:

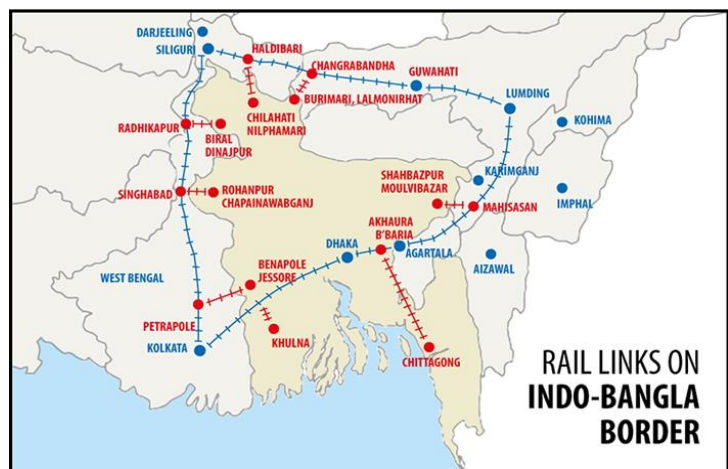
1. Bangladesh is the key to success of Neighbourhood First Policy and Act East policy.
2. Important for success of BIMSTEC, BBIN initiative etc.
3. Key to development and security of North East
4. Partner in fight against terrorism and radicalisation in the region.
5. Ensuring maritime security in Bay of Bengal
6. Cooperation necessary for limiting Chinese adventurism in the region

Economic Relations:

- Bangladesh is India's biggest trade partner in South Asia with bilateral trade volume of around \$16 billion. India's exports to Bangladesh are at \$14 billion and imports at \$2 billion.
- Bangladesh enjoys Duty-Free and Quota Free access for exports to India under South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) since 2011. In December 2020, to further boost the bilateral trade cooperation, an **India-Bangladesh CEO's Forum** was launched.
- India has extended 3 Lines of Credits (LOC) to Bangladesh in the last 8 years amounting to \$8 billion for development of infrastructure in sectors including roads, railways, shipping and ports.
- In July 2023, India and Bangladesh launched trade transaction in rupee aimed at reducing dependence on US dollars and strengthen regional currency and trade.

Connectivity:

- After the Partition in 1947, seven rail links were operational between India and Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) until 1965.
- Presently, five rail links between Bangladesh and India are operational. They are Petrapole (India)-Benapole (Bangladesh), Gede (India)-Darshana (Bangladesh), Singhabad (India)-Rohanpur (Bangladesh), Radhikapur (India)-Biraj (Bangladesh), Haldibari (India)-Chilahati (Bangladesh).
- Government of India has also been providing grant assistance to Bangladesh for various infrastructure projects including construction of **Akhaura-Agartala rail link**, **dredging of**



inland waterways in Bangladesh and construction of **India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline**.

Security Cooperation:

1. Bangladesh helped in arresting top leadership of ULFA and NDFB.
2. Bilateral Exercise: SAMPRITI between the two Armies.
3. \$500 million line of credit for purchasing defence equipments.
4. Regular meetings between BSF and BGB to tackle trafficking and illegal migration.

Energy Cooperation:

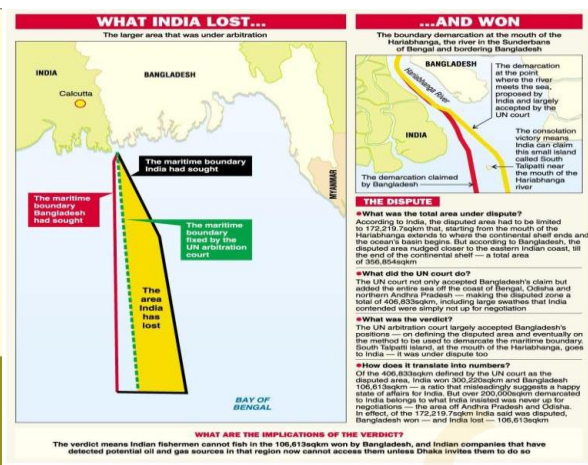
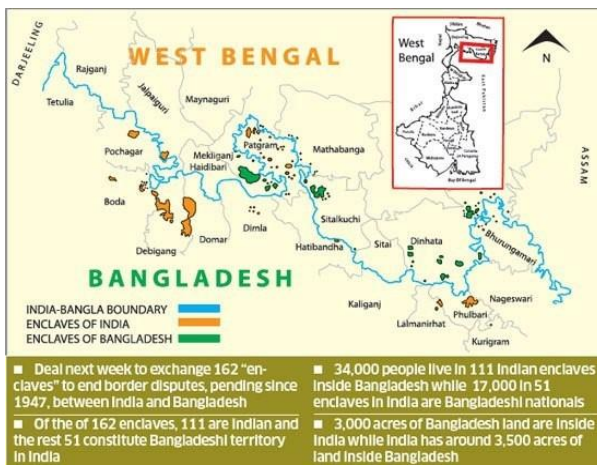
1. Agreement to export Energy to Bangladesh from Tripura.
2. India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline from Siliguri to Parbatipur in Bangladesh for supply of high speed diesel.
3. Trilateral cooperation between India, Bangladesh and Russia for construction and installation of Rooppur nuclear power plant.

Other Initiatives:

- **High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDPs)** constitute an active pillar of India's development assistance. The Government of India has funded 68 HICDPs including construction of student hostels, academic buildings, skill development and training institutes, cultural centers, and orphanages etc in Bangladesh and another 16 HICDPs are being implemented.
- Both nations have signed agreement allowing India to use the Chattogram and Mongla ports in Bangladesh for movement of goods to and from India, particularly from North-eastern India.
- Use of Bangladesh's Feni River for drinking water supply in Tripura.
- India and Bangladesh have agreed to expand cooperation across the entire gamut of water resources issues, including framework for sharing of river waters, mitigation of pollution, river bank protection, flood management and basin management.

