India Bangladesh relations

Why in news?

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Bangladeshi Prime Minister’s visit to India after a seven-year hiatus, just ahead of Poila Boishak, Bengali New Year, couldn’t have been more opportune.

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Why India Bangladesh relationship is important?

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- Bangladesh and India are at a historic juncture of diplomacy embedded in a rich matrix of history, religion, culture, language and kinship.
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- The current dynamics of the relationship are very positive.
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- Currently, the volume of bilateral trade between India and Bangladesh is about $6.6 billion.
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- There are estimates that the trade potential is at least four times the present level.
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- Both countries are looking at strengthening economic cooperation through joint investments and cooperation under the ‘Blue Economy’ programme.
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- The programme entails synergised efforts of littoral states in the exploration of hydrocarbons, marine resources, deep-sea fishing, preservation of marine ecology and disaster management.
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- The two countries also see themselves converging around lot of commonalities, not just as neighbours battling the scourge of terrorism, but as leading economic partners.
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- Both India and Bangladesh have adopted a common stance on tackling terrorism by both cracking down on terror and also condemning, nations regarded as sponsors of terrorism.
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- Recently Bangladesh’s measures toward setting up a power plant in the Sundarbans have been lauded.
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- As the second fastest-growing economy in the world in 2016 with more than 7 per cent growth, Bangladesh has a firm footing in the global apparel markets.
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- It is now a role model for the developing world in poverty reduction, achieving success in health and education and fighting climate change, among others.
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- India continues its run of strong GDP growth with a resilient economy.
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- The economy is powered by fast paced economic and tax reforms, measures on ease of doing business, increased public investment in infrastructure, opening up of defence, aviation and pharma sectors to 100 per cent foreign direct investment.
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- In terms of diplomacy in the South Asian region, both countries have had identical views.
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- From how organisations such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) should be going forward in promoting cooperation among its member nations to economic growth.
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What can India do to strengthen relations?

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- India needs to extend its support to Bangladesh for infrastructure projects such as improving road capacity in Bangladesh.
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- Also Cooperation in upgrading some customs posts, as well as establishing border markets for vendors along the 4,096-km boundary can help both countries.
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- Also efforts to integrate the region’s economies with road, rail and shipping routes can yield rich dividends.
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- Dhaka’s recent procurement of two submarines from Beijing has created a shock among the Indian power circles.
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- Thus it seems to be a good time for the industry in India to look for opportunities for collaboration in defence, such as in military hardware, space technology, technical assistance, exchange of experience, and development of sea infrastructure.
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- Connectivity offers a game-changing opportunity for India and Bangladesh.
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- This is pivotal to India’s connectivity with its north-eastern region and with countries of Asean.
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- This is particularly important in the context of both the Make in India initiative as well as India’s Act East Policy.
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- The Digital India programme offers tremendous scope for sharing of experiences and greater business engagement.
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- The renewing of the 25-year treaty of friendship and cooperation on the basis of sovereign equality can help India gain trust among Bangladeshi people.
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- And finally the long pending Teesta River sharing agreement where a middle path has to be carved so that both countries are benefitted.
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What are the opportunities available?

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- BBIN a mega cooperation initiative can complement India’s ongoing investments in power joint ventures in Bangladesh.
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- On the energy front, new opportunities are opening up for energy companies in India in LNG and supply of petroleum products.
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- There is tremendous potential held out by the initiative on sub-regional cooperation among BBIN nations that envisages transport and transit facilitation between the two countries through a motor vehicle agreement.
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- India can expand sub regional cooperation among BBIN countries to cover initiatives in rail which would open opportunities in land ports and land customs stations, air connectivity.
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- There is much that industry on both sides can work on such as containerised cargo movement, technical assistance and capacity building requirements.

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- Industry can be a constructive partner in tapping the opportunities for power trade and inter-grid connectivity cooperation in future power projects, and water resources management among the four countries.
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Source: The Hindu Business Line, The Hindu.

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