



India-Bangladesh Relations

For Prelims: India-Bangladesh Relations, [Bangladesh Liberation War](#), [Russia-Ukraine War](#), [Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement \(CEPA\)](#), [Ganga Waters Treaty](#).

For Mains: India-Bangladesh Relations, Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

[Source: TH](#)

Why in News?

Recently, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina returned to power in Bangladesh for a **historic fourth straight term**. India was among the first countries to congratulate, **illustrating the close bilateral relationship** between the two countries.

How Have the Ties Between India-Bangladesh Flourished?

▪ Historical Ties:

- The foundation of India's relationship with Bangladesh **was laid in the 1971 [Bangladesh Liberation War](#)**. India provided critical military and material support to assist Bangladesh in its fight for independence from Pakistan.
- Despite this, relations soured within a few years as military regimes took control. There was a rise in **anti-India sentiment in the mid-1970s** over issues ranging from boundary disputes and insurgency to the sharing of water.
- The instability continued for a few decades until **Sheikh Hasina came to power in 1996** and scripted a new chapter in bilateral ties with a **treaty on the sharing of Ganga waters**.
- Since then, India and Bangladesh have built cooperation in **Trade, Energy, Infrastructure, Connectivity and Defence**.

▪ Economic Cooperation:

- Bilateral trade between India and Bangladesh has grown steadily over the last decade.
- Bangladesh has emerged as **India's largest trade partner in South Asia**, with bilateral trade reaching USD 18 billion in 2021-2022 from USD 10.8 billion in 2020-21, though there was a dip in 2022-23 due to the [Covid-19 pandemic](#) and the [Russia-Ukraine War](#).
- **India is also the second biggest trade partner of Bangladesh**, with exports amounting to USD 2 billion in Indian markets.
- In 2022, both nations concluded a joint feasibility study on a [Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement \(CEPA\)](#). The CEPA gains additional significance as Bangladesh is set to lose its [Least Developed Country \(LDC\) status after 2026](#), thereby losing its duty-free and quota-free market access in India.
- Bangladesh will be eager to finalize a [Free Trade Agreement \(FTA\)](#) with India, and also pursue the China-backed [Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership \(RCEP\)](#). This dual approach raises concerns for India.

▪ Infrastructure:

- Since 2010, India has extended **Lines of Credit** to Bangladesh worth over USD 7 billion.
- India and Bangladesh have **successfully resolved long-pending issues**, like the [Land Boundary Agreement \(LBA\) in 2015](#) and a maritime dispute over territorial waters.
- India and Bangladesh in 2023 inaugurated the [Akhaura-Agartala Rail Link](#) that connects Bangladesh and the northeast through Tripura.
- The link has given **India access to Chattogram and Mongla ports** in Bangladesh for the movement of cargo.
 - It is likely to boost small-scale industries and development in Assam and Tripura.
- The [BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity](#) focuses on connecting major transport projects in India, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand, thereby establishing a shipping network.
 - India will focus on the Matarbari Port, 100 km from Tripura, being built by Bangladesh. This port will create a vital industrial corridor connecting Dhaka and Northeast India.
- **Energy:**
 - In the energy sector, Bangladesh imports **nearly 2,000 megawatts (MW) of electricity from India.**
 - **In 2018, Russia, Bangladesh and India** signed a memorandum on cooperation in the implementation of the **Rooppur Nuclear power plant project, Bangladesh's first nuclear power reactor.**
- **Defence Cooperation:**
 - India and Bangladesh share 4096.7 km of border; **the longest land boundary that India shares with any of its neighbors.**
 - Assam, West Bengal, Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Tripura share borders with Bangladesh.
 - The two also conduct Joint Exercises - **Army ([Exercise Sampriti](#)) and Navy ([Exercise Bongo Sagar](#)).**
- **Multilateral Cooperation:**
 - India and Bangladesh are also engaged in regional cooperation through multilateral forums such as [SAARC \(South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation\)](#), [BIMSTEC \(Bay of Bengal Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation\)](#) and [Indian Ocean Rim Association \(IORA\)](#).



What are the Points of Tensions Between India and Bangladesh?

- **Sharing of Transboundary River Waters:**
 - India and Bangladesh share 54 common rivers, but only two treaties have been signed so far of [Ganga Waters Treaty](#) and [The Koshiyara River Treaty](#).
 - The other major rivers, such as the Teesta and Feni are still under **negotiation**.
- **Illegal Migration:**
 - The issue of illegal migration from Bangladesh to India, encompassing both refugees and economic migrants, continues to be a significant concern.
 - This influx strains Indian border states, impacting resources and security. The problem intensified with [Rohingya refugees](#) entering India through Bangladesh.
 - The [National Register of Citizens \(NRC\)](#), aimed at curbing such migration, has raised concerns in Bangladesh.
 - Bangladesh seeks **Indian support in persuading Myanmar to take back the Rohingyas** who were forced to take refuge in Bangladesh.
- **Drug Smuggling & Trafficking:**
 - There have been many incidences of cross border drug smuggling & trafficking. Humans (especially children & women) are trafficked & various animal & bird species are poached through these borders.
- **Growing Chinese Influence in Bangladesh:**
 - At present, Bangladesh is an active partner in the [Belt and Road Initiative \(BRI\)](#) (India is not a part of BRI).
 - China's increasing involvement with Bangladesh could potentially undermine India's regional standing and impede its strategic aspirations.

Way Forward

- There is a **need to establish joint task forces comprising law enforcement agencies** from both countries to effectively combat cross-border drug smuggling and human trafficking.
- Shared intelligence and coordinated **operations can disrupt illegal networks**.
- Implementing smart **border management solutions that utilise Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and data analytics can streamline cross-border movements while ensuring security and efficiency.
- There is a need to establish a digital connectivity corridor between the two countries, focusing on high-speed internet connectivity, digital services, and e-commerce. This can create new avenues for trade, collaboration, and technological exchange.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. With reference to river Teesta, consider the following statements: (2017)

1. The source of river Teesta is the same as that of Brahmaputra but it flows through Sikkim.
2. River Rangeet originates in Sikkim and it is a tributary of river Teesta.
3. River Teesta flows into Bay of Bengal on the border of India and Bangladesh.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

Mains

Q. Analyze internal security threats and transborder crimes along Myanmar, Bangladesh and Pakistan borders including Line of Control (LoC). Also discuss the role played by various security forces in this regard. (2018)

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