

India - Bangladesh relations

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- During the last decade of Ms. Hasina's tenure as PM, Bangladesh-India engagement has intensified.

\n

- With her recent electoral victory, India and Bangladesh must seize the opportunity to further enhance connectivity and trade ties.

\n

\n\n

What are the present areas of co-operation?

\n\n

\n

- **Connectivity** - India's 'neighbourhood policy' has focussed on Bangladesh, which has emerged as a key interlocutor in India's 'Act East Policy' and sub-regional groupings like BIMSTEC and the BBIN Initiative.

\n

- The Padma multipurpose bridge and the Akhaura-Agartala rail link will dramatically change connectivity within Bangladesh and with India.

\n

- Waterways are also being revived to reduce the cost of trade.

\n

- **Cyberspace** - Bangladesh has provided cyber connectivity between the international gateway at Cox's Bazar to Agartala for faster Internet connectivity in India's northeastern States.

\n

- **Energy** - India has also become a partner in Bangladesh's nuclear power programme, with the beginning of construction at the Rooppur nuclear power plant.

\n

- India is poised to export around 1100 MW of power to meet the energy deficit in Bangladesh.

\n

- Power projects totalling more than 3600 MW are under implementation by

Indian companies.

\n

- **Trade** - Bangladesh is India's largest trading partner in South Asia with an annual turnover of around \$9 billion plus an estimated informal trade of around \$8-9 billion.
\n
- To enable more Bangladeshi exports to flow into India, duty free entry was granted in 2011 under the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA).
\n
- Also, a Special economic zone (SEZ) in Bangladesh for Indian manufacturing companies has been mooted and notified recently.
\n
- **Credit** - Indian investment in Bangladesh has reached \$3 billion.
\n
- To offset the economic asymmetry, India has granted Bangladesh generous lines of credit (LOCs) and grants, with commitments reaching \$8 billion.
\n
- While LOCs flow into infrastructure and connectivity projects, grants flow into social sector development.
\n
- Capacity building under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programmewas also extended.
\n
- **Tourism** - Over a million visas are issued to Bangladeshi citizens by India annually.
\n
- Both countries have signed Revised Travel Arrangement 2018 (RTA 2018) for further liberalizing the visa regime, including enhanced duration for employment and student visas.
\n
- **Terrorism** - Bangladesh has denied support to Indian insurgent groups, with insurgent leaders handed over to India.
\n
- This has progressively built trust and confidence between the two countries.
\n

\n\n

Where should the future focus lie?

\n\n

\n

- The Rohingya issue has imposed a huge economic and security burden on Bangladesh.
\n

- India, on its part, published the draft National Register of Citizens in Assam to account genuine Indian citizens residing in Assam and to curb the flow of illegal migrants in the future.
\n
- Thus the illegal migrants issue, along with sharing of river waters, will require deft handling of bilateral ties between the two countries.
\n
- Also, China's security and economic footprint has grown in South Asia and managing this will remain a challenge for both countries.
\n
- While Bangladesh is overwhelmingly dependent on military hardware from China, India has provided a \$500 million LOC for procurement of defence-related goods from India.
\n
- However, this momentum must be maintained and intensified.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n