Recent Initiatives:

- Resolution of land boundary and maritime dispute:
 - The 2011 protocol called for swap of 111 Indian enclaves in Bangladesh with 51 Bangladesh enclaves in India. This was ratified by Indian parliament in May 2015 through 100th constitutional amendment.
 - In July 2014, the UN tribunal awarded four-fifth of total disputed area of 25,602 sq. km in the Bay of Bengal to Bangladesh.



- Support during Covid-19: India gifted 109 ambulances and 1.2 million Covid-vaccine doses, the biggest recipient of Made-in-India Covid-19 vaccine doses, accounting for 16% of the total supplies.
- India and Bangladesh have agreed for simultaneous coordinated patrols by BSF and BGB (Border Guard Bangladesh) and enhance information-sharing to check trans-border crimes.
- Out of total 4,096.7 km of border, 3,141 km Border Fencing has been done.

Teesta River Issue:

Teesta river is a tributary of Jamuna River (Brahmaputra) originating in Sikkim and entering Bangladesh after crossing West Bengal.

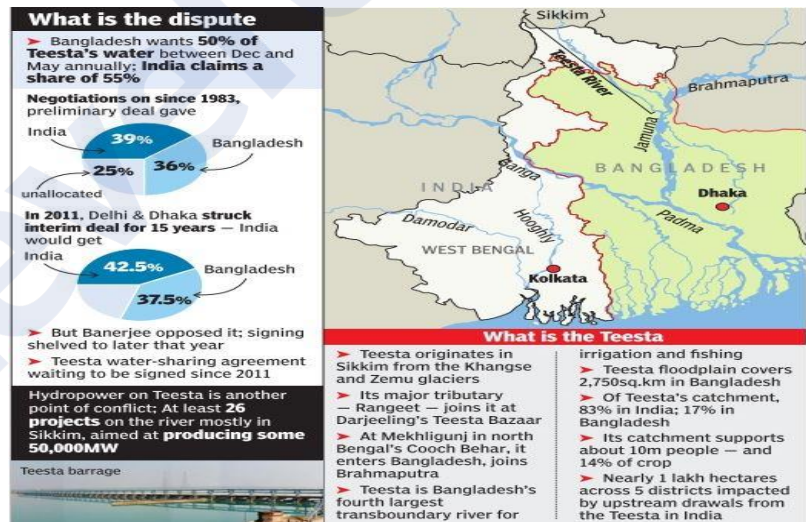
Importance for Bangladesh: It covers about 14 per cent of the total cropped area and about 7.3 per cent of the Bangladesh population relies on the river for direct livelihood.

Importance For West Bengal:

The river is important to sustain

its five northern districts of Darjeeling, North and South Dinajpur, Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri, which happen to be some of the poorest farming districts in West Bengal representing an approximate 12.77 per cent of the total state population.

- It is a highly politically charged topic in Bangladesh which is often an election issue raised by both the main national parties.
- Bangladesh sought a fair and equitable distribution of Teesta waters from India, on the lines of the Ganga Water Treaty 1996.



3. A 2011 interim deal – that was supposed to last 15 years – gave India 42.5 percent of the Teesta's waters and gave Bangladesh 37.5 percent. West Bengal and Sikkim opposed this deal so it was shelved and remains unsigned.

West Bengal Suggestion:

- West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has proposed sharing the waters of the Torsa, Jaldhaka and Raidak rivers instead. The Torsa has connectivity with Bangladesh's Padma.
- It has proposed that the two countries set up a commission to ascertain the level of water flowing through the Torsa and the quantum of water that can be shared.

India and Bangladesh share 54 transboundary rivers. So, a holistic planning and cooperation covering all rivers can be a win-win proposition.

Other Challenges:

1. Border issues: Illegal migration, Human and animal trafficking, border killings remain a challenge to the relationship.
2. Challenges due to CAA and NRC: CAA and NRC had been seen with scepticism by Bangladesh as targeted towards it.
3. Political Rhetoric within India aimed at Bangladesh cause unnecessary frictions to the relationship.
4. Increasing radicalisation within Bangladesh, targeting of Hindu places of worship, activities of Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh (JMB) are other areas of concern.
5. China factor: Deepening of Bangladesh-China military cooperation is another challenge to the relationship.

Avenues for Cooperation

1. Coordinating on Brahmaputra: Both nations can coordinate on maintaining Brahmaputra River and resisting China's unilateral designs over it.
2. Tackling Radicalisation: Since radicalisation remains a threat, that can be an area of cooperation. In November 2015, Bangladesh handed over top ULFA leader Anup Chetia to India.
3. Economic cooperation can be another area of cooperation due to economic complementarities.
4. Climate change: As both India and Bangladesh face threat of climate change, this can be another area of cooperation.

China-Bangladesh Relations:

- China is Bangladesh's biggest trade partner with over \$25 billion. The trade balance is heavily tilted in favour of China.
- In August 2022, China announced duty-free access to 99% of Bangladeshi products w.e.f. 1st September 2022.

- China is among the major investor in Bangladesh in sectors like energy and infrastructure. However, joint investments like Payra Power Plant has been performing sub-optimally and is a stumbling block in repayment of Chinese loans.
- China and Bangladesh has significant military cooperation with Chinese platforms like frigates, missile boats and fighter jets. In 2002, China and Bangladesh signed a "Defence Cooperation Agreement" which covers military training and defence production.
- In 2016, Bangladesh bought two Chinese refurbished submarines.

