



REMOVE THE WEDGES IN INDIA-BANGLADESH TIES

sanskritias.com/current-affairs/remove-the-wedges-in-india-bangladesh-ties

(Mains GS 2: India and its neighborhood- relations & Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests)

Context:

- The friendship between India and Bangladesh is historic, evolving over the last 50 years.
- India's political, diplomatic, military and humanitarian support during Bangladesh's Liberation War played an important role towards Bangladesh's independence.
- Nearly 3,900 Indian soldiers gave up their lives and an estimated 10 million Bangladeshi refugees took shelter in India.

Now it is about cooperation:

- Post-Independence, the India-Bangladesh relationship has oscillated as Bangladesh passed through different regimes.
- The relationship remained cordial until the assassination of Bangladesh's founding President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in August 15, 1975, followed by a period of military rule and the rise of General Ziaur Rahman who became President and also assassinated in 1981.
- Relations thawed again between 1982-1991 when a military-led government by General H.M. Ershad ruled the country.
- Since Bangladesh's return to parliamentary democracy in 1991, relations have gone through highs and lows.
- However, in the last decade, India-Bangladesh relations have warmed up, entering a new era of cooperation, and moving beyond historical and cultural ties to become more assimilated in the areas of trade, connectivity, energy, and defence.

Peaceful borders:

- Bangladesh and India have achieved the rare feat of solving their border issues peacefully by ratifying the historic Land Boundary Agreement in 2015, where enclaves were swapped allowing inhabitants to choose their country of residence and become citizens of either India or Bangladesh.
- The Bangladesh government has uprooted anti-India insurgency elements from its borders, making the India-Bangladesh border one of the region's most peaceful.
- Peaceful India- Bangladesh border allowing India to make a massive redeployment of resources to its more contentious borders elsewhere.

Increasing trade and commerce:

- Bangladesh today is India's biggest trading partner in South Asia with exports to Bangladesh in FY 2018-19 at \$9.21 billion and imports at \$1.04 billion.
- India has offered duty free access to multiple Bangladeshi products.
- On the development front, cooperation has deepened, with India extending three lines of credit to Bangladesh in recent years amounting to \$8 billion for the construction of roads, railways, bridges, and ports.
- Bangladeshis make up a large portion of tourists in India, outnumbering all tourists arriving from Western Europe in 2017, with one in every five tourists being a Bangladeshi.
- Bangladesh accounts for more than 35% of India's international medical patients and contributes more than 50% of India's revenue from medical tourism.

The connectivity boost:

- Connectivity between the two countries has greatly improved.
- A direct bus service between Kolkata and Agartala runs a route distance of 500 km, as compared to the 1,650 km if it ran through the Chicken's Neck to remain within India.
- There are three passenger and freight railway services running between the two countries, with two more routes on their way to be restored.
- Recently, a 1.9 kilometre long bridge, the Maitri Setu, was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, connecting Sabroom in India with Ramgarh in Bangladesh.
- Bangladesh allows the shipment of goods from its Mongla and Chattogram (Chittagong) seaports carried by road, rail, and water ways to Agartala (Tripura) via Akhura; Dawki (Meghalaya) via Tamabil; Sutarkandi (Assam) via Sheola, and Srimantpur (Tripura) via Bibirbazar.
- This allows landlocked Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura to access open water routes through the Chattogram and Mongla ports.

Bones of contention:

Teesta river water issue:

- Despite the remarkable progress, the unresolved Teesta water sharing issue looms large.
- Sharing the waters of the Teesta River, which originates in the Himalayas and flows through Sikkim and West Bengal to merge with the Brahmaputra in Assam and (Jamuna in Bangladesh), is perhaps the most contentious issue between two friendly neighbours, India and Bangladesh.
- The river covers nearly the entire floodplains of Sikkim, while draining 2,800 sq km of Bangladesh, governing the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.
- For West Bengal, Teesta is equally important, considered the lifeline of half-a-dozen districts in North Bengal.
- Bangladesh has sought an “equitable” distribution of Teesta waters from India, on the lines of the Ganga Water Treaty of 1996.
- Teesta remains an unfinished project and one of the key irritant between india and Bangladesh.

Porus border:

- India Bangladesh border is almost 4,096 km long (2,979 km land border and 1,117 km riverine border), half of which is along West Bengal. Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura are the other states which encircle Bangladesh.
- The India-Bangladesh border is porous. It runs through rivers, ponds, agricultural fields, villages and even houses where the entrance is in India and the backdoor in Bangladesh.
- It is perhaps the most complex land border anywhere in the world.

National register of citizenship:

- The Indian government’s proposal to implement the National Register of Citizens across the whole of India reflects poorly on India-Bangladesh relations.
- However, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has termed the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) as India’s “internal matters”, but at the same time she also said that the act was “not necessary”.

Increasing influence of china:

- Sri Lanka, Nepal and the Maldives, once considered traditional Indian allies, are increasingly tilting towards China due to the Asian giant’s massive trade, infrastructural and defence investments in these countries.
- In spite of its ‘Neighbourhood First Policy’, India has been losing its influence in the region to China.

- China, in lieu of its cheque-book diplomacy, is well-entrenched in South Asia, including Bangladesh, with which it enjoys significant economic and defence relations.

Conclusion:

- India-Bangladesh relations have been gaining positive momentum over the last decade.
- As Bangladesh celebrates its 50 years of independence (March 26, 1971), India continues to be one of its most important neighbours and strategic partners.
- To make the recent gains irreversible, both countries need to continue working on the three Cs – cooperation, collaboration, and consolidation.



IAS / PCS
Online Video Course

सामान्य अध्ययन
+
वैकल्पिक विषय
(इतिहास एवं भूगोल)

**15% Discount for
Next 500 Students**

Online Learning Programme
संस्कृति IAS
The Complete Online IAS Solution
JOIN NOW

IAS / PCS

Pendrive Course

सामान्य अध्ययन

+
वैकल्पिक विषय

(इतिहास एवं भूगोल)

15% Discount for Next
500 Students

