



Decline in China's BRI Investments

For Prelims: Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Build Back Better World, Blue Dot Network, Global Gateway

For Mains: BRI and its reach, implications and consequences, Initiatives launched to tackle BRI.

Why in News

According to a China based think tank report, **investments in China's much-touted Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have fallen by 5% since 2019.**

- Unsuccessful deals and the **Covid-19 pandemic** contributed to the fall in the investments.
- Also, China is no longer doling out hard cash for projects in Africa, amid criticism over infrastructure debt and loan defaults.



Key Points

- **About BRI:**
 - It is a **multi-billion-dollar initiative launched in 2013.**
 - It aims to **link Southeast Asia, Central Asia, the Gulf region, Africa and Europe** with a network of land and sea routes.

- It has been launched **to undertake big infrastructure projects** in the world which in turn would also enhance the global influence of China.
- **More than 100 countries signed agreements** with China to cooperate in BRI projects like railways, ports, highways and other infrastructure.
 - From 2000 to 2020, China helped African countries build more than 13,000 kms of roads and railways, and more than 80 large-scale power facilities, and funded over 130 medical facilities, 45 sports venues and over 170 schools and built the African Union Conference Centre.
- **Activities under BRI:**
 - It encompassed **five kinds** of activities:
 - Policy coordination, Trade promotion, Physical connectivity, Renminbi internationalization (China's currency) and People to people contacts.
- **Routes of BRI:**
 - **New Silk Road Economic Belt:** It encompasses trade and investment hubs to the north of China, by reaching out to Eurasia including a link via Myanmar to India.
 - **Maritime Silk Road (MSR):** It begins via the South China Sea going towards Indo-China, South-East Asia and then around the Indian Ocean thus reaching Africa and Europe.
- **Related concerns (for India and World):**
 - **Hamper India's Strategic Interests:**
 - The [China-Pakistan Economic Corridor \(CPEC\)](#) passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Baluchistan, both of which are home to a long-running insurgency.
 - CPEC would hamper India's strategic interests in the South Asian region and can aid Pakistan's legitimacy in the Kashmir dispute too.
 - Also, [attempts to extend CPEC to Afghanistan](#) may undermine India's position as economic, security and strategic partner of Afghanistan.
 - **China's Strategic Rise in the Subcontinent:** Along with [China-Myanmar Economic Corridor \(CMEC\)](#) and CPEC, China is also developing the [China-Nepal Economic Corridor \(CNEC\)](#) which will link Tibet to Nepal.
 - The endpoints of the project will touch the boundaries of the Gangetic plain.
 - Thus three corridors signify the economic as well as strategic rise of China in the Indian subcontinent.
 - **Lack of Transparency:**
 - **Lack of transparency of the BRI agreements** and mounting debt to China by smaller countries have raised global concerns.
 - The 99-year lease of **Hambantota port to China** by Sri Lanka has raised red flags about the downside of the BRI and push for major infrastructure projects **costing billions of dollars in small countries.**
- **Initiatives to Tackle BRI:**
 - **B3W Initiative: The G7 Countries proposed a 'Build Back Better World (B3W) initiative'** at the [47th G7 summit](#) to counter China's BRI.
 - It aims to address the infrastructure investment deficit in developing and lower income countries - the space which has been increasingly captured by China.
 - **Blue Dot Network (BDN):** It is a **multi-stakeholder initiative** formed by the US, Japan and Australia to bring together governments, the private sector and civil society to promote high-quality, trusted standards for global infrastructure development.
 - **BDN** was formally announced in november, 2019 at the Indo-Pacific Business Forum in Bangkok, Thailand.
 - **Global Gateway:** In a bid to compete with BRI, the [European Union](#) recently launched the Global Gateway, a new infrastructure development scheme.

Way Forward

- To counter China's BRI, **alternative projects must be launched** by more advanced countries which are also participatory in nature keeping into account the interests of the host/recipient countries.
- **India must seek help from partners like Japan** when necessary to build and upgrade its infrastructure and create an alternative to Chinese-led connectivity corridors and infrastructure projects since India's ability to act alone in South Asia and the larger Indian Ocean is limited.

- For India, it is **important to work with its partners in the region** to offer alternative connectivity arrangements to its neighbours.
 - Connectivity is increasingly seen as a tool for exerting foreign policy influence.

[Source: BS](#)

Ramna Kali Temple: Bangladesh

For Prelims: Ramna Kali Temple, Bangladesh Liberation War.

For Mains: 50th anniversary of the victory of Bangladesh and India in the Liberation War, India-Bangladesh Ties.

Why in News

Recently, the Indian President has inaugurated the **reconstructed Ramna Kali temple in Ramna, Dhaka (Bangladesh)**, where the **landmark Suhrawardy Udyan** (the former Ramna Race Course) is located.

- The inauguration of the reconstructed Ramna Kalibari **coincided with the 50th anniversary of the victory of Bangladesh and India in the Liberation War**, which also marks the **golden jubilee of the bilateral relations** between the two sides.



Key Points

- **About:**
 - The temple was destroyed by Pakistani forces **during their Operation Searchlight in March 1971**, the brutal crackdown that led to the genocide and the [Bangladesh War of Liberation](#).
 - In March 1971, West Pakistan led a genocide in East Pakistan to suppress calls for Bengali self-determination. East Pakistan fought and won to establish the People's Republic of Bangladesh. India played a crucial role in Bangladesh's freedom struggle.
 - After Bangladesh got rid of Pakistan, a small temple was set up at the site for people to

offer prayers.

