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 6th 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 2nd 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.

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