

## Sheikh Hasina re-elected as Bangladesh PM

### Why in news?

Sheikh Hasina's re-election as Prime Minister of Bangladesh will have positive impact on bilateral ties with India.

### What is the history of India Bangladesh relations?

*Sharing 54 rivers and a 4,096-km border, the India-Bangladesh border is the longest land boundary India has with any of its neighbours.*

- **Historical relations**- Both India and Bangladesh were under the British colonial rule and Rabindranath Tagore wrote the national anthem for both countries.
- **Partition of British India, 1947**- Bengal region was partitioned based on religious lines.

Bengal region		Control
East Bengal		Dominion of Pakistan
West Bengal		Dominion of India

- **Diplomatic relation**- India granted diplomatic recognition to Bangladesh as an independent and sovereign country and provided critical military and material support during ***Bangladesh Liberation War 1971***.

*Former Prime Minister of Bangladesh 'Bangabandhu' Sheikh Mujibur Rahman recognised that friendship with India is a cornerstone of the foreign policy of Bangladesh.*

- **Maitri Diwas**- Bangladesh and India celebrate Friendship Day on 6<sup>th</sup> December commemorating India's recognition of Bangladesh and the continued friendship between the two countries.

*Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Indira Gandhi laid the foundation of bilateral relations through a 25-year Friendship Treaty in 1972*

- **Ganga Water Treaty, 1996**- It is a 30 year treaty to share surface waters at the Farakka Barrage near their mutual border.
- **Land Boundary Agreement, 2015**- The Bangladeshi enclaves in India and Indian enclaves in Bangladesh were transferred by this agreement.

- **Shonali Adyaya**- In 2022, both countries inked an agreement on the sharing of waters of the common border river [Kushiyara](#), the first pact since 1996 Ganga Waters Treaty.
- **Economic relations**- Bangladesh has emerged as India's largest trade partner in South Asia, and India is the 2<sup>nd</sup> biggest trade partner of Bangladesh.
- Bangladesh started using rupees in its trade transactions with India last year to reduce dependence on the U.S. dollar and strengthen regional currency.
- **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)**- A joint feasibility study is conducted in 2022 which reduces or eliminate customs duties on traded goods and simplify trade norms.
- 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.
- **Regional trade agreements**- Both are part of Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA), SAARC Preferential Trade Agreement (SAPTA), Agreement on South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) and Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation ([BIMSTEC](#)) which govern the tariff regimes for trade.
- **BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity**- It is a comprehensive plan that aims to enhance regional connectivity and integration among the member countries of the BIMSTEC.
- **COVID-19 assistance**- India was the first country to provide free vaccines around 2 million Covishield to Bangladesh to assist in its efforts to fight against the pandemic.
- **Regional connectivity**- In 2022, [Akhaura-Agartala rail link](#) was inaugurated that connects Bangladesh and the northeast through Tripura.
- **The Khulna-Mongla Port rail link** is the project constructed in Bangladesh with financial assistance from India.
- A cross-border bus service operates from Shillong, Agartala and Kolkata to Dhaka.
- **Maitri Setu**- The [Sabroom Bridge](#) over the Feni river reduces the distance between Tripura and [Chittagong port](#).
- **India Bangladesh Protocol Route**- It is an inland water transit and trade protocol under which inland vessels of one country can transit through the specified routes of the other country.
- **Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (PIWT&T)**- It allows the use of the waterways for the movement of goods and people.
- **High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDPs)**- It constitute an active pillar of India's development assistance, around 74 projects have been assisted by India.
- **Defence relations**- [Exercise Sampriti XI](#) is the annual joint military exercise held at Umroi in Meghalaya.
- **Cultural cooperation**- [Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre \(IGCC\) and Indian Cultural Centre in Dhaka](#) plays a crucial role in celebrating the cultural links between the two countries.
- **Capacity building**- India announced 1000 "[Suborno Jayanti Scholarships](#)" for Bangladeshi students and in 2022.



### What are the concerns in their bilateral ties?

- **Rohingya crisis**- Bangladesh hosts over a million refugees from Myanmar and seeks India's help to repatriate them.
- **Teesta water sharing**- Bangladesh shows concern about lack of agreement on sharing the river water with India, which depends on West Bengal's consent.
- **China factor**- Bangladesh is China's best option to break out of its 'East Asia Mould' and strengthen its maritime presence in the Indian Ocean.
- **Geopolitical dynamics**- US has imposed sanctions and visa restrictions on Bangladesh for eroding democracy and human rights, which might pose a formidable challenge for India.

### What lies ahead?

- Despite concerns, both have shared a warm and cordial relationship based on mutual trust and a friendship that goes beyond the arithmetic of economic gains and losses.
- Both should work together to achieve the common goal of development and prosperity for their people.
- India should foster cordial relation in line with its 'Act East' policy to counter China's expanding influence in the Indo-Pacific and build a friendly and stable neighbourhood.

### References

1. [The Hindu- The growth of India Bangladesh relations](#)
2. [Ministry of External Affairs- India Bangladesh ties](#)



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