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50 Years of India Bangladesh Relations

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Why in News

Commemorating **50 years of the 1971 India-Pakistan war** that led to the liberation of Bangladesh, a 122-member contingent of the Bangladesh Armed Forces has recently participated in the **72nd Republic Day** parade.

This year, India and Bangladesh are also celebrating **50 years of the establishment of their ties**.

Key Points



- This is the **third time** the Republic Day parade in India has witnessed the participation of a military contingent from abroad.

Previously **French troops** marched in 2016 and **UAE troops** in 2017.

- **Bangladesh War of Independence: Vijay Diwas** is observed on 16th December every year to mark India's victory over Pakistan in the 1971 war.
 - The Government of India, on 3rd December 1971, declared that it would go for war with Pakistan to save Bengali Muslims and Hindus.
 - This war was fought between India and Pakistan for 13 days.
 - On 16th December 1971, the chief of the Pakistani forces with 93,000 soldiers had surrendered unconditionally to the allied forces consisting of **Indian Army** and **Mukti Bahini** in Dhaka.
 - Mukti Bahini refers to the armed organizations that fought against the Pakistan Army during the Bangladesh Liberation War. It was a guerrilla resistance movement.
 - Bangladesh was born on this day. Hence, Bangladesh celebrates its **independence day (Bijoy Dibos) on 16th December every year.**

India-Bangladesh Relations

- India was one of the first countries to recognize Bangladesh and establish diplomatic relations immediately after its independence in December 1971.
- **Defence Cooperation:**
 - Various **Joint exercises** of Army (**Exercise Sampriti**) and Navy (**Exercise Milan**) take place between the two countries.
 - **Border Management:** India and Bangladesh share **4096.7 km.** of border, which **is the longest land boundary that India shares with any of its neighbours.**
 - The India-Bangladesh **Land Boundary Agreement (LBA)** came into force following the exchange of instruments of ratification in June 2015.
- **Cooperation over Rivers:**
 - India and Bangladesh share **54 common rivers.** A bilateral **Joint Rivers Commission (JRC)** has been working since June 1972 to maintain liaison between the two countries to maximize benefits from common river systems.
- **Economic Relations:**
 - Bangladesh is India's **biggest trade partner** in South Asia. India's exports to Bangladesh for financial year 2018-19 (April-March) stood at **US 9.21 billion USD** and imports from Bangladesh for the same period stood at **US 1.22 Billion USD.**
 - 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.

- **Cooperation in Connectivity:**
 - Both countries jointly inaugurated the newly restored railway link between **Haldibari (India) and Chilahati (Bangladesh)**.
 - 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
- **Cooperation in Power Sector:**

This has become one of the hallmarks of India- Bangladesh relations. Bangladesh is currently importing **1160 MW** of power from India.
- **Partnership on Multilateral forums:**
 - 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.
- **Recent Development:**
 - Recently, India and Bangladesh signed seven agreements and also inaugurated three projects to deepen their partnership.
 - The use of the **Chattogram and Mongla ports** in Bangladesh for movement of goods to and from India, particularly from Northeastern India.
 - Use of **Bangladesh's Feni river** for drinking water supply in Tripura.

- **Further areas of Cooperation:**

- The two countries need to focus on priority areas, such as **investments, security connectivity development, cross border energy cooperation, blue economy, cultural economy, environment and disaster management** etc.
- Resolve the refugees (Rohingyas) crisis.
- **During Covid 19:**
 - 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.

- **Emerging Disputes:**

- There should be efforts to resolve pending issues concerning **sharing of waters, resolving continental shelf issues in the Bay of Bengal, bringing down border incidents to zero, and managing the media.**
- Bangladesh has already raised concerns over roll out of the **National Register of Citizens (NRC)** in Assam, an exercise carried out to identify genuine Indian citizens living in Assam and weed out illegal Bangladeshis.
- Currently, Bangladesh is an active partner of the **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** that Delhi has not signed up to.
- In the security sector, Bangladesh is also a major recipient of Chinese military inventory, including submarines.

Source: IE