- A **reconstruction of the complex was announced in 2017**, when then Indian External Affairs Minister inaugurated 15 development projects in Baridhara, Dhaka.
- The historic Ramna Kali temple is **a symbol of the spiritual and cultural bonding among the people of India and Bangladesh.**

▪ **Ramna Kali Temple:**

- The temple in the area, dedicated to the Goddess Kali, **is believed to have been built during the Mughal period.** It is believed to be 400 years old, even though it is difficult to pinpoint a year in which it was built.
- The temple was built by a Hindu sect, but it is difficult to identify exactly who built it. However, it is said that **it was built by a certain Haricharan Giri** who was a mahant in the temple.
- It was not a very large temple, and was fairly ordinary in terms of its architecture. However, it is **the second oldest Hindu temple in Bangladesh**, the Dhakeshwari Temple being the oldest.
- The temple gained prominence in the **early 20th century when the renowned saint Ma Anandamayi built her ashram in its precincts.**
 - Anandamayi was popularly addressed as “Shahbag-er ma”, or the Mother of Shahbag.

▪ **The Temple and the War:**

- On 27th March 1971, the **Pakistani army destroyed the temple and massacred 85 Hindus**, including priests and devotees.
- On 7th March 1971, Days before the temple was razed, **[Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman](#) delivered his historic speech at the Ramna Race Course maidan**, in which he exhorted Bengalis for the struggle for independence.
 - Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1920-1975) is the founding leader of Bangladesh and the country's first Prime Minister.

India-Bangladesh Relations

▪ **Military Cooperation:**



- The Bangladesh government has uprooted **anti-India insurgency elements from its borders**, making the India-Bangladesh border one of the region's most peaceful.
- This has allowed India to **make a massive redeployment of military resources** to its more contentious borders elsewhere.

▪ **Land Boundary Agreement:**

- Bangladesh and India **have achieved the rare feat of solving their border issues peacefully** by ratifying the historic Land Boundary Agreement in 2015.

▪ **Trade Relations:**

- Bangladesh today is **India's biggest trading partner in South Asia** with exports to Bangladesh in **FY 2018-19 at USD 9.21 billion and imports at USD1.04 billion.**
- Also, India has offered duty free access to multiple Bangladeshi products.

▪ **Development Sector:**

- India extended three **lines of credit to Bangladesh in recent years** amounting to **USD 8 billion for the construction** of roads, railways, bridges, and ports.
- **Improved Connectivity:**
 - 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.
 - **Bangladesh allows the shipment of goods** from its Mongla and Chattogram (Chittagong) seaports carried by road, rail, and water ways to Agartala.
- **New Areas of Engagement:**
 - 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.
- **Recent Development:**
 - Earlier, a 122-member contingent of the Bangladesh Armed Forces had participated in the **72nd Republic Day parade, commemorating 50 years of the 1971 India-Pakistan war that led to the liberation of Bangladesh.**

[Source: TH](#)

Pralay Missile

Why in News

Recently, the [Defence Research and Development Organisation \(DRDO\)](#) has successfully conducted maiden flight test of a new **indigenously developed surface-to-surface missile 'Pralay'**.

- The missile was tested from the **Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Island off the coast of Odisha.**

Key Points

- **About:** Pralay' is India's **first conventional quasi-ballistic missile** and is an answer to any conventional missile attack from northern or western borders.
 - A quasi-ballistic missile has a **low trajectory**, and while it is **largely ballistic**, it can **maneuver in flight**.
 - The missile has been developed in a way that it is able to **defeat the interceptor missiles** and also has the ability to **change its path after covering a certain range mid-air**.
 - It is powered with a **solid propellant rocket motor** and many new technologies.
 - The missile guidance system includes **state-of-the-art navigation system** and integrated **avionics**.
- **Background:** It is a derivative of the **Prahaar missile programme**, which was first tested in 2011.
 - Prahaar is a surface-to-surface missile with a **range of 150 km**.
 - Primary objective is to bridge the gap between the **unguided Pinaka multi-barrel rocket launcher** and the **guided Prithvi missile variants**.
- **Range:** The missile has a range of 150-500 kilometre and can be launched from a mobile launcher.
 - Pralay will be the **longest-range surface-to-surface missile** in the inventory of the Army.

- The Army also has the [BrahMos supersonic cruise missile](#) in its arsenal, with a stated range of **290-plus kilometres**.
- **Significance:** It will completely change the **tactical battlefield dynamics** and India will have two conventional missiles with long range.
 - The BrahMos will be a **cruise option and this one will be the ballistic option**.

| Ballistic Missile vs Cruise Missile | |
|---|--|
| Ballistic Missile | Cruise Missile |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Travel in projectile motion and trajectory depends on gravity, air resistance and Coriolis Force. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Comparatively follows a straight trajectory of motion. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leave the earth's atmosphere and re enter it. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The flight path is within the earth's atmosphere. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Long-range missiles (300 km to 12,000 km) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Short range missiles (range upto 1000 km) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ E.g. Prithvi I, Prithvi II, Agni I, Agni II and Dhanush missiles. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ E.g. BrahMos missiles |

Source: PIB

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