



India-Bangladesh Relations

For Prelims: [India and Bangladesh](#), [Exercise Sampriti](#), [Exercise Bongosagar](#), [Akhaura-Agartala rail link](#), [South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation](#), [Indian Ocean Rim Association](#), [Rohingya refugees](#), [Belt and Road Initiative](#)

For Mains: Major Areas of Cooperation Between India and Bangladesh

Source: [PIB](#)

Why in News?

The **14th Joint Group of Customs (JGC)** meeting between [India and Bangladesh](#) was convened recently, in New Delhi.

- The India-Bangladesh Joint Group of Customs meetings serves as a critical platform for fostering **collaboration on customs-related matters** and **enhancing the facilitation of cross-border trade**.

What are the Key Outcomes of the 14th JGC Meeting?

- **Expansion of Land Customs Stations:** The meeting deliberated on the **establishment of new land customs stations**, which play a pivotal role in facilitating cross-border trade.
 - The meeting explored the possibility of entering into a bilateral agreement on customs cooperation, which could serve as a comprehensive framework for future collaboration.
- **Easing Port Restrictions:** The discussion revolved around measures to **simplify port restrictions**, thereby enhancing the overall efficiency of port operations and reducing trade barriers.
 - India expressed appreciation for Bangladesh's completion of trial runs and the subsequent notification for operationalizing the **Agreement on Use of Chattogram and Mongla Ports (ACMP)**, as agreed upon in the 13th JGC meeting.
- **Electronic Connectivity of Transit Modules:** Discussions were initiated concerning the **electronic connectivity of the respective transit modules of ACMP**, signifying a step toward efficient digital collaboration.
- **Pre-Arrival Customs Data Exchange:** Both parties engaged in talks regarding the **pre-arrival exchange of customs data**. This step aims to expedite the customs clearance process by enabling authorities to prepare in advance.

What are the Major Areas of Cooperation Between India and Bangladesh?

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▪ About:

- India was the **first country to recognise Bangladesh as a separate and independent state** and established diplomatic relations with the country immediately after its **independence in December 1971**.
- India's links with Bangladesh are **civilisational, cultural, social and economic**.
 - Bangladesh's geographical location as **India's eastern neighbor** gives it strategic importance.
 - It provides India with **access to the Bay of Bengal and an important route for trade and connectivity with [Southeast Asia](#)**.

▪ Economic Cooperation:

- **Bangladesh is India's biggest trading partner in the subcontinent**. India's export to Bangladesh stood at **USD 8 billion during April -November 2022**.
 - India enabled the **export of cargo from ICDs within India to Bangladesh through [inland waterways](#)**.
 - Also, the transshipment of containerized export cargo **from Bangladesh to third countries through India** gained a streamlined process.
 - Utilizing both riverine and land routes, this measure reinforces trade routes and opens up new possibilities for cargo movement.
 - India has provided **duty free quota free access to Bangladesh** on all tariff lines except tobacco and alcohol under **[South Asian Free Trade Area \(SAFTA\)](#) since 2011**.
 - Bangladesh and India in **July 2023** launched a **trade transaction in rupees**, a move aimed at **reducing dependence on the US dollar** and strengthening regional currency and trade.

Note: According to the **India Tourism Statistics Report 2022 of Ministry of Tourism**, Bangladesh has been the second largest amongst tourist generating markets for India in the year 2021.

▪ Defence Cooperation:

- India and Bangladesh share 4096.7 km. of border; the **longest land boundary that India shares with any of its neighbors**.
 - Assam, West Bengal, Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Tripura share borders with Bangladesh.

- The two also conduct Joint Exercises - **Army (Exercise Sampriti) and Navy (Exercise Bongosagar)**
- **Energy and Connectivity:**
 - **The India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline** connecting **Siliguri in West Bengal and Parbatipur in Dinajpur district of Bangladesh**, will transport **one million Metric Tonnes Per Annum (MMTPA)** of High-Speed Diesel to Bangladesh.
 - India and Bangladesh have been cooperating in developing cross-border infrastructure projects, such as the **Akhaura-Agartala rail link and Maitri Setu**.
- **Multilateral Cooperation:**
 - India and Bangladesh are also engaged in regional cooperation through multilateral forums such as **SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation)**, **BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation)** and **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)**.

What are the Current Major Issues Between India and Bangladesh?

- **Sharing of Transboundary River Waters:** India and Bangladesh share 54 common rivers, but only two treaties have been signed so far of **Ganga Waters Treaty and The Koshiyara River Treaty**.
 - The other major rivers, such as the **Teesta and Feni** are still under negotiation.
- **Illegal Migration:** Illegal migration from Bangladesh to India, **involving refugees and economic migrants, remains a pressing issue**.
 - This influx strains Indian border states, impacting resources and security. The problem intensified with **Rohingya refugees** entering India through Bangladesh.
 - The **National Register of Citizens (NRC)**, aimed at curbing such migration, has raised concerns in Bangladesh.
- **Drug Smuggling & Trafficking:** There have been many incidences of **cross border drug smuggling & trafficking**. Humans (especially children & women) are trafficked & various animal & bird species are poached through these borders.
- **Growing Chinese Influence in Bangladesh:** At present, Bangladesh is an active partner in the **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (India is not a part of BRI)**.
 - China's increasing involvement with Bangladesh could potentially undermine India's regional standing and impede its strategic aspirations.

Way Forward

- **Joint Task Forces:** There is a need to establish joint task forces comprising law enforcement agencies from both countries to effectively **combat cross-border drug smuggling** and human trafficking. **Shared intelligence and coordinated operations** can disrupt illegal networks.
- **Smart Border Management:** Implementing smart border management solutions that utilize **artificial intelligence and data analytics** can streamline cross-border movements while ensuring security and efficiency.
- **Digital Connectivity Corridor:** There is a need to establish a **digital connectivity corridor** between the two countries, focusing on **high-speed internet connectivity, digital services, and e-commerce**. This can create new avenues for trade, collaboration, and technological exchange.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. With reference to river Teesta, consider the following statements: (2017)

1. The source of river Teesta is the same as that of Brahmaputra but it flows through Sikkim.
2. River Rangeet originates in Sikkim and it is a tributary of river Teesta.
3. River Teesta flows into Bay of Bengal on the border of India and Bangladesh.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
(b) 2 only

(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

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