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India-Bangladesh Virtual Summit

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Why in News

Recently, **India and Bangladesh** have held a **virtual summit** covering comprehensive discussions on all aspects of bilateral relations and exchanged views on regional and international issues.

Bangladesh also invited India for the celebration of **50th anniversary of Bangladesh's Independence** in 1971 and **50 years of India-Bangladesh diplomatic relations**, to be held in **March 2021**.



Key Points

- **Signing of Bilateral Documents and Inauguration of Projects:**
 - Sealed **seven agreements** to expand cooperation in **diverse areas** viz. hydrocarbons, elephant conservation, sanitation, and agriculture, and **restored a cross-border rail link** which was in operation till 1965.
 - Inaugurated a **digital exhibition on Mahatma Gandhi and Bangladesh's founder, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman**.

- **Cooperation in Health Sector:**
 - Reiterating the highest priority India attaches to Bangladesh under India's **Neighbourhood First** policy, India assured that **vaccines for Covid-19 would be made available to Bangladesh** as and when produced in India.
 - India also **offered collaboration in therapeutics and partnership in vaccine production.**
 - Bangladesh **appreciated India's conducting capacity building courses** for medical professionals in Bangla language.
- **Cultural Cooperation:**
 - Jointly unveiled a **commemorative postal stamp issued by the Government of India on the occasion of birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.**
 - India thanked Bangladesh for **issuing a stamp in honour of Mahatma Gandhi** on the occasion of his **150th birth anniversary** celebrations.
 - Bangladesh requested India to consider **Bangladesh's proposal to name** the historic road from Mujib Nagar to Nodia on Bangladesh-India border as **"*Shadhinota Shorok*"** commemorating the historic significance of the road during Bangladesh's Liberation War.
- **Border Management and Security Cooperation:**
 - Agreed to hold an early meeting of the **Joint Boundary Conference** to prepare a new set of strip maps with a view to finalizing the delineation of the boundaries.
 - It was agreed to carry out necessary work to convert the **International Boundary along *Kuhsiyara* river** into a fixed boundary.
 - **Kuhsiyara river (known as **Barak river in India**) is one of the transboundary rivers** between India-Bangladesh.
 - Bangladesh reiterated the request for 1.3 km **Innocent Passage through river route along River Padma** (main **channel of Ganga in Bangladesh**) near Rajshahi district (Bangladesh). India assured to consider the request.
 - Stressed on the full implementation of the ongoing **Coordinated Border Management Plan.**
 - Expressed satisfaction on **efforts against smuggling of arms, narcotics and fake currency and to prevent trafficking**, particularly of women and children.
 - Directed officials to expeditiously conclude the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the area of **disaster management cooperation** as both countries are prone to frequent natural disasters.
 - Bangladesh requested for early implementation of **India's commitment to remove remaining restrictions on entry/exit from land ports in India** for Bangladeshis travelling on valid documents in a phased manner.

- **Trade Partnership for Growth:**

- Bangladesh has appreciated the **Duty-Free and Quota Free access** given to Bangladeshi exports to India under **South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA)** since 2011.
- Emphasized on addressing issues of **non-tariff barriers and trade facilitation** including port restrictions, procedural bottlenecks and quarantine restrictions so that both countries can take full advantage of SAFTA flexibility.
- Directed the officials to expeditiously conclude the ongoing joint study on the **prospects of entering into a bilateral Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)**.
- Welcomed the **first meeting of the India-Bangladesh Textile Industry Forum** and directed the officials to conclude the ongoing negotiations on various MoUs on increased linkages and collaboration in the textile sector.

- **Connectivity for Prosperity:**

- Jointly inaugurated the **newly restored railway link between Haldibari (India) and Chilahati (Bangladesh)** and noted that this rail link will further strengthen trade and people to people ties between the two sides.
- Welcomed the signing of the second addendum to the **Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (PIWTT)**.
- Agreed to an early operationalization of the **Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) initiative Motor Vehicles Agreement** through the expeditious signing of the Enabling MoU for Bangladesh, India and Nepal to commence the movement of goods and passengers, with provision for Bhutan to join at a later date.
- Bangladesh expressed keen interest in the ongoing **India Myanmar Thailand trilateral highway project** and sought the support of India for enabling Bangladesh to connect with this project.
- Satisfaction on commencement of a temporary **Air Travel Bubble** to facilitate the urgent requirements of travellers on both sides.

- **Cooperation in Water Resources, Power and Energy:**
 - Bangladesh highlighted the need for **early signing of an interim agreement for sharing of the Teesta waters**, as agreed upon by both the governments in 2011.
 - Underscored the need for early conclusion of **Framework of Interim Agreement** on sharing of waters of six joint rivers, namely, Manu, Muhuri, Khowai, Gumti, Dharla and Dudhkumar.
 - Recalled the positive contribution of the **Joint Rivers Commission** (JRC) and looked forward to the next round of Secretarial level JRC meeting at the earliest.
 - Agreed to expedite implementation of projects including **India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline, Maitree Super Thermal Power Project** as well as other projects.
 - Welcomed the signing of the **Framework of Understanding on Cooperation in the Hydrocarbon Sector** which would further augment energy linkages by streamlining investments, technology transfer, joint studies, training and promoting **hydrocarbon** connectivity.
 - Agreed to enhance cooperation in energy efficiency and clean energy, including in **biofuels**.
- **Forcibly Displaced Persons from the Rakhine State of Myanmar (Rohingya):**

India appreciated the generosity of Bangladesh in **sheltering and providing humanitarian assistance to the 1.1 million forcibly displaced persons from the Rakhine State of Myanmar, in the Rohingya Crisis**.

- **Partners in the Region and the World:**

- India thanked Bangladesh for supporting India in its election to the **United Nations Security Council**.
- Both countries agreed to continue working together towards achieving early reforms of the UN Security Council, combating **climate change**, attainment of the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) and protection of the rights of migrants.
- Highlighted that regional organisations such as the **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation** (SAARC) and **the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation** (BIMSTEC) have an important role to play.
- Bangladesh thanked India for convening the **SAARC leaders Video Conference in March 2020** and for creation of the **SAARC Emergency Response Fund** to counter effects of the global pandemic in the South Asian region.
- Bangladesh will assume chairmanship of the **Indian Ocean Rim Association** (IORA) in **2021** and requested the support of India for working towards greater maritime safety and security.
- Bangladesh appreciated the work of the **New Development Bank** and thanked India for inviting Bangladesh to join the institution.

Source: PIB